

FLAVOURS OF THOUGHT: TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGY OF FOOD-RELATED EXPERIENCES

Fransisca Hok-Eng Tan*

c/o University of Vienna
Vienna, Austria

DOI: 10.7906/indecs.11.4.5
Regular article

Received: 15 October 2013.
Accepted: 21 October 2013.

ABSTRACT

Phenomenology, as the study of structures of subjective experiences and consciousness, finds itself in the persistent struggle to claim its rightful place in contemporary research. Accordingly, this article will point out the relevance of first person reports for interdisciplinary investigations of the brain and mind. This is done by exploring the multidisciplinary field of food studies as a novel *platform* for discussion. The phenomenological inquiry is thus proposed as the *vehicle* and method to access food-related experience. By highlighting the important surplus, essential to grasping the *process* of pristine inner experience we adjoin a new perspective to the common focus on the *content* of experience. Consequently, this will extend the current insights pertinent to food-related research and moreover, give vital implications to our overall construction of concepts in science.

KEY WORDS

phenomenological inquiry, food studies, experience, idiographic

CLASSIFICATION

APA: 2300, 3100, 3260

JEL: D80, Z10

*Corresponding author, *η*: fransisca.hok-eng.tan@univie.ac.at; -;
c/o University of Vienna, Universitaetsstrasse 7, A-1010 Wien, Austria

THE MIND, THE BODY AND THINKING OF PIECRUST

Juxtaposing cognitive sciences and food studies may seem peculiar, but on second thought, commonalities are evident. Both are multidisciplinary fields of research that require a successful collaboration in order to attain comprehensive understanding of cognition-related phenomena of interest. An under-representation of food in academic study seems manifest and potential causes have been detailed by Belasco [1]. Among them, we find the dualistic tradition that prizes the mind over the body. This Western philosophy poses the dilemma whether it is appropriate at all to assign superiority to the mind. Correspondingly, I would like to contrast this disproportionate cognizing aspect, by asserting that the “need for food is our primarily biological drive. Without it, without enough of it, or with the wrong food, we die. Food’s importance to our bodies makes it important elsewhere” [2; p.6].

The cognitive sciences concern themselves likewise with highlighting the different understandings of the mind and the centrality of the body and world, as elementary concepts [3]. But contrarily, with a head start, since it ‘pays heed’ to the ‘embodied mind’, as Andy Clarke wrote in remark to Merleau-Ponty’s work *The Phenomenology of Perception*. By deploying the hitherto existing phenomenological contributions to the study of cognition, what is thus offered is a resulting challenge for balancing out the seeming prevalence of bodily traditions in researching the account of food.

Nevertheless, what does ‘thinking of piecrust’ have to do with all of this? Let us take a look at it from the distance first. In contemporary scientific research, it seems that it is much about posing problems, identifying and operationalizing concepts or applying techniques, such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). Literally, it aims for the *big picture* of i.e. showing the activation of similar brain regions in response to food and drug cues, which they connected to the concepts of *hunger* and *craving* [4]. Ultimately, this leads to the question of *how* we actually construct our understanding of such phenomena; of concepts such as *food cravings*, that are clearly hypothetical constructs and far from directly measurable or observable. When adopting this focus on food, we find studies that integrate those concepts by means of arbitrary rating scales [5], specific foods craved for [6] or even physiological data [7]. These so-called *objective* measures have fortunately been widely criticized for being unspecific [7] in the recent years, yet a prevalence of mechanical approaches to the human body [8] crystalizes. Only on the periphery we will find studies that integrate the human experience.

However, even when studies on food do integrate qualitative research methods, they usually consider only the *content* of experience, i.e. by validating questionnaires [9]. This is where this paper posits the need for a turning point, i.e. for a shift that would integrate the *process* of experience as well. The decisive difference between these two classes of *content* and *process* lies in the first one questioning ‘what’, which results in interpretations, psychological origins or causal explanations, whereas asking ‘how’ aims at direct descriptions of lived experience. That is to say, instead of exclusively asking *what* is present in our experience when reporting on a state of *hunger*, we are interested in a direct description of *how* it is experienced. This might reveal ‘thinking of piecrust’ in inner speech, as mental image or as a memory of e.g. taste, smell or crunchiness. Apparalled by the use of phenomenological methods, it is about revealing the subjective constructs and the conscious integration of food in our daily life, because to my opinion it does matter great *how* something is experience.

The, indisputable, most famous example of involuntary memory elicited by food, is Proust’s episode of the madeleine in *Remembrance of Things Past*: “And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings

at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the shapes of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.” [10].

What Proust's exuberant writing does, is skilfully relating description of food directly to memory. Successively, it illustrates how memory is at the core of what we take to be essential for understanding the distinctive capacities of the human mind and cognition. Keep in mind though, that memories are experience-dependent internal representations [11] that do not exist separately from the various *acts* of recall [12]. Such acts are, in fact, the ones we try to capture by means of phenomenological methods (even if not in such an elegant literal manner).

Important to point out is that this paper does not focus on a pure theoretical review or critique on the use of phenomenology in the cognitive sciences, but instead, aspires to connect to areas of food studies by suggesting a methodological design and its potential advances for understanding food-related experiences. Furthermore, a brief overview of selected theories and concepts will be given, for both, the state of the art research in food studies and the study of phenomenology. This will establish a common ground, from which we set off to exploring a phenomenological method for collecting empirical phenomenal data of food-related lived experience. A short excerpt of empirical data acquisition, performed for the purposes of the author's M.Sc. Thesis, will give a feeling for the phenomenal constructs targeted. In line with the metaphor of *flavours of thought*, used in the title of this paper, I adopt the common equalization of taste and flavour as a common misconception, which will be at the forefront of the final discussion. By adjoining the *process* of experience, in an accordingly phenomenological fashion, I promote a novel way of accessing experiences to reveal new nuances for our understanding of the subjective experience of food-related thought. A concluding suggestion on how to methodically address the rich pool of acquired experiential data, will prospect a more systematic approach for the future.

THE PLATFORM: HUMAN EXPERIENCE IN FOOD STUDIES

Before we can discuss how to use food studies as a discourse platform, we first have to consider what it is, and respectively, what it is not. Miller & Deutsch introduced it in their book *Food Studies* as following, “There are many fields that study food itself – its production (agricultural sciences, meat and poultry science, aquaculture); its chemical, physical or biological properties (food science, biochemistry); its physiology when consumed (nutrition); and its preparation (culinary arts). ... Food study, then, is not the study of food itself but rather the study of the relationships between food and the human experience.” [2; p.1].

Accordingly, contemporary research that is dealing with the phenomena of food, paints a thousands pictures, but mostly about food itself [2; p.1]. What locks into your gaze most

probable will be the frequent motif depicting a love for erroneous detail, i.e. when identifying obesogens (environmental chemicals that are linked to obesity) [13] or connecting the body mass index to the energy balance model in nutritional science [14, 15]. Phenomena related to food, seem to be a topic of increasing attention, descending from simple intake covered by nutrition knowledge [16], to food safety [17] up to public health policies [18]. Food as a figurehead of culture and heritage is likewise nothing new, thus studies on the topic of food are abound. However, reviewing the core of approaches adopted causes a feeling of being in between two minds. On the one hand we encounter a growing appetite for qualitative research in studies of obesity [19-22] and eating disorders [23, 24], as dominant public health issue. But on the other hand, attempts to include qualitative aspects in a descriptive manner as proposed by this paper, remain on the periphery.

As we shift to the study of the relationships between food and the human experience, we are confronted with exemplary phenomena such as *food-cravings*. Clearly, these are normative everyday experiences [25, 26] and yet food-related experiences are predominantly investigated in their potential maladaptive nature [27]. Tiggeman and Kemps likewise criticised this negative construction of *food-cravings*, “For example, food cravings have been associated with binge eating [28, 29], which in turn contributes to both obesity [30] and eating disorders [23, 28]. Food cravings are also associated with guilt [31] and depression [28] and have been shown to impair cognitive performance [32].” [27].

“I think way too much about food.” This statement is just one of a manifold you might hear from individuals that are e.g. upset about their attributed ‘unhealthy’ relation to food. They, or people from their surrounding might label them as a ‘foodie’ or characterize them in a way that they come to the conclusion that they might experience food in a different, sometimes even erroneous way. Consequently, even more pressing is the need to engage into research of the subjective human experience of food. Suspending the preconceptions that highlight the potential maladaptive nature, and thus delimiting ourselves from prior hypotheses, is vital to our understanding of ‘what it is in fact for us’, following the words of Merleau-Ponty. It is suggested that *how* we experience food, can give a vibrant insight to our cognitive integration of sensations, perceptions, thoughts and feelings, and such.

THE MINDSET: PHENOMENOLOGY AS A ‘STYLE OF THINKING’

Phenomenology, in the most basic sense, is the philosophical study of structures of subjective experiences and consciousness. It is derived from the Greek *phainómenon*, which means ‘that which appears’. Phenomenology therefore tries to elucidate the importance of using methods that accesses people's experience of the world.

Founded in the studies of the philosopher Edmund Husserl, together with substantial contributions from others, such as Sartre, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Schütz, de Beauvoir, Bourdieu, Ricoeur, Derrida and Habermas (to only name a few), it is suggested that “it is futile to attempt to identify one single doctrine in phenomenology; rather, it is better to see it as a movement united by a common core” [33]. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty’s assertion of a responsible philosopher I act in place that “phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy” [3; p.viii]. This ‘style of thinking’ serves the purpose of the study of human experiences in this paper.

But how is this study of human experiences and consciousness practiced? Phenomenology is the overarching study of essences, but our experience is only accessible through a phenomenological method, according to Merleau-Ponty [3; p.viii]. However, before elaborating the specific phenomenological method proposed (see chapter: *The Vehicle*:

Access Experience Through a Phenomenological Method), it is necessary to clarify some concepts fundamental to the study of phenomenology.

PHENOMENOLOGY IS NOT EQUAL TO INTROSPECTION

It is a common misconception that introspection equalizes phenomenology. A long tradition of studies on introspection focuses on the self-examination of one's own conscious thoughts and feelings [34]. However, in the authors' opinion, it is a misleading equalization. One such argument that supports this stance, was made by Gallagher & Zahavi, in their book *The Phenomenological Mind*: "We are aware of what we experience without using introspection precisely because we have an implicit, non-objectifying, pre-reflective awareness of our own experience as we live it through. At the same time that I see the light, I am aware that I see the light. The awareness in question is not based on reflectively or introspectively turning our attention to our own experience. It is, rather, built into our experience as an essential part of it, and it is precisely this which defines our experience as conscious experience" [35; p.15].

They continued arguing in sense of 'my' and 'other' people's consciousness of the world, that often surrounds the question on whether we understand the concepts and use of other peoples words. Introspection, in this sense, is an important approach for phenomenology, but has no exclusive character for an access to our mind.

OUR DEPENDANCE ON 'WORTBEDEUTUNGEN'

Our means of communication, and thus also the phenomenological method of access, is unsurprisingly dependent on 'Wortbedeutungen' (from German: denoting meanings of words) and 'things said' in verbalized language.

"Seeking the essence of consciousness will therefore not consist in developing the *Wortbedeutung* of consciousness and escaping from existence into the universe of things said; it will consist in rediscovering my actual presence to myself, the fact of my consciousness which is in the last resort what the word and the concept of consciousness mean. Looking for the world's essence is not looking for what it is as an idea once it has been reduced to a theme of discourse; it is looking for what it is as a fact for us, before any thematization." [3; p.xvii].

Evidently, linguistic examination and ideas reduced to themes of discourse are inevitable. To give an example, a reported experience of *hunger* might reflect a preconception of a bodily need for food. But after elaborating on this concept of *hunger* and asking 'what it is in fact for us', something very different might reveal itself. It could have been the sole appetite, triggered by the favourite restaurant we just passed by, or seeing a clock, which rendered this moment to be an appropriate time to eat¹. Of course, just because our linguistic descriptions may be preconceptions, does not necessarily mean they are misconceptions [36].

Our intuition of conceptual material may include implicit judgements, of whether something is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, or in the case of food, what's a craving and what's not. However, accessing experience with a phenomenological method means to step back and look at the subjective construction first. We try to suspend the explanation of 'what', and therefore the 'thematized' content for a moment, and ask *how* something was experienced in order to reveal the subjective constructs of the process².

This notion is close to a reduction, which Eugen Fink formulated as 'wonder'. The according *reflection*, in Merleau-Ponty's sense "does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the worlds basis, it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from fire" [3; p.xv]. This way of 'stepping back' tries to bracket out³ biases and to

avoid prior theories that confabulate our reflection of experience, and that tempt us to reflect pre-constructed structures⁴.

DEBATING PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS

It is challenged, that there might be as many kinds of phenomenology as there exists phenomenologists. Looking into the work of a number of phenomenological researchers reveals that they were “extraordinarily diverse in their interests, in their interpretation of the central issues of phenomenology, in their application of what they understood to be the phenomenological method, and in their development of what they took to be the phenomenological programme for the future of philosophy” as posed by Moran [37]. A sceptical tone is thus basal to the historical discourse between interpretations, applications, terminologies and schools.

While restraining from going into details about the long tradition in phenomenology following Husserl, I need to emphasize the importance of his first directive, which advocates to ‘return to the things themselves’ as the essential matter of *describing*, rather than explaining or analysing. Resuming the previous question of whether we understand the concepts and use of other people’s words, the meaning of the ‘things said’, is the point of divergence (cf. chapter *Phenomenology Is Not Equal To Introspection*)⁵. Therefore, this research is constructing against the grain and delimits itself from prior hypothesis. Instead of locating gaps in existent theories, a phenomenological approach to food-related experiences intends to *problematize* the account of food in science. Doing this, includes investigating ‘what it is for us’ when someone gives an account of one’s experience of *hunger, desire, or a food craving*⁶. This *problematization*, as advocated by Freire [38], sets the general methodological proposal of posing questions to challenge assumptions and deconstruct the phenomena.

THE VEHICLE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO ACCESS EXPERIENCE

To avoid any potential misunderstandings and illinterpretations, the aim of this article is neither to give a detailed review of the data analysis, nor the verbal case descriptions and related illustrations of idiographic maps, since this would clearly exceed the scope of this article. Therefore, I will confine to elaborate the framework of the phenomenological method and only provide some empirical examples, drawn from the phenomenological inquiry of the authors’ M.Sc. Thesis⁷ to give a feeling for the phenomenal constructs targeted in the following chapter.

As mentioned before, phenomenology as the study of essences is only accessible through a phenomenological method according to Merleau-Ponty [3; p.viii]. After setting the general methodological proposal of *problematization* [38] we take a closer look at the specific method suggested for investigation of food-related experiences.

The approach advocated corresponds to empirical phenomenology. According to Aspers, this proceeds from the assumption “that scientific explanation must be grounded in the first-order construction of the actors; that is, in their own meanings. These constructions are then related to the second-order constructions of the scientist” [33].

The basic framework for phenomenological inquiry is drawn from Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES) by Russell Hurlburt [39], a method for investigating random samples of inner experience in participants’ natural environments. The usual setting is as follows: “DES subjects carry a random beeper in natural environments; when the beep sounds, they capture their inner experience, jot down notes about it, and report it to an investigator in a subsequent

expositional interview” [39]. A vital modification was implemented by setting an a priori focus on food-related experiences.

Nevertheless, the phenomenological inquiry consists of a procedure⁸, which needs to be delimited beyond the mere method description of DES as follows:

- 1) The co-researcher is introduced into the philosophical perspectives and attitudes behind the approach, especially the concept of studying *how* people experience a phenomenon.
- 2) The co-researcher is trained to collect and give descriptive reports according to DES. The following explicatory interviews of this training sampling serve to clarify uncertainties about the method on concrete examples from the everyday lived experience. (This training is excluded from the later data analysis.)
- 3) The actual data acquisition integrates an a priori focus (that is a variant to the former randomly triggered training sampling). The co-researcher is asked to jot down notes, whenever an onset of a food-related experience is noticed. The sampling period is set to 24 hours prior to the scheduled explicatory interview, in which the samples are discussed for a maximum duration of 90 minutes (due to reasons of concentration and accuracy of reports).
- 4) The collected phenomenal data is then analysed and coded by the investigator.

What is vital to note here, is that the chosen phenomenological method does not construe particular concepts such as *food cravings* or *hunger*, by explicitly asking or eliciting them. The phenomenological inquiry solely investigates concepts related to food that arise from the lived experience of co-researchers. Pre-understandings are to be suspended during this process, in order to allow for the revealing of novel nuances that are distinct for the subjective structure of the phenomenon. Observations show that this is well facilitated by questioning *how* something was experienced, since preconceptions are rarely available and usually constrain to content prejudices.

SELECTION OF CO-RESEARCHERS

The fundamental difference in qualitative phenomenological approaches is that we disregard the aspect of representativeness (common to quantitative approaches), until a general knowledge of a phenomenon is available. Thus the only vital question and condition when selecting participants is whether they have specific experiences for the investigated phenomena. A vague idea of expected aspects of the phenomena and interest in participation is necessary.

DATA ANALYSIS

The explicatory interviews are transcribed and then analysed using open coding in grounded theory, by abstracting codes (i.e. statements) and transforming these units into clusters of categories. This can be done in a textual and visual manner for each co-researcher, in which verbalized statements are structured into visual maps of codes that form a general description of the experience. These structured illustrations serve as *idiographic* maps, depicting food-related concepts significant to a co-researcher’s experience.

IDIOGRAPHIC MAPS

The core driving-force of this phenomenological underpinning lies in the conducted empirical research itself. The results of this process are designed in an idiographic manner (within-person,

as advocated by Allport [40]) and serve as the basis for case discussions, consisting of three parts⁹:

- 1) Content categories: individual themes, concepts and descriptions
- 2) Process categories: modality-specific descriptions (i.e. inner speech, imagery, ...)
- 3) Discussion: of the subjects' construction of food-related experiences by integrating both content and process categories.

The phenomenological inquiry results in a verbalized and visual illustration for each case, which shall reveal novel nuances of the essential structures underlying the co-researchers discussed experience.

THE DATA: EMPIRICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

A food-related experience can occur in numerous distinct ways. It might arise in form of abstract concepts and thoughts, as words present in inner speech [41], as images or memories in mental imagery [42], as bodily feelings, guiding moods or concrete emotions and affect [23]. It can be either externally triggered by perceptual cues, internally triggered due to a feeling or sound signalling hunger or simply a product of our very cognition. The possibilities are abundant and I shall, therefore, provide two more specific examples, taken from the phenomenological inquiry of the author's M.Sc. Thesis.

WHAT IT IS LIKE TO DECIDE WHAT TO BUY IN THE SUPERMARKET

Jake C. reported on the situation when deciding which fruits to buy, with the initial explanation that he decided not to buy oranges. But *how* did this process of pondering and deciding, on whether to buy oranges, was experienced? He reported, "I imagined the whole scene that I am trying to peel off the orange. And then I just gave up. ... It's too much." It happened in mental imagery, as a mix of visual imagery and bodily simulation, accompanied by a feeling he described as a 'cutting off', a 'termination' and 'sudden stop'.

WHAT IT IS LIKE TO DRINK TEA¹⁰

Ima G. reported the emotional shifts when sipping her sweet tea. "I feel the weight, that I'm going down with my feelings and when I have a sip it just goes up again". Her heavy, tired state shifted with every mouthful, from sadness to a satisfaction that her taste buds felt "like jumping from heaven". The overall situation was experienced as a clear blend of feelings and perceptions as her descriptions were very abstract, yet vivid and colourful. "Yea, I felt exactly like that pattern of fabric, as if everything would fit super to the music, a little bit romantic, fragile but at the end deep blue, deep colours".

A significant difference between the two examples is evident. Whereas the first experience shows to be a bodily and cognitive simulation involving imagery, the second one was coined by its emotional feelings and perceptions.

Hurlburt's work *Sampling Inner Experience in Disturbed Affect* included a description of inner experience of bulimia (a feeding and eating disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-5). Though, evidently, in a very specific context, he criticized that aspects of the *process* of thinking and feeling are "in sharp contrast to most modern cognitive theories of psychiatric disorder, which posit content categories as the cause of disorder. For example, Beck held that thoughts whose content is about loss lead to depression (e.g. [43]); and Ellis proposed that thoughts whose content includes 'and that would be awful' lead to emotional upset [44]" [45]. In this sense, he disagreed with the sole reduction of disorders of affect to the reported *content* of diagnosed patients. And rather

emphasized the importance of the overall integration, signified by the *process*, as engaged in, in the descriptions above.

THE DISCUSSION: FLAVOURS OF THOUGHT

This research on food-related experiences explores a phenomenological method, drawn from my training in the field of cognitive science, as well as theory from humanities and social sciences, for practicing interdisciplinary food studies. As introduced, it is sought to adjoin the *process* of experience, to promote a novel way to access experiences and to reveal novel nuances essential for our understanding of the subjective experience of food-related thought.

In line with the metaphor of ‘flavours of thought’, used in the title of this article, I adopt the common equalization of taste and flavour. This is a common misconception, since the sensation of taste is just one vital component to the integrated experience of flavour in the brain. The incorporation of various segregated information from the taste receptors, olfactory receptors, thermal nociceptors, photoreceptors and hair cells in the ear, is thus combined into one single perceived stimuli we call *flavour* [46]. One might assert at this point, that the *content* of experience denotes only the *taste* of a cognitive system. Consequently, it takes much more than just to look at the *content* reports of *what* happened, to make sense of the *flavour* of experience.

As Hurlburt points at the shortcoming of the sole reduction to the reported content (in disorders of affect, cf. previous chapter *The Data: Empirical Phenomenological Inquiry*), I similarly advance the need for a holistic engagement with the *gestalt* of human experience, by adjoining the *process* as a vital part.

Drawing from the example of lived experience of drinking tea (see chapter *The Data: Empirical Phenomenological Inquiry*), Ima G. reported on an everyday task, to her ‘it was nothing special’. Nevertheless, her reports revealed an emotional indecisiveness that showed to be significant for her overall experience of food-related thought. Her described excitement with every mouthful of tea was marked by subsequent switch in mood, where she would feel as if falling into a ‘bucket of sadness’ after swallowing. Here again, we can identify the *content* as isolated *taste* of experience that only builds up to a comprehensive *flavour* when integrating the lived experience of sensations, perceptions, thoughts and feelings.

I’m confident that this level and qualia¹¹ of descriptions would have remained hidden, without our engagement into this phenomenological inquiry. Our ways of accessing experience are crucial to our understanding of the subjective construction of food-related experiences. Consequently, in my opinion, a phenomenological approach poses the most promising way to obtain subtle but highly significant nuances. By and large, we have to realize that first-person reports are not plain add-ons to research (or i.e. empirical studies), but moreover, they are at the very core of our findings.

FUTURE OUTLOOK: THE PIE IN THE SKY

My, and the aim of this article, was to provide the wider audience with a first glimpse on the immense potential of a phenomenology of food-related experiences, which reveals characteristics of inner experience that would supposable remain hidden with the current methodologies adopted in the field of food studies.

Nevertheless, intentions to draw clear conclusions from the empirical phenomenal data require further extensive research. The anecdotes of content and process categories outlined, gave only a very small fraction of the empirical data acquired for the M.Sc. Thesis of the author. However, it illustrates insights critical to our understanding of *how* people experience and conceptualize food.

Let us thus finish with some interesting observations and questions that arise from this research. From the aforementioned examples it seems quite likely that individual experiences have a certain significance of modality involved, i.e. in our case, a food-related experience predominantly consisted of emotional hues, bodily perceptions or mental imagery. Now let us assume that each subject shows profound characteristics that identifies a set of modalities, certain patterns and combinations of content and process categories. This particular construction, which we denoted as idiographic approach, gives a within-person map of the subjective construction of lived food-related experience. Subsequently, we thus investigate *flavours* of their personal experiences and acquire insights into the sensations, perceptions, thoughts and feelings of specific subjects.

This idiographic mapping is a strong and legitimate aim on its own right, and may or may not offer general insights. Nevertheless, at some point we might acquire a sufficient phenomenal data set, which allows us to consider new perspectives, such as concerning ourselves with common themes, specific to particular phenomena. To name a potential example, this could be the attempt to identify a more general description that defines the nature of *hunger*, from a data-driven point of view.

This movement between experience, reflection and abstraction poses a very intriguing idea of being able to identify significances that are decisive to certain types of experience. Having said that, there is the need for further engagement in both collecting experiential data and finding novel approaches to analyze the data, when aspiring such a nomothetic understanding of food-related experiences. Vital to point out here is the strong explorative character of this research. Facing the need and great potential of interdisciplinary work, I see promising collaborations with researchers coming from anthropology, etiology, ecology, gestaltism or aesthetics, to only name a very few, and I remain with the uttermost hope for much more research to come.

Lastly, to facilitate an anchor for redrawing the connections between the discussed propositions and chapters, a schematic overview of this article's composition is illustrated in Figure 1. It shows the main components of argument with their corresponding chapter headings as discussed.

REMARKS

¹These examples have been taken from the author's phenomenological inquiry that was undertaken for her M.Sc. Thesis *Delicate Thoughts: A Phenomenology of Food Cravings*.

²From the theoretical and historical development in phenomenology, the chosen differentiation between process and content might be counterintuitive from a position following Husserl. According to his work in *Ideas*, the content of consciousness is equivalent to the act of consciousness. Our reflection on an act of consciousness renders this act to become an intentional object. Consequently our experience of content is only accessible through the act of content (and I posit this equivalent to process). In this sense I do not foster to differentiate those two aspects as concrete entities, i.e. where the process might precede the content, but rather identify the potential of changing the consciousness of access in the process of phenomenological inquiry. By asking 'how', I offer an extraordinary way to our common access to conscious content of experience.

³The concept was developed by Edmund Husserl, though a list of renowned scientists have elaborated further on bracketing out the world and presuppositions to identify experience in its pure and uncontaminated form. See [47, 48] for phenomenological reduction or [49] for steps of bracketing out.

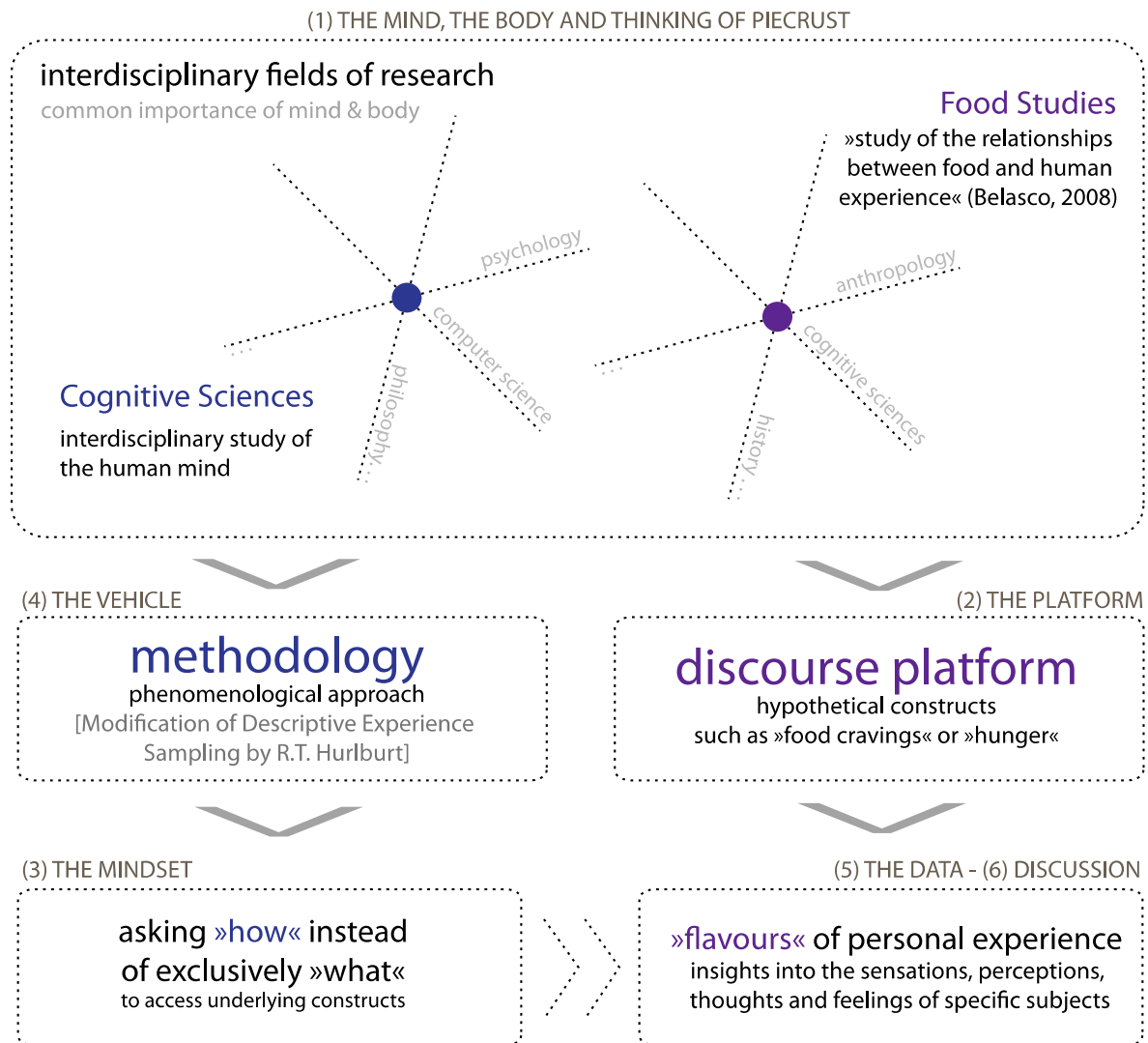


Figure 1. Illustration of this article’s composition.

⁴The intention to ‘bracket out’ the prejudgement and experiences of the investigator will inevitably trace us back to the impossibility to detach personal interpretation. The awareness of the investigators experience being infused into the explicatory interviews as well as the analysis of the data, even if actively limited to a certain degree, is therefore a vital precondition.

⁵The indeterminacy of linguistic reference opens a very own discourse. An inclusion of this would exceed the scope of this article. For reference see literature on the Philosophy of Language, such as [50, 51].

⁶Vital to this note is that the phenomenological method chosen does not construe particular concepts such as *food cravings* or *hunger*, by explicitly asking or eliciting them. The phenomenological inquiry only investigates concepts that arise out of the lived experience of co-researchers.

⁷The empirical examples are drawn from the phenomenological inquiry of the author’s M.Sc. Thesis, while for further reviews consult [52, 53].

⁸For similar research designs consult an overview of traditions proposed in [48].

⁹The wording of *content* and *process* was chosen for this research. Differing notations, such as ‘textural description’ for content and ‘structural description’ for process are used by Creswell [48] (see 2nd remark for a similar argument).

¹⁰The inclusion of drinking tea as food-related experience might be counterintuitive to the wider audience. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that we investigate samples and concepts as they are lived by the co-researcher. This particular awareness might seem more reasonable, if one accounts for the high appreciation and rooting of tea in Eastern cultures, although it does not coincide with the Slovenian origin of this co-researchers example.

¹¹The term ‘qualia’ is here used as phenomenal character, and thus in its broadest sense of describing a quality or property as it is perceived or experienced by a person. Therefore, I delimit the use of ‘qualia’ in this article from more restricted uses of the term.

REFERENCES

- [1] Belasco, W.: *Food: The key concepts*.
Berg Publishers, p.2, 2008,
- [2] Miller, J. and Deutsch, J.: *Food studies: an introduction to research methods*.
Berg Publishers, p.6, 2010,
- [3] Merleau-Ponty, M.: *Phenomenology of perception*.
London, Routledge, 2002,
- [4] Tang, D.W.; Fellows, L.K.; Small, D.M. and Dagher, A.: *Food and drug cues activate similar brain regions: A meta-analysis of functional MRI studies*.
Physiology & Behavior **106**(3), 317-324, 2012,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2012.03.009>,
- [5] White, M.A. et al.: *Development and Validation of the Food-Craving Inventory*.
Obesity Research **10**(2), 107-114, 2002,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/oby.2002.17>,
- [6] Hill, A.J.: *The psychology of food craving*.
Proceedings of the Nutrition Society **66**(2), 277-285, 2007,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0029665107005502>,
- [7] Shiffman, S.: *Comments on craving*.
Addiction **95**(8s2), 171-175, 2000,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.1360-0443.95.8s2.6.x>,
- [8] Guthman, J.: *Opening Up the Black Box of the Body in Geographical Obesity Research: Toward a Critical Political Ecology of Fat*.
Annals of the Association of American Geographers **102**(5), 951-957, 2012,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2012.659635>,
- [9] Meule, A.; Lutz, A.; Vögele, C. and Kübler, A.: *Food cravings discriminate differentially between successful and unsuccessful dieters and non-dieters. Validation of the Food Cravings Questionnaires in German*.
Appetite **58**(1), 88-97, 2012,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2011.09.010>,
- [10] Proust, M.: *Remembrance of Things Past*.
Translated by Scott Moncrieff, C.K. and Kilmartin, T. *Swann’s Way: Within a Budding Grove*.
The definitive French Pleiade edition. Vol. 1. Vintage. New York, pp.48-51, 1913-1927,
- [11] Dudai, Y. and Fitzpatrick, S.M., eds.: *Science of memory: Concepts*.
Oxford University Press, New York, p.11, 2007,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195310443.003.0002>,
- [12] Moscovitch, M.: *Memory: why the engram is elusive*.
In Roediger, H.L.; Dudai, Y. and Fristzpatrick, S.M., eds.: *Science of memory: concepts*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp.17-21, 2007,
- [13] Janesick, A. and Blumberg, B.: *Obesogens, stem cells and the developmental programming of obesity*.
International Journal of Andrology **35**(3), 437-448, 2012,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2605.2012.01247.x>,

- [14] Kuczmarski, R.J.; Flegal, K.M.; Campbell, S.M. and Johnson, C.L.: *Increasing prevalence of overweight among U.S. adults: The national health and nutrition examination surveys, 1960 to 1991*.
The Journal of the American Medical Association **272**(3), 205-211, 1994,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/jama.1994.03520030047027>,
- [15] Flegal, K.M.; Carroll, M.D.; Ogden, C.L. and Curtin, L.R.: *Prevalence and trends in obesity among U.S. adults, 1999–2008*.
The Journal of the American Medical Association **303**(3), 235-241, 2010,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/jama.2009.2014>,
- [16] Wardle, J.; Parmenter, K. and Waller, J.: *Nutrition knowledge and food intake*.
Appetite **34**(3), 269-275, 2000,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/appe.1999.0311>,
- [17] Ziegler, A.D. et al.: *Fighting liverflukes with food safety education*.
Science **331**(6015), 282-283, 2011,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.331.6015.282-b>,
- [18] Nestle, M. and Jacobson, M.F.: *Halting the obesity epidemic: a public health policy approach*.
Public Health Reports **115**(1), 12-24, 2000,
- [19] Morland, K.B. and Evenson, K.R.: *Obesity prevalence and the local food environment*.
Health and Place **15**(2), 491-495, 2009,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2008.09.004>,
- [20] Newbold, R.R.; Padilla-Banks, E.; Jefferson, W.N. and Heindel, J.J.: *Effects of endocrine disruptors on obesity*.
International Journal of Andrology **31**(2), 201-208, 2008,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2605.2007.00858.x>,
- [21] Wang, Y. and Beydoun, M.A.: *The obesity epidemic in the United States – Gender, age, socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic characteristics: A systematic review and meta-regression analysis*.
Epidemiological Review **29**(1), 6-28, 2007,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxm007>,
- [22] White, M.: *Food access and obesity*.
Obesity Reviews **8**(s1), 99-107, 2007,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-789X.2007.00327.x>,
- [23] Waters, A.; Hill, A. and Waller, G.: *Bulimics' responses to food cravings: Is binge-eating a product of hunger or emotional state?*
Behavior Research and Therapy **39**(8), 877-886, 2001,
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967\(00\)00059-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(00)00059-0),
- [24] Gendall, K.A.; Joyce, P.R. and Sullivan, P.F.: *Impact of definition on prevalence of food cravings in a random sample of young women*.
Appetite **28**(1), 63-72, 1997,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/appe.1996.0060>,
- [25] Hill, A.J. and Heaton-Brown, L.: *The experience of food craving: A prospective investigation in healthy women*.
Journal of Psychosomatic Research **38**(8), 801-814, 1994,
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999\(94\)90068-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999(94)90068-X),
- [26] Lafay, L. et al.: *Gender differences in the relation between food cravings and mood in an adult community: Results from the Fleurbaix Laventie Ville Sante Study*.
International Journal of Eating Disorders **29**(2), 195-204, 2001,
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1098-108X\(200103\)29:2<195::AID-EAT1009>3.0.CO;2-N](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1098-108X(200103)29:2<195::AID-EAT1009>3.0.CO;2-N),

- [27] Tiggemann, M. and Kemps, E.: *The phenomenology of food cravings: the role of mental imagery*.
Appetite **45**(3), 305-313, 2005,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2005.06.004>,
- [28] Gendall, K.A.; Joyce, P.R.; Sullivan, P.F. and Bulik, C.M.: *Food cravers: Characteristics of those who binge*.
International Journal of Eating Disorders **23**(4), 353-360, 1998,
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-108X\(199805\)23:4<353::AID-EAT2>3.0.CO;2-H](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-108X(199805)23:4<353::AID-EAT2>3.0.CO;2-H),
- [29] McManus, F. and Waller, G.: *A functional analysis of binge-eating*.
Clinical Psychology Review **15**(8), 845-863, 1995,
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0272-7358\(95\)00042-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0272-7358(95)00042-9),
- [30] Wurtman, R.J. and Wurtman, J.J.: *Brain serotonin, carbohydrate- craving, obesity and depression*.
Obesity Research **3**(4S), 477S-480S, 1995,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.1550-8528.1995.tb00215.x>,
- [31] Macdiarmid, J.I. and Hetherington, M.M.: *Mood modulation by food: An exploration of affect and cravings in 'chocolate addicts'*.
British Journal of Clinical Psychology **34**(1), 129-138, 1995,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8260.1995.tb01445.x>,
- [32] Green, M.: *Dietary restraint and craving*.
In Hetherington, M.M., ed.: Food cravings and addiction. Leatherhead, London, pp.521-548, 2001,
- [33] Aspers, P.: *Empirical phenomenology: a qualitative research approach*.
Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology **9**(2), p.1, 2009,
- [34] Schultz, D.P. and Schultz, S.E.: *A history of modern psychology*. 10th edition.
Wadsworth & Cengage Learning, Belmont, pp.67-77 and pp.88-100, 2012,
- [35] Gallagher, S. and Zahavi, D.: *The phenomenological mind: An introduction to philosophy of mind and cognitive science*.
Routledge, London, p.15, 2008,
- [36] Clement, J.; Brown, D.E. and Zietsman, A.: *Not all preconceptions are misconceptions: finding 'anchoring conceptions' for grounding instruction on students' intuitions*.
International Journal of Science Education **11**(5), 554-565, 1989,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950069890110507>,
- [37] Moran, D.: *Introduction to phenomenology*.
Routledge, London, 2000,
- [38] Freire, P.: *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*.
Translated by Barr, R.R.. Continuum, New York, 1994,
- [39] Hurlburt, R.T. and Akhter, S.A.: *The descriptive experience sampling method*.
Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences **5**(3-4), 271-301, 2006,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11097-006-9024-0>,
- [40] Allport, G.W.: *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*.
Henry Holt, New York, 1937,
- [41] McCarthy-Jones, S. and Fernyhough, C.: *The varieties of inner speech: Links between quality of inner speech and psychopathological variables in a sample of young adults*.
Consciousness & Cognition **20**(4), 1586-1593, 2011,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2011.08.005>,
- [42] Thompson, E.: *Look again: Phenomenology and mental imagery*.
Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences **6**(1-2), 137-170, 2007,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11097-006-9031-1>,
- [43] Rush, A.J. and Beck, A.T.: *Adults with affective disorders*.
In Hersen, M. and Bellack, A.S., eds.: Behaviour therapy in psychiatric settings. William & Wilkins, Baltimore, pp.286-330, 1978,

- [44] Ellis, A.: *Reason and emotion in psychotherapy*.
Lyle Stuart, New York, 1962,
- [45] Hurlburt, R.T.: *Sampling inner experience in disturbed affect*.
Springer, 1993,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1222-0>,
- [46] Shepherd, G.M.: *Neurogastronomy: How the brain creates flavor and why it matters*.
Columbia University Press, 2012,
- [47] Patton, M.Q.: *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd edition.
Sage, Newbury Park, 1990,
- [48] Creswell, J.W.: *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*.
Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1998,
- [49] Denzin, N.: *Interpretive Interactionism*.
Sage, Newbury Park, 1989,
- [50] Quine, W.V.: *Reference and modality*.
Quine, W.O., ed.: From a Logical Point of View. Harvard University Press, 1953,
- [51] Frege, G.: *On sense and reference*.
Ludlow, pp.563-584, 1997,
- [52] Tan, F.: *Delicate Thoughts. A Phenomenology of Food Cravings*.
Proceedings of the MEi:CogSci Conference 2013, Comenius University in Bratislava, 2013,
- [53] Tan, F.: *Delicate Food-Waves: A Phenomenological Approach To Food-Related Experiences*.
Proceedings of the 16th International Multiconference Information Society, Ljubljana, 2013.

OKUSI MISLI: PREMA FENOMENOLOGIJI ISKUSTAVA VEZANIH UZ HRANU

F. H.-E. Tan

Sveučilište u Beču
Beč, Austrija

SAŽETAK

Fenomenologija, kao proučavanje struktura subjektivnih iskustava i svjesnosti, stalno nastoji zauzeti mjesto koje joj pripada u suvremenim istraživanjima. Slijedom navedenoga, ovaj rad prvo ističe značaj izvješća u prvom licu za interdisciplinarna istraživanja mozga i uma. To je ostvareno pristupom multidisciplinarnom području istraživanja hrane kao novoj platformi za diskusiju. Fenomenološko propitivanje predloženo je kao metoda dohvata iskustava vezanih za hranu. Isticanjem značajnog viška, esencijalnog za obuhvaćanje procesa istinskog unutarnjeg iskustva, pridodajemo novu perspektivu zajedničkom fokusiranju na sadržaj iskustva. To će proširiti postojeće uvide vezane uz istraživanja hrane te, dodatno, pružiti vitalne posljedice našoj općenitoj konstrukciji koncepta u znanosti.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

fenomenološko propitivanje, proučavanje hrane, iskustvo, idiografski