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The two faces of appetite: Relevance and the question of food as art[1]

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Abstract Can there be "languages of food" in Nelson Goodman's sense of "languages of art"? Food appears like a borderline case because of its strong dependence on context and on the individuals involved. We seem to have difficulty either comparing food with language or seeing it as art. This is at odds with the fact that food has been recognized as an art form for decades by art institutions. The paper approaches this problem on a level often neglected in the discussion: pragmatics, the application of language in context. Cognitive scientists Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber have shown that the use of language is ultimately based not on rules, but on relevance. Relevance in turn depends on contexts and individuals. Such dependence, therefore, does not make food a borderline case. Rather, it is something that food and language have in common. But can we use a concept of relevance to analyze food? Following the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, relevance has two sides, termed here "typicality" and "spontaneity". Both sides of relevance are found to shape our experience of food in striking ways. Food is a particularly clear example of a more general, relevance-driven context dependence of both language and the arts.

Keywords: food aesthetics, pragmatics, relevance theory, Nelson Goodman, Alfred Schutz

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0. Introduction

Food has been presented as a medium of fine art throughout most of the 20th century. Still, philosophers continue to discuss whether to accept food as art. One of the reasons, I will argue, is that food presents a problem for a particular ideal of language. Can there be "languages of food" in the same sense in which Nelson Goodman (1968) spoke of "languages of art"? Can we compare food and language at all? It depends on what we think of when talking about language. I will suggest looking at a level of language which is still neglected in much of the discussion. The

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focus will be on *pragmatics*, that is, on the application of language by individuals in concrete situations. This level is distinct from that of grammatical or semantic structures which remain (ideally) invariant across different individuals and situations. In this dimension, food does not appear to be fundamentally different from the literary, visual or musical arts, and indeed from our everyday use of language. The experience of food – both of artistic food and of an everyday meal – depends on individuals and the fleeting "here and now". But the same is true in principle of the arts and of everyday language. Food is not so much a borderline case as a particularly striking example of context dependence. This will be shown using the notion of "relevance", which has been proposed in cognitive science (WILSON, SPERBER 2012). In the present paper, a broader, phenomenologically inspired concept of relevance will be used which builds on the theory of relevance developed by the philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schutz. Relevance in this sense, similarly to what Goodman called "rightness" in later work, has two sides: "typicality" and "spontaneity".

The argument will be pursued at this general level without asking more specifically how or what we "communicate" through food on a given occasion. On this level, it is hoped, the case of food can contribute to a wider and more thorough understanding of "languages of art" in general.

1. "Languages of food" and the ideal of structure

The institutional artworld has long accepted food as art. The Italian Futurists' banquets and restaurant dating back to the 1920s started a lively history of art gastronomy which was celebrated in a major retrospective at *Kunsthalle Düsseldorf* in 2010. While *Eat Art* pioneer Daniel Spoerri had concocted extravagant meals in the 1970s, Rirkrit Tiravanija served more traditional thai curries in galleries in the early 1990s. Both Spoerri's and Tiravanija's cooking earned them professorships in fine arts academies, and their colleague Peter Kubelka was appointed a professor for "film and cooking as an art form" at the prestigious *Städelschule* in Frankfurt in 1978[2].

However, both common opinion and philosophical reflection has been reluctant to accept, and often even to notice, this development. When Ferran Adrià was announced to participate in the 2007 *documenta*, there was public outrage at the idea, seemingly unheard of, that cooking should be considered an art. Philosophers have excluded food from art since antiquity[3]. Cooking, it is argued, cannot be an art form, at least not a "fine" or "major" art[4]. Where does this reluctance come from?

The reasons given for the exclusion of food from art recur through history[5]. We can look at the same painting again and again, but we cannot eat the same meal more than once. And whereas we can listen to the same concert together with others, two people cannot have the exact same bite. In other words, the experience of food cannot be identically shared, and it cannot even be repeated. The experience is bound

[2] See DIACONU (2005: 397ff.); LEMKE (2007: ch. 1); NOVERO 2010.

[3] Cf. KORSMEYER (2002: 38ff.); BRADY 2012.

[4] TELFER 2002; KORSMEYER (2002: 144). Anthropologist Mary Douglas (1982: 106ff.) classes "food" among the "applied arts" (however, she later writes catalogue notes for a 1977 food art exhibition: 113ff.).

[5] See KORSMEYER (2002: chs. 1-2); DIACONU (2005: 33ff.); BRADY 2012.

up with the bodily individual and his or her situation at a certain point in time, and it cannot fully be detached by extracting general rules which would allow us to stabilize or communicate the experience in an objective way. The food itself changes its qualities in a matter of minutes and spoils more or less quickly. The only way to preserve food for a long time is by withdrawing it from consumption and even from light and air, and the only way to enjoy it is by destroying it forever. This fleeting, individualized and bodily character of food runs counter to ideas which have been central in many aesthetic theories, such as the agreement of experts, the role of standards and criteria, the "test of time", cultivation and idealism, or distanced and reflective experience[6].

For the purposes of this paper, central strands of this ideal can be referred to a notion of language as a rule-governed activity. According to this notion, the rules of a language (such as the rules of semantics and grammar) allow us to articulate our experience in a way which is independent of individuals and of points in time. Once we can express an experience in a language we share with others, we can also share this experience, or at least we can paraphrase, imply or dispute it, with the help of language. The words we use can be recorded and understood by others who know the rules even a long time after. In this sense, it seems, language can objectify meaning beyond and above a plurality of embodied individuals and their constantly changing views and desires, allowing not only communication among the individuals but also a way for each one of them to distance themselves from the confines of their own unique situation and body.

The "hierarchy of the senses" critically described in a groundbreaking book by Carolyn Korsmeyer (2002: 11ff.) can also be related (at least partly) to this ideal. The two "distance senses" of sight and hearing, which have been at the top of this hierarchy since Aristotle[7], are natural allies to the objectifying and distancing functions of language; they allow us to share the spoken and written word. In contrast, taste and smell, so crucial to the experience of food, seem unable to encode disembodied rules of meaning or grammar. The "hierarchy" makes itself felt even within the aesthetics of food, where by "aesthetic" we often mean the *visual* aspects of food (e.g. in garnishes and arrangements or in food photography), but even more so in art, where the sharing, preservation and articulation of experience takes center stage and crystallizes in a system of art institutions.

Furthermore, for an artwork or artistic event, an internally organized structure is often preferred or seen as a prerequisite to art status. This is another traditional reason why food is rejected; there are no "taste-symphonies", as Monroe Beardsley put it. Again this could be referred to the ideal of rules which constitute elements and relations between them in a way analogous to how rules of language create words, sentences and meanings.

But is it impossible to assume a "language of food"? The analogy to language understood as an activity structured by systems of rules was explored in structuralist approaches widely applied in the 1960s and 1970s. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1967) aimed to carve out universal structures of signification in food and hypothesized "gustemes" as constituent elements of a cuisine. Roland Barthes (2013) saw food as

[6] Cf. SAITO (2007: 18ff.).

[7] At the same time, Aristotle provided the idea of a "common sense" (*koinē aisthēsis*) underlying all the others, which has been tapped upon to undermine the hierarchy, e.g. in the notion of a "*sensorium commune*" in Herder and then Merleau-Ponty (SUGIYAMA 2009).

a "system of communication" and envisioned a "grammar of foods". Mary Douglas (1972) proposed to analyze food cultures in terms of rules modelled on linguistic syntax. Their work sparked a semiotics of food which continues to evolve (STANO 2015). But what about food as art? When Nelson Goodman systematically applied structuralist thought to art and aesthetics in his *Languages of Art* (GOODMAN 1968), he did not mention this possibility. But Carolyn Korsmeyer demonstrated that food can be analyzed to a large extent with the help of the categories Goodman had employed to characterize art and "the aesthetic". In principle, she argues, food can exhibit symbolic relations (such as denotation or exemplification) to no lesser extent than more traditional objects of aesthetic appreciation (KORSMEYER 2002: 115ff.).
Nevertheless, Korsmeyer sees a limit. She notes that the symbolic structures and meanings which she observes are not intrinsic to the food itself; their application depends heavily on the social and cultural context around the ingredients, the preparation and consumption of the food in question (*Ivi*: 141ff.). This contextual dependence, she argues, is part of a lasting difference between "fine art" and "culinary art" (*Ivi*: 144ff.). On this view, food, while it can be highly "aesthetic", belongs more naturally to everyday life than to art[8]. Is a "language of food" fundamentally different from "languages of art" after all?
The question requires us to ask how languages are applied in context. But Goodman's *Languages of Art* is silent on this question. Goodman does not ask how the various systems of symbols he describes are actually applied to art, or on which occasion we choose one system of symbols rather than another. Later work (GOODMAN 1978) makes it clear that his silence does not reflect an inadvertent omission but a method. Goodman focuses on symbolic systems which can be described in structural terms, but not because the matter of their application is obvious but because it is so complex. What Goodman explicitly *denies* is the idea that the symbolic "languages" or the meanings they express are *intrinsic* to their carriers. An object is structured in the way a symbolic rule prescribes only if and when this rule is applied to the object. And the latter question depends on the circumstances. In the case of art, therefore, «the real question is not 'What objects are (permanently) works of art?' but 'When is an object a work of art?'» (*Ivi*: 66ff.).
We find a similar stance in structuralist treatments of food. For instance, Mary Douglas points out the difference between the abstract symbolic systems she describes and the actual selection and application of symbols which a given family performs in their meal in a concrete setting and for their own purposes. «At this point, the analysis stops» (DOUGLAS 1972: 69ff.).
In other words, a structural or rule-based analysis (DOUGLAS 1982, GOODMAN 1988) targets a different level than the question of how the structures described actually apply. If we wish to ask to what extent models looking to language as a system of rules apply to food in a way which is different from traditional aesthetics or art, and in particular whether the role of context marks an essential difference (as Korsmeyer could be taken to indicate), we should look for principles according to which linguistic rules are applied in concrete situations. This is the level addressed, in the study of language, by the subdiscipline of pragmatics.

[8] This is also argued in SAITO (2007: 15).

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2. Relevance and its two sides

The idea is temptingly simple that a strict application of shared rules provides a stable basis for sharing experience. A given word or sentence would mean the same for anybody who knows the language, and it would mean the same whatever the context. However, the idea would be too simple.

Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber have shown in detail that meaning expressed through language cannot be reduced to rules (SPERBER, WILSON: 1986-1995, WILSON, SPERBER 2012). What a sentence means even at the most basic level (that is, at the level of the propositional meaning core expressed) depends on the way in which this sentence is *relevant* to the individuals involved in the situation of use. People do not communicate by simply coding and decoding messages according to the rules of their language. Instead, they freely add content to what the bare rules would suggest, and they often deviate from the rules, using words and phrases with different and frequently new meanings. These additions and deviations, which cannot be predicted by the rules and not even by an apparatus of meta-rules, are most visible, for instance, in metaphor or irony. But they also underlie what has been called an "ad hoc" character of the concepts we use in concrete situations: we form ad hoc concepts by widening or narrowing (or both) in specific directions the typical meaning as found in a dictionary (WILSON, CARSTON: 2007). The relevant interpretation of a sentence may or may not conform with the rules of the language in question. Therefore, the ultimate principle of linguistic communication is not rule-following, but *relevance*. Even in cases where the relevant interpretation is reached by simply following the rules and nothing more, the rules by themselves do not tell us so. Hence, when we succeed in understanding each other, it is because we share certain principles of relevance, not just rules.

For the purposes of this paper, I would like to bracket the important question of how we communicate on the basis of relevance. This question is at the heart of Wilson's and Sperber's theory, and I defer to their seminal work here. What I would like to stress instead is, first of all, the fact that relevance is always relevance to an individual in a particular situation. Even in the case of everyday language, the core meaning of a sentence is not simply a function of uniformly shared and decontextualized rules, but it depends more fundamentally on relevance. And what is relevant to one person may be irrelevant to another, and what is relevant to me now may not be so later and may not have been relevant to me before. In principle then, individual and situational variability, as it was stressed above for the experience of food, also characterizes our linguistic communication. And if we take language as a model for "languages of art", this variability does not exclude food from art or aesthetic experience as traditionally described, but it is common to them. Meaning in food depends on context and on the people involved, but so does meaning in language.

If this is correct, then relevance should be fundamental in food as it is in language. But so far I have only claimed that relevance is different from pure rule-following. What is relevance? And is it not odd to talk about relevance in connection to food, precisely because the act and experience of eating is so closely related to the body? The very word "relevance" seems to connote language and thought rather than bodily sensations and visceral processes. Indeed, Wilson and Sperber restrict relevance to a cognitive-science framework. Maybe then relevance is something extrinsic to food

after all? In order to talk about relevance in food, we need to turn to a wider concept of relevance developed more than half a century earlier by Alfred Schutz[9].

Schutz developed a phenomenology of mind and body one core concept of which is relevance. A crucial assumption of Schutz's is that our experience and action is always "selective". Only some aspects and movements are relevant to me here and now while many others are not, and only the first constitute the concrete phenomena which make up my present situation. My conscious attention or judgments are only special cases of this selectivity. Other examples are the particular way I walk or my emotions on a certain occasion. A notable point here is that Schutz's analysis refers to a selectivity which includes the fullness of bodily experience and what he calls the "somatic feeling of life". In fact, this selectivity is more fundamental than any difference between mind and body. The very experience of something I call my conscious "I" which is different from something I call "my body" is itself already an example of this basic selectivity (SCHUTZ 2013)[10]. A selectivity so broadly understood will also shape the experience of eating (although Schutz himself does not refer to it). A particular taste or texture, whether or not I can verbally describe or categorize it, is selective, as is the way I chew and swallow. I would like to outline the concept of relevance before taking a closer look at its application to the experience of food.

The core problem of relevance concerns the dynamics of the selectivity just mentioned (SCHUTZ 2011, SCHUTZ 1966). Why are *these* aspects and movements selected rather than others? How is a person's present situation connected to their past and future? This connection is not simply a matter of following rules. First of all, relevance involves typical patterns of thought and experience and routines of action. In this sense, what is relevant to us is what fits our habits and conforms with the beliefs, expectations and goals we already have. Typical patterns are unlike fixed rules. Even our most entrenched typical procedures do not follow the ideal of guaranteed, systematic and identical laws, but they have the character of what Schutz (1964: 73) calls "cook-book knowledge"; they provide "recipes" that have worked for us so far but which we are ready to modify or give up once they should fail. But even in the absence of such failure, what is relevant to us can be precisely that which is novel, surprising or even dangerous, that which runs counter to what we want, expect or believe. Relevance has *two* faces then, is it based on two different dynamics. I would like to refer to the first dynamics as "typicality" and to the second as "spontaneity"[11]. Tried and tested routines make my world safe and familiar, so I selectively attend to those aspects of the world which fit them – to what is *typically* relevant. But in order to work, my routines must be applied to ever new situations and tested against new obstacles. It makes sense then that relevance also involves *spontaneity*, that is, an active and often creative openness to variation which makes itself felt most acutely when we become bored with a routine.

It is obvious that these two dynamics that make up relevance are opposed to one another: On the one hand, I tend to select aspects which are the same or typically

[9] The argument that Sperber's and Wilson's concept of relevance must be broadened with the help of Schutz has been made even *within* linguistic meaning (see STRASSHEIM 2010: 1431ff.).

[10] Schutz's German term for this selectivity is *Sinn*, which is usually, though misleadingly, translated as "meaning". *Sinn* includes forms of sensuality and intentional directedness far beyond the range of "meaning".

[11] On this concept of "spontaneity", inspired by Schutz's use of a Leibnizian term see STRASSHEIM 2016.

similar to those I have selected before; on the other hand, I tend to select aspects that *differ* from those I have encountered previously. Schutz tried to dissolve this tension, as especially his late manuscripts show, but his early death prevented him from finding a solution. I would like to suggest that the tension between these two dynamics cannot and should not be dissolved because it is inherent to the nature of relevance. Relevance has two sides which are intertwined in any concrete case but which should be analytically distinguished.

Especially the second side of relevance (spontaneity) is often overlooked. Its mostly discreet working in everyday experience and interaction attracts much less attention than its more celebrated manifestations in the arts. For example, the fact that in everyday speech we use more or less creative metaphorical expressions all the time goes largely unnoticed because we think of metaphors as the matter of poetry. But given the role of relevance in language, if we want to understand how even the most prosaic everyday chat works, we should assume that the interlocutors take an active interest in the novel as opposed to mere rule-following.

It is not difficult to see how a two-sided concept of relevance is essential to art. Boris Groys (2004) has shown that two opposed standards of valuation are at work in every successful work of art: conformity with certain traditions on the one hand and novelty and irritation on the other. Nelson Goodman too, it seems, would have supported a relevance theory. In later work, Goodman (1978: 128ff.) and Goodman, Elgin (1988: 158ff.) address the question of application in context, which Goodman had left out in *Languages of Art*. Application, they propose, follows a two-sided standard which is remarkably similar to the concept of relevance sketched above. Where we select certain symbols and systems of symbols rather than others, they say, we aim at "rightness", which in turn follows two different dynamics at the same time: "entrenchment" and "novelty"; or "inertia" and "initiative". A "right" selection is one which, in a given situation, "fits" with past symbolic practice, while at the same time it "works" in the sense of extending, revising, and changing this practice[12]. But can we find the two sides in our experience of food as well?

3. Relevance and the experience of food in art and everyday life

Relevance guides the way in which the "selectivity" (SCHUTZ 2011) of our experience develops over time. If we want to apply the concept of relevance to the experience of food, we should start with this idea of selectivity.

Our attitude towards food is clearly selective. This often takes the strong sense of *preference*: We eat and drink only certain things and not others; we like certain tastes while disliking or even hating others. Moreover, our experience of food is selective in the sense that certain aspects of the total situation are part of it while others play a marginal role at most. In Japanese cuisine, the shapes and designs of the varied dishes, usually suited to the season of the year, are part and parcel of the food experience, while in *nouvelle cuisine* the dishes recede into the background and are often designed in a simple and uniform way for that purpose. And needless to say, what we call taste is highly selective in that we distinguish, reconstruct and interpret, out of a fullness of input from our five senses, our memory and expectations, only certain aspects which we weave into a complex experience without even noticing

[12] GOODMAN, ELGIN (1988: 156) use the word "relevance" in the narrower (unspecified) sense of an aspect of "rightness".

that we perform such a daunting task[13]. In sum, our experience is constituted by a pickiness, an often desirous directedness towards only certain aspects which in the case of food may perhaps aptly be called "appetite". What about relevance?

If we consider the first side of relevance (that of typicality), it is obvious that our appetite follows typical patterns. In fact, our taste in food is often called one of the most conservative areas of our lives. On a social scale, this is part of what allows us to identify different styles of cooking or even national cuisines. Styles of cooking are sometimes used as a medium to construct and strengthen a national identity (CWIERTKA 2006), to which may correspond derogatory identifications of other groups as "garlic eaters", "krauts", "frogs", etc. The situation is similar with regional cuisines. On a more individual level, most people have consistent likes and dislikes, often for life. Frequently these preferences go back to the food of one's childhood which can provide fond memories, even for people whose childhood was otherwise terrible. At the same time, personal preferences are situated within group preferences like those of a particular family, social class or regional and national food culture, whether these personal preferences merely reproduce those of the group or oppose them. Personal food preferences can reflect normative expectations and thereby help maintain social distinctions, as Pierre Bourdieu (1984) showed. The traditionalism in our taste of food can be so strong that disinterest and ignorance reinforce each other. German has an expression to describe parochial stubbornness which translates as: "A farmer never eats that which he does not know". The circle is perfect where the "farmer" will never know that which he does not eat.

What about the second side of relevance? With the tendency to follow typical patterns so strong, we might expect food to be an area where spontaneity plays a weak role. But we would be mistaken. Having the exact same meal day in and day out is not pleasant. On the contrary, it can amount to torture and has been used as a punishment in prisons[14]. In few areas other than food does boredom with repetition gain such a visceral power over us. This boredom is the flip side of what can positively be addressed as an attraction of variety and change, a kind of "appetite" for the new or exotic which reflects the spontaneity of relevance[15]. Even within the most conservative style of cooking, some degree of variation is vital. The proverbial German "farmer" may not be interested in sashimi, but if he can afford it, he will have different kinds of vegetables, meat, bread etc. in varying combinations. There are connoisseurs or professional producers who enjoy the same dish or ingredient again and again. But their main interest seems to lie in learning new facets and varieties of their favorite every time. Japan's famous gourmet Kitaōji Rosanjin wrote that the moment you «first clearly apprehend the taste» (CARDOZO, HIRANO 1987: 100) of something is when you begin to «tire of it and grow sick of the taste» (*Ibidem*). And finally, national or regional cuisines (which seem so stable if looked at from afar), change constantly and sometimes dramatically with fashions of eating or cooking, with the introduction of new ingredients, with new technologies or through intercultural contacts. Again, this side of relevance is often overlooked. Even

[13] See KORSMEYER 2002; DIACONU 2005.

[14] A contemporary example is the "nutraloaf" administered as a disciplinary measure in US detention facilities.

[15] Leibniz (e.g. *Monadologie*: § 15) uses terms like "appétition" and "appetit" for the principle he calls "spontaneity" in other places. The parallel to our "appetite" for food is drawn in DIACONU (2005: 316).

everyday food routines involve an interest in variety and change which is more basic and more general than any more spectacular surprises or inventions which may or may not arise from this interest. Having everyday meals does not mean having the same meal every day. For those with less than perfect resources, skill or devotion or for those who cook for others, part of the pressure of having to prepare daily meals stems from being caught in a "routine" which crucially requires constant variation and inventiveness.

The two sides of relevance then are not only apparent in food, but they are even more clearly pronounced here than in other areas. Our appetite follows a combination of two distinct dynamics. This is consistent with the "founding paradox" of human food selection as described by Claude Fischler:

> The omnivore's paradox lies in the tension, the oscillation between the two poles of neophobia (prudence, fear of the unknown, resistance to change) and neophilia (the tendency to explore, the need for change, novelty, variety). (FISCHLER 1988: 278)

A theory of relevance may provide a more general framework for the "omnivore's paradox". Our languages and arts show that we are also communicative and aesthetic "omnivores" (in a sense in which other omnivores such as rats may not be).

Of course, I have described the two sides of relevance at a very abstract level. At more concrete levels, the two enter into a complex interplay of patterned variety, of styles of repetition and styles of change. Also, there are obvious social and individual differences, connected to personality and habitus, social status and resources, between styles leaning more to one or the other side of relevance. There is a world of difference between the "farmer" of the German proverb and the Japanese subculture of eating ever new fashionable inventions such as beef tongue ice cream. There is a world of difference between an ascetic like Wittgenstein, who explained «that it did not much matter to him *what* he ate, so long as it was always the *same*» (MALCOLM 2001: 69), and a gourmet like Brillat-Savarin, who stated: «The table is the only place where one never gets bored during the first hour»[16] (BRILLAT-SAVARIN 2005: 37). But despite their interaction in any concrete case, the two sides of relevance are logically opposed to each other in food as they are in general. Neither side can plausibly be reduced to the other.

If, in principle, a two-sided concept of relevance can be applied to our experience of food, there is no reason on this basic pragmatic level to exclude food from art or to relegate it to everyday life. No doubt there are differences between food in everyday life and food in art. The modern art world provides a framework of autonomous institutions and aesthetic theories which allows artists and audiences to move further to the side of spontaneity than we would find acceptable in everyday life, where no such powerful framework promoting novelty is readily available. For instance, Japanese food artist Ayako Suwa's performances feature strange or unpleasant taste experiences and finger food that looks like eerie insects or veiny human organs. If served at the family dinner table or in a street restaurant, many of her creations would, I believe, be rejected because they cross the limits of most people's food habits and even appear dangerous. As "edible artworks" within performances marked

[16] As Roland Barthes points out, the excitement of the first hour at the table is produced by original and surprising meals, by a novelty which is logically opposed to repetition (BRILLANT, SAVARIN, 2005: 25).

as artistic, however, her products receive attention and fetch high prices. This stretching of spontaneity is in the tradition of strange food in art seen already in Futurist cooking or in Daniel Spoerri's Eat Art restaurant. Everyday food is generally expected to conform to existing standards of what "tastes good", whereas the spontaneity of food artists takes license even with these seemingly minimal standards[17].

Yet a relevance model indicates that this is a difference of degree, not of principle. Spontaneity is present in any case. In everyday life too, we are interested in strange, uncanny and even irritating and dangerous aspects. This curiosity is part of what motivates us in the first place to leave our everyday lives for a while and enter such places as museums and galleries. Spontaneity seems to allow movement in both directions, and this is also true of food. An art college graduate like Ayako Suwa can work as an expensive but successful caterer outside the art world. Conversely, the restaurant of a trained chef like Ferran Adrià can be declared an external "exhibition space" of one of the world's major contemporary art events. There is a thin line between the tradition of artistic banqueting and theme restaurants, dinner theaters etc[18], which seem to operate somewhere in between art and "ordinary" everyday life.

Artistic autonomy and freedom comes to a certain limit in the case of food because of the "nutritional and digestive perils" it carries (KORSMEYER 2002: 62). Nevertheless, it is not clear that this limit separates food in principle from other artistic media. Even visual and auditory art can be dangerous, as attested by the use of signs cautioning people with epilepsy about certain video installations. Artists such as Marina Abramović have explored all sorts of bodily self-harm, but no artist with any lasting ambition will intentionally mutilate their audience any more than poison them. And if for no more than this very reason, the audience will trust the artist not to do so. In this sense, the offering of food may exemplify a general limit of communication, whether linguistic or nonverbal, artistic or prosaic. Sperber and Wilson have pointed to the offering of food to illustrate what they call a "presumption of relevance" which any communicator implicitly but openly conveys to their audience: «[…] the host who asks his guests to eat automatically suggests that what he is offering them is edible, and indeed worth eating» (SPERBER, WILSON 1995: 155). A sufficiently generalized concept of relevance would apply literally to this case. Within the realm of what is at all edible, what is "worth eating" is a matter of relevance. The notion of relevance suggested here with reference to Alfred Schutz implies that our appetite has two faces.

4. Conclusions

Why do many philosophers refuse to acknowledge that food has long been accepted in the art world? One reason may be a structural ideal of language as a system of rules which do not change with different contexts and individuals. Nelson Goodman's analysis of "languages of art" shows how productive this ideal of structure can be in the philosophy of art. But could it apply to food? Mary Douglas analyzed food in terms of syntactic structures. Carolyn Korsmeyer demonstrated that Goodman's categories from *Languages of Art* can be applied to food. She also pointed out that the application of these categories in food depends strongly on

[17] Cf. DIACONU (2005: 397); LEMKE (2007: 51).

[18] See LEMKE (2007: 55ff.).

contexts and individuals. Her argument seems to imply that this contextual dependence makes food fundamentally different from the way rules apply in everyday and artistic language. However, a structural analysis as such does not address the question how structures apply in context. The paper approached this question at the general level of "relevance".

I began by following the argument of Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber that relevance, not rules or structures, forms the basis of our everyday use of language. Is this also true of the experience of food? The question required generalizing the concept of relevance so that it includes the emotional or bodily dimension. With this aim, I took up the theory of Alfred Schutz. I suggested that his concept of relevance has two sides; it refers to two basic dynamics which drive the selectivity of our experience. The first side of relevance, "typicality", makes us seek out repeated or stable patterns in experience. Its second side, "spontaneity", makes us seek out variety, new experiences and deviations from established patterns.

I then pointed out that these two sides of relevance are also fundamental to our experience of food. Our "appetite" follows both sides in even more pronounced and tangible ways than do other areas of experience. This was outlined for our experience of both everyday meals and artistic food. While the side of spontaneity may receive stronger emphasis in artistic food, the difference is one of degree, not of principle. Even everyday food routines contain spontaneity.

The upshot of this was that contextual dependence, as distinct from strict rule-following or invariant structure, is not something that makes food fundamentally different from language or art. Relevance is always relevance to an individual here and now. Therefore, even the core meanings of everyday utterances ultimately depend on context, not on rules. If there are "languages of food", as the work of Douglas or Korsmeyer strongly suggests, contextual dependence is something they have in common with other languages.

More specifically, what food, art and everyday language have in common is the two-sided dynamics of relevance. This is compatible with structural analysis. Douglas and Goodman largely withhold judgment about the pragmatic level. But where Goodman addresses this level in later work, his proposal supports a relevance theory. According to him, the application of any language (and hence an answer to his question "when" something is art) depends on context. The application follows a standard he calls "rightness", which essentially has two sides. The concept of "relevance" used in this paper can be seen as an explication of Goodman's "rightness".

A concept of relevance helps assess the relation between structural analysis and the pragmatic level. Structures such as those identified by Douglas and Goodman are not ideally invariant. They are based on typicality and therefore counterbalanced by spontaneity, which often makes us divert from typical patterns. On the other hand, typical patterns do not dissolve into random variation; they are very real factors of experience, as Schutz has shown. Structural analysis can disclose these typical patterns by abstracting away spontaneity and constructing what Max Weber called "ideal types" (SCHUTZ 1962). Nevertheless, ideal types should not be confused with the reality of experience, which is driven by relevance. If we keep these levels apart, the contextual dependence of food can be seen as a general feature which "languages of food" share with other languages.

Food exemplifies this contextual dependence in a striking way because in the experience of food, both sides of relevance are so closely tied up with the individual body. Paintings and concerts may sometimes appear (wrongly) to promise us an

objectivity hovering above individuals and lasting unchanged across different contexts of consumption. But food flatly denies such an objectivity. In this sense, food as an art form may tell us more about a general truth of aesthetics than do the visual, literary or musical arts[19].

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[19] For the idea of relevance as an aesthetic principle, see also STRASSHEIM (in press).

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