



SWEETNESS AS AN AESTHETIC RELATIONSHIP

RESEARCH SCIENTIFIC POSTER

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INTRODUCTION

What is sweetness? Asking this question means entering a **broad, complex and transdisciplinary field of investigation**, since matters of “sweet taste” have been attributed to mostly elusive meanings and disparate values.

In the present day and age, sweet food is mainly considered as bad for the health of the body, in particular in **its sugary and refined version**.

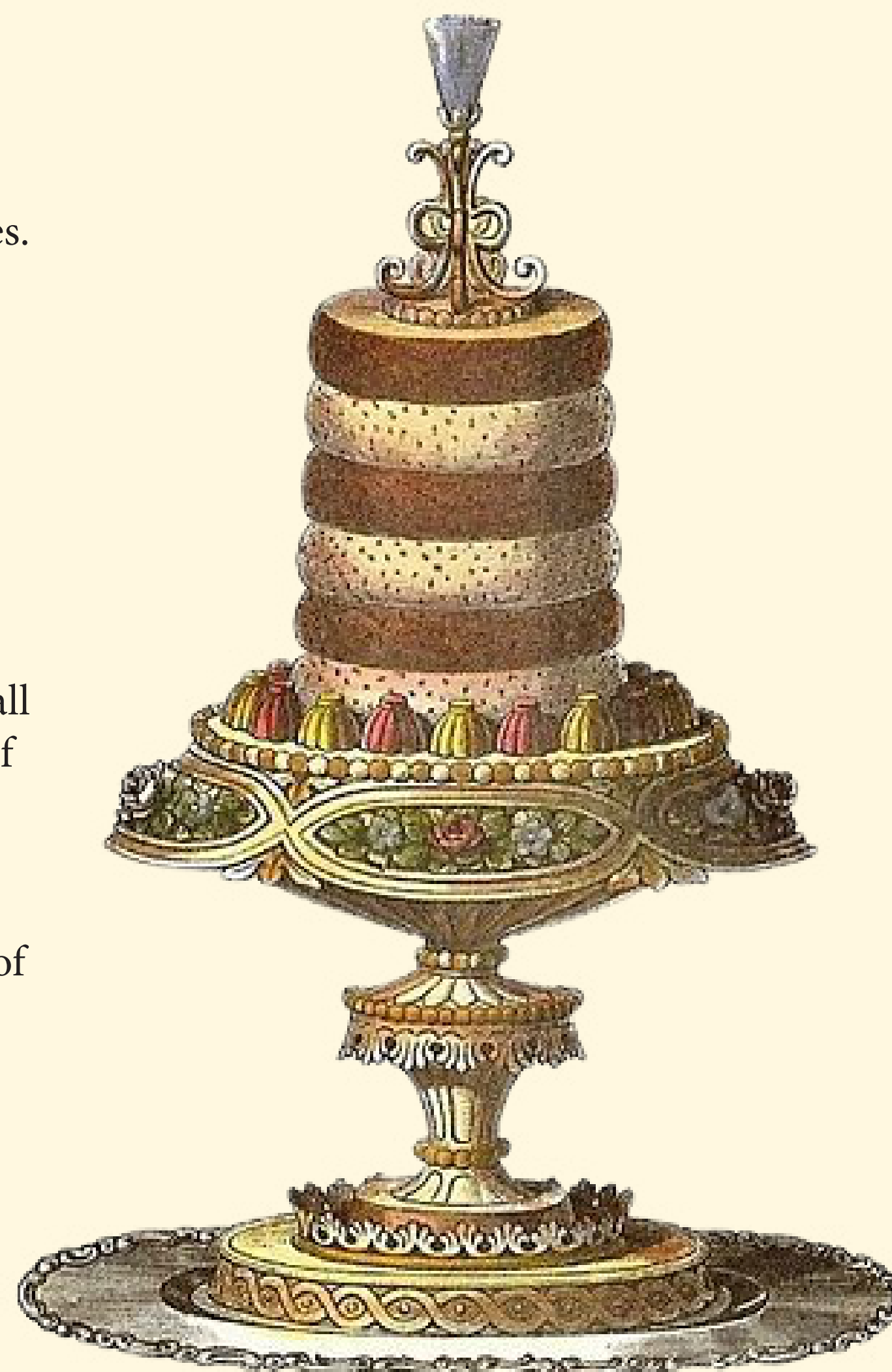
On the other hand, according to many scholars, it is also one of the most basic tastes for the human being: phylogenetically and ontogenetically related to **comestibility, pleasure and first experiences with food**.

This **ambivalence** is found in sweetness as a **metaphor**, which crosses almost all areas of everyday life and language, as well as potentially pertains to every kind of feelings and thoughts.

This research aims to understand the **ambiguities** of sweetness through the concept of **RELATIONSHIP**. More precisely, sweetness is very root of the idea of relationship; as a collusive and complicit mode of the necessary and continuous **interplay between passivity and activity**.

Moving away from any attempt of univocal and causal explanations of it, in a **culturalist** and a **naturalist** ways, this research aims at interpreting sweetness in its **experiential and relational multiplicity** to highlight its aesthetic potential.

The present research is articulated in **three parts** :



METHODOLOGY

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH
and comparative study of the different sources, through a **philosophical aesthetics** lens.

FIELDs of RESEARCH

In the absence of systematic philosophical treatises, the references will therefore range from **PHILOLOGY** to **ART HISTORY**, from **PSYCHOLOGY** to **ANTHROPOLOGY**, without neglecting the increasingly broad field of research of **GUSTATORY AESTHETICS** from which this work takes its cue.

1. BIO-CULTURAL GENEALOGY

THE AMBIGUITY OF SWEETNESS BETWEEN TASTE AND KNOWLEDGE

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Which are the different natural/cultural and metaphorical meanings of this taste?

1. Pleasure and Taste
2. Sweet as a Taste
3. Knowledge of Sweetness
4. Between Taste and Knowledge



The main complexity around the question of sweetness lies in the difficulty of making **psycho-biological** aspects interact with **socio-cultural** ones. Starting from the connection with pleasure, the **physiological issues** are firstly deepened, which make the sweet taste “universal”; then **the philosophical ones**, which show its broad range of meanings. The array of its **metaphorical uses** helps to define the complex field and the continuous interactions between these aspects. In the ongoing interplay between physical sense and metaphor – from knowledge of the divine to the idea of intimacy – sweetness turns out to be irrevocably ambiguous for its **multiple and disseminating nature**: together pleasure and sacrifice, incorporation and suffering.

2. AESTHETICS AND ART

SWEETS AS ARTIFACTS

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Which are the forms and symbols it entails?

1. Aesthetics and Symbols
2. Festivals, ceremonies and rites of passage
3. The *art* of Pastry creations
4. *Conventual Pastry*: baking as a means of non verbal expression



In its aesthetic value of artifact, sweet food encloses the idea of an **incorporation beyond its appearance**; a form that acquires different dimensions and new meanings, transforming vital foods into figures with a high **symbolic value**. The second part will deal with the history of consumption and functions of sweets, a decreasing parabola that made sweeteners medicinal, spices, decorations, until they became basic ingredients. From the uniqueness of sugar's triumphs during the Renaissance and modern banquets, to the industrialization of the food sector, sweet creations are placed in an epithelial fracture that separates **objects of consumption and of desire** as “edible” and “non-edible”.

3. ETHICS AND POLITICS

MEDIUM AND *FARMAKON*

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Which are the functions and ethical values of it?

1. from Religion to Diet-ethics
2. Between Taste and *Distaste*
3. The “refinement” of Sugar
4. For a sweet education



The third and final part of this work concerns sweetness' problematic and ambiguous horizon, where questions of **ethical and even religious natures** emerge. In the excess, the pleasure of sweetness can continuously turn into its opposite: from the crystalline whiteness of refined **sugar** to the intrusive stickiness of **honey**, from **nausea** of saturation to epidemic of **obesity**, from moral yielding to ideological subjugation. The multiplicity and interdependence of these aspects transforms the materiality of a taste into a **twofold feeling** of invitation and threat, where sweetness alters bodies and manipulates emotions.

GOALS

- 1) to provide for the first time a **philosophical monograph** on **Sweetness**
- 2) to show the **great potential of the topic** on sweet taste, mostly overlooked both by gastronomic science and by philosophy
- 3) to highlight **its possibilities and branches** in various applicative fields (ethics, public health, politics, sensory studies)

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