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Introduction

Andrea Pavoni

*Solus ergo gustus proprie et principaliter ad rerum naturas investigandas pre ceteris sensibus est destinatus.*¹

1. Law and the Senses

Philosophy tends to relegate senses to the realm of phenomenology and experience. By contrast, critical theory has gradually eroded the holy opposition between knowing and sensing to the extent that new speculative trends are now seeking to rebuild it. While the social sciences endeavour to frame sensing within socio-historical genealogies, scientific research draws deterministic connections

¹ From the anonymous thirteenth-century tractatus *Summa de Saporibus*, of which three copies still remain, in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), British Library (London) and Biblioteca Laurenziana (Florence). Burnett translates the quote as follows: ‘only taste is ordained above all the other senses as properly and principally the investigator of the natures of things.’ Charles Burnett, ‘The Superiority of Taste’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991): 230–38.

between our sensing the world and the neurophysics hardware. At the same time, planetary modifications gesturing towards the seemingly unavoidable extinction of humanity suggest ‘post’ human ways of sensing, with novel technologies that enable us to understand things that escape human capacity to sense, thus widening up perception to inhuman scales and temporalities. Meanwhile, capitalism relentlessly crafts our sensorial immersion into hyperaesthetic atmospheres, mirrored by art’s ongoing fetishisation of site-specific sensoriality.

Law is present in all this, and with a complexity that is yet to be addressed in the current sensorial turn in legal thinking.² In fact, law and the senses have been mostly explored through the usual *law v. ‘what escapes law’* framework, one that characterises many of the ‘law and...’ approaches (e.g. law and space, law and materiality etc.). In other words, the tendency in most cases has been that of remaining trapped within a phenomenological understanding of senses, oscillating between two sides (law vs. the senses) of an unquestioned opposition, occupying each of the sides of the partition without fully exploring its promising threshold.³ This has generated

² We are not the first to deal with this. See Lionel Bently and Leo Flynn, eds, *Law and the Senses: Sensational Jurisprudence* (London: Pluto Press, 1996); Bernard J. Hibbitts, ‘Coming to Our Senses: Communication and Legal Expression in Performance Cultures’, *Emory Law Journal* 41, no. 4 (1992): 873–955. See also the ongoing project ‘Law and the Regulation of the Senses: Explorations in Sensori-Legal Studies’, coordinated by David Howes at the Centre for Sensory Studies, <http://www.centreforsensorystudies.org/related-interest/law-and-the-regulation-of-the-senses-explorations-in-sensori-legal-studies>.

³ For a recent attempt in this direction see Sheryl Hamilton et al., eds., *Sensing Law* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

a series of compelling but ultimately limited narratives. Namely, law is assumed to be the anaesthetic par excellence, constantly numbing the polymorphous realm of the sensorial in order to assert the rational domain of normativity. According to this narrative, the legal project is a systematic attempt to depurate law from any compromise with the sensible and its contingent imprecision. The *violence*, *coldness* and *alienation* of legal abstraction, and its systematic denial of the sensual spontaneity of life, are the de rigueur accusations against law, whose failure the critical thinker is quick to point out: senses are not amenable to legal machinations, they always escape law's cumbersome and joyless, to put it à la Spinoza, apparatus.

Hence the call to re-materialise, re-spatialise, re-sensitise law: to let law come to its senses, that is. Except that law has never been outside of senses. Its way of making sense of the world is always premised on its sensorial immersion in the world itself. This appreciation requires not only thinking law differently, but also thinking senses differently. This could open a path, we argue, towards exploring the sensoriality of law, both in the epistemological way in which law engages with, and indeed senses the world, as well as the ontological emergence of law from the sensorial continuum of the world itself. This series intends to pursue this path through four intersecting conceptual endeavours.

First, to disarticulate the sensorial from its reduction to the phenomenological, the subjective, the personal and the human dimension, a reductionism of which law is simultaneously responsible as well as in denial. Second, to dismantle the law/senses separation by widening

the fissure into a complex ontology, and thus revealing the necessary but ultimately insufficient critique to law's 'anaesthetising' enterprise. While it is undeniably an anaesthetising *project*, law is at the same time an emerging *process*, and it is the uncharted territory between the de-sensitising project of legal control and the multi-sensorial process of legal emergence, that we intend to explore. Third, expanding on the latter observation: to expose the role of law in keeping the law/senses dichotomy in place. Fourth, to envisage an approach to law beyond these strictures, unfolding alternative strategies and methodologies to which a law attuned to *its* senses may open up. Thinking the post-human and inhuman dimension of senses, we argue, may permit rethinking law's sensorial engagement and entanglement with the world, at the same time gesturing towards different ways to use legal abstraction, beyond their absolutisation, or dismissal.⁴

2. Taste

As no text on the subject fails to point out, in the history of philosophy from Plato to Hegel and beyond, taste (together with smell) has traditionally occupied the bottom of the sensorial hierarchy: supposedly inferior – morally, aesthetically and intellectually – to the aural and the visual (the senses of clarity, purity and reason) but also to touch, whose tactile examination of the world is

⁴ For a more extended presentation of these four points, see Andrea Pavoni, 'Introduction', in *SEE*, eds. Andrea Pavoni, et al. (London: University of Westminster Press, 2018).

exempted from the alien penetration that taste and smell unavoidably implicate. No amount of *Galateo*-like normative treaties or fine dining sophistication may suffice to obliterate the closeness that taste enjoys with the animal, the corporeal, the elemental.⁵ No amount of self-inflicted privation, either via religious prohibition, ascetic penitence, ethical concerns or health-obsessed *orthorexia*, may sever the visceral and overpowering relation taste entertains with pleasure.⁶

However, taste did not always endure such poor treatment. According to the Stoic Chrysippus, it was the *Gastronomy* or *Gastrology*, a poem by Archestratus, that inspired the philosophy of Epicurus. As his famous aphorism goes, ‘the beginning and root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach; even wisdom and culture must be referred to this.’⁷ In his doctorate dissertation, the young Marx dismissed Chrysippus’ belief: it was not

⁵ Giovanni della Casa, *Galateo: Or, The Rules of Polite Behavior*, trans. M. F. Rusnak (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013[1558]). The normative documents on table manners that began to proliferate in middle age could be read exactly as an attempt to order the experience of eating by imposing control over the body; see Daniela Romagnoli, ‘“Mind Your Manners”: Etiquette at the Table’, in *Food. A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, trans. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁶ From the Greek *ortho-* (*ortho*, right), and *óρεξις* (*orexis*, appetite), refers to an obsession with eating food that is deemed ‘pure’ in the sense of being healthy. It has been proposed as an eating disorder. See Steven Bratman M.D. and David Knight, *Health Food Junkies: Orthorexia Nervosa – Overcoming the Obsession with Healthful Eating* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001).

⁷ Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, vol. 5, trans. C.B. Gulick (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), 546 [standard classicists’ reference: xii, 546].

gastronomy, but rather ‘the absoluteness and freedom of self-consciousness’, to be the core principle of Epicurus’ thought.⁸ Although very fond of Epicurus’ materialism, Marx was not willing to confuse it with vulgar corporeal enjoyment: the sensual pleasure of eating is a mere individual business with no place in philosophy’s path towards truth.⁹ The archetype of this prejudice may be located in Plato, who dismissed eating and drinking as a secondary, merely functional activity, and despised the gluttony of ‘those who feast only on earthly food’, whose ‘insatiable lust’ prevented them from having ‘a taste of true pleasure.’¹⁰ True taste is strictly *platonian*.

Medieval doctors had different ideas: amongst them, taste was held in great esteem as the principal ‘investigator of the natures of things.’¹¹ ‘Sight perceives only the properties of the surface of the object, not the whole substance’, a Salernitan medical writer argued.¹² When tasting instead, we enter a deep relation with the object, absorbing and swallowing, while being at the same time penetrated by – in fact, becoming-with – the object itself. This relation of mutual trespassing was not seen positively by Hobbes,

⁸ Karl Marx, *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, in *Marx & Engels Collected Works Vol. 1* (Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1975).

⁹ See Michael Symons, ‘Epicurus, the Foodies’ Philosopher’, in *Food & Philosophy: Eat, Think and Be Merry*, eds. Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe (Malden: Blackwell, 2009); Nicola Perullo, *Il gusto come esperienza. Saggio di filosofia e estetica del cibo* (Bra: slow food editore, 2016).

¹⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Courier Corporation, 1894).

¹¹ See the epigraph to this introduction.

¹² Quoted in Burnett, ‘The Superiority of Taste’, 233.

who conceded that human beings are governed by the law of the stomach (from *gastros*: stomach, and *nomos*: law), the reason for which they are to be subjected to the discipline and control of a sovereign reason.¹³

It was the possibility to legislate over what, when and how to eat that, according to Kant, that placed taste on a higher level than smell, the basest of the senses, insofar as the least controllable and communicable.¹⁴ Given the complicated relation between instinctive appetite and rational control, it is no surprise that taste be the sense most closely associated with restraint, as testified by the countless food prescriptions coded in religious, ethical and health beliefs throughout history. From self-inflicted penitence, as expressed in the ascetic self-privation of food performed by mystics, saints or anorexics to punishment,¹⁵ as conveyed by an old-fashioned British idiomatic expression for serving a prison sentence: *doing porridge*. Taste is the sole sense to have a dedicated capital vice: its denigration is simultaneously epistemological, aesthetic and ethical.

¹³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard E. Flathman and David Johnston (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 31.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

¹⁵ Among many, telling is the case of the Italian mystic, and anorexic, Gemma Galgani. Aware that her self-inflicted starvation would have led her to certain death, she resolved to eat just the minimum necessary to survive, but asked Jesus: 'the grace of not being able as long as I live to distinguish any taste in food anymore'. She will die nonetheless, two years later, at 25. See Gemma Galgani, 'Letter from Gemma to Father Germano C.P.', July 1901. <http://www.stgemmagalgani.com/2014/03/st-gemmas-submission-to-will-of-god.html> (accessed March 1, 2018).

Obviously, such treatment of taste must be framed within the prioritisation of the intellect over the senses, and of knowledge over pleasure, which founded Western philosophy since Plato, according to whom beauty is an unknowable pleasure (it cannot be rationally explained), while truth is an invisible knowledge (it cannot be accessed through the senses).¹⁶ This is also the case when taste becomes central to eighteenth-century aesthetics' attempt to re-evaluate sensible experience. In the writings of Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Kant, Hegel, Montesquieu, the centrality that taste assumes is premised on its prior purification from material promiscuity, base instinct, visceral hedonism and appetite, by means of its translation into the disinterested pleasure of an intellectual aesthetic experience. Taste, yes, but with 'the detachment and contemplative distance of vision.'¹⁷ The mouth, of course, but not as the orifice through which food is introduced and tasted; rather, as the acoustic mechanism through which language is materialised into words.

Yet, notwithstanding the metaphorical distancing from its corporeal counterpart, aesthetic taste still maintained a key relation with the sensorial immediacy of gustatory taste, bound to generate several conundrums, between the (claim to) universality of the former and the (supposed) relativism of the latter, the (arguably) generalisable normativity of knowledge and the (seemingly)

¹⁶ For a beautiful reflection on taste beginning from Plato's aesthetic fracture, see the recently republished essay by Giorgio Agamben, *Gusto* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015).

¹⁷ Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 39.

spontaneous singularity of pleasure. In fact, whereas taste is evidently tied to the domain of the normative (perhaps uniquely among the senses, to taste is *always* an act of judgement), such normativity rests over a highly unstable ground, apparently lacking any higher truth to ground it: *de gustibus non disputandum est*. The empiricist solution to the impasse was provided by Hume, who conceived taste as a subjective quality to be refined through education and whose *standard* depends on a consensual agreement among ‘true critics.’¹⁸ Such an empirical generalisation, however, did not satisfy Kant’s quest of universality. The philosopher of Königsberg posited a fundamental distinction: on the one hand, the visceral subjectivity of gustatory taste, tied to self-interest, biological necessity and instinctive appetite; on the other, the disembodied and disinterested universality of aesthetic judgement, which does not depend on a shared agreement a posteriori, but on the power of reason a priori: taste is the aesthetic (common) sense that emerges out of the harmonious accord between the disinterested functioning of my mind and the purposeless power of nature.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Kant found it puzzling that within the word ‘taste’ such a contradictory couple of meanings (visceral sensation and aesthetic judgement) were simultaneously encapsulated. Likewise, he found peculiar the close etymological cohabitation between *sapor* (flavour), *sapere* (knowledge) and *sapientia* (wisdom). While these

¹⁸ David Hume, ‘Of the Standard of Taste’, in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (New York: Cosimo, 2006[1757]).

¹⁹ Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgement* (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 1987 [1790]).

correspondences forced him into unconvinced and unconvincing explanations, their sense was viscerally expressed in the situation in which taste appeared to resist translation into language: disgust.²⁰ Disgust, by definition, defies representation. Before disgust, even the genius, the one able to turn the ugly into the beautiful through a digestive process of idealisation, is seized by revulsion, nausea and vomit. The perfect oral correlation of the Kantian ‘all-consuming mouth’ – which ingests and digests every bit(e) of the world spitting it out into words – tilted before the material and revolting reality of a digestive system that occurs away from the head, that is run by a gastronomy of bowels and that may turn the mouth itself into an orifice of nauseating defecation.²¹ Both Kant’s and Hegel’s *digestive* philosophies were bound to clash with the stubborn indigestibility of the real that disgust most forcefully signalled.²²

The ‘souring of taste into nausea’ summarises the parable from romantic aesthetics into existentialist bleakness, best exemplified by Sartre’s character Roquentin who, before the sea, does not experience any sense of beauty but rather a nauseating, ‘sweetish sickness.’²³ Disgust

²⁰ Kant, *Anthropology*, 144–5.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, ‘Economimesis’, *Diacritics* 11 (1981), 3–25.

²² According to their ‘digestive philosophy’, Sartre wrote, ‘the spidery mind trapped things in its web, covered them with a white spit and slowly swallowed them, reducing them to its own substance.’ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Intentionality: a Fundamental Idea of Husserl’s Phenomenology’, in *The Phenomenology Reader*, eds. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (London: Routledge, 2002).

²³ Denise Gigante, ‘The Endgame of Taste: Keats, Sartre, Beckett’, in *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism*, ed. Timothy Morton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 186. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964), 10.

figured prominently in twentieth-century thought, as the visceral indication that rotten were the foundations of the coherent edifice of the subject (Kristeva), the meaningful scaffolding of reality (Sartre), the barrier between humans and animals (Rozin), the stable frontier separating the living and the non-living (Miller).²⁴ In fact, what disgust renders traumatically explicit is already contained in the more general experience of taste, of which disgust is but an extreme hue.²⁵

Tempting,²⁶ promiscuous, dangerous, taste signals the entering into an uncertain zone of synaesthetic immersion where the boundary-making machine of the subject begins to tilt, sanctioning the three-step disintegration of the transcendental subject: the blurring of ideal, identity and physical boundaries, the collapse of distance and the erosion of immunity. First, the violation of one's bodily unity which any act of ingestion entails: taste poses an

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Sartre, *Nausea*; Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon, 'A Perspective on Disgust', *Psychological Review* 94 (1987); William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Harvard, CT: Harvard University Press, 1998).

²⁵ Thus is what led Lévinas to gradually integrate his early reflections on the concept of nausea into a more general ontology of eating that would be the material ground of his ethics, a promising step, albeit entrapped within the sterile dialectics of the Other. See David Goldstein, 'Emmanuel Lévinas and the Ontology of Eating', *Gastronomica* 10, no. 3 (2010).

²⁶ Taste is etymologically tied to *temptāre*, i.e. trying, guessing, tempting and being tempted, corrupting and being corrupted. The etymological kinship with the term coming from the Latin *tastāre* or *taxitāre* – i.e. touching tentatively something to guess its shape, as when blindfolded – testifies for the close relation between taste and touch, evident in the fact that in order to taste something, a contact must unavoidably occur.

immunitary threat to ‘somatic integrity’, invading and dismantling the physical and conceptual unity of the subject, disrupting any stable, isolated and unitary understanding of ourselves.²⁷ Second, the awareness of being consigned to a passivity that cannot be assumed, perfectly illustrated by Roquentin, who finds himself ‘wordless’ and ‘defenceless’ before the senseless materiality of things, that insist upon touching, penetrating and ultimately dissolving him.²⁸ Third, the sense of an inassimilable (indigestible) reality to which we are nonetheless released, of which we are part: each ingestion *is* indigestion. This is our *sapid knowledge*, Serres suggests:

We were too quick to forget that homo sapiens refers to those who react to sapidity, appreciate it and seek it out, those for whom the sense of taste matters – savouring animals – before referring to judgement, intelligence or wisdom, before referring to talking man ... Sensation, it used to be said, inaugurates intelligence. Here, more locally, taste institutes sapience²⁹

This sapience, however, should be resolutely freed from those notions of subject, individual body and human, to which existential-phenomenological, dialectical and psychoanalytical accounts are still far too dependent. Likewise, we should avoid framing taste into what Grusin

²⁷ Manabrata Guha, ‘Vague Weaponizations, or The Chemistry of Para-Tactical Engagements’, in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 177.

²⁸ Sartre, *Nausea*.

²⁹ Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 154.

terms the fallacy of ‘transparent immediacy’, namely the perspective that ‘holds that the subject’s contact with the real depends upon the erasure of the medium, which correlates and thereby obscures the relationship between subject and the world.’³⁰ To think of taste – or any other sense – as allowing an ‘immediate’ encounter with reality ‘beyond’ the mediation of representation, would be far too simplistic, insofar as it would be oblivious of the way in which ‘our’ sensorial engagement with the world is always processed through the complex entanglements in which we are immersed. This implicit presupposition – more generally, that of the senses being individually owned, and freely and spontaneously experienced – blatantly overlooks the crucial fact that it is *through* the socio-cultural-legal atmospheres in which we are immersed that senses come to be perceived as such.³¹ This is not to say, however, that taste should be fully reduced to the mediation of socio-cultural interpretations, symbolic meanings or political-economical structures. Here the classic example is Bourdieu, according to whom taste is structurally tied to *habitus*, which is in turn normatively connected to class structure.³² This argument is taken to a materialistic extreme by Harris who, reversing Lévi-Strauss’ famous argument (namely, it is good to eat what

³⁰ Richard Grusin, ‘Radical Mediation,’ *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 1 (2015), 131.

³¹ Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, ‘Atmospheres of Law: Senses, Affects, Lawscapes,’ *Emotion, Space and Society* 7 (2013); Matthew G. Hannah, ‘Attention and the Phenomenological Politics of Landscape,’ *Geografiska Annaler B* 95, no. 3 (2013).

³² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984).

is first good to think) maintained that it is good to think what is first good to eat: a 'good' which he assumed as the structural result of the necessity, availability and economical functionality of a given socio-historical context.³³ Notwithstanding its value in challenging the blindness to power relations of certain romantic or phenomenological accounts, this reductionism (dominant in most of contemporary food studies) in the end entraps taste within socio-cultural and politico-economical anthropic schemes, thus remaining blind to the non-human agency that constitutes its material ecology.³⁴

Unfolding such a material ecology requires crafting an understanding of taste whose complexity cannot be accommodated within the smoothness of dialectical movement; whose ontology bursts the phenomenological correlation; and whose nonhuman orientation exceeds anthropic framings. Simply put: taste has to do with the ontological fact of being-in-the-world as immersed in a co-constituted materiality: being as *tasting-the-world*. Once we take this understanding to its ontological consequences, the 'false' dichotomy between immediacy and mediation collapses: following Grusin, 'mediation' is no longer understood as 'an intermediary to the understanding of the nonhuman world' but as 'a property of

³³ Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1998); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Mythologiques, Volume 1* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

³⁴ See for instance Emma-Jayne Abbots and Anna Lavis, 'Introduction', in *Why We Eat, How We Eat: Contemporary Encounters Between Foods and Bodies*, ed. Emma-Jayne Abbots and Anna Lavis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

the nonhuman world itself'.³⁵ 'Mediation', in other words, plays a similar role to that of 'translation' in Actor-Network Theory, or to Barad's notion of 'intra-actions', that is, the ongoing 'mattering' through which materiality organises itself into assemblages, which emerge as local 'closure' of the 'materiality continuum', in which senses and law, bodies and space, affect and concepts, come to be immanently tuned in given, historically contingent configurations.³⁶

While humans do not disappear from this picture, they are drastically scaled down. In Barad's words, 'humans' do not simply assemble different apparatuses for satisfying particular knowledge projects but are themselves specific local parts of the world's ongoing reconfiguring'.³⁷ Likewise, the senses are emancipated from human control, they become post-human configurations, inhuman encounters: we may thus conceive taste as a material emergence, a coming together of heterogeneous parts, or an assemblage that is irreducible to phenomenological experience, although not independent from it. 'My' sensation of taste is neither illusionary nor autonomous, neither subjective nor objective, neither the originating source of taste, nor determined by external structures: 'my' tast-

³⁵ Grusin, 'Radical Mediation', 137.

³⁶ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); '... the establishment and maintenance of system boundaries – including those of living beings – presuppose a continuum of materiality that neither knows nor respects those boundaries'. Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Vol 1* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 54.

³⁷ Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs* 28, No. 3 (2003), 829.

ing is part of an emerging territory (Brighenti, below), a tastescape.³⁸

It is most notably through eating that we can glimpse the ontological fact of being part of a materiality continuum, constantly excessive to the individual, the subject, the body, the living being and other normative separations. It is ‘when one animal eats another’, Bataille observed, that the excessive immanence of being (what he termed the ‘divine’) can be savoured.³⁹ Perhaps this is the profound reason for the taboo against cannibalism, on the account of its capacity to trouble the normative separations on which the anthropomorphic machine (the production of the ‘human’) rests: cannibalism ‘result[s] in a culinarism of the human, in which the human itself becomes reduced to an object.’⁴⁰ Yet, reality *is* constitutively cannibalistic. We are reminded of Calvino’s *Under the Jaguar Sun*, where a couple, after visiting the temples of Palenque, sit at a restaurant, experiencing while eating ‘the ecstasy of swallowing each other in turn’, tasting their own being ‘assimilated ceaselessly in the process of

³⁸ The notion of tastescape here takes inspiration from the ecological connotation suggested by Roger Haden, ‘Lionizing Taste: Toward an Ecology of Contemporary Connoisseurship’, in *Educated Tastes: Food, Drink and Connoisseur Culture*, ed. Jeremy Strong (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

³⁹ Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Zone, 1989), 17. However, in a reversed anthropocentric fashion, Bataille argues that it is only the animal to be open to such immanence as ‘water in water’ (23), since the human must always objectivity the animal prior to eat it.

⁴⁰ Eugene Thacker, ‘Spiritual Meat: Resurrection and Religious Horror in Bataille’, in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 475.

ingestion and digestion, their own being part of a 'universal cannibalism' in which the boundaries between their 'bodies and sopa de frijoles, huachinango a la vera cruzana, and enchiladas' disappear.⁴¹

By eating we enter a 'continuity of material transformations of decomposition and regeneration, fermentation, decay and putrefaction, tasting the radical excess of an 'anonymous form of life whose precise function is to dissolve, transmute, and render indistinct the same anthropic metaphysics'.⁴² Any dialectic circle tilts, before a concept-less exteriority that cannot be subsumed, i.e. ingested, within an historical and meaningful narration, and by which, in turn, we are devoured.⁴³ Schizophrenia may follow, as in Caillos' description of the patient for whom space appears as a 'devouring force', by which is pursued, devoured and digested 'in a gigantic phagocytosis', to the point that 'he feels himself becoming space'.⁴⁴ Horror is another possibility, as described by Bataille, the horror before a life that proliferates beyond death, a life that is excessive to life itself and thus to the life-death binary on which existential-phenomenological and psychoanalytical models ultimately rely. Yet, and differently from Sartre's nausea, this disgust is not human, Thacker suggests.⁴⁵ It signals that indigestibility is not a deficiency

⁴¹ Italo Calvino, *Under the Jaguar Sun*, trans. William Weaver (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 29.

⁴² Thacker, 'Spiritual Meat', 476, 464.

⁴³ Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

⁴⁴ Roger Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychastenia', *October* 31 (1984[1935]), 30.

⁴⁵ Thacker, 'Spiritual Meat'.

of our digestive apparatus or a limit to our capacity to know, but a feature of the world itself.

Once we overcome the correlative deadlock of *our* in(di)gestion, we enter a ‘cooking without a “cook”, a generic “eating” without eaters and eaten’, a *culinary continuum* ‘that renders indistinct everything that an anthropic pretence to gustatory culture – the culture of taste, food, and humans relating unilaterally to nonhumans – would claim as its metaphysical privilege.’⁴⁶ Whether we avoid the temptation to interpret it as a restoration of the *grandeur* of man, this is exactly what the notion of Anthropocene ultimately conveys: a culinary continuum in which humans cook, and are cooked by, geological and economical, physical and political, material and discursive forces. Accordingly, the earth is no longer understood

... as mother of life or receptacle of celestial rays, but as a fuzzy and synthetic region of the chemical continuum, the outcome of a local ‘recipe’ that enjoys no synthetic or analytical privilege over the space beyond it⁴⁷

Taste may be therefore conceptualised as the simultaneously sensible and speculative appreciation of being matter among matter, bodies among other bodies, ‘complicit with anonymous materials’ in a cannibalistic immanence that radically denies any transcendent God or Law.⁴⁸ Perhaps

⁴⁶ Ibid, 476, 473.

⁴⁷ Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay, ‘Introduction’, in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 30.

⁴⁸ Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (re.press, 2008).

nowhere as in the Garden of Eden can this archetypal relation between God, Law and taste be better appreciated. In the Garden, the only law weighing over Adam and Eve was the one specifically concerning a prohibition to *eat* the forbidden fruit of knowledge. The dominant interpretation was of course metaphorical: the prohibition concerned the ‘truth’ which the eating of the fruit would disclose. The sensory experience of taste was transcended and anaesthetised into a metaphor of intellectual hubris or intoxication.⁴⁹ In the Bible we read: ‘when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.’⁵⁰ The fruit was good to see, to taste and to think.

What if what was at stake was the prohibition of tasting *as such*? What if knowledge was not beyond, but rather directly enshrined in the experience of tasting? It would be *sapor* itself to be the *sapere* which leads to *sapientia*. What wisdom? Nothing less than the crumbling of transcendence: it wasn’t God that banished the human from the Garden of Eden. Tasting the fruit for Adam and Eve was to taste the absence of God, tasting the evidence of

⁴⁹ In some Jewish and Islamic sources, Eve offers wine to Adam, and gets him drunk. See Kristen E. Kvam, Linda S. Schearing, and Valarie H. Ziegler, eds., *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999). In an anonymous thirteenth-century fresco at the Plaincourault Abbey in France, the tree of knowledge is an Amanita Muscaria, a poisonous mushroom that has hallucinogenic effects.

⁵⁰ Incidentally, ‘Genesis’ does not mention what kind of fruit was the forbidden one. The ‘Nordic’ apple seems to be quite out of place for a story emerged in the Mediterranean context, and was probably popularised by the Latin (mis)translation of the Bible, given the Latin *malus* means both *evil* and *apple*.

an immanent material continuum, the immanent truth of their own materiality, in this way precipitating the collapse of the Garden itself, projecting humankind into the materiality of a world devoid of the hopes and fears of a transcendent beyond: the real ‘immanence of paradise’ (Masciandaro, this volume) which the hypnotising Law of God had concealed. In fact, what is the holy communion if not an attempt to reassert a transcendence out of this continuum, to make clear that the only and holy unity is that between human and god, sanctioned by the holy theophagy? Instead, the culinary continuum to which we are released by the first bite brings about the collapse of the boundary between the un-mirrored inside and the unexplorable outside, facilitating the move from an Edenic humanism to an earthly post-humanism and, beyond, to a cosmic inhumanism.

This continuum, to be sure, is not a ‘flat ontology but a tilted, power-structured surface’, tuned by legal, socio-cultural, economical, geological, biological and cosmic normativities.⁵¹ Evidently we need to abandon the presupposition of law as a socio-cultural construct that is superimposed over an inert world: law is a normativity made of flesh and stones, thought and water streams, cosmic and everyday interaction, human and non-human sensing: a way in which the ‘world’ is organised, and one whose current socio-historical orientation is heavily shaped by the juridico-economical apparatus of the capital. How to

⁵¹ Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice: Body, Landscape, Atmosphere* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 3.

reconfigure taste then, from a hedonistic experience of individual enjoyment to a magnifying gustatory lens able to grasp, to put it in Althusserian jargon, the *position* that a singular tasting event occupies within the structural complexity of food normativity? ‘Is it possible’, as Mackay and Negarestani ask, ‘to develop the philosophical pertinence of cookery without merely appending philosophy to this burgeoning gastroculture’?⁵² How could law be used as a tool in this strategy? These are the questions, among many others, that inspire the six chapters and seven *speculative recipes* that form this volume.

3. Law and Taste

Law’s relentless juridification of the world (i.e. the reduction of the world into legal categories) is a digestive process through which law ingests its ‘outside’ (that is, what law *presupposes* as its outside) by *tasting* it, and emitting moral judgements accordingly. The ‘aftertaste’ can only be savoured under particular conditions, when the hyperaesthetic attack of the *nouvelle cuisine* has passed, and one is left with one’s own judgement. Awareness of aftertaste is rare and quickly dismissed. This is law’s dissimulation at work: once the sensorial is put into categories and its sense directed, the law only needs to deal with the after-effects which often appear as light post-moral sedimentation. This is of course dissimulated: law’s ingestion of the world must not betray any pleasure, compromise, indulgence or indeed, remainder. Digestion is the legal mechanism of

⁵² Negarestani and Mackay, ‘Introduction’, 3.

exception, which functions by *taking in* the chaotic, ever-escaping outside (life, world, space, etc.) and domesticating it, simultaneously *including* the outside by *excluding* its materiality. It is by reducing the world to speech, text and language that law manages to ingest the world whilst ‘anaesthetising its mouth.’⁵³

This is the mechanism that Nicola Masciandaro obliquely challenges in his contribution. Law, Deleuze wrote, is fundamentally premised on the definition of ‘a realm of transgression where one is already guilty.’⁵⁴ No amount of compliance with its rules would suffice in removing the original guilt, and thus the infinite debt humans (and non-human alike) must face, ‘to bear the burden of law’s own groundlessness, of law’s “own” guilt.’⁵⁵ Among the consequences of this configuration is an Edenic nostalgia for a justice that is always beyond, always *to-come*: the metaphysical hope that things ‘will be otherwise’ in some other transcendent ‘beyond’ where justice will finally occur. The corollary is the resignation about the supposedly necessary sacrifice which must be performed in the present by the hand of a binding, constraining, restraining and *bitter* law. Needless to say, the requirement to ‘negatively project thinking away from the present by means of concern for the inexistent past or future’ is ethically and politically atrophying, insofar as

⁵³ Serres, *The Five Senses*, 153.

⁵⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism. Coldness and Cruelty* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 82–3.

⁵⁵ Thanos Zartaloudis, ‘On Justice’, *Law and Critique* 22, no. 2 (2011), 144.

justifying the unwillingness to deal with the world and its materiality in the here-and-now.

It is exactly law's bitter metaphysical pretence to be *separated from* and *imposed on* the world, that Masciandaro opposes with the sweet truth of immanence: *law as such is inseparable from the world*.⁵⁶ Not a subjective pleasure, this notion of sweetness is an inhuman desire inscribed within the real itself.⁵⁷ Put otherwise: 'if there is indeed bitterness, let it not be *my* bitterness'. Masciandaro urges one to 'cleans the tongue' from both the bitterness of law's transcendence and the cloying taste of its binding (from *cloyen*: to bind, to hinder movement), so as 'to find the actual point of contact between sweetness and the law', the material-discursive continuum out of which law immanently emerges. It is through such a material continuum that the relation between law and justice can be thought anew, beyond the paradigm of guilt and the transcendent hope for a better world *beyond*. At the end of this vertiginous journey through mystical, visionary and biblical sources, a strategic suggestion thus emerges: to borrow from Agamben,

Law is not justice but only the gate that leads to justice. To open a passage towards justice is not the elimination of law, but rather its deactivation and inoperosity – in other words, another use of law⁵⁸

⁵⁶ The etymological root of the word *bitter* is the Proto-Indo-European **bheid*, to split.

⁵⁷ See Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 67.

⁵⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Stato di Eccezione* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 83–3 (my translation).

Cleansing the tongue from imaginary constructions and ecological sentimentality, and operationalising taste as a tool to discomfort given expectations, as well as a way to encounter and know the (undesired, non-human) other: this is the objective of the Japanese Knotweed ice cream devised by Cooking Sections (Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe). The chapter's protagonist is the Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), a plant that is a 'native' of Far East Asia and especially Japan. This plant is classified in UK as an *invasive* species, and currently at the centre of a moral panic campaign fuelled by media and propelled by its peculiar position vis-à-vis official normativity. This is no surprise. The weed, Deleuze and Guattari famously wrote, is 'the Nemesis of human endeavour'.⁵⁹ Referring to Mary Douglas' famous definition of *dirt* as 'matter out of place', Mabey, in his aptly titled *Weed: The Story of Outlaw Plants*, defined the weed as 'a plant in the wrong place'.⁶⁰ Useless, parasitic and thus immoral, ugly, savage, toxic: a dirty, swarming, and incomprehensible being which challenges all the ideals that make up our society, from aesthetics to morality, from utilitarianism to health.

The Japanese knotweed is no exception. Its exuberant proliferation does not respect property boundaries or, most importantly, the requirements of real estate market. On account of its supposed (and unproven) capacity to penetrate streets, foundations and walls, to the extent of

⁵⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004[1980]), 20.

⁶⁰ Richard Mabey, *Weeds: The Story of Outlaw Plants: A Cultural History* (London: Profile Books, 2012), 5.

causing structural collapse of buildings in the long term, the mere presence of the knotweed is capable of plunging the market value of a property.⁶¹ What if gastronomic interaction were to substitute for legal immunisation? What if taste were to become a way to deal with the *other*, substituting immunitary prevention with co-ingestion? Making an argument for an object-oriented cookery, Cochran has proposed an approach to cooking which would recognise non-human contingencies, materiality and agency, rather than seeking to preventively defuse them, as it occurs when the ‘immediate [human] aesthetic experience’ is posited as the only goal.⁶² Such a cookery, Mackay and Negarestani speculate, would not have to do with the exhibitionist recombination of cultural norms, but rather with an opening and attuning to nonhuman tastes and normativities, intersecting and mapping the human-non-human entanglements, and opening up ‘new routes’ through them.⁶³

Cooking Sections articulate such an effort, proposing ‘to adapt our sense of taste to them [the knotweed] rather than the law against them’. Or, we may say, using taste as a tool whereby deactivating law’s anaesthetic appropriation of the world, forcing it into a non-immunitary relation

⁶¹ Incidentally, knotweed’s current proliferation is in direct relation with urban capitalism, since it is in the post-industrial urban wastelands of the latter that the knotweed finds its perfect soil, full of the same minerals (lead, copper, iron, nickel, sulphur) ‘naturally’ available to her in the volcanic soil of Japan.

⁶² John Cochran, ‘Object-Oriented Cookery’, in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 307.

⁶³ Negarestani and Mackay, ‘Introduction’, 19–20.

with the worlds and its bodies. That is, as a tool to ‘challenge existing normative perceptions of belonging and predetermined legalities around ‘aliens’, contesting the image of economical and cultural toxicity attached to the knotweed – rhetorically presented as a dangerous and illegal immigrant to be extirpated – against the real toxicity of real estate market speculation. ‘If our sense of taste can adapt and make “invasive” plants palatable’, Cooking Sections writes, ‘our borders can also evolve and mutate into a blurry condition within a postcolonial world’. Here, as in Masciandaro’s chapters, the piercing suggestion of Zartaloudis resonates:

...what is to be assaulted is not law as an idea ‘in general’ but the juridical paradigm of law’s relation to violence as the performing art of determining guilt and taking life through a supposedly paramount, higher, ever deferred order of Last judgment⁶⁴

It is a subtler and yet equally strategic ‘assault’ that we may observe in the way the notion of taste is mobilised by the British craft cider makers, explored by Emma-Jayne Abbots in her chapter, which is a critique against the law materialised in and through the normative standards of the market, as well as in the excessively rigid legal imposition of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) regulations. In particular, the market-oriented ‘tyranny of immediacy’⁶⁵ configures cider-making as the invasively controlled process of generating a uniform, consistent

⁶⁴ Zartaloudis, ‘On Justice’, 144.

⁶⁵ Michel Legris, *Dionysos crucifié: Essai sur le goût du vin à l’heure de sa production industrielle* (Paris, Editions Syllepse, 2000).

and comfortable experience of pleasure: viz. an ‘artificial’ sweetness – achieved through the deterritorialising use of standardised techniques, imported apples, industrial yeasts, added sugar – which expresses the industry’s cloying attempt to attract younger (and arguably sweeter) palates into drinking cider. This morally reproachable (from the craft cider makers’ point of view), consumer-oriented sugar-coating, ultimately erases the territory and *invisibilises* the human and non-human (apple, yeast, etc.) bodies and practices involved in the production process.

We may find a resonance here with the criticism recently emerged in the realm of so-called ‘natural wine’, against the wine industry and its systematic production of easy and accessible wines, by means of flattening their territorial complexity in the aim of preventing non-human contingencies from threatening the standard of consistency, assumed as paramount vis-à-vis consumer expectations.⁶⁶ In fact, Abbot notes that *inconsistency* is valued among craft cider makers as the sign of a praxis that allows for unpredictability and non-human contingencies to enter the process, acknowledging that ‘the nonhuman raw materials ac[t] to produce taste as much as the human craft producer’. Paraphrasing Cochran, we may term it a sort of object oriented cider-making that, consistent to object-oriented ontology (OOO)’s dictum (‘objects are always in excess of their relations’), retunes standards of cider-making and tasting by opening them to a culinary

⁶⁶ See Andrea Pavoni, ‘Disenchanted Senses. Law and the Taste of the Real’, in *The Routledge Research Handbook on Law & Theory*, ed. Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (Abingdon: Routledge, in press).

continuum, in opposition to classical hylomorphism – i.e. a position that conceives praxis as the human action of imposing a form onto an inert matter.

To be sure, this strategy is not carried out through naïve spontaneity, or a consciously anarchic refusal of norms, but rather as a willing attempt to build an alternative normative framework, through a ‘dialogue with “others”’, both in form of appellation protocols and agri-capitalism.’ Taste is the prism through which this normativity is embodied and expressed: the sharper, at times uncomfortable flavours of the craft cider (the acid, the sour, the bitter, the dry), communicate the ontological, human-non-human entanglement that (inconsistently) produced it. The resulting ‘cider tastescape’ is an assemblage of practices and technologies, ideas and norms, human and non-human actors, whose complexity challenges both the standardisation of the agro-industrial systems as well as the dogmatism of commonsensical taste, and which requires learning ‘to savour the agony and ecstasy of [the] textured and flavourful life’ of the territory the drink embodies.⁶⁷

In these territories, specifically referring to those of wine, Andrea Mubi Brighenti argues, ‘the law can ... be observed as generated immanently, in the activity and the materials it is supposed to judge.’ In his chapter, Brighenti moves yet another assault to law’s juridical paradigm, via

⁶⁷ The quote is from Waterman’s incursion into the earthy beers of Payottenland, Tim Waterman, ‘The Flavor of the Place: Eating and Drinking in Payottenland’, in *Educated Tastes: Food, Drink and Connoisseur Culture*, ed. Jeremy Strong (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 79.

a critique of the revelatory ideology of wine tasting that informs professional sommeliers. The latter, he argues,

conceptualise the activity of tasting as an *encounter* between a subject and an object that should be resolved in favour of the latter: what counts, in their view, is the object, and the revelation – or the appearing, the explicitation, the becoming-explicit – of its features.

This is to be done by surgically splitting the realm of subjective impressions from that of scientific objectivity, joining the analytic examination of the wine with a normative judgement that frames and evaluates the experience of taste according to a set of legal requirements. What is at stake is not ‘an unstructured, idiosyncratic judgement’ about a wine being good or not, but rather a sort of Kantian, ‘structured, categorical judgment’ assessing the compatibility of a given wine, say a Côtes du Rhône, with the relative PGI requirement.

An assumption that eventually reproduces, in more complex terms, the commonsensical understanding around which taste is usually split, between a merely personal, relativistic and subjective immediacy which is not to be disputed (what Legris has termed the paradigm of the ‘narcissistic taste’) and a supposedly objective field of experts emitting normative judgements.⁶⁸ Evidently, the complex intermingling of law and the senses cannot be addressed via either subjective subtraction *from* law or external imposition *of* law. As Brighenti stresses, ‘not only does law operate on wine “from the outside”, but there is

⁶⁸ Legris, *Dionysos*.

also a special law that is secreted by wine itself in its social life': the 'living law' of territories.

Wine tasting can neither be configured as a revelatory enterprise, nor as depending on idiosyncratic subjectivity. Drawing his own work on territoriology, Brighenti proposes to understand tasting as a territory-making, that is, a multiplicity in which multiple elements come-together in a material and evolving continuum, as 'tasting produces "modalisations" that *animate* wine at the same time as they seek to assess and evaluate it'.⁶⁹ Avoiding not only classic hylomorphism, but also the reifying tendency implicit in some of the contemporary object-oriented fetishisations, Brighenti argues that 'wine is not an object, but an expressive material that fundamentally exists in the dimension of becoming'. Against the more fashionable concept of post-humanism, Brighenti proposes to rescue the concept of animism, as a more fruitful way to bridge the chiasm between analysis and judgement, and address the internal law of the tastescape.

Bataille argued that humans can only eat what they have already objectified. Likewise, the tastescape of a wine must undergo objectification in order to be marketed. For this purpose, legal categories play a key role by ratifying and reifying given relations between a set of technical, geographical and technological requirements, which are normally translated, and betrayed, into a specific visual and linguistic device: the wine label. Nicola Perullo's chapter begins from this peculiar artefact, in order to explore

⁶⁹ Andrea Mubi Brighenti, 'On Territoriology: Towards a General Science of Territory', *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 1 (2010).

the complex relation between seeing and tasting, in this way drawing an ideal link with the previous instalment of the *Law and the Senses Series: SEE*. Wine labels may be read as enacting a peculiar form of what Day defines as ‘lexeme to flavour’ synaesthesia: namely, a synaesthesia in which a word evokes a specific flavour on the individual.⁷⁰ Although no neuronal cross-activation is occurring (as instead is the case with synaesthesia proper), we may nonetheless see the wine label as producing, in Perullo’s words, ‘a relation of mutual *correspondence* ... in the postal meaning of this term: a word/image calls, the taste (cor)responds.’ A relation whose strength was shown by a famous experiment, in which oenology students smelled, tasted and assessed as red a wine which in fact was white, but had been dyed to appear as red.⁷¹ More than the wine itself, students in fact tasted its colour.

Nowhere as in the current era of food porn and *food-stagramming*, star-chefs and cooking TV show, can the short-circuit between seeing and tasting be observed. Today ‘the experience of eating has become *explicitly* visual as much as gustatory,’ a phenomenon which, Perullo notes, ‘risks obfuscating the significance of the concrete, real and material experience of both *cooking* and *consuming* the food, in favour of its media spectacularisation.’ On a sense, as today cooking is increasingly elevated to

⁷⁰ Sean A. Day, ‘The Human Sensoria and a Synaesthetic Approach to Cooking’, in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 396.

⁷¹ Gilles Morrot, Frédéric Brochet and Denis Dubourdieu, ‘The Color of Odors’, *Brain and Language* 79, no. 2 (2001).

the category of art, we may interpret the *foodstagramming* craze (brilliantly framed by Pil and Galia Kollektiv, below) as an implicit response to the famous Hegelian observation that food cannot belong to art, because of its perishability: ‘we can taste only by destroying.’⁷² In this sense we may see the act of taking and sharing pictures of food as a way to prolong the singularity of the event of tasting into time and space, that is, to reclaim its aesthetic relevance against its ephemerality. This however comes to the price of removing the materiality of taste altogether, in a way that is not so dissimilar from the mischievous aestheticisation of food in supermarket shelves, and that is consistent with the ongoing, individualistic detachment of taste not only from the materiality (and pleasure) of producing, preparing, and consuming food (as it is arguably often the case of the novel medicalization of food triggered by contemporary’s *orthorexia*, see below), but more problematically from the socio-economical structures and power relations that make it possible. Hence Perullo’s suggestion: rather than heightening cooking to the level of art, it may be the case of lowering art to the level of cooking, so as to attune to the materiality of relations, practices and bodies that lead, through time and space, to a given experience of taste.

Again, this conclusion revolves around the need to open up the culture of taste to the materiality of a tastescape. This is also the suggestion emerging from the next

⁷² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 138.

chapter where, with coffee as focus of their examination, Merima Bruncevic and Philip *Almestrand* Linné understand this beverage not as ‘merely a packaged, commercial, private, natural resource or a commodity’, but also as a tastescape in which bodies, ideas, norms and spaces comes together into a complex ecology. That coffee is directly tied to socio-cultural spaces and practices is certainly not a novel thing. From Habermas’ famous account of the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere out of the free circulation of ideas brewed in eighteenth-century European coffeehouses, to the recent recognition of the ‘Turkish coffee culture and tradition’ (2013) and the ‘Arabic coffee, a symbol of generosity’ (2015), among UNESCO’s ‘intangible cultural heritage’. What seems to be peculiar in these instances, however, is the stress on what is *intangible* and *symbolic* (e.g. cultures, traditions) that emerges *around* coffee: the material and agentic quality of coffee, that is, are often absent in this (anthropic) picture. Against this removal, Bruncevic and Linné turn their attention to:

the materiality of taste, namely how taste manifests itself as a tastescape ... produced through the entanglement of the stimulating and addictive taste of coffee with the sensations formed within its surrounding space

In fact, in the same sense as Negarestani describes in his visionary book *Cyclonopedia* the ‘agency’ of oil vis-à-vis Middle-East geopolitics, we may look at coffee as a geological ‘agent’ normatively organising humans and nonhumans around a series of capitalist and colonial relations via the effect of its caffeinic excitement, bitter

taste and sharp smell.⁷³ When it arrived in London, coffee quickly substituted ale as the drink of choice – by that time, it was more sensible to get drunk on ale than sick on the contaminated water of London – triggering, in the words of Green, ‘a dawn of sobriety that laid the foundations for truly spectacular economic growth in the decades that followed as people thought clearly for the first time.’⁷⁴ Coffee would be framed as a bourgeois substance of intelligence and efficiency, against beer-induced intoxication, and the lazy aristocratic decadence symbolised by chocolate.⁷⁵ While in a short text, originally published as an appendix to Brillat-Savarin’s *Physiology of Taste*, Balzac excitedly wrote that coffee ‘sets ideas in movement like they were grand army battalions in the battlefield’, Dolphijn notes that ‘the change from alcohol to caffeine [in nineteenth-century army rations] was the first sign of a new economy of violence’, not only exemplified in its colonial circuits, but also in its employment as a fuel to increase work-exploitation in coffee-fuelled factories, offices, and armies.⁷⁶ By attending at its agency and materiality, Bruncevic and Linné effectively explore the

⁷³ Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia*.

⁷⁴ Matthew Green, ‘The Lost World of the London Coffeehouse’, *The Public Domain Review*, 7 August 2013 <https://publicdomainreview.org/2013/08/07/the-lost-world-of-the-london-coffeehouse/> (accessed 1 March 2018).

⁷⁵ Massimo Montanari, *Il Cibo come Cultura* (Roma: Laterza, 2007).

⁷⁶ Rick Dolphijn, ‘The New Alimentary Continuum’, in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmout: Urbanomic, 2011), 147; Honoré de Balzac, *Traité des excitants modernes*, appendix to Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût* (Paris: Charpentier, 1838) <http://www.bmlisieux.com/curiosa/excitant.htm> (accessed 1 March 2018).

tastescape of coffee and, by ‘awaken[ing] law to coffee and its taste’, show how such a tastescape in fact morphs into a lawscape, in which geological, geopolitical, economical and socio-cultural normativities intersect.



What is a recipe if not the gastro-normative artefact par excellence? A set of *how-to* instructions meant to adapt the contingency of cooking to the standard of a normative knowledge. *Recipe*, in Latin, is the imperative form: *take*, and was the introductory formula of medical prescriptions. As Flandrin explains, it was only in the seventeenth century that gastronomy proper supplanted dietetics, cooking began to be assumed as an art rather than a medical science, and the hedonism of the ‘gourmet’ was *liberated*.⁷⁷ Yet, the early, normative power of recipes remained in place. This had ossifying effects, Haden argues, vis-à-vis the parameters of taste, and often resulted in communicating a rationalised and standardised gastro-normativity, exemplified by the ideology of measurability and repeatability expressed in recipe cookbooks and, we may add, repeated and magnified in today’s TV cooking shows.⁷⁸ Camporese has emphasised the crucial role played by a 1891 recipe book by Pellegrino Artusi, *The Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, in producing a national consciousness in Italy as,

⁷⁷ Jean-Louis Flandrin, ‘From Dietetics to Gastronomy: The Liberation of the Gourmet’, in *Food: A Culinary History*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁷⁸ Haden, ‘Lionizing Taste’.

30 years after the unification, the country was still culturally and linguistically split among regional enclaves. A unification that, however, occurred in heavily asymmetric form. Artusi, a bourgeois from central Italy, crafted a series of recipes in which ‘the politico-economical system, the social structure of his society, and the myth of bourgeois order’ were carefully and paternalistically translated, along marked geographical, socio-economic and gender cleavages.⁷⁹ The seven speculative recipes gathered in the second part of this volume aims towards an opposite direction. They seek to disentangle taste, first, from its parochial entrapment into bourgeois enjoyment and, second, from their normatively atrophying ideology. No longer a mechanism that preventively defuses contingency, the recipe is thus reconfigured as a tool aimed at detecting and unfolding the contingent frictions between the experience (of taste) and the culinary continuum of bodies and structures that shape it.

We begin with Kit Poulson’s recipe for an Ice Cream Sundae, an ideal complement to Cooking Sections’ knotweed ice cream. This popular late nineteenth-century American recipe is, for Poulson, the opportunity to reflect on the very nature of ice cream, which he sees more as a function (of politics, art, technology and even excess) than a food in itself. Ice cream may be seen as the (glace) cherry on top of an inversed Prometheanism, the millennial attempt by the human to master the ice, to bring ‘the cold to the hot’. It is in fact only with the advent of a proper socio-technological apparatus, in the

⁷⁹ Piero Camporese, *Alimentazione, Folclore, Società* (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1980), 117 [my translation].

nineteenth century itself, that the ice cream would abandon its status as object of elite consumption and fully become the quintessentially popular food of our time. What puzzles, Poulson argues, is the ice cream's ephemeral inconsistency, always in the process of dissolving, to the point that it could be seen as 'an abstracted action, eating without food in order to better understand eating': the self-fulfilling taste of a frozen immanence, in which notions of nutrition, necessity, and even substance, melt away into an excessive experience of surplus.

This experience could match Veblen's notion of 'conspicuous wastefulness', that he saw 'as a constraining norm selectively shaping and sustaining our sense of what is beautiful'.⁸⁰ From this observation Pil and Galia Kollektiv take inspiration for their 'Rainbow Pixels', a recipe for the perfect *foodstagramming*. In an ideal dialogue with Perullo's contribution, Pil and Galia Kollektiv reflect on the ongoing de-prioritisation of the experience of taste in favour of its visual communication: as 'the meal becomes a photo session and the plate a backdrop against which the palate becomes less important than the eye', they argue, 'Veblen's conspicuousness has been democratised'. Whereas Kant sang the glory of food only insofar as 'lubricat[ing] the wheels of free and general conversation', the removal of the materiality here appears even more drastic.⁸¹ Both the 'material culture of cooking' and the sensorial experience of tasting, are ingested by the

⁸⁰ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1973[1899]), 64.

⁸¹ Christopher Turner, 'Leftovers / Dinner with Kant. The Taste of Disgust', *Cabinet Magazine*, Issue 33 *Deception* (2009). <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/33/turner.php> (accessed 1 March 2018).

image and its visual normativity.⁸² Whatever the moral judgement one may have vis-à-vis this state of things, it is worth noting the problematic correspondence between this priority of visual aesthetics over taste and that of the agro-industrial mode. From the use of aesthetically enhancing chemicals to the systematic wasting of the food that is unable to meet these standards, it is evident how agro-industrial ‘conspicuous wastefulness’ is a serious problem, one that the current foodstagramming seemingly contributes to obfuscate.⁸³

This is a process that Amanda Couch’s recipe for an ox or cow tongue obliquely challenges. In this ouroboros encounter between a human and a non-human tongue, the visual, tactile and tasting materiality of food is not avoided through digital filtering but rather fully engaged with. The tongue, the ‘sentinel at the boundaries of the body’ and gatekeeper of taste enters in contact with its bovine alter ego. If eating is always a being eaten, tasting always a being-tasted, insofar as entering the cannibalistic and culinary continuum of being, then it is hard to find a more explicit instance than that of simultaneously licking and being licked by this non-human tongue, directly experiencing that negation of one’s subjecthood, the self-objectifying entrance ‘into the realm of anonymous

⁸² Montanari, *Il Cibo come Cultura*.

⁸³ ‘the fundamental function and ploy of gastronomy and its cultural overvaluation [is] the cultural exacerbation in discourse and culture of a necessary obfuscation of our relation to food, obscuring the anonymous, objectal dimension of subjectivity to which eating exposes us.’ Negarestani and Mackay, ‘Introduction,’ 26.

organic processes', which characterises every act of eating.⁸⁴ We are reminded again of Sartre's Roquentin, whose own tongue did lose formal relation with aesthetic taste and appeared to him in its slimy and disgusting reality, protruding from the gaping monstrosity of the mouth as an unbearably alien materiality. Here this impression is magnified, as the enormous and dark tongue of the bovine is an ever more appropriate proxy for the monstrous other: not the dialectical Other, however, but the implicit Real of the violent structure of killing that unavoidably underlines any act of meat eating, and that it is conveniently abstracted as much in the aesthetics digitalisation of food, as in the soothing marketing of more or less 'sustainable' meat production.

Abjection occurs in liminal places, Couch reminds us via Bartram, and it is exactly through the liminality of skin that Trine Lyngsholm seeks to make sense of this concept. The skin of milk, a threshold between liquid and solid, is where human lips and this other cow-derivate product meet. Her recipe explores the visceral feel triggered by the taste of this surface in which the body/mind gap seems to collapse, fleetingly bridging the knowledge-sensation chiasm via the revolting awareness of incompatibility between the I and the outside: "I do not assimilate it", as Kristeva uttered while describing the nauseating encounter of her lips with the milk. Disgust, as the taste of a radical otherness that I try to expel but ultimately cannot

⁸⁴ Dorothee Legrand, 'Ex- Nihilo: Forming a Body Out of Nothing', in *Collapse, Vol. VII: Culinary Materialism*, ed. Reza Negarestani and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 506.

since it would be only *myself* that I would spit out.⁸⁵ As in the previous instance, also in this case the experience of disgust explores the limits of a normative system – and the inconsistency of its anthropocentric, subjective and transcending premises. Desire appears to be released from these cages, so that while *I* recoil in disgust, an inexplicable and impersonal attraction remains, an excessive, inhuman ‘eroticism of disgust’.⁸⁶ How to translate this visceral feeling to the audience, however? How to communicate the very collapse of communication that abjection triggers by throwing us into ‘a place where meaning collapses’ (Kristeva)?

How to discomfort taste by releasing an inhuman desire (a desire released from subjective enjoyment) through which relating taste to its conditions of production, distribution and consumption? These seem to be among the implicit questions informing Lyngsholm’s and Couch’s experiments, and also Nora Silva’s recipe for a Mexican chilli salsa. Here, the violence of financial capitalism engrained within agro-industrial system is expressed via a performative engagement with an as much ferocious preparation and consumption. The salsa ‘must be acidic and sour, brutally spicy, violent on the palate – Silva explains – the process of cooking must also reflect agitation: we smash, we break, we chop’. In a beautiful essay, Gigante interprets Beckett’s *Molloy* and his notorious penchant for sucking stones to resist hunger, as an ironical attack to the romantic pretence to separate the appetite-driven

⁸⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 3.

⁸⁶ Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2004).

bodily enjoyment from the disinterest of aesthetic pleasure.⁸⁷ In a sense, what Molloy absurdly expresses is nothing but the insipidness of disinterest. To taste requires to take part, to be partial, interested, involved and, at times, in danger. We may read in this light Silva's own reference to Molloy as representing the modern consumer: the one that is engaged in a world whose violence is unwilling and unable to experience, that is, to taste – exactly because, to follow Jameson, peculiar to modernity is the severing of experience from its structural conditions of possibility.⁸⁸ Silva's recipe materialises this very violence, via a vigorous performance that, by removing safe distance, makes explicit the reality that normally remains hidden behind polished culinary practice.

From extreme sourness and acidity we then move to extreme sweetness in Mariana Meneses' recipe that, taking inspiration from the work of the artist Ana Prvacki, looks at the Serbian tradition of offering a spoonful of *slatko* (very sweet strawberry jam) to welcome the guest. Again we are in a threshold, tenuously oscillating between welcoming and fearing, trust and suspicion, embrace and entrapment. There is a thin line between the seemingly disinterested sweet pleasure the guest is offered, and the cloying bound they may be entangled with. A veritable liminal ritual, we may see the *slatko* as a sugar-coating of sorts, with the precise purpose to neutralise the potential for conflict that always inhabits the crossing of boundaries. It is in a sense

⁸⁷ Gigante, 'The Endgame of Taste'.

⁸⁸ Fredric Jameson. 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *The Modernist Papers* (London: Verso, 2007).

a sweet trick (tricksters, after all, are the threshold deities, from the Greek *Hermes* to the Nigerian *Exú*) that through the sensorial innocence of sweetness enacts a normative re-structuring of power relations, based on a set of mutual expectations – a ‘symbolic anthropophagy’ (Derrida) in which socio-cultural codes are mutually eaten into a cloying embrace that eventually leaves a ‘bitter-sweet aftertaste’.

The conclusion is left to Jonathan Bywater’s ‘Menu Turistico’, based on a text composed to accompany a dinner/exhibition curated by Jennifer Teets, held in Rome and titled, with a nod to Athanasius Kircher, *the world is bound in secret knots*. In fact, in this delicate narration of an ancient Roman meal, from the antipasto to the dessert, the themes that traverse this volume reappear, implicitly processed, confounded, and bound by the panoply of courses, reflections, ‘unattributed sources’, inviting the reader to a hypnotic sequence which, very appropriately, brings the volume to an end.

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