

THE PERCEPTION AND JUDGMENT OF FLAVOR SOME EXAMPLARY CASES AND SOME APORIAS *

ελαττωσι [...] εινε¹.

Plotino, *Enn.*, IV, 3, xviii, 4-5

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Il faut se prêter à autrui et ne se donner qu'à soi-même².

M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, L.III, C.X

An einen Lichtfreund

Willst du nicht Aug' und Sinn ermatten,
Lauf' auch der Sonne nach im Schatten!³

F.Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*
("Scherz, List und Rache", n.11)

Presented here are some reflections on the issue of gustatory judgments. Several questions will be addressed in the present paper: are these judgments something unique in their genre, or can the process of meaning-making which forms the basis of these judgments – which we will examine shortly - be analo-

1 * Many thanks to Flavia Gasperetti for her help in this translation. »The need of deliberation goes with the less self-sufficing intelligence; craftsmen faced by a difficulty stop to consider; where there is no problem their art works on by its own forthright power«.

2 »A man should lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself«.

3 »To a Friend of Light. If you want to spare your eyes and your mind, / follow the sun from the shadow behind«.

gous to the way other sensorial judgments, particularly visual and auditory, but also to a lesser degree olfactory and tactile, are formed? And would this include even those judgments that, being concerned with the perceived 'states of affairs,' might involve something akin to the feeling by a form of life? In short, what kind of truth - if there is one - underpins these sensorial judgments, and gustatory judgments in particular⁴?

The literature that has examined so far the formation of gustatory judgments, though certainly not extensive, has isolated at least two properties which make them somewhat unique, compared to all other forms of sensorial judgments: the first is the reliability of gustatory judgments in the individual's subjective certainty⁵; the second property is the weak and undefined value of these judgments from a cognitive/intellectual perspective and their being, as it has been argued, essentially unadorned or devoid of language⁶. To put it succinctly, on the one hand their perceptual immediacy and on the other, their inability to develop into 'accomplished' forms of judgment, as in the case of other more intersubjectively reliable forms, such as those associated with (and/or depending upon) sight, hearing, olfaction and touch which, according to Condillac, are able to make us certain of the world's exteriority⁷.

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4 Before we move forward into the subject of this paper concerning the specificity of gustatory judgments, it seems appropriate to clarify the relevance of the term 'judgment' that here occurs several times, both in reference to gustatory judgments and to other forms of sensorial judgments. We say, therefore, that we are using the word 'judgment' with no reference to the *moral* connotations that have often been attributed to it. It is therefore used not in *evaluative* terms (where we always find lurking a more or less implied *generalization* of predication), but to describe an act of *subjective discrimination* - something akin to 'reflective judgment' as outlined in Kant's third *Critique*, as far as its 'subjective' nature is concerned - but without the cumbersome 'natural finality' which is, in the Kantian perspective, an integral part of his argument.

5 Aside from all conjectures and suppositions of both phylogenetic and ontogenetic order, the case of *the wild boy of Aveyron* is exemplary. His 'linguistic education' was unsuccessful and it had to surrender to the *evidence* of the facts. Even though Victor was incapable of uttering in a loud voice any judgments concerning flavors and smells that were proposed to him in the course of these educational experiment, he was nevertheless capable of recognizing and appreciating them (cf. H.Lane, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*, Harvard, Harvard Univ. Press, 1976 (ed.it., Padova, Piccin 1989, p.44, 66).

6 This refers to the meticulous observations of A. Leroi--Gourhan in *Le geste et la parole*, 2 vols., Paris, A. Michel 1965 (ed.it. Torino, Einaudi, 1977, II, pp.341-43), which I have discussed in "Del problematico rapporto tra forma e funzione, a partire dal Gusto", in A.Martone, Ed., *Sensorialità, Sensibilità, Linguaggio. A partire dai 'sensi minori'* (28-29 maggio 2012, Napoli), in print.

7 Cf. E.B. de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* [1754], Paris, A.Fayard 1984.

Even within this frame, mentioned here very succinctly but exhaustively, we advance the following hypothesis: the basis of gustatory judgments could rest on its status as a belief, as perceived both by the issuer of said judgment and by those who accept it and, therefore, on the credibility of the issuer, i.e. the expertise possessed by the person/s issuing the judgment. Expertise that is believed to be such, regardless of the reasons that create and nurture said belief.

We shall map out, therefore, the modalization of six different kinds of gustatory judgment⁸, regardless of the credibility they enjoy (or not enjoy) among a particular audience. Secondly, we shall consider the issue of credibility, wherever applicable. Finally, we shall try to consider, moving from their credibility, whether such judgments can extend to, or affect, judgments of a different kind, such as other sensorial judgments or judgments that concern 'states of affairs', and the feeling by a form of life. Lastly, we will not lose sight of the issue of truth, assuming there is one, raised by these kind of judgments, and of gustatory judgments in particular. In conclusion, we will take our leave presenting a small number of instances that exemplify, but in a non precisely focused way, the introjective/ingestive practice of flavor.

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Here, therefore, are the six Tables of modality:

TABLES OF MODALITY OF TASTE/FLAVOR

- a.1 Tom tastes x and finding it too spicy (says) he does not like it
- a.2 Eva tastes x and finding it to be not spicy enough (says) she does not like it
- a.3 Mike tastes x and finding it too salty (says) he does not like it
- a.4 Mary tastes x and finding it to be not salty enough (says) she does not like it

- b.1 Tom tastes y (which could be x, but he does not recognize it as x) and finding it very (or not enough) spicy (says) he likes it

8 We refer here to modalization as it, according to Greimas, specifies to the very abstract level the *competence* of the subject, a competence that articulates itself in the forms of *vouloir*, *devoir*, *pouvoir* and *savoir* of which the latter, in these Tables, is the most important and is assumed to be, if possible, of the *same level* among the subjects in question. As it is pointed out in this regard: «[...] the importance of the modal values of the *vouloir*, *devoir*, *pouvoir* and *savoir*, is evidenced by the fact that these four modalities constitute a group of predicates that are common to many languages» (F.Marsciani–A.Zinna, *Elementi di semiotica generativa*, Bologna, Esculapio 1991, p. 95; our transl.).

- b.2 Eva tastes *y* (which could be *x*, but he does not recognize it as *x*) and finding it very (or not enough) spicy (says) she likes it
- b.3 Mike tastes *y* (which could be *x*, but he does not recognize it as *x*) and finding it very (or not enough) salty (says) he likes it
- b.4 Mary tastes *y* (which could be *x*, but he does not recognize it as *x*) and finding it very (or not enough) salty (says) she likes it

- c.1 Tom tastes *x* (which he now recognizes as *x*) and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) he likes it
- c.2 Eva tastes *x* (which he now recognizes as *x*) and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) she likes it
- c.3 Mike tastes *x* (which he now recognizes as *x*) and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) he likes it
- c.4 Mary tastes *x* (which he now recognizes as *x*) and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) she likes it

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- d.1 Tom tastes *y* and finding it too spicy (says) he likes it
 - d.2 Eva tastes *y* and finding it not spicy enough (says) she likes it
 - d.3 Mike tastes *y* and finding it too salty (says) he likes it
 - d.4 Mary tastes *y* and finding it not salty enough (says) she likes it

 - e.1 Tom tastes *y* and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - e.2 Eva tastes *y* and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) she does not like it
 - e.3 Mike tastes *y* and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - E.4 Mary tastes *y* and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) she does not like it

 - f.1 Tom tastes *x* and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - f.2 Eva tastes *x* and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) she does not like it
 - f.3 Mike tastes *x* and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - f.4 Mary tastes *x* and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) she does not like it
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These Tables may only convey the oddity, i.e. the volatility or volubility of this kind of judgments, and therefore of human feeling in general; indeed what happens in the a, d., c. and f scenarios, in particular, is a case in point. An oddity which, evidently, can appear strange, even harmful, being intractable, in our everyday practices, in our more or less socially constructed life. We shall investigate the aporetic nature of such oddity later.

There could, of course, be other possible combinations of perceived taste/flavor of a dish (whether it is in fact the same dish or a different one), on the one hand, and judgments issued by Tom, Eva, Mike and Mary, intersubjectively or not, on the other- and these judgments could be shared by the issuers or, as exemplified in the Tables, not.

What these Tables clearly illustrate, despite all possible intersubjective agreements or disagreements (and intrasubjective agreements or disagreements) is that a flavor, which cannot obviously be separated from smell, or the appearance of the dish, from its tactile consistency, and even from its history – is converted into a judgment. Such judgment can form the basis for the evaluation of similar (or different) tastes/flavors, or, and if forgotten, can contradict or deny the ones previously issued in different, similar or even in the same circumstances: a taste/flavor is thus converted into a judgment, a judgment that is not in any way comparable to intellectual knowledge, but that is, and still remains, a feeling.

And nevertheless, when Tom tastes x and finding it too spicy says he does not like it (a.1), what kind of 'knowledge' does his judgment demonstrate? What cognition does this knowledge possess about another knowledge, stating an obvious and repeated association between tasting and knowing⁹? This

9 In Italian the association is between *sapore* (here *taste*) e *sapere* (here *knowledge*) – an association based on a peculiar assonance in Italian, does not find correspondence, and is therefore lost, in English. This association has been visited several times among others by R.Barthes who, in a memorable text, also very well known, said: «I undertake therefore to let myself be borne on by the force of any living life: forgetfulness [...]. Now comes perhaps the age of another experience: that of *unlearning*, of yielding to the unforeseeable change that forgetting imposes on the sedimentation of the knowledges, cultures and beliefs we have traversed. This experience has, I believe, an illustrious and outdated name, which I shall venture to appropriate here, without inhibition, at the very crossroads of its etymology: *sapientia* – no power, a little knowledge, a little wisdom and as much flavor as possible». (R. Barthes, *Leçon inaugurale de la chaire de sémiologie littéraire du Collège de France, prononcée le 7 janvier 1977*, Paris, Seuil, 1978; *Inaugural Lecture*, in *A Barthes*

knowledge, the former, knows about itself and must, therefore, leave a trace, insofar as it knows that what it has felt (tasted) is certainly connected to a judgment of some kind. It is irrelevant whether such a judgment is shared or not by other forms of knowledge that come from the same sensorial field, nor if its judgment is contradicted or denied by another judgment completely dissimilar, as in the case where such a judgment is issued by another person or where it is issued by he who had, perhaps in other circumstances, judged the same flavor in a different way.

In order to make explicit the material basis of this knowledge, based on taste, it is necessary to consider that this sensorial knowledge is simply a knowledge amongst others, but it is also important to remark that it is primarily an endocorporeal knowledge, which sets it apart from all other sensorial forms of knowledge. After all, the constitutive matter of such knowledge, namely the flavor, reveals itself only this way, by penetrating and pervading the areas that are located half way between the senses and sensibility, structuring our memory, imagination, fantasy and linguistic interaction.¹⁰

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A gustatory judgment, therefore, because of its inextricable link with flavor, has to be, before being 'subjective', but also after that (*de gustibus non est*

Reader, ed. S. Sontag, New York, Hill and Wang 1982, p.478). With such an 'experience' that assigns to knowledge a conscious and perhaps more refined sensorial explanation (particularly when it comes to flavor), and states the *sapientia of unlearning* entrusting to *flavor* the role of leading the game (tasting is not knowing as it is *unlearning to knowing!*), the present paper is in full agreement. It is less in agreement whenever such an 'experience' is interpreted as a 'knowledge' born and raised elsewhere and considered able to legislate, as well as on everything else, also on the relation, uniquely and irreducibly gustatory, of an *endocorporeal knowledge*. with the 'metaphysical' projection of such knowledge over the endocorporeal one, on the contrary, this paper does not intend to establish any complicity.

10 It is not easy to draw a dividing line between these two 'semantic fields', that of *imagination* and that of *fantasy*, which are the product of historically layered cultural notions. For an examination, both conceptual and terminological of these fields in the Modern age, cf. M.Fattori-M.LBianchi, *Phantasia-Imaginatio*, Roma, Ediz. dell'Ateneo 1988. Limiting ourselves here to a simple etymological analysis, it should not be to overlook that *imagination* is connected to the 'imago' and thus is concerned with the act of *seeing*. *Fantasy* on the other hand is anchored to *phainestai* or the act of *showing*, which is what happens with all the hypotheses, assumptions, inferences that such an act makes possible, and do not concern just 'seing' but also *feeling* in general. Also, we must not forget that G. Vico, led perhaps by similar inferences when it comes to conceptualise instances of physiological feeling, does not speak, as is well known, of imagination but of *fantasy* which is, even more than *wit* and *memory* which also share with fantasy an 'embodied' knowledge, the 'mythopoeic' faculty *par excellence*.

disputandum - as the old saying, one of the most pernicious and misleading adages of our long-lived Modernity, has it) more than anything, certain of itself and does not care to agree with the (inter)subjectivity of Tom, Eva, Mike or Mary, nor with its own subjectivity – so what follows?

This certainty of itself, before and after Hegel, who considered it to be the litmus test of an ascent of Subjectivity towards more ambitious goals, such as Objectivity and the Absoluteness of the Spirit, has remained blurred as if bewildered by its own purely subjective nature, as if the ‘immediacy’ of such certainty were not worthy of attention, but rather vulnerable to suspicion and distrust towards a knowledge so poor and devoid of...absolute-ness. We shall not dwell on this ‘symptom’ or ‘syndrome’ of suspicion, of this suspicion, even though its immediacy, its innocence, would be worth further reflection.

Having said that, could we have here, in a gustatory judgment, the template of all forms of judgment? If a gustatory judgment (a judgment which is related to flavor) reveals, on the one hand, the ‘necessary’ certainty of itself and, the other, all its ‘contingent’ groundlessness, based as it is only on such certainty, what is, then, the nature of all other sensorial judgments?

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When I state that a particular thing is pleasurable/unpleasant to my sense of smell, beautiful/ugly to the sight, smooth/rough to the touch, melodic/cacophonous to the ears, or light/heavy or easily/dangerous for my form of life, and, for this reason alone I like it (or I do not like it),¹¹ am I doing anything different from establishing a simple connection between a judgment and a sensorial perception?

It has been said before, and it will be repeated now: the knowledge derived from a gustatory judgment finds its material basis in flavor, an entirely endocorporeal matter. The value of this judgment, because of its specificity, is not translatable, does not have a ‘literal’ translation in other sensorial judgments, and this could be because the material basis of these other judgments,

11 This does not mean, obviously, that the opposite is not also true, at least *ceteris paribus*, and that this thing I smell, see, touch, listen, interact with, is not also fragrant/stinky, beautiful/ugly, smooth/rough, melodic/cacophonous, light/heavy or easy/dangerous (to my form of life) *just and only because I like it* (or *not like it*) bringing into play once again something that is very similar to the *association of a judgment to a sense*.

their matter of the expression,¹² is different: olfaction, sight, hearing, touch, or the acceptance or rejection by a form of life do not possess the same penetration capacity and pervasiveness of a gustatory judgment. Nevertheless, the difference between these sensorial judgments, this ‘impossible’ intersemiotic translation,¹³ does not efface the common quality they all share: they are all connected to a sensorial perception and/or depend on it.

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- 12 In the sense of *Prolegomena to a theory of language* [1943] by L. Hjelmslev (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press 1963), where he states: «The terms *expression plane* and *content plane* and, for that matter, *expression* and *content* are chosen in conformity with established notions and are quite arbitrary. Their functional definition provides no justification for calling one, and not the other, of these entities *expression*, or one, and not the other, *content*. They are defined only by their mutual solidarity, and neither of them can be identified otherwise. They are each defined only oppositively and relatively, as mutually opposed functives of one and the same function» (p.60). Each one of these planes (*expression plane* and *content plane*) is in turn articulated into: *expression-form*, *expression-substance* and *expression-purport* (in the case of expression) and in: *content-form*, *content-substance*, and *content-purport* (when it comes to content).
- 13 The existence of an *intersemiotic translation* or ‘transmutation’, together with both *intra-linguistic* and *inter-linguistic*, was introduced, as it is well known, by R. Jakobson (“On linguistic Aspects of Translation” [1959], ed.it. in *Saggi di linguistica generale*, Milano, Feltrinelli 1966, pp.56-64) who did not, however, discuss it as a specific subject. It has only recently become the subject of an in dept examination (N.Dusi-S.Nergaard, Eds., “Sulla traduzione intersemiotica”, in *Versus. Quaderni di studi semiotici*, 2000, 85-86-87). Bearing in mind Jakobson’s distinction, which makes intersemiotic translation «an interpretation of verbal signs by means of non-verbal sign systems», it is worth remarking on how here ‘verbal signs’ are assumed to have *primary role*, considered as the only ones susceptible of ‘transmutation’ by the non-verbal signs, assumed therefore as signs of the semiotic system *par excellence*. This ‘supremacy’, albeit involuntarily or unconsciously established by Jakobson, of ‘linguistic’ or ‘verbal’ signs has led to a theoretical neglect of those semiotic systems which are to be considered *linguistic* nonetheless, even if they are *not verbal*, like sign-languages – in respect to which the translation process (or ‘interpretation’ as it is called by Jakobson) is accomplished not only by converting a system of linguistic (‘verbal’) signs but also from a system of *linguistic but non-vocal signs* into linguistic and vocal signs. This is also true of those translation acts concernend with expressing sensorial perceptions, such as flavor and taste, through a specifically linguistic system (vocal or non-vocal as in the case of Signs languages), converting them into linguistic signs (vocal or not-vocal), and thus ‘transmuting’ (or *translating?*) the sensorial experience in question. Putting aside the issue of the ‘supremacy’ of the linguistic (‘verbal’) system (as the *vocal* linguistic system was called after Jakobson) – which has been elected, in homage to the structuralist tradition, by many as the one true *scientific* system, the most complete and accomplished semiotic system – well, putting aside this kind of methodological *a priori*, it is possible to seriously consider the questions concerning a sensorial system such as taste, both in itself and in all matters relating to its ‘transmutation’ (or *translation?*) into linguistic system *tout court* (whether vocal or signed).

And what about the truth? Does such a judgment ('this is true/false/fake') have any links with the senses? If I state that something is true/false/fake, which of my senses, if any, will be involved in this statement?

If I stop to consider any of the judgments listed in the Tables mentioned above, eg. "Tom tastes x and tasting it too spicy (says) he does not like it" (a.1), there are two possibilities: either Tom is silent on what he has just felt, so nothing happens intersubjectively (although for him what he has just felt remains something he has experienced nonetheless); or else Tom, after tasting x and finding it too spicy, opens his mouth and says he does not like it. In this case, Tom is implicitly assuring that what he is saying is true, that it is not false nor fake (he could be lying, of course, but even if this were the case, Tom is nonetheless expecting that his statement will be taken as true). Tom is, therefore, implicitly claiming or expecting to be believed. Whether he is lying or not, he demands or expects his pronouncement to be taken at face value.

And so, where truth is concerned, whenever we are considering the truth of a judgment, is there any other possible way to proceed aside from taking someone's word for it? And if this is the case, are we doing anything different from establishing a link between a judgment and a sensorial perception?¹⁴

And if Tom, or anyone else, were to declare that he believes that the gustatory judgment he has heard, issued by Eva, Mike or Mary, is true, whatever the reasons attributed to Eva, Mike, or Mary, is he doing anything different from simply taking their word? Is Tom doing anything different from the establishing a link between a judgment and a sensorial perception?

14 F.Nietzsche, perhaps more than others, has repeatedly stated that this was just the case, and that 'the truth' was nothing more than the result of an «unconscious disguise of physiological needs»: « Every philosophy which puts peace higher than war, every ethic with a negative grasp of the idea of happiness, every metaphysic and physic that knows a finale, an ultimate condition of any kind whatever, every predominating, aesthetic or religious longing for an aside, a beyond, an outside, an above all these permit one to ask whether sickness has not been the motive which inspired the philosopher. The unconscious disguising of physiological requirements under the cloak of the objective, the ideal, the purely spiritual, is carried on to an alarming extent, and I have often enough asked myself, whether on the whole philosophy hitherto has not generally been merely an interpretation of the body, and a misunderstanding of the body. [...] in all philosophising it has not hitherto been a question of 'truth' at all, but of something else, namely, of health, future, growth, power, life» (F.Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* [1882], Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press 2001, pp.5-6).

The truth game is a game of mirrors, where he who declares that *p* is refracted by them *ad infinitum* until someone interposes himself in this game, and interrupting it, takes responsibility for this judgement, shoulders the burden and interrupts that infinite game of 'reflections'. But he who, like Tom "tastes *x* and tasting it too spicy (says) he does not like it" expects his word to be taken at face value, without second thoughts or retractions or denials. In the same way, anyone who interposes himself in this game, expects his word to be taken at face value, plus, by having interrupted the infinite game of mirroring judgements, he has performed an act of testimony¹⁵.

The game of truth comes up against an unsolvable *aporia* or, at least, one that cannot be solved by using the yardstick of the observations made so far: if Tom claims or expects his word to be believed, this is also true of Eva, Mike,

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15 It would be interesting, would it not lead us to stray from the present topic, to introduce here a thorough meditation on a particular perspective, running through our cultural tradition, that has posited the existence of a natural form of intelligence, as opposed to the rational - an intelligence that relies exclusively on 'reason' or 'reflection' and is entrusted with the duty and the honor of deciding precisely about the 'truth' of this or that proposition, of this or that statement, of this or that judgement. As we have seen, the Plotinian quotation placed here in *exergue* is, on the contrary, expressive of the naturalness of intelligence. The permanence of this tradition is still very noticeable in G. Vico, according to which «*homo non intelligendo fit omnia*». This lack of reflection («*not intelligendo*») in turn, is linked to the notion of common sense which is: «*un giudizio senz'alcuna riflessione, comunemente sentito da tutto un ordine, da tutto un popolo, da tutta una nazione, o da tutto il genere umano*» (Principj di una scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni, cpv. 142; 342). The notion that 'intelligence' is determined in some measure by sensorial perceptions, rather than relying entirely on 'logic', is clearly present also in Nietzsche, and especially in *The Gay Science*. In this text, he observes how «*The course of logical thought and reasoning in our modern brain corresponds to a process and struggle of impulses, which singly and in themselves are all very illogical and unjust; we experience usually only the result of the struggle so rapidly and secretly does this primitive mechanism now operate in us*» (Ibid., pp.111-12). To bring this perusal of Nietzschean ideas on natural intelligence to an end, see also «*I fear that the animals see man as a being like them who in a most dangerous manner has lost his animal common sense - as the insane animal, the laughing animal, the weeping animal, the miserable animal*» (Ibid., p.145), and then: «*They are disagreeable to me, those men in whom every natural inclination forthwith becomes a disease, something disfiguring, or even disgraceful. They have seduced us to the opinion that the inclinations and impulses of men are evil; they are the cause of our great injustice to our own nature, and to all nature! There are enough of men who may yield to their impulses gracefully and carelessly: but they do not do so, for fear of that imaginary 'evil thing' in nature! That is the cause why there is so little nobility to be found among men: the indication of which will always be to have no fear of oneself, to expect nothing disgraceful from oneself, to fly without hesitation wherever we are impelled [...]*» (Ibid., p.167).

or Mary, as they too can make the same claim and have the same expectation. And if Tom has experienced that particular taste too often, and this has made him too confident or too familiar with it, then he won't be willing to re-evaluate his knowledge, the knowledge of that flavor, and to believe whatever Eva, Mike, Mary consider to be the truth about that same flavor.

On the one hand, therefore, the subjective certainty, exposed (and represented) in all its 'necessity' by the immediate, invincible and inescapable knowledge of a flavor; and, the other, its 'contingent' but arrogant entrenchment on a form of knowledge that is intangible, invisible, inaudible: if the subjective certainty exposes itself, then it also exposes, by the same token, its own defensive entrenchment, which can be made porous and penetrable only by relinquishing its own self-exposure, which would be equal to going back on its his own word – a double bind in which the gustatory judgment seems to expose, more than any other sensorial judgment, the one who issues it. As a judgment of taste, more than any other, is based on the word given and received – on the credibility of the giver and the testimony of the receiver.

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There you have it: the connection between a judgment and a sense, that of taste in this case, is an incontrovertible act of testimony, the most indisputable of all, as such sensorial certainty (a certainty at the same time unique and unrepeatable) cannot be re-evaluated, withdrawn or denied: it is certain in as much as it is unfounded, and its incontrovertibility will be guaranteed by nothing else but the given, and received, word.

And then: this association between a judgment and a sense, that of taste in this case, does it not serve as the template for all forms of judgment? If a gustatory judgment (a judgment related to taste and depending on it) shows, on the one hand, the 'necessary' certainty of itself and, on the other, all its 'contingent' groundlessness (as it is based only on such certainty) does it not follow that perhaps any judgment displays the same certainty and the same groundlessness?

To conclude on this point, if Tom, after having found *x* too spicy, says he does not like it, what evidence could ever be invoked to support this judgment and to substantiate it outside of his own word? And even if he could provide any evidence drawing from his consummate skill or expertise, what would be the worth of such arguing if not merely to support and substantiate his own

word? Whether we share or not Tom's expertise, wouldn't his judgment ultimately still be a case of his word against mine? Sure, I could let myself be guided by his expertise but, regardless, on what else could his expertise be based on except...itself?

In short, there can be such things as competence, authority, performativity to a judgment that is able to show credibility and testimony, but only so far as other competences, other authorities, other performativities do not come to undermine it. At this point, it might be instructive to look back to those earlier examples contained in the Tables, those that assumed as stated in the Note, an equal level of knowledge – as long as such a hypothesis is credible – amongst all the subjects. It is, after all, such knowledge that exposes the aporetic condition of such plural and subjective certainties: insisting on keeping one's word determines, sooner or later, a gradual erosion of its credibility. Likewise, maintaining that credibility will involve, sooner or later, the attenuation or the progressive fraying of the word given.

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What will follow will be argued within the framework we have defined so far. Nothing that follows will have to be considered as external to the constitutive aporeticity that each tasting act entails, and this will mean moving away from an interpretation that is not quite reconciled and satisfied with itself, in spite of the many scenarios, sugar-coated and 'ideological', within which the world of flavor and taste, and therefore of food, is often represented and communicated nowadays. What follows, therefore, is only intended as an offering of additional themes to be placed within the framework we have so far put... on the table.

What has been discussed so far has concerned the circuit of flavor, rather than the circuit of the word¹⁶, that short-circuit created by 'inside' and 'outside': introjecting and ingesting flavors (food) vs. expelling and externalizing words.¹⁷ Viewed in this light, the good rule of etiquette don't speak

16 The reference to this 'circuit of the word' is in the *Cours de linguistique générale* by F.de Saussure.

17 The L. Marin's book, *La parole mangée* (Paris, Klincksieck 1986, pp.47-49, 125-40) presents interesting scenarios of such a short-circuit; other very relevant and effective places of these scenarios are in D. Cecchi *Cibo, corpo, narrazione* (Milano, Mimesis 2010, pp.109-26). On these questions I refer also to my essay "Lingua del Gusto e Gusto della Lingua", in *Estetica. Studi e ricerche*, 2011 (2), pp.203-23.

while you eat (or drink), would be much better understood if it also stated don't eat (or drink) while you speak, which indeed remains an implicit rule, unspoken.

To put it clearly: the circuit, the channel that passes through the mouth can only do one thing at a time: either eat or speak, either introject/ingest (flavors) or expel/externalize (words) - if the circuit works in both directions simultaneously, then it becomes a short-circuit: the air, the breath that is so useful both to utter words and to the savor food, chokes, languishes or runs out.

That is why, perhaps, nothing is more profitable than eating alone or, if in company, at least in silence – an advice that is not offered only as a way to avoid the aforementioned aporias but just to avoid, more than anything else, that embarrassing short-circuit between the introjection/ingestion on the one hand and the expulsion/externalization on the other. Which raises the following question: how did it come to be that the pleasures of the table have become so closely associated with convivial socialization?

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There could be two possible answers: (a) conviviality of the table is seen as the opposite of the heavy and pompous dialectic of everyday life, as it possesses the levity of conversation that serves no purpose (the Kantian 'disinterested interest'), while the opposite is true of the dialectic of everyday life (which also often serves no purpose, but away from the table this dialectic is cloaked with heaviness). This creates a mood, at the table, that favors the alternation between inside and outside: here we converse without purpose and, usually, in turn, when the mouth is empty and, vice versa, we eat when we have nothing to say; (b) through conviviality of the table, the array of flavors on offer (and their reception) takes on the role of creating a mood where conflicts of opinion can be resolved. This obviously would hint at the existence of a purpose, though possibly hidden, diverted or deflected, which denies or deviates from the role of conviviality as imagined in (a).

Eating alone or as if alone, in silence, allows us to assimilate food to prayer, an act which, as performed by any believer (the diner, after all, also believes in what he is feeling and wants or expects to be believed), is done softly, quietly, or just in silence: this kind of prayer, however, does not necessarily (or even by chance) entail neither the recognition of a teleological design that has led

to this moment,¹⁸ nor the expression of gratitude to those who made this meal happen. And if one really feels drawn to express gratitude then one is likely to express it towards the certainty of that particular feeling and the uniqueness of the moment, when one is alone with oneself, or as if alone, in silence.

And here we see a force, an almost ‘illocutionary’ force that flavor possesses (through the act of introjection and ingestion), unlike sexual love, which is based on a misleading notion of reciprocity: introjection and ingestion of flavor, convivial and shared as they may be, remain an intimate, endocorporeal, intransitive affair, a prayer that does not require, or at least not necessarily (unlike sexual love) sharing, completion, supplement or complement: the flavor alone, embodies this sharing, this completion, this complement/supplement.

Flavor, which is alone and for this reason, as we have said, suffices to itself, is the song that elevates the animus towards unknown paths – paths of experience, knowledge and cognition,¹⁹ that no act of sexual love could equalize, as

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18 On the field of teleology is played an important match, from an epistemological point of view: the relationship between *form* and *function* of an organism, an organ or sensorial perception (respectively, in this case, that of the mouth, the tongue and gustatory perception). On these issues, which go far beyond the suggestions outlined above, see: A.Martone, “Del problematico rapporto tra forma e funzione, a partire dal Gusto”, cit.

19 This ‘song’ can be appreciated, and this is in fact what happens, in spite of the reluctance displayed by some ‘beautiful souls’, with full awareness of the existence of ‘additives’ (both in the sense of the *complement* and *supplement*), indeed it can be appreciated all the more intensely *because* of such awareness. The fact that food, and therefore flavor, undergoes a process of ‘manipulation’ that starts well before cooking, is not a discovery of Modernity, and those who state the contrary speak either in bad faith or out of ignorance. See on this subject: M.Mariani-S.Testa, *Gli additivi alimentari. Indagine su conservanti, edulcoranti, coloranti, addensanti e aromatizzanti*, Macro Ed., Cesena 2011. Here we find examined with a great degree of analytical accuracy many of the basic manipulation processes that have always been essential ‘completion’ of flavor. The following instructive passage might appear off-topic, as it concerns sight, but it can be seen to apply to taste as well: «Colouring agents are designed to satisfy the eye, improving the appearance of the product and hence its palatability. These are substances against which we often hurl accusations of damaging our health, but then it so happens that, on the shelf, artificially coloured orange juice has a greater commercial success than those less striking in appearance, for the same reason we are convinced that everything that tastes like mint, for some reason, must be green and that is why we find the green colouring used even in toothpaste» (*Ibid.*, p.9; our transl.). This passage is instructive because it shows our attachment to some *habits*, to a product’s certain *communication style*, or to some stereotypes. What is important about such ‘communication’ is not so much the illusion of ‘immaculate virginity’ (according to which a product desirable in as much as it is presented as ‘natural’) but the notion of a product’s potential *harmfulness* or *dangerousness*. And it is this aspect to which the

sexual love is doomed to tiring repetition, triggered as it is by the repetitive nature of the 'charm' exercised by each seduction.

Flavor too seduces, of course, but only insofar that I am willing to listen to its siren song, to let myself be pervaded by it, and from that moment on it offers no resistance: it bows before me, but only insofar as I make space for it, I welcome its invitation in my animus, and the full measure of this act is the result of our encounter: is it, or is it not, for me? The outcome of this encounter will always depend solely on my (never its own) agency, for better or for worse, in joy as in sorrow, in pleasure as in disgust.

In sexual love, on the other hand, the real measure of the seduction taking place remains, at the best of times, unknown, uncertain, always repetitive. In the worst case scenario, the measure of this encounter appears asymmetrical, unbalanced, leaving behind in its wake the monumentality of one subject – too self-satisfied and smug, too full and too sated to be believable – and the destruction of another, left bewildered and incredulous, delivered to his/her own impotence.

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The consumption of the body, that no act of sexual love is entirely able to avoid or safeguard, has nothing to do with the introjection/ingestion of flavor: the former being full of imaginary reciprocity while the latter is the locus of an intimate intransitivity.²⁰

Authors appropriately draw attention. Knowing that the flavor of a tomato or ginger as been manipulated (a fact which should always be communicated more effectively rather than being kept secret) does not in any way alter the 'palatability' of that flavor and, in as far as it is detectable, contributes to make it such.

- 20 M.Ferreri's movie »La grande bouffe« (1973) still constitutes an exemplary illustration of these issues. Aside from its condemning and derisive view of the excesses of a society seen as in a state of decadence, this masterful movie illustrates in fact the following aporia: In what conditions could someone enjoy both sex and food until he dropped? In short, is it possible to *die of enjoyment* or *even enjoy death*? And if this movie is still 'current', it is certainly not so much for the first reason but for the second one, as it is revealing, perhaps today more than yesterday, of how much more than sex, (which none of the characters in the movie is able to 'resist' though they often lose interest in it) it is food, its introjection/ingestion, the main instrument of each character's death. The act of introjection/ingestion subverts the notion of 'masculinity' that these characters seek to embody, as they have been, to an extent, *playing seriously* with a 'mask' (acting as 'real men'). But this mask reveals itself to be just that, a cover-up, and it is their 'femmininity' (as defined, once again, from an exclusively male perspective) that is represented in the movie. This 'femmininity' lies in the desire to be penetrated...by food and its flavors. And it will be the female character,
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Passing through the ‘narrow door’ that is the elementary nature of flavor – the elementary nature of these ‘cases’ which reveal how flavor is essentially an intransitive practice, rhythmic, ritual, religious – would require, of course, getting rid of many cumbersome ‘philosophemes’, such as the most cumbersome of all, the existence of a ‘qualitative’ difference between animality and humanity. A matter that, on the one hand, is not dwelled upon by those who theorize an essential superiority of man, as they consider it too patently obvious. Whilst, and on the other hand, the more critical voices, the ‘deconstructionists’, to say nothing of ‘animal rights’ theorists, have inspired a spirited and lively debate in which, nevertheless, the wisest could not help admitting that by looking at the matter from an exclusively theoretical and critical perspective, the question of this alleged and intrusive difference would remain as it is, unchanged and undisturbed, in short, just a ‘philosopheme’ among others.

54 Without delving further into the issue of this constitutive difference, as this would force us to confront it again and again as a theoretical and critical question, we will content ourselves here to suggest the opportunity of putting aside all the aforementioned philosophemes, not just to repeat the late or outdated Feuerbach motto - *der Mann ist was er ißt* - which is itself also a philosopheme among others, but because in the ‘cases’ we have considered here we only intended to suggest a practice – and not, therefore, another demonstrative or deconstructive theory. A practice which, being essential, elementary, and perhaps even rudimentary, does not attempt to draw boundaries and barriers between worlds or even to subvert their scope, but moves from the observation that the perception of flavor is and remains, in all possible ways, a constitutive and ineliminable feature.

And if after all it is still considered necessary to question the specificity of sensorial judgments – whether they are or not a purely human affair, exclusive of and excluding other species - that door, however ‘narrow’, will always remain open and available to be crossed, with the aid of always new philosophemes.

Andrea, the one to restore a notion of the ‘feminine’ untainted by this ‘masculinity’ vision, as the one who proves able to ‘resist’ that penetration, for no other reason that this ‘masculine’ perspective does not concern her in anyway.