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Tables

ANIMAL SPIRITS – MEMORY – STATUE – DEATH – BIRTH

ANIMAL SPIRITS

So we had bought a bottle of 1947 Yquem in the north-eastern corner of Paris, near La Villette, from an expert dealer who had acquired it from the restaurant that used to be at the Gare de l'Est, which in turn cellared its wines in long-forgotten underground tunnels – a bottle from the catacombs. It was said that the wine list was like a dictionary that aficionados would take their time poring over, sometimes without getting around to ordering dinner, or even days before their meal. The dealer went out of business, his son imports soft drink now, the restaurant has been replaced by fast-food outlets (in matters of taste, as in love-making, if you would rather hurry, better that you abstain altogether; in both these cases haste leads to nothing but regret), the dark tunnels now house only rats, until the next air raid. The three of us sat down, two friends with the gift of the gab, which is to say knowing how to remain silent.

The liquid had taken on a deep golden hue, orange-yellow with coppery tones and hints of pink: the colour of intelligence and wisdom, scented with the thrill of desire. It was like the base of a cauldron in a Flemish kitchen, polished with patience over time, half-hidden in darkness amidst the crosspieces of dark timber. The wine glowed like straw in a barn, like a windy night watch illuminated by the glow of the compass. The cork, solid, was starting to turn to liquid, just a little, dark shading into light, everything shifting phase.

It took us so long to finish this bottle that we are still talking about it.

I remember with gratitude the moment when a great wine gave me a new mouth – the day of my second communion, it says. It already existed, ill-spoken no doubt; the second mouth was born there.

Speech passes through the mouth on the day of our first communion – giving us our first mouth. The golden mouth starts to chatter, will not stop chattering. Speech reigns there, a queen in palatine splendour; the reign of language over lips and tongue is absolute. Imperious, exclusive. But speech and language cross these spaces, neither smelling nor tasting. Soft: not hard. Soft: dull and insipid. They anaesthetize the mouth, which finds the zestiest conversation tasteless. The most wide-ranging eloquence, the most sonorous poetry, the most incantatory song, the liveliest dialogue transform the palate into a musical instrument, which nonetheless remains numb to fragrant flowers, to the scent of the earth, to the powerful fragrance of musk and skin; or worse still, chases them away. Neither acidic nor astringent, sentences refrain from awakening our tongue to anything but themselves. Sapidity slumbers beneath the narcosis of speech. Frozen: frigid.

Of our five senses, this one, these two – smell and taste – seem to us the least aesthetic. I'm beginning to understand, says the golden mouth, why we reject, forget, put off their specific abilities, why I can say with such confidence that the given only gives itself in and through language: one mouth kills the other. I, a golden mouth, kill the long palate of Yquem. I will not tolerate doubt, a double tongue in my mouth, a forked tongue, me speaking, it tasting. Today, the day of the banquet, I will be kind to my victim, it says, and step aside.

And awaken the palate from anaesthetizing talk through the use of a second talent. Which discovers an aesthetics of sense in the work of a different, artistic aesthetic. The Château d'Yquem awakens the second mouth, the second tongue, reveals it through this second communion. Oppressed, too close to language, too much its twin or competitor, taste is rarely conveyed well, is often expressed in language that provokes mirth – our mouth laughs at it – as though in this place language allowed it no voice. One mouth chases the other, the mouth of discourse excludes the mouth of taste, expels it from discourse.

The second tongue sleeps; timid, it remains silent; receives what is given, all the better when it forgets its twin.

Before drinking good wine, we have never tasted wine, or smelled it, or known it, and have no chance of ever knowing it. We may have drunk, and gotten drunk; another form of anaesthesia. But knowledge cannot come to those who have neither tasted nor smelled. Speaking is not sapience, the first tongue needs the second.

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

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matters – savouring animals – before referring to judgement, intelligence or wisdom, before referring to talking man. The rise of the golden mouth at the expense of the tasting mouth. But hidden within a dead language, we find this confession of the first about the dead mouth: namely that wisdom comes after taste, cannot arise without it, but has forgotten this.

Let us speak dead languages, says the dead mouth. Do you remember, O golden twin, jewel of philosophers and scholars, the common linguistic origin of the words regulations and rillettes, from the Latin *regulae*? Where are you, Descartes? Or of the words induction and andouille, from the low Latin *inductile*? Bacon, where are you? This is how the sapient tongue asserted its rights and demonstrated, in its neighbour's tongue, their joint intersection, the place where they go their separate ways.

The first mouth, all talk, was left speechless. Caught out by its own forked tongue.

Sensation, it used to be said, inaugurates intelligence. Here, more locally, taste institutes sapience. In the ancestral Latin definition of human beings, our educated but still sensible forebears are a serious demonstration that, without taste, we risk abnegating our human state and returning to that of animals. Before recreating ideas about sensation – a strange business – they no doubt wanted us to imagine the opposite: if we disdain sensation, replace it with artifice, with orthopaedic forms of discourse, then we are headed towards animality. Animals wolf down their food, man tastes it. Appreciates the aromas, hunts no more. Cruelty only produces blood.

Before having received, bedazzled, the manifold and vibrant bouquet that unfolds through our sense of smell, exploding as it descends, still full of arabesques or new stars, like fireworks; before having known the complex, fringed moiré that meticulously segments the precise geographic map of the cheeks, differentiating top from bottom, and front from back, short and long palate, tracing ornamentation on the roof of the mouth, passing over and under the tongue, to the sides and back; before having known that we have tongues, and not just one tongue; before having transformed this volume into a rainbow-coloured, tattooed, ornamented, mingled space, before the unction of wine has changed the uniform into the multiple, and frigidity into tenderness, before this patient, slow, detailed recognition, we have drunk, of course, have quenched our thirst over and over again, have even been heavily intoxicated, but have never sensed; sensation never came – we were speaking. Knew need and desire; took remedies and poisons in altered states, most certainly drugged ourselves, but overlooked sensation. Anæsthetic robs us of æsthetics.

Communities which hasten to shed the naïve sapience of empiricism find themselves locked out of their destiny by drugs. Take this wine: drink, taste – you must choose. If you merely drink it, you will keep only speech, language. If you taste it, it will give you your taste by giving you its taste, it opens a new mouth in you, this is the day of your second communion, prevented by the first. The given, generous, gives more than we think. It heals impotence or the inability to receive, or other inadequacies. *Æsthetics* cures us of *anæsthesia*. It awakens us. The given often gives the subject the capacity to take what is given: here is the gift, plus its container, and ribbons too, as well as the right disposition to apprehend it. In short, it will create the function, or at least activate it, or initiate it. The first tongue, talkative, admits this: fine food and wine can create taste in the person who tastes them. Similarly, a beautiful sight gives sight to the person who sees it. It has the same word for what is smelt and the act of smelling it – but it takes a lot for the recipient to make the most of it. We know more people who are asleep than people who are awake, more who are blind than clear-sighted, more impotent people than lovers. The apprehended given does more for perception than the other way around. Fine wine works on the tongue, awakening it from its narcotic slumber.

Therefore you cannot get drunk on it. Take this wine: drink, taste, reveal your dormant sense of taste or *anæsthetize* it again by getting drunk, but both at once – no. *Æsthetics* or *anæsthesia*, no third tongue. I cannot sense the difference between the speaker and the drunk, says the second tongue, the taster, in both cases I am drugged and put to sleep. The guests at the *Symposium* hiccup, speechify or slump about, weighed down by alcohol, Plato has ensured that the banquet never takes place.¹ They speak of love without making love, sing of this or that without actually singing, drink without tasting, speak with the first tongue – but for all the sounds they produce, do we know what wine they drank: from Chios, Corfu or Samos? He who holds the floor and talks the most until pallid dawn, triumphs over the inebriation of the rest. Wine encourages talk, and is numbing. The first tongue, the talker, uses the mixture drawn from amphorae and mixed in craters, circulating unnoticed around the beds, sometimes spilled on the cushions or bread, to oppress the second, always asleep in philosophy. At symposia today you can still hear virtuosic talk, over cups of a weak, black beverage. But no banquet.

The second tongue tries to trace its geographic map of the tongue, as it wakes.

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From where might we describe it? From near or far or middle distance, it always seems to shimmer like watered silk.

No doubt because smell and taste differentiate, whereas language, like sight and hearing, integrates. The first mouth stockpiles, the second expends: words pile up in dictionaries, food accumulates, frozen, in coldrooms, like bank accounts; smells and tastes are transitory, evanescent, ephemeral. Differential. The map is refined like delicate silk, or a spider's web. With neither stock nor total, a fragment of time.

Unstable moire, mingled body.

The second tongue has humility: simple, rudimentary taste, poor like reasoning, it can barely make out four or five qualities, sweet, sour, astringent, acidic . . . It depends on smell to achieve its festive richness. Avid, empty, gluttonous, roaring, whether talking or eating, imperious as only the weak can be, the mouth relies on its nose and ears to be able to boast as it does. It is the mouths of barbarians that we hear, talking about talking, holding forth about eating, ignorant of fleeting tastes and aromas, deaf chatterboxes, gluttons with neither sense of smell nor wisdom, human funnels, eating and drinking sweet or savoury to bring the nose down to the mouth's level, reducing smell to taste and manifold refinement to crudeness. The man of sapience, whether peasant or baron, has flair and a keen ear to capture the moment; the stubborn, like the jovial, are all mouth, transmitting; whereas everything comes from subtle reception. Leave aside singing and eloquence where the voice is regulated by the ear in an active loop: in both instances, music arises when the general din beseeches hearing for its clemency; hearing in turn gives or gives back timbre and cadence. And the first tongue becomes hoarse when the eardrum becomes brittle with age. In a comparable loop or cycle, smell regulates taste judiciously. Earring, nose-ring. So our sense of smell, champion among our sensations, and our taste, excellence in culture and refinement, bestow their rare treasure together, within a shared cycle. A cornucopia emerges from nose and palate, odours and tastes spilling forth, the peacock's tail is displayed.

Here is the map.

Here is the bottle from which this fan emerges.

Here is the region of the lower Garonne, the left bank, where the forest disappears, where the tide ends, a knot of eleven confluences, here is the gentle slope, near Yquem, from which the ocellated fan can be seen: a map of the area and an expanse of taste.

The second tongue, in between the two others – the one that will not stop talking and the one that remains hidden modestly, and has neither spoken nor tasted yet – now requires silence and time. It never has either of these.

Take time, remain silent, taste.

The streaked, blended, marled, damask, watered-silk, ocellated body unfolds itself gently from the cornucopia or around the tufted feet of Juno's bird. Can we enumerate? Here are spring flowers, dog rose or lilac, clematis, the fruits of *Messidor*,² including peaches (autumn or winter ones), pears, apples, grapes, walnuts, some hazelnuts trailing in their wake, in dark, fern-covered undergrowth, here are truffles in the greyish humus, bark sticky with resin, then rare mineral fragrances, flint, gunflint, and animal fragrances, musk or amber, damp fur or the scent of copulation, and here, behind the second and first bouquets, the first one floral, the next bestial and mineral, comes the third bouquet, so difficult, like pizzicati heard beneath an orchestral storm, like cross-hatching through floral-print fabric, aromas as ethereal as acetone, try to pick them out: aromatics – mint, geranium; ambrosias – jasmine, vanilla, lime; balms like benzoin, carnation, camphor; empyreumata like coffee, tobacco; the Yquem bears traces of the persistent forest, remembers distant Armagnac, cites its neighbour, Graves; now here is disequilibrium, the outer edge of the expanse, or ocellated tail, its instability or catastrophe, repulsive combinations like mercaptan, the stench of oil, tar and sewers, sulphur; what's happening? Close the door when the East wind is blowing, the one-track reason of the highway has intruded bringing a vile and stupid horde of Huns, has uprooted the vines of Sauternes, severed the heraldic shield from its nobility, torn up the map, cut out its tongue. It cuts through the sacred vines, merely indicating them with a road sign. For those who hurry past, riding thunder and spewing a cloud of gaseous filth in their wake, the given is reduced to written language, painted on a panel. The roadmap is rectilinear, as linear as the method which passes through the forest without seeing it and which, ignobly, severs the ancient vines without so much as a greeting.

If you pass through a vineyard as a blabbermouth might cross the sea, then you will see only green or red foliage, just as the other would see only water. Bend down and examine the furrows: earth or body, streaked, blended . . . silica, pebbles, sand, clay and limestone, deposits from above or afar, carried by the Garonne. Fine silica, rich limestone, moist clay, everything comes from the mingled earth. Walk through the vines where the Muscadelle has been picked, sweetness comes from the Semillon, spice notes from the Sauvignon, the rows are streaked, striped, composite. We would

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have to superimpose several maps: geological, pedological, viticultural, a mosaic of yellow, pink, royal blue, bottle green, an unexpected element, as though the substratum – what a surprise – were reproducing itself on the surface, as though the old growers themselves, unwitting geologists, were revealing the dark secrets of the earth, through and in the arrangement of these maps: mingled seacharts for navigating the Bordeaux region. In the same way, through the alloy of syllables, vowels, rhythms and assonances, the writer tries to evoke the map of deep-seated deposits and brings to the surface the glittering pattern of underground veins.

The coat of arms of the Comte de Lur-Saluces, master of Yquem, should, it seems to me, bear or depict on its unified page, this streaked, ocellated body, this honourable map, in its colours, devices and charges: either a peacock's tail, or an interleaved stack of atlases. Doesn't a coat of arms typically reproduce a map of mixed blood and the manner of its enduring survival? What is a title, if not the proportions of a mingled body? The noble shields of the vineyard would thus show how, after so many quarters, wine becomes blood – or the other way around.

Now, in the silence and cool tranquility of the cellar, what different sort of mingling is at work? Alcohol and acid are balanced against sweet-smelling ester, suspended in water and sugars. The right balance comes in incremental changes. Might we guess at the various titles, at any given time? The titles of the mixture would indicate time.

I can draw a thousand maps, but I am only ever talking about time.

Mixture haunts the cellar in the art of the vigneron, runs through the vineyard – soil, layering and subsoil – fills the singular bottle, completes the mouth by closing the cycle of aromas, the same map everywhere, I draw it on the page, it is my coat of arms.

Old cellars, vineyards, bottles, seacharts, enduring heraldic alliances, ancient mouths and tongues, attentive patience of the design marking earth, flora and palate: the time of mixtures slowly ticks by.

The accumulated quarters divide the space of the shield between them; conversely, the shield displays the antiquity of the title, and the title borne by this blood. Many a vermilion cascade has flowed over the shield, thus marked: red clepsydra.

The earth of rivers, seas and forests, long ago laid bare, ravaged by tears and sterility, long unsuited to all kinds of agriculture due to an excess of sand and gravel, slowly becomes the exceptional specific of such and such a botanical palette. It takes at least a millennium of peasant stubbornness, punctuated with famines, to reach this blended picture.

Alluvial cascade, receiving or giving cascades of wine: if only my tongue were equal to these miraculous nuptials, amidst the floodwaters of the versatile Garonne, a grey clepsydra.

In a miracle of the first tongue – when it is speaking in French, at least – the word for time is also the word for weather: *le temps*. The miracle of bountiful seasons interspersed, pot-luck, with weak or barren ones. The ground, the vines and the wine itself carry traces of the clemency and inclemency of the weather; the mixture of any given vintage is an expression of this mixture of hot and cold, moist and dry, calm and turbulent that we call the weather – which we might just as well call temperament or temperance, if the world had the same moods as our bodies: weather which is typically rather mild in this temperate region. Take this great wine, taste it, the map of its temperament will be traced on your tongue, the inimitable and singular facets of a particular season. Remember that year: the autumn was immense, unmoving, soaring, endless, flecked with notes of orange and yellow, so light as to be barely perceptible. Cascades of wind, sun and rain mingled with the Sauternes, a golden clepsydra.

Now read: in the left-hand column, a simple list of calendar years, a roll-call of years gone by, none omitted, none repeated; in the right-hand column, a list of notable years, glorious or catastrophic. 1930, the year I was born, produced an unspeakable liquid and nothing better, yet 1929 (when my brother was born), has been equalled only three times since in the whole Bordeaux region, in '45, '61 and '75, once in a lifetime vintages of supernatural taste and enormous longevity. As though weather and time were intimately connected, enough to make us understand how two words could be one, two meanings – time and weather – cohabiting in a single term, *le temps*. If time flowed like a series of whole numbers, on the left, we would have known long ago that history and reason go hand in hand. But the stochastic mixture of years by which we might read the different vintages of Château d'Yquem over the last hundred years gives us a very different idea of that same history, once again drawing us a blended map. During our banquet with the bottle of '47 Yquem, an almost mythical vintage, the first tongue runs off the series of numbers, the second throws the figures to the wind, savouring the highpoints. On the left, the time of language; on the right, the time of the given. From which we can see that the two are separate, like a forked tongue. On the left, time as an *a priori* pure form – I was going to say algorithmic – on the right, the time of mixture and mingling, of which the time of the left understands nothing.

A cascade of numbers, not parallel as we might think when reading them but merging into one another, because we live; an immaterial, abstract,

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double clepsydra, combining a straight corridor with the irregular percolation of a fulling mill.

The unstoppable current of the Garonne is blended with tears of joy and mourning.

Three friends or enemies thus find themselves seated at the banquet, drawing maps, stirring mixtures, discovering time. Maps of watered silk trace the spaces around mingled bodies, poured together; their fusion in the same clepsydra or bottle follows the currents of duration.

Two of the friends, intimate acquaintances, want to liberate themselves from the third, enamoured of discourse. They too love speech, but want to free themselves from its absolute tyranny. The golden tongue, disengaged from the other two, travels a different path, rare and disconnected, with time flowing through a unique clepsydra. The other two tongues, enamoured of concourses, follow blended, fluidic, liquid pathways, flowing in knotted confluences.

The dominant tongue performs analysis. Successfully, convincingly so, which proves that it should continue.

The other two dare not say that they practise confusion. In the language of the first, confusion means failure. Just as success avoids failure, so has the first tongue banished the other two.

Once enemies, they find themselves seated thus together at the banquet, temporarily reconciled.

Mixture and confusion preside in the crater of Château d'Yquem. Nothing more delicious, more divine, more memorable than this confusion of gold, copper and bronze.

The two neglected tongues challenge the first to speak, to expatiate upon this confusion without maligning it, for once.

When Monsieur le Comte Alexandre de Lur-Saluces' hundred and twenty grape-pickers spread themselves across the gentle slopes of the hillside, between rows of vines, to pick the overripe Sauvignon and Semillon, one grape at a time, for yet another autumn since the first in 1785, from the glorious beginning of October until, sometimes, the heavy mists of December; when they mix the harvest from the rocky side with the harvest from the clay-rich side and then with that of the sandy side; when the must of the southern slope is mixed with grapes that ripened under a more oblique, less generous sun; when different slopes, wines, bunches are thrown together, we dream indistinctly that a word capable of expressing

this confluence might be acclimatized into our tongue. We cannot say concade nor syrrhesis.

Greek abhors the term synchysis, which should describe the act of directing several currents from different sources or urns into the same channel, one confluence uniting numerous affluents. But it merely refers to confusion or entanglement, a chaos that will not be unscrambled. French abhors it equally, speaking only of confusion. What flows together seems confused to the first tongue, whether speaking French or Greek, but seems as divine as a mouthful of Yquem to the second, which receives it as an unction and can follow the map of its mixtures. We must suppose that the first has never tasted, in order for it to so despise unified streams, compound waves, entwined colours flowing into the same space; interchanges and fluid interference.

I can accept that the primary and immediate tongue should have banished confusion from thought, but anyone who does not hate liquid con-course will be taken aback that the philosophy of knowledge should as a consequence of this have canonized this blind spot. To confuse means, first of all, to pour together, to conjoin several streams into one. Taken literally, confusion sounds rather like a solution.

The metallurgy of alloys, with us since the Bronze Age; the new science of chemistry, classifying mixtures and new bodies through recombination; pharmaceutical preparations, adding specifics to broaden the efficacy of remedies; kitchen-craft, whether of baked goods or liquors – since the dawn of time a thousand noble practices, whether hot or cold, have stirred different streams together in a hundred craters for practical purposes or merely for pleasure, often for knowledge. Why are they not recognized? These actions, alloys, mixtures, brews should all be called confusions, and the philosophy of confusion should be the common ground of sapience.

The first tongue, which speaks and has the ear of reason, calls the second confused, and the latter, confused, accepts the name. It receives con-courses of liquid, a hundred simultaneous cascades. A single one, like the Yquem, is abundant, hiding many and composing on the second tongue the map of mixtures, drawn in confusion, fluctuating. A multiple, vibrant, complex map, more complete than clear, detached, simplistic ideas, about which the first tongue boasts so loudly.

I remember with gratitude she who gave me my third mouth, it says. It was the blessed day of my last communion and my first union. Fragrant flowers fell from her mouth: be silent, third tongue, your discretion is your wisdom.

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The mouth will not enter into discussion of tastes and odours, in fact they have a fixed scale. Strong or weak, superficial, profound, rich or poor, delicious, repulsive, immediately agreeable or enduringly constant. What we call bouquet, whether accurately or not, seems as objective and precise as a numerical sequence to the initiated.

The scale or order is a descending one, going from air to earth. The most fragile or obvious fragrances, at the top, belong to the flower family: rose, lilac, lime-blossom, jasmine; lower down carnation and violet; less delicate, but still fresh is the order of fruit scents: peach, pear, raspberry, almond, apricot, cherry. Pear and peach are more resistant to wines than red fruits, and less childish. Stonefruits are better than berries. How can you taste a pear, using the chattering tongue rather than the sapient tongue? Pears really melt in the latter's mouth – Passe-Crassane, Duchesse, Anjou and Comice or Messire Jean, in increasing order of excellence. With the exception of the adorably named Lady's Thigh, sweet and flavoursome. Similarly, how can you eat plums or apples? Yes to Belle-Fleurs and Greengages, Blue Damsons and Court Pendu Plat; but modesty prevents me from eating prunes except at home. The series progresses downwards from leaves and high branches, where flowers bud, where fruits hang, towards the ground, along bark, odours of resin and dead leaves, mushrooms, truffles. Black ones, from Quercy, not hypocritical white Italian ones. Glory to the heady scent of truffle, precious, subtle, delicate, subterranean. Self-evident, this progression is not open to debate, it runs from light to dark, from trivial to serious and dense, from puerile to trained expertise. The order or series keeps descending, towards the decomposing earth where animal and vegetable remains in the undergrowth mix with the humus. All these bouquets wedded to decay: the vegetable realm discovers sublime aromas when it merges with the inert.

This downwards exploration takes place in the countryside, near its periphery, at the end of spring, at the beginning of autumn or all year round at the markets, in our part of the world. We should also take a stroll through the realm of imports, cane-sugar, vanilla, tobacco, coffee, the blended haze of spices on the docks of Bordeaux or Le Havre, in the merchant's cellar, the bazaars of Istanbul, or elsewhere in the tropics. We could not survive without mingling with other worlds. We used to read in our textbooks that our intellect knows nothing that has not first passed through the senses. What we hear, through our tongue, is that there is nothing in sapience that has not first passed through mouth and taste, through sapidity. We travel: our intellect traverses the sciences the way

bodies explore continents and oceans. One gets around, the other learns. The intellect is empty if the body has never knocked about, if the nose has never quivered along the spice route. Both must change and become flexible, forget their opinions and expand the spectrum of their tastes as far as the stars. How many past adventures and sometimes even heroic deeds have served to astonish our sense of smell, how much knowledge was acquired along the way?

Just as taste is crowned by sapience, so does sagacity complete the aromatic scale. The title of every banquet should be: sapience and sagacity. Around the table, only sage tongues.

The vegetable bouquet, aptly named, decomposing into the rot of the undergrowth, leads in to animal odours, heavier and more composite, less easily dispersed, denser and heavier. The scale descends further, from violas to cellos. Floral waste mixes with filth, straw litters are blackened from dung, under the bellies of cattle; don't look away city-dwellers, sagacity is entranced by the sweet odour of cows.

This is how we recognize individual bodies, in no way are we inferior to animals in this respect; it is only practice we lack, or shame that overcomes us. It is this initial reckoning that makes for a good nurse; a doctor's diagnosis begins there; a veterinarian should find a new profession if he is offended by sweat and musk. Sagacity goes beyond intuition, or informs it: certainly it recognizes mint and lilac, orange rind and sage leaf, but it comes to know men too, weakness, deficiency, illness or explosive force, their very singularity; recognizes the beasts within that transform our nearest and dearest into parrots, sharks, birds of prey or pigs; is trusting or wary, fleeing or approaching them. Scents of hatred and indigestion, of acrid sweat and resentment emanate from this chamber, this scrutiny. Floral emanations come from spring mouths, does this mean that they speak? Love begins with consent and is only content when two conspiring bouquets combine, the scent of mingled genitals so heady that we sometimes think we might pass out. The sage knows, in the scriptural sense; what is there in our mind or consciousness which does not first pass via this sense?

I am hesitant, says the third tongue: must we be convinced that the given comes to us through language for Denis Diderot, Sophie's perfect lover, to give voice to a jewel so precious that, in the mind of our philosopher, it is equal in excellence to the mouth and lips of a kiss?³ Speaking lips experience less happiness, tenderness and sweetness. Why do they spend so much time expatiating on love instead of, and sometimes while,

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sweetly making love? The given is truly given to us through soft, voiceless lips, says the third tongue, still hesitating.

No-one is ever rendered speechless amidst the aromas of foliage and flowers; the distinct odours of flesh sometimes make us gasp, leaving us breathless in the duel of mingled bodies. Sweat, shroud. Here is the frontier or catastrophe, the border which opens up or closes off what we might call instinctive repugnance: deep, pungent, dense, black aromas, underground, in graves.

Compost and soil are mixtures of bodies and plants, flora and fauna, dead and alive, organic mixtures. We like vegetable detritus well enough, animal excrement repels us, but not always, it can be heady; when it comes to game, we can appreciate the smell of meat that is high. Yet we flee from the stench of death.

Just as the most sublime sound verges on noise, so is the headiest perfume but a step away from death and putrefaction; it arises from their domain; the soul leaves its deceased body in an odour of sanctity, we burn incense at funerals.

Led by volatile spirits, we are approaching the sacred; we are verging on the unclean and purification, where sagacity seems to awaken both knowledge and the sacred dimension. Do not enter here, you will profane this place, or sully yourself. The terrain thus defined can be called temple or propriety, or dirty, clean or taboo – in any event, it is demarcated, thus located and known. The terrain thus purified sees the birth, through cleansing or ritual, of pure reason in the midst of impurity. Together, Pasteurian hygiene, our more recent aseptic tastes and the theory of knowledge take us back to ancient rites of purification. Priests in the past and scholars today make us forget the insuperable boundary, or reinforce it. They make us feel disgusted by our own noses. I sense that we are heading simultaneously towards knowledge and the sacred, we are approaching repulsive places: filth, mixture, excrement, death – the supreme filth, supreme excrement. In death my dust will mingle with sticky, slimy substances in the moist compost. This is where the limit lies: smells of life, beforehand; funereal fragrances beyond this threshold. This is where definition is born.

Earth, rocks, gunflint, sulphur, hydrogen: terrifying, primary, molar, simple, primeval – I was going to say atomic – mineral odours. Here lies our horror of chemistry, the reason our ancestors burned alchemists and sorcerers at the stake, terrified by the common ground shared by knowledge and death.

There is nothing in our intellect that does not first cross this ground.

Emanations rise, the fragrant procession dissolves into light, airborne spirits; they are quickly dispersed. Conversely, the spirit descends into density, is converted into matter and, mingled with the heavy entrails of things, finally knows. It collects itself, and plunges from flowers to the dead. The Greeks of the decadent period sometimes used the word cathode to describe this fall or descent that overturns dispersal or emanations.

Emanations flow from the air to the ground or across the water. Over the tidal expanse, the ebb and flow churns over the beach sands; seaweed, kelp, jellyfish, half-open molluscs and dead, limp fish accompany the sagacious on the surface of the sea, where their sense of smell is lost, swamped. Saline spirits or volatile iodine: the wind carries everything back towards submerged fantoms. Orpheus' head, severed by the tornado, is still floating alone, still singing, his mouth full of brine, not smelling these last spirits swirling about on the water's surface.

Orphic itinerary, descent into the Underworld; the order of odours or subtle spirits, once emitted, is a fall towards the repugnant bottom, until we reach the odourless: whether shipwreck or funeral, the nose fills with water or earth.

Foliage, a scattering of flowers, berries or fruits, bark, humus and roots, markets, bazaars, beaches and ports, sewers, graveyards, mines, ditches, Underworlds: still life.

The evaporated spirits of beings laid low: substances.

Flames, fire, oven: no matter how far our travels take us, we must return home to the hearth, where the banquet is prepared. Outside, the raw; in the kitchen, the aromas of a sublime alchemy emanate from the grilled meat.

Socrates, Agathon and Alcibiades speak of love without ever making love, or sit down to eat without actually eating or drink without tasting; likewise they enter directly from the porch, over the threshold, into the dining area, without ever visiting the kitchens. Like the Gods, slaves and women stand near the stoves, where transformations occur, while the barbarians talk.

This transformation within the flames, this passage from raw to cooked, is connected to knowledge. The fermentation of bread or wine, for instance, or pretransubstantiation. The Last Supper did not consecrate grapes or wheat. It attended to the things that were eaten, tasted, made, transformed by heat. Wine belongs to the order of the cooked: the peacock's tail, in which each ocellus exalts an island that is simple by nature, raw in its elementary

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composition, comes together through cooking, is organized into a whole. The flavours, more numerous than before, converge into a new synthesis. Visit the Sauternes region, vines and woodlands, resin and flowers, river and breezes: it would take you twenty years to gather through sapience and sagacity what a single drop of Yquem gives you in a single moment. In the days when our bread still tasted of the countryside, it too would be like taking a long stroll in a single instant. There is a whole lifetime in a glass of Margaux, or even in a simple cob loaf. Cooking compacts, concentrates, reduces the given, makes it converge, the raw is made more abundant by cooking, the given goes from random chance, from flighty, improbable, inconstant circumstance to habit and compactness. Goes from diffuse, chaotic mixture to dense, ordered blend. Fire cements mixtures, transforms the above-mentioned confusion into stained glass, stirs in the small, secret elements just enough to combine things that would disgust us when cold. It assists convergence, favours collusion, binds closer, enriches alloys, discovers new combinations on the spot and, through synthesis, learns how to know.

When scholarship or knowledge is reduced to analysis, the guests at the banquet lie down in distaste on their cushions, in a different order and language, keeping their distance from the hearth where some crafty genius combines, composes, blends, creates a new order, a different scale of sapidity: a slave or woman with dirty hands, pouring incompatible liquids into a single crater, as though into a stomach. The analyst gags in disgust at these messy characters, in revulsion at the bubbling broth; he prefers to vomit. Thus emptying his stomach of the mixture and confusion to which he is addicted.

And yet, there is confusion behind every recipe: bubbling away in the pot, sizzling in the embers, simmering for hours. Take this, and measure, then take that, and blend.

Nothing surpasses the excellence of cooking when one knows how to cook well, as we do in France. For once, nature does things less well than we do. Our *savoir-faire* magnifies the given, which belongs to a suborder when raw. The aroma of roasted coffee early in the morning makes our muscles and skin quiver with delight; the smell of roasting meat, which verges on that of burning meat, delights our spirits – although rather less so than caramel, mere sugar until it meets fire. I have difficulty understanding that other culture, of boiled food, more Nordic or puritanical, hidden beneath the smell of cabbage. I have lived downwind of a fast food restaurant long enough to know how disgusting it is to be lacking in culture.

Once again, this literally supernatural excellence emanates from mixtures and confusions. Fire fuses many things together. The raw gives us tender simplicities, elementary freshness, the cooked invents coalescences. Conversely, analysis slices and dices raw; synthesis requires flame. As a result, the latter tends towards knowledge and culture; the former remains unrefined.

What if the philosophy of knowledge had not yet begun?

Clear, distinct knowledge is the result of analyses which divide and separate, systematically distasteful of confusion. Separation and division presuppose a space, on which or in which distinction pricks out a singular location: all simple topological operations. Confusion or multiple cascades, intertwining and interchanging in confluence, also presuppose a space, but also somewhat more attention. They represent, in fact, the direct operation of division, or separation; which is a kind of summation, or multiplication. If you know how to undo a knot or pull apart its fixed strands, you do not typically condemn the person who knots the loose strands together: the same person can perform both gestures. Yet the theory of knowledge, untying knots and refusing to tie them, tolerates only one side of the equation: the analytical. Cutting, undoing, subtracting, dividing, differentiating. Destroying. To analyse is to destroy. Such a theory resembles the traditional practice of certain tribes which consisted in binding the left arm to the body in order to ensure that one would only ever use the right, so dominant is one side over the other: sinister. Nor does it tolerate confusion. Yet confusion enables fluid multiplication, where the indistinct multiplicities in play are transformed into continuous varieties. The latter flow into one another and vary in concert, subject to multiple variables. Everything leads us to the conclusion that analysis has not yet accepted these varied, complex functions with which it has been dealing for two hundred years.

We return yet again to mixture and to the concept of variety, both immediate in the rich, complex, vibrant experience of the senses and, unparadoxically, more abstract than the simple, inverse operations of analysis; or perhaps we should say that they are posterior to what we call abstraction. Here, sensation appeals to a more difficult and complex kind of abstraction than our traditional understanding of it. We can say either: that in order to be understood, the senses require a new effort of abstraction to recompose what analysis separates, or that working

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towards a more composite kind of abstract leads to sensational or sensual results.

Confusion presupposes a space, or series of proximities, it accesses time, which is no doubt not as separate from spaces as we think. It marks, watches, keeps time. For a long time now I have thought of time as a node or interchange or confluent of several times, each of which can be understood spatially. This multiple clepsydra is incomprehensible to thinking that is limited to inverse operations alone. Oddly, it is made perfectly comprehensible by the immediate given.

How can it be that philosophy has taken several centuries to ask that we wait a moment while the sugar in a glass of water melts? How can it be that when faced with such evidence, time itself was not immediately associated with mixture and the fusion of one body into another? Yet two streams poured forth their compound as one. Bergson, following Duhem and in the footsteps of the Greeks, invented a clepsydra with several entry points: variable inflow, communicating vessels. This was the precise practice of confusion. And solution. The intimate fusion of one thing into another, of one flow into another: generalize this to as many kinds of flow as you like.

It has indeed taken the whole history of philosophy, which from its very beginnings had nonetheless intuited mixture and chaos, to rediscover in a glass or a vessel, in a simple, naïve, almost childlike way, what was already happening in the kitchen while the guests drank and spoke of love, and what vigneronns have been doing in an insanely complex manner since the very beginnings of our traditions. Remember this: confusion begins with the flood, and the Ark of the Covenant. As though the water clocks were already beginning to fill: a colossal volume of water, a stock of animals, life, seed, the first blended wines. Alloys. The old patriarch Noah, the prototype of the œnophile, makes the multiple clepsydra flow in confusion. Remember this.

Clear, distinct knowledge presents or represents a space. Confused knowledge flows and returns along fluent times. Is present, certainly, but its past floods back, and it remembers.

Take this and drink. Do this in memory of me.