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**The Spiritual and Sensuous in the Aesthetics
of Adorno and Scruton:¹
Discernment Beyond ‘the Culinary’ of ‘Industrial Chardonnay’**

Virgil W. Brower

Ethics begins and ends with tastes. If outdated or failed attempts heretofore enframed their ethical projects in terms of optics or vision,² today, following Friberg, time is ripe to reconsider ethics in terms of ‘gustics’ or taste. (But, in suggesting this, I may be insisting on empiricist proclivities apostate to the ‘spirit’ of today’s discussions).

For there would be ethical dimensions to taste, the possibilities of which I believe Friberg encourages us to reconsider. This gesture, alone, is

¹ This study is a part of the research project "Christianity after Christendom: Paradoxes of Theological Turns in Contemporary Culture", Charles University, PRIMUS/HUM/23.

² “The experience of morality does not proceed from this vision – it *consummates* this vision; ethics is an optics”, Levinas *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis, Duquesne UP, 1969, p. 23.

perhaps already an ethical or political achievement. Within a Gadamerian frame – reminding us that modern *Geschmack* may well be set in motion by *morality* more so than by aesthetic sensibilities – and closing with an almost virtuous bookend on Aristotelean intentionality, Friberg asks refreshing “Questions about Taste”. A question at the heart of his analysis is, “*how to maintain a position where the development of a ‘true’ taste, i.e., one related to morals, is possible*”.¹ On the way, he offers a compelling case for the possibly under-appreciated aesthetic kinship – even, unlikely alliance – between Theodor Adorno and Roger Scruton; especially, with regards to *tradition, education, and a certain kind of irreligious pneumatology* inherent to art and/or the artistic process. But perhaps Friberg’s most salient question is the one pushed to “extremes” as his paper draws to a close: “[*Are*] *many discourses of taste ... without spirit?*”²

I am inclined to answer in the affirmative: that most discourses of taste are without spirit. In response, I would like to suggest that *one way* of resisting this reality in which discourses on taste lack spirit and do little beyond ruling imitation might be to return (or begin again) discoursing on taste in its empirical and *gustatory valences*. Since there’s no escape from tradition (after Adorno and Scruton) must we not always concede the human animal’s position in the grand bio-sensorial tradition? The kind of taste we are lacking (and for which, I hope, we’re searching) – perhaps something like *discernment* or *sapience* – certainly would be *not only, solely, or merely* empirical and sensuous. But neither would it be naively (nor ideally) indemnified from gustation.

The canonical debasement of gustation, empiricism, and sensuousness does not seem to be improving the discourses on taste. So, philosophy must not be afraid *to try* something else. *If*, following Adorno, “aesthetic experience is not genuine unless it becomes philosophy”³ and ‘values of taste’ must be resisted by philosophy because of the culinary commodification of art into the consumption of cuisine, *then* perhaps one of the primary tasks of philosophy must become a revaluation of *gustation-beyond-consumption* to salvage tastes (and values). (Marx even evokes a *taste of value* only accessible by tongue).

¹ Friberg “The Aesthetic Endeavor in the Age of *Halbbildung*: Some Questions about Taste”, *WER* V,4, p. 176; my italics.

² Friberg, p. 182.

³ Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 131; qtd. by Friberg, p. 176.

The culture industry might be understood to produce *clichés*, as conceived by Scruton. At the heart of the matter, e.g., we find, “Scruton’s upshots against popular culture where we find ‘clichés of form and expression, attached to sentiment so *cheesy* and fake, that we are never troubled by the thought that someone might seriously mean them’, ... sounds like an echo of Adorno’s comment on the culture industry as ‘empty time filled with emptiness’”.¹ Such culture-industrial production, for Adorno, doesn’t even construct false-consciousness, but simply “leaves things as just as they are”.² If the clichés of Scruton participate in the false-consciousness of Adorno, then it is worth considering that those ensnared in the culture industry may ever fall short of even producing a mere cliché, at all.

I’m encouraged by Friberg to think the culture industry alongside *Halbbildung* as a cog in this industry to leave things just as they are. The true problem is not the lack of education but, rather, the *incompletion* of education. Perhaps the difference between *Halbbildung* and a true *Bildungslosigkeit* is that those in/of the latter still yet harbour a ‘buildability’; the possibility, capacity, or potency to become educated or cultured or attain *Bildung*. They’re not left stranded in a suspended state (as would be the case of those left ‘just as they are’ in the *Halbbildung* of a culture industry). If the uncultured are better off than the half-cultured, we might need to invert the dictum of Arnold Bennett, “bad taste is better than no taste”.³ After Adorno, perhaps tastelessness or no taste is preferable to bad taste. *Better well-hanged than ill-wed*.⁴

Along similar lines, “Art for Adorno may at first hand seem to conflict with Scruton’s perception when we learn from Adorno that art is a dynamic category that changes itself ... and that art lives on by negating its

¹ Friberg, *ibid.*, p. 178. The texts juxtaposed, here, are Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor, New York: Continuum, 2002, p. 274 and Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding*, South Bend: Augustine’s Press, 1998, p. 223; my italics of *cheesy*.

² Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 274.

³ Arnold Bennett *The Evening Standard Years: “Books and Persons,” 1926-1931*, London: Chatto&Windus, 1974, p. 404.

⁴ Kierkegaard’s glean of a line from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (Act 1, sc. 5; clown speaking to Maria), which became a guiding tenet in his resistance to Hegel and epigraphed to his idiomatic critique of education and learning that embodies *Philosophical Crumbs* or *Fragments*. *Kierkegaard’s Writings*, Vol. 7, [Johannes Climacus], *Philosophical Fragments, or A Fragment of Philosophy*, trans. Howard V. & Edna H. Hong, Princeton UP, 1985), p. 3.

own origin ... [as long as we try to remember that this dialectic of art is] ... no simple [blind] opposition...”,¹ such as the kind of dialectics critiqued by Scruton. “For both Adorno and Scruton rejecting the tradition is naïve ...” and, perhaps, most importantly, both “find the spiritual ... appearing in artworks”.² Adorno advocates the “comprehending of art as spiritual”³ and proclaims the “nature of art as spiritual”.⁴

Adorno feels little need to address – even less, to develop – an aesthetic sense of taste, because taste seems irrevocably doomed to always diminish (and lead us astray from) the spiritual element of art. This is overtly pronounced in his lectures from the winter semester of 1958-59 (from which the published text of *Aesthetic Theory* is drawn), on the issue of contingent judgment. There, tells his listeners: “the question of the contingency of the judgements of taste will not trouble us [... and ...] I am *not* referring to the empirical contingency of the judgments of taste...”.⁵ It seems like Adorno wishes to indemnify art from any stain of the empirical realm of the sensuousness, which he believes (following Hegel) never quite able to free itself from the old *disinterestedness* presumed by *idealist* (and Kantian) aesthetics. For Adorno, values of taste are indissociable with empirical gustation. This is so because taste and gustation are, further, indissociable from and ever contaminated by food, eating, and, therefore, consumption. This entanglement of empirical reality and sensuality with the gustation of cuisine and wine as impediments to properly (i.e., spiritually) approaching the work of art finds further expression in the 1958-59 lectures:

The sensual elements of art as aspects of *stimulation and pleasure* become false and questionable the moment we isolate them. All this means ... is that *they become culinary elements, values of taste*. We then literally approach the work of art in *the way we approach a good dish* – or perhaps I should say *a very fine wine*. We *consume* the work as it were phys-

¹ Friberg, *loc.cit.*

² Friberg, p. 179.

³ Adorno *Aesthetics 1958/59*, ed. E. Ortland, trans. W. Hoban, Medford: Polity Press, see also Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*, 62.

⁴ Adorno *Aesthetics 1958/59*, p. 111.

⁵ Adorno *Aesthetics 1958/59*, p. 8. One should note that, here, taste doesn't trouble Adorno *because* he is *not* referring to empirical taste (i.e., this particular approach to the issue does not necessarily suggest that we need not trouble ourselves with or by empirical taste).

ically real ... whereas, ... art ... constitutes a sphere which is removed from *the sphere of mere empirical existence*.¹

“Only once it is *done with tasteful savouring* does artistic experience become autonomous. The route to aesthetic autonomy proceeds by way of disinterestedness; *the emancipation of art from cuisine* or pornography is irrevocable”.² For Adorno, cuisine performs like pornography, with regards to their respective perversions of art, as would gustation if understood or delimited solely as a function of cuisine (which seems to be the case, here). As such, tasting, savouring, gustation, or sensuousness always ever partake, necessarily, in a mode of “consumption” (perhaps, even, ‘destruction’, in Hegelese) and also, thereby, in the “commodification”, characteristic of the culture industry.

These theoretical echoes of the culture industry in the aesthetics of Scruton, prompt me to suggest something similar in Scruton’s philosophical oenology that dissuades us against “*industrial Chardonnay*”.³ As Friberg points out, Scruton shares Adorno’s resistance to the sensuous. He “criticizes modern and postmodern art regarding a problematic separation of what he calls an aesthetic impulse, i.e., sensuous effect, [away] from the spiritual impulse...”

In Scruton’s *I Drink Therefore I Am: A Philosopher’s Guide to Wine* this resistance to the sensuous effect of the aesthetic impulse finds expression, yet again, against gustation or empirical taste, akin to Adorno’s critique of cuisine, consumption, and the culinary. Here, in his fun and informative text devoted to wine – the very place, *if any*, one might expect Scruton to indulge in any possible merits of gustation – one instead finds another distancing from the sensual (and, hence, gustation and flavours, as well). He confesses adherence to “the *terroiriste* philosophy”,⁴ far more interested in soil and territory than in any mere flavour(s) of them. “I was about to fall in love – *not with a flavour* ... but with ... a hallowed piece of France”.⁵

¹ Adorno *Aesthetics 1958/9*, 111; italics mine.

² Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 12; italics mine.

³ Scruton *I Drink Therefore I Am: A Philosopher’s Guide to Wine*, London: Continuum, 2009, p. 52.

⁴ Scruton, p. 55; cf. “I was a *terroiriste*, for whom the principal ingredient in any bottle is the soil”, p. 12.

⁵ Scruton, p. 12.

To think you can *judge a wine from its taste and aroma, alone*, is like thinking you can judge a Chinese poem by its sound, without knowing the language. Just as words sound different to the one who knows their meaning, so do *wines taste different to the one who can locate them* in a place and a time.¹

Like Adorno, Scruton seems prone to debase the sensuous for the sake of a higher knowledge believed beyond the scope of brute sensation or vulgar empiricism. The point of questioning Scruton or Adorno on these issues is not to suggest that gustation or sensation, “*alone*”, are the preferable paths to such knowledge but merely that they, too, tell or teach the taster something about the location or *terroir* of any tastant, also. It merely suggests, against Scruton, that his love for that piece of French soil and the experience of its flavour need not be categorically distinct, divorced, apostate, or indemnified from each other. In terms of gustation, this would be tantamount to claiming, against Adorno, that tasting is not simply about consumption nor cuisine. Hopefully, this could ally itself with Friberg’s earlier comments beginning with Gadamer and freedom. Humanity liberated from the banality of its brute necessities is a path to refinement ever widened by acts of taste. Beyond consumption, bestial feeding, machinic fueling, and “our need for food ... what and how we eat is a matter of cultivation”.²

Gustation participates in such cultivation and, as such, partakes in the *useless*. Taste is irreducible to what is simply utilizable (i.e., food and fuel). Its capacities far surpass the utility of fulfilling these basic needs. Akin to Scruton’s understanding of education as “pursuit of useless knowledge”,³ gustation and sapience learn, discern, study, and know the world of tastes in less than useful ways. The tasting-tongue renders the feeding-mouth *inoperative*⁴ in its less than satisfying savouring of the useless.

It is worth considering that *gustation is precisely not eating*; tasting is *no longer or not yet* consuming foodstuffs. The colloquial conflation of eating with tasting is so normal that one almost forgets that *taste is*

¹ Scruton, p. 34; italics mine.

² Friberg, p. 174.

³ Quoted by Friberg, p. 180.

⁴ Borrowing a term from Giorgio Agamben in his attempts to conceive ‘use’ beyond utility and usefulness.

also considered to be a deterrent against eating. Be it at the foot of the cross in the Christian gospels, to the natural selection of Darwin, up to the more developed analysis of gustation by contemporary analytic philosophy. One tastes so as *not to eat*. And once eating commences it performs a collateral adumbration of *dulling of the gustatory palate*.

As such, it is perhaps helpful to consider possible tastes beyond the realm of the culinary, cuisine, and industrial commodification; such as selftaste, osculation, oral sex, or the taste of time/*le temps*. While we have industrial commodification on the tips of our tongues, it is rarely appreciated with due sensitivity that throughout *Capital*, Vol. 1, Marx considers value (or appropriation) in terms of *licking*, and exchange and price (or expropriation) in terms of eating, devouring, vampiric sucking, and fat. Scruton finds cliché too “cheesy”. Adorno finds kitsch too sweet or at least prone to “sugary stereotypes”.¹ It is more than likely that Adorno’s thinking, here, is influenced by Marx’s suggestion that the invention of money, gilding, and the gold standard of value was a process of over-sweetening (or artificial sweetening). Friberg’s understanding of the kind of learning he believes advocated by Adorno (and Horkheimer) as a kind of resistant *enrichment*² must never become *too rich* for our tastes. Refined discernment must ever learn, test, sample, and, if necessary, dilute or dissolve such cheesy or sugary stereotypes that amuse us away from such resistance.

Though he almost only emphasizes the shortcomings of taste, (e.g., in the wake of the commodification of industrial Chardonnays), Scruton cannot help but intimate a sort of *pre-commodified gustatory baseline* – perhaps quite rare, repressed, or nearly forgotten – that is, yet, the precondition of his very critique, (without which it would be impossible). For there would still be *tastes of places*, even if the culture industry debases them in the process of commodification: “with *few exceptions*, like WiraWira, Australian wines do not *taste of places*. Hence they’ve decided to taste like grapes”.³

¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, qtd. by Friberg, p. 177.

² “What matters is to be confronted with something that asks of us to make an effort of understanding and by that means possibly *enrich* our minds ... *Enriching is not for contemplating but for learning* how to relate to, face and in the end act on our reality in contrast to the culture industry...” Friberg, p. 179; italics mine.

³ Scruton, p. 83.

But there are *exceptions*. Thankfully, the spirit of WiraWira yet moves. Just because industrial/cultural ‘values of taste’ and commodification have debased gustation, does not mean philosophy must, therefore, abandon them (and, thereby, further continue that debasement). It is precisely because few wines, today, taste of place that taste requires careful cultivation to protect or salvage its endangered capacity to taste places, time, and others in a milieu where such practice is debased, discouraged, forgotten, and made more difficult. Otherwise taste will slowly perish in its perpetual half-cultivation.

Scruton’s *terroirisme* focusing on place, region, and soil is refreshing and important. But to cast the knowledge of them as, necessarily, beyond the scope of gustation or flavours smacks of rationalist idealism. He simply seems unwilling or unable to consider the possibility of tasting time (or temperance), itself; a position that perhaps only a radical empiricist (or phenomenologist) might be able to espouse. E.g., in *The Five Senses*, the radical empiricist, Michel Serres, appreciates all the *terroiriste* concerns of Scruton – place, time, climate, and temperance – yet, far from denigrating the sensuous or empirical, addresses them as experiences of gustation. E.g., “Soil, climate, gravel ... the sweat of the vigneron ... the hot summers, the rains, the rot ... The wine says a thousand things, moving from sense to information: *spiritual*”.¹ For Serres, taste can still participate in the “spiritual”, precisely because of the tastes of temperance and *terroir*.

This brings us back to the Adorno/Scruton aesthetic alliance which insists on the spirit and an inescapable spiritual tradition. Friberg suggests that “Scruton relates the spiritual to a religious content which *must not be confused with religious doctrines or matters of faith*”.² This is perhaps Scruton’s intention, but is easier said than done. The spiritual does seem yet to be a matter of faith. One may be convinced that the spiritual is *not* to be confused with religious doctrines, but it seems less evident that it can be dissociated from faith. In the very same paragraph where Friberg suggests otherwise he quotes Scruton yet evoking a somewhat inescapable, perhaps even necessary, relation to a proper faith. Scruton claims that our “power to perceive other and more important ... truths about our condition ... *cannot, without the benefit of*

¹ Serres *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies I*, trans. M. Sankey & P. Crowley, New York: Continuum, 2008, p. 182.

² Friberg, *op.cit.*, p. 176; italics mine.

faith, be confronted properly”.¹ We must attempt to free ourselves from religious faith (as much as possible; if such a thing is possible). But the most important truths – be they conditional or existential² to the human spirit – seem to be only *confronted, properly, by a faith* (though perhaps not by faith, alone).

Friberg is quite right to hear an “echo of Hegel”³ in the specialized endowments of art with independence due to the vanishing of the sacral, sacred, spiritual, or *Heilige* from art. This spirit of Hegel is less obvious with regards to Scruton, but often directly evoked by Adorno. One discerns, rather easily, hints of Hegel in Adorno’s thinking through the spiritual aspects of art and his attempts to salvage them from artistic taste. Advocating the spiritual nature of art, for Adorno, “is in direct union with the removal of the aesthetic realm from the empirical realm” and ‘the sensuous’. This union also reeks and smacks of Hegel.

Although a proper textual analysis is beyond the scope of today’s discussion, I believe a strong case could be made that this Hegelian tendency to overcome sensuous shortcomings (through the spirit) has its theoretical roots in Hegel’s early theological writings on the sacraments. Here (and even throughout Hegel’s mature system) one can detect the incomparable influence of Luther, particularly of Luther’s critique of the catholic eucharist. So, it’s worth considering that it is the Reformer, himself, who sets in motion this powerful and ruthless critique of the sensuous experience of wine that has continued to steep, age, and mature into the uncanny critiques on the consumption of wine (in Adorno) and the grapy flavours of industrial wines devoid of taste for place (in Scruton). Such thinking is perhaps not as dissociated from religious doctrines, as we may believe. There may well be a very Protestant super-ego lurking within the critiques of Adorno and Scruton. Perhaps only the presumptions of a secular fundamentalism believe to ever dissociate yesterday’s catholic industry from today’s culture industry (or so any dialectic of enlightenment would, at least, encourage us to consider).

¹ Scruton *The Aesthetic Understanding*, p. 225, quoted by Friberg, p. 177; italics mine.

² Beyond Scruton’s own terminology, Friberg suggests that certain concerns (such as the spiritual) canonically or colloquially considered to be religious, be recast instead as “existential questions”, p. 176.

³ Friberg, p. 175.

A traditional relationship to spiritual and religious content must be maintained, but *not* because religion offers adequate answers to such questions, but, simply, “because over the centuries [religion] is where such questions have been dealt with. The religious tradition may be seen as our source for interpreting questions we cannot do without; even if the interpretations may be false we should not simply discard them”.¹

Perhaps we can learn something about taste from the regions of religion, along these lines. Similar flexibility ought or might be granted to taste and gustation. It would be a lesson in co-mingling or fusion of traditions. Even if, for Adorno, “elements of art ... become false”² in their sensual, sensuous, culinary, or gustatory experiences and one cannot, for Scruton, adequately “judge a wine from its taste and aroma [or, “flavour”], alone”,³ we yet should not simply discard them. It is worth recalling the faint yet persistent religious or Biblical tradition of “spiritual taste” or a “taste of the sacred” that can be traced from Latin-American liberation theology,⁴ through Levinas,⁵ Edwards,⁶ Schleiermacher,⁷ Calvin,⁸ Nicholas,¹ stretching back to the Psalmist.²

¹ Friberg, p. 177.

² Adorno *Aesthetics 1958/59*, *op. cit.*

³ Scruton *I Drink Therefore I Am*, *op. cit.*

⁴ E.g., Gustavo Gutiérrez *The Density of the Present: Selected Writings*, trans. J.B. Nickoloff & M. Wilde (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 202. Q.v., Gutiérrez *Spiritual Writings*, ed. D.G. Groody (Maryknoll, MD: Orbis Books, 2011), p. 101f.

⁵ “A taste of the sacred”. Levinas “Being Jewish”, trans. M. Mader, *Continental Philosophy Review* 40 (2007), p. 210; final line, §IV].

⁶ “... a certain divine *spiritual taste* ... diverse from any former kinds of sensations of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other five senses”. *The Works of Jonathon Edwards*, Vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. J. Smith, Yale UP, 1959, p. 259; italics mine.

⁷ “[R]eligion is the sensibility and taste for the infinite [*Religion ist Sinn und Geschmack fürs Unendliche*]”, Schleiermacher *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. R. Crouter, Cambridge UP, 1988), p. 103; *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, Felix Meiner, 1970, p. 30.

⁸ *We’ve lost all taste*, Calvin’s commentary to Psalm 92:4 laments the loss of taste and, perhaps, is not nearly as apostate as one might expect from the critiques of taste by Serres, Nietzsche, Bourdieu, or even Adorno; as if the latter are diverse secularizations of the former: “... *la cause de nostre paresse brutale est, que nous avons perdu tout goust quand il est question de savourer la fin des oeuvres de Dieu* [the cause of our brutish laziness is that *we’ve lost all taste* when it’s a question of

Galen describes semen as *pneuma*.³ The Cappadocians considered the spiritual experience as the dilution of bitter drops of vinegar in water.⁴ Luther did so, conversely, through sweetening water with sugar.⁵ Nicholas conceives spirit as salt.⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux theorized spirit as a taste of kissing.⁷ The intellectual history of pneumatology and canonical ‘spirit’ studies are saturated with gustation and tastants (and not only those colloquially considered mere consumptions; i.e., osculation and bodily fluids).

Perhaps a possible alternative to the incomplete education by which, according to Adorno, “we become *absorbed by the world* and conform to it ... give up and conform to the environment and the others”,⁸ is to shift our attention to the precious ways in which, instead, *the world is absorbed by us*; through which, instead, *we absorb the*

savouring the end of god’s works]”, *Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. 3, *Psalms 67-93* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, nd), p. 432; fn. 589; translation & italics mine. (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom10.pdf>).

¹ *Unity and Reform: Selected Writings of Nicholas de Cusa*, trans. John Patrick Dolan, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, p. 106.

² “Taste and see the Lord is good”, Psalm 34:8. Cf. “Taste and fear not: God is here ...” George Herbert, *The Complete English Poems*, Penguin Classics, 2004, p. 170; [“The Invitation”, line 16].

³ Foucault *The Care of the Self*, p. 136.

⁴ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, trans. P. Schaff & H. Wace, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1892, p. 347f.

⁵ “This resembles our experience with the sugar water ... when I drink it, I also *taste*, drink, or *lick* [*koste, tricke* oder *lecke*] the sugar ... ‘If you believe [*gleubet*] in the Son, accept Him, and *taste the flesh* [*kostet das fleisch*], then you have assuredly encountered Me’, says God the Father”, *Luther’s Works*, 23 p.120; italics mine; *Luthers Werke*, 33 p. 184f; italics mine.

⁶ “[W]e experience that a certain mineral power, which can also be called a ‘spirit’, exists in the bowels of the earth ... present there in a potency from which the mineral ... of salt may arise”, Nicholas of Cusa *Selected Spiritual Writings*, p. 285; [*De visione Dei*, Chapter 20, § 110].

⁷ *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, 2 p. 10; [Sermon 2, Part 2, § 3]; Bernardi, *Opera*, 1 p. 10. Before falling in love with that piece of France rather than a flavour, Scruton describes the experience as “lips trembling in anticipation as though on the brink of a fateful kiss”, p. 12. But just as one cannot judge a wine by its taste, alone, one cannot judge “a woman through a blindfold kiss”, p. 33. Yet he still raves of the “wonderful floral kisses” (p. 50) of a *terroiriste* experience.

⁸ Adorno *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, qtd. by Friberg p. 182; italics mine.

world, time, our surroundings, environment, and others. At the end of the analysis Friberg's dream of a taste beyond *Halbbildung* is a process of *maturation*. Absorbing the world would be another way of *maturing* (and understanding) as that might ally itself with those evoked in the final sentence of Friberg's essay: aging and steeping so as "to understand there is a *wider horizon* on humanity [into which] to place the judgement of taste".¹

Such a horizon – like, e.g., a Husserlian horizon and *Umwelt* of one's immediate neighbours, surrounding environment, and temperance – widens to include the complex absorption, fusion/confusion,² dissolution, or osmosis between taster and tastant across "the mucous membrane"³ of the tongue. It is this mucosal absorption (along with its additional haptic dimension) that particularly distinguishes gustation from the other four colloquial senses. (This distinction is so distinct that it is perhaps worth considering, that – by virtue of it – taste might not belong truly among the proper empirical senses, at all; a singular contact chemo reception even one more degree of magnitude further removed from the other senses than that already enjoyed by haptic touch and proprioception, alone).

Friberg is well aware of the stereotypic dangers so often associated with emphasis on empirical or sensuous gustation, from which the likes of Adorno or Scruton would dissuade us. There would be assumptions of a certain "separation from knowledge"⁴ perhaps prone to becoming *too subjective* or psychological, like the "empiricist tradition's alliance with psychology".⁵ It is difficult to read Friberg's essay without discerning a desire to revalue the discourse of taste, but like Adorno and Scruton, he has almost nothing, directly, to say about gustation. Does he find these dangers (psychology, subjectivity, false knowledge, etc.) reason(s) enough to refrain from engaging gustation? Are there other dangers worth mentioning? Must the spiritual always ever purge itself (or believe itself purged) from the sensuous? If so,

¹ Friberg, p. 182; italics mine.

² "These actions, alloys, mixtures, brews should all be called confusions, and the philosophy of confusion should be the common ground of sapience", Serres *The Five Senses*, p. 161.

³ Serres, p. 22.

⁴ Friberg, on Kant, p. 175.

⁵ Friberg, *loc.cit.*

would such sensuousness include all of its possible gustatory valences?
Would Friberg consider it possible to think gustation beyond the confines of culinary cuisine consumption, beyond Adorno?