

Tasting *Vino* with Vico: Full–Bodied Discourse

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Abstract

The experience of tasting wine and our earnest attempt to make sense of it draws the body back into discourse, recalling the sensorial and corporeal roots of language creation unearthed by Giambattista Vico in *The New Science*. Vico's narrative strategy will help us to understand the necessity and utility of the bodily metaphors pervading wine discourse. Rather than being mere artifice or ornament, out of a poverty of speech; furthermore, they fulfill the need to express new and uncharted dimensions of reality. Our examination of the sense of taste and its intimately related senses of smell and touch reveals gaps in Vico's story of how language springs from the body. His narrative traces the birth and development of language drawn from only two of our senses: sight and hearing. In other words, the corporeal origins of language creation in the Western intellectual tradition uncovered by Vico are limited to only two aspects of the body; the others remain buried. Finally, we will consider how cultivating the hidden and hedonic senses of taste, smell, and touch can open up new dimensions of our sensorial experience of the earth, one another, and ourselves.

Keywords: Metaphors, Language, Body, Wine, Taste, Vico.

The experience of tasting wine and our earnest attempt to make sense of it draws the body back into discourse, evincing the sensorial and corporeal roots of language creation unearthed by Giambattista Vico in *The New Science*.¹ Vico's narrative strategy will help us understand the necessity and utility of the pervasive bodily metaphors found in wine discourse. Rather than mere artifice or ornament, the metaphors are born of a poverty of speech and they fulfill the need to express new, uncharted experiences of reality. Our examination of the sense of taste and the intimately related senses of smell and touch, moreover, will reveal gaps in Vico's story of how language springs from the body. We will see that his narrative is primarily from only two of our senses: sight and hearing. Finally, we will consider

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1. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max and Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). Hereafter cited as *NS*.

how cultivating our sense of taste can open up new dimensions of our sensorial experience of the earth, one another, and ourselves.

Vico's first public academic address was titled "On the Sumptuous Banquets of the Romans." He meditated upon Roman dining and culinary practices in order to capture their lived experience. In a similar spirit, Vico turned to the Roman comic poets to catch their living, breathing, and daily discourse.² His choice to present an oration on the gustatory habits of the Romans during such a momentous step in his career (when he first took up his position as Professor of Latin Eloquence at the University of Naples) offers us a clue about Vico's valuation of the body and its habits in the story of Man. Vico is a philosopher of the body and its ontological relation to place. Below, we will see how Vico's narrative tells the story of the simultaneous transformations of body and place as they expand and diminish.

Wine tasting suits the *habitus* of Vico's cities and academies. The pleasures of tasting wine and evaluating its aesthetic value evokes the luxury and pomp of the sumptuous banquets Vico captures in Homer. The refined sensuality of this age indicates an age in decline, for Vico. In the age of men, the once robust heroes have become frail humans, and the masculine has given way to the feminine. The body lies soft and inert on plush cushions. This is its proper form — the result of refinement and cultivation. Cultured and clean, it "has reached the extreme of delicacy" in which men "lash out at the slightest displeasures."³ But in the first age, Vico gives digestion a role in the story of our primordial emergence from the forests. His narration begins with the dire search for fresh perennial springs and ends with the sumptuous banquets of the Greeks. The urgent need for drinking water motivated the wandering of the first poets. And this need motivates our powers of invention. For true ingenuity is born of a response to necessity or utility.

We might note that wine culture could provide a study in the symbolic languages of Vico's heroic age, for it seems to be alive and well today: family crests, coats of arms, emblems, and heralds still adorn bottles and chateaux,

2. Donald Phillip Verene, "Vico and Culinary Art: 'On the Sumptuous Banquet of the Romans' and the Science of the First Meals," in *New Vico Studies* 20 (2002): 69. Here, Vico prefigures Mikhail Bakhtin's notion that comedy breaks up centralizing, hegemonic discourse. Parodic-travesty forms capture the laughing, breathing, and spontaneous discourse of peoples in dynamic relation to their lived situation. Alternatively, according to Bakhtin, myth has a homogenizing power over language. The *mythos*, fables, or true speech that Vico recovers vibrate with life. He captures them before they become sedimented and centralized into reified myths. There is a strong destabilizing and decentralizing current coursing throughout *The New Science*. It would make sense, then, that Vico took care to stay close to the comics and their unique ability to express the pulsating, lived expressions of the people. The language of the kitchen, too, is often close to the language of everyday speech, far removed from the learned discourse of the academies. Vico digs beneath the inert abstractions of the erudite men to reveal their situated, experiential source.

3. NS, par. 1107.

whose images demarcate plots of land. They evoke the secret symbolic language of the heroes, meant to induce awe and perhaps a little fear. This illusory mystique and fabled imagery is especially at work in Burgundy and Bordeaux. This essay, though, focuses on the experience of taste (though this would be an enticing study to take up at a later date).

Recently, there has been growing philosophical interest in taste, food, and wine. A wave of popular academic works on the topic has come mainly from the Anglo–American analytic tradition. Various publications include *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*;⁴ *Philosophers at Table: On Food and Being Human*;⁵ *The Aesthetics of Food: The Philosophical Debate; Wine & Philosophy: A Symposium on Thinking and Drinking*;⁶ *Questions of Taste, The Philosophy of Wine*;⁷ *I Drink Therefore I am: A Philosopher's Guide to Wine*;⁸ *The Philosophy of Wine: A Case of Truth, Beauty, and Intoxication*⁹ among others. Although philosophical attention upon the traditionally devalued sense of taste is encouraging, one is disheartened to find these works swamped in debates over the objectivity or subjectivity of taste. Carolyn Korsmeyer's pioneering text, *Making Sense of Taste*, provides the greatest springboard for our reading of Vico and taste.¹⁰

Korsmeyer elucidates the privileged status of the distal senses of sight and hearing in the Western intellectual tradition. The three devalued senses of taste, touch, and smell are traditionally held to be too bound up with the body to have any substantial cognitive or aesthetic value. These proximal senses have been regarded as ignoble, hedonistic, and

4. Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

5. Raymond Boisvert and L. Heldke, *Philosophers at Table: On Food and Being Human* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2016).

6. *Wine and Philosophy: A Symposium on Thinking and Drinking*, ed. Fritz Allhoff (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

7. *Questions of Taste: The Philosophy of Wine*, ed. Barry Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

8. Roger Scruton, *I Drink Therefore I am: A Philosopher's Guide to Wine* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009).

9. Cain Todd, *The Philosophy of Wine: A Case of Truth, Beauty, and Intoxication* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2010).

10. I would like to add that I recently invited Carolyn Korsmeyer to speak at my family's restaurant, *Giancarlo's Sicilian Steakhouse* in Williamsville, New York. Her lecture was accompanied by a wine and food pairing meant to invoke the convivial sense of light intoxication and discussion that colored the ancient Greek symposiums. Korsmeyer related how her work on taste prefigured the others listed above by ten years or more. Until recently, she was the lone figure in the forests of taste. I would also like to note that I am currently training to become a certified Sommelier, which motivates my reading of Vico through the fascinating world of wine. I am also training in order to nourish the development of my family's collection of imported wines, *Grivani* and *ana blu: Wines of the Sea*. Our *Wines of the Sea* are based upon the old world concept of *terroir* and, in particular, coastal *terroir*.

feminine. Although Korsmeyer expends most of her effort upon reevaluating taste, touch, and smell, and conferring cognitive and aesthetic value upon them, she is often pilloried by commentators for her relatively marginal argument that food and wine cannot achieve the status of fine art. She cautiously excludes food and wine from the traditional categories constituting fine works of art.

But her argument is more subtle than most commentators appreciate. By establishing the historicity of the categories of fine art, and their arbitrary dependence upon the two masculine senses of sight and sound, she ruptures the categories themselves. One of her more generous critics, Raymond Boisvert, explains, “in declining to grant ‘art’ status, Korsmeyer is suggesting that, given the restrictiveness of the category, granting art status to food is not the most efficacious thing we can do to recognize and value it aesthetically.”¹¹ Korsmeyer’s argument points to our need for a broader, more robust sense of the aesthetics of taste — one not limited by traditional categories. Vico presents such an aesthetics, as we shall see. In tracing the sensuous, savage, and wild beginnings of the fine arts and recondite sciences, Vico boldly destabilizes the traditional categories, while Korsmeyer’s approach is far more timid and subtle.

Korsmeyer’s work is important for our purposes for one other major reason. It allows us to detect a gap in Vico’s recovery of the bodily roots of recondite concepts. Vico, it turns out, does not trace the beginnings of the refined arts from the body as a whole, but rather, from only the two distal bodily senses: sight and hearing.

To examine the relationship between the senses and language in wine discourse, let us return to the improper, unruly, excessive bodies of the first poets in Vico’s ages of the gods and the heroes. Like the first poets, tasters seem buried in their bodies, groping for a way, in an almost agitated spirit, to make sense of the beguiling object before them. There is a secret dialogue between wine and the body that demands fuller expression. The recourse to metaphor and poetic expression used by wine tasters indicates a need and a lack. Beyond mere artifice and play, the poetics taken up conveys an underlying poverty of speech. Although not as dire, this lack and need mirrors the impulses that drive invention in Vico’s first two ages. The gross, bodily giants wander the primeval forests in search of freshwater. Vico is the rare philosopher in the history of Western intellectual thought who acknowledges the digestive aspect of our being and becoming human. He elaborates, to a degree, what Raymond Boisvert and Lisa Helde call a “farmer guided, stomach-endowed philosophy.”¹²

11. Boisvert and Heldke, *Philosophers at Table*, 84.

12. Boisvert and Heldke, *Philosophers at Table*, 76.

Why is there a poverty of expression in wine discourse? Despite Vico's heroic return to the first narratives, the senses of taste, touch, and smell have left no story to unearth — there is little for Vico to recover. These senses have remained uncultivated and unexpressed. Though the first beastly poets carried words over from their excessive bodies, they augmented their distal senses in the process. Hence, we are left with a story that ends with the detached, abstract discourse of the age of Man.

Let us consider poetic logic traversed by the first awakening of sight and sound in Vico's narrative. We will look to the creation of the first poetic character in Vico's founding myth, the birth of Jove. After the floods, giants wandered the great forests of the earth. One day, upon the mountain tops, lightning strikes the air and the hiss of the lightning and the clap of the thunderbolts cause the strongest of the wandering giants to shake in fear. They seize their feral wandering and, significantly, stay in one place. For the first time, they "raise their eyes and become aware of the sky."¹³ There is a dialogic relationship between the hissing earth and the giants' shouts; they are performing a duet. More importantly, they "see" and "hear" the first signs of the gods. Vision and sound dominate this expressive exchange between the earth and the body. In this primordial scene, we witness the birth of the sky-gods. The proto-humans "express their violent passions by shouting and grumbling, they pictured the sky to themselves as a great animated body."¹⁴ As the age of gods gives way to the age of heroes and then, finally, the age of men, bodies and their gods shrink. The excessive bodies of the poetic giants and the vast bodies of their imagined gods diminish simultaneously. The once great, animated body of the earth and sky ultimately becomes the tiny image of the god, Jove, flown about in a chariot.

Their guttural shouts and songs are quieted in the age of men. Where the written word prevails, the vigor of the vocalic is lost. This silence in the last age is a haunting mirror of the primordial silence of the giants roaming the earth in the first age. They wandered without mothers and "without ever hearing a human voice."¹⁵ Sight eclipses hearing and the written word dominates. The sonorous residue of language is depleted and the power of our primordial bodily eyes is diminished. Vico relates:

The nature of our civilized minds is so detached from the senses, even in the vulgar, by abstractions corresponding to all the abstract terms our languages abound in, and so refined by the art of writing...that it is naturally beyond our power to form the vast image of this mistress called "Sympathetic Nature."¹⁶

13. *NS*, par. 377.

14. *NS*, par. 377.

15. *NS*, par. 454.

16. *NS*, par. 378.

The men of the cities and of the academies are incapable of envisioning the primordial images that were once created by wholly bodily imaginations. For the first poets were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, “buried in the body.”¹⁷ The unbound, excessive giants are reduced to their delicate human form in the final age of men. And accordingly, the vast, impenetrable forests are reduced to orderly, demarcated cities and academies. As man becomes detached from his body, he also becomes untethered from his sense of place.

I use the word man because Vico’s is the story of the birth and end of the concept Man. In the final age, humanity attempts to live through this concept. In Adriana Cavarero’s words, we may see this as an age where one “attempts to recognize oneself in the definition Man.”¹⁸ This results in a sort of rational madness. Donald Verene explains: “Vico shows that to believe in the reality of the concept is a form of madness.”¹⁹ As women were never fully included in the universal concept Man, there is a sense in which they have been spared this tragic fate. Much as Adriana Cavarero has taught us that women joyfully carried on the art of narrative while men struggled to live through the concept, women in this case, too, have remained closer to their bodily senses of taste, touch, and smell. An intellectual tradition that has cast them out of the sphere of rational discourse and, in turn, out of the place of the cities and academies has in fact helped to preserve their sense of self as lived through their proximal, hedonic, and feminine senses. Of course, this is not to argue that women should be displaced from the cities and academies. Instead, the feminine realm of sensorial expression should be celebrated and used as a curative for the fatigue of the concept in the cities and the academies.

Taste, touch, and smell do not make a significant appearance in Vico’s tale of shrinking bodies, then, because these feminine senses have never been narrated or granted full expression. Vico’s narrative is the story of the birth, death, and decline of the concept Man. And the distal senses of sight and hearing are at the origins of this story. The hedonic, proximal senses remain buried in the body, dormant, feral, uncultivated — without a story.

But Vico’s demonstration of the poetic transformation of bodies can be accessed to imagine how a new poetic transformation of the body through cultivating the hedonic senses might take place. For Vico, the body and its relationship with place is always in a state of becoming. It is never reified

17. NS, par. 378.

18. Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (London: Routledge, 2000), 8.

19. Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico’s New Science of Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 215.

into one fixed form.²⁰ The first poets struggle and expend great heroic effort to carve out a sense of themselves and a meaningful place. Their bodily senses are vibrant and fully engaged. At the beginning of things, they “were extremely lively.”²¹

The energetic quest for expression is palpable when witnessing wine tasters today, as they grope for words and shout out flavors, aromas, and novel metaphors. Wine discourse is exciting because of the conspicuous ignorance vibrating along its edges. It evokes the animate, untamed ignorance of the first poets. The effort to discover new names for our gustatory experience is tantamount to creating the experience itself. According to Vico, “the name creates the character, the word engenders the thing.”²² The power of the name to create reality fuels the poetic making of the first human places.

The beastly poets create not through knowing, but through ignorance. Vico affirms that “when men are ignorant of the natural causes producing things [...] they attribute their own nature to them.”²³ What is more, “the human mind because of its indefinite nature, wherever it is lost in ignorance makes itself the rule of the universe in respect of everything it does not know.”²⁴ New experiences necessitating new metaphors almost always spring from bodies. Vico anticipates the cognitive scientists Lakoff and Johnson’s notion that metaphors arise from our bodily experience of reality.²⁵ Or, as Goetsche frames it, “metaphor is based on the metaphysics of the body.”²⁶

In *The New Science*, the first narrations are concrete metaphors created through bodily skills. Vico notes that:

In all the languages the greater part of the expressions relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphor from the human body and its parts and from the human senses and passions. Thus head for top or beginning; the brow and shoulders of a hill; the eyes and needles of potatoes...the flesh of fruits, a vein of rock or mineral, the blood of grapes for wine [...] our rustics speak of plants making love, vines going mad, resinous trees weeping.²⁷

The famous Sangiovese grape of Italy and star of the fabled Super Tuscan wines is etymologically rendered as the blood of Jove (we wonder whether

20. NS, par. 272.

21. NS, par. 499.

22. Nancy Struever, “Vico, Valla, and the Logic of Humanist Inquiry,” in *Giambattista Vico’s New Science of Humanity*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozza and Donald Phillip Verene (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 174.

23. NS, par. 180.

24. NS, par. 181.

25. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

26. Goetsche, *Vico’s Axioms*, 32.

27. NS, par. 405.

this is the grape Vico had in mind in his metaphor above). More to the point, bodily metaphors hint at nascent beginnings. If our proximal, hedonic senses have no real story, and are uncultivated and unrefined, we should expect a plethora of metaphors drawn from the body. When a wine is described as skeletal, full-bodied, moody, or shy, we need only to think back to Vico's first poets and their bodily metaphors.

Bodily metaphors dominates wine discourse. Cain Todd affirms that:

Perhaps the most striking ways in which wines are typically characterized is in their personification; that is, wines are attributed human characteristics and personalities. Physically wines can be big, bold, corpulent, fleshy, skeletal, muscular, masculine, feminine, thin, emaciated. They can be gentle, inviting, cheerful, pretentious, amusing, enticing, proud, vicious, capricious, sly, shy, restrained, voluptuous. Wines can be straightforward, clean, genuine, authentic, honest, pure, commercial. They can possess or lack virtues and vices, and they can be precocious, chic, raunchy, demure, smart, elegant, charming, sophisticated, refined, brilliant, distinguished, gracious, enticing, sumptuous, seductive, opulent – and their opposites [. . .]. They can be energetic, vigorous, spirited, powerful, combative, aggressive, feeble, punny, lacking backbone.²⁸

Furthermore, in her essay, “Can Wines Be Brawny? Reflections on Wine Vocabulary,” Adrienne Lehrer writes:

The most interesting words for a linguist are those relating to mouthfeel, which involves two general classes of words: 1) *body*, characterized most generally by the antonymous pair *full-bodied*, and *light*, and 2) other tactile sensations like *hard* or *prickly* [. . .]. *Full-bodied* wines can be *heavy*, *big*, *flabby*, *thick*, *solid* and *deep*. These words, in turn, have associations and yield terms such as *strong*, *sturdy*, *solid*, *powerful*, *forceful*, *beefy*, and *robust*. On the *light* side we find *small*, *little*, *thin*, *weak* (all negative), *delicate*, and *fragile*.²⁹

These bodily metaphors demonstrate that we are at the beginning of things. As Vico states, “All metaphors conveyed by likeness taken from bodies to signify the operations of the minds must date from the time when philosophies were taking shape. The proof of this is that in every language the terms needed for the refined arts and the recondite sciences are of rustic origin.”³⁰ And today a philosophy of taste is just beginning to take shape.

Vico held the fine arts and sciences up to the light and peered back into their deep history. But food and wine have never reached the status of fine arts such as music, painting, and sculpture or what Tim Crane calls the institutional theory of art. In short, “anything which is in an art museum

28. Todd, *Philosophy of Wine*, 57.

29. Adrienne Lehrer, “Can Wines be Brawny? Reflections on Wine Vocabulary,” in *Questions of Taste*, 128.

30. *NS*, par 404.

(gallery, concert hall, etc.) is a work of art, and anything that is a work of art is in an art museum.”³¹ The criteria used to judge these works of fine art hinge upon, as we saw above, the senses of sight and hearing.

Vico traces the corporeal origins of these refined arts. But since the hedonic senses were never part of the story, he could not recover them. For there is nothing to uncover — they had not yet found a place to begin their story. A refinement or sedimentation of the hedonic senses has yet to take shape. Although we do not find them in Vico’s backward glance, his recovery of the rustic, corporeal origins of the refined arts and sciences helps us to catch a glimpse of the way the dialogic relationship between the body and the earth gives birth to stories. The nascent languages he digs up resemble the fledgling metaphors found in wine discourse today and the poetic transformation of taste is occurring as we speak.

Because of his intense meditation upon the bodily senses, Vico comes close to capturing the multi-modal synaesthetic experience of the senses. His recovery of the corporeal imaginations of the first poets illuminates our primordial *synaesthesia*. He writes, “they spoke of hearing the sun pass at night from west to east through the sea, and affirmed that they saw the gods.”³² This elucidates the originary synaesthetic experience that the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty regards as our primordial way of experiencing reality. Learned men distinguish and separate the senses, but this is derivative of a more primordial correspondence between the senses. Tasting wine notoriously brings the interplay of the senses to the fore. For instance, most of what we take to be taste is in fact retronasal olfaction. Moreover, the overall situation affects the taste experience: the color of the tablecloth, the lighting, the music playing, the scent of our friend’s perfume, etc. Tasting recalls the chaotic interplay of the senses at work in the primeval forests, where every face appeared to be a new face.

The hedonic senses still commence with the chaotic whirl of the primeval forest — they have yet to discover their Jove. The cycle of spontaneous expression turning toward rigid sedimentation has not run its course. Our received, established discourse has left a part of our corporeal experience of the earth unexpressed. In fact, the poverty of expression found in wine discourse reveals its proximity to the primeval forest. The uncultivated senses of taste and smell point to the forest, where the senses are mixed up in a synaesthetic, amorphous play. The creation of the poetic character Jove lifted the wandering giants out of the chaos and confusion of the senses characterizing the forest. He was called the stayer or establisher because he caused the giants to stop their feral wanderings and establish the first place.

31. Crane, *Questions of Taste*, 143.

32. NS, par. 117.

Acting through the poetic character Jove, the poetic beasts burned down the forest so that they could till the land, and more importantly, read the signs of their imagined god Jove. They eliminated the treetops that covered their view of the sky so that they could interpret his divine auspices. Robert Harrison explains, “We find here in Vico’s text a fabulous insight, for the abomination of forests in Western history derives above all from the fact that, since Greek and Roman times at least, we have been a civilization of sky-worshipper.”³³ Esposito also highlights the savagery inherent in the clearing of the forest. He writes, “The violent erasure of the originary forest, as well as being a reduction of *communitas*, marks a progressive abstraction from its bodily content.”³⁴ The loss of the forest triggers the loss of our connection to the earth, each other, and our own bodies.

The beastly proto-humans crane their neck to the sky and the start of our detachment from the earth and body commences. There is a dialogic response between bodies and place, between the earth and the trembling giants, at the birth of things, but this dialogic exchange weakens and men begin to live in abstract palaces, cut off from the earth and their communities. In the cities, men wander without a place just like the giants did in the chaotic, undifferentiated forests. What is more, place gives way to space and they no longer realize themselves as creatures of the earth, dwelling beneath the sky. Harrison explains, “At the center, one forgets that one is dwelling in the clearing. The center becomes utopic. The wider the circle of the clearing, the more the center is nowhere and the more the logos becomes reflective, abstract, universalistic, in essence, ironic.”³⁵ Like the primordial giants, men once again wander ignorant of places.³⁶

Vico’s forest mirrors Nietzsche’s Dionysian forest, and his cities, Nietzsche’s antithetical Apollonian force. The Apollonian form, identity, and difference established in the cities and academies vanish in the forest. Drunken chaos thwarts the Apollonian impulse toward order and individuation. Nietzsche warns, “Drunken reality does not head the individual unit, but even seeks to destroy the individual.”³⁷ Barbarism lurks behind both forces. For Vico, dwelling too close to the forest engenders the barbarism of sense. Conversely, dwelling inside the abstract palaces of cities and academies engenders the barbarism of reflection. These barbarisms are characterized

33. Robert Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6.

34. Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 82.

35. Harrison, *Forests*, 245.

36. NS, par. 3.

37. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Clifton Fadiman (New York: Dover Thrift Editions) 4.

by the extremes of chaos and order respectively. The savagery at both ends is comparable to Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian principles. Both Nietzsche and Vico capture the dynamic tension between the forests and the cities; between the promiscuous interplay of the senses and the icy logic of the philosophers; and madness is discovered at both ends.

For both thinkers, the world is always spilling over in excess and can never be adequately captured by discourse. Vico further symbolizes this excess by the gross giants and Nietzsche by the mad god Dionysus. We have not yet touched upon this aspect of wine tasting, namely, intoxication. Wine opens one up to the other. Light intoxication can engender the sense of community that is lost in the solitary boundaries of the cities and academies. Intoxication invites the god Dionysus in and upends boundaries and distinctions, sometimes dangerously so. Nietzsche powerfully conveys the pole of madness brought on by Dionysus and his mad sylvan vines. Conversely, we have seen that living through the concept is also a form of rational madness in Vico. With the excess of Apollonian form and boundaries, men become "beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense."³⁸ Vico writes, "no matter how great the throng and press of their bodies, they live like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit."³⁹ The story of the rise and dominance of sight and hearing has left us detached and divorced from our bodies in a state more savage than the condition of the multi-modal, beastly poets.

The birth, rise, and decline of languages in Vico's narration is situated between these two poles of excess: the excess of the body and the excess of form. Discourse emerges from corporeal excess. Esposito writes, "the origin of life itself, in all its expressions — material, ideal, sensory, cognitive emotional and intellectual — is embedded in the corporeal magma from which it can never fully detach itself."⁴⁰ The academies and cities can never purify themselves of their murky birth. Their reified, sedimented expressions will always bear traces of the spontaneous, corporeal expressions first born of the forests and its gross beasts.

Vico's ages act more as a dynamic tension rather than a cycle. The creative impulse harnesses forces at opposite ends to give birth to sublime beauty. Vico affirms, "The poetic speech which our poetic logic has helped us to understand continued for a long time into the historical period, much as great and rapid rivers continue far into the sea, keeping sweet the waters born on by the force of their flow."⁴¹ In order to drink sweet water, or to

38. NS, par. 1106.

39. NS, par. 1106.

40. Esposito, *Living Thought*, 76.

41. NS, par. 412.

indulge in beautiful wines, we need to keep the channels open, and dwell in a liminal space, somewhere between the forests and the cities. The vineyard is at the threshold of the forests and the cities.

A sense of place or *terroir* remains vital to our experience of wine. Although the French concept is not scientifically proven, one can taste hints of lavender if the wine comes from a vineyard near lavender fields or mineral, saline notes when the vines grow near the sea. Today, the overuse of technology has covered over the grape's expression of *terroir* and, in many cases, it may be impossible to identify where a wine is from. We find our self in the utopic, the no-place characterizing Vico's age of men. Wine making technique can all too often obfuscate the true voice or expression of the grape and its ontological relation to place.

When we respond to a wine's unique expression of *terroir* or the synaesthetic way it conjures up all of our senses, we may reawaken a sense of ourselves as emplaced, sensorial beings. At the very least, the concept of *terroir* offers a beautiful metaphor for the way in which we realize ourselves through our dwellings.

The vineyards, like Vico's clearing in the forest, call us away from the cities and academies. The taster brings the wine to her nose, feels its texture, and tastes its flavors, engaging in a dialogic relationship with the wine. Cultivating this experience awakens the hedonic senses and draws out our powers of expression to poetically transform our selves and our relation to the earth. Here we feel how the world always spills over in excess, forever beckoning new responses. Reminding us, as Vico once did, that the world is always young.