

Comitato Scientifico: Tiziana Andina, Università di Torino; Alessandro Arbo, Université de Strasbourg; Marco Belpoliti, Università di Bergamo; Mauro Carbono, Université "Jean Moulin" Lyon 3, France; Roberto Casati, Institut Jean Nicod, Paris; Jean-Pierre Cometti, Université de Provence; Arthur C. Danto, Columbia University, New York; Stephen Davies, The University of Auckland; Mario De Caro, Università di Roma Tor. Pilo De Luca, Università di Salerno; Fabrizio Desideri, Università di Firenze; Giuseppe Di Giacomo, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"; Umberto Eco, Scuola Superiore di Studi Universitari, Bologna; Pietro Kobau, Università di Torino; Jerrold Levinson, University of Maryland; Giovanni Lombardo, Università di Messina; Armando Massarini, Università di Bologna; Giovanni Matteucci, Università di Bologna; Pietro Montani, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"; Mario Pernbia, Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"; Jacques Moritz, Université de Provence; Frédéric Neuf, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris; Nicola Perullo, Università di Scienze Gastronomiche, Pollenzo; Lucia Pizzo Russo, Università di Palermo; Roger Pouivet, Université de Nancy; Luigi Russo, Università di Palermo; Salvatore Tedesco, Università di Palermo; Amle Thomasson, University of Miami; Achille Varzi, Columbia University, New York; Nicola Vassallo, Università di Genova; Stefano Velotti, Università di Roma "La Sapienza".

Redattore capo: Tiziana Andina  
 Redazione: Luca Angelone, Carla Barbero, Elena Casetta, Davide Grasso, Alessandra Jacomuzzi, Ivan Mosca, Vincenzo Santarcangelo, Daniela Tagliacofe, Enrico Terrone, Giuliano Torrenge  
 Segreteria di redazione: Carla Barbero  
 http://www.iabont.it/estetica/index.asp  
 Corrispondenza, lavori proposti per la stampa, libri per recensioni e riviste in cambio indirizzare a «Rivista di Estetica» Università di Torino, Dipartimento di Filosofia, Via Sant'Otavio 20, 10124 Torino  
 Fax 0038.011.8124543, Tel. 0038.011.8703738, e-mail: tiziana.andina@iabont.it  
 Il presente volume è stampato con il contributo del MIUR, Fondo di ricerca scientifica PRIN, 2009-2012, coordinatore prof. Maurizio Ferraris

Editori: Rosenberg & Sellier, via Andrea Doria 14, 10123 Torino  
 Tel. 0038.011.8127820, Fax 0038.011.8127808, www.rosenbergseller.it

Per abbonamenti scrivere a: abbonamenti@rosenbergseller.it oppure usare www.rosenbergseller.it  
 Per ordini dei fascicoli scrivere a: clienti@rosenbergseller.it oppure usare www.rosenbergseller.it

Tariffe abbonamento annata 2012 (fascicoli 49, 50, 51)

n° 49 ontologia analitica (Advisory Editor: Andrea Bottani, Richard Davies)

n° 50 a partire da Documentalità (Advisory Editor: Elena Casetta, Pietro Kobau, Ivan Mosca)

n° 51 wineworld (Advisory Editor: Nicola Perullo)

Italia € 95 Estero € 135

annate arretrate Italia € 108 Estero € 135  
 fascicoli arretrati Italia € 40 Estero € 50

Argomento annata 2013 (fascicoli 52, 53, 54)

n° 52 aura (Advisory Editor: Giuseppe Di Giacomo)

n° 53 immaginazione (Advisory Editor: Daniela Tagliacofe)

n° 54 esperienza estetica ed evoluzione (Advisory Editor: Gianluca Conso)

Effettuare versamento sul ccp 11571106 intestato a:  
 Rosenberg & Sellier Editori in Torino, via Andrea Doria 14, Torino,  
 specificando "Rivista di Estetica".

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Torino, n. 2845 del 7.2.1979

Direttore responsabile: Maurizio Ferraris

Proprietario: Ugo Gianni Rosenberg

Stampa: Legoprint per Pda

Finito di stampare: ottobre 2012

La legge 22 aprile 1941 n. 633 sulla protezione del diritto d'autore, modificata dalla legge 18 agosto 2000 n. 248, tutela la proprietà intellettuale e i diritti connessi al suo esercizio. Senza autorizzazione sono vietate la riproduzione e l'archiviazione, anche parziale e anche per uso didattico, con qualsiasi mezzo, sia del contenuto di quest'opera sia della forma editoriale con la quale essa è pubblicata. La fotocopia per uso personale del lettore possono essere effettuate nei limiti del 15% di ciascun volume/fascicolo di periodico dietro pagamento alla SIAE del compenso previsto dall'art. 68, comma 1 e 5, della legge 22 aprile 1941 n. 633. Le riproduzioni effettuate per finalità di carattere professionale, economico o commerciale o comunque per uso diverso da quello personale possono essere effettuate a seguito di specifica autorizzazione rilasciata da AIDRO, Corso di Porta Romana n. 108, Milano 20122, e-mail segreteria@aidro.org e sito web www.aidro.org

© 2012 by Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino, Italia per i testi in forma di periodico e  
 © 2012 by Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino, Italia per la copertina

In copertina: testata di Valerio Adami  
 Copertina: Ada Lantieri

www.rosenbergseller.it



n.s., 51 (3/2012), anno LII  
 wineworld, new essays on wine, taste, philosophy and aesthetics  
 advisory editor Nicola Perullo

wineworld

Nicola Perullo, *Wineworld: Tasting, making, drinking, being*  
 Steven Shapin, *The tastes of wine: Towards a cultural history*  
 Cain Todd, *Expression and objectivity in the case of wine:*  
*Defending the aesthetic terror of tastes and smells*  
 Ole Martin Skilleås, *Douglas Burnham, Patterns of attention:*  
*"Project" and the phenomenology of aesthetic perception*  
 Kevin Sweeney, *Structure in wine*  
 Giampaolo Garavina, *A matter of taste. The semi-serious musings*  
*of a wine taster on the contentious prospects of professional tasting*  
 Gabriele Tomaai, *On wines as works of art*  
 Andrea Borghini, *On being the same wine*

varia

Felice Cimatti, *Quel dolore che non deve sapersi.*  
*Il linguaggio e il problema dell'esperienza estetica*  
 Luca Taddeo, *Analisi della dicotomia apparenza-realtà:*  
*realismo entro i sistemi di riferimento*

193

215

3

49

95

117

137

149

155

175

- NEURTON, R.  
 – 2009a, *Beauty*, Oxford, Oxford University Press  
 – 2009b, *I Drink therefore I Am. A Philosopher's Guide to Wine*, London, Continuum  
 NAGAI, M.  
 – 2009, *Astirealismo e artefatti. Sui limiti della natura*, Milano, Franco Angeli  
 SIECKER, R.  
 – 2003, *Definition of Art*, in J. Levinson (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 136-154  
 – 2006, *Aesthetic experience and aesthetic value*, "Philosophy Compass", 1: 1-10  
 – 2010, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art. An Introduction*, Itham, Rowman & Littlefield  
 THOMASSON, A.L.  
 – 2006, *Debates about the ontology of art: What are we doing here?*, "Philosophy Compass", 1: 245-255  
 – 2007, *Artifacts and Human Concepts*, in E. Margolis and S. Laurence (eds), *Creations of the Mind. Theories of Artifacts and Their Representation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 52-73  
 TODD, C.  
 – 2010, *The Philosophy of Wine. A Case of Truth, Beauty and Intoxication*, Durham, Acumen  
 TOMASI, G.  
 – 2010, *Un bicchiere con Hume e Kant. Divertissement estetico-metafisico*, Pisa, ETS  
 VÖSSENKUH, W.  
 – 2012 (forthcoming), *Architectural Grammar and Their Changes. Observations from Wingenstein*, in E. Caldarola, D. Quattrocchi, G. Tomasi (eds), *Wingenstein, l'estetica e le arti*, Roma, Carocci  
 WENNINGER, R.  
 – 2009, *Künstlerische Authentizität. Philosophische Untersuchung eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann  
 ZANGWILL, N.  
 – 2007, *Aesthetic Creation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Andrea Borghini  
 ON BEING THE SAME WINE

#### Abstract

Philosophers have been quarrelling for ages over the correct understanding of the identity relation and its applications, but seldom have they discussed the identity of foods, including beverages under this head. Taking wine as a working example, the present study shows that foods call attention over unnoticed metaphysical difficulties, most importantly the role of authenticity in ascertaining the identity of an individual and the possibility of identity being determined by a collectivity of people. More in details, the paper examines the relationship between a *rank* of wines and its specific instances, that is, on what ground some wine is of a certain rank. A 'rank of wines' here stands for wines that are identical under some respect, be it the area of production, the style, the color, the variety, and so forth. Exrant wine labels are taken as the best candidates to carve out a class of wine ranks that is metaphysically prior to any other; the analysis focuses on geographic indications because of the extensive discussion they have generated, but the morals here drawn extend also to other classes of wine ranks, such as those utilized by wine experts. After some introductory remarks (§1), the case is made that the identity of wines is established through judgments of authenticity (§2). Issues of authenticity are then discussed through the special case of geographic indications (§3). Two different views on how to justify the attribution of a geographic indication are presented and criticized; those rest respectively on *termini* (§3.1) and chemical composition (§3.2). The last section (§4) argues for a conventionalist view on wine identity. Distancing itself from conventionalist proposals advanced to favor industrial wine production, the view defended here ties the identity of a wine to collective expert judgments of authenticity that are based on the extensive pleasure of the product.

Philosophers have been quarrelling for ages over the correct understanding of the identity relation and its applications, but seldom have they discussed the identity of foods, including beverages under this head<sup>1</sup>. Taking wine as a work-

<sup>1</sup> While this fact may strike as odd, there may be deep philosophical motivations for it, which have been recurrently examined in last years. See for example (Shapiro 1998) and (Terullo 2010). *Rivista di estetica*, n.s., 51 (3 / 2012), LI, pp. 175-192 © Rosenberg & Sellier

ing example, the present study shows that foods call attention over unnoticed metaphysical difficulties, most importantly the role of authenticity in ascertaining the identity of an individual and the possibility of identity being determined by a collectivity of people. More in details, the paper examines the relationship between a *rank* of wines and its specific instances, that is, on what grounds some wine is of a certain rank. A "rank of wines" here stands for wines that are identical under some respect, be it the area of production, the style, the color, the variety, and so forth. Exant wine labels are taken as the best candidates to carve out a class of wine ranks that is metaphysically prior to any other; the analysis focuses on geographic indications because of the extensive discussion they have generated, but the morals here drawn extend also to other classes of wine ranks, such as those utilized by wine experts. So, what does it take to be a wine of a certain rank? For example, what does it take to be a Chianti Classico?

The topic that is at center stage here should be kept separate from cognate metaphysical difficulties about wine identity. One such is the most general query regarding wine: what tells it apart from other beverages? If wine is «the alcoholic fermented juice of fresh grapes used as a beverage», as per the Merriam-Webster's definition, a wine will be the product of the fermentation of *some* fresh grapes. But borderline cases complicate the application of the concept and call for a metaphysical justification of its boundaries: for instance, are fermented grape juices whose alcohol content is remarkably low (e.g. 6%) or high (e.g. 25%) wines? This and cognate issues, certainly of great importance, shall be left for another occasion. The present work focuses solely on the metaphysical status of wine ranks, or how two wine samples can be recognized of being *the same* wine.

## 1. Introduction

The laymen systematics of wines is a hodgepodge. In different circumstances they are sorted by the color, or the bouquet, the grapes, or the vintage, the method of production, or the producer, the region, or the price, the style, or the food matches, the price, or the alcohol content, the chemical composition, or the likings of an expert.<sup>2</sup> Such criteria are reflected in the organization of wine stores and restaurant menus as well as in the discourses of wine sellers, producers, servers, and critics. The result is an assortment of groupings overlapping to various degrees, which accommodates a wide range of practical purposes. This is only part of the story, however. At the same breath, in fact, the laymen's wine experience is channeled through a firmer classification of wines, which finds expression in their labels. Under this perspective, each wine has one and only one label, devised on the basis of laws regulating trades and sales. Thus, a 1997 Chianti Classico from I Sodi will be a different wine than a 1997 Chianti Classico from Vignavecchia, and the latter will be a different wine than their 1998

vintage of Chianti Classico. Do wine labels reflect the most accurate system of classification we have for wines?

Before starting off, a few remarks are necessary to prepare the ground. First, due to the large legal, scientific, and cultural attention that has been drawn upon them, the following discussion will focus on geographic indications, that is, Chianti Classico generally speaking rather than Chianti Classico 1997 by I Sodi. The latter method of ranking wines arguably cuts at some metaphysical joints that are finer grained: experts employ it to discuss wines and pair them with a score; then, the majority of wines – including several excellent ones – do not fall under any geographic indication. Nevertheless, as the example of *ribollita* in the next section (§2) shows, the problems of identity raised by geographic indications are fundamentally analogous to those related to the identity of other foods and spirits. It was still through some judgments of authenticity that certain wines were identified as belonging to the rank of 1997 I Sodi Chianti Classico and accordingly bottled and labeled; it is thus an open matter whether that judgment rested simply on *terroir*, or on some chemical details, or on a more complex process of identification. What will be said regarding geographic indications will hence speak also to this matter.

Secondly, the main issue here taken up requires an assessment of the methodology of wine classifications. What fixes the identity of a wine? For instance, what is the relevance and role of scientific inquiry in justifying wine labels? Should wines be paralleled more to natural kinds or more to artifacts? What is the relationship between a wine and its biological niche of origin? Could a wine ever be identified solely in terms of its chemical composition? Could it ever be identified solely in terms of its producers? These questions are at center stage of a contemporary intellectual and legal battle, whose importance can hardly be underestimated. To draw a parallel, consider the case of fruit systematics. Here we also have an array of laymen classifications, which often run counter those devised by the botanists and to those of the nutritionists. Thus, to name just one case, according to the layman peas are not fruits, while according to the botanist they are. Because the botanist's systematics is based on biological considerations of how *Pisum sativum* plants disseminate their seeds, the consensus usually grants the botanist the *most genuine* classification. That is, the methodologies employed by the two lead to different types of evidence. The botanist's verdict is based on natural *facts*, while the layman's is based on culinary practices, a chapter within human *conventions*. Natural facts are brute, while conventional facts have some degree of arbitrariness. That a plant disseminates its seeds is not arbitrary; that something tastes sweet and plays a certain role in a culinary culture is (to some degree) arbitrary. Is the case of wine systematics analogous to that of fruit systematics? According to an argument that will be examined later, wine systematics ought to be based on natural facts only. In due course, a counter-argument will be advanced for the conventional character of wine labels.

Thirdly, the topic here addressed is not a matter of metaphysical sophistry. While being genuinely metaphysical, it bears extraordinarily rich practical

<sup>2</sup> A nifty list of criteria for sorting wines within a collection can be found in Deroo 2008.

implications as well. Indeed, it finds its roots in current scholarly research on wine classification and how this seeks to back up rules and regulations for wine labeling. Wine labels purport to portray *real* features of wines that are best suited to capture their identity. Here is a passage, from a recent article on New Zealand wines, testifying of a widespread attitude:

New Zealand has a rapidly growing wine industry that has won international recognition for wines such as Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir. These wines are often associated with a region, such as the Sauvignon Blancs from Marlborough. More recently, it has been recognised that subregions of New Zealand can produce distinctive wines, and in 2004 the Gimblett Gravels Winegrowing District was identified based on a specific soil type and climate. We have investigated whether the metal content of New Zealand wines can be used to support claims of origin from a particular region.<sup>3</sup>

The discovery of a link between a specific soil type, climate, or metal content, on one side, and a wine label, on the other, functions here as a proof of the genuineness of the label: it shows that Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir from Marlborough are entities of a kind. This is analogous to the botanist's proof that peas are fruits: the claim is grounded on scientific facts, that is, on non-conventional evidence. Here is then another way to think to our initial question: are wines, in their most accurate and scientific systematics, natural kinds? How we answer shall speak to the scientific and commercial trends in wine classification.

Finally, the present study employs the tools of contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of science to inquire into the identity of a wine. At stake are the rules and regulations by means of which wine labels ought to be devised. The purpose is thereby not historical; nor is it in any way descriptive. The analysis is based – but does not solely rest – upon statistical data, laboratory analysis or extant scientific literature on the theme. The goal is to set forth a metaphysical theory of wine ranks. A similar viewpoint as well as analogous arguments could be advanced with respect to other foods, including those protected by geographic indications (e.g. Parmigiano Reggiano or Prosciutto di Parma) and dishes such as *pasta amatriciana* or *ribollita*; although the case of wines presents its own peculiar chemical, biological, and cultural aspects, they should be regarded more as a case study exemplifying some broader questions of identity.

Here is how the discussion to follow is organized. The next section argues that the identity of wines is established through judgments of authenticity (§2). Issues of authenticity are then discussed through the special case of geographic indications (§3). Two different views on how to justify the attribution of a geographic indication are presented and criticized; those rest respectively on *terroir* (§3.1) and chemical composition (§3.2). The last section (§4) argues for a conventionalist view on wine identity. Distancing itself from conventionalist proposals advanced to favor industrial wine production, the view defended here

ties the identity of a wine to collective expert judgments of authenticity that are based on the extensive pleasure of the product.

## 2. Wine Identity and Wine Authenticity

Let's start with an imaginary, but realistic example involving a dish. We are in 2011. The young Elena, born and raised in Volterra (near Pisa, Italy), is a "brat" escaped to New York City in search of better academic fortune. In order to celebrate the end of her first year as an immigrant, she decides to prepare a typical Tuscan dish, a *ribollita*. She spends two days cooking, following the procedure typical in her town. On paper, she has all the ingredients and utensils. Still, black cabbage raised in America is a quite different thing than the one from Volterra: *dito* for the cannellini beans, the water she uses for cooking, the bread, the stove, and so on. The end result is a dish which clearly resembles the one she used to prepare in Volterra, but it is also different. Is it an authentic *ribollita*? How to find out and *who* has sufficient authority to fix the answer to such a question?

Authenticity is the trait that best serves to express the identity of a dish. What's in your plate? Is it really Parmigiano Reggiano or is it more modestly parmesan cheese? Is it really a randoori chicken or a poor imitation? While questions of authenticity surface on a daily basis, their importance is most evident during periods of radical change. Environmental catastrophes and diasporas set clear examples of a people drastically going without their culinary niche. The distress experienced in those circumstances of the loss of material property is extended by a cultural threat, in which food plays a major role. When a people leaves a land for another they wish to bring their culture along, including their foods. What if the dishes of religious holidays cannot be authentically reproduced? More trivially, and going back to our previous example, consider the culinary drama of Elena: can she really believe she prepared *ribollita*? Did she drop the possibility of executing the authentic recipes of her land when she left Volterra for New York City?

Interestingly enough these questions can be asked also with respect to the culinary tradition of those who do not migrate. People in Volterra used to make *ribollita* also in the 1930s. Yet the quality of their cannellini beans, water, black cabbage, bread, and so forth was arguably quite different from the one enjoyed nowadays in Volterra. If Elena in New York City is doubting whether she made *ribollita* when comparing her dish to those of her contemporaries in Volterra, it seems that also the latter should question the authenticity of their *ribollitas* when looking back at the dishes of their 1930s predecessors. What goes for *ribollita* also goes for most other foods, so that parallel questions can be posed for all sorts of vegetables, meats, dairies that characterize local recipes. For instance, the gastronomical niche of Parmigiano Reggiano has undergone some deep changes since the 1930s; is contemporary *parmigiano* authentic *parmigiano*?

Now consider a parallel example regarding Chianti Classico wines. Anna, an expert wine-maker of Jewish origins from Radda in Chianti, flees her country

<sup>3</sup> Angus et. al. 2006: 170.

in 1942, tearing the turmoil of the incipient war, and relocates to Mendocino county, California. Determined to endure in her profession, Anna manages to bring with her the major biological and technological tools: a few samples of sangiovese grapes along with some canaiolo nero, malvasia bianca lunga and trebbiano toscano; some barrels for aging the must; wine bottles from previous years, corks, chemical additives, and other basic resources to ensure the best practice for production. Fast forward to the 1990s: Anna has established a name for herself among the California wine growers by using the traditional methods and plant varieties she had first imported from Radda. The biological niche of her wine of course is different than the one in Chianti. For this reason, extant regulations prevent her from using the appellation "Chianti Classico" in labeling her final product. In the meantime, some Californian competitors have bought wine estates in Radda and started producing Chianti Classico. They are far less experienced in the grape varieties and production techniques typical of this rank; but, since the grapes they harvest are grown in the region protected by the geographic indication and then processed according to the appropriate rules and regulations, they can use the term "Chianti Classico" in labeling their final product. To Anna, the situation seems puzzling: who is to say that her product is not Chianti Classico? Who is to say that the biological niche of Mendocino in the 1990s resembles the one of Radda in the 1300s (when the *Legge del Chianti* was established) less than the biological niche of Radda in the 1990s does? More importantly: why couldn't we recognize her production as a *possible* development of Chianti Classico wines?

I would like to suggest that the issue of wine identity is not different from the one of the identity of *ribollita*. Clearly in the latter case we have no geographic indication protecting the identity of the dish; but that is a matter of accident, I believe, and not substance. I could have used pesto (whose identity is protected through a geographic indication) as an example and the force of the metaphorical dispute would have stayed the same. Wines are recipes. Each specific instance of a recipe is bound to be different from the other ones in some respects. Wines and their niches of production are in constant flux. Because of this, it seems plausible to believe that the identity of a wine cannot be given in terms of precise, necessary and sufficient criteria, as it happens for salt, or vanilla flavor. The identity of a wine is indeed typically established through judgments about its authenticity, reflecting a dynamic identity. Bearing witness to this claim is also the recent scientific research on wine identities; one of the most relevant papers in the area, for instance, titles «The Determination of the Authenticity of Wine from Its Trace Element Composition»<sup>1</sup>.

Wine represents a paradigmatic case study of those denizens of reality caught in between two metaphysical views of identity, both problematic in their own manners. On one hand, those who hold strong to the motto that *there is no entity*

*without identity*<sup>2</sup>. To these, unless we have necessary and sufficient criteria to determine whether a wine is or is not, say, a Chianti Classico, Chianti Classico wines do not – metaphorically speaking – exist. This outcome would clearly run counter those who dedicated their life to *this* wine, or those claiming to have an almost spiritual relationship with *it*. That some metaphysicians should point out such momentous denizens of reality seems bizarre, if not overtly pretentious. On the other hand – to adopt a suggestion of Parsons<sup>3</sup> – it is doubtful «whether we have criteria of identity for any interesting sorts of entity at all». For example, the question: *Am I identical with my own body?* does not seem to have a clear-cut answer. But, for metaphysicians of this herd, the fact that a denizen's identity is indeterminate is not a reason to believe that it does not exist. Following this string, the fact that the identity of Chianti Classico is vague is no reason to believe that it does not exist. But, if such is the case, what to make of the specific rules and regulations defining labels? A Chianti Classico, for instance, has to be made for at least 80% of Sangiovese grapes; 79.9% would not do. The restriction is clearly adopted for practical purposes; yet there are several others in place and, when we add them up, the credibility of the label starts to blur. If the genuine identity of Chianti Classico is not fully captured by the Italian regulations regarding its production, how should we characterize it? How far the identity of Chianti Classico departs or could depart from such regulations?

The claim advanced by this paper is that judgments of authenticity are the best tool to answer those questions. Under this perspective, the case of wine identity is not different from the one of settling the identity of a dish. The preparation of a wine is an irreversible process: the grape you press today cannot be pressed again tomorrow. At the same time, the methodologies of production evolve with technology, market needs, and the changing of vineyards' biological niche. It takes expert judgment to assess whether a wine is or is not of a certain rank: the decision will rest on an interpretation of the evolution of the recipe, hence, at least partially, on conventional matters. In order to establish this piece of theory we need to look more closely into the justification of wine labels. We shall start from geographic indications. For centuries, they have been used to establish the identity of the vast majority of precious wines; this is still true to date, although a new trend is emerging, which aims to identify wines on the basis of natural facts alone, regardless of grape origins. We shall review such trend as well in order to clarify the concept of authenticity embedded in the debate.

### 3. Wine and Geographic Indications

Geographic indications (henceforth GIs) have a long history, dating back to at least 1730, when Hungary introduced a three-fold classification for its Tokaj-

<sup>1</sup> Baxter *et al.* 1997.

<sup>2</sup> See Quine 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Parsons 1987: 2.



Hegvalia wines. It wasn't until recently, however, that GIs joined the rank of patents, trademarks and copyrights as the subject of international agreements among multiple States. The change took place within the WTO, under the Articles 23 and 24 of the 1993-94 TRIPs agreement, that is the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. When considering wine, five aspects of the ways GIs are understood under the TRIPs are particularly relevant:

- (i) GIs are treated as intellectual property rights;
- (ii) GIs are identified through relationships with a spatial region;
- (iii) GIs are identified with respect to no temporal limit;
- (iv) GIs are identified through some *essential* properties of the protected items;
- (v) Recognition and protection of GIs is left to each individual State.

In other words, for any item that is ranked as an instance of a GI, some individual or corporation may claim its exclusive ownership (i). The ownership in question stems from the relationship between the item produced and a certain portion of land (ii), which is not temporally characterized (iii). Not all the items produced on that land however qualify to be protected under the GI; a GI is a method of ranking items based on whether they present those traits that essentially define the intellectual novelty to be protected under the agreement (iv). Chianti Classico is a case in point of GI. A wine can be included under this rank only if the grapes from which it originated were grown in specific portions of nine townships in Central Tuscany, between the provinces of Florence and Siena; the property right over items produced in these territories does not have any temporal limitation; in order to qualify as Chianti Classico, a product must fulfill a relatively long list of requirements, including grape variety, fermentation techniques, organoleptic aspects, bottling restrictions.

On which grounds can the introduction of a GI such as Chianti Classico be, metaphysically speaking, accounted for? In other words, which features of the wine can serve to justify a claim of intellectual property right and the introduction of a rank with the five above specified characteristics? Two principal methodologies of answering this question can be devised, one centered on the concept of *terroir* and the second – more recent – moving from scientific considerations. Both rest on an erroneous understanding of the relationship between a food and its culinary niche.

### 3.1. *The View From Terroir*

«Over recent years, place has come to play a central role in defining the character and quality of agricultural products<sup>3</sup>; the trend goes hand in hand with the rising importance of a quite peculiar concept, that has no easy metaphysical analogues:

*terroir*. A great deal of publications in the social sciences has been devoted in the past dozen years or so to uncover the nuances of the concept and for an updated overview of the literature see Demossier<sup>4</sup>. *Terroir* is supposed to capture some qualitative aspects of an item, while being unable to pin them down specifically. Thus, the *terroir* of the wine in a Chianti Classico bottle is a qualitative aspect of the wine itself, derived from its biological niche of production (the rocks, soil, air, plants, insects, birds, yeasts) as well as the complex system of practices that yielded it.

Now, the most common argument in defense of GIs is that they stem from and are key to protect specific *terroirs*. This argument however seems far from being tenable for two main reasons. First of all, human tender is part of the definition of *terroir*, but because of their economic attractiveness, most wineries producing GIs are bound to be bought off from etherophone partners. Recent trends in wine production bear witness to this; just to remain in the territory of Chianti Classico and to name a few, estates such as Candialle, Le Fonti, Monte Bernardi, and La Porta di Bertine are all of recent acquisition by foreign proprietors. While such a trend may increase creativity in wine production, it flies in the face of those arguments relying on the stability of Chianti Classico's *terroir*. Secondly, while GIs have no temporal boundaries, ecological conditions within *terroirs* change, sometimes drastically, over decades and centuries (see also Ingold 2000, chapter eleven). The boundaries of the Chianti Classico area of production have been moved a number of times over the last decades precisely to follow the changing environmental conditions of production; still, the entire region has undergone a dramatic modification of its landscape.

To spell out the remark more fully, let's distinguish between three sorts of views on the identity of a wine. Under the first one, the *Thick Identity View*, a wine is identified through its *terroir* and its *perceptual* and *nutritional* aspects. Under the second, the *Thin Identity View*, a wine is identified with *some* (but not all) of *terroir*, *perceptual* and *nutritional* aspects. Finally, under the *Nominalistic View*, a wine is identified only through its name, which might be bestowed also on the basis of its region of origin. Call *Legal Nominalism* any legislative body which conceives of its subject matter through the nominalistic view. Call *Legal Essentialism* any legislative body which conceives of its subject matter through an essential aspect, which can be part of a thick or thin view of the subject. The point here moved is that *GIs are a case of Legal Nominalism masked as a case of Legal Essentialism*. Ranking a food or drink within a rank because it presents certain characteristics is quite the norm. This is done with the least expensive and refined varieties of items too, such as breads, yogurts, and cookies. While it is important to take notice of whether a ranking is strict or not (see the dramatic changes in American food production after the FDA drop of so-called "imitation food rule" in 1973, discussed also by Pollan<sup>5</sup>), what makes GIs *sui generis*

<sup>3</sup> Demossier 2011: 685.

<sup>4</sup> Demossier 2011.  
<sup>5</sup> Pollan 2008: Ch. 4.

instances of intellectual property rights is their essential tie to a land. The point is that, while a GI necessitates certain product characteristics, it does not require a land with some qualitative aspects: all it takes is *that* land!

The concept of a GI is not equivalent to the one of *terroir*. A GI is defined through an essential link to a geographic location without any specific restriction regarding the possible environmental changes to the land; *terroir*, on the contrary, is a cultural concept, presupposing not only the preservation of specific environmental conditions but also of a tradition of human tender. Thereby GIs cannot be used to convey information regarding the thick identity of a product. On the contrary, a GI creates a monopoly with respect to a certain label, which is *at best* based on a thin conception of the identity of a product. "At best", because the essentialist requirements that are usually embedded within the definition of a GI are accidental in making a product a GI: we could change the requirements without changing the identity of the product, but were we to change the land of production the identity of the product would be compromised.

### 3.2. *The View From Science*

Another approach to our central topic rests on chemical facts characteristic of wine ranks. Modern chemistry successfully identified chemical compounds such as water in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions based on a typical structure; can similar conditions be offered for wine as well? Is it possible to tie each wine rank once and forever to some class of chemical properties that are necessary and sufficient for its identity? A trend of research moving in this direction has gained particular strength over the last decade or so: one of its specimens is the study conducted by Angus *et al.* (2006) on the chemical properties of New Zealand wines, while Baxter *et al.* (1997) represents a pionieristic study in the field.

I have a reservation regarding this approach and an amendment. Starting from the latter, it should be recognized that the scenario is more complex than portrayed. Even with basic chemical compounds, such as water, matters are rather complicated. First of all, water comes in different varieties, e.g. light and heavy, which have distinct chemical formulas. Although heavy water is toxic, it is present in water basins and living organisms in small quantities. Thus, when we are pointing to water, chances are we are not just pointing at a substance whose chemical structure is  $H_2O$  (cf. LaPorte 1996). Moreover, water is in practice always occurring alongside other substances, such as  $H_3O^+$  e  $OH^-$  (Hendry 2006). Finally, as Needham (2000) has pointed out, water has a dynamic structure: a glass of water, for instance, is made out of hydrogen bondings among molecules of  $H_2O$ ,  $H_3O^+$  and  $OH^-$ , constantly breaking and reforming, whose relevance to the identity of the substance is key when it transitions between states (solid, liquid, or gas). If all those amendments are in order for our conception of a simple substance like water, all the more they are needed for complex composite substances like wines. From a dynamic perspective, a wine is never the same

over time and to accurately portray its overall chemical structure is a daunting enterprise. More importantly, what goes for the structure of *this* bottle of Chianti Classico will not suit another bottle. Can we find some parameters such that all and only Chianti Classico wines fulfill?

Before settling this question, a parallel with issues in biological classifications may be useful as well. From a metaphysical standpoint, geographic indications aim to establish that a wine deserves to be classified under a certain rank based on its relationship to a spatial location along with additional requirements, such as grape variety or alcohol content. Each of these features (including location) is regarded as necessary, and all of them are jointly sufficient, for the wine to be included in the rank. The approach from science tries to simplify the process of identification, reducing it to the ascertaining of certain natural facts. One way to do so is to identify chemical traits typical of each wine rank; the close relationship between a wine, on the one hand, and the grapes with their characteristic biological niche, on the other, may suggest that wine classification could parallel biological classification. However, systematics of living entities is characterized precisely by the rebuttal of necessary and sufficient conditions for the inclusion of an organism or a trait within a certain rank. This is the case, for instance, with the taxonomy of species. While there are several alternative definitions of a biological species, basically none of them relies on (non-trivial) necessary and sufficient conditions for including an organism within a species, and some (e.g. Hull 1978) recognize that the only criterion might in fact be ancestral relationship<sup>10</sup>. The sheer circumstance that a wine falls under a geographic indication in terms of a list of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, hence, should arise suspicion regarding the scientific value of the category when compared with issues of classification in biology.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of the enterprise, let us grant that one day we will have appropriate technology and knowledge to be able to fully read the unique chemical structure of each sample of Chianti Classico; how could those data be used to infer the metaphysical specificity of the Chianti Classico rank? In fact, each sample of Chianti Classico exhibits a (even slightly) different chemical composition; how do we derive an appropriate range of values, that could sustain possible changes in wine characteristic due to ecological, technological, and stylistic shifts? The complexity of the issue is not merely practical: the point is conceptual. A wine is not just a chemical formula, but an artifact. To name only two non-scientific aspects, the method of fermentation and the type of bottles are key in identifying a wine as Chianti Classico. In other words, the identity of a wine does not depend solely on its chemistry, but also on the *process* through which it is produced. As a forged painting and the original may not differ at all materially, while still being quite different artworks, so a Chianti Classico

<sup>10</sup> The debate on the classification of organisms into species is one of the oldest and broadest in the philosophy of biology; somewhat dated but still valid entry readings are Erchevsky (1992) and Kitcher (1984).

cannot be equated to its material constitution: some aspects of its making are key to its identity. The upshot is that the chemical or biological data which help fix the identity of a wine rank need be accompanied by some requirements as to the process of production: which of those features of a wine are necessary to ensure the identity of a rank is up to a judgment of authenticity.

### 3.3. *Doing Away With GIs*

Most European and US consumers believe that – as Sophie Revillon recently put it – «GIs are not only a business but part of a regional patrimonial strategy, perceived to be for the benefit of both farmers/processors and consumers»<sup>11</sup>. Is it really so? While in the past GIs have also served this purpose, in recent years we are witnessing more and more cases where the contrary effect is reached. By rigidifying the criteria of identity of a product, while allowing non-local producers to exploit the market vantage points offered by GIs, we are creating monopolistic opportunities for high-end international specialty-food producers and traders, rather than promoting the continuation of local culture. As we may reasonably expect that those trends will intensify in the future, if we care for fairness, sustainable economic conditions, quality certification, and the respect for food *milieus* we should aim for a different labeling system.

GIs do not align with basic claims of wine authenticity. While the biological niche of wineries in the Chianti Classico region may drastically change so to justify a belief that the authenticity was compromised, the GI would continue to support labeling the wines produced in the new niche as authentic Chianti Classico. At the same time, migratory patterns and environmental changes may render possible that the *terroir* of Chianti Classico be *moved* from Central Tuscany to Mendocino County (or even Southern Tuscany, if you would prefer a less fantastic example), so that the new region produces authentic Chianti Classico: GIs rule against cases of this sort, which is evidence of the fact that they establish a too rigid link between a region and a wine. If, on the other hand, GIs for wines are justified in terms of their unique chemical composition, the authenticity of the process of production is left out of the identity of wine while the admissible values of each chemical parameter is still the product of conventional decisions. Either way, it seems that GIs are not suitable to capture the identity of a wine. To understand what makes of a wine a sample of a certain rank we should turn to the roots of wine authenticity.

### 4. *Rethinking Wine Identity*

In order to come to grips with wine identity we shall look more into the relationship between natural and conventional facts. Some facts are conventional,

others aren't. That a red and green traffic light signal, respectively, to stop and to walk is a matter of sheer convention: we could have switched the colors around or used blue and yellow lights instead. Yet that marble contains carbonate minerals is not up to us to decide: marble is that stuff composed of recrystallized carbonate minerals. There is an interesting way to align the distinction just made with the one between nature and culture. Define as natural all and only those facts that are not based on conventions, while all other facts being cultural. This delivers also a neat separation between the world of science and the subject of inquiry for non-scientific disciplines: the former deals with natural, i.e. non-conventional, facts; the latter study cultural, i.e. conventional, ones.

The picture just sketched is elegant, but untenable. Scientific facts are oftentimes conventional, while cultural facts are based on non-conventional circumstances. Here is an example based on the art of butchering and anatomy, which will serve to introduce the discussion over the conventional nature of wine identities<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4.1. *Between Nature and Convention: the Case of Butchery*

Butchery, probably one of the oldest human professions, is seen by most as an art rather than a science, as the title of a recent and complete professional guide for butchers in the United States attests: *The Art of Beef Cutting* (Underly 2011). The very same animal, indeed, is parced quite differently depending on the butcher's training and the target market. Cuts differ greatly across – say – the United States, Korea, Senegal, Italy, or England; and they vary depending also on the type of consumer. For instance, in a Spanish Harlem supermarket targeted to low-income families it is uncommon to find cuts for ossobuco, florentine steak, or yakimiku, while some cuts for hispanic dishes may be available. Analogous considerations go for other meats: the specific cuts will be tailored to the culinary purposes. To offer another example, the way a deer hunter dresses its prey on the field depends on the use the hunter will do of the meat – will it end up in a stew, a dry roast, or will it be aged instead? These few considerations suggest that butchery is the outcome of human conventions, based on culinary practices and socio-economical differences.

On the other hand, anatomy seems to be based on natural facts. That a knee is composed of the femur, fibula, tibia, and patella is just a matter of observation. There are hundreds of anatomy textbooks: all of them agree on those basic facts and some millions of students have pondered them over. This is the landmark of scientific achievement, which is based on sheer evidence – no convention.

Again, while this picture is tempting, it seems wrong. As Franklin-Hall (2009) pointed out, in anatomy there is more than one way to look at bones. Take for

<sup>11</sup> Revillon 2009: 27.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the topic of conventionality and nature in crafts see (Ingold 2000, especially ch. 18); for a more specific discussion of foods, see Pernullo 2008: ch. 5.



example a cranium: it is made out of twenty-two parts; but, is it one complex bone or is it a plurality of bones? If we define a bone on the basis of the discontinuity in body tissues, the cranium turns out to be a multiplicity of bones; but then it will be impossible to tell apart cartilaginous tissues from bones on other body parts. If, on the other hand, we define a bone on the basis of its function, we won't have any longer univocal definitions and a hodgepodge metaphysics of bones would ensue. Or, we could take a different perspective, considering the key junctures of human body as the main anatomical units; in this case, a knee would turn out to be a unity of development, in which for instance femoral condyles develop so to work jointly with the top part of the tibia.

Now, Franklin-Hall seems to suggest that – despite difficulties such as those encountered in defining bones – anatomy is a science because its teachings are used in multiple domains (e.g. medicine and developmental biology), while the same cannot be said about butchery. This seems to overlook the importance of natural facts for butchery. Butchery requires a systematic knowledge of the animal's body plan (e.g. the location of the first five thoracic vertebrae), of the physical properties of cutting tools (e.g. which ones can cut through a major bone), as well as of the influence of environmental conditions over the whole process (e.g. a pig is traditionally never slaughtered in a hot season). This knowledge is by and large shared across butchers producing different types of cuts and it is relevant also for dictating veterinarian's choices. Also, it is not simply scientific knowledge landed to an artistic or practical profession: butcher's anatomy is unlike veterinarian anatomy, as it stresses different sorts of features of animals' bodies. Thus, butcher's choices are not arbitrary in the same way in which the color we employ for traffic lights are. First of all butchery relies on a great deal of knowledge of natural facts; secondly, once a certain culinary technique is decided, there is a right and wrong way of butchering the animal, whose assessment largely depends on natural facts. A butcher and an anatomist looking at the same beef have different perspectives on the animal because they participate in different practices, not because one's or the other's work centers on natural as opposed to conventional facts.

#### 4.2. *Establishing Wine Authenticity: A Proposal*

From the butchering example we can bring home some important lessons for the metaphysics of wine identity. If butchering is an art, this is not because it centers on exclusively conventional facts. On the other hand, clearly it does not and should not be centered on exclusively natural facts. Analogously, the identity of wines cannot be given solely in terms of natural facts regarding its chemical composition, the biology of grapes, or ecological parameters, as some attempt to do today. Some natural facts will play a key role; but this is only part of the story. Even more so, whether a wine is a Chianti Classico cannot be drawn just on the basis of natural facts plus an essential relationship to a land, because territories

change over time, while expertise and technology travel. Hence, it is in virtue of some convention that wines are included in the rank of Chianti Classico. Now, wine identity is unavoidably affected by some form of indeterminacy because it is established through judgments of authenticity. Echoing Parsons's quote given above – one could «doubt whether we have criteria of identity for any interesting sorts of entity at all»<sup>13</sup> – the indeterminacy of wine identity appears all the less worrisome. It should be clear, however, that if the identity of a wine is indeterminate, this does not imply that the convention fixing the methods through which the identity is established should also be vague. The proposal advanced here, if fully developed, aims at being clearcut when it comes to its procedures.

What sort of convention best captures the identity of wines? This matter is delicate. The main reason why the “old world” of wine (the major European wine producers such as France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Portugal) holds strong to GIs is probably that a label reflecting a GI ensures some even minimal levels of quality. Were European countries to buy into the “new world” conception of wine, exemplified by documents such as the Agreement on Mutual Acceptance of Oenological Practices signed in December 2001, that is were GIs to lose legal validity, the quality of Chianti Classico wines would be threatened. That the industrial food production has lowered the overall quality of foods is no n. w. As it is no new that the abuse of terms such as “natural”, “genuine”, “organic”, “traditional” has compromised their meaningfulness. “Chianti Classico” may be next in line were its use no more to be regulated by means of a GI. So, while we are advocating doing away with GIs, we suggest that only a convention that could prevent the industrial exploitation of wine ranks would do.

The most plausible form of convention seems to be one that values – to adopt an expression of Wendell Berry – the *extensive pleasure* characteristic of a wine rank. Several initiatives in this direction have been developed over the last few years when it comes to foods, from Slow Food's *presidia* to the Rainforest Alliance certification for sustainable products. As for wines, the example of those who best served in the defense of the authenticity of a recipe while insisting on the value of a plurality of final products may best prevent from the threat of industrial wine production: the figure that best embeds these values for Chianti Classico is probably Giulio Gambelli<sup>14</sup>. More concretely, here are some thoughts on a strategy that may be applied to our case study. Chianti Classico wines have a distinct style and are produced in accordance with a number of typical procedures already detailed in the Italian regulations on Chianti Classico labeling. Today the label is tied to a specific land by law and, as we have seen, this poses some serious problems for its metaphysical credibility. The GI on Chianti Classico should be given up. In its place, the governmental body of Chianti Classico should institute a committee of Chianti Classico experts whose role is to vote over the inclusion

<sup>13</sup> Parsons 1987: 2.

<sup>14</sup> See Cecchi 2007.

or exclusion of wines within the Chianti Classico rank. Even exceptional wines coming from outside the present geographical borders of Chianti Classico could be bestowed the label, if regarded as authentic instances of Chianti Classico by the committee. The composition of the committee, the voting method, and other administrative details would of course be of great importance and it would be out of place to offer the specifics of a practical proposal here.

The methodology of judgment sketched would ensue that a wine is included in a rank upon a judgment of authenticity. A rigorous work on the part of the committee would result in the metaphysical accuracy of the judgment. Finally, notice that the judgment would not be demanded to one person alone, or even a few ones. The identity of traditional recipes, such as Chianti Classico wine, is established through a collective effort, exactly as it happens with a *ribollita*.

### 5. Conclusive Remarks

The present article studied wine ranks, focusing on the relationship between a wine sample and a wine rank. More work awaits to be done on the notion of wine rank. To rehearse just a few questions that have not been touched here, experts' wine ranks should be examined with respect to their natural and conventional metaphysical aspects. Also, since our most metaphysically refined wine ranks are conventionally established, it seems at least in principle possible that our most exact metaphysics of wine classifies a same wine under two or more ranks; is such an outcome feasible? Another question addresses how wine ranks contribute to the general conception of wine. Finally, what sorts of metaphysical underpinnings characterize laymen's wine ranks? In what ways, if any, are the latter related to the ranks that seem metaphysically more accurate?

On to a final remark, while identity occupies a central role in contemporary metaphysics, it is striking that philosophers have so far been rather uninterested in applying their metaphysical theories to foods (including beverages). Had they done so they would have been confronted with a *sui generis* paradigm of identity. This paper focused on wine ranks, yet some of the questions and arguments reported here equally apply also to other foods protected by GIs (e.g. *Parmigiano Reggiano*) as well as to dishes such as *ribollita*. Foods are a particularly interesting case study. While they are among the most mundane and *real* entities, their identity conditions are tied to judgments of authenticity. Oftentimes regarded as natural products, the identity of foods depends on the judgment of (typically expert) consumers, and at times on the judgment of a multiplicity of consumers. In brief, foods open up to us a novel paradigm of identity based on the interpretation of a complex relationship between nature, tradition, and culinary practice, depicting a scenario where the distinction between subject and object loses its force. While the present work has offered sparse remarks on each of those topics, much remains to be unearthed about the metaphysical aspects of food.

### References

- ANGUS, N.S. *et al.*
- 2006, *Regional classification of New Zealand red wines using inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry (ICP-MS)*, "Australian Journal of Grape and Wine Research", 12: 170-176
- BAKTER, M.J. *et al.*
- 1997, *The determination of the authenticity of wine from its trace element composition*, "Food Chemistry", 60: 443-450
- CECCHI, M.
- 2007, *Giulio Gambelli. Uomo che sa ascoltare il vino*, Bergamo, Seminario Luigi Veronelli
- DEMossier, M.
- 2011, *Beyond terroir: Territorial construction, hegemonic discourse, and french wine culture*, "Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute", 27: 685-705
- DRÖY, O.
- 2008, *Classification and wine styles*, "The World of Fine Wine", 21: 76-79
- FRESCHBESKY, M.
- 1992, *The Units of Evolution. Essays on the Nature of Species*, Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press
- FRANKLIN-HALL, L.
- 2009, *Il macellio di Platone*, "Rivista di estetica", 41: 11-37
- HENDRY, R.
- 2006, *Elements, compounds and other chemical kinds*, "Philosophy of Science", 73: 864-875
- HULL, D.
- 1978, *A matter of individuality*, "Philosophy of Science", 45: 335-360
- INGOLD, T.
- 2000, *The Perception of the Environment*, London, Routledge
- KITCHER, R.
- 1984, *Species*, "Philosophy of Science", 51: 308-333
- LA PORTE, J.
- 1996, *Chemical kind term reference and the discovery of essence*, "Notas", 30: 112-132
- NEDHAM, P.
- 2000, *What is water?*, "Analysis", 60: 13-21
- 2007, *Macroscopic mixtures*, "Journal of Philosophy", 104: 26-52
- PARSONS, T.
- 1987, *Entities without identity*, "Philosophical Perspectives", 1: 1-19
- PERULLO, N.
- 2010 *Filologia della gastronomia laica. Il gusto come esperienza*, Roma, Meltemi
- 2008 *L'altro gusto*, Pisa, Ets
- POLLAN, M.
- 2008, *In Defense of Food. An Eater's Manifesto*, New York Penguin
- QUINE, W.V.O.
- 1958, *Speaking of objects*, "Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association", 31: 5-22

- KEVIRON, S., IHEVENOD, E., EL, BENNI, N.  
 – 2009, *Geographical indications: Creation and distribution of economic value in developing countries*, "NCCR Trade Working Papers", 14
- SHAPIR, S.  
 – 1998, *The Philosopher and the Chicken: On the Dietetics of Disembodied Knowledge*, in C. Lawrence and S. Shapir (eds), *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge*, Chicago, Chicago University Press: 21-50
- UNDERLUX, K.  
 – 2011, *The Art of Beef Cutting. A Meat Professional's Guide*, Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons

## Varia

Felice Cimatti

### QUEL DOLORE CHE NON DEVE SAPERSI. IL LINGUAGGIO E IL PROBLEMA DELL'ESPERIENZA ESTETICA

[...]  
 Per nostra tranquillità – gli animali non muoiono  
 ma crepano d'una morte per così dire più piastra,  
 perdendo – vogliono credere – meno sensibilità e mondo,  
 uscendo – così ci pare – da una scena meno tragica.  
 Le loro anime si mantengono non ci ossessionano la notte,  
 mantengono la distanza,  
 conoscono i morti.

E così questo scambio morto sul viottolo  
 brilla non compiano verso il sole.  
 Basta pensarci per la durata di uno sguardo:  
 sembra che non gli sia accaduto nulla di importante.  
 L'importante, pare, riguarda noi.  
 Solo la nostra vita, solo la nostra morte,  
 una morte che gode d'una forzosa precedenza.  
 Wisława Szymborska, *Visto dall'alto*

1.

Non c'è esperienza se non c'è un soggetto che la prova, e se non c'è qualcosa che quel soggetto sta provando. Questa è una definizione dell'esperienza, che funziona, come tutte le definizioni, fino a dove funziona, cioè fino a dove vogliamo che funzioni. L'esperienza del dolore, per esempio, non rientra a pieno in questo schema, perché spesso il dolore, al contrario, lo si può provare senza sapere che lo si prova. La sofferenza mentale, per esempio, è un caso di esperienza del dolore che può essere vissuto in modo intransitivo, senza sapere di soffrire. Qui la sofferenza non è propriamente una esperienza che si fa, è un modo di essere, quasi un inconsapevole stile di comportamento, che può prendere la forma di un