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Kitchen Table

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Introduction

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Saint Jerome in his Study, 1514
Albrecht Dürer, German
9 11/16 x 7 7/16 in. trimmed on plate line
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Wine Journey

**Tasting Dwelling
Learning
at
The Kitchen Table**

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Heraclitus Hölderlin Rilke

publication a painting by Glen Cebulash, *Jonah and the Whale* 2019 Oil on canvas. 72 × 66 inches (182.9 × 167.6 cm). Private collection.

I have learned during this odyssey to grasp what Aristotle could have called the unifying thread connecting philosophy, university teaching and wine aesthetics that I did not understand at its beginning. In saying "I have learned" I am both telling a story and describing the unifying theme of my odyssey. Albrecht Dürer's *Saint Jerome in his Study* (above) returned to my thoughts as I tell this story. It presents for me that central theme of learning. Erwin Panofsky noted that Dürer's master engraving / *Meisterstiche* has things arranged on a Cartesian grid at either 90° or 45° angles. Rather than having the feeling of rigidity the image has comfort, a feeling of being at peace. This feeling is felt by Saint Jerome not the observer of the engraving. Saint Jerome's life of being a scholar and thinker has this calm being-who-one-is, what one is. Dürer's word for the space is *Gehäus* and has links to the deep significance of *Haus* / house found in later chapters of this book on Hölderlin and Rilke, and Dürer. I share this experience of being *at home* in the quiet life of a student working slowly at learning.

Plato did not teach me something when I read *Republic II (405a)*. Plato let me learn, mentoring me into becoming a learner. I did not conclude that what Plato was correct because Plato said it was correct. The passage is presented as a question, "Don't you think ...?" One could conclude otherwise. I decided for myself that the proposed analysis is correct. At the center of my decision to become a university professor of philosophy was the wish to be a teacher whose essential task was to let students learn. I did not say or think it that way for many years even though it was what I was doing. The step from philosophy to wine is easily made if one understands teaching in this way. When I started telling students about my experiences tasting wines I was telling them the story of learning that was (and still is) taking place in me. I did not expect them to learn the same things but rather to become autonomous learners themselves. In these essays telling the stories of my wine journey I share accounts of the teachers who allowed me to learn about wine. I talk about wines that have given me the richest learning opportunities. My goal is to invite readers to recall their own wine experiences and to consider carefully the learning that has taken place for them. Stated in a different way the task for all of us is **learning to taste**. One will notice a pervasive emphasis on Taste throughout these stories.

The second story grew directly out of the first and yet, once again, the connections are not simple. In the same year that the scholarly essay on Kant's aesthetics was published another, "Nietzsche's Schopenhauerianism," *Nietzsche Studien* 17 (1988): 45–74 also appeared. That essay turned out to be my most important scholarly contribution becoming what is called a seminal essay in its specialized area. The volume *Nietzsche Studien* 17 was reviewed by the leading Schopenhauer scholar of the time. in *Schopenhauer Studien*, Passagen Verlag because *NS 17* included several essays on the relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the death of Schopenhauer. The review mentions the other essays then focuses entirely on mine calling it "a "...particularly lucid account ... which along with the latest book publications by Decher and Goedert can be counted as the most important literature about the relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer." I had in fact devoted a great deal of time to that essay, studying Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* very very carefully. The preparation of my essay on Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* prepared me perfectly to write this essay on Schopenhauer's extensive discussion of contemplation of works of art. As with the essay on Kant, my first essay on Schopenhauer was addressed to scholars. It actually had no specific reference to wine as such beyond Nietzsche's focus on the Dionysian. A future essay in this series may indeed turn to Nietzsche.

Chapter 2, *Contemplation and Fine Wine* develops Schopenhauer's highly detailed exploration of contemplation of arts from architecture through dance, sculpture and painting to its pinnacle in music. Then it looks at connections to the contemplation of wine. After completing the essay on Kant and fine wine, *Expect the Unexpected*, Ch 1., it was clear that a much more detailed examination at contemplation would be very useful. Thoughts of Schopenhauer's discussion of contemplation began



arising at random. Soon I decided, as Nietzsche once suggested, I needed to write to get rid of these thoughts. The resulting essay also appeared in *The World of Fine Wine*. "Contemplation and Fine Wine" Tasting with Saintsbury, Schopenhauer and Pater," *World of Fine Wine* 47 (2015): 116–123.³ The version that is presented here has been edited to make it part of the larger series that will eventually include additional stories of my wine odyssey as it continues.

Chapter 3 *Tasting Dwelling Thinking: Tasting Wine Thinking about Being with Heidegger* brings a turn in this journey. *Expect the Unexpected...* asked the question of Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly about extraordinary wines, "What's this?" Immanuel Kant provides a starting point in his explanation of what allows one to judge something *Beautiful*. Contemplation devoid of *interest* may include the lively free play between our Understanding and our Imagination. That experience entitles us to judge the thing contemplated *Beautiful*. Chapter 2, *Contemplation and Fine Wine...* turns to Arthur Schopenhauer's detailed analysis of aesthetic

contemplation as it might be connected to the experience of a *beautiful* wine. Ch. 3 is guided by 20th century German thinker Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). Heidegger's public lecture of 1951, *Building Dwelling Thinking* addressed re-construction after WWII. Normal questions at that time concerned kinds of buildings needed, their locations and uses, Heidegger took the opportunity to think about *building* in a far more fundamental way, asking essentially, "What is building?" he traces building back to its roots in *dwelling* and then dwelling back to its roots in *Being*. Heidegger's path from *Building to Being* is re-thought in this story as a journey from *Tasting to Dwelling* and then from *Dwelling to Being*. The center of Chapters 1 & 2, *Contemplation*, is now thought more fundamentally as part of *Dwelling*. While the first segment of the odyssey was defined by Kantian aesthetic questions, guiding questions now come from considerations of language and poetry. Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) informs Chapter 4 and Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926), Chapter 5.

None of these chapters consider opinions about wine from the philosophers or poets guiding the explorations. That does not suggest they had no opinions on wine. Kant, as noted, clearly knew about *Canary Sack*, a fine wine of his era. Schopenhauer almost certainly enjoyed good wine, dining as he did regularly at the *Englischer Hof* in Frankfurt in the mid 19th Century. In the case of Heidegger's interest in wine I have better information. In Fall, 1973 I moved to Brussels as an independent scholar to write my doctoral dissertation. I was working with Jacques Taminiaux, *Université catholique de Louvain*. One day Jacques announced that he would be out of town because he had been invited by Heidegger to participate in a seminar in Zähringen with four other scholars including Jean Beaufret and François Fedier. Jacques was very excited as this was his first invitation to this elite seminar. When he returned he told me stories of Heidegger reading to the group (all French scholars) from his latest writings. He read slowly enough so that they could follow his German but too fast to take notes. Each evening Heidegger invited two of the participants to have some wine with him and talk. In 1973 German wines were predominantly sipping wines for casual gatherings.

This is the initial publication of *Tasting Dwelling Thinking: Tasting Wine Thinking about Being with Heidegger*

Chapter 4 first appeared in *The World of Fine Wine* as a *feature wine and words*, "Gifts of Taste: Discussing Wine and Heraclitus with Friedrich Hölderlin," *The World of Fine Wine* 65 (2019): 118-124.⁴ Chapter 3 turned the odyssey from contemplation to tasting as dwelling. Dwelling is understood as a lingering as was contemplation but now also as a staying in a place. A dwelling *Wohnung* can also be named an abode where one bides one's time, where one waits. *Dwelling* is understood as the essential

³ Permission to reproduce the cover of *WFW* 47 granted by them.

⁴ Permission to reproduce the cover of *WFW* 65 granted by them.

nature of the *Being of humans*. Staying in one place, dwelling has two fundamental meanings. One is being at peace, being untroubled. This is related to building a nest. A second meaning of dwelling is to till the soil and cultivate the wine as a farmer does. Thus dwelling has in its origins cherishing and protecting. Chapter 4 turns to Hölderlin's magnificent elegy, *Brod und Wein / Bread and Wine* that begins with going home after a day of work. We are now in a city. Hölderlin's poem inspired Heidegger's meditation on building and dwelling in Ch. 3 and one sees that in his emphasis on home as, first of all, a place of deep contentment. Home for Hölderlin is also a safe place to become open to mystery. The wines examined in Ch.4 are mysteries of Taste as were all the wines of the preceding chapters. Appropriately the wines considered include extraordinary wines but now also, having made our way clearly home and to the kitchen table, there are everyday wines with their own kind of mystery.

THE WORLD OF
FINE WINE



ISSUE 65 (2019) / ALEX MALTMAN RELATES THE STRIKING STORY OF FLINT
AUSTRIA / SANCERRE / MARGARET RIVER / SOUTH AMERICAN WHITES

Chapter 5 *Agrarian Opera: Wines of Beauty at the kitchen table Rilke's Duino Elegies* deepens thinking about the themes of Chapter 4 with a turn to his *Duino Elegies*. Rilke explores the Being of dwelling with things entrusted to a poet for care. Abandoned lovers and those who die young are central themes along with stars, waves in the ocean and a violin calling to us through an open window that seems unquestionably a reference to Hölderlin's elegy discussed in Ch.4. I add wine to the list. Wines are entrusted to us for care because of their Beauty. In Ch. 1 the discussion of Kant's aesthetics focused on the contemplation of Beauty in things seen or heard. Ch. 2 moved to Schopenhauer's expansion of things worthy of contemplation. Hölderlin and now Rilke even more so expand things heard to words of poetry. And Rilke adds the sense experiences of both smell and touch. These changes also turn the discussion more to the Presence of individual things.

Chapter 6 *Barolo Landscape Studies: Barolo MGA 360° Vermeer Rilke* brings another turn in the idessey. It is a new kind of learning. The title of my 1974 doctoral dissertation, *The Friendship of Art and Science: An Inquiry into Nietzsche's Writings Before Zarathustra* provides a new section title, *The Friendship of Art and Science*. The Pre-socratic philosopher Parmenides (born c. 515 bce) says in his single work, a long poem *On Nature* (a poem anticipating Hölderlin and Rilke here at least in difficulty of understanding) --

it does not matter where one begins in philosophy because one eventually comes around full circle to where one began.

In this story art and science again together provide us with necessary ways of making sense of questions that arise. In this case the *nature* of interest is the landscape of the small area where Barolo originates. This tiny region has many separate hillside vineyards producing wines from the same grape that taste noticeably different from each other. Geology and geography are the starting point for study. Vermeer paintings provide a direct connection between geography and astronomy, Rilke contributes the poetics of *naming* the separate hillside fields.

This Introduction has followed a linear path of writings from 2014 to 2021. The thinking that has arisen through listening to Rilke and everyone in the earlier essays brings forth new connections. My thoughts returned to an essay published 25 years ago, "Calvino's Mr. Palomar: Of Bread, *Specialites froumageres* and Watercress," *The Dalhousie Review* 76:3 (Autumn, 1996): pp. 1311-334. Re-reading the Calvino story I realized how questions of 25 years ago have returned. I include it here as an *Overture*. Wine is not mentioned but contemplation is. And so is the friendship between art and science. It begins and ends wondering if it is or is not a culinary essay. We like mapping experiences of taste and of thought into an organizational framework believing the framework will give us a solid connection to *what is*. These essays explore getting lost again and again and learning the most worthwhile things through those experiences.

Chapter 7, *Learning to Taste: Praising the Transcendent Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus Heidegger Hölderlin Heraclitus* makes a deepening path into Taste and Being. The first part of *Sonnets to*

Orpheus give the main direction to the odyssey now. Poetry becomes part of Dwelling, first mentioned in Ch 3 where Dwelling was recognized to be directly connected to Building understood as both the work done by a farmer as well as the work done in the creating of houses (dwellings). Old words give us a path to discovering these connections. Rilke as poet is our guide to understanding poetry as a dwelling that enables us to reveal Being. The experience of the taste of a wine is a way to learn about Being. This is the initial publication of this text.

Chapter 8, *Hieronymus' Bench: Conversations Dürer Heaney Auerbach Panofsky Heidegger Herzclitus Hölderlin Rilke I* first published in this ebook. There is an introduction to it at the beginning of that chapter.

Future additions to this ebook will have introductions included at the beginning of each chapter.