

PENDING - Lender

Yc?

OD



60325027

JH

GENERAL RECORD INFORMATION

Request Identifier: **60325027** Status: PENDING 20091130
 Request Date: 20091130 Source: ILLiad
 OCLC Number: 1754812
 Borrower: **CIN** Need Before: 20091230
 Receive Date: Renewal Request:
 Due Date: New Due Date:
 Lenders: *WIT, OSU, UUM, UUM, EZS
 Request Type: Copy

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Call Number:

Title: The Journal of speculative philosophy.
 ISSN: 0891-625X
 Imprint: [Missouri : s.n.], 1867- ([St. Louis, Mo. : George Knapp & Co.])
 Article: C. Taylor: Prolegomena to an Aesthetics of Wine
 Volume: 1
 Date: 1988
 Pages: ~~127~~ 120-139
 Verified: <TN:196202><ODYSSEY:illiad.uc.edu/CIN> OCLC

MY LIBRARY'S HOLDINGS INFORMATION

LHR Summary: 1-(1987-)
 Lending Policies: Unknown / Unknown

Location: WITB

Note: Retains current issue

Format: unspecified

BORROWING INFORMATION

Patron: Martin, John
 Ship To: ILL Borrowing/University of Cincinnati/Langsam Library/2911 Woodside Dr./Cincinnati, OH 45221-0033
 Bill To: SAME/Fein 31-6000989W/OhioLINK Member
 Ship Via: Library Mail / U.S. Cargo
 Electronic Delivery: Odyssey - illiad.uc.edu/CIN
 Maximum Cost: IFM - \$25.00
 Copyright Compliance: CCL

CHARLES SENN TAYLOR

Prolegomena to an Aesthetics of Wine

Early in the "Analytic of the Beautiful" Kant provides us with the following illustration of the pleasant (*Angenehm*) in order to compare it to the good and to the beautiful (*Schön*):

As regards to the pleasant, everyone is content that his judgement, which he bases upon private feeling and by which he says of an object that it pleases him, should be limited merely to his own person. Thus he is quite contented that if he says, "Canary wine is pleasant," another man may correct his expression and remind him that he ought to say, "It is pleasant *to me*."¹

One is at first inclined to agree with Kant here and to pass over the example quickly. For the reader who is seriously interested not only in aesthetics but also in wine, however, the passage invites more thought. The canary wine referred to was, in fact, already in Elizabethan times a most famous wine, often called "Canary Sack." One canary drinker provides us with one of the earliest descriptions of modern times of the actual taste of a wine.² In *Henry IV*, Part II, Act II, Scene IV, Mistress Quickly proclaims, "But i' faith, you have drunk too much canaries, and that's a marvellous searching wine, and it perfumes the blood ere one can say, What's this?" In choosing such an example, Kant lets us know that he indeed appreciated not simply wine, but good wine and that in this, as in many things, he was far from the provincial person one would expect of one who never travelled more than

THE JOURNAL OF SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY, Vol. II, No. 2, 1988.
Published by The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park and London.

twenty-five miles from his birthplace of Königsberg. He could, after all, have said, "Steinberger wine is pleasant."

There is concealed in this passage a much larger question. One could come to the conclusion that implicit in his saying that canary wine is pleasant, Kant was also saying that one could not claim that canary wine (or even Steinberger) was beautiful—that wine cannot be beautiful. Stated more broadly, the question is whether wine can be considered an aesthetic object, or on what level. Contrary to the implications of Kant's example, the argument here presented for consideration is that wine can indeed be called beautiful. Moreover, what I wish to suggest is that the very considerations which Kant provides to distinguish the uniqueness of the aesthetic judgment apply particularly well to wine.

In spite of the status Kant gives to aesthetics (in being the first philosopher of the modern world to pay serious attention to art), Kantian aesthetics remain problematic. In his translator's introduction of 1892, J. H. Bernard summarizes his estimation of Kant's discussion of the beautiful thus, "But indeed his discussion of painting or music is not very appreciative; he was, to the end, a creature of pure reason."³ A more sympathetic appraisal of Kantian aesthetics can, of course, be made. There is, to be sure, a purism in the attitude Kant describes as the aesthetic. It is pure gratuitous contemplation which turns towards things demanding no explanation, resisting all knowing, refusing to serve as a pretext for the experience of sensuous enjoyment (pleasure), and also refusing to further any goal. Such things are neither true nor false because they escape knowledge's grasp, are neither pleasant nor unpleasant because they extend well beyond all ordinary pleasure and desire, and are neither useful nor useless, neither perfect nor imperfect because they escape all accountability to ends and goals. Such purism leads one to wonder if Kant in some curious way was anticipating contemporary abstract, nonrepresentational art.⁴ But reflection along these lines provides only one perspective on Kant, and one that may be too restrictive. In applying Kant's aesthetic considerations to wine, I hope to open new paths upon which we might come to appreciate more fully his discussion of the beautiful.

The procedure to be followed here will be quite simple. I will examine each of the four moments of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" and ask in what ways each of these can be applied to the experience of a wine. I say "a" wine here because my comments will be derived from reflection upon specific wines much in the way I would discuss specific performances if I were talking of music. A problem with this method is, of course, that a reader

can find recordings of concerts/performances but may not have tasted or may not be able to find bottles of the specific wines considered. This limitation will not seriously affect the argument for, as will become clear later, the aesthetic judgments examined here are singular, yet have universality. It is, then, possible for readers to substitute their tastings of a 1929 Chateau Leoville-Poyferré, or a Canary Sack, or a 1959 Steinberger Auslese or (as we shall hear later) of an 1846 red Hermitage for my tasting of a 1959 Chateau Suduiraut (Sauternes). If the comments presented here, besides presenting something the aesthetician will find worthy of thought, also encourage readers to search for beautiful wines on their own, then I will be satisfied that I have, to paraphrase George Saintsbury, amused some readers and been profitable to others.⁵

The four moments of the "Analytic of the Beautiful," determined by the division of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are divided into the headings of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Modality. The first moment discusses, then, the judgment of taste according to quality. The passage begins with the argument that a judgment of taste is not a judgment of cognition, it signifies nothing in the object but is rather a judgment in which the representation is referred to the subject and to the feeling of pleasure or pain in the subject which the representation affects. Here at once we might apply Kant's focus upon the subjective quality of the judgment of taste to a practice that developed in the early 1970's during the beginning of the "wine boom" in California. By the mid-70's it was far from uncommon to encounter a wine label presenting a quite detailed technical description not only of the chemical composition of the wine when it was placed in the bottle but also of the chemical composition of the grapes at the time of harvest. This practice was the result of a major change among California winemakers when the old, family winemaker who probably harvested grapes when they "tasted right" was replaced by the contemporary winemaker who has earned a Ph.D. in enology and viticulture from the University of California at Davis. What I want to suggest is that while the tremendous growth in our knowledge about wine making and grape growing reflected in those detailed bottle labels has indeed increased the number of wines that Kant would consider pleasant and perhaps even the few he would judge beautiful, the implicit assumption that aesthetic quality can be determined by judgments signifying characteristics of the object is fundamentally wrong. The aesthetic judgment, Kant would tell these winemakers, presents a quite different faculty of distinction than does the judgment of cognition.

Kant's major concern in this first moment is to distinguish the satisfaction in the beautiful experienced by the subject from two other kinds of satisfaction, the satisfaction in the pleasant and the satisfaction in the good. Having stated that the judgment of taste is not determined by any knowledge of the object, Kant goes on to say that the judgment of taste is not concerned even with the existence of the object. Kant calls the satisfaction that requires the existence of an object *interested*. Satisfaction in the pleasant and satisfaction in the good are both interested, *but* satisfaction in the beautiful is, rather, *disinterested*. We must look at this disinterestedness in each of its two forms.

Ordinary sensuous pleasure, says Kant, *gratifies* in such a way that one's own interest is fundamental. We might say, here, that in this kind of satisfaction the thing is subordinated to the delight it provides for us, the object is only a pretext for the pleasure we derive from it. Such satisfaction locks us in our own individuality, in our own bodies—we are, it seems, nothing more than bodies. On this level, says Kant, “hunger is the best sauce.”⁶

One can indeed see this satisfaction in the narrowness of the pleasant in countless forms when considering wine. I can best explain this in terms of personal experience. I began collecting and aging wines while living in California, working for a small winery in the mid-70s. Many of the wines available then were the ordinary 71's, the poor 72's, and the ordinary, early-released 73's. After tasting countless thin, watery, tired wines I became “hungry” for a red wine with some “body.” I soon found my “sauce” in the 1974 Zinfandels. I quickly, enthusiastically began tasting and buying some for aging—generally the “biggest,” most tannic ones I could find, wines often with 14 percent alcohol or more. The experience of retasting these wines more recently shows how much my hunger was indeed the best sauce. Not one of the wines has approached the expectation I (and many others) had of them when they were first released. Most have matured into “pleasant” wines to accompany pork, but Kant would call none beautiful.

The most general version of this interested satisfaction in the pleasant is to be seen in the current rage for comparative tastings. The most common versions are California Cabernet Sauvignon vs. red Bordeaux and California Chardonnay vs. white Burgundy. Such tastings are conducted across the country and reported in numerous wine publications. It is surprising that few who conduct these tastings do not question the frequency with which American tasters choose California wines over their French “equivalents.” Here again I suspect that Kant would suggest the likeli-

hood of "interested" tasters choosing wines with which they are most familiar.

This interested satisfaction in the pleasant is, alas, not restricted to amateur tasters. "Professional" tasters display similar narrowness. Edmund Penning-Rowsell, whose *The Wines of Bordeaux* has just appeared in its third edition, "confesses" that "the St.-Estéphanes have never been great favourites of mine."⁷ He then criticizes the St.-Estéphanes by damning them with faint praise. And in Michael Broadbent's *The Great Vintage Wine Book* (1980) there are the expected long chapters on Bordeaux, Burgundy, Port, Champagne, and German whites, and even short ones on California and Australia—but nothing (!) on Rhône wines or Italian wines.

In contrast to such all-pervasive satisfaction in the pleasant, Kant argues that the true judgment of taste is *essentially* disinterested. This means that, far from being swept away in the course of enjoyment, we must recognize the thing of beauty for what it is, we must let it be such as it is, we must *contemplate* it with fervor—nothing more, nothing less. In this contemplation we find partial grounds for agreeing with Professor Bernard's claim cited earlier that Kant remained a creature of pure reason. Contemplation is certainly an activity dominated by the intellect; but contrary to Professor Bernard's further point that Kant was, as a creature of pure reason, unappreciative of the beautiful, I see such contemplation as crucial to the unique satisfaction in the beautiful Kant describes. This contemplation allows us to be involved with the sensuous but at the same time to get beyond being pure emotion or pure passion, to get beyond being controlled by our bodies. Contemplation allows us to be free at the very heart of the sensuous. This freedom is an essential element in any true judgment of taste.

Just as satisfaction in the pleasant is interested, concerned with the existence of the object, so is satisfaction in the good. This satisfaction in the good is different from the satisfaction in the pleasant in that it pleases by means of reason and through concepts. In being more involved with the intellect, satisfaction in the good is closer to satisfaction in the beautiful than satisfaction in the pleasant, which is a mere pleasing of the senses. The good, says Kant, has two versions; something is good as a means, and is called useful, or is good in itself. In both cases a concept of what sort of thing an object ought to be is required, and each object is compared to this concept. In the case of satisfaction in the pleasant our senses force our assent; satisfaction in the good is likewise not free because here reason forces our assent.

The confusion between satisfaction in the good and satisfaction in the

beautiful has played and continues to play havoc in the "ambitious" wine producing regions of the world. A most blatant example comes from California. It has long been known that the premier red wine grape grown in California is the Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cabernet is also the dominant grape in many, but not all, of the red Bordeaux to which Americans love to compare their Cabernets. Of the (now) five "first growths" of Bordeaux,⁸ two, Chateau Latour and Chateau Mouton-Rothschild, have won more comparative tastings than their "peers," Chateaux Lafite, Margaux, and Haut Brion. Simple research disclosed that the vineyards of Latour and Mouton contained higher percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon than the other first growths. The "logical" step was made that if more Cabernet made better wine then the best wine would be 100% Cabernet. From the mid-1960's to well into the 70's the new breed of winemakers in their new wineries made 100% Cabernets. This practice was followed even though it was well known that even the "best" Bordeaux were blends of Cabernet with at least two other grapes.⁹ In California a few daring winemakers were blending other grapes into their Cabernets, but these wines seldom were ranked highly in comparative tastings.

What a shock it was in the midst of the pure-Cabernet craze when some wines from St.-Emilion and Pomerol started not only to appear in these blind, comparative tastings but also to "win" a few. Actually such results are not all that surprising; Pomerols and St.-Emilions do more closely resemble California Cabernets *in taste* than do the classified wines from the Medoc. The Medocs were first chosen for comparison for the simple reason that the French seemed to consider them the best. Thus the shock to Americans of finding that they generally preferred Pomerols and St.-Emilions to Medocs could only be surpassed by the discovery that their most beloved Pomerol, their most beloved Bordeaux, Chateaux Petrus, contains no Cabernet Sauvignon at all!¹⁰ The result is that now in the 1980's, one is just beginning to find many Cabernets blended with Merlot and even some 100% Merlots in California (it takes some four to five years for young vines to begin producing grapes worthy of being made into wine and probably ten to get into proper productivity). In any event, the California winemakers are learning what the French learned through *many* years of *tasting*, that Cabernet Sauvignon does not make the best wine by itself, that it needs softening by Merlot and the other grapes. Had the winemakers been more influenced by satisfaction in the beautiful and less by satisfaction in what they conceived to be the good, they might have learned earlier.

Unfortunately this same confusion that allows concepts of what is good to override judgments of taste based upon disinterested contemplation is found not only in a "young" wine region like California but also in an old region, Italy. Italian wines have lately become the best-selling wines in the world, the result, mainly, of improved technique in wine-making. But some producers have ambitions like the Americans, to produce what are coming to be called "world-class" wines. One such producer is Marchesi Antinori, long noted for their Villa Antinori Chianti Classico and today, also, for a range of traditional Italian red and white wines. The best wine Antinori makes is Chianti, a wine with a long, varied history. Today it is made in a number of styles, the best can mature in ten or more years into a splendid wine—but not the equal of mature Bordeaux or Burgundy. To make even better wines Antinori wants to alter the classic Chianti formula (red Sangiousese 50–80%, red Canaiolo 10–30%, white Trebbiano and Maluasia 10–30%) by replacing the white grapes with, of course, Cabernet Sauvignon. Antinori is actually making such a wine (Tignanello) but it does not seem to have the potential their rationally conceived wine is supposed to possess. Further, they are quite likely already making the best style of wine in that region; *taste* should require them to work on making Chianti as beautiful as they possibly can.

What is happening in the two examples just cited is that winemakers are allowing satisfaction in the good to interfere with the judgments they are making which should be judgments of taste, pure ones in which disinterested contemplation is free to identify that which is pleasing to the subject from that which is not. When either satisfaction in the good or satisfaction in the pleasant intrudes, one is no longer capable of making such a judgment. In avoiding the requirements of the good and the pleasant, one achieves the freedom at the center of sensuous experience needed for making an aesthetic judgment. This freedom amounts to turning what is perceived into an occasion for play, "taste only plays with the objects of satisfaction."¹¹ To understand this play of the mind with the aesthetic object we must turn now to the second moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful."

So far we have examined the quality of the pure judgment of taste and found it to be disinterested—determined neither by the individual prejudices that identify the pleasant nor by the logical requirements of any concept of the good. We can, Kant points out, make an inference about the *quantity* of the judgment of taste on the basis of its disinterested quality. To the degree that we are disinterested, we cease to be locked away in our own

individuality; instead we spread out, we surpass ourselves toward an intersubjectivity. Our own disinterested satisfaction implies a ground of satisfaction for all,

since the person who judges feels himself quite *free* as regards the satisfaction which he attaches to the object, he cannot find the ground of this satisfaction in any private conditions connected with his own subject, and hence it must be regarded as grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person.¹²

Thus judgments of taste are universal. This claim we must examine most carefully because serious wine drinkers intuitively believe it to be true but do not know upon what ground they may base their belief.

The first point Kant makes here touches something wine drinkers understand fully. The universality of a judgment of taste is not like the universality of a logical or a scientific judgment because it is based neither upon concepts nor upon objectively verifiable data. The judgment of taste, on the other hand, claims validity for all, says Kant, in the form of *subjective* universality. But just what is the ground of this subjective universality? First, Kant points out one way in which wine tasters of today have been erroneously seeking a claim to universality in their judgments. Experience shows, Kant acknowledges, that there is often a rather extended concurrence among judgments based upon satisfaction in the pleasant. Again the comparative blind tastings of California Cabernets vs. Bordeaux serve as a good example. Lately one even sees in wine publications attempts to determine statistical reliability in such tastings. The fact that many (Americans) repeatedly prefer their own Cabernets to Bordeaux only proves the consistency of their satisfaction in what is pleasant to those tasters. In contrast, experience also shows that there is often disagreement about judgments of taste.

On the other hand, the taste of reflection [the pure aesthetic taste] has its claim to the universal validity of its judgements (about the beautiful) rejected often enough, as experience teaches, although it may find it possible (as it actually does) to represent judgements which can demand this universal agreement. In fact it imputes this to everyone for each of its judgements of taste. . . . [I]f we then call the object beautiful, we believe we speak with a universal voice, and we claim the assent of everyone. . . . The judgement of taste

does not *postulate* the agreement of everyone . . . it only *imputes* this agreement to everyone, . . . the universal voice is, therefore, only an idea. . . .¹³

In logical judgments ($2+2=4$) or empirical judgments (this wine is 12% by volume alcohol) we can postulate the agreement of all and need no proof beyond the scrutiny of our concepts or of our methods of measuring. In aesthetic judgments about the beautiful we can only impute agreement and realize that our actual experience may well contradict our imputation. We blame others who do not judge as we do for lacking taste. In making a judgment of taste we must not wait for confirmation from others; rather we can only re-examine our own judgment to be certain that we have eliminated everything belonging to satisfaction in the pleasant and to satisfaction in the good in our own judgment.

The obvious question at this point is what are the positive characteristics of the satisfaction in the beautiful; we have sufficiently examined the satisfactions irrelevant to judging the beautiful. The first characteristic Kant mentions, beyond disinterested contemplation, is that judgments of taste are singular. Thus such judgments will be like the judgment, "This bottle of 1959 Chateau Rouget (Pomerol) is beautiful." Such judgments are always determined in a single experience; when we make the further judgment, "All 1959 Chateau Rougets are beautiful," we have moved beyond a strictly aesthetic judgment to a logical one. Wine drinkers, perhaps better than others who deal with multiple aesthetic objects, know, of course, that the logical judgments based upon the aesthetic one is quite shaky because of countless conditions which may have been detrimental to the wine instead of beneficial. Here, too, we might notice that in our opening example Kant only said "Canary wine is pleasant," and not "this Canary wine."

A second, much more important, positive characteristic of the judgment of taste is disclosed when Kant turns to the question of whether the feeling of pleasure precedes or follows the judging of the object. "The solution of this question," says Kant, "is the key to the critique of taste, and so is worthy of all attention."¹⁴ If a judgment of taste is to be universal it must contain something that can be universally communicated—either a cognition or a representation. But having already separated the judgment of taste from the judgment of cognition, we must see that what is capable of universal communication in the judgment of taste is a representation.

If the determining ground of our judgment as to this universal communicability of the representation is to be merely subjective, it can be nothing else than the state of mind, which is to be met with in the relation of our representative powers to each other, so far as they refer a given representation to cognition in general.¹⁵

The judgment of taste, then, is grounded upon a state of mind in the subject which is determined by a special relation of our representative powers, the understanding and the imagination, to each other. What is this special relation of the representative powers?

The cognitive powers, which are involved by this representation, are here in free play, because no definite concept limits them to a definite rule of cognition. Hence the state of mind in this representation must be a feeling of free play of the representative powers in a given representation with reference to cognition in general.¹⁶

Thus we see that the play that is possible when we disinterestedly contemplate a thing of beauty is indeed a playing by the mind. It is a free play of the imagination and the understanding; these two representative powers are here involved with the sensuous but not controlled by it.

With the realization that the judgment of taste is grounded in a free play of our representative powers with each other we can answer our question about the timing of the feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste.

This merely subjective (aesthetical) judging of the object, or of the representation by which it is given, precedes the pleasure in the same and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive faculties.¹⁷

If satisfaction in an object precedes the judging of it, such satisfaction could only be satisfaction in the pleasant which requires no contemplation, or satisfaction in the good which is logically determined and thus also needs no contemplation. Aesthetic judging, on the other hand, can only truly be made before the experience of satisfaction that comes from the play of our representative powers.

One is here quickly reminded of two kinds of wine drinkers to whom Kant would deny taste. First, there are people who barely manage to get a whiff of the bouquet of the wine in the rush to get a gulp of it down their

throats so that they can instantaneously declare the wine great (or terrible) and move on to another. It is most upsetting to see how many wine "professionals" "taste" in just this manner. This practice is still much better than another that seems to give the "gulpers" support. It is axiomatic among American wine "cognoscenti" that Chardonnay makes the greatest white wines in California (and it does); this wisdom leads to the mere placing of any Chardonnay in a glass being grounds for the wine being at least "very good" and more likely "great"—though far too many of them are neither. This practice is, of course, world wide. Show most people (with at least a "little bit of knowledge") a Chateau Latour label and they will tell you they are tasting a great wine. This psychological factor accounts for the extraordinary number of wines in Bordeaux with some version of "Latour" in their names, and for the increasing popularity of blind-tastings. But we have digressed again into what does not contribute to a judgment of taste; let us return to what does.

In saying that the satisfaction in the beautiful follows the judging of an object, Kant provides a further important point. We have seen that disinterested contemplation allows for the free play of our representative powers with each other. In this mental state of free play we experience pleasure. We normally do associate pleasure with play but Kant goes further when he speaks not merely of the play of our representative powers but also of their harmony. There is, Kant acknowledges, a pleasure to be experienced simply in being able to communicate one's state of mind derived from contemplating the beautiful, but this does not touch the core of the judgment of taste. To fully understand the satisfaction in the beautiful we must look more closely at the harmony of our representative powers in their play with the representation by which the object of beauty is given to us.

Kant first asks how we are conscious of this mutual subjective harmony in a judgment of taste. This harmony could be determined by a concept of how the understanding and the imagination are to be united, but then any judgment made could not be in reference to pleasure and pain but would rather be a judgment of cognition. Thus we can only know of any harmony of the representative powers through sensation.

An objective relation can only be thought, but yet, so far as it is subjective according to its conditions, can be felt in its effect on the mind; and of a relation based on no concept, . . . no other consciousness is possible than that through the sensation of the effect, which consists in the more lively play of both mental powers (the

imagination and the understanding) when I animated by mutual agreement.¹⁸

We see that the predicate of beauty is appropriate only to those objects which, when disinterestedly contemplated, occasion not just a play and harmony of the representative powers (for such play and harmony seem grounded in disinterested contemplation alone) but actually a *more* lively play of those powers.

The *key* to the critique of taste is, then, this more lively play of the imagination and the understanding with each other. It seems to me that this lively play of the representative powers is precisely what Shakespeare was identifying as his own state of mind when tasting the "marvellous searching" Canary wine that "perfumes the blood." He was talking not so much of the wine itself as he was of what he sensed in himself, a state of mind which as Kant so rightly says is, first of all, free from being controlled by the senses and what immediately pleased them and, second, free from any concepts. In this freedom the mind is fully active, but in a special manner. When we concern ourselves with what pleases the senses, the mind is essentially passive. When we are concerned with the good, the mind of course becomes active, but this activity is controlled by the laws of thought and by the activity of comparing what is given to concepts. In contrast, the mind when making an aesthetic judgment is active in free play in which the imagination and the understanding are animated by each other.

The pleasure of satisfaction in the beautiful is, as would be expected, also of a special nature. The pleasure of the play of the representative powers, says Kant,

involves causality, viz. of *maintaining* without further design the state of the representation itself and the cognitive powers. *We linger* over the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself. . . .¹⁹

This lingering over the contemplation of the beautiful, that is, over contemplation that strengthens and reproduces itself, is expressed exceptionally well by George Saintsbury, the already mentioned Regius Professor of Rhetoric who has provided us with some classic reminiscences of wines he drank. Of an 1846 red Hermitage, Saintsbury says,

The shade of its colour was browner (people used, *vide* Thackeray, to call the red hocks 'brown') than most of the Hermitages I have seen; but the brown was flooded with such a sanguine as altogether transfigured it. The bouquet was rather like that of a less sweet wall-flower. And as to the flavour one might easily go into dithyrambs. Wine-slang talks of the 'finish' in such cases, but this was so full and so complicated that it never seemed to come to a finish. You could meditate on it; and it kept up with your meditations.²⁰

Saintsbury drank the few bottles of this wine that he had purchased when they were between thirty-two and forty years old.

Both Shakespeare in his "marvellous searching wine" and Saintsbury in his "full, complicated wine" disclose the grounds upon which one can experience satisfaction in the beauty of a wine. They both point to a state of mind in which the imagination and the understanding are playing with each other in a most lively fashion. In terms of a wine, such satisfaction seems essentially related to the unfortunately much over-used idea of complexity. A wine which truly animates the representative powers does so through the complex smells, tastes, textures, and colors which it provides for contemplation. The more complex these factors are, the more we are likely to linger over them, to meditate upon them—and the more the wine will be able to keep up with, to sustain, to even strengthen our meditation.

Meditation upon a beautiful wine corresponds precisely with Kant's analysis of the universal quality of satisfaction in the beautiful. Saintsbury was inclined to dithyrambs about the flavor of his Hermitage; for another wine it might be the bouquet which keeps up with our meditation. Whatever feature of the wine gives such satisfaction, however, that satisfaction is most likely preceded by empirical knowledge. A trusted merchant might say, "You don't even need to taste *this* wine; just smell it"; or you will know that this wine was made by a highly regarded producer from a "vintage of the century." Perhaps the specific wine has been called the "greatest Bordeaux for current consumption." Such factors contribute to our having expectations quite like the ones we have about going to hear the resident string quartet of the Smithsonian performing Beethoven.

What seems to characterize the true satisfaction in the beautiful is not the fulfillment of one's expectations but rather a surpassing of them. We can see this surpassing of expectations when considering a beautiful wine. A Barolo from northwest Italy can be such a wine. Barolos are usually

described as tasting/smelling of violets, truffles, and often tar, sometimes raspberries. One has no trouble with the violets and raspberries, few have actually smelled truffles, but the idea of smelling or tasting tar is none too appealing. Perhaps what is meant by "tar" in relation to Barolo is that while having a delicate smell (which is quite like violets), the smell (of a good one) is also so concentrated that there is a *conceptual* contradiction between the delicacy and power; "tar" is perhaps the name given not so much to a specific smell as to the concentration of smell. A great Barolo clearly smells more deeply of violets than real violets do. But in so doing the bouquet only seems to have met some pre-determined concept. What is exciting is not *that* the wine exhibits these smells but rather the *manner* in which it does this. It is in paying close attention to how the bouquet presented the expected smells of Barolo that one's imagination and understanding are given the opportunity for the greatest playing with each other.

To explain how the bouquet of a great Barolo occasions such lively play of the representative powers, we begin with the point that one essential basis for this experience was that one is quite familiar with the smell of wines made from the Nebbiolo grape. The play that one's imagination and understanding experience in smelling such a wine comes from the qualitatively different nature of those smells. One says *qualitative* because the difference between the bouquet of a beautiful Barolo and the majority (which are not beautiful) is not just a case of more of the same but rather a unique combination of varying quantities of the *standard* elements of the bouquet of Barolo. Stated otherwise, the point here is not that the bouquet of this one wine comes closer to a Platonic ideal Barolo bouquet than other Barolos; rather it is beautiful because of a singular complex of smells. Other Barolos are not beautiful (though often very good) because no special complex of aromas or flavors is to be found in them. The surpassing of expectations in such a situation means finding oneself experiencing what was not expected, the unique.

Another way to present the difference between a beautiful wine that occasions the lively play of our imagination and a good wine that does not is to examine the reasons why some wines are blends of grapes and others made of one grape only. Beautiful wines are made by both methods. If we use Michael Broadbent's recent *Great Vintage Wine Book* as a catalog of which wines can be great, we find three examples of beautiful wine coming from a single grape—white Burgundy from Chardonnay, red Burgundy from Pinot Noir, and German Rheingau and Mosel from Riesling. We also find four wines coming from blends—red Bordeaux, white Bordeaux,

Champagne, and Port. Wanting to point to differences between great wine and good wine, I must return to a comparison made earlier. In discussing the confusion between satisfaction in the good and satisfaction in the beautiful, I presented as an example the decision by California winemakers to make wines of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon in spite of the fact that the ideal they employed was red Bordeaux wines which are never 100% of any grape and often have little or no Cabernet Sauvignon in them (e.g. Chateau Petrus). One can suggest why California winemakers are now blending other grapes into their Cabernets by looking at the tastings of those pure Cabernet Sauvignons now that most of them have reached maturity. Many of these wines are indeed very good, they have more complex flavors and bouquets than any other wines made in California, but on the other hand they really are not complex. They do possess some nuances of flavor but do not show the tremendous range that some mature red Bordeaux possess; they are full-bodied, pleasant wines which are unexcelled as accompaniments to charcoal-broiled steak. None of these Cabernets occasion, on disinterested contemplation, the lively play of the representative powers Kant considers essential to the experience of a thing of beauty. It seems that blending grapes makes for the possibility of beautiful claret; it remains to be seen if California will in the future produce such wines.

Having seen that few wines truly deserve the predicate beautiful, though many raise expectations of deserving it, we might as if we can more clearly identify in the few that are beautiful what distinguishes them from the others. Can we, in other words, better understand the French saying, "The good is the enemy of the best?" We can, I believe, with the assistance of the third moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful." This discussion of the judgment of taste according to relation deals with purposiveness. Since purposes carry with them interest, they cannot serve as the ground of the pleasure in the judgment of taste. My California Cabernets may be most useful in accompanying steaks, my Zinfandels in accompanying pork, but on that basis alone I cannot call them beautiful. The ground of the true judgment of taste, says Kant,

can be nothing else than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any purpose (either objective or subjective), and thus it is the mere form of purposiveness in the representation by which an object is *given* to us, so far as we are conscious of it, which constitutes the satisfaction. . . . ²¹

This purposiveness without any purpose at the core of the judgment of taste is a formal purposiveness which is the ground for the activity in the subject of the representative powers exciting each other without their being limited to any specific cognition. What excites the representative powers in this manner, says Kant, is form.

In order to see how this notion of purposiveness without purpose might be applied to wine, it is helpful to first see how Kant applies the idea to more traditional forms of art.

In painting, sculpture, and in all the formative arts—in architecture and horticulture, so far as they are beautiful arts—the *delineation* is the essential thing; and here it is not what gratifies in sensation but what pleases by means of its form that is fundamental for taste. . . .

Every form of the objects of sense (both of external sense and also mediately of internal) is either *figure* or *play*. In the latter case it is either play of figures (in space, viz. pantomime and dancing) or the mere play of sensations (in time). The *charm* of colors or of the pleasant tones of an instrument may be added, but the *delineation* in the first case and the composition in the second constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste.²²

It was Bernard's interpretation of precisely this passage that led him to conclude that Kant was unappreciative of music and painting. My only concern here is with what is said of music. Music is properly judged by the play of sensations in time and by the composition of those sensations. Much the same can be said of wine, except, of course, that in a wine the composition is of the play of sensations of smell, taste, and texture instead of the tones in music.

I believe this point tells us much about why a few wines merit being called beautiful but most do not. We have already seen that the beautiful wine occasions a lively play of our representative powers—a play rooted in the complexity and intensity of the representation. To this we now add the idea of composition in time. A beautiful wine must be more than intense or complex; these elements must be put together properly. In order to examine this idea of composition in a wine we can look at the language wine-tasters use, as it might be applied to the glorious sweet wines of Sauternes. A typical note on a Sauternes might be, "Deep gold, rich honeyed marmalade nose; good depth and weight; hot finish." Such a note follows the

sequence of the tasting experience. First one notices color, which in Sauternes changes from pale yellow through gold to dark brown in old age which can be as much as one hundred years before total collapse. A deep gold indicates, generally, peak maturity. Here I might point out that though color tells the experienced eye much about a wine, it nevertheless is next to the least important kind of sense data we get from a wine—sound obviously being the least. A deaf person, a blind person can identify the beautiful wine because what is essential in the contemplation of wine is smell, taste, and texture. This lack of importance particularly of vision in judging a wine allows, perhaps, for us to more easily form a true judgment of taste about wine. Vision is the sense most likely to present interests to us which intrude upon making a pure judgment.

Returning to the tasting of our Sauternes, one next notices the bouquet of the wine. With the bouquet begins the contemplation and lively play of the mind. "Rich, honeyed, marmalade" is correct but with a great Sauternes one first smells not simply marmalade but perhaps orange marmalade (some Sauternes smell rather of peach or apricot marmalade). The orange marmalade is so sweet, so deep, that it seems "honeyed" as well. Further, there is the special smell of the *botrytis*—the "noble rot" which concentrates the sugars in the grapes but does not lower their acidity and thus allows these wines to be very sweet and still to have incredible precision of smell and flavor. Again, as in the Barolo, what one contemplates in this wine's bouquet is not the presence of these aromas so much as it is how each presents itself in a way never experienced before *and* how these individual aromas fit together. One finds oneself thinking, "I've smelled 'oranges' in Sauternes before but *never* like this and *never* with that kind of botrytis; never such power that is yet so controlled. . . ."

But the bouquet is only the beginning of the composition. Eventually one's contemplation of the bouquet leads to the question, "What's this going to taste like?" Before tasting, of course, one imagines what the taste will be and, if experienced, can probably anticipate the kinds of flavors that will be there. With a beautiful wine, however, the actual tastes are, like the aromas, most exciting because of the unique way they surpass the typical. "Wine-slang," as Saintsbury calls it, identifies not only the finish of the wine but also the beginning and the middle of the taste. In the beginning of the taste some flavors stand out more than others—depending on the age of the wine. Then these initial flavors give way to others that linger while the wine is swallowed. Like Saintsbury's Hermitage, the flavors of a great Sauternes never seem to end; there are more and more nuances to be

noticed. At times it is the concentrated yet clear fruit, at others the sugar, which seems to make the fruit taste better rather than to mask its taste as sugar can do. Then one notices the texture which is quite thick (some would say "almost oily"); yet the best have that perfect feel carrying the sweetness and the fruit—neither too thick nor too thin. And there is also the acidity which keeps all the flavors and the texture balanced, keeps the wine from being like the honey or maple syrup that the inexperienced expect Sauternes to be. Thus it is both the unique quality of each of the aromas and tastes and of the texture, and the composition of all these that make a great Sauternes a beautiful wine. To steal from my lingering metaphor, such wines "sing."

The fourth moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" deals with the modality of the judgment of taste. In the third moment discussion of the purposiveness without a purpose of the beautiful Kant might seem to have moved towards some objective quality in the beautiful. This apparent objectivity is eliminated in the fourth as Kant considers the *peculiar* necessity found in judgments of taste. The necessity of aesthetic judgments is derived neither from concepts nor from a practical necessity. The basis of this *exemplary* necessity is a presupposed *common sense*, a subjective principle in contrast to the objective principle which allows for cognitive judgments. This sense common to all determines what pleases and displeases on the basis of feeling and not concepts. A *feeling* is the result of the free play of our cognitive powers. The excitement of one mental faculty by the other which determines the judgment of taste is a mutually beneficial excitement. Neither faculty is privileged in this situation. In the "General Remark on the First Section of the Analytic" Kant dismisses judgments about the 'beauty' of geometrically regular objects as overly dominated by the Understanding; judgments about the 'beauty' of the ever-changing shapes of a fire are dismissed as mere charm for the imagination. The pure judgment of taste is beneficial to *both* mental powers. Being thus beneficial is perhaps best disclosed by the fact that a *feeling* and not knowledge is the result.

In the contemplative consideration of a wine which deserves the predicate "beautiful" one finds precisely the elements Kant enumerates in the fourth moment. To begin with, the satisfaction found in a beautiful wine is indeed determined by a feeling and not by concepts. To say that a wine *sings* is to speak only superficially of some objective quality; it more importantly tells of the effect that such an object has upon the observer, that the object evokes a feeling. One also hears wine tasters say that a wine instructs—that

a wine 'speaks' to us in concepts ["this is what too much oak ageing produces"]. When a wine is said to disappoint it often does so in not achieving a conceptual level ["this wine lacks the pretty floral bouquet so essential for a Mosel"]. When a wine *sings* it has that obvious yet enigmatic effect upon us that those special noises we normally call singing have—a contrast to the effect of 'mundane' sound.

Such enigmatic beauty, says Kant, is rooted in the free play of the imagination and the understanding. The mental powers are here free from their normal cognitive and practical functions and in this freedom mutually excite each other. One experiences precisely this freedom in the contemplation of a beautiful wine. One is not involved in any cognitive judgment about which country the wine comes from, or which region, or which vintage, or which producer. In the singularity of tastes in a great Sauternes one is not concerned with the relative percentages of blended grapes or with the percentage of alcohol [as indicated by the 'hot finish' (=high alcohol) mentioned above]. The judgment "beautiful" comes from the *feeling* of pleasure that accompanies the mental powers' freely tasting *this* orange marmalade, feeling *that* satiny texture and smelling *such* a complex bouquet. The understanding and the imagination do not cease operation, they go on vacation.

The vacation play of both mental powers occurs only when contemplating the beautiful—and not automatically even then. Only when each is free from its normal occupation and is animating the other can a pure judgment of taste be made. The effect of this situation, when it occurs, is universally felt. We all possess an internal sense for the harmony the understanding and imagination achieve. This harmony occurs in a wine when a wine "sings," when it "keeps up with our meditation."

Wright State University

NOTES

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951), p. 46.

2. I emphasize "of modern times" because one finds ancient poets giving rather precise descriptions of wines—Homer comes to mind immediately. Of the wine used to get the Cyclops drunk he says, "and then this liquor—twelve two-handed jars/of brandy, pure and fiery. Not a slave/in Maron's household knew this drink; only/he, his wife and the storeroom mistress knew;/and they would put one cupful-ruby-colored,/honey-smooth-in twenty more

of water,/but still the sweet scent hovered like a fume/over the winebowl./No man turned away/when cups of this came round." (*Odyssey*, IX)

3. Kant, p. xxi.

4. I am indebted to Professor Jacques Taminiaux of the *Université de Louvain* for making me aware of this connection.

5. George Saintsbury, *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, 3rd ed. (1920; rpt. New York: Mayflower Books, 1978), p. xxiv.

6. Kant, p. 44.

7. Edmund Penning-Rowsell, *The Wines of Bordeaux*, 1st ed. (New York: Stein and Day, 1970), p. 131.

8. According to the classification of 1855, revised 1973 version.

9. Latour is 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 10% Merlot; Mouton is 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Cabernet Franc, 3% Merlot. Penning-Rowsell, p. 117, p. 120.

10. Penning-Rowsell, p. 208.

11. Kant, p. 45.

12. Kant, p. 46.

13. Kant, pp. 49–51.

14. Kant, p. 51.

15. Kant, p. 52.

16. Kant, p. 52.

17. Kant, pp. 52–53.

18. Kant, p. 54.

19. Kant, p. 58.

20. Saintsbury, p. 6.

21. Kant, p. 56.

22. Kant, p. 61.