Study Questions on Gale, “Are Some Aesthetic Judgments Empirically True?”

Gale thinks that evaluative and aesthetic judgments about wine are “theoretical” statements within a scientific theory about wine, and that they are “based on” judgments about the perceptual properties of wine.

How in general are “laws” of a scientific theory based on “perceptual evidence?” Describe briefly the relation in a scientific theory between its general theoretical statements of the laws of nature and the experimental data collected to support or confirm these laws. It might help to think of another science and how it works, like physics or chemistry.

Gale cites the Davis score card as providing an example of both the (law like, theoretical) aesthetic judgments and of the (data, experimental) perceptual judgments on which the aesthetic judgments are “based.” Explain how the score card does this.

Gale says there are two types of scientific “theories of wine.”

The first theory type is supposed to be a theory about wine as a “natural product” with certain natural characteristics. Try to think up an example of a law-like statement within such a theory that would imply some empirical judgment about perceptual properties.

The second type of theory is supposed to be a theory about wine as a perceptual or “sensory object” with characteristics as a sensory object. Try to think up a law-like statement about wine as a sensory object within such a theory that would imply some empirical judgment about perceptual properties.

Can you think up any criticisms or problems with Gale’s claims? (Note: Gale does not explain very well the details of the two types of “theories of wine.” If you do not quite understand what exactly he thinks these “theories” are like, it is not all your fault. He is not too clear. It is often the case that philosophy is hard to understand not because you are stupid, but because the text you are trying to read and understand is not very clear – it is the writer’s fault.)