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VIII<sup>th</sup> Wassard Elea International Symposium:

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## The Evaluative Dimension of Judgements of Taste

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Many philosophers have treated morality and aesthetics alike, (see e.g. Hume (1998, 1999, 2000) Ayer (1936/2001), Railton (2003)) both with respect to their metaphysics and philosophy of language. Recently some philosophers have advanced a single view for both moral expressions and predicates of personal taste.<sup>1</sup> The main reasons have to do with metaphysics of value.

Both judgments of taste and moral judgements attribute value to objects or events. A metaethical tradition that dates back at least to Ayer takes facts and values to be of metaphysically different kinds. Ayer's suspicion of values is due to his verificationist commitments that he adopted from logical positivists, but even after logical positivism the status of values has remained questionable. Similarly Stevenson (1944) and Foot (1958/2002) advocate the view that with moral judgements and judgements of taste agreement on facts does not suffice for agreement on values, and Sibley (1959) held the view for aesthetic qualities. The distinction between facts and values has become commonplace.

Once one distinguishes between facts and values, it is natural to wonder what kind of things values are. Many philosophers question the existence of the kind of values that could make moral judgements true. Error theorists like Mackie (1977) and Joyce (2001) have argued that the values that moral judgements presuppose are simply metaphysically too weird to exist. Loeb (2003) on his part argues that given the similarities of moral judgments and evaluative judgments about food or drink, same ontological considerations about value will support either what he calls "realism" or "anti-realism" about both domains. What he means by "realism" is a view which holds that value judgements such as "Genocide is wrong" are true independently of what people believe about the matter. Non-cognitivists

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Kölbel (2003, 2004) and MacFarlane (2014), who argues for radical Relativism for tasty and moral ought.

such as Ayer argued that moral and aesthetic judgements do not have truth-conditional semantics because value statements have no truth-conditions, they are mere expressions of states of mind.

I shall here focus on the evaluativeness of judgements of taste and on the nature of the value they attribute. I have two aims here. First, to understand the meaning of judgements of taste it is useful to know whether they have evaluative content or if their evaluativeness is merely a matter of pragmatics. If the evaluative dimension does not come from their content, then we wouldn't have to worry about the nature of the value that judgements of taste attribute since the truth of the attributions would not depend on that. However, I conclude that predicates of taste do have evaluative content.

The second aim is negative. I argue that whether or not there are metaphysical worries with respect to the values that moral judgements attribute, judgements of taste are evaluative in a very naturalistic way since the values they attribute are fully dependent on the dispositions of the people. Therefore there is no need to worry about the metaphysics of value more generally when inquiring into the realm of taste.

*Types of Evaluative Expressions.* Let me begin by analysing the ways in which expressions may be evaluative or their uses convey an evaluation. A classic starting point is Williams (1985) who introduced the terminology of thick and thin terms in his critical discussion of the fact / value distinction in ethics. He distinguishes between terms that have both descriptive and evaluative content – the thick terms – and terms with only evaluative content – the thin terms.

Williams' examples of thick terms include treachery, brutality and courage which intuitively are factual and evaluative. Hence they put descriptive conditions on how the world or the object must be like and also attribute positive or negative value to it. For example, we may suppose that treachery attributes the quality of betraying someone's trust in a way that is bad. Because of the evaluative aspect, the use of a thick term also potentially guides action: if an action A has positive value, then one has a pro tanto reason to do A. Examples of thin concepts include moral good or right which are supposed to merely attribute value without any descriptive content.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Let me mention some difficulties related to good and bad so that we don't rely too much on them as examples. Hare (1952) argued that good has both a descriptive and evaluative meaning so that e.g. in "He bought a good car" good attributes the car certain properties which depend on the standards of the goodness of cars at that time,

Another analysis of the descriptive / evaluative distinction comes from Sibley's (1974/2001) discussion of aesthetic expressions which complements Williams' distinction. Sibley distinguishes between three kinds of evaluative terms: (a) intrinsically evaluative terms, (b) descriptive merit terms, and (c) evaluation-added terms. Let me look at each category in turn.

*Intrinsically evaluative terms.* These expressions correspond most closely to thin terms; Sibley's examples are good, bad, mediocre, nice, nasty, obnoxious, valuable, effective, ineffectual and worthless. Here is how he describes them:

First, there may be terms the correct application of which to a thing indicates that the thing has some value without it thereby also being asserted that the thing has some particular or specified quality ... with explainable exceptions in special contexts, they [intrinsically evaluative terms] will be evaluative (pro or con) whatever the subject-matter they are applied to, and may be applied to any subject to which their application makes sense, (p. 92).

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and also commends the car. Hare holds that the evaluative dimension of good is its "primary" meaning, and the descriptive part "secondary", by which he roughly means that any use of good is always evaluative whereas the descriptive dimensions may be more or less present and also change with times.

Geach (1956) targeted Hare by arguing that in fact good and bad do not commend at all. First he emphasised the distinction between predicative and attributive uses of predicates. A predicative use predicates a property, e.g. "He was right". An attributive use modifies another predicate, e.g. "he found the right tool" or "he bought a good car". Some predicates are always attributive, e.g. small, big, former, etc., so that even when the predicate appears by itself, the modified predicate is provided pragmatically. Geach argued that good and bad are always attributive so that judging something to be good implicitly contains a predicate that good modifies. Furthermore, he claimed that attributive uses do not commend or provide reasons for actions.

Williams on his part is discussing a third position since he gives good as an example of a thin term that has only evaluative meaning. Given these competing viewpoints we do better avoiding taking a stance on good and bad altogether since that would take us outside the scope of the present topic. However, the issues related to these expressions are worth keeping in mind since some examples in the literature on predicates of taste use good.

*Descriptive merit terms.* These terms are descriptive terms which attribute a property that is a merit in the object given its usual function. Sibley's examples are sharp for razors, selective for wireless sets, and spherical for tennis balls. Their meaning is purely descriptive, and it is contingent that the property attributed by the expression has positive or negative value. Hence being a competent user of the term does not require knowledge of the merit that is typically accompanied by the object that has the property.

*Evaluation-added terms.* The third category corresponds most closely to thick terms as Williams defines them, although many terms that are often considered thick will in fact come out as descriptive merit terms. Sibley describes evaluation-added terms thus:

These are terms which are supposed to have both a descriptive and evaluative component: that is, when they are applied to something, not only is a property being attributed to it but an indication is being given that the speaker has a favourable or unfavourable attitude to that property. If there are such terms in the language, it would be a rule of their use that they are so used; they would be both descriptive, as indicating that a thing had a quality, P, and evaluative, in indicating that the speaker values or disvalues the quality P., (p. 92).

Sibley's examples from the aesthetic realm include tasty, insipid, fragrant, noisome, cacophonous, brash and rancid.

Once we look at the criteria for descriptive merit terms and evaluation-added terms we see that Sibley's distinction cuts through the class of thick terms. For example, Sibley would count the usual examples of thick terms (courageous, honest, considerate) as descriptive merit terms rather than evaluation-added terms. And indeed, we can easily imagine plenty of contexts where honest doesn't convey a positive attitude but merely the descriptive content has a tendency to speak the truth.

Given Sibley's distinctions, we see that if an apparently evaluative expression turns out to be a descriptive merit term, then the evaluative dimension is not part of the content but merely something its uses may convey – or not, depending on the context.

*The Evaluativeness of Predicates of Taste.* Now, my first aim here is to find out whether judgements of taste are evaluative. I will do that by looking at a variety of predicates of taste within Sibley's tripartite distinc-

tion. First, nice, good, bad and the other intrinsically evaluative terms listed by Sibley can be all used of the same objects and in the same contexts as the more specific taste predicates like delicious can be used; indeed, it's doubtful that there is any difference in meaning between delicious and very good or excellent, or between tasty and nice as applied to foods. Delicious and tasty don't have any more descriptive content than good or nice but their domain is narrower.

However, many other taste predicates seem to have some descriptive content as well. Compare goodlooking and attractive; both attribute positive qualities to persons, but one ascribes a pleasing visual appearance, the other a disposition to attract. Spicy, salty and tasty are evaluations of the flavour of foods or drinks (salty and spicy can be either purely descriptive or descriptive and evaluative, meaning too salty / spicy), and each attributes other qualities too (too much salt / hotness; tasty may attribute a lot of flavour although it is often used to just mean has a good taste).

In many of the cases the descriptive content is dispositional; it describes a specific disposition that the object in question has, e.g. a disposition to cause amusement (fun, funny), to attract (attractive), or to disgust (disgusting). So it seems like some predicates of taste are thin / intrinsically evaluative, but others belong either to descriptive merit terms or evaluation-added terms. Since we want to know whether all predicates of taste attribute value we need to look closer at the two last categories.

How can we tell whether a term is one or the other? Sibley's criterion was that when one learns to use evaluation-added terms one learns that they attribute value, whereas to learn to use a descriptive merit term only consists of knowing which descriptive property it attributes. Thus, with evaluation-added terms the evaluation is a necessary part of the use whereas with descriptive merit terms we can imagine cases where the property lacks its usual merit. One of Sibley's examples of descriptive merit terms was sharp as applied to razors, and indeed we can imagine contexts where it's not a valuable property of razors that they are sharp. For example, think of a group of artists who are using old razors for an art work; they would take the sharp ones to be the least desirable ones since they may accidentally cut themselves with them.

An evaluation-added term in contrast always attributes value. For example, tasty seems to attribute the positive value of having a pleasing taste. Therefore, it's not possible to use tasty without thereby making a positive evaluation. However, the cases are not always very clear cut. For example, imagine a tribe of people who have such unlucky genetics that

anything they consider tasty happens also to be highly unhealthy to them, causing them to immediately gain a lot of weight if they eat it. Consequently in their culture tastiness is always considered bad and dangerous.

The case is similar to the case of the artists who use razors in that tastiness and sharpness are not sought after by the agents in these cases. However, tastiness hasn't lost its value as being gustatorily pleasurable and therefore valuable; it is simply that the link between tastiness and obesity is an obstacle to enjoying the value of tastiness. In contrast, the value of sharpness seems entirely dependent on the needs for sharp objects, and on the possible value gained by having or using them.

The contrast of the cases above suggests that one can locate the difference between evaluative and descriptive terms to whether the value is intrinsic or extrinsic / instrumental. More importantly, whether a term is evaluation-added or a descriptive merit term can be decided by looking at whether the value of the property resides in the property (e.g. deliciousness is valuable) or depends on the relation of the property to something else which is valuable (e.g. sometimes the honesty of a person saves one from being tricked, and not being tricked is valuable).

To conclude, it looks like predicates of taste are evaluative by being either thin / intrinsically evaluative terms or evaluation-added terms. Therefore we need to consider what kind of value judgements of taste attribute, and whether the nature of that value poses metaphysical worries.

*Objectivism about Taste.* Let me again look at those predicates of personal taste which seem to have some descriptive content as well: funny, fun, attractive, good-looking, tasty and disgusting. I have argued elsewhere that judgments of taste are made on the grounds of one's experiential state, for example on the grounds of being disgusted by something (my 2014). There are two ways to see the disgust: as a reaction to some properties of the object which are not in themselves disgusting but which cause disgust to the particular experiencer, or as the object having disgust properties, which cause being disgusted in any accurate perceiver.

The latter view would take the evaluative taste properties as independent of the responses or beliefs of anyone. Let me call the view objectivism about taste. The view holds that for example disgusting objects would have the disgust properties irrespective of whether anyone experiences them as such. Nevertheless, a person who accurately perceives disgustingness properties would judge the right objects to be disgusting, and have the relevant pro tanto reasons for avoiding them.

Taste objectivism holds that there is always a perspective-independent fact of whether something is delicious, fun or disgusting, and therefore people may very well be at fault when judging matters of taste. That is something that the recent literature has systematically opposed.<sup>1</sup> On the positive side the view can explain disagreements of taste as disagreements of the ordinary kind. Moreover, it does justice to the way we speak about taste including giving arguments in favour of our views, encouraging others to try things we enjoy and so on. It also makes good sense of the idea of good and bad taste; whoever gets things right (whether we know it or not) has a good taste.

However, objectivism about taste, it seems to me, is empirically highly implausible. It presupposes that there are perspective-independent truths about matters of taste. Regarding experiences of fun, common sense tells us that people are very different regarding what they enjoy. And it just seems way too far-fetched to think that some people might be correctly tracking fun whereas others are unable to, and hence mistakenly think that e.g. their hobbies are fun whereas they are not. Fun seems to reduce to personal enjoyment and nothing more.

The same holds of disgustingness. Some people are disgusted by cockroaches or the sight of infected wounds whereas some are not. But there isn't anything that is disgusting as such. Perhaps humans have tendencies to feel disgust towards particular things for evolutionary reasons, but such convergence rather shows that those things are worth avoiding by humans, not that the things are objectively disgusting.

Regarding experiences of flavour, empirical studies have shown that there is a lot of genetic variation in how foods taste to people. For example, people can be divided into nontasters, tasters, and supertasters regarding how a chemical 6-n-propylthiouracil (PROP) tastes to them. Nontasters do not taste the chemical whereas it tastes mildly bitter to the taster and unpleasantly bitter to the supertaster. The natural relative of the chemical is present in a variety of vegetables and other foodstuff, causing them to taste bitter to the supertaster.<sup>2</sup>

The three genetically different groups are estimated to be roughly equally large with some differences in distribution between the genders and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., e.g., Kölbel (2003), Lasersohn (2005), MacFarlane (2014), Marques (2016), Recanati (2008), Stephenson (2007), Stojanovic (2007), Sundell (2011).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of genetic differences in taste perception, see Garcia-Bailo *et al.* (2009).

around the globe. Flavour perception naturally plays a major role in evaluative judgements. Given that there is no reason to consider any of the groups as being somehow deficient in their ability to taste (in contrast to various forms of colour blindness), it would be arbitrary to claim that one of them has better access to flavour properties than the others, and thereby to also have better grasp of evaluative properties. For example, the flavours and evaluative qualities of wines are often considered to be objectively in the wines, to be discerned by the connoisseurs. However, at least one study found that judgments of a wine's bitterness, astringency and acidity correlated with the subjects' PROP taster status, (Pickering *et al.*, 2004).

Not only do humans begin their lives as having different experiences of foods, subsequent experiences also make for a very large differences in later food preferences, (Prescott, 2012). Given the crucial roles of both genetic variation and one's eating history in determining one's judgements of the taste of food and drink, it seems rather absurd to think that there might nevertheless be the evaluative properties of foods out there to be discovered by the perfect judges. Therefore, objectivism about taste is not a plausible view about the nature of values attributed by judgements of taste, at least the ones I have considered.

Lack of space prohibits considering more complicated cases such as aesthetic judgments about works of art, or about style. But I want to mention an important factor which introduces a dimension of objectivity, even if judgements of taste are essentially based on one's own subjective experiences. Knowledge always plays a role. For example, take two people with equal musicality, but one with a lot of experience of music of all styles, the other with access only to one local radio station. Even if both make judgements about whether some music is good or bad only based on what they enjoy, the former has also learnt more about the objective qualities of music that make for value in music, for example originality. There is no reason to deny the objectivity of those values. But it is worth pointing out that they are normally not the reason why we make a judgement of taste. For example, it is perfectly fine to say "What a horrible song! It's good in that they are doing something different, and they've clearly worked a lot on it which is good too, but nevertheless it sucks".

*Judgments of Taste Attribute Response-Dependent Values.* The approach I will take towards the nature of values attributed by judgements of taste is that the value comes from our positive or negative experiences towards the objects. Hence the values are "subjective": their existence de-

depends on individual responses. Hence, values are tied to our valuations of things, or to what matters to us as in the following quote by Railton:

we need to ask whether we can locate a compelling case for saying that subjectivity is essential to value. I believe the best case to be a highly abstract one. According to this case, value enters the picture when mattering does. (Nihilists thus have hit on an apt phrase when they say, “Nothing matters”). If we imagine a world without any locus of mattering or concern – say, a world composed entirely of oxygen molecules in random motion – no issues of value would arise internal to that world. Within that stark world it couldn’t matter less what happens, because it doesn’t matter at all. If to this world we add some beings to whom something matters, then questions of value might have a foothold, (p. 88).

The experiences which underlie our evaluations of objects of taste are numerous. Positive evaluations are grounded in for example, experiences of having fun, in experiences of tasty or delicious food or of perceiving someone attractive or sexy, whereas negative evaluations are grounded in experiencing disgust, lack of intellectual stimulation, etc. For example, if something is disgusting to one then it is intrinsically of negative value to that person; seeing, tasting, smelling or touching it makes her experience disgust.

People make judgements of personal taste on the basis of their own experiential states; let’s call these grounding experiential states. Grounding experiential states depend on sensory modalities. These sense modalities may be directly referred to as well, as when we say that something tastes disgusting. However, usually the relevant sensory mode of experience is omitted from judgements of taste. For example, we say that something is disgusting even though it might be perfectly nice to touch and to look at and only disgusting when tasted. Normally, pragmatics makes clear which sense modality is intended. I am supposing that judgements of taste basically attribute dispositions to bring about positive or negative sensory experiential states. Therefore the values that judgements of taste attribute are straightforwardly dependent on our responses.

Let me now compare moral and taste judgments. The contrast with moral judgments becomes quite obvious when we consider the role of sensory experiences with respect to matters of taste. Predicates of taste bear an

obvious relation to our experiences and normally one cannot make a judgement of taste without having been in the grounding experiential state. Nothing like that is true of moral judgments: I can make moral judgements about actions or events without having experienced them. Most people have not experienced say, the burning of live humans but nevertheless anyone can felicitously make moral judgments about that.

Secondly, many philosophers hold that morality is “inescapable” as Joyce puts it (2001). We feel that moral principles must be followed even by the murderous sociopath who wishes for the destruction of everything. Whether that is true of morality or not, probably no one thinks it true of taste. If a person is deficient in a relevant sensory modality they are excluded from the commendatory force of judgments of taste. For example, if a person cannot perceive flavours I shouldn’t insist that he should still eat ice cream because it’s delicious.

Hence, the values that judgements of taste attribute seem to be firmly grounded in the dispositions of the people and consequently, judgments of taste are less universal in their scope than moral judgments. That is probably related to the fact that morality concerns our relations to others whereas tastes are mostly of private concern. No one is harmed if a person fails to like ice cream whereas a murderous sociopath poses a risk for the others. But whatever the reason is for the more acceptable relativity in the case of taste, that should be reflected in our thoughts and judgements about the two domains.

I have said that taste objectivism is not plausible, whereas it is plausible to think that the taste related values depend on our responses to the objects. Therefore there is no reason to worry about the metaphysics of value in the case of taste. I don’t pretend to have anything like a full account of the metaphysics of taste, and giving one has not been my aim anyway. What matters is that the evaluative dimension of judgements of taste does not pose metaphysical worries. Therefore, at least metaphysics of taste gives no reasons to be tempted by non-cognitivism or error theory.

*Conclusions.* I have argued that predicates of taste are inherently evaluative. Some philosophers who find values metaphysically suspicious have advanced similar anti-realist arguments for both judgements of morality and of aesthetic judgements and judgements of taste. However, I’ve argued that the value judgments of taste attribute depends on our sensory experiences. What matters for my purposes is that there is nothing metaphysically suspect about the values attributed by judgements of taste, and

hence the anti-realist or non-cognitivist arguments in metaethics that are based on metaphysics have no relevance for the theory of taste.

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## The Aesthetic Properties of Wine

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In this paper we defend the intuition that, through tasting a wine, an agent improves her epistemic standing towards it. Suppose that oenology achieved an understanding of all the natural information concerning wine and wine tasting and let Clara be the representative of such oenological community. Because of an unusual physical condition, Clara was never able to actually sample wine. One day a cure is discovered and she tries out a glass of L’Apparita 1985. Does Clara learn something new *about the wine* by tasting it? We first show (§2) that Clara’s allegedly improved epistemic status cannot depend on a natural property of the wine or on a *quale*. After drawing two distinctions among the aesthetic properties of wine (§3), we present our solution (§4), which appeals to response-dependent properties. We finally argue (§5) that our account can be used to vindicate *some strains* of wine criticism from the charge of epistemic untrustworthiness.

§1. *Clara the Super-Oenologist*. Imagine that oenology achieved a much firmer knowledge of the chemical, biological, geological, environmental, and physiological constituents of wine – in brief, of the natural properties of wine – and of the way these interact with gustative organs and

give rise to different gustatory experiences.<sup>1</sup> Let Clara be a distinguished representative of this scientific community, our *super-oenologist*. Clara has a peculiar story: unable to ingest foods since birth, she was raised unaccustomed to taste. Such a condition, however, did not prevent her from becoming a leading figure in her field. One day, a cure is discovered for her condition and Clara decides to celebrate by treating herself to a tasting of Castello di Ama L'Apparita 1985. As the occasion approaches, she knows every natural detail of the setting and she can foresee in what manners the natural properties of the wine will affect her physiological state.<sup>2</sup> After having given the glass a gentle swirl, Clara sips a small mouthful from it, for a moment swirls it around, and then swallows the precious liquid. Does Clara thereby learn something new about L'Apparita 1985?<sup>3</sup>

In this paper we establish the conclusion that Clara, upon tasting it, does learn something new about L'Apparita 1985. By doing so we aim to offer a positive account of the indispensability of first-person experience in

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the prospects of scenarios akin to super-oenology, see also Noble. The scenario we are proposing could remind one of the 2030 and 2015 scenarios depicted by Burnham & Skilleas, (pp. 48-53). Our aim, however, is to study the epistemological insights provided by the experience of tasting a wine, rather than to appreciate its ontological status. It should be further clarified that our aim is not to prove the reliability of Clara's testimony about the wine's properties, but whether the experience of tasting the wine improves *her* epistemic status with respect to it; we shall come back on this point in note 2, p.30; for some recent discussion of testimony about taste see Whiting, Robson, and Meskin.

<sup>2</sup> We are here operating a simplification by assuming that L'Apparita 1985 is homogeneous with respect to its natural and aesthetic properties. This is obviously not the case: each bottle and its liquid content is a story of its own; moreover, the conditions of the wine in each glass may differ, no matter how slightly, due to differences in the conditions of each glass (e.g. temperature, tidiness). At the same time, our simplification is in keeping with current methods of evaluating and pricing wines (cf. Borghini 2012); this may suggest that wine judgments concern properties that are stable across large samples; at any rate, it would be of little difficulty to adjust our analysis so to regard each bottle of wine, or each glass, as an entity of its own rank.

<sup>3</sup> Clara's example may remind one of Jackson's colour-blind scientist, Mary. This invites a misunderstanding about the question we are asking here that we would like to preempt. Here we do *not* address the question whether Clara's subjective reactions, as she savours her sample of L'Apparita 1985, are identical with or supervene upon some physiological state of her body instantiated as a consequence of the ingestion of the wine. What we ask is whether undergoing those subjective reactions is a way for Clara to apprehend some testable property of L'Apparita 1985.

aesthetic judgments regarding wine. Authors such as Smith (p. 44) pointed out such indispensability, but did not offer a positive story in its favour; on the other hand, Meskin & Robson recently questioned the existence of any necessary link between first-person experience and aesthetic judgment: our argument can be seen as a rebuttal of their position. We shall also underline that our study is limited to the case of wine and it may possibly be generalized to cover other domains as well; but we shall not attempt to make more general claims here.

In the sequel, we first articulate the reasons against the conclusion that Clara, upon tasting L'Apparita 1985, does learn something new about it (§2). Then, we delineate the most plausible strategy to dispel the air of paradox surrounding that claim. This strategy points to the right kind of properties to be identified as the object of Clara's new acquaintance. We propose two distinctions among these properties that are important for our purposes (§3) and supply a solution to the question raised by Clara's case, which appeals to response-dependent properties. (§4). We finally show (§5) that our account can be used to sketch a defense of some strains of wine criticism from the recurrent charge of being epistemically untrustworthy. It should be emphasized that we operate on a reasonably modest reading of the epistemic notions central to our conclusion. Our suggestion is that during the tasting Clara is confronted with properties of the wine that are *anthropocentric*, in the specific sense that their distribution is not solely determined by what there is in the environment, but also by the nature of our sensitivity and by the way one thing interacts with another. However, we suggest (§4-5) that Clara's new knowledge is also, in two respects, knowledge of features of the wine that are objective. To begin with, on the model we defend the properties of wine with which Clara interacts are objective in the sense that their instantiation is independent of the existence of subjects endowed with the relevant sensitivity. Secondly, they are objective in the related sense that they could be instantiated even if subjects endowed with the right sort of sensitivity had lost the capability to recognize that they are.

§2. *Beyond Super-Oenology?* Any suitable answer to the question about the properties with respect to which Clara's epistemic improvement supposedly holds is subject to three constraints. To begin with, if Clara apprehends something *new* about L'Apparita 1985, there must be a property P that Clara wasn't in a position to detect or know about before the tasting, and that she comes to detect or know about for the first time after the tasting. Call this constraint *novelty*. A second constraint, which we propose to label *relevance*, is that it should be straightforward that the bearer of P is

the sample of L'Apparita 1985 contained in Clara's glass. A third constraint, which we label *privileged epistemic access*, is that a sound epistemological story should be available to explain how it is that P is discoverable upon tasting, and also to explain how it wasn't discoverable by resorting to means of detection that Clara had at her disposal beforehand.

When *novelty*, *relevance*, and *privileged epistemic access* are in place, many properties prove unfit for the purpose of vindicating the intuition about Clara's alleged epistemic improvement. This includes any of the properties of L'Apparita 1985 that contribute to determining the character of Clara's gustatory experience. For example, take the properties of having a certain concentration of phenols  $x$ , an alcoholic degree  $y$ , and a degree of titratable acidity  $z$ . Although it is beyond dispute that these are properties of the sample of L'Apparita 1985 contained in Clara's glass – so that *relevance* is clearly satisfied – these properties could not be the ones in relation to which Clara achieves a better epistemic perspective. For they clearly fail *novelty* and *privileged epistemic access*. Being omniscient in relation to the natural properties of the wine, Clara knew before the tasting about the tannins contained in the sample of L'Apparita 1985 and about their concentration; for the same reasons, she also knew how alcoholic and acidic the wine was. Moreover, savoring the wine is neither the sole, nor the most reliable way to detect those properties – lab analyses are a more reliable source, which Clara would have already accessed.

Since Clara has never tasted wine beforehand, her epistemic perspective undeniably improves as she swallows her sample of L'Apparita 1985. For before she didn't know *what it is like* to drink a wine with degree of phenolic concentration  $x$ , alcoholic degree  $y$ , and degree of titratable acidity  $z$ . This epistemic improvement meets *novelty* and *privileged epistemic access*, as it opens up a whole set of new properties that the tasting has disclosed to Clara. However, the epistemic improvement does not seem to meet *relevance*. Tasting the sample of L'Apparita 1985 is a way for Clara to get acquainted with what many philosophers would call the *phenomenal character* of the experience induced by the contact of a wine with degree of phenolic concentration  $x$ , alcoholic degree  $y$ , and titratable acidity  $z$  with her gustative organs. But, the bearer of these properties is not the sample of L'Apparita 1985. More plausibly, it is the experience of savoring it. So, even if the tasting puts Clara in a position to learn something new, it is something new about an experience of hers, or perhaps about herself, and not, as explicitly required by *relevance*, about the wine itself.

We seem to be at a loss. Clara's gustative experience seems to mark an important improvement in her epistemic relation to L'Apparita 1985. The explanation, however, cannot be that the experience results from the causal interaction between certain of the natural properties of the relevant sample of wine and her gustative organs. The natural alternative – that Clara has learned what it is like to savour a wine with those natural properties – has turned out to be equally unhelpful. If no other property of the wine emerges to be identified as central to Clara's epistemic improvement, then, the intuition that it ever occurred seems to be in danger.

We may begin to sense a way out of this impasse by paying due attention to the phenomenological side of Clara's experience. There is something it is like to undergo Clara's gustatory experience and we have already granted that Clara gets acquainted with it while savouring L'Apparita 1985. The phenomenal character of Clara's gustative experience, however, does not seem to be what the experience is *about*. The gustatory experience is bound up with its phenomenal character in a way that a subject who underwent it could not fail to appreciate what it is like to have it. But, the experience itself is not about what it is like to have it. The subjective feeling is rather experienced as the way in which properties of things in the environment manifest themselves to our conscious mind as being instantiated outside of it. So, until now we have simply failed to look in the right direction. Clara's epistemic improvement is obviously not about the properties that cause her gustatory experience; nor is it about the phenomenal character of this experience. Rather, it is about properties *of* the wine, but not the ones causing her gustatory experience. The next section is devoted to illustrating what these properties are. The sections to follow are then devoted to accounting for their peculiar metaphysical status.

§3. *The Aesthetic Properties of Wine*. A good way to introduce the properties we have in mind is to start with a classic passage from Hume's treatise *Of the Standard of Taste*. By way of illustrating what he means by "delicacy of taste", Hume reports (with some alteration) an episode from Chapter XIII, Part 2 of Cervantes's *Don Quijote*:

It is with good reason, says Sancho to the squire with the great nose, that I pretend to have a judgment in wine: This is a quality hereditary in our family. Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hogshead, which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it; considers it; and, after mature reflection, pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same

precautions, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom an old key with a leathern thong tied to it.

Sancho's kinsmen exemplify the special sensitivity to what is "naturally calculated to give pleasure" which, according to Hume, is key to the special aesthetic experience that can be elevated to the rank of a *standard of taste*. What deserves emphasis, for present purposes, is however not the "delicacy of imagination" in itself, but the properties of the wine which Sancho's gifted kinsmen are especially attentive to. These, we submit, are among the properties that one should concentrate upon in the attempt to vindicate the intuition about Clara's epistemic improvement. We propose to call such properties the *aesthetic properties* of the wine. In this section we put forward some distinctions among these properties that are relevant for present purposes.<sup>1</sup> In the sections to follow we lay down an account of the metaphysical nature of these properties, and show these properties to meet the three conditions laid down above of novelty, relevance, and privileged epistemic access.

Hume's passage suggests distinct varieties of aesthetic properties. On the one hand, there is the property that the wine in the hogshead is supposed to possess: the property of being an excellent – or perhaps just a good – wine. We call these *evaluative aesthetic* properties of the wine. On the other hand, there are the properties grounding the expert judges' cautious attitude. They detect additional features of the wine, which contribute to determining its aesthetic worth: its tasting of leather, in the judgment of the first, and its tasting of iron, in the judgment of the second. We shall call those *referential aesthetic* properties of the wine, for reasons that we are going to explain.

To call a wine excellent, or good, is to pay a compliment to it, implicitly to recommend its consumption as the potential vehicle of an aesthetic gratification, and implicitly to qualify a reaction of approbation of it as fit or appropriate (cf. Bourdieu, and the ensuing debate, for the social significance of evaluative aesthetic properties). Evaluative aesthetic properties also come in a derogative variety. To say that a wine instantiates a property of this kind – as, plausibly, the property of being a bad or a disgusting wine

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<sup>1</sup> The rich literature on the aesthetic properties of wine generated several distinctions among them. For a start, see Burnham & Skilleas, Todd (2010), Scruton, Shapin, Crane.

– is to denigrate it, implicitly to warn your peers against the disappointment potentially deriving from its consumption, and implicitly to qualify one’s possible reaction of approbation of it as unfit or inappropriate.

The other properties surfacing in Hume’s quote are not as clearly identifiable as evaluative aesthetic properties of the wine. Rather than being genuine instances of the evaluative aesthetic properties of a wine, they seem to be mere *determiners* of them; they seem, that is, to be the properties *in virtue of which* a wine counts as excellent or bad. One way to convey the difference would be to exclude these properties from the family of genuine aesthetic properties and to name them, after the function they exert, *aesthetically relevant* properties.<sup>1</sup> This move would however have the disadvantage of sustaining the insertion of the gustative properties of the wine – like its tasting of leather or iron, in Sancho’s tale – within too vast and heterogeneous a category, with the potential consequence that their privileged role in determining the aesthetic worth of the experience of savoring a wine might too easily be underestimated or pass unnoticed. An established tradition of assessing the aesthetic properties of a wine, for instance, makes reference to the *total experience* embedded in a wine. The total experience includes not only the savouring part, but also – to different degrees – the way in which the wine has been produced, its price, its natural history, the region of production, the producer, or the social status it aims at representing or appealing to.<sup>2</sup> Bertrand Russell expressed the relevance of such conditions to aesthetic appreciation in a well-known passage from his essay "*Useless*" Knowledge:

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<sup>1</sup> This seems to be, for instance, the choice of Burnham & Skilleas, who distinguish the aesthetic attributes of a wine from its sensory qualities: the latter supposedly single out particular aromas and flavors, which – we conjecture – corresponds to the referential aesthetic properties of our account; the aesthetic attributes, instead, comprise those qualities of wine that are especially valued by more sophisticated drinkers, and plausibly overlap with our evaluative properties. In our account we distinguish four sorts of aesthetic properties of wines (cf. fig. 1), thereby offering a more articulated analysis than the one provided by Burnham & Skilleas. On a different note, it is worth remarking that, for research purposes that extend beyond the scope of philosophical inquiry, additional criteria for distinction among the aesthetically relevant properties of wine may be adopted, based for example on consumer’s preferences, wine prices, grape varieties, regions, and methods of production.

<sup>2</sup> The idea of a total experience seems to be presupposed also in the well-known concept of *extensive pleasure*, introduced by Wendell Berry to discuss the pleasures of eating.

I have enjoyed peaches and apricots more since I have known that they were first cultivated in China in the early days of Han Dynasty; that Chinese hostages held by the great King Kaniska introduced them to India, whence they spread to Persia, reaching the Roman Empire in the first century of our era; that the word "apricot" is derived from the same Latin source as the word "precocious", because the apricot ripens early; and that the A at the beginning was added by mistake, owing to a false etymology. All this makes the fruit taste much sweeter, (p. 25).

The properties enumerated by Russell are clearly aesthetically relevant. However, they seem to contribute to determining the aesthetic worth of the experience of tasting an apricot differently than its gustatory properties. While an awareness of the former properties might seem to have the potential for *cognitively penetrating* the gustatory experience of eating an apricot, and to this extent for contributing to determine its aesthetic worth, the latter properties seem in a way to be *more centrally involved* within it. For this reason we believe that clarity is best served by singling out the aesthetically relevant properties emerging from Hume's quote, and their cognates, as belonging to a separate kind of aesthetic property. Following a recent distinction drawn by Shapin, we propose to call them *referential* aesthetic properties of the wine. Here is how Shapin distinguishes these properties from another family of properties – which he labels *evocative* properties and which correspond to what we call the *evaluative aesthetic* properties of the wine:

The more familiar descriptive vocabulary ranges, for example, from black currants (for cabernet sauvignon) to gooseberries (for sauvignon blanc) to lead-pencil, cedar and cigar-box (for clarets) – all of which seem (to me) fairly straightforward ways of linking tastes in one domain to familiar tastes in another. But then we encounter predicates like wet stones, tomato skin, brier, Provençal herb, fig paste, and blanched almonds – where the path to wine taste and smell from the reference descriptors is less apparent. Nevertheless, one can call this sort of vocabulary *referential* because the evident intention is reliably to describe the organoleptic characteristics of wine by *reference* to tastes and smells which are *really in* the wine and in the entities – fruits, minerals, herbs, animal substances etc. – to which comparisons are made. This is a very different sort of exercise from one which talks about the *powers* or *qualities* of wine or one which seeks to *evoke* the sensations of drinking wine by way of other modes of aesthetic experiences, (p. 51).

The qualifier "referential" is meant to signal two features of these properties. Although the detection of the properties is, in some sense, partly constitutive of the aesthetic appreciation of a wine, they are disguised as natural – hence, they are disguised as not evaluative (cf. also Sweeney). Whether or not a velvety wine is positively or negatively valuable seems to depend, in addition to the features that can be detected by savouring it, on who the judge is, and on their taste and aesthetic standards (cf. Bourdieu, Bach, Smith, and Scruton). So, one first negative feature of referential properties is that they *are not* evaluative properties: outside an appropriate frame of reference, to call a wine velvety is neither to pay a compliment to it, nor to denigrate it. On the other hand, to keep with the same example, whether or not a wine is velvety does not seem to depend on the judge's taste and standards, in the same way in which the positive or negative aesthetic worth of a velvety wine does. So, a second, positive feature of the properties in question is that the qualifier "referential" is designed to bring out is that they *are* – at least to a greater extent than the evocative properties of a wine – independent of the judge's taste and standards. Even outside any specific frame of reference, to call a wine velvety is – to a certain extent, at least – to describe it.

Evaluative and referential aesthetics properties – as the passage above by Russell suggests – can be further articulated based on an orthogonal distinction. Some aesthetic properties are entrenched in the gustatory experience of the wine while others are not so entrenched. We could put these properties on a continuum scale and call those that are closer to the former end of the spectrum *gustatory*, and the others *non-gustatory*. For instance, acidity is closely connected to the gustatory experience, but price is arguably extrinsic to it. Some gustatory properties – like acidity – are referential, while others – for instance, excellence – are evaluative. Fig. 1 sums up the distinctions we draw among aesthetic properties of wine. Whether there are evaluative non-gustatory properties is debatable: traditional or authentic may be good candidates (cf. Borghini 2012 & 2014a). How the cut-off between gustatory and non-gustatory properties gets traced indicates what one can expect Clara to learn about the wine upon tasting it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this work we focus on wine due to the longstanding tradition of aesthetic criticism that, within Western culture, paid homage to such beverage. Said tradition, arguably, greatly influenced the aesthetic criticism concerning other products. It is important – though it would take us too far from present concerns – to consider whether the fourfold distinction between aesthetic properties that we are suggesting here can be employed to study the aesthetic properties of products other than wine, such as

	Referential	Evaluative
Gustatory	E.g. white pepper; wet stones; tannin; mineral; blackberries; cherries; almonds.	E.g. elegant; excellent; austere.
Non-Gustatory	E.g. price; branding.	E.g. authentic; traditional.

Figure 1 Aesthetic properties of wine divided into classes

§4. *The Aesthetic Properties of Wine as Response-Dependent Properties.* It is a provisional result of the last section that the properties of wine with which Clara makes contact for the first time while savouring a sample of L’Apparita 1985 should be identified with its aesthetic properties. In particular, Clara contacts with gustatory properties of the wine, some of which are referential and some of which are evaluative. These properties, we argued, should not be identified with any of the wine’s physical properties, nor with the subjective feelings that accompany Clara’s first encounter with them. In this section we defend the suggestion that the referential and the evaluative aesthetic properties of the wine are response-dependent properties, namely dispositions, grounded in the wine’s natural properties, to elicit experiences with a distinctive phenomenal character. To begin with, we introduce this kind of property by drawing a parallel with a conception of the nature of moral properties known as metaphysical sentimentalism (§4.1). Then (§4.2) we proceed to illustrate how the same metaphysical account can be applied to the specific case of the (referential and perhaps evaluative) properties of the wine. Finally (§4.3) we vindicate the intuition about Clara’s epistemic improvement by contending that, once the referential and aesthetic properties of the wine are conceived of as response-dependent properties, they can easily be shown to meet *novelty*, *relevance*, and *privileged epistemic access*.

§4.1 *Response-Dependent Properties: the Case of Moral Sentimentalism.* Moral sentimentalists are united in believing that human sentimental responses such as approbation and disapprobation are what grounds ethics, (Kauppinen). Metaphysical sentimentalists, in particular, believe that our responses of approbation and disapprobation metaphysically *determine* the moral facts and properties. The details of this view – corresponding to the manner in which this determination is supposed to take place – can be

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tea, coffee, chocolate, whiskey, cheese, beer, olive oil, and, perhaps, foods of any sort.

spelled out in different ways. Here is a series of increasingly less problematic proposals, (Kauppinen).

According to the simplest and least plausible conception:

(a) For X to be morally good (bad) is for X to be approved (disapproved) of.

This position is unoccupied, because it has some obvious shortcomings. Undetected actions are neither approved nor disapproved of. So, on the view under consideration, undetected actions, such as undetected murders, should lack moral properties. Moreover, (a) runs into trouble as soon as there is an X of which some individual approves and some other individual disapproves. Which is the moral fact in such a situation? A way to preempt either shortcoming is to revise (a) in the following manner:

(b) For X to be morally good (bad) *for Y* is for X to have the disposition to elicit approbation (disapprobation) from Y.

By indexing moral goodness (badness) to some specific subject Y, the second problem is prevented from emerging. At the same time, the first problem is successfully dealt with by tying the moral goodness (badness) of X not to the responses it *actually* elicits in Y but to the responses it *would* elicit in Y, were Y to take a stance on X.

However, (b) renders moral disagreement impossible by definition. Moreover, it makes it (nearly) impossible for Y to be morally mistaken, as it is nearly impossible for Y, upon consulting her responses towards X, to be mistaken as to whether she approves or disapproves of it. Thirdly, in close connection with the latter point, (b) implies that, if we were to develop, say, a pro-slavery sensibility, slavery would become morally good. However, the right thing to say seems to be that in those kinds of situations we would approve of slavery because we have become morally worse, not that slavery would have become morally good, (Kauppinen). These problems can be successfully dealt with if we idealize the subject Y or the conditions C under which they operate; the idealization – and this is a very important point for present purposes – can be very modest, to the extent that one could use ‘typify’ instead of ‘idealize.’ In the case of moral sentimentalism, the idealization could be implemented in the following way:

(c) For X to be morally good (bad) is for X to have the disposition to elicit approbation (disapprobation) by idealized subjects Y in idealized conditions C.

First of all, it is important to elaborate on the terminological choice of referring to *idealized* subjects, which is significant for the subsequent analysis of aesthetic judgments about wine too. As it is, (c) does not commit us to a view where moral worth is evaluated against the judgments of an omniscient, infallible, and omnipotent being; rather, the idealized subject may be an actual agent with a formidably educated moral sensibility, or an agent that departs only minimally from an actual one, for instance by differing from the latter in only one character trait. By tying moral goodness (badness) to the responses of a subject that is the result of an idealization of actual subjects, the problem of impossible disagreement vanishes. Indeed, A and B engage in a genuine disagreement if they debate whether X is good (bad), for they debate on matters that are settled one way or another depending on whether the idealized subject Y would or would not approve of it. By the same token, (c) is compatible with the existence of moral mistakes, for one can disapprove (approve) of what the idealized subject would approve (disapprove) of. Finally, under (c) the objection based on the pro-slavery sensibility can easily be handled by simply contending that, no matter what actual human subjects eventually come to morally approve of, the idealized subject would definitely not approve of it.

To say that moral properties are response-dependent in the sense of (c) is to say that they are *anthropocentric*: they are properties whose nature cannot be adequately understood unless in terms of the specific way in which our human sensibility is affected when we interact with the objects that instantiate them. These properties would be unintelligible if conceptually divorced from certain subjective responses of ours. Something being morally good, along with (c), would be unintelligible if conceptually divorced from the notion of an idealized version of us approving of it. In the same fashion, it seems plausible to suppose that a wine's tasting of blackcurrant, its being crisp, or its being excellent are properties that would be unintelligible if conceptually divorced from the notion of a subject with a sensorial constitution like ours undergoing gustatory experiences with a distinct phenomenal character when sampling the wine.

So it seems plausible that the metaphysical nature of referential and evaluative properties of wines can be modeled on the example of (c). This is the task to which the next section is devoted.<sup>1</sup>

§4.2 *The Referential and Evaluative Properties of Wine as Dispositional Properties.* Let's start with the referential properties of wine, as exemplified by the property of being *crisp*. The general idea – introduced in the previous section with (c) – is that for something to possess a response-dependent property it is to possess the disposition to elicit a given response in subjects with certain traits that operate in certain specified conditions. Call  $R_c$  the characteristic gustatory experience of sensing a pleasing acidity in one's mouth, and let T and C stand, respectively, for the relevant human taster and the relevant sampling conditions. At a first approximation, we might then say that:

( $c_C$ ) W is crisp =<sub>df</sub> W has the disposition to arouse gustatory response  $R_c$  in human tasters T if sampled in conditions C.

Tasters T and conditions C, along with the *proviso* discussed in the previous section, must be conceived of as the result of an idealization of current tasters, and of current sampling conditions. However, for the purpose of generating a definition in keeping with the current practice of describing a wine in terms of its crisp taste, it suffices that T and C are idealized in small measure. Such a small idealization would guarantee that tasters T do not dramatically depart from our *current* average sensorial constitution, and circumstances C do not depart from the circumstances that are *currently* taken to be conducive to a fair and neutral assessment of a wine. When T and C are idealized in this way, ( $c_C$ ) makes room for the possibility of mistakes a-

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<sup>1</sup> There is an important tradition, dating back at least to Locke, of accounting for the metaphysical nature of colour properties in dispositional terms. Some readers acquainted with this tradition might think that it would have been better to introduce our metaphysical account of the aesthetic properties of wine by drawing a parallel with these properties, rather than with the moral properties described by the metaphysical sentimentalists. One possible motivation for this protest is that, as it will become apparent in the section to follow, the aesthetic properties of wine are more similar to colours than to moral properties in that they are identified by qualitative subjective responses more than they are identified by purely evaluative responses. We agree that, under this respect, the aesthetic properties of wine resemble colour properties more than they resemble moral properties. Nonetheless, we believe that the latter properties offer a parallel with the aesthetic properties of wine which is more fit to convey their normative dimension.

bout a wine's crispness, because actual tasters – as contrasted with their idealized counterparts – sometimes happen to deviate from the average sensorial constitution, and so sometimes happen to have unfitting responses when they sample a wine; in the same way, actual sampling conditions – as contrasted with their idealized counterparts – sometimes happen to differ from average conditions, and so to fail to be conducive to a neutral assessment. By the same token, when T and C are idealized in the way explained above, the property of being crisp is immunized against the possibility of losing the rigidity needed to count as an admissible property of things. Under some possible scenarios, L'Apparita 1985 may lose the disposition to arouse  $R_C$  in average tasters under current suitable sampling conditions, and maple syrup may acquire it instead. The relevant scenarios must however involve a dramatic departure from T's *current* average constitution or current suitable sampling conditions. Current average tasters in current suitable sampling conditions do experience  $R_C$ , for instance, when they sample L'Apparita 1985 and do not experience  $R_C$  when they sample maple syrup. So, the envisaged scenario is not to be described, on  $(c_C)$ , as one in which L'Apparita 1985 is not anymore, and maple syrup has become instead, crisp. They must be described as circumstances in which average tasters have lost the capability of determining whether something is crisp.<sup>1</sup>

When we move from the referential aesthetic properties of wine to its evaluative aesthetic properties, the framework exemplified by (c) and  $(c_C)$  can probably be retained without altering it in any fundamental respect. An important qualification must however be stated.

The referential aesthetic properties of a wine, such as its crispness, and the evaluative aesthetic properties of a wine, such as its excellence or beauty, seem to differ in one important respect. The latter properties also seem to be unintelligible if divorced from the notion of a taster who is pleased by their encounter. And there is probably a distinctive experience of gustatory enjoyment – say  $R_E$  – that a wine, to the extent to which it is excellent, can be taken to have the disposition to arouse in current average tasters, when savoured under suitable conditions. However, borrowing from Zangwill's terminology, a wine's crispness and a wine's excellence (or beauty) differ because the first property isn't, and the second property is, "sociable". When a property P is sociable, our capability to appreciate that P is instantiated is constrained by our realization that something X cannot be *barely* P,

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<sup>1</sup> In the last section of the paper we come back to this point, when assessing Clara's alleged epistemic improvement in terms of its testability.

and that if  $X$  is  $P$  it is in virtue of some other properties, not of the  $P$ -type, exemplified by  $X$ . Referential properties like having a crisp taste are not sociable in this specific sense. The account conveyed by  $(c_C)$  above arguably points to an intimate connection between the natural properties of a wine  $PP_N$  and the disposition – grounded by  $PP_N$  – to elicit  $R_C$  under suitable conditions in appropriately idealized tasters. However, it is not a constraint on someone's appreciating a wine's crispness that one realizes that this property is intimately tied to the distribution of the wine's  $PP_N$ . It does not seem part of the phenomenology accompanying the appreciation of a wine's crispness that this property be experienced as somehow resulting from the causal interaction between one's *sensorium* and  $PP_N$ .

When we judge a wine to be excellent, on the contrary, we normally take ourselves to have a wealth of reasons for doing so which is hardly exhausted by our experiencing, in response to it, something like  $R_E$ . Typically, we justify our ascriptions of excellence to a wine in terms of the way it tastes – so, arguably, by mentioning the referential aesthetic properties we detect in it – and by mentioning the way in which the wine's different tastes and components blend together contributing to the wine's complexity and balance. So, the overall gustatory experience that typically underwrites – and that we take to justify – our assessment of a wine as *excellent* or *beautiful* is not typically exhausted by  $R_E$  alone (in the way, say, in which the gustatory experience that underwrites – and that we take to justify – our assessment of a wine as crisp appears to coincide with  $R_C$  alone).

One way to take account of this difference might involve a small departure from the letter, though not from the general spirit, of the response-dependent account. One, in particular, might deny that a wine  $W$ 's excellence consists in its disposition to arouse  $R_E$  in the relevant idealized tasters  $T$  in the suitable conditions  $C$ , and maintain instead that  $W$  is excellent to the extent that the relevant  $T$ , when savoring  $W$  on  $C$ , would *judge* on the basis of  $T$ 's overall gustatory experience that  $W$  is excellent. An alternative way to take account of the difference advertised above is to grant that the wine's excellence is constituted by its disposition to elicit  $R_E$  in the relevant idealized tasters  $T$  under the suitable conditions  $C$ . The viability of this strategy, which we tentatively pursue in this paper, depends on the assumption that  $R_E$  should be regarded as an emergent feature of the overall experience that characterizes our contact with a wine.

The emergence of  $R_E$  from the overall experience accompanying a wine's tasting should be understood on the more familiar model of the way in which the pleasure and gratification that is key to our appreciation of

beauty in a thing is intuitively taken to depend on our appreciation of other features of the same thing like its shape, the balance among its part, its overall harmony, etc. The idea, in particular, could be that it is *in virtue of* our experiencing responses like  $R_C$ , say, or by experiencing other gustatory responses of a balanced blending between this and other tastes in the wine that we end up experiencing the specific pleasure that is key to our experiencing  $R_E$ . Bearing this qualification in mind about the way in which  $R_E$  should be taken to be an emergent feature of other responses like  $R_C$ , we can now proceed to define a wine's excellence as follows:

( $c_E$ )  $W$  is excellent =<sub>df</sub>  $W$  has the disposition to arouse gustatory response  $R_E$  in human tasters  $T$  if sampled in conditions  $C$ .

Some additional comment on ( $c_E$ ) is in order before we move any further. As seen above, in §3, the referential aesthetic properties of a wine  $W$  and its evaluative aesthetic properties do not simply differ for their "sociability." On the one hand, the referential aesthetic properties seem *independent* of taste and standards. Whether or not a taster  $T$  happens to praise the acidity or the tannic character of a wine  $W$  is an independent fact from whether  $T$  detects acidity or tannic character in  $W$ . Our account of the nature of these and like properties is designed to preserve this intuition. For, on our account,  $W$  is acidic and tannic just on the condition of having the disposition to arouse certain gustatory experiences in tasters  $T$ , *whatever their tastes and standards*, provided that they have an average sensorial constitution and they sample  $W$  under conditions that are currently regarded as conducive to a fair assessment of it.

When we move to consider the evaluative properties of wine, there seems to be no corresponding intuition about their independence of the tastes and standards of a taster that our account should be able to preserve. Whether or not a wine  $W$  possesses, say, the evaluative aesthetic property of being an excellent wine seems to depend, above and beyond the referential aesthetic properties that can be detected in it, also on whether, by the standards accepted by the taster, a wine with those properties counts as an excellent wine.

This is not to suggest a form of relativism about the excellence or the beauty of wine. To get at a relativist picture, one must additionally argue that there is no principled way to assess one's possible standards of taste as being more or less correct, or accurate. On this point we want to stay neu-

tral. The observation above, about the second asymmetry between the referential and the evaluative aesthetic properties of wine, signals that the tasters T mentioned by  $(c_E)$  must be taken as idealized along an *additional axis*: above and beyond having an average sensorial constitution, and above and beyond sampling a wine in conditions that are currently regarded as conducive to a fair assessment, tasters T must be conceived of as the ideal end-product of a specific *education* (whatever its specific content), as having learned and interiorized specific norms of appraisal (whatever they are), and as having come to endorse specific standards of excellence (again, whatever they are).

There are competing "schools" or "traditions" about the specific education, the norms of appraisal, and the standards of taste that should have been imparted to the idealized tasters mentioned by  $(c_E)$  if their responses are to track wine's excellence or beauty. Each school will arguably educate the taste of its trainees in ways that do not necessarily converge with the way in which other schools will. So, it is to be expected that T1 and T2, as a result of their different background, will have acquired the disposition to experience the relevant emergent response  $R_E$  in different sets of conditions, namely when detecting different sets of referential aesthetic properties.

Depending on one's meta-theoretical inclinations, this can be taken to show that there is no such thing as *the* excellence of wine, but that there are as many excellences as there are schools and traditions of wine tasting. Perhaps, a radical conclusion in the neighborhood might also be that there are *none*. Alternatively, one who endorses  $(c_E)$  might believe that it determines a unique extension for the evaluative aesthetic properties of wine because there is just one correct school, and a wine should count as excellent just to the extent to which it would elicit the relevant responses in idealized tasters who have acquired the right dispositions.

As said, these are additional concerns that are bound to emerge only when our account of the evaluative aesthetic properties of wine has been accepted. For the time being, let us then concentrate on the consequences of our account for the question that has occupied us throughout this paper. Does Clara increase her epistemic standing towards L'Apparita 1985, after all?

§4.3 *Vindicating the Intuition About Clara*. We can now show that Clara, upon tasting the wine, gets acquainted with properties of *the wine* of which she wasn't – *and could not have been* – knowledgeable otherwise than by savoring it.

It is plausible to suppose, to begin with, that if P is the response-dependent property of having the disposition to elicit the subjective response R in subject S under conditions C, S cannot be credited with knowledge of what it takes for something to be P unless S has herself experienced R.<sup>1</sup> As an example, take the property of being red and assume, for the argument's sake, that X's redness coincides with X's disposition to appear redly to subjects S with average constitution under suitable environmental conditions C. If the analysis above is correct, one cannot grasp what it takes for something to be red if one does not know what it takes to be appeared redly under the advertised conditions C.<sup>2</sup> *Novelty*, hence, is satisfied.

Secondly, if experiencing the relevant R is the only way for getting acquainted with the property P of being disposed to elicit it, then P cannot be known otherwise than by experiencing R. In our case: if an aesthetic property P of L'Apparita 1985 is the disposition to arouse R<sub>X</sub> in T under C, there seems to be no other way for T to get acquainted with P other than by experiencing R<sub>X</sub>. Thus, *epistemic privileged access* seems satisfied too.

Finally, if P is the disposition of X to arouse R in T under C, P is straightforwardly a (dispositional) property of X and of nothing else. In our case: if an aesthetic property P of L'Apparita 1985 is the disposition to arouse R<sub>X</sub> in T under C, it is straightforward that P is a property of L'Apparita 1985, and of nothing else. *Relevance* is then also satisfied.

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<sup>1</sup> The memory of the experience, of course, is crucial too. This will emerge more clearly in the last section of the paper, where we discuss the importance of expertise to our proposal.

<sup>2</sup> Because our argument suggests that some dispositional properties of the wine coincide with some of its aesthetic properties, one may also take the argument to indicate that – in the oenological realm – we side with the philosophers who deny the possibility of transmission of aesthetic knowledge and justification by testimony (for some recent contributions to the debate see Whiting, Robson, and Meskin). We must point out two important limitations of such a reading. We take acquaintance with a wine's dispositional properties to be a necessary condition for the possession of the concept of those properties. So, we are not opposed to the possibility that aesthetic knowledge and justification can be transmitted through testimony to someone who has already acquired by acquaintance the relevant concepts. Secondly, we do not make the commitment to analyze any aesthetic property, inside and outside the oenological realm, in dispositional terms; so, our account is obviously silent as to the possibility of transmission of knowledge and justification by testimony of non-dispositional aesthetic properties.

By savouring the glass of L'Apparita 1985, Clara thus improves her epistemic situation with respect to the wine by becoming acquainted, for the first time, with some of its aesthetic properties. These properties are new to Clara because they do not coincide with the wine's natural properties, and could not have been detected otherwise than by tasting it.

The latter conclusion naturally triggers the additional question of which relation, if any, the aesthetic properties of wine do bear to the wine's natural properties, given that they do not seem to ally in any simple way with one another. By way of sketching possible answers to this question, we conclude this section by envisaging three types of relationships between natural and aesthetic properties. Jointly they suggest that, while it is possible that the aesthetic properties supervene on the natural ones, the supervenience cannot in general be captured by a law.<sup>1</sup> (i) In the most favorable scenario, an aesthetic property is *multiply realized* in several natural properties. The taste of vanilla, for instance, may be triggered by substances with different chemical structures. Analogously, gustatory notes – such as a peach note – in a wine could be multiply realized in different chemical structures. (ii) A second type of relationship involves *clusters* of properties. Consider the relationship between the natural property *tannic*, which can be measured by means of a laboratory analysis, and the referential aesthetic property *tannic\**, which is detected when a wine feels tannic. Most traditions of wine judgment agree that *tannic\** can vary independently of *tannic*. Two wines may be equally tannic while one is regarded as tannic\*, and the other as non-tannic\*; moreover, two wines can be equally tannic\* while having different sorts and concentrations of tannins. In this case, it seems that "tannic" and "tannic\*" designate two clusters of properties. (iii) The third type of relationship is *shapeless*. For instance, the influential traditions of wine criticism so far developed have not seemed able to discover a reduction of excellence to any given property or cluster of properties. What seems to be the case is, rather, that there is an indefinite class of referential aesthetic properties, and an indefinite class of natural properties, both of which may trigger the detection of excellence.

§5. *Wine Expertise and Wine's Response-Dependent Properties*. A vexed and central epistemological accusation affecting aesthetic judgments

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<sup>1</sup> This is the reason why geographic indications for wines contain a mix of natural and aesthetic properties: despite the apparent claim that the *place* (declined as soil, climate, *terroir*, etc.) makes a difference, no law-like or straightforward tie between place and taste has been found to date. (cf. Borghini 2014b).

about wine is that wine judgments are made out of thin air and that wine experts are charismatic communicators, whose epistemic authority rests on a form of flattery rather than on justifiable opinions.<sup>1</sup> In concluding this paper, we want to highlight the implications of the account of the aesthetic properties of wine we have defended in this paper for such a debate.

A common allegation is that expertise tends to be auto-referential at its core. As Hartelius puts it, "to be an expert .... is to rhetorically gain sanctioned rights to a specific topic or mode of knowledge", (p. 1f). In the specific case of wine, the charge of auto-referentiality may and has been leveled on three distinct and correlated grounds. (i) The first ground is *arbitrariness*. Aesthetic judgments about wine are accused of being arbitrary, not just because they are anthropocentric (a feature that our account reckons with), but also because they are not in any clear way sensitive to the causal structure of the natural world. (ii) The second ground is a distinctive lack of *testability*. If aesthetic judgments are arbitrary, then, when Clara pronounces that L'Apparita 1985 is excellent, who could really prove or disprove such a claim? (iii) The third reason is that the acquisition of expertise is a *goal-oriented* process. As Majdik puts it, "the defining characteristic of "expert" and "expertise" is not bound (simply) to the possession of knowledge, or processes of knowledge acquisition or production, or connections to knowledge networks, but instead flows from problems that require resolutions", (p. 276). Accordingly, the role of wine experts may seem to be more to guide consumers and to provide feedback and recommendations to producers, than to track any objective features in the wine, (cf. also Collins & Weinel).

The concerns we just rehearsed are important and they have long traditions. Some schools of wine criticism found an easy way around them: by distancing themselves from epistemic models relying upon justification, wine critics within those schools can argue that the worries rest on a misunderstanding. For instance, a literary approach to wine criticism emphasizes the creative and egocentric nature of aesthetic judgments about wine.<sup>2</sup> Thus, from this perspective there is nothing to worry about if wine critics are auto-referential. That's how it should be.

Our account of the aesthetic properties of wine seems to make available the materials for a defense of wine expertise that is more compatible with the identification of a robust epistemic dimension to it. To begin with,

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<sup>1</sup> A good starting point for a discussion of the practice of wine criticism is (Burnham & Skilleas, Chapter 5).

<sup>2</sup> Shapin (pp. 69-73) provides some notable examples of poetic wine criticism.

we have argued that the properties with which wine expertise is concerned – the wine’s referential and evaluative aesthetic properties – though anthropocentric, are nonetheless objective in at least a twofold sense. Whether or not a wine possesses them is independent of their being actually tasted by anyone; and, secondly, if a wine possesses these properties it would continue to possess them even if anyone, a distorted sensitivity having become dominant in the meanwhile, had lost the capability to recognize that it does. We have thus provided for the *metaphysical* setting required to vindicate the claim that (at least some of) the experts’ pronouncements do track a reality, not entirely of their own creation, awaiting to be described.

More than this, the metaphysical account of a wine’s referential and evaluative aesthetic properties we defended suggests a natural starting point for an *epistemology* of wine expertise. Suppose the genuine aspect P of a wine W that an expert taster T aims to describe coincides, as suggested in this paper, with the disposition to arouse certain gustatory responses R in idealized tasters in idealized conditions. In this case a suggestion about what can justify T’s possible belief that W has P is the following:

(EXP) When T possesses the concept of property P, and T has not reason to suppose that the conditions under which T tasted W are abnormal in any significant way, T has justification for believing that W is P if T experiences R, and correctly identifies it.

Arguably, when all these conditions are satisfied, T’s possible opinion that W is P is successfully rescued from the allegation, reviewed few lines above, of just being thin air arranged opinion-wise.

The considerations just offered seem to point in the right direction. Of course our account could be finessed by providing a richer account of the array of abilities, extending beyond the mere ability to *detect* a property, which T needs to exercise in order to acquire a reason to believe that W is P. For instance, as already mentioned by (EXP), an expert must be able to *recognize* and *re-identify* her gustatory responses; moreover, especially when P is an evaluative aesthetic property, T must possess the ability to reliably *compare* one with another several wines in terms of their aesthetic properties, and this involves having the ability to *remember* past gustatory responses, and to *reactivate* relevant memories for evaluative purposes. This

richer account would be of considerable interest.<sup>1</sup> However, it would lead us too far away for the limited space we have at our disposal. So, for the time being, we remain content with expounding some considerations that seem to speak for the feasibility of this more ambitious project.

Expertise has some uncontroversial dimensions to it that, instead of detracting to its credibility, naturally lend support to the claim that wine experts do acquire, display, and routinely exercise the kind of abilities required for their pronouncements to count as epistemically justified. Expertise has four dimensions: exposure, development, natural talent, and esotericity (cf. Collins). It is on the first two that the epistemic objectivity of wine expertise rests. An aspiring wine expert must pass through (be *exposed* to) some relevant experiences (e.g. guided tastings, blind tastings, visits to producers, seminars, readings); those experiences comprise an apprenticeship period, a *developmental process*, typically divided into separate stages (e.g. the different tasks that must be mastered in order to become an *itamae*).<sup>2</sup> Exposure and development contribute to the formation and cultivation of a large number of abilities, involving memories that are both intellectual and endocorporeal. A wine expert must know how to properly: open a bottle; serve the wine; swirl the wine in a glass; sniff a wine; move the liquid in the mouth; compare a present tasting experience with selected past experiences. Regarding abilities that are more directly relevant for our argument, a wine expert must also be able to track her gustatory responses to wine. For instance, she must be able to re-identify wine colours, odorants, aromas, flavours, and characteristics. Thus, an expert will cultivate her ability to recognize those properties of wines that make them – say – acidic, tannic, or fruity as well as those properties that make them – say – appropriately expressing a *terroir*, innovative, or excellent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A distinct question in the neighborhood is how to tell whether a taster does possess the abilities that make a taster a wine expert. Although the richer account would not touch on this distinct question we clearly would gain insight into it by understanding which abilities must be possessed by a wine expert.

<sup>2</sup> McCoy, who addresses the rise of Bob Parker, one of the most influential contemporary figures in wine criticism, offers a hands-on example of the importance of exposure and development.

<sup>3</sup> Parr, Heatherbell & White argue that wine experts are more able than non-experts to detect similarities of wine-relevant odorants because experts pair the same odorants more consistently than nonexperts. However, in their experiment, experts and non-experts tend to be more alike with respect to their abilities in *naming* the odorants. The evidence, that is, is that experts have some form of endocorporeal memory

We can hence point to one strategy for dismissing the worry that wine expertise is – from the point of view of epistemic justification – ill-founded. Although the abilities developed by experts do not link natural and aesthetic properties by means of law-like regularities, there is a form of wine expertise that is not merely auto-referential, and that values the cultivation of abilities which are related with the response-dependent properties of wines in our account. When such wine expertise is cultivated in a dispassionate manner, there is no reason to deny that it may become an activity engaging the agents in a game that has a ground of objectivity.

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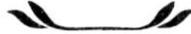
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## Philosophy at Work: Taste and Aesthetic Learning-processes

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The overall aim of this symposium is to engage philosophers in a conceptual analysis of taste. As philosophers tend to view taste in terms of discrimination in the arts, it might seem a bit outside the scope of this symposium to put forward a proposal that aims at exploring taste in terms of sensory experience – that is taste as gustatory and corporal sensation. And that, furthermore, refers to a parallelism between these two approaches to taste. This alleged parallelism was considered by David Hume in his essay *On the Standards of Taste* where he put forward the resemblance between what he called the mental and the bodily taste, (Hume, p. 217). And, more recently, it has been submitted to philosophical analysis by Carolyn Korsmeyer who has criticized the dismissal of gustatory taste as unworthy of philosophical examination, (Korsmeyer, p. 1).

Concerning the last-mentioned point, a quick glance at the dominant themes in the course of the history of philosophy reveals that taste – in particular gustatory taste – has received limited attention. It has been mentioned in Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* as a capacity of the tongue to differentiate between the basic tastes (Plato: 66a5-66d15), a capacity that he linked to the sphere of moral questions through the positioning of the bitter taste of bile provoked by overeating in opposition to the affection for wisdom, (Plato: 70e5-73c15). To Aristotle, in *De sensu*, taste was viewed as marginal in the sense that it was related to the heart and, hence, contrary to the senses related to the brain (Aristotle: 439a1-2), meaning that it was of little interest with regard to further philosophical investigation. Taste resurfaces with Cusanus, a medieval thinker who indicated a parallel between gustatory taste and intellectual conception in his *Idiota de sapientia* through the double meaning of *'sapere'* connoting both taste and wisdom, (Cusanus, pp. 57-59). This parallel was repeated by Voltaire who pointed out that the gustatory and intellectual sense of taste are commonly being used analogically and that in both uses actual experience as well as meticulous discernment is required to pass a judgement, (Voltaire, p. 28f). With Immanuel Kant, the

analogy was abolished in the sense that he linked gustatory experience to subjective pleasures guided by interest or desire, thereby positioning corporal experience in opposition to the intellectual pleasures in the artistic judgement believed to be valid for everyone, (Kant, B19-20/A19-20). A view that has had profound impact on subsequent philosophical enquiry. Nevertheless, reconsiderations on the parallelism are not without philosophical interest.

Taking Voltaire's view as a point of departure, he claims that actual experience is a prerequisite. And as for the meticulousness of discernment, he states that it requires formation. This is the case for both types of taste, even if the intellectual taste requires more formation than the gustatory, (Voltaire, p. 30). In this, Voltaire's view differs from David Hume's position in his *On the Standards of Taste* where he seeks to reconcile a view on taste as being individual and hence relative with a view on taste as referring to a standard that is generally agreed upon. Hume's starting point is a discrepancy between the trivial observations of disagreement in judgements of beauty and deformity and the inclination towards finding a standard from which judgements of taste can be derived, (Hume, pp. 203-208). In order to clarify what is characteristic in terms of judgements of taste, he proposes the notion of delicacy and seeks to define it with reference to Cervantes' *Don Quijote*. More precisely, to a passage in which two kinsmen are asked to assess the qualities of a wine, (*ibid.* pp. 216-219). It is, for Hume, the capacity for perceiving even the most elusive details that determines the delicacy of taste both in its literal and metaphorical sense. But even if the potential for acquiring delicacy in taste seems to be universal, (*ibid.* p. 228, 232), Hume's general view is that only few men possess such delicacy. Meaning that, as in Voltaire, refinement of taste is a prerequisite. But, to Hume, the cultivation is needed in equal measures for literal taste when tasting wine and food and for metaphorical taste when taste is employed in the sense of passing judgements on art. And, he outlines a number of criteria to be met if such cultivation is to be achieved: practice, familiarisation, freedom from prejudice, and good sense, (*ibid.* pp. 220-226). From an overall point of view this means that Hume appeals to a disinterested critic who is capable of assessing beautiful qualities with particular minuteness and can pass reasoned judgements.

When piecing together the parallelism as outlined by Voltaire and by Hume, three criteria stand out as particularly important. Firstly, actual experience is required. One has actually to perceive the object in order to discern its qualities. Secondly, cultivation is needed. In order to weigh the qualities of an object with clearness of conception, a certain degree of education is indispensable. In this, the capacity for assessing qualities in a disinterested

manner seems to be implied. Lastly, the acquisition of a refined vocabulary is imperative. In order to formulate reasoned assessments of both concrete and metaphorical taste a vocabulary surpassing the mere distinction between like and dislike is required.

My aim here is to examine whether a more profound understanding of gustatory taste might provide insights into how the cultivation of taste might unfold. The examination falls in three parts. The first part places the gustatory taste within the framework of a phenomenological investigation. The second part uses the insights gained from this investigation to position taste in an educational context, a part constituting a work that is still in progress. The third and final part summarises the main points of the former parts in a few concluding remarks. It is not my intention to move towards a unified conception of what constitutes good or bad taste. Rather, the intention is to outline how taste might contribute to the development of discriminatory abilities through educational activities. Or, stated otherwise, the aim is to examine perspectives related to the proposed theme of how taste is understood as a capacity and how it may be improved.

*A phenomenological approach to taste.* Approaching taste within the framework of phenomenology is to study the fundamental conditions for taste-experience. This does not imply the establishment of causal relationships between sensory impressions and the activity of the brain as is characteristic of studies of taste within the framework of sensory sciences. It is about describing how sensory experience unfolds from the point of view of the person experiencing. In order to approach such a view of taste-experience, the insights from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* form a relevant point of departure. Even if he left taste in the margins in his explorations of sensory experience, his work serves as a valuable starting point for the formulation of an outline of how the synthesis of sensory impressions takes place and for asking whether the complexity of taste might indicate a privileged but hitherto unexplored access to cognition.

Throughout this work, Merleau-Ponty articulated a critique of the fragmented understanding of sensory experience characteristic of the empirical sciences. Instead he emphasised the complexity of our sensory encounter with the world – an encounter that takes place in a synthesis of sensory impressions, each sense contributing with distinct perspectives. We do not ordinarily contemplate the sensory impressions separately, though. In Merleau-Ponty's phrasing, such action requires a particular attitude that is different from the way in which we customarily perceive our environment (Merleau-Ponty, p. 260f). However, in order to present the synthesis in a

comprehensible manner, the following outline will describe the contributions of each sense to the full experience of taste – separately and in combination with other senses. In this context, taste stands out as a particularly complex experience. It is not the intention to claim that the sensory impressions are perceived in any specific order, nor that they have the same impact in all instances. It is merely outlining ways in which each sense influences the experience of taste.

Visual impressions offer a blend of shapes and colours. Our field of vision is limited, meaning that food-items and dishes appear in one specific profile at a time. We can, however, move the gaze or the body, thus making new profiles appear while other profiles fade from our vision. Because we are temporal beings who continuously interact with our environment, our present experience is not isolated but connected to past experience, (Merleau-Ponty, p. 276f). Hence, what appears as shapes and colours is charged with meaning, permitting us to identify food-items as well as their condition – are the vegetables for instance fresh or decayed? Furthermore, through the embedded meaning in visual experience, shapes and colours indicate the progression of cooking-processes – has the Maillard-reaction changed the colour of the meat or is the soufflé sufficiently airy? Tactility intervenes as a capacity for making hitherto absent profiles emerge, like when a food-item is rotated in our hands in order to make a succession of profiles available to the eyes. Handling the food-items in our hands – or with the help of kitchen utensils – not only makes new profiles appear to the eyes, it also allows us to turn our attention towards the feel of the food-item at hand. When past experience blends with the present, tactile impressions present the tenderness of meat or the crispness of vegetables. Tactility, however, is not limited to the use of the hands. It occurs in the mouth as well in the form of impressions of texture, a type of sensation that changes in the process of mastication as the food is gradually transformed before eventually being swallowed. Olfactory experience offers intangible and often transient impressions of food-items and dishes. We can use our hands to bring the food closer to the nostrils or we can move closer to the source, thereby combining our capacity for smelling with tactility and movement in order to enhance the present experience. Drawing on past experience, olfactory impressions bring about possibilities for distinguishing between edible and decayed or poisonous foods. And, furthermore, it enables us to identify food-items or ingredients such as spices and herbs as well as offering impressions of the progression of cooking-processes. Audible impressions offer indications of texture when the hands or utensils are used for breaking or squeezing food-

items. Indications that are even stronger with the first bite where sound and tactility merge as every possible texture is characterised by a specific sound. The experience of crunchy food-items is accompanied by the tactile impression of resistance that is suddenly broken, resulting in a sharp sound. Liquid dishes are experienced as watery substance and accompanied by slurping sounds, while the sound of tender ingredients is heard as a soft squeaking. It is not until the food-items or dishes are put into the mouth-cavity that taste is experienced in the way in which it is most often referred to, namely as the taste of something that we are about to swallow. In this context, taste is experienced as one or more of the five basic tastes: sweet, sour, bitter, salty or umami. In the process of chewing, the food-items or dishes not only change texture – the experience of taste-profiles also changes due to the mechanical actions through which the food is gradually dissolved. The initial impression might be dominated by one basic taste, while another stands out during the following phase – and the remaining impression that lingers after the food-item is swallowed might be of a third basic taste, (Hedegaard, 2018b).

In Merleau-Ponty, the synthesis of the sensory impressions that enables the understanding of the intended object does not take place in separated instants, but in a continuous process in which the multiple profiles are merged into an understandable – and in this case palatable – whole, (Merleau-Ponty, pp. 270-272). Only then can we say that a food-item or dish is *this* particular food-item or *this* particular dish. And, only then can we pass judgements of the full experience of taste.

The embeddedness of experience in our temporal existence adds a layer to the complexity of taste. In this context, an often used reference is found in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, (Proust, pp. 44-47). Despite being a work of fiction, the insights open towards philosophical consideration. The passage accounts for a moment when the narrator is served a cup of tea and a small cake, a *madeleine*, and when sipping tea from the spoon where a small piece of the cake is left, he is overwhelmed by emotion. He cannot grasp immediately why such a joyous feeling accompanies the taste, but searching his past experience he gradually realises that the taste brings him back to the Combray of his childhood. To Sunday mornings where his aunt Léonie served him bits of *madeleine* soaked in her tea. This process of recollection is described as something that does not come about instantaneously, but is a work of reflection that requires his full attention. And, in this process, he realises that the recollection that is mediated through taste is neither in him, nor in the cake; it is somewhere in between – in the connection that is shaped by the encounter and left as a corporal im-

print. And, he realises that the recollection is sparked by taste and not by sight – he recalls having seen the small cakes in the windows of bakeries, but not having connected them to past events. The passage is interesting from two perspectives: the priority given to taste in the context of recollection and the connection to place that is established. With regard to the priority given to taste in the sense of constituting a privileged access to (re)cognition, it is interesting because it mostly is sight that takes up this position. However, in the passage in Proust, the position of taste is reinforced at the expense of sight. This is what Proust illustrates through his narrator's encounter with the *madeleine*: the sight of the small cake awakes no recognition in the narrator. However, in the moment he tastes the cake, he is overwhelmed by emotion and up of his teacup emerges a past that is no longer retrievable except in the form of mental images. In terms of the establishment of a link to place through the recollection of a specific taste, the passage in Proust describes how the taste initiated the recollection of Combray. Initially, it instigated the remembrance of the room in which he visited his aunt on Sunday mornings, but gradually images of the house and its immediate surroundings as well as the streets and the buildings of Combray reappear. This remembrance of physical objects is described as images that are reconstructed in a reflective process. It is a kind of recollection in which the objects of remembrance are gone and the images that appear are vague. Taste, on the other hand, initiates a different kind of recollection that is stronger and more persistent, yet also more frail, (my 2018a, p. 73; my 2018b).

What the outline based on Merleau-Ponty and the passage referring to Proust tell us about taste and (re)cognition is that taste-experience is indefinitely complex and that it does not merely serve as a vehicle for individual recollection. Through the influence of past experience on present experience, taste constitutes a gateway between individual and shared experience in the sense that the individual experience and recollection refers to tastes that are shared with others and are in some ways linked to places. Meaning that taste is not merely sensory experience at the level of the individual, but refers to a social world in which taste makes up what Lévi-Strauss called *gustèmes*, units of taste that establish bonds between individuals in a society, (Csergo). Furthermore, taste seems to leave a strong corporal imprint. Referring to the previous description of taste-experience, tasting consists in a synthesis of multiple sensory impressions. So, when it is claimed that taste makes up a particularly strong impression in terms of recollection, the contribution of all senses cannot be discarded. At the level of corporal expe-

rience, these impressions seem similar in the sense that they constitute meeting-points through which the encounter with the food is perceived and interpreted. In this sense, tasting does not seem different from other types of sensory experience in which the synthesis of sensory impressions enables the understanding of an intended object. Taste, however, appears as unique because it is in the physical encounter between the world and the body that the full experience of taste unfolds. Only through taste is sensory experience intimately related to actual incorporation. And, precisely incorporation is interesting because in the moment of incorporation the tasted food ceases to be an object. Articulated in an echo of Merleau-Ponty, an object carries with it the possibility of disappearing outside the field of perception, (Merleau-Ponty, p. 106). The body, on the other hand, is always present – it can be viewed as an object, but being the point of departure for all experience, it is permanently present in a way that is distinctly different from the presence of an object. But in the incorporation, the tasted object enters the body and transforms into being a part of it.

Further investigations into incorporation and recollection are needed in order to fully understand the meaning and potential. However, the strength of the corporal imprint raises the question of whether taste constitutes a privileged – and hitherto unexplored – access to (re)cognition. And, thereby, speaks in favour of developing approaches to taste within the framework of education.

*Taste and aesthetic learning-processes.* In educational theory, aesthetic experience in the sense of observing and assessing objects on grounds of their beauty, appeal or perfection has been proposed as a means to initiate curiosity and motivation for learning, (Brodersen 2015, p. 25). This might take place through the employment of sight and tactility when works of art or utensils make up tools for learning about historical periods, or by using hearing when narratives are supposed to stimulate the attention through the use of surprise or suspense. Such employment of experience in education is in the spirit of John Dewey to whom experience in education was more than the use of enjoyable distractions providing transient moments of pleasure. Even if he was not completely clear on which kind of experience he referred to in particular, Dewey emphasised that experience had to be selected in a way that provides opportunities for expanding the horizon of the pupils and initiates incentives for growth, (Dewey, p. 9). If the parallelism between literal and metaphorical taste is to be taken seriously, then the existing knowledge and experience from aesthetic learning-processes drawing on sight and hearing as well as tactility in artistic production ought to be trans-

ferable to the context of gustatory taste. However, transferring such knowledge to a practical level requires contemplations on the field of aesthetics, the didactic framework as well as the content of educational activities.

According to Elliot Eisner, the field of aesthetics transcends the province of the arts – it is present in all human formative activity, whether artistic, scientific or leisurely, (Eisner, 2005, p. 99). Consequently, aesthetics is neither a property, nor a state of a given product that we can perceive and assess. Aesthetics unfolds between an object, an event or an experience and the one observing or perceiving. It is a fundamental way in which we meet and interpret the world. It is an important point in Eisner’s work that our capacity for experiencing and interpreting aesthetic impressions can – and must – be cultivated. Competences are a prerequisite without which we are unable to perceive the qualities of aesthetics forms, (*ibid.* p. 97). Eisner speaks into the context of education, but there are no reasons to assume that he rejects the idea that aesthetic impressions can spontaneously influence our encounter with the world. What he emphasises is that our capacity for ‘reading’ aesthetic forms can be improved.

In order to do so in an educational context, a didactic framework is required. Eisner does not address this issue from a practical point of view, except from critical remarks concerning teaching by telling to large audiences, (*ibid.* p. 124). Taking this criticism into account, a possible way of approaching taste is by the employment of a didactic model based on the interplay between aesthetic, conceptual, communicative and artisanal forms of activity that each includes receptive as well as constructive perspectives, (Brodersen, 2016). Or, to state it otherwise, to employ a didactic framework that emphasises the active participation of the pupils in selected ways instead of reducing them into passive listeners. The overall aim of such activities is to consider education as more than the acquisition of competences in the form of quantifiable indicators. Such an approach changes the focus from ‘*literacy*’ in terms of education as the preparation for future work-life to a focus on ‘*Bildung*’ in the sense of providing a framework within which the pupils can develop capabilities that enable them to make reasoned decisions and act accordingly. This does not mean that evaluation up against learning-goals is out of the question. Single activities might have quantifiable outcomes that allow evaluation according to precise and limited learning-goals. The overall aim, however, transcends the instantaneous measurement.

Employing gustatory taste in such an educational approach provides opportunities for creating activities through which the pupils can learn both

*about* taste and *through* taste. That is, learning about taste in terms of sensory experience and learning about other subjects using taste as a gateway. Using the above-mentioned didactic model as the overall framework, the pupils can engage in aesthetic forms of activity. The receptive perspective of such activities can be the actual taste of selected food-items, steering the pupils towards the discernment of basic tastes or the contribution of all senses when tasting the food-items. The constructive perspective can be to ask the pupils to express their experience in the form of discussions or by asking them to compose an essay on a particular taste-experience and what it reminds them of. Such activities are not enjoyable distractions, in the phrasing of John Dewey. They can be selected in a way that allows them to meet learning-goals in science and food education *about* taste and in language-classes *through* taste. And, they may furthermore contribute to the development of capabilities enabling the pupils to make reasoned decisions in the sense that they acquire tools for discerning. Regarding the analytical forms of activity in the didactic framework, the receptive perspectives can involve listening to explanations on physical/chemical processes in selected preparations of food-items, followed by constructive perspectives where the pupils engage in grating, baking and otherwise handling food-items while demonstrating their understanding of the processes through the use of a precise, technical language. In this way, the pupils are directed towards the acquisition of skill *about* taste permitting them to consider the influence of selected preparations on taste and *through* taste owing to the insights into the use of a scientific language. Apart from meeting learning-goals in science regarding the acquisition of scientific terms, the activities contribute to the development of abilities for recognising types of preparations and their influence on taste. Abilities that are indispensable if the pupils are to develop skilfulness enabling them to make reasoned choices. The artisanal forms of activity can be planned and carried out in a way that allows the transfer of insights from the aesthetic and analytical forms of activity to cooking-processes. In this way, the receptive perspective has already been covered and the constructive perspective, the actual cooking, can be preceded by asking the pupils to form hypotheses on how they intend to obtain a specific texture when preparing a dish. In this way, the pupils are guided towards learning *about* taste as they put their prior knowledge into play. And they can learn *through* taste in the sense that they must negotiate taste-preferences with their classmates in order to determine the types of preparation. Communicative forms of activity can take place when introducing the pupils to taste as a cultural and social phenomenon. In this context, puzzlement might make up

an encouraging starting point for the constructive perspective of the educational activities when asking the pupils to produce photos or film-sequences demonstrating the tastes of others. The receptive perspective can then be planned in a way that encourages the pupils to listen to presentations of photos and films from classmates. In this way, the pupils can learn *about* taste as they will be guided towards grasping their own preconceptions of taste and the tastes of other people. And they can learn *through* taste in the sense that they obtain skills for producing digitally based artefacts.

An argument in favour of employing this particular didactic model in educational activities focused on taste is the idea that aesthetic and analytical forms of activity provide an opening of the thematic content for the pupils, while the artisanal and the communicative forms of activity contribute to the embedding of the thematic content. In this sense, the model provides a foundation for working with aesthetic learning-processes in schools and other educational institutions. In the educational context, however, gustatory taste occupies a minuscule place when speaking of learning-goals *about* taste. As indicated above, this does not have to remain the case as the employment of taste both as a subject and as a means give way to new possibilities.

*Concluding remarks.* Within the context of my paper, the outline of a phenomenological approach to gustatory taste and the educational approach to learning about and through gustatory taste match the criteria derived from the parallelism between gustatory and intellectual taste in Voltaire and Hume. The requirement of actual experience is met. By positioning gustatory taste in the context of phenomenology, the approach to sensory experience in terms of the trivial appreciation of various sensory impressions is overcome and replaced by a theoretical framework emphasising the complexity of taste. In this way, the actual experience forms a gateway towards the acquisition of skill for discernment. The criterion regarding clearness of conception is met. The phenomenological framework positions contemplations of gustatory taste within a particular attitude which is different from the way in which we ordinarily perceive our environment. This shift in attention is paramount to the acquisition of skill for cultivating our experience and interpretation of aesthetic forms. It seems likely that the roots of the disinterestedness of the critic may also reside herein in the sense that the improvement of our perception of aesthetic forms may improve our ability to detach our assessments from individual taste-experience and preference. The requirement of the refinement of language is met in the educational approach where the simple statements of like and dislike are replaced by com-

municative skills and, in particular, the ability to differentiate between ‘my’ taste-experience and a precise language for selected perspectives of taste.

My overall aim today was to examine whether a more profound understanding of gustatory taste might provide insights into how the cultivation of taste might unfold. It has been with the critique of the dismissal of gustatory taste from philosophical enquiry as the point of departure that I have attempted to reposition gustatory taste as worthy of philosophical interest by demonstrating that the gustatory taste fulfils the same criteria as taste in the arts. In this respect, I believe to have indicated that a renewed interest in the parallelism between literal and metaphorical taste might bring about new insight into how the cultivation of taste might unfold.

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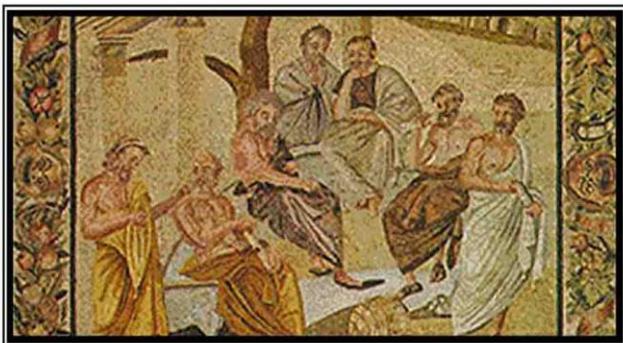
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