



Wine Economics Research Centre Working Paper No. 0212

Wine and Astonishment

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Wine and Astonishment

My topic for this Lecture is the way we view wine, and the way we think about wine. The aim is to make wine strange for us again, and in doing so to freshen or re-make our mental relationship with it. Or, perhaps, our marital relationship with it? We are all, in one way or another, married to wine. It's as familiar to all of us as a spouse. There are dangers in that familiarity.

We explore unfamiliar places with passionate intensity for two weeks a year, then barely glance at the familiar places where we live for fifty weeks a year. We look with glazed, or veiled, or ungrateful eyes at those closest to us, those who give us most, whereas indifferent strangers are minutely appraised. We relish health only when we've lost it. This danger is always there for those of us who speak to wine. Let me name a few of the traps.

It's easy to use a received language of wine and assume that it has universal meaning. It doesn't. The language of wine is, of necessity, highly metaphorical and hence puzzling: these are not plain words. That language needs constant reworking in order to keep meaning fresh. At the same time, a strenuous search for freshness can easily teeter over into the ridiculous, because of metaphorical overload. Every wine writer should be not just thinking about wine with passionate intensity, but about language too.

What else? Received, unchallenged assumptions about wine are often wrong, or relate to a past wine world which no longer exists. It's important to take nothing for granted, to weigh everything in the scales of your own mouth, with global benchmarks in mind. Honest opinions, though, can easily congeal into personal dogma. If you have a theory about something, keep testing it and putting it to proof; it will probably need discarding eventually. The wine world has its fashions, and fashions are always seductive. They can, though, be silly. If you have read the same assertion or opinion in two or three places elsewhere, it usually means that it's time to consider whether in fact the opposite might be true. Writers about wine should, at least on occasion, be troublesome, irritating and critical. Critical disengagement flattens the landscape; critical double-

standards blanket it with fog. Flattery, by contrast, gets us all nowhere; it is meaningless for the flattered, and demeans the flatterers. If you have a mind, you should speak it. Worst of all, though, is the failure to be astonished by wine: a wine-worldliness, if you like. This knowingness, this taking-for-granted of the landscape of the wine world, does wine a disservice. (I am, by the way, able to enumerate all these failings with some feeling since I have committed them all myself, on multiple occasions.)

Wine is quietly unique in human experience: a creation in which human beings and the natural world have almost equal roles; a creation which is experienced sensually, intellectually and emotionally, and at its best has a spiritual force, too. My friend Brian Croser has a different, more characteristically rigorous perspective: he calls unique wine “a pure biological expression of environment interpreted by rational and creative thought” [1].

By either definition, there is no thing like it. Exfoliate the familiarity, detonate the familiarity, and you have a substance which, in its remarkable singularity, can take us closer to being itself, to the principle of existence. The mechanism by which can do this is astonishment. I urge you, therefore, to be as open as possible to astonishment when you speak for and to wine.

Before we examine ‘the being of wine’, though, let me provide a brief layman’s background to the philosophical significance of astonishment.

Astonishment

One of the major questions in philosophy, perhaps the fundamental question, is “Why is there something rather than nothing?” The formulation is that of Gottfried Leibniz in 1718 [2], but many philosophers before and since have posed it. As the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge put it in 1825 [3], “In wonder all philosophy began; in wonder it ends ...”

Religion, obviously, has an answer to the question: the ‘something’ is the intended work of a divine creator.

Scientists, too, are engaged in an incessant search for the answer to this question, and the torrent of scientific insights about matter itself makes the

present an exciting moment to be alive [4].

Philosophy, by contrast, has no answer to the question -- but the asking of the question, from the Pre-Socratic philosophers onwards, has always been significant and fruitful. One twentieth-century philosopher, Martin Heidegger, made this question the centre of his philosophical enquiry. He did so via a book called *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), published in 1926, and via a series of subsequent essays and lectures. I don't read German, and Heidegger's original work is in any case famously and forbiddingly difficult, so I am indebted in my limited understanding of it to his translators and commentators, and among the latter George Steiner in particular [5]. What follows is a simple, primitive and partial sketch of Heidegger's thoughts. I have the temerity to offer it to you only because I think it might help us to see wine afresh. Professional philosophers may view what follows as superficial, but philosophy is of little value if it cannot be used by the people as well as by the professionals. I plead guilty to playing about with Heidegger's ideas. That's all I can do.

Heidegger

Heidegger maintained that, in the torrent of existence, Being itself ('*Sein*', a word which he capitalised [6]), has been forgotten. What is the difference between existence and Being? Existence is the extant; it is what exists. You bump into it, trip over it, look at it, touch it, smell it and eat it. You could call it 'stuff'. Being, by contrast, is the 'isness' inside everything which exists. The fact that this seems such a strange concept indicates how complete our forgetting of Being is. We're so obsessed with 'stuff', with appearances and externalities, that we forget 'isness'. Or, to go back to the original phraseology, we're so distracted with existence that we forget Being.

Heidegger's project was to 'uncover' Being, to 'think' Being and to 'say' Being, though he recognized that this was difficult and perhaps impossible, given the inauthenticity, distraction, ambiguity and hunger for novelty in which most of our lives pass.

Being for Heidegger was emphatically not the metaphysical matter or question of ideals which had been associated by previous philosophers with notions of 'essence'; still less did it equate to God. Instead it's something earthly and

worldly, embedded (though at the same time hidden) in the quiddity of things. All of existence, in other words, is secretly saturated in Being. The challenge is to break through the thick carapace of existence to find Being again.

It's as if Being (to use an image most of us will be familiar with) is the mass of calcarenite limestone underlying Coonawarra, concealed beneath the hard calcrete duricrust above it. Existence is that duricrust, and the covering of soft, seductive red loess we glance at. You have to disturb the red earth and rip through the calcrete to get to the limestone beneath. Heidegger's own technique for disturbance and ripping is a set of new words, often forged clumsily out of clusters of existing words. He uses these in order to shock and dislocate the reader into the re-thinking which might reveal forgotten or lost Being within the familiar, drenching rain of existence.

Language is key, because language is where and how we make our home in the world [7]. For human beings, it's through words and language that things come into Being. Customary philosophical thinking, he maintains, is unable to take us back to Being. That can only be achieved, says Heidegger, by what he calls 'poeticizing thought' or 'thinking poetry' [8].

Being, Heidegger stresses, is also temporal: it can only exist in time. It is therefore fully accomplished only as it ends, in death, or rather in ceasing-to-be. It is care and attention to Being itself which makes human existence meaningful.

Because Being is projected in time and completed by death, it must necessarily involve anxiety. This positive, end-focussed anxiety stands in opposition to the negative, formless fear which the daily run of inauthentic existence provokes. Out of that positive, directed anxiety comes care, concern, apprehension and attention [9].

To be authentically in the world, says Heidegger, is to care for, or be answerable to, Being itself. Astonishment is essential: it is astonishment which reveals the presence of Being inside existence.

The process of questioning, the questioning of everything which surrounds us, is a translation of astonishment into action; care or carefulness is how that action might be maintained. There is no particular answer to this questioning. Both it, and care itself, are a kind of practice. "To question truly," summarises George

Steiner, "is to enter into harmonic concordance with that which is being questioned" [10]. More generally, Steiner suggests that "To know how to question being is to know how to wait ... even a whole lifetime" [11].

Now let's go back to wine, the substance around which we have chosen to orchestrate our own lives, but try to keep some of these insights in mind as we do so.

If I asked everybody here to think back to the moment at which they decided to devote their professional life to wine, or to writing about wine, I suspect that the motive force sprung from a single moment of astonishment. In some cases, this would be strong enough to be called an epiphany – defined by Collins as 'any moment of great or sudden revelation', and by the online Free Dictionary as 'A sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something.' These moments are regularly written about or discussed in wine circles; some like to cite the particular bottle which led to the revelation or epiphany.

Assigning the impact of such moments to a particular wine in a particular vintage is, with respect, to miss the point entirely. Indeed I'm not always sure that the wine involved on such occasions is great. It certainly wasn't in my case – an encounter with a bottle of anonymous Beaujolais in the mid-70s. Good wine is good enough.

What happens, I'd suggest, is that for a moment we see or sense the Being of wine inside the existence of wine. This has a physical dimension, of course: we suddenly relish the wine we are tasting in a more comprehensive manner than we have ever been able to do before. We suddenly 'get it', often with overwhelming force. We suddenly grasp, in other words, the radical principal of beauty common to all good and great wine, and gasp for a moment at the extent of its appeal. We understand how wine creation might mesh with other cultural activities. At the same time, we come to realise just how intimate its relationship with the natural world is. It has a maker, but who is that maker? The winegrower, or the place from which the wine came? The question is a resonantly difficult one. We become one with all of those who have understood this beauty and this uniqueness in the past, and we become one of those by whom it will be transmitted in the future. All this is often wordless and instantaneous, a kind of explosion of insight.

What I want to do for the rest of this lecture is to unpick some of the mechanisms at work in that moment of epiphany, and suggest to you that it should stand behind all of our interactions with wine. That we should try not to forget, in other words, the first astonishment we felt as we looked, tasted, and tumbled into the Being of wine. It's difficult, I admit, when you're judging your 49th young red wine of the morning at a show or competition, or tasting through the cheapest offerings in a branded range. That first moment of insight, though, was the reason you're passing your life in this way and not in some other way. This could hardly be more significant for you. Perhaps, too, there is some other drinker at large who may be ready, in the unfathomable circumstances of his or her life, to feel astonishment at the modest wine you're in the middle of assessing. Perhaps it could even lead to an epiphany for him or her. Being is always there, inside existence; it just requires the torch of astonishment to shine a light on it.

Alcohol

The first of these mechanisms is alcohol. Yes, the epiphany which I am alluding to and which you experienced is an alcohol-lifted one, though not, I would suggest, alcohol-induced.

Alcohol, strangely enough, seems to have become problematic in the way both wine writers write about wine, and the way wine-creators think about the wines they are crafting. I sometimes have the impression that both commentators and creators would prefer wine to be alcohol-free if only it could retain its sensual personality intact in that form. And if not alcohol-free, then 12.5% abv and no more. There might be those ready to disqualify the initial experience entirely on the basis that alcohol has a role in it, and suggest that the glimpse of Being contained in that moment is consequently inauthentic.

I disagree. It's alcohol which gives wine an emotional dimension or force, which enables us not just to perceive wine's beauty, but to feel it, to be moved by it. You could even say that alcohol humanises wine. Nothing is more human than seeking the means in nature to access emotion in this ritualised or formalised way. If ever and whenever we are able to perceive being inside existence, there will be an emotional aspect to that perception – because we are human. No epiphany is every purely intellectual or purely rational. There may be other drivers of emotion in moments of epiphany – like religious rapture, or long-

sought spiritual insight, or the physical forms of human longing. I see no reason, though, why alcohol should be considered secondary to these merely because its trigger is chemical. It seems likely, indeed, that chemical triggers of all sorts play a larger part in the life of the mind than most of us ever realise.

Whenever yeast meets ripe fruit, you will find alcohol. Alcohol belongs in wine; alcohol helps define wine; without alcohol, wine does not exist. For non-professional drinkers, alcohol is central to the appeal of wine. A little wine brings spiritual music to secular life. Alcohol plays a role in that. What would wine be without the solace it imparts? Alcohol plays a role in that, too. Alcohol itself is never easier to assimilate or more nourishing than in wine. And if, as I will ultimately suggest, a large part of our astonishment at wine's Being is connected with the diverse manner in which it exists, then a wide range of alcohol levels in wine is a cause for celebration and enjoyment, not censoriousness or hand-wringing.

Naturalness

A second mechanism at work in the initial moment of astonishment which brings us to wine for a lifetime is our understanding of just how intimately implicated in nature wine is. I vividly remember my own sense of wonder, during the winter of 1974 and spring of 1975, as I realised that in drinking wines from different countries, continents and hemispheres I was actually drinking a liquid whose physical form and sensorial outline had been brought into existence by a plant or plants anchored in those places. Agreed, the liquid had been through a transformation; grape juice had become wine, thanks to the agency of yeast. The substance itself, though, had come into existence through physical pathways in root and leaf, and through a suite of interactions with soil, rain and sunlight, in vineyards in Tuscany, in Portugal, in Burgundy. The birth both of that substance and of its personality had taken place inside grapes hanging in clusters on vines there, there and there. Cold, drizzle, mud, stones, a misty dawn, bright noon, storms at dusk: the liquid I was rolling on my tongue had synthesised all of those, snug inside its grapeskin. They in turn were a part of its Being. There was a direct line of transmission from the distant vine's vascular tissue to my waiting tongue. With nothing added and nothing subtracted, or so I believed.

This made wine very special indeed, and utterly different to beer or to spirits,

most of which were made in a depot or plant by assembling ingredients, adding tap water, and following a kind of recipe. A glass of grapefruit juice may follow a similar line of transmission to a glass of wine, but it's silent concerning its place of origin, and the absence of alcohol robs it of an emotional dimension, of the same capacity for solace, and thus of cultural significance.

This still astonishes me today. I'm still shocked by the naturalness and wholeness and strangeness of wine. I think this is a common experience among new wine drinkers. It is one reason among many why I would urge anyone who has a hand in making wines to seek to respect the integrity of the raw materials, the harvested grapes, to the maximum extent. Drinkers want to hear nature's heartbeat in wine. They want to sip distant places, to taste geographical difference rendered with astonishing articulacy: this is the unique gift of wine, found nowhere else. This shock or jolt of place is part of the Being of wine. We live on planet earth; we will die on planet earth; the notion that humans might ever leave planet earth to make a life elsewhere is ludicrous. Wine is the only way in which we can drink a little of the diversity of our home planet. Through wine, the earth becomes more precious to us. If wine, all wine, even inexpensive wine, is served and regarded with a kind of respect which eludes beer and other alcoholic drinks, that's the reason. We erode or discard that respect at our peril. It's care; it's attention; it brings meaning.

The human hand

In the epiphany or moment of astonishment which first seals our bond with wine, of course, there is the implication of craftsmanship. Meeting a wine is not like meeting a wind, or gazing at the Aegean. We know that wine is made. Man, Heidegger famously wrote in a later work, is the "shepherd of Being" [12]. Men and women are the shepherds of wine. There may be a direct line of transmission from vascular tissue in a Hunter Valley vineyard to a waiting tongue in Edinburgh or Stockholm, but it is not uncomplicated, and it requires close supervision. It is an uncovering: the finding of potential inside a crop. At another level, it is the revelation of the sensual personality of place. To pursue the pastoral analogy, you might almost call it a transhumance – the leading of the object from a settled lowland circuit, where it exists as fruit, to a nourishing summer upland altogether elsewhere, in which it has become wine. The process of transformation itself will happen anyway, in some way or another, given the

right conditions; it is not alchemy, but one of nature's metamorphoses. Nature, though, is bent on making vinegar; the human shepherd leads wine away from that destiny and towards a place where wine can endure. For longer than nature intended, at least.

The notion of the winemaker or the winegrower fascinates many drinkers, who imagine a kind of magician of pleasure, half-chemist and half-chemist, conjuring perfume and flavour from the hillsides via mysterious cellar arts.

They're not wrong, though the truth is both more banal and more complicated. On the one hand, there is the technocratic or industrial ideal of the winemaker as master of mistress of his or her variable and inconsistent raw materials, engineering a desired wine outcome which will be consistent, reliable and deliver value for money at the target price for what is often called a 'product'. This is the winemaker as 'lord of wines'. We are familiar with such figures in other areas. Those possessing a reassuring if incomprehensible expertise invite us to trust them – with our money, with our journeys across the face of the earth, with our health. Thus the hazards of life can be mitigated. In most cases, the trust is well-placed, though when it isn't, the ensuing failures can be catastrophic. The measure of success, note, is generally satisfaction, but no more than that.

This technocratic ideal (winemaking, for examples, as mastery or lordship over raw materials) is what Heidegger later called *Gestell* in an essay entitled 'The Question Concerning Technology'. *Gestell* means 'frame' or 'rack' – an imposed system which does not bring Being to light or make it radiant, but rather denatures it and falsifies it [13]. Such systems are of course useful, but they come at a price. Heidegger contrasts this kind of technique with the technique of the farmer, who does not provoke and master the earth but works with it in a process of custodianship and renewal, via rhythms of donation and acceptance.

In contrast to the winemaker stands the winegrower. This is a more astonishing concept, not least because at first glance it appears to be self-contradictory. Fruit is grown, but wine is made. The word seems to elide two separate actions.

When you talk to those who have crafted wine the longest, though, or to those creating wines which inspire, almost all of them prefer the term 'winegrower' to that of 'winemaker'. The critical decisions affecting the personality and quality of the wine, they feel, are those taken in the vineyard, and they will make every

effort to be as close to the vineyard as possible. Custodianship and renewal are indeed ideals cherished by winegrowers.

Choice of variety is most significant, followed by the way in which the plant looks at the sun, the way in which it is sculpted each winter, and the way the soil is maintained and nourished. Crop size is another key factor, together with fruit positioning and attention to the growing vine. The moment at which harvest takes place, and the way in which it takes place, matter greatly too. This is the royal hunt for perfect grapes, or as close to perfection as the season permits. The vinifying gestures which follow are immensely important too, but it is not uncommon to hear experienced winegrowers in long-established regions say that they can think of nothing further to do in the cellar to improve quality. The only way they can improve on past performance is by growing better grapes still, and then doing the same things to them. The variability which thirty years' work then proceeds to trace in sensual form is that of nature: the play of the seasons. It is a gift which the winemaker has done his or her best to honour. This accords with Heidegger's gloss on the Greek word *technē* as 'a coming into radiant being of that which was already inherent' [14].

What happens in the winery, in other words, is the use of craft to realise potential. The crafting process can never take the grapes or grape juice beyond their potential. We quickly return to intimacy with nature. A great winegrower is someone who can read skies and soils and seasons, be an attentive parent to the vines in their charge, giving them as much care as economic possibilities permit, and then realise the potential inscribed in the vine's fruit over that season with maximum sensitivity: shepherd and not lord.

Where else do you find stewardship and craftsmanship so conjoined?

Astonishingly, nowhere. No other farmers work with a crop capable of giving sensual voice to the nuances of place in this way, nor do they customarily craft that crop themselves. Chefs, perfumers and jewellers, by contrast, practice their craft on nature's gifts, but have no role in shaping and shepherding those gifts. The rare intimacy of stewardship and craftsmanship is part of the Being of wine. Every winegrower, I think, will have moments when the Being of wine will be evident to them despite the existential drudgery; when they will be bringing not just *their* wine into being, but wine itself.

Poetry, science and wine

I mentioned that the initial moment of joy at our own consuming realisation of wine's Being may be wordless; indeed perhaps it's always wordless. Words, though, will flock like birds around it at the moment we do anything with it, such as tell others about it, or resolve to make it the keystone to a lifetime's work. Words become part of the mechanism of that moment as it takes shape in time.

Yet words and significances settle quickly in place; they become part of the muttering fabric of existence, and thus come to hide Being rather than reveal it. Hence Heidegger's emphasis, mentioned a little earlier, on 'poeticizing thought' or 'thinking poetry'. He is able to move towards the articulation of Being only by chiselling words anaesthetised by familiarity into a strange and re-made language. The taste of wine, inside which the Being of wine lurks, is in fact famously unsayable; we must chisel with metaphor, yet those metaphors, unless constantly renewed, can quickly become anaesthetised themselves [15].

The moment when we first experience wine's Being will be an exciting one, and perhaps a dislocating one; we may well have the sense that it has rearranged our world. This, of course, is what poetry does. It treats of what we know, but makes it new. At that moment of epiphany, wine is indeed, as Stevenson called it, 'bottled poetry' [16].

By 'poetry', I don't simply mean written literary texts. There is a poetry of doing and of being; a making new, even of the most familiar acts. I don't want, either, to stand science and scientific insights in opposition in any way to poetry, though scientists tend to be suspicious of that which might be considered poetic. The scientific journey must proceed by objective means, while the poetic one must proceed by subjective means. There need not, though, be war between the objective and the subjective; the two can walk hand-in-hand. There is a common end -- in the thing itself. The scientist wishes to understand what that thing is, stripped of its veils of incomprehension; the poet wants to feel, show and tell what that thing is, underneath the rust of familiarity. Arriving at the Being of the thing -- raw, pure, fresh, true -- is the aim of both.

How does this relate to our moment of drinking astonishment? If we are to preserve the astonishment, and remain as close as we can to the Being of wine, then I think we need to search ceaselessly for the poetry which inhered to the

initial moment itself. The newness, or the remade-ness, which implies astonishment and which helps define poetry is an essential quality of the best writing about wine, and the best communicating about wine. It does not, of course, have to be “poetic” in any mannered way. Indeed purple prose can often screen or fog the true poetry of wine.

But I also want to stress that none of this should be seen as conflicting with wine science. Those working at the Australian Wine Research Institute and similar institutions are engaged in a struggle to understand the issues which fascinate them or astonish them. The amount that we still don’t know about wine is vast; there is much to be done. The term ‘terroir’, to take just one example, has a sense with which everyone here is familiar; we all know roughly what we are talking about, and we have all come across many wines in which terroir seems to us amply apparent. The moment we begin to examine the concept, though, we realise how many different disciplines it implies: climatology and meteorology, geology and soil science, plant biology, organic chemistry and agricultural anthropology, to name just five, each of which would harbour tens of thousands of possible research projects. Science, in the end, confirms or refines the insights made by the attentive, many of which were first couched in poetic terms. You might think that malolactic fermentation is the conversion of malic acid to lactic acid by bacteria; or you might, a thousand years earlier, have regarded it as mischievous springtime spirits at work in the wine, disturbing it and troubling it for effects which are finally beneficial. The process, though, is the same; attentiveness and astonishment led us to understand it.

What is less satisfactory are the uses to which scientific insight is put as wine is taken away from agriculture and made industrial. Industrial ideals are founded on the requirements of existence as opposed to Being: that there should, in other words, be a sameness and a consistency to goods, and that functionality is paramount. Agricultural ideals, by contrast, are more consonant with Being, in that the inconsistency and primacy of nature is accepted, along with a spectrum of difference which will both fail and exceed the standards of functionality.

Perhaps it is naïve to expect wine to remain entirely agricultural when even agriculture itself can be industrialised. Remember the initial moment of astonishment, though – that sudden incandescent glimpse of the Being of wine. This has little to do with the return of the same, with the consistent satisfaction of demand, with the exclusion of surprise which lies somewhere at the heart of the

successful industrial object. Those things are not astonishing; they are a large part, in fact, of the duricrust we need to rip through in order to reach Being itself. My contention is that those of us who love to drink wine, and a still higher percentage of those of us who want to read about it or learn about it, are not in search of an industrial object, like a liquid brake pad or an internet connection. We are prepared to find inconsistency, just as we are prepared to live through four seasons. We value truth to place in wine's sensual personality, even if this personality seems strange at first, as places inevitably do in our own wanderings across the earth. We want to re-experience the astonishment which might lead us to the Being of wine.

Difference

The final mechanism at work in our initial moment of epiphany, the moment at which we glimpse the Being of wine, is an understanding of difference. That moment is rarely if ever our first glass of wine; we're probably seasoned drinkers by that point, and have long moved from the simple consumption of wine to a state of attentiveness to wine's sensual discourse. What we realise in that pivotal moment is that there is something irreducibly different about the wine we are drinking, something which is both aesthetically overwhelming yet also rooted in a truth to place. Indeed the sensual pleasure may well be perceived as deriving from that sense of place. It is not just the taste of wine which is sensually appealing, but there is also a physical joy involved in taking our world-home into our mouths, into our nostrils, into our bodies, in making it something which is no longer external and 'out there' but inside us. This is not true of other drinks and foods, because they cannot reflect place in the same way, nor do they carry the same emotional charge. We may well feel a kind of vertigo of difference at that point, since we realise on the instant that there is no limit to the differences of place which wines might beautifully encapsulate, and with which we could become sensually and emotionally intimate.

This, I think, is the heart of wine's Being; indeed wine's ability both to embody difference and to take difference into our bodies may be the main reason why it has the cultural significance and importance it does for us [17]. An attentiveness to the Being of wine is in fact an allegiance to difference, played out indefinitely, since nature itself generates nothing but difference and, inspired by nature, those who craft wines most skilfully weave further layers of difference into wine. Wine's

Being in time, as I am about to explain, creates further levels of difference. The role of those who speak to or for wine, as I conceive it, would be to tell or to call those differences in a manner which honours the Being of wine rather than busies itself exclusively with the existence of wine. In practical terms, that that means never losing touch or breaking faith with the moment of epiphany in which the Being of wine first becomes apparent.

Against wine-worldliness

Before finishing by a consideration of wine in relation to time, let me just outline a little more about what I mean by wine-worldliness. I spoke earlier about the traps into which it is easy to fall: received language, received opinions, personal dogma, the seductions of fashion, critical disengagement. They all play a role in wine-worldliness, which is a taking-for-granted of all of the givens of wine, and the assumption of a kind of assurance or familiarity over the subject which precludes astonishment. Naturally, this mastery pays lip-service to difference, because difference is the very grain of wine, but the differences are told demeaningly, as if they exist in a settled world incapable of expansion, thereby perhaps to aggrandise the teller, who is the master of all.

Philosophically, the scoring of wines seems to me to be a form of wine-worldliness. It does, of course, acknowledge difference, via the attribution of a score, but it also freezes difference by rendering it numerically immutable. The wine is thereafter pinioned to its score, and the teller of that score then becomes in some sense the master of the wine, under whose heel the wine might squirm but cannot escape. The consumer of the wine, meanwhile, loses his or her own primary and unfettered relationship with the wine in favour of a relationship with the scoring intermediary. Scores are a technocratic innovation – the perfect example of what Heidegger called a 'frame' or a 'rack'. In the shuttling to and fro of settled existence, they prove useful; the price we pay for this mundane usefulness, though, is that the Being of the wine is diminished or hidden, and our own unfettered relationship with it is snatched away from us.

Another aspect of wine-worldliness worth mentioning is the excessive familiarity which is inclined to dispense with the bonds which would attach the Being of wine to Being more generally. Wine is never more astonishing than when viewed innocently, though the eyes of the unknowing; and never less astonishing than

when viewed through the eyes of one who cannot even remember what it was *not* to know wine, or who has long 'known it all'. Part of the struggle to find our way back to the Being of wine is the challenge of seeing wine unknowingly or innocently once again. The solution may lie in exploring the relationship between the expression of wine difference and the expression of other forms of difference. Wine is sensual, but also cultural, geographical, historical – and sometimes literary and political. Its Being becomes most apparent when we care for wine under those broad eaves.

Let me conclude by returning to Heidegger, and to a consideration of wine and time. Being, Heidegger asserted, was inseparable from temporality; 'outside time' is a meaningless phrase, though the geologist's or astrophysicist's time frame is of course different to the historian's. All being is therefore a Being-towards-death, and Being is only completed by death -- hence the generative anxiety felt by human beings as they contemplate non-being.

Part of the affection we feel for wine is that it mimics our own trajectory towards non-being. In wine, we can taste the different stages of Being. We can taste what it is to be youthful, to be mature, to be elderly. We can even taste what it is to be dead, to have lost the Being which once existed. We have the pleasure of tracing an infinity of differences in life trajectories in wine; we can see both the beauty and the ugliness wrought by time, and we can see how decisions taken early in life can lead to beauty or ugliness later in life. Wine, in this way, can reconcile us to time; it gives us the chance to practice the journey towards non-being, to share it and understand it. It does this while taking us closer, in the most intimate manner, to the infinity of felicitous differences with which we are surrounded in our world, our home; and it gives the lucky few who chose to 'grow wine' the chance to use craft to embody, reflect and echo nature itself. This is the Being of wine, and it is astonishing.

Endnotes

1. Personal communication to the author, 24 December 2011.
2. Leibniz, Gottfried: *Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondés en raison* (1718), principal 7: see http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Principes_de_la_nature_et_de_la_grâce. Retrieved 3 December 2012.
3. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor: *Aids to Reflection* (New York: Stanford & Swords, 1847), p.177.
4. See, for example, the recently published *A Universe from Nothing: Why There is Something Rather than Nothing* by Lawrence M Krauss (New York: Free Press, 2012).
5. Steiner, George: *Heidegger* (Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1978).
6. Though note that the customs of capitalisation are different in German and in English. Heidegger's lexicon of 'being', moreover, is a vast subject in its own right: see 'Some Basic Terms' in Steiner, *Op.cit.* pp.25-72; or Theodore Kisiel's 'Lexicon' in Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010, pp.417-482).
7. "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells." 'Letter on Humanism', in Heidegger, Martin, 'Basic Writings', edited by David Farrell Krell, *Brief über den Humanismus* translated by Frank A. Capuzzi (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2011, p. 147).
8. "das dichtende Denken": see Steiner, *Op.cit.* p.43.
9. There are many kinships between Heidegger's work and Buddhist tradition. Heidegger's 'existence', the aggregated and inauthentic externalities which hide being from us, might be seen as having a kinship with *samsara*, the ceaseless flow or drift of transitory desires, emotions and experiences which every Buddhist is urged to repudiate. Heidegger's 'Being' and its locus, by contrast, spoken of as a 'clearing' or *lichtung*, shares much with the positive Buddhist notion of emptiness, better seen as a space capable of being filled by light. The *koans* of

the Zen Buddhist tradition might be considered to perform a similar jolting task to Heidegger's 'poeticising thought'. The posture of 'care' is not dissimilar to the attentiveness and compassion of Buddhist practice. These kinships have been noted by Japanese scholars: see the brief summary provided by John Macquarrie in *Existentialism* (London: Pelican Books, 1973, p.43).

10. Steiner, p.57.

11. Ibid, pp.55-56.

12. "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being." 'Letter on Humanism', in Heidegger, Martin, 'Basic Writings', *Op. cit.* p. 167.

13. "Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding sway of truth." 'The Question Concerning Technology', in Heidegger, Martin, 'Basic Writings', edited by David Farrell Krell, *Die Technik und die Kehre* translated by William Lovitt (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2011, p. 232).

14. My paraphrase of Steiner's paraphrase: *Op.cit.* p.131. Lovitt's translations of the key phrases are "the revealing that brings forth truth into the splendour of radiant appearance ..."; "the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful ..."; and "a single, manifold revealing". 'The Question Concerning Technology', in Heidegger, Martin, 'Basic Writings', *Op. cit.* p.237.

15. How far can this metaphorical process be taken? Perhaps the most metaphorically daring tasting note ever written is by Philip White, about Julian Castagna's 2006 Sangiovese from Beechworth. This is the note in its entirety.
\$75; 13.5% alcohol; Diam cork; tasted 16-20 AUG 09; 95+++ points
Sometimes I think she glimpses at me, over her shoulder, but not often. No white of eye, only mascara and cheekbone. She sits here on my desk with her back to me. Once, I thought I saw lipstick, but so fleeting it may have been a smudge in my brain, a tragic shard of lust. It's all shiny black leather, disappearing in the dark to a raven muss of hair. She's been eating morello cherries and Valrhona Cœur de Guanaja 80% chocolate, and she's wearing Jean Desprez Bal à Versailles to enhance the fact that she hasn't showered for days. When she moves her legs, I hear stockings. And that scarlet Louboutin clack.

16. Stevenson, Robert Louis, *The Silverado Squatters*. Printed in *The Works of*

Robert Louis Stevenson, Tusitala Edition, Vol. XVIII (London: William Heinemann, 1924), p. 168.

17. The notion of difference is one which became significant in philosophy through the linguistic work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and through the anthropological work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009): both in their own fields pointed out that meaning and significance arises from difference within language systems or cultural systems, and suggesting that the systems themselves were generative of those differences, rather than the differences necessarily springing from pre-existing phenomena. Subsequent French philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), expressing a debt of gratitude to Heidegger, have taken these ideas further, suggesting that difference may in fact precede identity, and that the permanent and mutable interplay of difference more properly represents our relationship with the world and with each other than the formalised, immutable systems favoured by philosophers of the past.