

### More on the substance-object continuum, with a little help from wine

When we choose to view a substance as an object, some (or all) of the characteristics typically associated with objects (boundedness, internal heterogeneity, countability) are activated. Here is an example of what happens when we view the substance *wine* as an object (*a wine*).

Wine is a prototypical substance: it is...

- Unbounded (it has no pre-ordained shape or size)
- Internally homogeneous (whether you drink a drop, a glass, or an entire bottle, it's all the same)
- Uncountable (because it has no shape and no component parts, it is impossible to pluralise)

Most people who drink wine will differentiate between...

- red and white (the colour)
- sparkling and still (the texture)
- dry and sweet (sweetness)

When they talk about these subcategories of wine, they can choose to present it as a substance (mass noun) or an object (count noun).

With the mass noun form (e.g. *red wine*, *sparkling wine*) they are referring to a category of the substance, i.e. not to all wines but to a *subset* of wine (see chapter 6), using a form of *generic reference* (see chapter 5). In other words, they are excluding all non-red or non-sparkling wines but not specifying which type, variety, producer or year, so the reference remains quite vague.

With the count noun form (e.g. *a red wine*, *a sparkling wine*), they are referring to a specific *variety* or *type*, using a form of *individuating reference* (see Chapter 5), i.e. picking out for notice one type (or *subset*, cf. chapter 6) which is of particular interest. Even if their interlocutor does not know which wine is being referred to, we can infer that the speaker is thinking about a specific type.

These *subsets* divide the entirety of the substance (all wine, everywhere) into categories. However, the categories are mono-characteristic (red wines are all red; sparkling wines are all sparkling), so the subdivision does not affect the internal homogeneity of the substance. The specific substance is *bounded* by its single characteristic, but it remains internally *homogeneous*. It is *uncountable* (unless a specific variety is intended, in which case it can become countable).

Wine experts, however, make *finer-grained* (chapter 2) distinctions. They identify particular flavours and textures within the homogeneous substance, and in so doing they make it *heterogeneous*, i.e. they isolate the component parts of the flavor, plus textures, and sensory effects, which all work together to create the overall characteristics of *a particular wine*. Look at these examples of wine tasting notes<sup>1</sup> – they all refer to the same grape variety, but each note concerns one particular year of one producer's product. Notice the similarities (relative to the grape variety: *berry fruits*, *earthy*) and differences (separating out producers and years).

[1] Easy drinking forward, *medium bodied*, fresh, **earthy**, **cassis** and **blackberry** dominated wine for current drinking, at a fair price.

[2] Light, fresh, **fruity**, soft, and fully ready to go, with its **sweet**, **floral** and **cherry** essence. The wine is pleasant, but lacks depth and complexity.

[3] Forward, *medium bodied*, fresh and more on the **red fruit**, than the **darker berry** side of the style range, this is all ready and easy to drink. It is not a wine to lay down.

[4] Fully mature, with a **sweet** core of **fresh black cherries**, made even better with the **essence of forest floor** and **thyme** notes, leaves you with a *round*, **cherry** finish.

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<sup>1</sup> From [www.thewinecellarinsider.com](http://www.thewinecellarinsider.com). Formatting corresponds to: **flavours**, *qualities*, *sensory effect* ("mouth feel").