

Dabney Townsend

# Hume's *Aesthetic* Theory

Taste and sentiment



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# HUME'S AESTHETIC THEORY

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IN MEMORY OF JOHN LEWIS KAYES  
1915–2000

The sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas; morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments; and politics consider men as united in society, and dependent on each other. In these four sciences of *Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics*, is comprehended almost every thing, which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can end either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind.

*Treatise of Human Nature*  
Introduction, xv–xvi

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- A George Berkeley, *Alciphron or The Minute Philosopher. The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964).
- EHU David Hume, 'Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,' *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge; revised P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
- EPM David Hume, 'Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,' *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge; revised P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
- H Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London: J. Danby, 1725).
- IVM Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'An Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit,' *Characteristics*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).
- L Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm to My Lord \*\*\*\*,' *Characteristics*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).
- M Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody,' *Characteristics*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).
- MR Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Miscellaneous Reflections on the Preceding Treatises,' *Characteristics*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).

## ABBREVIATIONS

- OST David Hume. 'Of the Standard of Taste,' *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987).
- P Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Plastics,' *Second Characters or the Language of Forms*, ed. Benjamin Rand (Thoemmes Press, 1997; a reprint of the edition of 1914).
- S Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Soliloquy or Advice to an Author,' *Characteristics*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).
- SC Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,' *Characteristics*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).
- T David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge; revised P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

# INTRODUCTION

One of the more intimidating factors in approaching David Hume's philosophy is the sheer volume of commentary, including work from philosophers of the first rank. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to Hume's aesthetics beyond commentary on 'Of the Standard of Taste.' Peter Jones, who is certainly the exception to this rule, observes: 'It is unfortunate, perhaps, that in the absence of alternative texts, a single, condensed, derivative essay of under twenty pages should be taken as representative of Hume's considered views on art and criticism.'<sup>1</sup> Yet the absence of alternative texts has not prevented Jones and others from finding more extensive sources for Hume's aesthetic thought.<sup>2</sup> I want to go even farther. I will propose not only that there is substantial aesthetic material embedded in Hume's major philosophical works, but also that the implicit aesthetic is crucial to a better understanding of the way that Hume deals with those central philosophical problems that occupy him.

My view is not without precedent. William Halberstadt noted some time ago that 'some of [Hume's] essays deal directly with questions of aesthetics, and even in the major philosophical writings (the *Treatise* and the two *Enquiries*), there are numerous references to it – so numerous, in fact, that Lechartier was justified in finding among Hume's writings "un véritable traité d'esthétique".'<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the treatments remain scattered and are considered problematic. Peter Kivy, for example, has certainly gone beyond 'Of the Standard of Taste' for his understanding of Hume, but he cautions

It is certainly true that Hume's moral talk, like Hutcheson's, is permeated with aesthetic terms and images. But in general, this is rather the background noise left by Hutcheson's 'big bang' than the direction in which Hume's thought is moving in moral theory or aesthetics. . . . If one comes from Hutcheson's first *Inquiry* to the *Treatise*, a casual reading of Book III will immediately suggest that Hume was seeing moral perception

in a distinctly aesthetic way. . . . I say that a *casual* reading of Hume might suggest this to one coming to him from Hutcheson's first *Inquiry*. But, of course, this is hardly what Hume has in mind, or means to convey with such seemingly 'aesthetic' terms as 'contemplate' or 'view'.<sup>4</sup>

Granted the wisdom of that position, I will still argue that if one does not read back our own aesthetic meanings onto Hume's aesthetic terms, they serve an essentially aesthetic function that is important to the understanding of his whole philosophy.

How then is Hume to be read? In his own day and in ours as well, readers provide no uniformity of either interpretation or methodology. To his contemporaries, he seemed a skeptic and atheist. Subsequently, he was assimilated to a history of philosophy that read him as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the empiricism of Locke and Berkeley.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Norman Kemp Smith<sup>6</sup> has forced a re-evaluation that acknowledged Hume's relation to Francis Hutcheson and at more or less the same time Hume attracted the attention of both positivists and analytical philosophers of a less positivist bent who reacted to Kemp Smith's reading and found in Hume the foundation for their own theories of language and meaning.

More recently still, particularly in England, a way of reading Hume as if he incompletely and confusedly anticipates Reid has emerged. History repeats itself. Having been initially misunderstood and misrepresented by Reid, to the considerable detriment of nineteenth-century versions of Hume, we are asked to repeat the mistake. H. O. Mounce would exorcise Hume's 'empiricism' and the theory of ideas in favor of a 'naturalism' better represented by Reid. More frequently, Kemp Smith's naturalistic interpretation is expanded or 'corrected' to emphasize recent work on common sense and naturalized epistemology. To do so, these readers not only have to follow Kemp Smith and read Hume backward; they almost willfully have to ignore what Hume says he is doing. I want to focus on the aesthetic dimension of Hume's work both because that is what interests me and because it offers a needed corrective to the over-emphasis on Hume as a philosophical problem-poser or proto-naturalist. I believe that if one pays attention to the implicit aesthetic woven into Hume's work, the criticisms leveled at his empiricism can be met and he will appear more consistent without turning his philosophy into an anticipation of our own philosophical perspectives.

Underlying my approach is a concern to find a middle way in making a historical figure such as Hume relevant to our own time. Strict historical investigation as practiced in the history of ideas and in much of the best Hume studies is very informative, but it provides only a background to what I attempt. On the other hand, the approach to Hume's philosophy as a series of philosophical problems more or less independent of their context, while it is often extremely productive in

understanding the problems, does not seem to me to get us close enough to Hume. So I will attempt a contextual reading that tries to understand the eighteenth-century ways of thinking about aesthetics but does not pretend not to be influenced by our knowledge of the subsequent history of aesthetics.

It is in the nature of philosophical reading to seek different interpretations of historically significant texts. From such diversity of reading, enlightenment is supposed to flow. One of the ironies of philosophical hermeneutics is that the most absolute insistence on truth in interpretation goes hand in hand with the greatest differences in interpretation. One would think that if a single definitive reading is the hermeneutical objective in philosophy, somewhere it would appear. Yet it never does. Plato and Aristotle are the objects of debate today and always. That said, the reading of Hume still seems an extreme case, for it is not even agreed what his place *vis à vis* his own contemporaries is. At least the basic contrast between the independence and embodiment of forms in Plato and Aristotle, respectively, seems clear.<sup>7</sup> But Hume is variously read as a skeptic and a realist, an emotivist and a moralist, and it is even denied that he is an empiricist. One might well despair over offering yet another reading of Hume, therefore. With the great volume and diversity already present, however, at least one more reading can do little harm.

I think that reading philosophy, particularly before its disciplinary manifestation, as a set of disembodied arguments is misleading. Writers such as Hume are rhetoricians with an audience of the educated, not of other professional philosophers – who do not exist. Even Reid, Gerard, *et al.* are university professors and clerics, not philosophers. So irony, hyperbole, effect are foregrounded, as are the accepted terms of the debate. Someone like Hume seeks to join the past masters and always keeps them before him. He sees himself as a part of a long tradition of humanistic thought; for Hume, style is an essential feature of writing. To read Hume, to read any philosopher, one must pay attention to context and style, therefore. Hume has attracted the attention of commentators along these lines as well. What is needed is to bring history, rhetoric, and philosophy, understood broadly, together. In a sense, that has always been the task of aesthetics. Hume is not a bone, the possession of which is being fought over by dogs. My own hermeneutic does not regard any text with that kind of possessiveness. Alternative readings must be disputed; that is the nature of philosophy. Within the bounds of sense, they remain alternatives, however. Hume taught that lesson when he granted to sentiment a primary role in reasoned discourse.

It is very hard to fit my reading of Hume into many of the discussions of Hume because they require an extensive re-translation of Hume's concerns into a contemporary philosophical idiom. I will not say that this cannot be done, but I will not do it in this book. For example, does Hume allow a distinction between normative and non-normative aesthetic sentiments along the lines of Kant's distinction between

the beautiful and the agreeable? The problem is that Hume takes all passions to be normative to the extent that they involve pain or pleasure, and no passions are normative in the sense that they refer to a reasoned normative principle. So the attempt to separate aesthetic sentiments along those lines – the fault lines of contemporary cognitive and non-cognitive moral and aesthetic theory – is un-Humean from the beginning. A similar point might be made about the more extreme forms of naturalism ascribed to Hume. Hume's science of human nature has not undergone the divisions that separate biology from physics and psychology. That is not to say that there is no useful distinction to be made along those lines, or that it may not be the right distinction to make. It is just to say that to bring Hume to bear on that discussion, one will have to engage in an extensive cultural hermeneutic in order to bring the mid-eighteenth century and the late twentieth century into the same circle.

In particular, the categories of the fifties through the early eighties don't fit Hume very well. Hume does not divide propositions between normative and descriptive. So, for example, Hume's 'is-ought' contrast is between ways of thinking, understood as operations of the mind, not between two classes of propositions. The problem could be recast that way, but Hume's division between matters of fact and relations of ideas assumes that both matters of fact and relations of ideas are expressed in ideas and impressions, not in propositions. So when someone like Charles Stevenson or Anthony Flew or John Passmore claims that 'the meaning' of a sentence or judgment is *X* and translates it into something like "*X* is a virtue" has the same meaning as "*X* would be the object of approbation of almost any person who had full and clear factual information about *X*", Hume's meaning is distorted because for Hume, sameness of meaning would be a psychological, not a semantic fact. '*X* is a virtue' means the same for Hume as 'having the idea of *X* with pleasurable feelings or feelings of approbation' and ideas have the same meaning just in case each is an image of the other. Linguistically, 'I admire *X*' and '*X* is admired by me' have the same meaning because both sentences express one and the same idea – my idea of *X* for which I feel admiration (or love or pride, etc. as the analysis may indicate). One just cannot force Hume into the prepositional view of language and the corresponding view of philosophy as argument without being sensitive to the shifts that this move entails. For Hume, arguments are demonstrative or probable. They are not separate formal arrangements of propositions that, in themselves, serve only to clarify what is asserted. Hume's arguments are a way of getting to a conclusion psychologically. Good demonstrative arguments are valid. Good causal arguments are stable; the habits and expectations are met, not contradicted by the next occurrence. Good arguments involving normative terms – moral and aesthetic judgments – accurately express what one feels about original impressions that are recognized in the

subsequent ideas. Bad normative arguments are confused about what impressions produced the ideas. In some cases, there are no original impressions at all of the type that the ideas seem to express. Such ideas are either very confused, as in the case of our feeling that there are real substances or causes when the actual original impression is only a habitual expectation, or meaningless, as is the case when we use words for which no idea or original impression can be found. None of this is prepositional, and reducing Hume's arguments to standard form and then criticizing him for committing a naturalistic fallacy or really allowing one to move from 'is' to 'ought' because some factual basis appears in the premises of a normative argument is just distortion. When Hume notes that many arguments move from 'is' to 'ought' he is noting a movement of ideas. When he cannot find the original of the 'ought' ideas in the 'is' ideas, he concludes that the movement is confused. One cannot save that movement by rearranging non-existent premises. So, is Hume a naturalist or a skeptic, a realist or an idealist? The answer should be 'no.' The disjunctions do not fit.

My approach does not exempt Hume from criticism, however, not even criticism based on a better knowledge of psychology or logic. Some of what Hume says about mathematical reasoning, for example, is clearly confused. In order to read Hume both critically and philosophically, therefore, I turn to what Hume himself saw as the way out of the dilemmas that his skeptical arguments posed. That is sentiment. The role of sentiment is to be the 'glue' of reasoning. Standing alone, reason is false philosophy. Standing alone, impressions and ideas are 'mere sense' subject to despair and subjective isolation. But we do not reason in abstraction from our own minds; we are the reasoners. Thus all reason is accompanied by sentiment that tells us when we have pulled apart what belongs together. Sentiment alone would be sentimentalism. Hume is no sentimentalist. If he were, the *Treatise* could not exist. But sentiment appears in the analysis of our mental life.

The most telling criticism of Hume's dependence on sentiment is really from a Kantian perspective. Hume seems to require at least one element – a self or narrator – that on his own demand for an original impression he cannot supply. Because Hume does not distinguish a pure intuition that is pre-conceptual, all impressions and ideas are already someone's. But that someone remains mysterious in spite of Hume's attempt to supply a theory of personal identity. On this point, H. O. Mounce's criticism is telling:

The essence of Scottish naturalism is that our knowledge has its source not in our experience or reasoning but in our relations to a world which transcends both our knowledge and ourselves. The power of this view may be illustrated by referring once more to empiricism. The empiricist



view is that our knowledge has its source in sense experience. Thus our belief counts as knowledge only if we can justify it. . . . The Scottish naturalists clearly anticipated views which were later developed by Kant. Thus our ideas or beliefs cannot simply be the product of sense experience since without ideas or beliefs our sense experience is blind. The point may be illustrated by reference to our belief in an independent world. On the empiricist view, this belief is justified by an inference from sense experience. But sense experience, being subjective, can give us no idea of an independent world. If we have no idea of such a world, how can we infer it? The inference from sense experience is plausible only if we already have knowledge of such a world. But if we already have such knowledge, it is unnecessary to make the inference. We could never have known an independent world were it not given to us in natural belief. For it is the condition of all our knowledge. It is naturalism in this sense which Reid opposes to the empiricism, as he sees it, of Hume's philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

The only reply that I can offer on Hume's behalf is that the Scottish naturalists and Kant after them are asking for a justification of something that needs no justification. If one must justify belief, then Kant would be right. But Hume moves beyond the earlier empiricists to show that one always begins *in media res*. Human nature cannot escape that contingency, but if Hume can supply an analysis of human nature, he can escape the despair that that contingency threatens to bring upon us. Hume's own rhetorical strategy anticipates the Sartre of *Nausea* rather than Reid, but he has a faith in the stability of the human world that Sartre cannot imagine. We cannot know whether that faith will save us without following Hume's sentimental form of argument.

The theory of ideas will play a significant role in the chapters that follow. This may be off-putting to some readers. Recent scholarship has not treated the theory of ideas very kindly. It is criticized as confused because it gives no adequate account of the distinction between ideas and impressions.<sup>9</sup> Its reliance on association of ideas and association of impressions is thought either vague or psychologically indefensible in the light of contemporary theories of the mind. It may be well, therefore, to say a few words at this point about why I think that the theory of ideas must be taken seriously in reading Hume and why I do not think that its weaknesses necessarily reflect badly on Hume's philosophy.

We might ask the following question: if one substituted a very different account of how thoughts are related to other thoughts and conscious states to other conscious states, what would change in Hume's analysis of human nature? Certainly, the explication could not go forward in the same terms. Hume relies on impressions

and ideas as theoretical primitives, and without both ideas and their associative combinations, he cannot move to more complex thoughts. But as long as thought is taken to be the primitive and the way to clarify a disputed understanding is to trace its causal origins to an experiential beginning, a different account could be substituted. Hume's distinction between those thoughts that are original and those that are secondary would remain. If that is the case, then the problem of causation would still take the same form that it does, and the same solution would apply. In moral philosophy, it would still be the case that actions are subordinate to the 'character' that represents the stable pattern of consciousness; an individual 'self' would still be identifiable only by the existence of some stable and related set of thoughts; and feelings, emotions, and 'passions' would still be the guiding forces in our mechanics of human nature. Reason, in the sense of rational demonstration and detached consideration of means and ends, would still be no more than a means to the forces that can produce lived responses. So we might as well allow Hume his theoretical base in order to understand his philosophy, even if as psychologists we would need to learn a more detailed and less impressionistic folk psychology.

There are some things about the theory of ideas that still present difficulties. It is essentially atomistic. That atomism continues right through the early Wittgenstein and Russell, however, so it is not unique to the theory of ideas. Hume is much less affected by it than Locke. Hume's analysis is more contextual and situational just because he does not separate primary and secondary qualities as the basis for his inference to a real world. The following passage in 'The Sceptic' confirms the situational nature of the way Hume relates sentiment to its influence:

But though the value of every object can be determined only by the sentiment or passion of every individual, we may observe, that the passion, in pronouncing its verdict, considers not the object simply, as it is in itself, but surveys it with all the circumstances, which attend it.<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of a select set of qualities, Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas can be closer to common sense and nearer to realism than Locke's atomism, Berkeley's idealism, or even Russell's distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description.

The places where the atomism of his theory cause Hume the most problems are when he needs to account for personal identity and intersubjective exchange of ideas. 'My' ideas seem to get started before any account of 'mine' can be constructed out of impressions and ideas, so Hume is certainly open to criticism that a substantial self is smuggled into his analysis of personal identity. I take that to be the basis of Hume's own dissatisfaction with his account of personal identity, though it may

not solve the problem, much discussed, of what specific inconsistency Hume is referring to in the Appendix to the *Treatise*. Hume was equally dissatisfied with the concept of ‘sympathy’ and evidently tried to avoid it when he simplified his theories to make them more accessible. Sympathy, properly understood, is a very specific and restricted concept for Hume. It is a ‘reflex image’ but there is something mysterious about how the outward signs of what passes in another’s mind can be sufficient to produce that reflex image in us.<sup>11</sup> If ideas are atomistic images of impressions that combine only subsequently (by association, causation, or some more adequate theory that Hume could not have imagined), working backward from the outward expression of already complex combinations would require the skill of a Freud, and then one would have only a possible story. But for Hume’s sympathy, the transfer must be immediate, essentially passive, and almost direct. Nevertheless, the problems that arise are precisely the problems that the aesthetic dimension of Hume’s thought can deal with, if not definitively solve. Feelings, passions, and emotions have the directness required, and they are not atomistic. It can be no accident that Hume turns to fictions, the emotions of tragedy, and an analysis of the emotion of beauty to fill the gap created by the atomism of original impressions and ideas. Without that element in his philosophy, it remains incomplete. Or at least, so I will argue.

My claims may be summarized as follows. Hume writes within the context of a tradition that makes sentiment evidential. This claim can best be understood by looking closely at its origins in the work of the third Earl of Shaftesbury and by following the history of taste to the point where taste becomes normative as well as experientially primitive. Hume then converts sentiment into evidence by recognizing its influence in human nature and at the same time subjecting it to the same kind of analysis and criticism that any other empirical evidence must be subject to. Sentiment is most prominently displayed in moral and aesthetic judgments, and Hume focuses on those judgments as the paradigms not only for ethics and criticism but also for matters of fact (probable knowledge) and demonstrative reason. Of the two, aesthetics takes priority analytically over morality in Hume’s epistemology because it includes a treatment of fictions that are necessary to connect many of our ideas and impressions. Morals, however, have priority in terms of importance, so Hume focuses on that aspect and incorporates judgments of taste as they arise in the moral arguments.

The problems and diversity in readings of Hume noted above are best understood as the result of Hume’s indirect way of incorporating sentiment into his system. Under the influence of the theory of ideas, Hume works from impressions up to sentiments. The aesthetic dimension of his argument appears only as one moves through the *Treatise*, and it is only when Hume restates his position in the *Essays*

and *Enquiries* that some aesthetic elements are singled out. Nevertheless, what seems inconsistent when isolated in the eighteenth-century debates that Hume inherits can be viewed much more consistently in the light of an aesthetic perspective.

The aesthetic dimension of Hume's philosophy that I seek to explicate could not be understood without the clarification of sentiment itself. Much of the role of sentiment has been worked out in recent books on Hume. In particular, the work of Páll Árdal and Annette Baier deserves mention. Both focus on sentiment in illuminating ways. Árdal is particularly helpful in understanding the crucial slogan, 'Reason is, and ought only be the slave of the passions' (T 2. 3. 3, 415). He writes, for example,

But Hume thinks it may be confusing to use the term ['reason'] in this way, and wants us to amend our language, so as to make plain that when people criticize conduct on the ground that it is unreasonable, the criticism is not always of the same kind.<sup>12</sup>

My only disagreement is that I think Hume's point is more radical. It is not a linguistic recommendation but a recommendation to relocate reason. Reason is directed by the passions; that is a matter of fact for Hume. If it should only be directed by the passions; that is a recommendation about what the proper role of reason is. It serves the passions by its nature (it is a slave), but in its proper place, it is a useful servant. If, then, the anti-sentimentalists have a point about the dangers of irrational actions (and Hume would certainly agree that enthusiasm is not to be encouraged), then the slave must be guided well. That cannot be done unless the true ruler (passion) is recognized and the calm passions, which are the source of judgment, given precedence. This is a very Shaftesburyian point: uncontrolled passion can lead anywhere, but objective reason is a myth. The only corrective is to promote those passions to command that are the true guides and to use passion itself as a way to judgment. Reason will then be ruled as it should and will be able to perform as a slave should – at the command of its legitimate master.

Annette Baier is similarly helpful. She explains:

Hume's *Treatise* campaign to show the limits of 'reason,' to point up what it cannot do alone, was a campaign directed first against deductive reason or 'demonstration,' then against a wider ranging inferential reason that was limited to fact-finding, fact-relating and fact-predicting. This latter needs to 'concur' with some motivating passion before it goes to work for any practical or evaluative purpose. But the love of truth is among our passions, and it can motivate us to reason, to write treatises, to become

moral anatomists who tell ourselves that our systems might also serve practical morality, might concur with other passions besides the love of truth. ‘Reason,’ by the end of the *Treatise*, has effectively teamed up with the calm passions it has served with the *Treatise*. It is no longer ‘reason alone’ (T 3,3,3, 414), and the splenetic humour against it has spent itself, replaced by a ‘serious good humour’d disposition’ (T 1,4,7, 270).<sup>13</sup>

Again, I only wish to go slightly farther. Baier takes the passions as motivators – the love of truth – but not as part of the apparatus of thought. I want to argue that the passions are a necessary part of getting from one idea to another, just as reason was supposed to be in demonstration. Passions do not just motivate. They are part of the thinking process. Baier’s emphasis on the emotional movement to humor and away from care seems to me to misplace both reason and the passions. They are not virtues or abilities; they are the complex of impressions and ideas themselves. In the *Treatise*, both reason and the passions make up the network of impressions and ideas that we call human nature, and character is the complex (and fictional) identity that we give to the impressions and ideas that identify an individual person.

My conclusion, therefore, is that reason and sentiment have been so assimilated to the passions as forms of judgment and argument that they can no longer be separated as demonstrative reason or even Lockean atomism must separate them. The basis for this assimilation is essentially aesthetic (in Alexander Baumgarten’s terms). Feeling itself is what moves the mind from one conclusion to another and what we must subject to analysis and the constraints of philosophical criticism. Hume does that by attending to the problems he inherits – the external world, skepticism, the identity of the self, free will, and increasingly, superstition, religion, immortality, etc. The problems are those posed to a Newtonian philosopher by eighteenth-century culture, and Hume deals with them in those terms. The flaw in much of the ‘naturalism’ attributed to Hume is its biological basis which is foreign to Hume’s more mechanical paradigms. The problems for Hume are still framed in terms of reason vs. individual experience (atomism), substance vs. accident (causation, original impressions), the eternal vs. the ephemeral. But Hume’s way of dealing with these problems presumes a role for sentiment that is essentially aesthetic in the sense that ‘aesthetics’ refers to the way that feeling and sentiment determine how the mind represents its world.

I would add only one additional caution at this point. In recognizing the cultural and social dimension of Hume’s philosophy, some have concluded that Hume ‘aestheticizes’ values in a largely subjective and negative way. For example, Flint Schier concludes,

## INTRODUCTION

Hume was not merely proposing that a good character is aesthetically noteworthy, but that all moral judgments are in fact judgments of ‘mental taste’, reactions of pleasure or pain to the visible display in behaviour of certain character types. Hume’s radical aestheticism informs his particular version of the doctrine that moral qualities are secondary.<sup>14</sup>

This is correct if properly understood. But Schier goes on ‘Of course, this radical ‘aestheticization’ of virtue is wildly counter-intuitive: firstly, because it doesn’t seem necessary that agreement that x is a virtue be underpinned by finding aesthetic delight in x and secondly, because in so far as we do take aesthetic delight in x it is *because* we take x to be a virtue.’<sup>15</sup> So we are back with an accusation that Hume is committing some kind of naturalistic fallacy. The problem with this is just that if Hume is correct and his naturalism is understood within the context of his mechanics of ideas, naturalism is not a fallacy. Hume develops an aesthetics of human nature, but he does not aestheticize human nature. Or at least so I will argue in the chapters that follow.

# SHAFTESBURY AND HUME

To understand properly the use of the concept of sentiment as it developed in the first half of the eighteenth century in relation to aesthetic issues, it must be differentiated from contemporary forms of relativism and subjectivism that are based on a separation of psychological and epistemological evidence. Twentieth-century aesthetics accepts that separation as fundamental and divides its problems accordingly. So, for example, the emotional reaction to fictions is distinguished from the epistemological question of whether such reactions are coherent. Hume and other theorists of taste make no such separation. For them, the questions are posed in terms of individuals and universals, substance and accident. Rejecting universals and substance shifts evidence to the individual and what appears to be accidental. The appeal to sentiment is part of accepting that shift. The problem then becomes how one is to avoid the charges from both theologians and rationalist philosophers that reason and judgment are lost – that the evidential baby has been thrown out with the metaphysical bath water.

The attacks on sentiment come from opposite sides, sometimes simultaneously. Theologically, sentiment is seen as conceding too much to human ability and leaving too little to divine grace and teleology. For the Calvinists and pietists, the primary threat is Ideological. God must be in control of every moment. So the only important sentiment will be religious inspiration, which has no need for reason. Those who are chosen will think rightly; those who are not can be controlled only by force. From the more orthodox Protestant and Catholic side, even that is too individualist. Control must be exercised hierarchically through the church and scripture, and the interpretations of both must be rigorously given, not left to individual whim. In either event, appeals to sentiment are forms of human *hubris* that must be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline.

The rationalist and Aristotelian objections to sentiment are different, but often they are combined with the theological objections. To both, appeals to sentiment fail a basic test for knowledge: sentiment is changeable while knowledge must be

stable and the same for all. If everyone's sentiment rules, as the Earl of Shaftesbury acknowledged, then anything might be approved. Only clear and distinct ideas, governed by logical or self-evident rules, can provide the stability that knowledge must exhibit.<sup>1</sup> The problem is not relativism or subjectivism but the absence of authority. That authority may indeed turn out to be located in the ego, as Descartes deduced, but only if it can be deduced, not if it must be felt emotionally.

In this disputation, a defense of sentiment in both moral and aesthetic contexts grew up. The third Earl of Shaftesbury, the Abbé Du Bos, and various Socinians and free-thinkers are the most prominent progenitors of the defense, but they soon acquire allies in more orthodox writers such as Francis Hutcheson and Friedrich Schleiermacher. In one direction, Rousseau becomes the second generation exponent of sentiment. It is my argument that Hume, in a much more deeply reasoned and defensible way, becomes the exponent from the side of an epistemological psychology and aesthetics.

The role of sentiment in moral philosophy is widely recognized. It was debated in many different forms in the course of the eighteenth century. I will argue that there is a close parallel between these debates and aesthetic issues (Chapter 4). Considerably less attention has been paid to the way that sentiment provides an epistemological basis for aesthetics. I want to focus specifically on the way that 'beauty' and 'taste' present special problems and are incorporated into the epistemology of writers such as Hume. Without an understanding of the way that sentiment can be used to save beauty and taste as epistemological concepts, they become easy targets for the charges of sentimentalism and subjectivism that eventually are leveled at them. I hope to show that Kant's transcendental idealism is not the only way that aesthetics might defend its epistemological legitimacy, though I will stop short of engaging the Kantian and post-Kantian forms of aesthetics directly.

Hume notes a special confusion in the relation of sentiment and reason: the ancients derive morals from sentiment, but affirm that virtue conforms to reason. Moderns derive morals from abstract principles, but speak of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice. Hume credits Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, with recognizing the distinction but falling into the same confusion. It is not clear just what Hume has in mind when he says that the ancients 'seem to consider morals as deriving their existence from taste and sentiment' (EPM 1, 134/170). Peter Jones places a heavy emphasis on Hume's reliance on Cicero.<sup>2</sup> But while this is undoubtedly an important source for Hume's thought, the crucial insight concerns the kind of conformity of the mind to the world discussed in the dialogue toward the end of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Section XI). In the *Treatise*, Hume is clearly aware that he is proposing something very new and difficult to accept. His reference to Shaftesbury suggests that the issues are deeply



embedded in the evolving eighteenth-century understanding of evidence and reasoning.

The reading that I offer of Hume on taste and sentiment does not stand alone, therefore. Without getting involved in questions of influence in the strictly historical sense, I think it is possible to see that the way that Hume understood taste and beauty is of a piece with earlier discussions that were influential and controversial. In other words, Hume is considering problems in a context that promoted sentiment to a controlling position. This has been widely recognized in the literature on Hume.<sup>3</sup> What has not been so clearly seen is that beauty and taste in their relation to art are central to the way that sentiment is able to exercise that control without falling into the kind of subjective individuality typified by contemporary resistance to aesthetic judgments and standards. Therefore, I will try to understand Hume's positions in their aesthetic context. Hume advanced the role of sentiment in relation to beauty and taste considerably, but he was not simply an isolated figure. The *locus classicus* for this tradition is the work of Shaftesbury.<sup>4</sup> Shaftesbury was not alone in turning to sentiment and 'the affections' for moral and aesthetic support, but his work provides one of the most significant extended developments of the position.

### *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*

Shaftesbury wrote only one truly systematic treatise, and it has a complex history. Sometime before 1699, while he was still in his twenties and before he had succeeded to the title, Shaftesbury wrote *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*. John Locke, who was closely allied with the first earl and was indirectly responsible for Shaftesbury's education, is, perhaps, the one to whom Shaftesbury is addressing this work, at least in spirit. Shaftesbury was at that time involved both politically and intellectually with such 'free-thinkers' as Anthony Collins and John Toland. At the same time, he served in parliament from 1695 to 1698 as a part of the country Whig faction. His position as Lord Ashley and as a potential politician would have been sensitive. The manuscript of the *Inquiry* evidently circulated, but it was far too intemperate in its religious opinions to be safely published. Nevertheless, John Toland obtained a copy from Collins and published it in 1699, evidently to the embarrassment and without the permission of Shaftesbury, who, according to his son, attempted to buy up all of the copies. If one considers the political and religious climate and Shaftesbury's position, the situation appears to be confused at best. There is no way to know how Shaftesbury really felt about the appearance of his work. He eventually broke with Toland, but apparently not over this incident. In 1701, he endorsed a translation by Pierre des Maizeaux of the 1699 version and desired that it be sent to Pierre Bayle.<sup>5</sup> He certainly did not repudiate the work itself, and in 1711 revised it for inclusion as the Fourth Treatise in *Characteristics*. There

are substantial stylistic differences between the later version and the 1699 version, and there is a subtle shift in emphasis.<sup>6</sup> The earlier version stresses system and in a more strictly Lockean way avoids references to ‘qualities’ in things and abstract entities such as the soul. The revision is less concerned with such matters. It is more cautious in the way it presents virtue as relative to a system, though it in no way repudiates the idea that what determines the virtue of a creature is the good of the system to which it belongs. On the other hand, the revisions make much more use of beauty, harmony, and order as moral qualities and aesthetic analogies. Shaftesbury’s language had become much more conventionally neo-Platonic. Nevertheless, the systematic positions remain consistent and show how sentiment can be given a place in normative judgments, both in the arts and in morals.

The *Inquiry* begins instrumentally. ‘Good’ is understood in terms of the system to which a creature belongs. Moreover, it is clearly good in terms defined by the system. Shaftesbury is thinking along natural lines. A system will be harmed by what is irregular to that system or what tends to destroy that system. There is an interlocking hierarchical arrangement of systems, and good is system-relative. If there is a universal system that includes all others – and Shaftesbury clearly presumes that there is – its good will be the highest good.

‘System’ should be understood in terms of the classical forms of order and harmony. Regularity is itself a holistic value. Individuals are to be located in relation not just to a cosmos, but as contributing constituents:

Now, if by the natural constitution of any rational creature, the same irregularities of appetite which make him ill to others, make him ill also to himself, and if the same regularity of affections which causes him to be good in one sense, causes him to be good also in the other, then is that goodness by which he is thus useful to others a real good and advantage to himself.

(IVM, I, 243-244)

The appeal to affections and passions depends on regularity. In turn, order and harmony contribute to produce affections that are positive (IVM, I, 279). Shaftesbury does not make system an end in itself apart from its effects. The affections, which are the center of the system, are justified by the system, but they are also self-justifying in their effects.

There are two sources of system. One is natural and holistic. It is as close as Shaftesbury comes to a teleology, but he does not rest much on it. The other is an interior harmony of motion that produces pleasure (IVM, I, 314). Organic wholeness and pleasure are linked because the mind itself takes pleasure in its exercise. In other writers, the emphasis shifts to the pleasure of the imagination and the exercise

of the mind as sources of pleasure. Shaftesbury has a more ‘moral’ version of exercise. Social affections are the product of natural affections, and natural affections are moral because they contribute to a whole.

Virtue arises because the individual is related to the system in such a way that the individual can benefit or harm the whole. So a necessary condition for virtue is good relative to a society where that good includes the individual’s own good. An animal eaten by a man is not virtuous by benefiting the human system, but a man who takes as his own good the good of society is virtuous. Locke proposed a two part ethic: our knowledge of situations can only come from experience, but knowledge of right and wrong is deductively certain – like mathematics. Shaftesbury echoes this (IVM, I, 336).<sup>7</sup> But according to Locke, the ethical premises are not matters of sense; they must be derived from authority by the rational faculty (e.g. reflection on what is given in Biblical revelation.) Locke was careful in most cases (at least for public consumption) to wall off religion and morality from his epistemology. Shaftesbury replaced that religious root of morality with a natural source – the good of a kind – and he refers certainty ultimately to what passes within ourselves. This is the significance of his separation of virtue from religion at the beginning. His purpose is to inquire

What honesty or virtue is, considered by itself, and in what manner it is influenced by religion; how far religion necessarily implies virtue; and whether it be a true saying that it is impossible for an atheist to be virtuous, or share any real degree of honesty or merit.<sup>8</sup>

(IVM, I, 238)

In this sense, the *Inquiry* is a direct consequence of Shaftesbury’s association with Locke but also bears out his rejection of Locke’s careful avoidance of giving offense to traditional Christianity and his disagreement with Locke over the innateness of moral behavior. It becomes understandable in this light how Shaftesbury might have proceeded very cautiously – concealing the depth of his disagreement – and how he might have used the more impetuous and less vulnerable Toland to expose his work while providing deniability.

The initial argument of the *Inquiry* focuses on what is needed to convert individual good to the good of a kind in such a way as to constitute virtue. This is the role of affection. Since what defines ‘good’ is instrumental to the system, a good affection is one that is instrumentally good to the system. If the affection the creature feels is good in this sense, then the individual’s affection is a reliable sign of the system’s good, and the individual is virtuous by virtue of the affection that he or she feels (IVM, I, 247).<sup>9</sup> Affections thus become the evidential source and require careful analysis (IVM, I, 247). They are divided into natural affections and social affections,

and they are distinguished on the basis of whether the affections themselves are good or not. Not all affections are good. Affections are distinguished in two ways. If they are ‘unsocial’ they are bad (IVM, I, 254). Shaftesbury gives as an example the worship of animals. Since cats are not in fact deities, this misapprehension produces a belief that is blamable and an affection that is both irregular and unsocial since it disrupts a natural and useful relation between individuals and the state. It is thus ‘wrong’ in terms of its systematic effect, though a whole society may have learned to worship cats and feel an affection for them. Other examples would include admiration for pirates etc. Affections are also bad if they are essentially selfish. Self-interest is not in itself bad because it normally contributes to a unified whole. There is, in the nature of things, a cooperation between self and society that is mutually beneficial. But immoderate self-interest is bad (IVM, I, 329–330). Selfishness is the root of all evil for Shaftesbury. It produces both misery for the self and a bad character. It is defined not as self-interest but as an excess of self-affections. Shaftesbury clearly does not treat affections uncritically or unsystematically. Their evidentiary value is only possible because of the way that they contribute to the good of a system that is defined by the system, not by the raw feel of the affection.

Shaftesbury sought to provide stability not by a direct analysis of specific passions but by an analysis of their contribution to a stable ‘character.’ Hume shares the assignment of virtue to character, not to actions. Affections constitute the temper of the creature, and only temper determines virtue.

Nothing therefore being properly either goodness or illness in a creature, except what is from natural temper, ‘A good creature is such a one as by the natural temper or bent of his affections is carried primarily and immediately, and not secondarily and accidentally, to good and against ill;’ and an ill creature is just the contrary, viz. ‘One who is wanting in right affections of force enough to carry him directly towards good, and bear him out against ill; or who is carried by other affections directly to ill and against good.’<sup>10</sup>

(IVM, I, 250)

Hume uses similar language: ‘’tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the whole bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end’ (T 2.2.9, 381).<sup>11</sup> Shaftesbury was thinking in terms of an individual as an instance of a species, but he tends toward the formation of a substantive character for each individual. Hume drops the species but ‘human nature’ plays that role. It is both the evidence by which one knows a temper, and the means by which a temper is formed.

For Shaftesbury, temper is fundamentally instrumental, however. What makes a temper good is not how it feels but how it contributes to the species-good (IVM, I, 250). Hume relies on the pleasure or pains themselves and utility in the same situation. For both Hume and Shaftesbury, 'good' and 'ill' are not defined themselves, except vaguely in terms of the kind or system. Shaftesbury takes for granted that they are immediately recognizable by affections. The affections or passions are motives, and determine the quality of actions. The motives are in turn natural and determined by character and temper. The lynch-pin is affections that are at once the signs and the product of virtue.

By itself, however, a good temper is not enough. Good tempered dogs may benefit their masters and feel affection for them and thus satisfy everything so far. To be virtuous, the actions themselves must be the object of affection. At this point, Shaftesbury has learned his Locke well and adopts Locke's epistemology. Not sensible things but the actions and affections themselves become the objects of affections because we have ideas of reflection as well as ideas of sense (IVM, I, 251).<sup>12</sup> So the affections generated by reflection make a creature virtuous. This is the Lockean pattern of reflection. Hutcheson abandons it, and Hume returns to it but with a different analysis of ideas. In Shaftesbury, there are affections for affections, so that affections can be at once the sign of what is virtuous and the cause of virtue. Hume has a similar double relation of impressions from primary to secondary impression. Affections become signs in that reflection on affections produces affections that, as moral qualities, are self-evident. They are causes of virtue in that only such reflection provides affections that are not just directed toward some action or interest but toward the having of affections. Virtue requires both that one exhibit the morally good affections, and that one do so out of affection for those affections.

Reflection is also a source of moral judgment. It provides a definition of conscience.

There are two things which to a rational creature must be horridly offensive and grievous, viz. 'to have the reflection in his mind of any unjust action or behaviour which he knows to be naturally odious and ill-deserving; or of any foolish action or behaviour which he knows to be prejudicial to his own interest or happiness.'

(IVM, I, 305)

Reflection is the key to having such affections. This is 'conscience.' The difficulty, of course, is that Shaftesbury's psychology at this point seems rather naive, even compared to its Lockean source. An epistemological reflection is limited. When it also becomes conscience, it is being asked to do double duty, and it is more difficult to make the connection between having a particular affection and its moral character.

Shaftesbury assumes that such reflection will be painful. That does not allow for repression, self-delusion, or any of the other psychological moves that avoid the consequences, however. In Shaftesbury's terms, it does not sufficiently acknowledge the presence of evil and sin, and it thus contributes to the impression that Shaftesbury is naively optimistic about human nature. Hume cannot be accused of such optimism. He frankly acknowledges that our passions arise from impressions of pleasure and pain and that those impressions do not conform to moral platitudes. The poor make us uncomfortable and malice is a form of joy (T 2.2.5, 362 and T 2.2.9, 381).

Between 1699 and 1711, Shaftesbury interpolated a significant addition to the *Inquiry*. For Locke, an internal sense is merely a form of reflection. Shaftesbury came to consider a stronger version of internal sense. He places it specifically on the same grounds as the eye, and claims for it a similar immediacy (IVM, I, 252–253).<sup>13</sup> Just how far Shaftesbury had moved in the direction of a real sense is questionable. He still arrives at the same conclusion (IVM, I, 253).<sup>14</sup> Senses still depend on reflection. The mind is 'spectator or auditor of other minds' (IVM, I, 250) and has its senses as a result. Only reflectively does one have this immediate sense, and the extent to which it is a sense is obviously metaphorical. The response is to something in the affections themselves, harmony and order, but they in turn are responses to something in things. Shaftesbury accepts the authority of the affections without conceding anything about their ultimate source. His argument is that to deny the affections is impossible. What cannot be denied must be the case. That does not yet commit him to any perception independent of the affections, but it avoids the imputation that it is only the affections that are the objects. He certainly does not press sense as far as Hutcheson does, and a moral sense remains essentially a form of sensibility rather than a sixth or seventh sense. As we shall see, Hume is closer to Shaftesbury in this regard than he is to Hutcheson.

In one sense, actions are done for the sake of the affection they produce – for a moral and not just a natural end. This a crucial move. It is the way that Shaftesbury forges a link between the fact *that* we feel and the moral *ought*. Having begun instrumentally, he now has a way to distinguish moral affections from merely natural ones. Dogs that love and benefit their masters lack the crucial moral dimension. Persons who act for the public good are virtuous because they not only do the good act and do it for the love of society (or the other); they know they have done good and have an affection for the action. That affection is a necessary condition for virtue. At the same time, only affections are able to move us to actions (IVM, I, 285). Hume adopts this position radically. Only passions *can* move us to actions. Shaftesbury does not go quite as far as Hume in ceding to the passions motive force for actions because reflection provides control as well as making the resulting affections moral. He is moving toward making the passions the only moral force,

however, and that was one of the points upon which his critics seized (just as Hume was criticized and misunderstood on this issue).

At this point, Shaftesbury has a problem. Which determines virtue: the action, or the affection? A purely instrumental answer will no longer do because the object is now the creature's action or affection and the virtue attaches to the creature via a second affection, not just the act performed. (Hume has a similar argument for strong passions that require a double relation.) That affection could be for a good affection. The list of things that are outside the bounds of virtue are all those things that Shaftesbury takes to be universally disapproved by sentiment – such things as treachery, ingratitude, cruelty, torment, barbarity, brutality – regardless of any justification by religion or the state; the positives are less obvious – they include love and friendship, but any positive affection can be distorted and made vicious. So what one really has is a negative test. Any attempt to justify certain things will be simply unnatural and outside the pale. Shaftesbury's appeal to affections produces a moral substantive that is psychological, introspective, and individual. The lists of passions that he generates provide the material for analysis in other writers including Hume.

Both Shaftesbury and Hume are rhetorically cautious, but it is clear that their reliance on sentiment does not extend to religious fervor. The arguments are interesting not just for their main line, but for how Shaftesbury manipulates sense to avoid the weakness that his affirmation that everything is 'for the best' implies with respect to an obvious loss of virtue, and for the light they throw on what a moral sense is. There are three cases. The first case involves the loss of such a sense. Here the argument is that one might know the good or ill of the species, but even recognizing what is rewardable and punishable, one might still lack any feeling for or against such acts. This places Shaftesbury on the opposite side from Kant since according to Shaftesbury, even if one does one's duty, one does not act virtuously unless one's feelings support the action. Kant, of course, claims that the highest virtue would be to act from duty even if one's feelings opposed it. However, in spite of Shaftesbury's instrumentalism, he is not a consequentialist. Instead, sense is affected (IVM, I, 259).<sup>15</sup> This confirms what has been already noted – the moral sense is a reflection on other actions with an instrumental teleology. If I do not hate what is destructive, I lack all moral sense, because that affection of hate is the moral element (as opposed to simply the good element). The reason for calling it a sense is that it is natural; it is not itself a product of rational judgment (IVM, I, 260).<sup>16</sup>

The second case considers the mistakes possible. Here Shaftesbury was much more concerned to show how dangerous false beliefs and religion can be. He shares almost exactly Locke's views on toleration – it is not good itself but as a guard

against dogmatism and enthusiasm, and it does not extend to either papism (the ultimate form of dogma) or atheism (which cannot bind society together), though like the true grandson of the first earl, the young Shaftesbury is more afraid of the former. There is an interesting argument with respect to moral sense, however (IVM, I, 264).<sup>17</sup> If the will or law of God makes something right or wrong, then in true nominalist fashion, right and wrong would simply mean what was willed and could be directly contrary to moral sense. Shaftesbury obviously believed an affection cannot be directed so arbitrarily, so an appeal to the law or will of God cannot form the basis of morality. It is interesting, however, that Shaftesbury reasoned here just as Locke did with respect to names. Names are nominalist; if one is to avoid arbitrariness, one must retreat to ideas and that forms the basis for the claims of sense.

The third case considers the opposition of other affections. This was the most difficult case for Shaftesbury since a simple appeal to affection leaves no grounds for preferring one to the other as eighteenth-century writers on aesthetics were all too aware. However, here the argument is whether a deity helps or not, and we must constantly keep in mind that the moral sense is not a simple sense but a reflective judgment whose soundness is guaranteed by the objective good of the system as a whole. Shaftesbury reminds us of this when he sets up the following case: a creature with good qualities but lacking the power of reflection will immediately approve of those qualities as soon as it acquires the ability to reflect on them (IVM, I, 266).<sup>18</sup> The distinction between the moral creature and the pre-moral one is reason, understood as a reflective faculty. The point, of course, is that a moral affection precedes any theological belief in God – it is present as soon as the creature begins to reflect on a potentially virtuous affection.

To sum up, then, belief in a deity does not necessarily support virtue because the affections that link the individual and whole themselves rest on the reflective faculty and these precede belief. That precedence justifies calling them a moral sense, just as their affectiveness opens them to the three lines of attack. In so far as religion promotes those countervailing affections, particularly through dogma and the selfishness of rewards and punishments, it is not supporting virtue. The claim of a perfect theism to offer an advantage is its ability to sustain the moral affections by providing a belief in a universal system that subordinates intermediate evils to its own good and thus directs the soundness of the moral affections.

Far from resting virtue simply on a moral sense, Shaftesbury tests affections by a standard – ‘the good of that system . . . where he is included’ – and to be virtuous is to achieve a coherence of all the affections and passions in line with the good of one’s kind, and forming a disposition of mind and temper (IVM, I, 280).<sup>19</sup> One does not simply perceive right and wrong by a sense; one becomes virtuous by forming



a whole family of affections that are suitable. The triumph of those affections over competing affections for self etc. is a contingent matter of an agreement of a part (the affections) with a whole – the good of the whole.

In Book II, having established in Book I what virtue is, Shaftesbury turned to consider how one can and should act to achieve it. The dominant problem here, as for so many opponents of Hobbes, was to achieve a rapprochement between private affections and those related to the species as a whole. On its face, it might seem that selfish affections not only oppose the moral sense, but also offer greater benefit to the creatures. The arguments in Book II are all designed to show that not only in nature but in the economy of rational creatures, there is a coincidence of self-interest and the interest of the whole through an organization of the affections when all affections are taken into account – in other words, that the good of the system and of the self are one (IVM, I, 282). Logically, the governing affection must be directed toward either the good of the system, of the self, or neither. The task is to show that the first two systems coincide. Shaftesbury considers in some detail the ways in which these options are exercised. His argument is instrumental, and it is not optimistic except on a cosmic scale. The coincidence is contingent, and knowledge of it is empirical.

The important point for Shaftesbury is to establish that social affections are superior to natural affections, and that both are superior to mere sense (IVM, I, 295). The ground for this argument is apparently that anyone who experiences both the pleasures of sense and society will recognize the superiority of the latter. This claim comes close to losing any empirical force, however. If one does not find the social affections superior, then one is immoral. The empirical claim is supposed to be that no one who acknowledges both will opt for private affections, but it evaporates because if the social affection does not prevail, it is not strong enough; if it does, that is proof it is the stronger. The only way that one knows that one has both affections is if the social affections are given preference. Here, as elsewhere, Shaftesbury has a problem about how far he is willing to go in allowing a simple appeal to passions to be decisive.

The problem becomes acute when one considers ‘unnatural passions’ that rather than producing pleasure ‘must,’ on Shaftesbury’s view, make one miserable (IVM, I, 334). This is really no explanation at all, especially since it both denies pleasure in unnatural passions and explains it as the result of relief from torment. Shaftesbury never quite gets his psychology to fit his passions and affections. It begins to look as if ‘natural affections’ must play the role of Locke’s ideas. Pleasure arises from natural affections and just as with ideas, moral content arises from reflection on those basic affections. Shaftesbury was understood – for example by Balguy<sup>20</sup> – to base morals on feelings, but if natural affections play the role of simple ideas, then

that is not quite correct. Natural affections are not cognitive moral ideas, nor are they virtuous in themselves. Shaftesbury might well say that we only arrive at an idea of justice – which is an idea of reflection, and wholly the product of the mind’s combining of ideas – by reflecting on the natural affections we have for some acts or relations of creatures to their system. So here, love – reciprocally perceived – is only recognized as moral as a result of reflection on the natural affections it arouses. On this reading, natural affections are not themselves moral ideas but the simple ideas on which moral ideas are founded by reflection (reason).

It is important to see that Shaftesbury is doing a lot more than just saying that we feel bad when we do wrong and that our conscience will punish us. His argument is that natural affections are causally moral. So he must show that the widely accepted consequences of a bad conscience and the equally widely accepted pleasures of a consciousness of virtue are sufficient to sustain the moral claims of virtue itself. He argues from cases, but the stronger part of the argument virtually identifies natural affection with moral sense via pleasure/pain. To have one is to have the other – not just because God rewards and punishes or because of moral absolutes (Balguy) but because natural affection either is or is the cause of the pleasures/pains that moral sense requires. Thus one is led to the following conclusion: ‘For if the chief happiness be from the mental pleasures, and the chief mental pleasures are such as we have described, and are founded in natural affection, it follows “that to have the natural affections is to have the chief means and power of self-enjoyment, the highest possession and happiness of life”’ (IVM, I, 309).<sup>21</sup> Once the conclusion is established, it needs little more to see that lack of affections is going to produce ill. Much of what follows is a catalogue of the ways we make ourselves miserable by a disordered, immoderate, and unnatural course.

The priority of affections and passions in the *Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* is thus complex and qualified. Shaftesbury took over many epistemological elements from Locke, but he understood them less systematically and more intuitively than Locke. He disagreed strongly with what he took to be Locke’s coldness toward moral affections. Beauty and taste begin to appear in the revisions in the *Inquiry* because Shaftesbury expects a quite traditional equation of beauty and truth. But the real connection is that aesthetic affections test moral affections and share the same problems. Francis Hutcheson implicitly understood that when he began with a separate *Inquiry Concerning Beauty* as a preface to the moral inquiry whose relation to Shaftesbury he acknowledges. Shaftesbury’s other writings collected in *Characteristics*, published separately, or remaining in manuscript form (and included in *Second Characters*) make much more explicit the affective basis of morality and its aesthetic implications and parallels. Hume is the logical inheritor of this tradition.

One must approach these writings with some sympathy if they are to yield

philosophical insight into the development of that tradition. The *Inquiry* is only marginally systematic when compared to the rigor of Locke and Hume. The subsequent writings are even more difficult to approach in philosophical terms. They are occasional and rhetorical in a very specific way. Shaftesbury assumed the position of one who disdains an audience. He writes for a few friends he claims, prints for their convenience, and anyone else who reads is incidental (S, I, 197ff.). This denial of audience is more than just an artifice. The idea that a writer is really engaged in self-examination is tied to the idea that only friends can understand what is being written.<sup>22</sup> That suggests that Shaftesbury's audience is essentially intimate, and this has some basis in the way that he understood literature to work; it presumes a reader who is not simply neutral. Authors write for a much more select audience than we acknowledge; and conversely, lacking such an audience, they do not succeed. It also suggests that the rise of a public, particularly of bourgeois, middle-class readers, is opposed by Shaftesbury's demands. He is not too aristocratic, but too intimate for such an audience; his *persona* is neither that of an authority nor that of an entertainer but that of a confidant. One must be prepared to enter into those confidences with sympathy if the affective basis for morals and aesthetics is to become evident. In this sense, aesthetics has priority for Shaftesbury as I believe it does for Hume.

One must also realize, however, that Shaftesbury is no romantic who expects to indulge the affections at the expense of other values. Shaftesbury does not so much argue for the priority of passion and sentiment as he fears that priority. His observation is that passion controls and forms our character and temper. Extreme passions are infectious, communicative, and potentially overwhelming. This is both empirical observation and his assumed basis for human nature. In the background is Locke, but where Locke is pressing revolutionary claims for the individual against established authority, Shaftesbury is responding to a threat. Unchecked, the priority of passion will take one anywhere. Here then is Shaftesbury's dilemma. Sense and passion are powerful and sometimes necessary and legitimate. But they are also seductive and overwhelming. Neither reason, in its Cartesian forms, nor authority in its ecclesiastical and royal forms can control passion. Shaftesbury does not actually say this, but it is part and parcel of his Protestant-Whig faith. So he looks elsewhere for a way to test the spirits and control the genie of the passions. His antidote is self-examination and humor. Toleration is only possible under those conditions. Those who are not capable of open examination – dogmatists, most notably papists – are not included in toleration. Everyone else is. Within that context, Shaftesbury develops an aestheticized procedure for moral and critical analysis.

Hume shares both Shaftesbury's fears and his solutions. Following the tradition of Shaftesbury, he acknowledges the priority of the passions. In itself, however,

that is not a good thing. It threatens both social order and personal peace of mind. Hume attributed his early breakdown to the diseases of the philosopher. In the spirit of Shaftesbury, Hume found a solution in tolerance and an ironic humor. That led many of his contemporaries to attribute to him a lack of philosophical seriousness and a perversity of spirit. The parallels to the accusations against Shaftesbury are striking. In both cases, the accusations are fundamentally mistaken. Neither Shaftesbury nor Hume trusts unrestrained and uncontrolled passion. They fear them. So they look for ways to distinguish true passions from false enthusiasm. Hume goes much further than Shaftesbury to make the passions an epistemologically respectable source of judgment, but at least to most of his audience, he is no more successful.

I have spent considerable time laying out Shaftesbury's use of the affections as a basis for moral judgment because it is that judgmental function of the affections that provides the crucial link between affections or sentiment on the one hand and taste and beauty on the other. Shaftesbury's obvious neo-Platonic language allows him to continue to understand 'beauty' as a form of higher existence while he adapts the affections to the task of judging true virtue and beauty. Gradually, as one moves from the 1699 version of the *Inquiry* to Shaftesbury's mature version, beauty becomes more important. It is the substantive to which taste responds, so taste is also a form of judgment. That is the epistemological line that I seek to highlight. I now turn more directly to how art plays a role in judging the affections.

### **Art and character**

Art and moral judgment play a dialectical role in shaping character, especially through 'raillery' and criticism. Character, in turn, assures us of good taste and moral probity. Thus Shaftesbury lays the foundation for treating sentiment and taste as constitutive elements in our mental life. If my arguments are correct, for both Shaftesbury and Hume, philosophy itself is understood as an aesthetic enterprise. It has three elements: good breeding or manners, what is just, and what is beautiful. Shaftesbury writes:

To philosophise, in a just signification, is but to carry goodbreeding a step higher. For the accomplishment of breeding is, to learn whatever is decent in company or beautiful in arts; and the use of philosophy is, to learn what is just in society and beautiful in Nature and the order of the world.

(MR, II, 255)

The passage echoes Balthasar Gracian's description of taste. Hume could have concurred. The link between breeding (or 'taste' in one of its senses), justice, and beauty is very close, and they are united in the formation of a 'temper' and character. Shaftesbury does not have a detailed ontology for what this personal unity is, nor is he overly concerned with its mode of existence. His principle concern is with its formation. The end of philosophy is a particular kind of person. What he had referred to as affections in the *Inquiry* may be thought of more generally as simply 'the heart.' The object of philosophy is to produce a whole:

'Tis not a head merely, but a heart and resolution which must complete the real philosopher. Both characters aim at what is excellent, aspire to a just taste, and carry in view the model of what is beautiful and becoming. Accordingly, the respective conduct and distinct manners of each party are regulated; the one according to the perfectest ease and good entertainment of company, the other according to the strictest interest of mankind and society; the one according to a man's rank and quality in his private station, the other according to his rank and dignity in nature.

(MR, II, 255–256)

Taste is as much a moral as an aesthetic form of judgment.

The taste of beauty and the relish of what is decent, just, and amiable perfects the character of the gentleman and the philosopher. And the study of such a taste or relish will, as we suppose, be ever the great employment and concern of him who covets as well to be wise and good as agreeable and polite.

(MR, II, 255)

Shaftesbury does not equate moral and aesthetic judgments themselves. He is not an aesthete in the later sense of one who thinks that taste replaces morals. (He was perhaps misunderstood in that way. See the discussion of Berkeley's *Alciphron*, pp. 63–69.) The common denominator is character.

Nevertheless, character and manners are very closely associated. In order to judge authors, they must be found to satisfy social and moral criteria:

It remains that we pass sentence on our authors after having precluded them their last refuge. Nor do we condemn them on their want of wit or fancy, but of judgment and correctness, which can only be attained by thorough diligence, study, and impartial censure of themselves. 'Tis

manners which is wanting. 'Tis a due sentiment of morals which alone can make us knowing in order and proportion, and give us the just tone and measure of human passion.

(S, I, 181)

'Due sentiment' is still a complex notion, however. If Shaftesbury cannot escape sentiment, he also does not simply take it for granted. On the one hand, sentiment connects morals and manners. Commenting on his own work in the assumed form of a third person reference, Shaftesbury writes: 'His pretension . . . is to recommend morals on the same foot with what in a lower sense is called manners, and to advance philosophy (as harsh a subject as it may appear) on the very foundation of what is called agreeable and polite' (MR, II, 256–257). But he can only do that because he equates morality and beauty. 'And thus, after all, the most natural beauty in the world is honesty and moral truth. For all beauty is truth' (SC, I, 94). This, of course, sounds conventionally neo-Platonic, and in a sense it is. What makes it more than that is sentiment, and what makes sentiment crucial is that if it can be disciplined by philosophy, it has an immediate and direct control of actions and the formation of character. So Shaftesbury links the three elements – sentiment, morality, and beauty – in a network that depends ultimately on sentiment.

The direct form of judgment of sentiment is taste. However, taste is not itself simply sentiment. Shaftesbury held that certain moral sentiments were innate. This was one element of his quarrel with Locke. But taste as a form of judgment is more than pure sentiment. It has to be formed by experience.

Now a taste or judgment, 'tis supposed, can hardly come ready formed with us into the world. Whatever principles or materials of this kind we may possibly bring with us, whatever good faculties, senses, or anticipating sensations and imaginations may be of Nature's growth, and arise properly of themselves, without our art, promotion, or assistance, the general idea that is formed of all this management and the clear notion we attain of what is preferable and principal in all these subjects of choice and estimation will not, as I imagine, by any person be taken for innate. Use, practice, and culture must precede the understanding and wit of such an advanced size and growth as this. A legitimate and just taste can neither be begotten, made, conceived, or produced without the antecedent labour and pains of criticism.

(MR, II, 257)

Taste belongs to judgment but it is not separate from sentiment. By putting the two together, Shaftesbury is able to have both his immediate response and his cultured,

classicist judgment. This is precisely why the analogy of taste became so important to eighteenth-century aesthetics.

The formation of taste is virtually equivalent to breeding and manners.

A little better taste (were it a very little) in the affair of life itself would, if I mistake not, mend the manners and secure the happiness of some of our noble countrymen, who come with high advantage and a worthy character into the public. But ere they have long engaged in it, their worth unhappily becomes venal. Equipages, titles, precedencies, staffs, ribbons, and other such glittering ware are taken in exchange for inward merit, honour, and a character.

(MR, II, 259–260)

But taste itself stands in need of judgment. Some taste is clearly venal. Shaftesbury does not approve of all taste, only that which forms a good character. The question must be how one knows which taste is venal and which produces a good character. If taste is not innate, it is also not reasoned. The answer must be that what is approved by affection, under the tests to which affection is subjected, distinguishes taste. Affection does not equal taste, but they support each other. Those who have exchanged a venal for a good taste, ‘know better within themselves, and have occasion to find that after all the world too knows better, and that their few friends and admirers have either a very shallow wit or a very profound hypocrisy’ (MR, II, 260). Thus the formation of taste is not simply a matter of accumulating experience passively. It is itself a process that has to be controlled and formed. There is a considerable danger in Shaftesbury’s approach that taste will turn out to be nothing more than what a well-mannered, Whig aristocrat approves.

To guard against that danger, one turns inward.

’Tis we ourselves create and form our taste. If we resolve to have it just, ’tis in our power. We may esteem and resolve, approve and disapprove, as we would wish. For who would not rejoice to be always equal and consonant to himself, and have constantly that opinion of things which is natural and proportionable? But who dares search opinion to the bottom, or call in question his early and prepossessing taste? Who is so just to himself as to recall his fancy from the power of fashion and education to that of reason? Could we, however, be thus courageous, we should soon settle in ourselves such an opinion of good as would secure to us an invariable, agreeable, and just taste in life and manners.

(MR, II, 271–272)

The power of self is over itself. That, to some extent, mitigates the vagueness of the process. This self that is to exercise choice is itself in a process of formation. Reason is reflection and comparison of ideas. So self-examination is not simply an appeal to a fixed ego with innate rational standards. For Shaftesbury, the ultimate resource is inward proportion and harmony. This is strongly neo-Platonic in its standard of inwardness, but it is equally individualistic. Anyone can do this if they so choose, and the harmony is itself inward self-consistency. Reason is an inward capacity, not an outward deduction or a transcendent perfection. Shaftesbury avoids rationalist perfection and harmony because he relies only on self. That, of course, is what made him so dangerous to orthodox religion. There is no need for faith or grace in the formation of taste.

The arts parallel morals and offer a test case.

Could we once convince ourselves of what is in itself so evident, 'That in the very nature of things there must of necessity be the foundation of a right and wrong taste, as well in respect of inward characters and features as of outward person, behavior, and action,' we should be far more ashamed of ignorance and wrong judgment in the former than in the latter of these subjects. Even in the Arts, which are mere imitations of that outward grace and beauty, we not only confess a taste, but make it a part of refined breeding to discover amidst the many false manners and ill styles the true and natural one, which represents the real beauty and Venus of the kind. . . . And thus the sense of inward numbers, the knowledge and practice of the social virtues, and the familiarity and favour of the moral graces, are essential to the character of a deserving artist and just favourite of the Muses. Thus are the Arts and virtues mutually friends; and thus the science of virtuosi and that of virtue itself become, in a manner, one and the same.

(S, I, 216–217)

Everything depends, therefore, on the models and the inward perfection of taste. But how does one know which works are to provide models? That is precisely the problem to which Hume will turn in 'Of the Standard of Taste.' Shaftesbury is maddeningly imprecise at this point. There is a kind of appeal to authority; one develops taste by first 'inquiring which are the truest pieces' and then persisting 'till he has brought himself to relish them, and finds their hidden graces and perfections' (S, I, 218). Of course these must be accepted models of perfection. How they become accepted and what is to be made of critical disagreements is not addressed. We are told only that taste is to be formed to the best models. Everything depends on the models: 'Our relish or taste must of necessity grow barbarous, whilst barbarian customs, savage manners, Indian wars, and wonders of the terra



incognita, employ our leisure hours and are the chief materials to furnish out a library' (S, I, 221–222). Clearly taste is not infallible, though it is still immediate. It is not changed by reason but by repeated experience – a point Hume never tires of repeating. That fits the judgmental aspect of taste. If one tastes more wines, what at first seemed indistinguishable become distinguishable, and pleasure and pain are enhanced where before they were only grossly stimulated. But if one does not like wine, does repeated tasting develop a liking? Perhaps. Shaftesbury seems to think so. At least in the case of works of art and of moral virtues, there will be a kind of test of time. Hume had exactly the same problem for the same reasons. The difference is that Shaftesbury also appeals to perfection and harmony, though these remain vague.

Shaftesbury has one additional element that helps to correct the formation of taste and informs self-analysis. Far from following the pattern of later aesthetics and declaring war on critics as enemies of aesthetic experience, Shaftesbury looks to critics as one more way of forming taste. Hutcheson can, perhaps, be credited with a movement in the direction of 'aesthetic experience' that becomes in the nineteenth century after Kant's *Third Critique* a separate autonomous realm into which criticism should not intrude. Nothing like that is present in Shaftesbury nor in Hume after him. Their way of introducing sentiment makes its individuality a problem, not a virtue. Shaftesbury needs all of the means of controlling the formation of taste that are available. He appeals to critics for such aid.

For this reason we presume not only to defend the cause of critics, but to declare open war against those indolent supine authors, performers, readers, auditors, actors or spectators who, making their humour alone the rule of what is beautiful and agreeable, and having no account to give of such their humour or odd fancy, reject the criticizing or examining art, by which alone they are able to discover the true beauty and worth of every object.

(MR, II, 257)

Taste is not automatic but educated. It is a form of judgment as well as a form of sense and of character. The role of critics is to provide the internal comparisons without which harmony would not be perceived. Criticism is a part of the testing that Shaftesbury also applies to religion and character itself.

In what form or manner soever criticism may appear amongst us, or critics choose to exert their talent, it can become none besides the grossly superstitious or ignorant to be alarmed at this spirit. For if it be ill-managed,

and with little wit, it will be destroyed by something wittier in the kind. If it be witty itself, it must of necessity advance wit.

(S, I, 170)

Critical disagreement is less of a problem for Shaftesbury than it is for Hume because Shaftesbury understands criticism as part of the inward process of self-examination and self-formation. Critical disputes should be settled by reference to one's own experience, and warring critics should probably be sent off to do some more self-examination of their own.

### **The power of the affections**

A central element in Shaftesbury's implicit argument is that our affections are a necessary condition for arriving at conclusions. While this argumentative structure remains unsystematic, it means that we cannot argue ourselves into morality or good taste if we do not first have the supporting affections. The real problem for Shaftesbury is the passions themselves. Temperamentally, he is more suited to a neo-Platonic transcendent morality. However, he is forced to acknowledge the leading role of the passions, which would be unacceptable to a traditional neo-Platonist such as the Cambridge Platonists with whom Shaftesbury was familiar. He does not arrive at as explicit a combination of the roles of reason and the passions as does Hume, but fundamentally, passion must be admitted as the motive force for action and taste.

For let Will be ever so free, Humour and Fancy, we see, govern it. And these, as free as we suppose them, are often changed we know not how, without asking our consent, or giving us any account. If opinion be that which governs and makes the change, 'tis itself as liable to be governed and varied in its turn. And by what I can observe of the world, fancy and opinion stand pretty much upon the same bottom.

(S, I, 122)

This not an endorsement of the situation, but it is an honest appraisal. So on the one hand, one is confronted with the fact that human beings are governed by an undisciplined assortment of fancies, opinions, and tastes.

Thus we see, after all, that 'tis not merely what we call principle, but a taste which governs men. They may think for certain, 'this right, or that wrong': they may believe 'this a crime, or that a sin; this punishable by man, or that

by God': yet if the savour of things lies cross to honesty; if the fancy be florid and the appetite high towards the subaltern beauties and lower order of worldly symmetries and proportions, the conduct will infallibly turn this latter way.

(MR, II, 265)

On the other hand, this not a desirable result from the standpoint of morality, virtue, and character. The problem, then, is how Shaftesbury is to continue to acknowledge the leading role of the passions without simply ceding control to them as his opponents feared that he had.

In order to understand Shaftesbury's response to this problem, one must pay close attention to how the passions operate. Their function is to move the self to action. But in order to do that, they must be grounded in a perception of reality. One is not moved by what one does not believe. Sense, belief, opinion, and fancy all work to represent a situation that is felt as much as perceived. 'The appearance of reality is necessary to make any passion agreeably represented; and to be able to move others we must first be moved ourselves, or at least seem to be so, upon some probable grounds' (L, I, 77–78). Hume takes this a step farther by equating belief with the strength of impressions and he uses it to solve the problem of how fictions can have the effects that they do. Correspondingly, Shaftesbury makes this observation in the context of a discussion of why the ancients could appeal effectively to the muses while modern appeals seem 'awkward and spiritless.' The underlying theory seems to be that being moved oneself provides a basis in belief that can then be adopted by others at least hypothetically. Otherwise, it would make no sense that we continue to find appeals to the muses poetically moving in any case. We adopt the beliefs of the ancient authors, but modern authors for whom the muses are mere allegory do not move us at all. Implicitly, then, the effectiveness of the passions is grounded in a sensible and perceptible response to reality. That places Shaftesbury's theory of the passions on a very different basis from his neo-Platonic models. He is essentially acknowledging Locke's experiential foundation while distrusting its result.

The distrust goes very deep and is directed not just at experience but at the fundamentally mechanistic model of human behavior.

You have heard it, my friend, as a common saying, that interest governs the world. But, I believe, whoever looks narrowly into the affairs of it will find that passion, humour, caprice, zeal, faction, and a thousand other springs, which are counter to self-interest, have as considerable a part in the movements of this machine. . . . When, perhaps, the mainsprings of this machine will be found to be either these very natural affections

themselves, or a compound kind derived from them, and retaining more than one half of their nature.

(SC, I, 77–78)

In other words, because human beings are machines, they are moved by the ‘springs’ of their emotional and mental life. Those are not self-interest but immediate responses to what one sees and feels. Taste, in this sense, is an analogy of sensual response.

The mechanistic model is flawed, however. It does not take into account what the interest of the person is. One who describes a watch only in terms of its moving parts ignores its function, which is to tell time, and consequently does not understand the watch.

Should a philosopher, after the same manner, employing himself in the study of human nature, discover only what effects each passion wrought upon the body; what change of aspect of feature they produced; and in what different manner they affected the limbs and muscles, this might possibly qualify him to give advice to an anatomist or a limner, but not mankind or to himself; since according to this survey he considered not the real operation or energy of his subject, nor contemplated the man, as real man, and as a human agent, but as a watch or common machine.

(S, I, 190–191)

So Shaftesbury does not accept the deist watchmaker model as adequate, nor accept the machine metaphor as basic. Instead, he turns to psychology. If the passions are in control, as they must be acknowledged to be, and if they operate mechanically, as they seem to do, then one must look deeper into the mechanism. The result is an essentially psychological philosophy (as opposed to a philosophical psychology). The inner working of the psyche, including its purpose, interests, and ends must be accounted for if fancy and opinion are not to careen out of control from moment to moment. This is the fundamental connection between Shaftesbury and Hume. They share a perception that only by understanding the passions themselves can one account for the whole of the human self. Shaftesbury and Hume are both psychologists rather than mechanists. They differ in the depth and direction of their analysis, but they start with the same insight into the problem.

From the beginning, an analysis of beauty and art must be a part of their psychology. The mechanical model only follows the external movement. Art and beauty present emotions for our inspection. The artist must know how to move us. Beauty is the most effective form for producing passions, especially when it is founded in our perception of a specific human reality.

Of all other beauties which virtuosos pursue, poets celebrate, musicians sing, and architects or artists, of whatever kind, describe or form, the most delightful, the most engaging and pathetic, is that which is drawn from real life, and from the passions. Nothing affects the heart like that which is purely from itself, and of its own nature; such as the beauty of sentiments, the grace of actions, the turn of characters, and the proportions and features of a human mind.

(SC, I, 90)

The power of beauty to move is based on its direct relation to an inner self that is the object of virtue for Shaftesbury. It follows that once one recognizes the power of the affections, one must take account of the most powerful source of producing them.

One must distinguish still between the natural affections that are merely one's own immediate response and the social affections that have as their object society or a public. Once the priority of the passions is granted, however, even the social affections may become suspect. The problem is that passions are communicable, and social passions may run to enthusiasm. Shaftesbury was aware of the dangers of mass psychological effects.

One may with good reason call every passion panic which is raised in a multitude and conveyed by aspect or, as it were, by contact or sympathy. Thus popular fury may be called panic when the rage of the people, as we have sometimes known, has put them beyond themselves; especially where religion has had to do. . . . Such force has society in ill as well as in good passions: and so much stronger any affection is for being social and communicative.

(L, I, 13)

Passion is communicable, and the danger is being put beyond oneself. Sympathy is very important in Hume's account of the passions because it accounts for how what is not directly experienced can nevertheless be moving. Shaftesbury notes the same problem, but his focus is on the dangers to the self that social passions can pose when they run to enthusiasm. Hume's path parallels that of Shaftesbury, but, here, as elsewhere, Hume goes much farther along it. 'Sympathy' remained a social-psychological term for Shaftesbury; Hume recognized its epistemological necessity.

One cannot give in to passions, but one cannot avoid their effects. The result is a continuing struggle.

Either I work upon my fancies, or they on me. If I give quarter, they will not. There can be no truce, no suspension of arms between us. The one or the other must be superior and have the command. For if the fancies are left to themselves, the government must of course be theirs. And then, what difference between such a state and madness?

(S, I, 208)

Hume recognized the same threat. When the passions are unstable and unable to provide social norms, they become a form of madness. Shaftesbury's response is essentially rhetorical, in a very strong and almost contemporary sense of the power of rhetoric. One gains command by means of soliloquy or self-examination. The problem is that one cannot identify what Shaftesbury means by this 'I' that is to combat fancy. He vacillates between a substantive ego and a more empirical self that is formed in the process. In spite of the tendency to slide back into the former, the latter is closer to what is implied by the whole pattern of self-analysis and self-formation that Shaftesbury has made the object of his writings. Hume has exactly the same problem when he must refer the passions of love and hate to a self that his epistemology had reduced to a 'bundle' of ideas.

Taste is the point at which the struggle is engaged. 'The great business in this (as in our lives, or in the whole of life) is 'to correct our taste.' For whither will not *taste* lead us?' (P, 114). On the one hand, taste is a form of fancy, a variable that is unstable and misleading. On the other, taste is immediate judgment, a form of sense, and a taste for beauty and art. So if taste can be formed, it will correct fancy. Art provides a kind of self-reflection that is an alternative to a substantive ego on the Cartesian model. Reason can then be brought back into the struggle.

It is evident however from reason itself, as well as from history and experience, that nothing is more fatal, either in painting, architecture, or the other arts, than this false relish, which is governed rather by what immediately strikes the sense, than by what consequentially and by reflection pleases the mind, and satisfies the thought and reason.<sup>23</sup>

By setting thought and reason over against the false relish of immediate sense, Shaftesbury does not abandon experience or 'what pleases the mind.' His appeal is to a form of reflection. So reason is relocated in the appeal to taste. Reflection must discipline sense. The limitation on this is how discipline is to be achieved. Shaftesbury's concept of 'reason' includes sense. That is what links him to Hume and separates him from Hutcheson who rejects reflection and appeals directly to sense to do the work.

There is not just good and bad taste for Shaftesbury. He has in mind a three-fold division. Bad taste is 'artificial.' Good taste is 'well formed.' In between is a kind of natural taste. The fragmentary notes for an essay on 'Plastics, or The Original Progress and Power of Designatory Art' spell out the differences:

The artificial, witty, far-fetched, refined, hypocritical taste (what is apt to be commended as ingenuous and merely speculative) is the worst in the world, being half-way, and like half-thinkers. . . . The *natural* best, till well and truly formed, . . . and the original first rude taste corrected by rule, and reduced to a yet more simple and natural measure. Otherwise an innocent child's eye (of good parts and not spoilt already by pictures of the common sort) always found the best, as I have found experimentally, in such a one not the higher gentry but liberal, and out of the way of prints, and such costly playthings of imagery, etc.

(P, 115–116)

The 'innocent eye' is not a formal response in the manner of Clive Bell. It will have to be educated by the best models as we have seen. But it is clearly the best that can be achieved unaided. If its education leads it to the common or artificial, it will result in bad taste. If it is well and truly formed, it will be combined into a character that will exercise both moral and aesthetic good taste.

There is another aspect to the effect of the passions and the fear of enthusiasm, however. Shaftesbury is not quite prepared to dismiss all forms of inspiration as enthusiasm. 'For inspiration is a real feeling of the Divine Presence, and enthusiasm a false one. But the passion they raise is much alike' (L, I, 37). If one cannot distinguish between passions, one cannot tell inspiration from enthusiasm. If inspiration is possible, it must be distinguishable. Yet Shaftesbury has no such sign. His method is still to test the passions and train the consequent self to respond differently. Shaftesbury's combination of toleration, reliance on passion, and distrust of enthusiasm leads to his defense of the uninhibited testing of the claims of religion. In effect, a corollary of toleration is unrestricted questioning. Otherwise, enthusiasm will overwhelm everything else because of its infectious nature and its self-delusion. If one could locate authority somewhere other than passion, then that authority could determine what is true inspiration and what is not. But there is no authority independent of passion, so one must appeal to some way of testing passion itself. Shaftesbury does not deny reason or judgment, but everything from the *Inquiry* of 1699 on indicates that he is constantly looking for ways to test feelings and passions, to submit them to some kind of self-control. A noble enthusiasm arises from ideas or images too large for the human mind.

But to know it [a noble enthusiasm] as we should do, and discern it in its several kinds, both in ourselves and others; this the great work, and by this means alone we can hope to avoid delusion. For to judge the spirits whether they are of God, we must antecedently judge our own spirit, whether it be of reason and sound sense; whether it be fit to judge at all, by being sedate, cool, and impartial, free of every biasing passion, every giddy vapour, or melancholy fume. This the first knowledge and previous judgment: 'To understand ourselves, and know what spirit we are of.' Afterwards we may judge the spirit in others, consider what their personal merit is, and prove the validity of their testimony by the solidity of their brain. By this means we may prepare ourselves with some antidote against enthusiasms. And this is what I have dared affirm is best performed by keeping to good-humour. For otherwise the remedy itself may turn to the disease.

(L, I, 39)

Instead of finding criteria for distinguishing passions, Shaftesbury turns to a pragmatic level. The judgment of the spirits is not so much a work of judgment in this case as a corrective attitude – humor and sound sense. Compared to Hume's psychology of sentiment and taste, this is at best a promissory note, but the catalogue of characteristics of a 'fit judge' will find their echo in 'Of the Standard of Taste.'

How far can one press self-examination and pragmatic testing without their being reduced to nothing more than a reflection of the social attitudes of the one concerned? In part, the answer depends on how interest is understood and how it is linked to pleasure. A direct hedonism would offer an immediate confirmation that one had tested correctly, and if it were combined with egoism, one's self-interest would be identified with one's pleasure. Then one could claim to know one's interest and to adjust one's taste to maximize pleasure. That would lead back to Hobbes and, perhaps, forward to utilitarianism. Shaftesbury's form of virtue ethics and the corresponding aesthetic testing that it constructs is not compatible with that solution. Yet pleasure and interest are the only direct ways of testing taste and the passions.

My chief interest it seems, therefore, must be to get an aim, and know certainly where my happiness and advantage lies. 'Where else can it lie than in my pleasure, since my advantage and good must ever be pleasing, and what is pleasing can never be other than my advantage and good? Excellent! Let fancy therefore govern, and interest be what we please. For if that which pleases us be our good because it please us, anything may be our interest or good. Nothing can come amiss. That which we fondly make



our happiness at one time, we may as readily unmake at another. No one can learn what real good is. Nor can any one upon this foot be said to understand his interest.’

(S, I, 199–200)

Shaftesbury takes this as a kind of *reductio* of hedonism. Of course, one could reply that something can come amiss – I might not be pleased; and my interest would be to understand when I would be pleased. But that misses Shaftesbury’s point. He takes seriously the claim that the passions are the primary motive force. So one has already either been pleased or not. If good and interest are simply defined as those times and passions that pleased me, there is nothing to understand. Testing the spirits and educating taste would be impossible.

Instead, Shaftesbury has in mind a kind of open question argument. In ‘The Moralists,’ he has Philocles say to Theocles:

You would not ask me surely to enumerate the several species of sensations which men of certain tastes have adopted, and owned for their chief pleasure and delight. . . . This I only know, ‘that either all pleasure is good, or only some.’ If all, then every kind of sensuality must be precious and desirable. If some only, then we are to seek what kind, and discover, if we can, what it is which distinguishes between one pleasure and another, and makes one indifferent, sorry, mean; another valuable and worthy. And by this stamp, this character, if there be any such, we must define good, and not by pleasure itself, which may be very great and yet very contemptible. Nor can any one truly judge the value of any immediate sensation otherwise than by judging first of the situation of his own mind.

(M, II, 31)

Since one can ask whether pleasure is good, pleasure is not the same as good. The last clause makes Shaftesbury interesting and different. In order to judge immediate sensation, one can only judge one’s own mind. This, and not some sensationalism, is Shaftesbury’s characteristic answer to the same question asked over and over – how is one to distinguish pleasures?

The first step in making a distinction is to find some aspect of the mind that is affected by pleasure and that the mind itself will recognize as a distinction. Shaftesbury’s proposal is stability and constancy. Hume turns that into an appeal to general rules. Shaftesbury explains:

If therefore the only pleasure I can freely and without reserve indulge, be that of the honest and moral kind; if the rational and social enjoyment be

so constant in itself and so essential to happiness; why should I not bring my other pleasures to correspond and be friends with it, rather than raise myself other pleasures which are destructive of this foundation, and have no manner of correspondency with one another?

(S, I, 201)

This, of course, presumes that one can manipulate pleasures. As long as the basis for the manipulation is itself a recognition of pleasure, however, that is consistent with the power to move granted to the affections. So Shaftesbury cannot and does not abandon pleasure as the intrinsic sign of good. Instead of proposing some alternative to pleasure, he looks for some pleasure that is lasting, stable, and foundational. He finds that in moral and social pleasures. These then are the basis by which other fancies may be judged. Rather than abandoning fancy, Shaftesbury seeks to control it. At bottom, he acknowledges that one cannot escape one's humors and fancies; what one can do is train them so that they are not capricious. His opponents were offended at this lack of moral authority and acquiescence to merely human control, but they did not give sufficient credence to his Stoic virtues of self-examination and self-control. The lurking contradiction is that only by feeling the moral virtues can one oppose and control fancy, and that seems no more than fancy itself. The answer is to be found, I think, in taste and breeding. Our problem is how this plays out in aesthetics where one must confront the variability of taste.

One simply must be made to feel what is indeed in one's interest. That can only be done by a kind of exemplary art.

A lovely form advances to our assistance, introduced by the prime Muse, the beauteous Calliope! She shows us what real beauty is, and what those numbers are which make life perfect and bestow the chief enjoyment. . . . She shows us that by this just compliance we are made happiest; and that the measure of a happy life is not from the fewer or more suns we behold, the fewer or more breaths we draw, or meals we repeat, but from the having once lived well, acted our part handsomely, and made our exit cheerfully, and as became us.

(S, I, 204)

Art is a showing, and what it shows is a stoic virtue that can survive the tests of stability, control, and pleasure. This is Shaftesbury's 'answer' to the demand that fancy be subordinated to reason and pleasure distinguished. One is not convinced by arguments but by being shown a moral alternative that is itself felt as more stable pleasure, a measure of a happy life. The problem with fancy is that it is fancy, not happiness. Hedonism remains, but it is a disciplined hedonism, a true interest and

not the momentary interest that fails to fulfill its promise. Art is instrumental in this process. Thus we retain on virtue's side the noblest party of the Muses. Whatever is august among those sisters, appears readily in our behalf. Nor are the more jocund ladies wanting in their assistance when they act in the perfection of their art, and inspire some better geniuses in this kind of poetry.

(S, I, 204)

It would not be too much to suggest that for something to be art, it must attain the stability of sentiment that justifies some elements of moral hedonism. 'Art' retains the technical sense of making something according to a rule even though it is inspired by the muses. Bad art, like bad taste, is artificial. Nature provides the central rule, but only art formed to produce the stable higher pleasures can correspond to good taste. Thus art becomes a way of testing passion to see if it is morally and aesthetically approvable. If passion rises to the standard of art, it is; if it does not, it isn't. Religious enthusiasm fails this test; high religious art passes it, for example.

Can art bear that burden? One should not underestimate what Shaftesbury has claimed. To be sure, he is thinking of a specific, neo-classical form of art. His instructions for the execution of an historical painting are conventional, and the painting executed according to them is no masterpiece. But it is hard to imagine Shaftesbury imposing a moral test or censorship on art. As what needs testing changes, presumably both the forms and content of art will change as well. The result is an interesting form of engaged aesthetics. The problem is to achieve control by some means consistent with the passions and affections themselves. Hume has the same problem if reason is the slave of passion. And Hume has a somewhat similar affinity for Stoic and Ciceronian virtue if Peter Jones is correct.

One is led to aesthetics because there, imagination and wit can be turned to the service of testing the pleasures of fancy. Inferior wit will yield to superior wit. The imagination can only move on the basis of probability and belief. Hume, on the other hand, probes more deeply into the nature of the passions themselves and finds a kind of passionate reason rooted in habit and causality. Certain sorts of sentiment themselves are productive of judgments that project as rules and serve to discipline the passions. Sentiment itself has a kind of sufficient reason. Shaftesbury has nothing like that philosophical basis, though he retains more of Locke than he himself knew. For Shaftesbury, aesthetics is a subordinate means to moral judgment and good breeding; for Hume, it is a parallel species of judgment. Yet both recognize that stability and regularity must replace mere momentary hedonism. Hume follows Shaftesbury in so many points, not by way of repetition, but because the logic of their empiricism is the same. Sentiment and the passions control action, but just because they exercise that control, they must be stable and regular. Otherwise, no control would be possible.

## Breeding and experience

Aesthetics, breeding, and philosophy come together for the same end – the formation of a true self.

But whatever may be the proper effect or operation of religion, 'tis the known province of philosophy to teach us ourselves, keep us the self-same persons, and so regulate our governing fancies, passions, and humours, as to make us comprehensible to ourselves, and knowable by other features than those of a bare countenance.

(S, I, 184)

'Self is Shaftesbury's touchstone. It is individual, but the whole takes precedence, so the self is judged by its relation to a whole. It is governed by passions, fancies, and humors, but they too are subject to regulation. What makes Shaftesbury different from his critics and followers is where he looks for regulation. 'Tis the hardest thing in the world to be a good thinker without being a strong self-examiner and thorough-paced dialogist in this solitary way' (S, I, 112). As an author, one exhibits what is essentially one's self. Manners are as important in this exhibition as truth because truth is a property of the self and is exhibited in manners, not in propositions.

And on this bottom it is that we often challenge ourselves when we find such variation in our manners, and observe that it is not always the same self nor the same interest we have in view, but often a direct contrary one, which we serve still with the same passion and ardour.

(S, I, 185)

Shaftesbury's aestheticizing of self-examination is never foppish, but it goes very deeply into his system.

What is missing in Shaftesbury is the awareness of how tenuous the notion of a self is becoming. Superficially, at least, Shaftesbury remains comfortable with a substantive self that can take on neo-Platonic properties. In fact, he has made the mannered self a product of a Lockean accumulation of ideas that are constantly changing the self as new ideas are added. Hume's problems in maintaining consistency between the new experientially defined self that he proposes in Book I of the *Treatise* and the aesthetic self that is important in Book II reflect the tensions in a Shaftesburian form of self-identity.

Equally deeply embedded in Shaftesbury's approach to the self is his combination of Augustan classicism and 'raillery.' Shaftesbury sees no contradiction in combining manners and ridicule. Eighteenth-century literature combined the bawdy and

rhetorically polished in equal measures. Shaftesbury provides a justification for both.

Justness of thought and style, refinement in manners, good breeding, and politeness of every kind can come only from the trial and experience of what is best. Let but the search go freely on, and the right measure of everything will soon be found. Whatever humour has got the start, if it be unnatural, it cannot hold; and the ridicule, if ill-placed at first, will certainly fall at last where it deserves.

(L, I, 10)

Not only does this appeal to experience; it makes experience free. It has the effect of opening everything to criticism and testing. This is the counterpoint to Shaftesbury's upper class rejection of the vulgar. The ultimate measure is within oneself: 'For if unhappily we lose the measure in ourselves, we shall soon lose it in everything besides' (L, I, 11). Shaftesbury's appeal to criticism, ridicule, and raillery is designed primarily to force one back upon oneself in judgment. 'We must beforehand judge of our own temper, and accordingly of other things which fall under our judgment' (L, I, 11). The force of Shaftesbury's critical method is introspective, and hence the appeal is basically to one's sentiment. But it is always a tested and educated sentiment. The key in reading Shaftesbury is where he places the judgment, not what judgments he finds uppermost.

Sense never disappears totally in this process. 'The eye has sense of its own, a practiced method peculiar and distinct from common reason or argumentation' (P, 177). But sense, like taste and pleasure, is divided between public and private, not between kinds. One begins with a private sense. It is educable and thus only indirectly a sense. It approaches reflective understanding, particularly in aesthetic situations.

If a musician were cried up to the skies by a certain set of people who had no ear in music, he would surely be put to the blush, and could hardly, with a good countenance, accept the benevolence of his auditors, till they had acquired a more competent apprehension of him, and could by their own senses find out something really good in his performance.

(L, I, 30)

In this case, the appeal is to one's own senses, but the development of an ear implies more than just auditory sensitivity. Sense in these kinds of aesthetic cases is distinguished from skill.

'Tis not the same with goodness as with other qualities, which we may understand very well yet not possess. We may have an excellent ear in music, without being able to perform in any kind. We may judge well of poetry, without being poets or possessing the least of a poetic vein; but we can have no tolerable notion of goodness, without being tolerably good.

(L, I, 30)

Music and poetry are dependent on external senses, but goodness can only be experienced in the first place as one's own character. Hume adopts this identification of goodness and character more or less explicitly (though not necessarily directly from Shaftesbury). Both implicitly recognize that once value is identified with emotion, the emotion is not just some secondary characteristic of a self but a defining property of that self. If emotion is value, we are what we feel.

Private sense leads to a common sense. Shaftesbury does not press the *sensus communis*. It is either common agreement (SC, I, 55) or a public feeling (SC, I, 72). He is concerned to reject both one kind of appeal to reason and any appeal to authority. He understands reason, as we have argued, as a reflective operation. Even if that is sometimes hedged, however, what reason is not is clear:

According to the notion I have of reason, neither the written treatises of the learned, nor the set discourses of the eloquent, are able of themselves to teach the use of it. 'Tis the habit alone of reasoning which can make a reasoner. And men can never be better invited to the habit than when they find pleasure in it. A freedom of raillery, a liberty in decent language to question everything, and an allowance of unraveling or refuting any argument, without offense to the arguer, are the only terms which can render such speculative conversations any way agreeable.

(SC, I, 49)

For Locke, reason is a comparison of ideas. Shaftesbury introduces habit. Hume, of course, makes habit into a constitutive element of reason itself.

Shaftesbury sometimes seems to use reason more loosely simply for serious consideration of a subject. His psychology points in the opposite direction from Locke and more toward what Hume will accept. Reason has an element of free play about it that Hume will discipline by association and habit. Shaftesbury's use of reason must permit the freedom of discourse that is quite different from rationalist demonstration and medieval syllogistics, but he seemed much too free to most of his contemporaries. Similarly, authority conflicts with the freedom demanded by critical method. 'So that to bid me judge authority by morals, whilst the rule of morals is supposed dependent on mere authority and will, is the same in reality as

to bid me see with my eyes shut, measure without a standard, and count without arithmetic' (S, I, 193). Neither reason nor authority can correct sense; correction can come only from a rationalized sentiment.

Thus one arrives at a public sense that can serve as the final corrective. It is not so much a sense, however, as the manifestation of the public affections that Shaftesbury argued for in the *Inquiry*.

There can be no excuse for making an ill choice. Merit in every kind is easily discovered when sought. The public itself fails not to give sufficient indication, and points out those geniuses who want only countenance and encouragement to become considerable. An ingenious man never starves unknown; and great men must wink hard or 'twould be impossible for them to miss such advantageous opportunities of showing their generosity and acquiring the universal esteem, acknowledgments, and good wishes of the ingenious and learned part of mankind.

(S, I, 149–150)

This is definitely not simply a public opinion survey, even over time. The public may not be wrong, but that is not because a segment of the public, even a majority, is right. 'In our days the audience makes the poet, and the bookseller the author, with what profit to the public, or what prospect of lasting fame and honour to the writer, let any one who has judgment imagine' (S, I, 172–173). Shaftesbury does not trust the public very far, and condemns the artist for catering to the public. The paradox is only apparent. It is sense, not fame and honor that the public cannot mistake. Merit is there in public; that does not mean that the public will embrace it. Shaftesbury could hardly be that naive. Even in art, perhaps especially in art, public judgment must be balanced against 'cabal':

For this worthy observation that though we scarce see a man whose fancy agrees with another in the many hands and paintings, yet in general when the cabal is over, for this must be excepted (as in Poussin's case in France and Domenichino's in Naples), the public always judges right, and the pieces esteemed or disesteemed after a time and a course of some years are always exactly esteemed according to their proportion of worth by these rules and studies. So that the gentleman who follows his caprice may undo himself. But he who either fixes his taste, or buys according to the universal judgment and public taste and confession of painters in works of the deceased, will never be abused or come off a sufferer when he parts with his effects.

(P, 124)

The obvious test of time in this passage is less important than what the public is really judging of – an emergent public sense that is reliable just because it is based on those sentiments that persist through time. Hume arrives at almost exactly the same reliance on a test of time based on the persistence of taste in rules. The difference is that Hume understands much more clearly than Shaftesbury the problem that rules introduce to a sentimental version of reason. Shaftesbury tends to trust breeding and his own strata of society to provide the rules. Hume sees that rules are potentially contradictory because of the variability of taste and sentiment and the questionable foundations of cause and effect, so Hume's general rules have to be established independently of appeals to class and innate nature.

There is a direct parallel between Shaftesbury and Hume on the passions. Both turn to an analysis of the passions, and both have somewhat the same inventory: fear, vanity, anger, ambition, love, desire. Hume's analysis goes very differently. He probes each passion to show how it arises from and supports his version of the relation of impressions and ideas. Shaftesbury's analysis is directed toward the control of the passions; Hume's toward their function as primary elements in the make-up of the self. Hume gives a phenomenology of each passion; Shaftesbury denies that that is useful:

'tis not very material to inquire, on this occasion, to what parts or districts the blood or spirits are immediately detached, or where they are made to rendezvous. For this no more imports me to understand, than it depends on me to regulate or change.

(S, I, 192)

But there is a striking similarity in their respective turn to the passions at the crucial point. 'The examination, therefore, of my humours, and the inquiry after my passions, must necessarily draw along with it the search and scrutiny of my opinions, and the sincere consideration of my scope and end' (S, I, 192–193).

Sentiment and affections play two different roles for Shaftesbury. A kind of broad sentiment has as its opposite the dogmatism of religious orthodoxy and the scientific rationalism of Leibniz and Descartes. Sentiment is here allied with 'nature.' But in the *Inquiry*, a more considered reliance on the affections also owes a great deal to Locke, even though it is somewhat backhanded. There natural affections play the epistemological role that supports judgment. This side is most suggestive for reading Hume. The appeal to affections, sentiments, and passions is a complex affair that has more than one reading. In moving from Shaftesbury at the very beginning of the eighteenth century to Hume in mid-century, one is not so much following a clear line of influence and development of ideas as a repeated reflection on the consequences of taking the affections and passions seriously. In trying to read



Hume in the light of Shaftesbury's earlier treatment, I am suggesting that one can see how plausible it is to think that an analysis of the passions could contain an implicit aesthetic.

Hume is not much of a skeptic on my reading.<sup>24</sup> (How much is not a question that is of very great concern at this point.) Shaftesbury explains why skepticism is not a problem:

For let us carry scepticism ever so far, let us doubt, if we can, of everything about us, we cannot doubt of what passes within ourselves. Our passions and affections are known to us. They are certain, whatever the objects may be on which they are employed. Nor it is of any concern to our argument how these exterior objects stand: whether they are realities or mere illusions; whether we wake or dream. For ill dreams will be equally disturbing; and a good dream (if life be nothing else) will be easily and happily passed. In this dream of life, therefore, our demonstrations have the same force; our balance and economy hold good, and our obligation to virtue is in every respect the same.

(IVM, I, 336–337)

Instead of Cartesian certainty and an indubitable ego, Shaftesbury gives us our whole inner selves as the emerging modernism of the eighteenth century constructed that self. Hume, in turn, shows us how the passions and emotions can do the work of reason and demonstration. In the process, Hume makes aesthetics part of epistemology. Hume goes far beyond Shaftesbury in systematic clarity. But many of Hume's themes are already at work in Shaftesbury's more discursive and rhetorical meditations. By reading Hume in the light of Shaftesbury, one is able to see where the proper emphasis should be placed and to some extent avoid both the Kantian and analytic overlays that have colored a perception of Hume's importance to aesthetics.<sup>25</sup> We will follow these themes in detail through Hume's work. First, however, we must look more closely at the background for the other major element in the emerging eighteenth-century aesthetic: taste.

## TASTE

**The analogy of taste**

The promotion of experience as the exclusive source of our mental life that has become commonplace since Locke and Newton can obscure the extent to which sense and experience have been central to western philosophy from its beginnings. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the increasing interest in the arts and the reinterpretation of beauty along the lines laid down by Shaftesbury saw ‘taste’ become the central aesthetic term. The appeal to a sense of taste must be understood against the background of the classical appeal to the senses, however. It is a complex metaphor with a complex history.

Sense was acknowledged to have an important role in knowledge and the formation of the mind by both Plato and Aristotle. If sense was unreliable, it was nevertheless central. The question was not whether sense is important but which sense is the most important and how sense is related to knowledge and to experience. Sight and touch were each taken as the lead senses in different ways and in different contexts. Taste was directly related to touch, and its immediacy offered a fundamental analogy for explicating the relation of sense and judgment. Thus, virtually from the beginning, taste has been part of the philosophical discussion.

An adequate history of taste as a critical and epistemological term remains to be written. David Summers, in a discussion of the evolution of the concept of a common sense, leads us back to Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> Summers points out that for Aristotle a common sense was required to unify the different sensory inputs. In the process, he calls our attention to the opening passages in *Metaphysics A* where Aristotle begins with sense because ‘even apart from their usefulness they [the senses] are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight.’<sup>2</sup> For our purposes, however, there is an even more important aspect of the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle presents a progression from sense to memory – ‘By nature animals are born with the faculty of sensation, and from sensation memory is produced in some of them, though not in others’ (980a) – and from memory to experience – ‘Now from memory

experience is produced in men; for the several memories of the same thing produce finally the capacity for a single experience' (pp. 980b–981a). In other words, for Aristotle, sensation and experience are not the same thing at all, and experience is a later result compounded of sensation by means of memory. Without a common sense, sensation would remain fragmented and could not play any role in knowledge.

Experience is still inferior to universals for Aristotle. The progression that begins with sense ultimately leads beyond sense, through experience, to knowledge.

With a view to action experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and men of experience succeed even better than those who have theory without experience. (The reason is that experience is knowledge of individuals, art of universals, and actions and productions are all concerned with the individual. . . .) . . . For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others know the 'why' and the cause.

(p. 981a)

Experience is a precondition for art, not in the distinct sense of fine art but in the more basic Greek sense of making something. So one moves from sense to memory and common sense, thence to experience, and finally, perhaps, to knowledge and wisdom that guide the productive arts. Theory and judgment come with art, not with sense. In this hierarchical progression, experience plays an intermediate role, and sense, while it is even lower in the hierarchy, provides a starting point. The introduction of a common sense connects the individual to experience.

Sight, as we have just seen, is placed 'above all others' in *Metaphysics A*. Sight is also the most developed sense and leads to imagination: 'As sight is the most highly developed sense, the name *phantasia* (imagination) has been formed from *phao* (light) because it is not possible to see without light.'<sup>3</sup> Imagination is directly related to sense and memory by the formation of images. Elsewhere, however, touch is considered the primary sense.<sup>4</sup> Touch is an unmediated sense; it works by direct contact. It is also the sense without which none of the others is possible.

Without touch it is impossible to have any other sense; for every body that has soul in it must, as we have said, be capable of touch. . . . All the other organs of sense, no doubt, perceive by contact, only the contact is mediate: touch alone perceives by immediate contact. . . . Without touch there can be no other sense.<sup>5</sup>

Without touch, one is no longer a sentient being. Aristotle summed up a classical tradition that, for all of its distrust of individual sense, nevertheless recognized an

essential relation between sense and consciousness. The problem with sense and experience was not whether they were necessary, but how they were to be incorporated into judgments. Taste provided an analogy that connected sense and judgment.

Touch is related to taste. Taste is the subordinate sense to touch because taste is impossible without touch: 'What can be tasted is always something that can be touched, and just for that reason it cannot be perceived through an interposed foreign body, for touch means the absence of any intervening body.'<sup>6</sup> But taste discriminates more accurately than other senses such as smell:

It seems that there is an analogy between smell and taste, and that the species of tastes run parallel to those of smells – the only difference being that our sense of taste is more discriminating than our sense of smell, because the former is a modification of touch, which reaches in man the maximum of discriminative accuracy. While in respect of all the other senses we fall below many species of animals, in respect of touch we far excel all other species in exactness of discrimination. That is why man is the most intelligent of all animals. This is confirmed by the fact that it is to differences in the organ of touch and to nothing else that the differences between man and man in respect of natural endowment are due.<sup>7</sup>

So taste is a modification of touch; touch is the most discriminating faculty; and from discrimination comes intelligence. The Aristotelian hierarchy from sense to knowledge has the potential to incorporate each sense, including taste, by virtue of its ability to provide images to experience in a discriminating way. Most importantly, when discrimination is required, touch is the discriminating sense. When taste finally becomes a metaphor for judgment in the arts, its powers as a discriminating and 'delicate' faculty are central.

Taste in particular is adaptable as a form of judgment. Aristotle treats the privation of a sense as itself a part of the sense. Dark is a product of the sense of sight as is color. Bad tastes are also tastes. 'So too taste has as its object both what can be tasted and the tasteless – the latter in the sense of what has little flavour or a bad flavour or one destructive of taste.'<sup>8</sup> 'Drinkability' is the basis of taste because it is in liquids that taste/touch is mediated. The privation of taste includes that which has little flavor, what is bad, and what is 'destructive of taste.' This last negative form suggests how taste might appropriately be extended to critical contexts. It is both discriminative and subject to positive and negative forms. Literally, that is not what Aristotle means, of course. 'Bad taste' is just taste that does not function – bad in the sense of not being a useful sense. But if the sense is corruptible and

educable in these ways, it becomes potentially a faculty for judging. Apparently, that is what the later tradition seizes upon.

Aristotle himself may sanction such an extension. For example, in the *Nicomachian Ethics*, X, v, Aristotle distinguishes kinds of pleasures depending on the activities that produce them. He weaves comparison to music, statues, pictures, and sculpture into the discussion, and explains variations in pleasure on the same basis as variations in taste. However, since activities differ in moral value, true pleasure is related to goodness and the good person. This led W. D. Ross to translate a crucial passage (X, v, 1176a. 17–29) as follows: ‘*Those which are admittedly disgraceful plainly should not be said to be pleasures, except to a perverted taste*; but of those that are thought to be good what kind of pleasure or what pleasure should be said to be that proper to man?’<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the phrase Ross translates as ‘a perverted taste’ does not actually employ the metaphor of taste. Even though the analogy is suggested by earlier references to variations in sweetness and to healthy and fevered reactions, here the explicit contrast is just those whose pleasures are depraved.<sup>10</sup> It is only in our vocabulary that a kind of failure in judgment is a ‘perverted taste.’ For Aristotle, pleasure is determined by the person, and a person of virtue will thus be pleased by certain things. If non-virtuous activities please, then that is evidence that the person is abnormal and less than adequate. That can be characterized by someone who links sense and judgment as a perverted taste – a failure of the discriminating sense organ – which makes the sense of taste into a metaphor for a less than satisfactory human soul, but the explicit connection is foreign to Aristotle’s way of regarding senses.

Aristotle is quite clear that there is not some sixth sense in addition to the five senses,<sup>11</sup> and as Summers makes clear, common sensibles – those qualities such as extension perceived by more than one sense – do not imply additional senses:

For Aristotle the completed sensation in the common sense *is* sensation, and it is therefore in the common sense that the sensible world actually exists for us. As the unifier of special sensation, the common sense is closely related to the image-making faculty essential to Aristotle’s explanation of both thought and action.<sup>12</sup>

The image-making faculty, in turn, depends on memory, and must be distinguished from higher levels of judgment and reasoning. In *De Anima*, all of the senses, including taste, are limited in their judgmental roles:

For imagination is different from either perceiving or discursive thinking, though it is not found without sensation, or judgement without it. That

this activity is not the same kind of thinking as judgment is obvious. For imagining lies within our own power whenever we wish (e.g. we can call up a picture, as in the practice of mnemonics by the use of mental images), but in forming opinions we are not free: we cannot escape the alternative of falsehood or truth. Further, when we think something to be fearful or threatening, emotion is immediately produced, and so too with what is encouraging; but when we merely imagine we remain as unaffected as persons who are looking at a painting of some dreadful or encouraging scene.<sup>13</sup>

Truth and falsehood are not matters of perception and sense but of the way things are. Emotion results only from what is, not simply from imaginings. So Aristotle would be as puzzled as later aestheticians by why one would fear a known fiction, and he ‘solves’ the problem by denying that such fictions would produce emotion. For tragedy to have its effects of arousing pity and fear, its objects cannot be fictions. They must be real in the *mythos* and in their depiction of human situations, though the presentation may be imagined and thus made tolerable in its emotional effects. Such universal references are, of course, perfectly acceptable to Aristotle as they would be to Plato.

Taste can only become a fully theoretical aesthetic term when the universals of Plato and Aristotle are replaced by the empiricism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Prior to that point, however, many of the elements were in place. Umberto Eco comments, for example, on the increasing empiricism of the later Middle Ages:

The exemplary form can arise in the artist’s mind because of the impulse to imitate, because he wants to reproduce an object in nature. But when it is a new object like a building, or a story or a statue of a monster, the exemplary idea is created by the *phantasia*, the imagination. This putting together of forms is the most typical activity of the imagination, and does not have to be explained by reference to any other faculty. . . . This theory is openly empiricist and intellectualist. Its most positive features are its clarity and simplicity. It sets out to explain art without reference to the non-rational or the preternatural. What is missing, however, is the more complex notion of the inventive powers of the imagination, which could in principle have been explained on the existing premisses.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, the increasing fantasy in late medieval art indicates a turn toward the particular, but does not yet regard the imagination as inventive. It finds its subjects and its justification in the traditional religious iconography, and the artist

remains subordinate to the subject. We must look to the Renaissance for the expressive emergence of the artist, and with that expression, the increasing dependence on personal factors that ultimately lead to a theory of taste.

Anthony Blunt cites Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) as one of the first to use the metaphor of taste in connection with judgment:

Many . . . say that our ideas of beauty and architecture are wholly false, maintaining that the forms of buildings are various and changeable according to the taste of each individual and not dependent on any rules of art. This is a common error of ignorance, to maintain that what it does not know does not exist.<sup>15</sup>

But even if this usage by Alberti will withstand examination (and one must be careful of what is being translated as ‘taste’), it is regarded as negative and distinguished from the positive uses of the senses that are subject to the rules of art. Leonardo da Vinci is similarly ambivalent on how the senses are related to judgment. Sense and experiment are important, but they are a means, not an independent source of knowledge. Much of the High Renaissance reference to sense is still within the Aristotelian mode.

Renaissance and seventeenth-century writers evidently found grounds for the metaphorical extension of ‘taste’ not directly in Aristotle but in the classical rhetorical tradition. Both Ernest Robert Curtius and Benedetto Croce cite Cicero and Quintilian as sources for seventeenth-century authors who use ‘taste’ as a critical term, and their references are picked up by more recent critics.<sup>16</sup> Historically, this is undoubtedly accurate, but one must be careful in going beyond saying that Cicero and Quintilian were *thought* to have said that taste was a faculty of judgment. Just how far they actually went in extending an actual sense of taste to critical contexts is open to question. Quintilian says, for example, that ‘It is no more possible to teach it [*judgment/iudicium*] than it is to instruct the powers of taste and smell.’<sup>17</sup> But in context, while the analogy is suggested, taste and smell remain just what they were for Aristotle, that is senses that are lower on the scale of mental operations than the imagination, memory, and reason. Other passages in Cicero and Quintilian seem closer to the later use of ‘taste,’ but they avoid the word. It is not clear that either writer would be able to import a direct sensible element in the way that it comes to be applied later.

The Renaissance appropriation of the classical rhetorical tradition is complex. The essential analogy between taste and judgment had been constructed well before it makes its appearance in the Spanish mannerist tradition cited by Curtius and Croce. Taste comes to be linked directly to judgment and wit in sixteenth-

century Italian writers on art and painting. As the individuality and expressiveness of the artist become central, taste takes its place as an indicator of the make-up of the artist and the means of transforming the artist's sense into a form of expression. This moves beyond the reliance of Alberti and Leonardo on sense as a means toward artistic imitation. One place that this can be seen is in the shifting importance of illusion. Illusion, of course, plays upon the senses and brings both their fallibility and the pleasure we take in imitation into prominence. In classical art, illusion had something of the quality of a forbidden fruit. It fascinates us, but it also shows the fundamental unreliability of our senses. In the sixteenth century, a fascination with illusion and skill takes a different direction. For example, Sabba di Castiglione (1485–1554) writes

But above all, those who can obtain them, furnish and decorate their house with the works, more divine than human, of dear Father Fra Damiano da Bergamo of the Dominican order, who, not only in perspective views, like those other fine artists, but in landscapes, in pictures of houses, in distant views, and, what is more, in figures, can do with wood all that the great Apelles could hardly do with the brush. In fact, it seems to me that the colors of those woods are more vivid, brighter, and more agreeable than those used by painters so that these noble works can be called a new sort of painting, excellently painted without paints. It is admirable and also most surprising that, although these works are made of juxtaposed pieces, the more one tries, the less one can see the joints; which stupefies the observers. I believe this good Father will be without equal in centuries to come, as he has been in past ones, for dyeing woods any color, and for imitating spotted and veined stones.<sup>18</sup>

Sabba appeals to sense in a more direct way than earlier illusions. The classical appeal is to the ability to fool the audience. There, one has anecdotes such as Zeuxis's birds and the competition between two painters. In contrast, the Renaissance appeal is to sense itself. As John Ruskin noted, imitation in this sense requires not that the eye be deceived but that one perceive both a resemblance and a difference at the same time. The fascination is not just with the deception but with the complex ability to see through deception by means of a sense that discriminates and judges. Taste has the advantage over sight in that it is more direct and less subject to mere illusion.

Sabba di Castiglione also links judgment with decoration. He connects decoration with judgment: 'I favor and praise all these ornaments too, because they are a sign of judgment, culture, education and distinction.'<sup>19</sup> One is being led in the direction of a connoisseurship that connects taste and desire. Desire is a physical appetite,



a lack that seeks to be satisfied. What is desired appeals to taste. For example, Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga in a letter to his brother Ferrante on the death of Giulio Romano speaks of a loss of appetite:

I try and convince myself that the death of this rare man will at least have succeeded in taking away my appetite for building, for silverware, for paintings, etc., for in fact I would not have the heart to do any of these things without the design of this beautiful mind; therefore, when these few are done, whose designs I have with me, I think I shall bury with him all my desires as I have said.<sup>20</sup>

Individual desire finds its expression in one of the marks of mannerism, design, that the Cardinal understood as satisfying his appetite. The metaphor he constructs is of an appetite for beauty that only design can satisfy, an appetite that has been destroyed by the loss of the artist. All of the elements of a theory of taste except the explicit application of the metaphor are present in this passage.

The Venetian Paolo Pino's *Dialogue on Painting* offers an interesting distinction in the way that sense is being promoted:

[Fabio (a more successful Tuscan painter)]: He pleases me most, and I tell you that charm [*Vaghezza*, sensory attractiveness] is the relish of our works. I do not, however, mean by charm the ultramarine blue at sixty scudi an ounce or fine lacquer, because paints are also beautiful by themselves in their boxes, and a painter can not be praised as charming for giving pink cheeks and blond hair to all his figures, for making serene expressions, or for coating the earth with beautiful green; but true charm is nothing else than grace, which comes from a harmony or just proportion of things, so that, while the pictures have decorum, they also have charm and bring honor to the master.

[Lauro (a Venetian painter)] How badly off I would be, if they did not sell those beautiful paints, which bring me credit and profit!

[Fabio] This just dazzles the ignoramuses. I do not blame you for using beautiful colors in your work, but I would like *you* to enhance the colors, and not the colors to serve you.<sup>21</sup>

The implicit idea seems to be that colors should reflect the artist, bringing honor to those who master their use. This provides the basis for comparing individual painters. Pino is conservative, preferring earlier idealizations to the rising colorism of painters such as Bellini, Giorgione, and later, Titian and Tintoretto, but his definition

of charm as relish makes this a matter of taste. The medieval *claritas* as it is found in Aquinas's three-fold definition of beauty (integrity, harmony, clarity) has been transformed into individual expression. The emphasis on style as a reflection of individuality is a necessary step in the construction of taste as a critical term.

Robert Klein links this development with the rise of mannerism. He explains:

But the definitive discovery of artistic temperament and the crucial assertion that, in the case of great masters, the personal character of the work can have a value of its own, belong mainly to Cinquecento aesthetics, where they are best traced in the oft-told history of the word *maniera*. . . . The discovery of individuality in expression demanded and presupposed individuality in the appreciation of works of art; *maniera* and *gusto* are complementary.<sup>22</sup>

Lodovico Dolce, in the *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino* (Venice, 1557), provides an interesting example of how this individuality of expression is incorporated into critical judgments. In defending Raphael's superiority to Michelangelo, Dolce writes:

He [Raphael] placed his principal end in pleasing, (as really being the principal part of painting) seeking rather the name of elegant than terrible: and he acquired another, being generally called graceful; for besides invention, design, variety, and the effect which all his works have on the spectator's mind, there are found in them that which Pliny says characterized the figures of Apelles, that *venustas*, that *je ne sais quoi*, which used to charm so much in painting as well as poetry; insomuch that it fills the mind of the spectator or reader with infinite delight, without our knowing what gives us pleasure.<sup>23</sup>

This *je ne sais quoi* requires an immediacy of sense because it cannot be given a principled formulation. It gives pleasure without depending on anything other than a direct contact. Critically, that poses a problem for a classical theory that looked to a hierarchy from sense to experience and thence to knowledge and depended on rational rules and forms. The only principle at work here is pleasure, and the *je ne sais quoi* is accessible only to sense. Both source and critical means are sensibles. One is led to a significant extension of contact, touch, and the analogy of taste.

Dolce also provides a link to *maniera* – 'manner' – that is important. Again, praising Raphael, he says

In all his works he had a variety so admirable, that no one figure resembles another, either in air or motion; so that there is not the least shadow of that which is called by painters ‘manner’ in the bad sense of the word, that is bad practice, in which you constantly see forms and faces resembling one another.<sup>24</sup>

The classicist Dolce seizes on the negative sense of ‘manner’ – a stylization that subordinates the subject to the artist’s manner. But the root of *maniera* is *some* individuality. If it is not the artist’s, it is the subject’s. The alternative, positive sense stresses the free play that the artist indulges in by his manner, thus developing his own style and taste.

The positive sense of ‘manner’ can be illustrated from Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Painters* (Florence, 1550). Vasari lists five achievements that advance painting beyond its earlier stage: rule, order, proportion, draughtsmanship, and manner (*regola, ordine, misura, disegno, maniera*). He goes on to define manner as a choice of parts:

Manner then attained to the greatest beauty from the practice which arose of constantly copying the most beautiful objects, and joining together these most beautiful things, hands, heads, bodies, and legs, so as to make a figure of the greatest possible beauty. This practice was carried out in every work for all figures, and for that reason it is called the beautiful manner.<sup>25</sup>

While this represents manner as a stylized idealization, it also identifies it with a style that cedes the authority for the process to the artist. Without the ability to select, there is no manner, no beautiful figure. Thus artists can compete to develop a style that exhibits more and more detail, more and more of the ideal in concrete form. More is better. Elaboration is a positive move. Above all, the artificial is a product of the judgment of advanced artists. Vasari specifically sees this as a move beyond the simplicity of Giotto. Of earlier masters, there was, he writes, ‘wanting in their rule a certain freedom which, without being of the rule, might be directed by the rule and might be able to exist without causing confusion or spoiling the order.’<sup>26</sup> Freedom is a condition of manner, of style.

The foundation was already laid in Aristotle’s assertion that what one takes pleasure in is an indication of the character of the person. Klein argues, however, that taste is extended much more into the realm of judgment by writers such as Leonardo, Alberti, Guicciardini, and Castiglione. The initial moves are essentially Platonic, but sense becomes more and more a direct judgment, and taste is its natural expression. For example, Klein concludes:

For the Renaissance, judgment was not a purely intellectual act; it belonged to a domain intermediate between the mind and the senses. . . . Judgment as an act was in the last analysis an immediate reaction to things perceived, and must not be confused with a proposition deduced from other propositions. But this immediate reaction could be rationalized – in the sense that reasons might be found for it. . . . It suffices to note that for traditional philosophy the concept of judgment implied at the same time immediate perception and virtual reason – that is, an ambiguity or polarity that we find again in the aesthetic concept of taste.<sup>27</sup>

Two significant changes can be detected in the movement that Klein describes. Individual sense becomes more important, and judgment becomes more direct. One is forced to rely much more on the immediacy of sense for judgments as well as for rules of composition. A common sense becomes more like a sixth sense than it could ever be for Aristotle.

Klein works out this movement as a play of judgment: ‘*giudizio* does not appear as the recollection of ideal rules, but, on the contrary, as the faculty of discarding such rules, when and where necessary. Judgment is, then, the exact equivalent of Guicciardini’s term *discrezione*.’<sup>28</sup> The other key term is *ingegno*, which can mean wit or even genius. It carries the connotations of individuality, independence of rules, and the connecting together in the imagination of what is not found together in nature. The means of linking judgment and wit is taste. The result is a productive judgment that expresses the artist’s being and creates rules rather than following them. Again, to cite Klein:

This equation implies the concept, strange to us, of a ‘productive judgment,’ in other words, the confusion between *giudizio* and *ingegno* already suggested by Alberti and Ficino and criticized by Persio and Valdes. . . . This sense, which now seems aberrational, is in fact explained by the contamination of *maniera*: any faculty which characterized a person belonged to the order of expression, and therefore *giudizio*, because it is personal, must be the same as style.<sup>29</sup>

What Klein characterizes as an aberration and contamination was central to the use of ‘taste’ adopted by the sentimental tradition of Shaftesbury and Hume. Taste corresponds to the essentially personal nature of this new form of judgment: To identify *giudizio* thus understood – that is to say, as close as possible to the contingent particular – with ‘taste’ as we understand it today, we need only add to it one feature: diversity according to temperament.<sup>30</sup> Taste is still identified essentially with the character of the individual, but individuals are increasingly

truly individual and simply different. Instead of their pleasure being indicative of what is truly pleasing, the inference runs the other way. What is pleasing is so because it pleases. Vasari provides a number of concrete examples, particularly in his discussion of Coreggio who, he says,

brushed hair, not in the precise manner used by the masters before him, which was constrained, sharp, and dry, but soft and feathery, so that you could feel the hairs, such was his facility in making them; and they seemed like gold and more beautiful than real hair, which is surpassed by that which he painted.<sup>31</sup>

An even more striking example from Vasari is his description of Jacopo Pontormo:

But that which most displeased other men in him was that he would not work save when and for whom he pleased, and after his own fancy; wherefore on many occasions, being sought out by noblemen who desired to have some of his work, and once in particular by the Magnificent Ottaviano de' Medici, he would not serve them; and then he would set himself to do anything in the world for some low and common fellow, at a miserable price.<sup>32</sup>

Behavior that seems merely stereotypical of artists to us struck Vasari as exceptional, and in fact it could only occur in an eccentric such as Pontormo who shut himself up with a work for years only to produce something so singular that it baffled his contemporaries (the Fresco in the Temple of San Lorenzo). Vasari's judgment of that work (which was covered over in the eighteenth century) is interesting:

For the whole work is full of nude figures with an order, design, invention, composition, coloring, and painting contrived after his own fashion, and with such uneasiness and so little satisfaction for him who beholds the work, that I am determined, since I myself do not understand it, although I am a painter, *to leave all who may see it to form their own judgment*, for the reason that I believe that I would drive myself mad with it and would lose myself, even as it appears to me that Jacopo in the period of eleven years that he spent upon it sought to lose himself and all who might see the painting, among all those extraordinary figures.<sup>33</sup>

In the face of such madness, Vasari is thrown back on individual judgment. Something so singular can only be judged directly by the response of each who sees it. To lose

oneself in this way still appears to a Renaissance man as madness (as it undoubtedly was in Pontormo's case). By the eighteenth century, the singularity of taste had become a critical given that challenged all of the neo-classical rules.

The primary function of such judgment was productive, however. The classical concept of imitation was still central. Quintilian had argued that what and who one imitated as an orator was most important.

First we must consider whom to imitate. For there are many who have shown a passionate desire to imitate the worst and most decadent authors. Secondly, we must consider what it is that we should set ourselves to imitate in the authors thus chosen. . . . And even those who have sufficient critical acumen to avoid the faults of their models will not find it sufficient to produce a copy of their merits, amounting to no more than superficial resemblance. . . . But this is just what happens to those who mould themselves on the first impressions derived from the style of their model, without devoting themselves to a thorough investigation of its good qualities, and despite the brilliance of their imitation and the close resemblance of their language and rhythm, not only fail absolutely to attain the force of style and invention (*inventionis*) possessed by the original, but as a rule degenerate into something worse, and achieve merely those faults which are hardest to distinguish from virtues: they are turgid instead of grand, bald instead of concise, and rash instead of courageous, while extravagance takes the place of wealth, over-emphasis the place of harmony and negligence of simplicity. As a result, those who flaunt tasteless and insipid thoughts, couched in an uncouth and inharmonious form, think that they are the equals of the ancients. . . . Consequently it is of the first importance that every student should realise what it is that he is to imitate, and should know why it is good.<sup>34</sup>

But Quintillian's concept of production here is limited to achieving known and predetermined effects. Klein argues that in the Renaissance, something much more personal was involved:

Taste, therefore, indicated a personal affinity of the artist with the master he must follow to form the sort of style that suited him best, particularly as regards those accessories for which there was no valid rule (*sono tutta gratia e maniera*). . . . We are on the threshold of 'productive taste,' a seventeenth-century notion that . . . was prepared by the productive *giudizio* of the Venetians. Taste determines style, which is a sort of

involuntary self-portrait of the artist. Thus all leads to the identification of *maniera* and *gusto* – as Poussin said, according to Bellori.<sup>35</sup>

In this respect, the personal and variable nature of taste is just what makes it a suitable metaphor since individuality, personality, and sense are to be imitated. Imitation becomes a form of expression, and style is its outward and visible form.

The final move to an explicit metaphorical use of taste as a critical and aesthetic term can be located in the late mannerist writers who make explicit the connection between judgment and taste. Federico Zuccaro writes, ‘Grace is . . . a soft and sweet accompaniment which attracts the eye and contents the taste. . . ; it depends entirely on good judgment and good taste (*gusto*).’<sup>36</sup> The essentially aesthetic property, grace, is linked to the eye and good judgment is explicitly identified with a second sense, taste. This effectively unites the Aristotelian sense theories in a new way.

Mannerism retains the classical ordering of sense, but shifts the emphasis. It was common place to cite classical authorities for critical principles. Giovanni Batista Armenini wrote a single academic work, *Dei Veri Precetti della Pittura* (1586 or 1587), on painting. Armenini was no innovator. One of the tenants of mannerism was that the combination of forms that presented beauty must go beyond mere imitation of nature and even beyond the earlier reliance on idealization. What appears to us as elaboration and even distortion was central to the mannerist desire to exhibit a beauty that could not be found naturally. Anthony Blunt points out how Armenini very traditionally retells the same story that others used about Zeuxis who selected several maidens as his model for his Venus, combining the best features of each. But Armenini adds one additional factor: ‘If Zeuxis had not possessed a unique personal style (*singolar maniera*) in addition to his great diligence, he would never have been able to harmonize the beautiful individual parts he copied from so many virgins.’<sup>37</sup> Here is the final link between mannerist theory and taste. Recall that for Aristotle, a common sense is required to combine the five senses into a single perception that memory and reason can use, but that common sense is not a sixth sense. It is not a sense, *per se*, like the others, which is what later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theory makes it. For late mannerism, manner or style plays the role of Aristotle’s common sense to unite several elements of perception into an idealized whole. So one who has a manner can unite elements and go beyond imitation, just as one who has a common sense can unite the five senses into a single sensory impression. This makes manner into a kind of sense. It plays the same structural role as a common sense. Since taste is the analogy that worked best for the classical writers, it is a natural move to identify having taste with having the mannerist style. If such a style, or a response to it, is instinctive, then not only are manner and taste linked, taste can operate immediately and take on even more of the sense-characteristics of its empirical origin.

This critical assimilation of taste and *maniera* came, apparently, in the seventeenth-century Spanish mannerist writers for whom style was itself an end. Invention entered the equation in the Renaissance, but only when it becomes critically reflective does 'taste' become the dominant critical term that is at once normative and individual. Then the commonality of sense can drop away and be replaced by a taste whose very activity is aesthetic as well as sensory judgment. Balthasar Gracian is widely acknowledged as the source of the last stages of this critical transformation, but clearly taste was already being used in the necessary sense by earlier mannerist writers such as Zuccaro and the real transformation had taken place a hundred to a hundred and fifty years earlier.

Gracian treated taste as something independent of intellect which could be acquired and imitated:

You can train it like the intellect. . . . You may know a noble spirit by the elevation of his taste: it must be a great thing that can satisfy a great mind. . . . Things of the first importance are few; let appreciation be rare. Taste can be imparted by intercourse: great good luck to associate with the highest taste.<sup>38</sup>

In this regard, its character as sense is taken for granted. Rather than being produced by the virtue of the one who experiences its pleasures, it produces a character, or at least allows one to pretend to a higher character than one may actually have. Metaphorically, taste is a form of judgment and discrimination. It relates directly to Gracian's concept of *agudeza*, 'acuteness,' which is an essentially prudential principle. Gracian cautions,

Do not condemn alone that which pleases all. Enjoyment and pleasure are good. You simply destroy respect for your taste rather than do harm to the object of your blame, and are left alone, you and your bad taste. If you cannot find the good in a thing, hide your incapacity and do not damn it straightway. As a general rule bad taste springs from want of knowledge. What all say, is so, or will be so.<sup>39</sup>

Prudentially, the variability of taste leaves the critic or the would-be connoisseur exposed. Knowledge in this case is not Aristotle's higher form but simply knowing what is going to be accepted. Gracian does not mean that vulgar taste will win, but clearly one does not want to be the one who is different. Bad taste just is eccentric taste.



Thomas Hobbes is roughly contemporary with Gracian and uses ‘taste’ in the same way, though he is much less happy with the moral consequences of such use. Speaking of the failure of those who ignore science and retain the philosophy of the schools, Hobbes accuses them of being dependent only on their own taste:

Their moral philosophy is but a description of their own passions. For the rule of manners, without civil government, is the law of nature; and in it, the law civil, that determineth what is honest and dishonest; what is just and unjust; and generally what is good and evil. Whereas they make the rules of good and bad, by their own liking and disliking: by which means, in so great diversity of taste, there is nothing generally agreed on; but every one doth (as far as he dares) whatsoever seemeth good in his own eyes, to the subversion of commonwealth.<sup>40</sup>

For Hobbes, the emptiness of scholasticism means that it is thrown back on an unrecognized, pre-civilized reliance on taste that can only be individual and thus disruptive. Reliance on taste is inevitable; control of it requires government and law, not scholastic dogma. Both Hobbes and Gracian take for granted the importance of taste as a sense. In becoming a critical term, sense has been transformed into a normative judgment. Good and bad taste are ways of praising and blaming. The analogy that is necessary to get the term into a productive and critical vocabulary in the Renaissance can largely be taken for granted by the later part of the seventeenth century. Hobbes can accuse his opponents of resting on mere taste because he does not acknowledge any other grounds than experience to which Aristotelian scholasticism could appeal. In other words, it is not that taste is not a sense, but that its status as a sense has become too obvious to need justification and the question is whether one has good or bad taste. Croce claims that ‘the transference of the word to the domain of aesthetic seems to have taken place in France during the last quarter of the [seventeenth] century. . . . As attributes or variants of taste it was usual to mention *delicacy* and *variety* or *variability*.’<sup>41</sup> From there, it spreads into Germany and England (as good taste). By the time Hutcheson is writing, it is the obvious source for any empiricist aesthetic judgment.

### **Bishop Berkeley’s attack on Shaftesbury’s theory of taste**

In spite of the increasingly widespread use of ‘taste’ as a critical term in the later seventeenth century, positive appeals to taste, even within the empiricist camp, remained suspect. Direct appeals to taste emphasize variability as Hobbes saw, and

they undermine the rules and canons so important to neo-classical aesthetics. The complete assimilation and simultaneous distrust of taste is evident in Bishop Berkeley's attack on the principle defender of an evidential appeal to taste, Lord Shaftesbury. In *Alciphron*, published in London in 1732, Berkeley assumed the role of defender of religion against free-thinkers, among whom he cast Bernard Mandeville and Shaftesbury. Mandeville is presented as making a rather callow appeal to pleasure and taste; he is represented in the dialogue by Lysicles who is young and takes pride in flaunting established opinions. Alciphron represents the more high-minded positions of Shaftesbury, but to Berkeley, that makes them more dangerous. Since those positions concern both moral and aesthetic taste, the dialogue includes several discussions that depend on the status of taste. Berkeley's own reliance on ideas does not make him in any way sympathetic to appeals to taste and sense as they were developing. Like Hobbes, he sees them as destructive, though it is now free-thinkers, who openly embrace taste, who are to be condemned. What Berkeley objected to in Shaftesbury's work applies equally to Hutcheson, in spite of Hutcheson's own Calvinist doctrines, and it is especially applicable to Hume.

Initially, taste is presented as a distinction in men. Alciphron, the more cultivated of the two free-thinkers in the dialogues, wants to distinguish the free manner of the Italian masters from what he considers the more labored works of the Dutch. When he is challenged that the Italian mastery comes only after training, time, and effort, he appeals to delicate taste and refined judgment as the alternative to pedantry and method. Delicate taste and refined judgment are the result of a modern education and good company. 'Men get insensibly a delicate taste, a refined judgment, a certain politeness in thinking and expressing one's self.'<sup>42</sup> Even if this is an ironic *reductio*, it indicates one reason that taste was suspect. Appeals to taste seem to be beyond contesting because they are arrived at insensibly and are not subject to correction by more established rules. The *reductio* comes in because taste is then equated with the easily parodied politeness of the dilettante.

Two characteristics of taste are important to Alciphron's case. Taste is a sign of wit and genius rather than method and rules. And taste is acquired culturally, but not as a result of study. Neither a college education nor country virtues give one the delicate taste that is linked to artistic judgment. Judgment in this context is both the ability to produce as the Italian masters do and the ability to recognize what is produced as Alciphron is claiming for his sect. From Berkeley's point of view, such taste goes too far. It is disrespectful of the plain virtues of their host, Euphranor. It is not at all clear that taste is such a good thing. The suggestion is that judgments of taste are somewhat trivial – 'a certain politeness in thinking and expressing one's self.' The underlying idea is that taste requires acuteness (Gracian's *agudeza*). Taste is a kind of mental alertness that results from the mind's exercising its faculties,

but it is not clear that Alciphron can lay claim to those abilities. Crito's ironic reply punctures Alciphron's pretensions: 'Hence those lively faculties, that quickness of apprehension, that slyness of ridicule, that egregious talent of wit and humour, which distinguish the gentlemen of your profession' (A 1.11, 50). Instead of the mastery of the Italian style, one gets only the inflated rhetoric of Shaftesbury according to Berkeley.

At one extreme, taste is just sense and pleasure. Its metaphorical extension remains close to physical appetite. Lysicles represents Berkeley's version of Mandeville. He defends the pleasures of vice, and that means 'whoever understands life must allow that man to enjoy the top and flower of it who hath a quick sense of pleasure, and withal spirit, skill, and fortune sufficient to gratify every appetite and every taste' (A 2.13, 83). Berkeley has little trouble showing that in this sense, taste is self-defeating because to satisfy appetite is to lose the pleasure. For Lysicles, taste is essentially an animal sense. Crito reduces that form of taste to mere animal behavior: 'But to cheat, whore, betray, get drunk, do all these things decently, this is true wisdom, and elegance of taste.' Obviously taste is associated with free-thinking and degeneracy to Crito. By reducing taste to sensuality, Lysicles leaves no room for a true taste.

Nevertheless, there is something important in the way Lysicles uses taste. As degenerate as it is, the connection between taste and pleasure and taste and sense are taken for granted. The form of a reply must identify alternative pleasures, and that is essentially what Euphranor does. He returns to Aristotle's classical order of levels of the soul from *De Anima*: 'Are not reason, imagination, and sense, faculties different in kind, and in rank higher one than another?' (A 2.14, 85). If taste belongs only to sense and appetite, it will be the lowest form of pleasure. Berkeley expects an easy agreement in placing reason at the highest level in this polemical context, even though that is just the issue that separates the sentimentalists from their rationalist and scholastic opponents. The issue is where taste is to be located and whether there are more kinds of pleasure. The problem for Lysicles is that his location of taste with animal sense does not allow him to make judgments based on taste. He needs to be able to acknowledge that 'the same vulgar sort of men prefer a piece of sign-post painting to one of Raphael's, or a Grubstreet ballad to an ode of Horace' (A 2.15, 88) as Euphranor points out, but he can appeal only to men of rank and fashion in his defense. Euphranor rests his case with Aristotle and a taste for rational pleasures.

This dispute does not get very far because Lysicles defends only a very gross sense of Mandevillian taste, and Euphranor replies with a very traditional Aristotelian flight from sense. The real question is whether sense itself can be incorporated into taste in a way that retains the initial connections between taste as an elevated form

of judgment and productive wit. That case belongs to Shaftesbury and not Mandeville.

In the third dialogue, Alciphron summarizes Shaftesbury's position. Berkeley understands Shaftesbury in a fairly obvious neo-Platonic way. Analogous to corporeal beauty is 'a beauty of another kind, an order, a symmetry, and comeliness, in the moral world. And as the eye perceiveth the one, so the mind doth, by a certain interior sense, perceive the other' (A 3.3, 117). This Platonic language is evident in Shaftesbury, but it is central to Berkeley's understanding of Shaftesbury's view of taste in a way that oversimplifies Shaftesbury's argument. Alciphron reduces taste to what Shaftesbury would have regarded as 'mere taste.' 'To relish this kind of beauty there must be a delicate and fine taste; but where there is this natural taste, nothing further is wanting, either as a principle to convince, or as a motive to induce men to the love of virtue' (A 3.3, 117). The metaphor is empirical, but the sense is Platonic. Berkeley was not prepared to grant Shaftesbury this natural religion, and he was not capable of understanding how Shaftesbury had shifted the ground for it and reversed the traditional Aristotelian direction by treating taste and sense as ways of testing experience. As Alciphron presents the case, sense is not only an inner sense; it is in no need of correction or education. So taste is not only a form of judgment; it takes on the incorrigibility of direct sense. This misrepresents Shaftesbury, who always insisted that taste stood in need of testing and correction, but it is a misrepresentation to which Shaftesbury had left himself open.

Two difficulties make this form of taste problematic to Berkeley. The first is that it does not take account of the 'ill taste of the present'; the ancients are compared favorably to the license of the moderns. Crito objects to the likely outcome that would 'make as mad work in other affairs, were men to follow, instead of rules, precepts, and models, their own taste and first thoughts of beauty' (A 3.9, 128). Crito's preference for ancient models, particularly in architecture, is largely conventional, but it points to a more basic problem in basing judgment on taste. If, as Alciphron has claimed, taste is an inner sense that does not require education, it should not be subject to such 'madness.' Note, however, that Crito accepts that taste is the proper analogy. The problem is that ill-taste, and not good taste, results from inner sense.

Second, taste, as Alciphron presents it, is a taste for beauty. But Euphranor understands beauty as 'order, proportion, and symmetry.' Given the Platonic cast of Alciphron's arguments, this is entirely reasonable. But in that case, principles of beauty can correct and improve taste.

In effect, have we not learned from this digression [into ancient architecture] that, as there is no beauty without proportion, so proportions are to be esteemed just and true only as they are relative to some certain use or end,

their aptitude and subordination to which end is, at bottom, that which makes them please and charm?

(A 3.9, 128)

In effect, Alciphron's notion of taste brings out an implicit contradiction. If taste is pleasure and sense, it is not Platonic; if it is Platonic, it is subject to a higher order and harmony. Crito and Euphranor (and Berkeley) use the latter to combat the free-thinking tendencies of the former. They accept that taste is the critical term that it has become, but they seek to maintain control of taste for the sake of religion and order.

Crito's view of beauty is providential: 'But in an incoherent fortuitous system, governed by chance, or in a blind system, governed by fate, or in any system where Providence doth not preside, how can beauty be, which cannot be without order, which cannot be without design?' (A 3.11, 129–130). So much of the new, empiricist use of 'taste' sounds very much like the older classical subordination of sense through imagination, memory, and reason that it is easy to understand how in a polemical context, Berkeley can use one against the other. The language of impressions, imagination, and inner sense all have classical analogies, as we have seen, and they contribute to the newer critical use of taste. Berkeley does not recognize that the real difference should be located in the identification of beauty as a pleasant emotion rather than as order or harmony. As long as order and harmony are understood as the essence of beauty, the judgment of taste cannot be individual and variable without being dangerous. When beauty is understood as an emotion itself, however, taste judges and produces beauty in a new sense. Taste belongs with beauty for Shaftesbury, but for Berkeley, taste is subordinate to beauty. There is no way that Berkeley can understand the radical nature of Shaftesbury's shift, and it is unlikely that even Shaftesbury himself was prepared for the consequences. For that, one must look to Hume.

Crito opposes being governed by taste to being governed by accepted models:

Nor should we venture to be governed by taste, even in matters of less consequence. . . . What wretched work do they and other northern people make when they follow their own taste of beauty in any of these particulars, instead of acquiring the true, which is to be got from ancient models and the principles of art.

(A 3.12, 132)

Crito probably should not be taken simply as a mouthpiece for Berkeley. His arguments are sometimes too crude or too ironic. Here his preference for ancient

models is not argued for; it is itself a matter of taste, evidently. What underlies it is the distrust of taste as it is expressed in Britain. A dilemma is implicit. If classical models educate northern tastes, then taste cannot be superior to the models. If classical models do not educate northern taste, then that taste is barbaric. To Berkeley, taste is an empirical phenomenon, so to rely upon it is to abandon judgment. The Renaissance understanding of taste as a form of judgment and as a productive faculty is threatened by its identification with a fundamentally empiricist understanding of taste. If taste is truly individual and emotional, it cannot maintain the Renaissance balance between classicism and modernism.

Crito's position is openly prudential. He is prepared to admit that in exceptional cases, high-minded philosophers may be able to follow their own taste and at the same time conform to the demands of beauty. 'But in no case is it to be hoped that *to kalon* will be the leading idea of the many, who have quick senses, strong passions, and gross intellects.' Even if there are some heroic philosophers whose senses and tastes could lead to the beautiful, they should keep quiet because they will corrupt those who cannot follow them. Thus the attack on Shaftesbury (under the name Cratylus at this point) shifts to essentially prudential grounds. It is acknowledged that Shaftesbury's purpose 'was to assert the reality of a beauty and charm in moral as well as in natural subjects; to demonstrate a taste which he thinks more effectual than principle; to recommend morals on the same foot with manners' (A 3.13, 133). However, his writings corrupt others. Crito is scathing in his ridicule of the idea that 'taste or relish' can replace law:

His conduct seems just as wise as if a monarch should give out that there was neither jail nor executioner in his kingdom to enforce the laws, but that it would be beautiful to observe them, and that in so doing men would taste the pure delight which results from order and decorum.

(A 3.13, 133)

This is fairly close to the mark since Shaftesbury did spend a considerable amount of his argument in the *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* on rejecting the necessity of the doctrine of rewards and punishments. The prudence that led Gracian to consider taste a form of practical wisdom is turned against taste by Crito. The aristocratic Shaftesbury, with his strong sense of *noblesse oblige*, is caricatured, but taste itself is in an ambivalent position.

Part of Shaftesbury's solution to this ambivalence was to endorse raillery as a test of taste. Alciphron appeals to raillery as a response to 'the various taste of readers' (A 3.15, 137). What is for Shaftesbury a way of exposing the true feelings of men behind the conventions and hypocrisy of the world is merely ridicule to Alciphron, however. The distance between a taste that is genuinely a test of character

and the kind of in-between taste that Berkeley distrusts is clearer here than anywhere else. Taste is inevitably hierarchical – it serves to sort men according to their sensibility. The problem is that for Berkeley, such a test does not produce truth. Of course, for Shaftesbury, the sense of ‘test’ is different; it is in fact closer to taste itself. Berkeley does not make this connection, so raillery seems to him merely ridicule. Both Alciphron and Crito associate wit (*ingegno*) with taste. Alciphron speaks of ‘our ingenious men’ (A 3.15, 138) and Crito replies that ‘Wit without wisdom, if there be such a thing, is hardly worth finding’ (A 3.16, 138). The crux remains that taste has moved toward an autonomy that Berkeley cannot allow it.

There remains one element of taste which Shaftesbury exemplified and which Berkeley could not resist attacking. Taste provides models to be imitated. One sign of good taste is simply who and what one imitates. So, for example, elegant taste is associated with ancient Greece and is enhanced by the reputation of the classics (A 5.17, 191). Against this, some attacked religion as a poor stylistic model. One of the claims made for Shaftesbury by Alciphron is that he sought to improve public taste:

Doubtless the taste of the age is much mended: in proof whereof his [Cratylus/Shaftesbury’s] writings are universally admired. When our author published this treatise, he foresaw the public taste would improve apace; that arts and letters would grow to great perfection; that there would be a happy birth of genius: of all which things he spoke, as he saith himself, in a prophetic style.

(A 5.22, 200–201)

This claim to be a model of taste unites several themes: improvement, genius, the authority of taste for an age. But Shaftesbury’s own style is easily parodied, and Berkeley has some fun with it, re-writing a section of ‘A Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author’ as blank verse. The argument becomes *ad hominem*. This ‘northern’ refugee to Italy poses as a stylist, but his own style refutes him.

If he, who professes at every turn a high esteem for polite writing, should yet despise those who most excel in it, one would be tempted to suspect his taste. But if the very man who of all men talks most about art, and taste, and critical skill, and would be thought to have most considered those points, should often deviate from his own rules, into the false sublime, or the *mauvaise plaisanterie*, what reasonable man would follow the taste and judgment of such a guide, or be seduced to climb the steep ascent or tread in the rugged paths of virtue on his recommendation?

(A 5.25, 204)

The plain style of Christianity is preferable to the mannerist style of Shaftesbury. If God has bad taste because he speaks plainly, so much the worse for taste. There is a serious dispute beneath the satire, however. An appeal to taste will always be subject to such *ad hominem* attacks, Berkeley thinks. All who put themselves forward as models must claim to be true models, but if taste is autonomous, it cannot make such a claim.

One should not conclude that Berkeley's attack on Shaftesbury is sufficient to discredit taste, or even that that is its object. Taste is too well established as a critical term and a critical issue to be so easily displaced. The doubts that arise for someone like Berkeley, who is concerned to defend religion against the dangers of free-thinking disorder, are based on an acceptance of taste as a quasi-judgmental aesthetic term. That there is some *je ne sais quoi* must be granted by Berkeley; the question is how it is to be controlled. Some, such as the ancients and Erasmus are acknowledged as a 'fit judge of sense and good writing' (A 6.27, 274) by Crito. The very ambivalence that Crito feels toward taste demonstrates its acceptance and power. Hume, in effect, takes up the challenge to vindicate its authority.

### **Francis Hutcheson: the teleology of sense**

The first systematic defender of the aesthetic implications of Shaftesbury's theory of taste is Francis Hutcheson, however. Hutcheson provides the first systematic treatise on aesthetics in the British tradition that looks to John Locke for its philosophical inspiration. The problems that Hutcheson's line of inquiry raises might be said to force Hume to begin again from a different direction. Hutcheson adopts the obvious parallel for both beauty and morals suggested not only by Locke's exclusive reliance on ideas but also by the success of Newton and the new science. If ideas come from sense, and sense is individual experience, then, Hutcheson reasons, there must be a sensible basis for morality and beauty. Since the received tradition already has a form of internal sense going back at least to Augustine, it seems straightforward for Hutcheson to adopt internal sense as the basis for defending sentiment and taste as reliable guides to beauty and morality. Yet the consequences and difficulties that this seemingly straightforward defense encounters force Hume to reject Hutcheson's form of internal sense and severely qualify the way that it enters Hume's own system.

Hutcheson begins *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) as a defense and explanation of Shaftesbury's principles. Shaftesbury provides grounds for Hutcheson's immediate sense which sound very much like Hutcheson's theory:



The shape, motions, colours, and proportions of these latter being presented to our eye, there necessarily results a beauty or deformity, according to the different measure, arrangement, and disposition of their several parts. . . . It [the mind] feels the soft and harsh, the agreeable and disagreeable in the affections, and finds a foul and fair, a harmonious and dissonant, as really and truly here as in any musical numbers or in the outward forms or representations of sensible things. Nor can it withhold its admiration and ecstasy, its aversion and scorn, any more in what relates to one than to the other of these subjects. So that to deny the common and natural sense of a sublime and beautiful in things, will appear an affectation merely, to any only who considers duly of this affair.

(IVM, I, 251–252)

Compare this to Hutcheson's claim 'that some objects are immediately the Occasions of this Pleasure of Beauty, and that we have Senses fitted for perceiving it.'<sup>43</sup> But Hutcheson is concerned to take the sense of beauty in a different direction. His defense of Shaftesbury is designed to show that 'this moral sense has no relation to innate ideas' (H, vii). For Hutcheson, the moral and aesthetic senses produce ideas in the mind like those produced by the 'external' senses of sight, taste, smell, and touch. They correspond to Locke's ideas of sense rather than ideas of reflection, and they have the same kind of immediate incorrigibility that other ideas of sense have. For Shaftesbury, reflection is part of taste. Mere sense is not reliable. Hutcheson reduces reflection to temporal delay: 'It is probably some little time before Children do reflect, or at least let us know that they reflect upon Proportions and Similitude' (H, ix). Hutcheson takes the internal sense to be a form of perception, and its qualitative accompaniment is pleasure. Moral pleasure follows from good actions; aesthetic pleasure from beautiful objects. In both cases, the perception is an idea in the mind and the pleasure is likewise the experiencer's internal feeling.

It is not important that Hutcheson misreads Shaftesbury and that his defense is misguided. Shaftesbury certainly does not find pleasure a reliable sign of moral or aesthetic quality, and Hutcheson provides so many teleological qualifications that he evades most of the consequences of his implicit hedonism. The significant point is that for Hutcheson, both external and internal sense are immediately reliable (if not wholly incorrigible). External sense shows us the physical qualities of the world. Internal sense shows us the moral and aesthetic qualities of the same world.

Hutcheson is a much more systematic thinker than Shaftesbury, so he works out internal sense on a strict analogy to Locke's ideas of sensation. It is indisputable that Hutcheson begins in a way that owes much to Locke. On the first page of his *Inquiry Concerning Beauty*, Hutcheson focuses on ideas, which are raised by external objects acting on our bodies (H, 7). Yet equally, from the beginning,

Hutcheson deviates from Locke. For Locke, perception simply is having ideas.<sup>44</sup> Everything turns on what ideas one has and how they are arranged. For Hutcheson, also, the ideas we have of external objects are passively received perceptions, but that does not exhaust perception. Hutcheson explains:

Since there are such different Powers of Perception, where what are commonly called the External Senses are the same; . . . we may justly use another Name for these higher and more delightful Perceptions of Beauty and Harmony, and call the Power of receiving such impressions, an Internal Sense.

(H, 9–10)

It is important to keep clearly in mind what ‘idea’ means here for Hutcheson. There are not two ideas – an idea supplied by the external senses and a separate idea of beauty. The idea of beauty is not separable from the idea of a triangle in the way that Plotinus can separate the idea of unity from the ideas one has of unified objects to arrive at a separate, reified idea of the ‘One.’ For Hutcheson, the perception of the triangle may be different depending on the action of an additional sense that is hierarchically added. Thus the idea that one has will include a perception of beauty if and only if one has the internal sense. The qualities of the triangle that are causally productive of the idea that includes a perception of beauty are, for Hutcheson, uniformity amidst variety. One might have a separate, abstract idea, of those qualities. But beauty is the beauty of the triangle. It must not be confused with its causes nor detached from the idea provided by the external senses. Hutcheson’s extension of ideas to a higher form of perception seems to follow by analogy from Locke’s insistence that ideas alone are the ‘stuff’ of our perceptions, but it is in fact a radical deviation from Locke.

The comparison is instructive. For Locke, the division of ideas is between those which are externally caused and those which are internally caused:

The other fountain, from which Experience furnisheth the Understanding with Ideas, is the Perception of the *Operations of our Own Minds*. . . . This source of *Ideas*, every man has wholly in himself: And though it be not Sense as having nothing to do with external Objects; yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be call’d internal sense.<sup>45</sup>

Such ideas Locke calls ideas of reflection. There is no implied hierarchy, as there is in Hutcheson. Locke’s distinction between ideas of sense and ideas of reflection is one half of a potentially four-fold distinction, the other half being between simple

and complex ideas. But Hutcheson loses the second half of the distinction because his internal sense *is* supposed to be really a sense, and it distinguishes not other ideas that can combine in exactly the same way as ideas of sense but a whole different level of perception. Locke goes on to allow that some ideas can be acquired both by sense and reflection.<sup>46</sup> That is obviously impossible for Hutcheson's internal sense, which is a different power of perception. Thus, Hutcheson drops out ideas of reflection and replaces them with ideas of internal sense.

The problem with this, from a Lockean perspective, is that it asks sense to do a different job in the epistemological scheme. For Locke, sense simply supplies ideas. Everything else, including knowledge, is a matter of agreement or disagreement of ideas.<sup>47</sup> But for Hutcheson, the internal sense is superior, just as it is for Shaftesbury. In practice, the internal sense operates like a rationalist check on sensation – to such an extent that Hutcheson must insist warmly that it is not an innate idea (H, 75). The problem, of course, is that the internal sense is not just passive; it is a power of perceiving ideas that have human value.

We can get an additional perspective on how Hutcheson takes an internal sense to work from the letters he wrote to Gilbert Burnet at the same time (1725). Their discussion concerns a moral sense, but the problems are similar. Burnet thinks the sense itself could be wrong. Hutcheson replies that nothing can be antecedent to moral sense without circularity:

In this circle we must run until we acknowledge the first original of our moral ideas to be from a sense or, which is to the same purpose, 'till we acknowledge that they arise from a determination by the author of nature, which necessitates our minds to approve of public affections and of consulting the good of others.<sup>48</sup>

It is the equation in the last clause that gives the game away. Moral ideas are not separate ideas of what is moral. They are specific ideas that the moral sense leads the mind to approve. For Hutcheson, the moral sense, and a sense of beauty, are powers of perception that configure the mind to approve, and on the basis of that judgment, Hutcheson can advance an elaborate teleology to show that how we judge is divinely ordained. No such derivation can arise for Lockean ideas in any of their combinations, and Locke does not expect them to. Such teleology falls outside *knowledge*, which is limited to what the ideas themselves contain, no matter how firmly Locke may have *believed* it.

For Hutcheson, mistakes about beauty are due to a failure of perception or to accumulated associations. Beauty must be objective correspondence of the mind to some external thing just as our ideas of sensible qualities are. Hutcheson thinks

that he can identify the ideas that correspond to the qualities necessary for beauty in the same way that one identifies the ideas of color that correspond to color qualities: 'The figures that excite in us the ideas of Beauty, seem to be those in which there is uniformity amidst variety' (H, 15). But equally, the presence or absence of those qualities is a matter of experience: 'As to the universal Agreement of Mankind in their sense of Beauty from Uniformity amidst Variety, we must consult Experience' (H, 68). Hutcheson's concern is to defend the moral and aesthetic senses against charges that they are 'interested' and thus capricious and subjective in the absence of innate ideas. He does so by providing an apparatus of sense that will place morals and aesthetics on the same footing as perception and by appealing to common experience (the universal agreement of mankind).

The problems of sense understood along the lines Locke lays down lead to Hume's skeptical arguments against our ability to draw reliable inferences in the way that our common sense or Locke take for granted. But it is not skepticism about sense in general that creates the difficulty for Hutcheson's line of development in aesthetics. Hutcheson would be successful if he could maintain that beauty has the status of a simple idea of sense. The problem is whether he can do this or not.

For there to be an aesthetic sense, it must not be reducible to the external senses (though as Alexander Gerard argued, it need not be wholly independent of them<sup>49</sup>). If it were, then beauty would become a complex product of reflection or an association of ideas (as it does for Archibald Alison) and thus a product of education. It would lose the qualified kind of objectivity as a simple idea of sense that Hutcheson seeks to win for it. To achieve this, Hutcheson attempts to follow Locke by treating aesthetic experience as something acquired directly and in discrete units from things. But there is no organ of internal sense. So, in spite of Gerard's argument, it is unclear how the ideas of an internal sense are to be identified. External sense can be defined causally. Hume shows the difficulties that reliance on cause raises, but at least they are the same for external sense as for internal sense, and as Hume acknowledged, we do not really doubt causality. A simple idea of sight is produced by corpuscular action on the retina of the eye. If we do not know the quality, and even if Hume convinces us that we cannot answer the questions that knowledge requires us to answer on the basis of causation alone, nevertheless we know the power that it has on us. Whatever skeptical problems arise from that causal connection, external sense has a kind of common-sense biological basis. A comparable hypothesis is not available for an internal sense, however.

Thus, it is not just incidental that Hutcheson must supply some criteria for aesthetic qualities in the object even though he acknowledges that the pleasure we call beauty is an idea in the subject. He need not settle on the pleasure that follows from uniformity amidst variety, but he must supply some defining properties that

link the idea – pleasure – to the object if the sense of beauty is not to lose the objectivity that simple ideas of sense can claim according to Locke. The seemingly obvious move to an experiential sense on a direct analogy with the external senses thus ends by committing aesthetics to two theses: i) The aesthetic sense is qualitatively distinct and not reducible to any other sense, and ii) some qualitative characteristics are uniquely aesthetic. The first thesis might be called the aesthetic experience thesis. It is most commonly conceived as a uniquely aesthetic delight or pleasure, and it leads in the nineteenth century to aesthetic attitude theories. Much of subsequent eighteenth-century British aesthetics is occupied with supplying alternatives to satisfy the second thesis. Hogarth's sensuous line and the revivals of the classical golden section are among the proposals. The failure of these attempts and the multiplication of senses that is required to fill the gap left by an inability to supply criteria doom Hutcheson's naive appeal to an aesthetic sense.

The real problem is that for Hutcheson, 'sense' does not mean acquiring ideas in the same way that it does for Locke and for Hume. It does mean acquiring ideas; the moral sense supports the idea that benevolence is reasonable, and against Burnet, Hutcheson holds that there can be no further appeal without circularity. But for Hutcheson, a being without a moral sense could have exactly the same *understanding* that we do. The difference in perception would not appear to such a being as reasonable, and this evidences itself in a lack of the sentiment or feeling that would make it painful to one with a moral sense to act against conscience. Thus Hutcheson is intermediate between Locke who truly relies on ideas of sense and reflection, all of which occur at the same level, and someone like Burnet who is reluctant to rely on sense at all. For Hutcheson, a sense is a necessary condition for judgment, but he makes sense do a double duty. It operates as if it were part of a faculty of reason that produces understanding; but combined with the teleological deductions it allows, Hutcheson's internal sense also operates independently to judge reason. Without the teleological element, Hutcheson has no way of accounting for the presence of his version of internal senses. Shaftesbury's notion of a system to which the individual belongs played the same role in his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*, but Shaftesbury was not trying to establish a pure sense as Hutcheson is. Hume recognized and rejected Hutcheson's appeal to teleology, but Hume also has moved beyond Shaftesbury's reliance on Platonism and Locke's unitary ideas.

There is thus a deep confusion in Hutcheson's reliance on sense and ideas. On the one hand, sense is located at the level of mental perception. Hutcheson assumes that sense is a mental operation. The mind is an active sensing organ. There could be other configurations of sense – other things than uniformity amidst variety could affect different beings. The moral sense could be constituted differently; one

cannot immediately judge one's own moral sense.<sup>50</sup> No justifying reason is antecedent to the moral sense or the sense of beauty because those senses are judging faculties from the beginning. This makes sense quasi-rational; the differences between moral or aesthetic perceptions lie in *how* sense judges. On the other hand, sense is located at the level of passive acquisition. Hutcheson assumes that sense provides pre-cognitive ideas on which the mind operates. There would be no moral judgment without the moral sense. 'Had we wanted a moral sense . . . moral good or evil would have been unknown to us.'<sup>51</sup> This is a sense that supplies data but does not determine how that data is used. It is thus possible that the data could be used to verify or falsify a particular moral or aesthetic judgment. Sense as data-supplier corresponds to the position of Locke and the scientific circle he belonged to, but it does not, by itself, supply moral or aesthetic knowledge. Sense as judge/reasoning power – which is what it is for rationalists – provides knowledge but qualifies pure sense with an instinctive Ideological organization or demonstrative procedure (though not necessarily innate ideas, as Hutcheson insists). Hutcheson uses 'sense' in both ways.

I want to emphasize how different Hutcheson's concept of aesthetic experience is from the kind of experience to which Shaftesbury refers and to which Hume returns. When Shaftesbury speaks of an immediate sense of beauty, the emphasis falls on 'immediate.' It is unmediated by rules or interest. The sense of beauty is not a sixth sense, however, because Shaftesbury is not committed to Locke's process of acquiring experience. Shaftesbury's opponent is Hobbes, and Shaftesbury must show how social virtues arise from individual sense. Shaftesbury wants to show that experience is public and some kinds of senses are not restricted to Hobbes's individual egoistic interest. The moral and beautiful are themselves empirical evidence that Shaftesbury can cite against Hobbes, and his reference to a sense of these in men implies only that to be a man is not to be a brute living in a state of nature. Shaftesbury is thus not committed to a simple sense unqualified by reflection, nor does his aesthetics need the kinds of defining qualities that Hutcheson must supply. For Shaftesbury, art is bound up with both history and morality, and beauty remains an essentially 'higher' form.

Hutcheson turns to Locke for an alternative structure. For Locke, the key powers rest with what produces ideas in us or with the mind's ability to consider or not consider any idea (Will).<sup>52</sup> The idea of beauty is one among many ideas of a mixed mode; it is of little epistemological importance. Hutcheson moves power inward by means of an internal sense. That sense is clearly a power *of the mind*. The moral sense and the sense of beauty assume major epistemological importance. But they do so only by departing in significant respects from Locke's usage. The difference is evident in all of Hutcheson's uses of 'beauty.' Beauty is 'taken for the idea raised

in us, and a sense of beauty for the power of receiving this idea' (H, 6–7). Later, beauty 'is pleasing some perceiving power' (H, 65). Hutcheson has no single idea that one could identify as the idea of beauty corresponding to a Lockean idea. (Of course Locke does not have a 'Lockean idea' of beauty either. That is the point. What is not to be found in Locke in aesthetics cannot be supplied by Hutcheson's way of rethinking Locke without an added appeal to Hutcheson's Calvinist teleology.) Hutcheson's 'idea of beauty' is quite varied. Its one criterion of identity is its pleasantness. It cannot be painful (H, 65). In us, uniformity amidst variety causes ideas to be perceived as beautiful and marked by a form of pleasantness just as the moral sense causes ideas to be approved and provokes pain when one acts against their claims, but that could be otherwise.

Hutcheson's attempt to combine Shaftesbury's reliance on sentiment and taste with Locke's exclusive reliance on ideas fails because it cannot identify the requisite internal senses independently of teleology and causation, and beauty lacks any criteria of identity. Hume destroys the kind of reliance on both teleology and causation that Hutcheson requires. The only alternatives, therefore, are for Hume either to turn to science, in the manner, perhaps, of Joseph Priestley, or to deconstruct ideas further. Hume chooses the latter course, rejecting the complexity of quasi-mechanical associationism in favor of a philosophical psychology of human nature based on his own 'experimental' method.

### Hume and Du Bos

The Abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos's *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* appeared in French first in 1719<sup>53</sup> and was translated into English from a fifth edition by Thomas Nugent in 1748.<sup>54</sup> Hume certainly knew Du Bos's work, and the English translation precedes Hume's 'Of the Standard of Taste' which was published in 1757, so Du Bos would have been potentially available to Hume's audience at that point, though not when the *Treatise* appeared. There are striking similarities between Du Bos's defense of sentiment and the priority he gives to sentiment and experience over reason and inference in judgments of taste and the positions of Hume. This has led some, most notably Peter Jones, to conclude that Hume is influenced by Du Bos.<sup>55</sup> Comparison supports that conclusion.

Du Bos explores several points that had become common topics of discussion by the early eighteenth century. In the later seventeenth century, individual arts were grouped together into fine arts, and the comparison and relative merits of one art in relation to another became a subject for discussion. In particular, the relative priority of poetry and painting was a topic of interest. At the same time, national character was associated with the arts. Italy versus France and England, and more generally northern versus southern claims were considered. Finally, public taste had become

an issue, particularly with the increasing importance of a middle-class, bourgeois audience for the arts. The Renaissance concept of taste was assimilated to criticisms along the practical lines laid down by Balthasar Gracian. One wanted to identify good taste and be associated with and cultivate those who had it. Such instruction had a decidedly prudential aspect.

Du Bos's *Reflections* provides an interesting amalgam of these issues in the context of an extensive classical learning combined with a thoroughly sensationalist aesthetic. The result is not only not systematic; it is not consistent nor linear in its display. Du Bos raises possibilities only to frustrate discussion of some of the most obvious difficulties with an obscure reference to 'nature' or simply a change of subject. He can be perceptive and ridiculous in the same paragraph. Above all, he never met a classical citation that he did not feel deserved exhibition. For all that, portions of his work are extremely suggestive for understanding later writers such as Hume.

I will argue that Hume's appropriation, if it is that, is substantially different in its final outcome from what one finds in Du Bos, however. Du Bos combines a theory of imitation with a distaste for any connected inference. His appeals to sentiment are naturalistic, naive, and would, if developed, lead directly to a critical subjectivism. Hume, in contrast, has a theory that appeals to sentiment because it is the mind's final authority for what one knows as *reasoning*. Du Bos dismisses all argumentation. Hume shows that the most reliable arguments are dependent on sentiment. Du Bos's judgments are simplistic. Hume's are by his own admission abstruse and difficult. Whatever suggestions Hume may have derived from Du Bos, he converted them to his own very different system.

Du Bos begins with a paradox that is generated by his reliance on what he calls simply 'sense.' Just what is meant by 'sense' will require some consideration because Du Bos refers both to 'sens,' *simpliciter*, and to 'sentiment,' but at a minimum, sense is an immediate reaction to what one perceives. So if one sees an object, sense is one's response to that object. If the object is frightening, one is moved by fright etc. Whatever else is going on, one's sense is immediate and obvious. Sentiment is more complex. It includes the first ideas that are raised in the soul, but sentiments also move us because they 'speak the language of the heart.'<sup>56</sup> 'Sentiment' evidently refers to a class of feelings, identified in terms of their emotional effects. It is an extension of taste and, since, as we have seen, taste is related to touch, taste shares its organic basis with sentiment as the etymology of the French term '*toucher*' used for an emotional effect indicates. At bottom, therefore, sentiment is still a form of sense because of its organic basis. Sentiments are the product of taste, and to change them, one must undergo an organic change.<sup>57</sup> Ideas are not distinguished as a separate reflective class, as they are in the Lockean tradition that Hume follows. Du Bos is a sentimentalist, but unlike Hume, he does not seem to



have anything more in mind than that sentiments are powers of affecting us through sense.

A complication arises because in some cases, one's sentiments do not respond in the way that they should. Confronted with sad, piteous, or fearsome events in a tragedy, one does not respond as one would if the events were real. Part of the answer comes from the fact that reason has nothing to say about such emotions. Tragedy provokes strong emotions; it is affecting and moving. It produces stronger sentiments than the kinds of emotions, including beauty, that Hume identifies as calm emotions. Whatever is moving can be attractive to the mind, and posing alternatives and choices does not affect the emotions themselves. Like Hume, Du Bos holds that reason cannot control emotion. But for Du Bos, the priority and choices of emotions seem largely accidental or naturalistic. Stronger sentiments prevail. Hume is driven to the priority of sentiment over reason by the logic of his epistemology. If one is not moved by an argument, then the argument has no effect. Thus being moved is itself a form of judgment that takes precedence over the reasoning within the argument. But for Du Bos, being moved is simply the end toward which the mind is directed by its nature, and it is likely to take its pleasure where it finds it.

Nevertheless, there is a strong parallel between Hume and Du Bos and others over the paradox of taking pleasure in suffering. Du Bos dwells at length on gladiators and why one takes pleasure in such spectacles that are both painful in themselves and degrading in their implications. Augustine had struggled with the same problem in his *Confessions* when his friend was drawn to the arena. If emotion is central, it also seems perverse in itself. Why should one take pleasure in what is painful? If imagination repeats what is sensed, then what is unpleasant to sense should also be unpleasant to imagination. But the opposite appears to be the case. The imagination is drawn to what sense recoils from. This is a less serious problem if sense is a lower form, as it is for classical authors and for rationalists. They can account for such pleasures as a degradation of reason, a dualistic movement of mind back toward matter. But for Du Bos and Hume, emotion is simply a fact that must be accounted for, and it seems, on its face, to be a paradoxical, even irrational fact.

Their responses to this paradox are different. Du Bos's solution is that art creates the passion without the consequence. We have the excitement without the real pain and suffering.<sup>58</sup> He does not recognize that this is not a real solution to the problem that underlies dependence on sense and emotion. It was not the actual consequences that were the problem but why we should be attracted to what was painful. The problem was not that gladiatorial combat in a painting would be pleasant but that gladiatorial combat should be pleasant at all. Fundamentally, Du Bos can only

amass facts that indicate to him that sense will ultimately choose correctly. Hume, on the other hand, re-structures knowledge to show that the paradox is only apparent and that sentiment is capable of the refinement needed to allow it to judge for itself.

Du Bos acknowledges that the result of relying on sense will be differing tastes. While pleasure is the common goal of everyone, different physical characteristics mean that different things will please.<sup>59</sup> 'Taste' is metaphorical, but essentially it is just pleasure transmitted by an aesthetic quasi-organ. Several issues emerge from this hedonism. On the one hand, Du Bos must offer some account of the passions themselves. For Hume, of course, the nature of the passions is the central issue, particularly in Book II of the *Treatise*, but for Du Bos, such argumentation is beyond his scope (and, one suspects, his capabilities). On the other hand, he must trace emotions back to objects if he is to maintain his fundamental commitment to a naturalistic theory of imitation.

Du Bos's theory of passions reduces to a theory of imitation. Painters and poets are imitators, so their imitations excite artificial passions parallel to the true passions that those objects would excite. The only difference between an artificial and a real passion, then, is the status of the object. In so far as imitation succeeds, the passions it provokes are closer to those that the real object would excite.<sup>60</sup> The difference is one of force. The impression that an imitated object makes lacks the force of the object itself.<sup>61</sup> The lack of force is not just a lack of strength in the way the passion is felt, however. It is a difference in consequences. The effect on the 'sensitive soul' by imitations is weaker, and thus it soon fades.<sup>62</sup> Hume agrees that strength of sentiment is the only difference in ideas, but he follows that distinction to its logical conclusion. There is no difference in kind between sentiments based on the ontological status of the objects. If sentiment plays a role in judgment, it must play the same role regardless of whether its object is an imitation or not. What makes Du Bos important is not that he has any worked out psychology of the passions but that he is prepared to grant them a greater authority than any of his contemporaries do. In particular, they take precedence over argument.

Du Bos simply distrusts the artificiality of reason. Sense and experience are not just the alternative to reason but to all philosophical argument. His appeal to sense is part of his naturalism. Experience, based on sense, rarely misleads us, and even reason confirms that one should rely on sense. In contrast, philosophical generalizations and chains of reasoning mislead us every day.<sup>63</sup> This distrust is not itself reasoned. If it were, Du Bos would have to consider some fairly obvious objections. For example, it is obvious that one might react differently on different days; does that make the work of art different? Hume's defense of sentiment is quite different. For Hume, sentiment is how one knows that an argument is correct; ultimately, sentiment judges the Tightness of comparisons. Inference is not denied

but identified with the expectations formed by habit and association etc. But Du Bos seems to mean by sense what Shaftesbury would have called ‘mere sense’ – the reaction of the moment. For example, Du Bos’s understanding of science is the collection of facts as he makes clear when he praises the Royal Society in London and the Academy of Sciences in Paris for limiting themselves to the collection and recording of facts.<sup>64</sup>

One of the most striking demonstrations of the difference between Du Bos’s system and that of Hume is found in their treatment of probability. The probability of events is a staple of Aristotelian dramatic theory and thence it enters into classical rhetoric. There the probable is what conforms to the universal. The particular is too eccentric or private for anyone to participate in. Mere events have no significance. So Aristotle ranks poetry above history because poetry is more universal. Rhetoric achieves its effects by appealing to what is universal in human beings, to their intellect, rather than to their material souls, which will vary too much for the effects to be predictable. Du Bos echoes this classical order, but at the same time, he reverses the ranking. Truth is the soul of history; poetry is only probable.<sup>65</sup> Truth and probability belong to particular facts and particular existence, but the probable is subordinate to the actual. A probable fact must be possible. What is impossible, in terms of the conditions presented in the work, cannot seem probable.<sup>66</sup> Du Bos seems to be echoing Aristotle’s preference for a probable impossibility to an improbable possibility, but he has switched the relations. Possibility produces probability. Du Bos has no room for a probable impossibility in his epistemology. Fictions may be possible and probable if they conform to what is believed at some time. Belief becomes important, but Du Bos does not notice it, nor does he consider the problems it is likely to raise. Probability must conform to existence if any effect is to be predictable, but instead of treating probability as regularity, Du Bos depicts it as contrasted to the marvelous. Only poets of genius can bridge the gap. Skill alone cannot combine the probable and marvelous. Only great poets can accomplish that.<sup>67</sup> What is thought to be or is accepted as historical fact or natural truth is important. Poets are limited to what they should have known. We will not be affected by what we know to be false. Poetic probability conforms to fact, to what is taken as fact in the received tradition, and to what could be imagined, in that order.<sup>68</sup> Du Bos does not consider the kind of conflict that this principle could produce. If the painter believes wrongly, for example, or if the spectator now knows better, will that affect the results? Presumably it would, but then one is caught in a constantly changing play of belief and assumption that threatens to leave even the most inspired poet or painter at a loss as to how to proceed.

The contrast to Hume on this point is striking. Hume’s treatment of probability raises many problems because of Hume’s lack of mathematical skill, but he

nevertheless constructs a defense of probable knowledge that applies equally to art and life. Hume, of course, does not consider the comparisons of poetry, painting, and drama in anything like the kind of detail into which Du Bos enters. But Hume has a similar problem since he denies any form of real universal that is accessible to the mind. Where Du Bos treats probability as an effect of real objects, however, Hume treats probability as a psychological effect of the mind's own demand for regularity. Thus probability is a product of general rules and causality, both of which are themselves ultimately grounded on habitual expectation. Rhetoric and drama both depend on the audience and the way the mind works, not on the facts. Because the audience can appreciate rules and the projection of fictions, probability has at least a psychological basis that is founded in human nature. Hume is much better able to account for an aesthetic probability than Du Bos, whose probability changes with every change in factual awareness.

Hume seems to be following Du Bos because both depend on sense and reject reason in critical and aesthetic judgments. Du Bos limits reason to two functions; it can account for the judgment of our sentiment, and it can explain what might be interfering with the normal operation of sentiment. Beyond that, sentiment is the judge and reason can only confirm its judgment. Hume gives sentiment a similar role and agrees in its priority.

There is a substantial difference in how sentiment has priority over reason, however. Du Bos constructs an analytic relation. The function of a work of art is to please; pleasure is felt as sentiment; so whatever pleases is already judged favorably. Du Bos buttresses the judgment of sentiment with the classical canon as well as what was taken as the modern French canon – Corneille and Racine. Hume makes no such analytic connection. Hume's argument traces the utility and pleasure produced by sense to the underlying structure of human nature. The fine arts are no different from other sources of pleasure. Sentiment has priority over reason only because when we seek other principles, we find only sentiment.

Du Bos makes a direct appeal to the analogy of taste, but it is more limited than Hume's psychological extension of the concept. Du Bos posits a sense that judges in the same way that we judge the taste of food. We taste it and, independently of our knowledge of the rules that guided the cook, we judge it good or bad.<sup>69</sup> Art appeals to a sense in the same way, but art is still imitation – the same sense that would be moved by an object is the one at work in the imitation. The importance of taste is simply that it does not require reasons or need to know the underlying causes. When Hume takes up the same kind of analogy, however, he looks for confirmation in a way that Du Bos does not. The problem in reading the wine tasting analogy in 'Of the Standard of Taste' is what to do about the physical evidence of the key and thong found at the bottom of the barrel when no such key

or thong is available to the taste for art. Du Bos has no such problem because art is simply an imitation of something better known in its own right. Sentiment continues the same.

Du Bos's concept of judgment is limited to individual judgment. It has whatever incorrigibility can be claimed for individual sense in such matters. Du Bos does speak of taste as a sense and calls it a sixth sense. We consult it directly and it does not need to consult 'rule or compass.'<sup>70</sup> However, the real issues that motivate Du Bos are questions about the relative priority of painting and poetry, and even more the variations and relative merits of the ancients and the moderns, the French and the Italians, etc. He is less concerned with whether *x* judges correctly about *y* (which is the fundamental question for someone like Shaftesbury or Hume for whom the moral analogy is primary) than where one should rank the tragedies of Racine in relation to classical models. The kind of problem Du Bos considers does not arise from the variability of taste or the absurdity of some judgments as it does for Hume; it comes from the fact that the public has been mistaken in judging ministers, generals, and magistrates. How then can one trust public judgments in the arts?

Du Bos answers that the judgment of poems differs from other kinds of public judgments because imitations are being judged; everyone knows the object. An imitation, unlike that which it imitates, is wholly present to the mind. In that case, the sentimental judgment of the public cannot be wrong, because the experience of the pleasure or lack of pleasure from the imitation constitutes the judgment. The only way that such judgment could go wrong would be if the object were deceptive. But, Du Bos argues, the beauties and imperfections of imitations are laid open for all to see.<sup>71</sup> Thus Du Bos can appeal directly to sentiment because he locates beauty in the objects and the quality of the imitation rather than as a sentiment or emotion itself. Sciences, theology, etc. require knowledge and thus can only be judged by those who know such things. But all mankind is able to judge poems and paintings because all consult their own sentiment, and the only relevant effects of poems and pictures fall under sentiment.<sup>72</sup> Du Bos is not postulating an aesthetic sense but 'a natural sensibility' because unlike mathematics, astronomy and theology the objects of verse and painting are directly apprehensible, publicly accessible, and uniformly affective.

It is noteworthy that there is no moral sense for Du Bos because there is no comparable analogy at work.<sup>73</sup> Morals do not have 'objects' and thus cannot provide the common basis for sense judgment. The exceptions are history painting and philosophical poems because there one needs more than sentiment to know whether they are accurate. Such works are mixed, but the art is judged solely by its ability to move us. To judge, consult one's sentiments. Everyone can do that. There is no

need to learn from critics what pleases. We need only examine whether and how far a work pleases.<sup>74</sup> The audience's judgment is final in such matters. Compared to Hume, whose use of sentiment is complex, Du Bos's appeal to sense and sentiment is direct and naive.

Obviously, this appeal, each to his/her own sentiments, would result in a chaos of judgments. Some means of restricting the judges must be supplied. Hume investigates the appropriate qualities of a judge so that the judge may be judged. Du Bos's criterion is simpler. He limits who can judge to 'the public.' The public is not just anyone. It only applies to those persons who are qualified by means of their reading or their experience of the world.<sup>75</sup> Comparison is the crucial skill. Taste itself is comparative.<sup>76</sup> Part of the comparison is not just looking at pictures; it includes listening to others talk about pictures. It seems to contradict what is said earlier about the naive reader who needs only sentiment and also to contradict what has been said about taste not being teachable. Du Bos does not really go that far, however. While the judgment is immediate, aesthetic sense itself must be educated in a way that neither taste nor smell requires. As Hume does, Du Bos appeals to a cumulative judgment over time.<sup>77</sup> Hume's appeal is more consistent, however, because it is a way of establishing regularities that function as rules in Hume's strictly inductive sense of rule. For Hume, therefore, there is a place for accumulating judgments. Du Bos has no such appeal. His idea of a rule is the neo-classical practical rule designed, on the model provided by Horace, to insure success for the artist. Judgment is nothing more than immediate sentiment. Thus for Du Bos, appeal to a test of time contradicts the reference to pure sentiment. Du Bos builds the case for sense as a virtual tautology – whatever moves us, moves us – but then adds both comparison and time so that the direct nature of sentiment is largely lost. He reverts at the end to the autonomy of response. Neither knowledge of how the work is made nor of the reasons for one's response invalidates the response.

Du Bos has a number of explanations of why public judgments vary. Among the villains are artists and critics. The professionals judge according to their own interest, and the public is unable to defend its sentiments against such authority. It is misled for a time, but were the public to consult its own sentiment, it would judge rightly.<sup>78</sup> In time, professional interests and authority are left behind and the judgment of the public emerges. The public eventually gets it right. It judges by sentiment and disinterestedly.<sup>79</sup> 'Disinterested' here means neither for nor against the author. Since only a few will actually be one or the other, the public judgment is disinterested simply because most do not know and are not related to the author. Over time, that disinterestedness increases and the judgment of pure sentiment emerges.

Du Bos's claims for a public sense that is virtually infallible are riddled with contradictions. For example, Du Bos notes that sixty years ago, everyone praised

the operas of Quinault and no one dared object.<sup>80</sup> But that contradicts his earlier claim that works do not attain a fame that they could not achieve in their own time.<sup>81</sup> Claims for the uniformity of public judgment are contradicted by an elaborate scheme of comparative judgments based on air and climate. Individual variations in taste are never adequately accounted for. Du Bos attributes the early popularity of some lesser works to novelty. The public is not really deceived. Unfamiliarity takes some time to overcome. Persons of good taste get to the right judgment sooner.<sup>82</sup> In spite of his reliance on public taste, Du Bos ends by distinguishing different tastes and preferring some to others. Frequently he has to explain away or modify immediate judgments. The most common factors in his explanations are prejudice, comparison, and knowledge. In general he distrusts critics, connoisseurs, and artists and anything that suggests reasoning. When that fails, he has recourse to distinctions in the audience itself. The lower classes cannot pay attention throughout a play and by the third act are calling for more excitement.<sup>83</sup> No matter how acutely observed this is, Du Bos seems immune to thinking through the implications of such comments. For him, if the lower classes are not moved, that is not the fault of the imitation but of a certain class of audience that is deficient in ability. Yet nowhere in his treatment of judgment is there a basis for preferring the true sentiment of one group over another. Like Hume, Du Bos is committed to the indisputability of taste, but unlike Hume, Du Bos does not recognize the equally strong conclusion that insists that judgments are true and not merely felt non-cognitively. Du Bos is pragmatic; he would take the superiority of a better class of audience as obvious. How one is to determine such deficiencies apart from a class structure that can be taken for granted is not part of his problem. His optimism and trust of the final public judgment is tempered only by his distrust of abstract reasoning. He speaks as the secretary of the Academy when he deplores the rise of speculative reason and the loss of those arts that conserve society.<sup>84</sup> In the end, public taste will be correct, genius will find its way, and facts will triumph over speculation. Hume lacks such optimism.

At bottom, however, for Du Bos there is a single villain – reason – and a single answer – sentiment. Du Bos is not consistent enough to make all of the pieces fit over the course of a thousand pages, but he knows what he likes. The end of poetry is to please, and thus its principles are more arbitrary than other arts because of the variety of tastes in the poet's audience.<sup>85</sup> Du Bos seems oblivious to the contradiction this suggests; if tastes vary, then experience will be contradictory. The conclusion would seem to be pure subjectivity of taste and judgment. Instead, Du Bos concludes that that which is analyzed with difficulty is known at once by sentiment.<sup>86</sup> Analysis makes errors; sentiment is correct. Sentiments also vary as the abilities of people vary.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, people who judge according to sentiment find themselves in agreement. If they do not, the difference is caused by a combination of language

and principles that act together so that people mislead one another. Such confusion cannot last against the force of sentiment, however. This may sound very much like Hume who also distrusts analysis and language. In fact, it is quite different. Hume does not distrust analysis because it is analytical but because in its own workings, it cannot escape an appeal to sentiment. Du Bos sets the professional audience against the naive audience and prefers the latter. Hume turns the tools of the professional – logic and rhetoric – against them by showing that on their own principles, they cannot arrive by reason alone at sound conclusions. Du Bos finds a simple opposition; Hume seeks a new cooperation.

I suggest that the fundamental difference between Hume and Du Bos lies in their different understandings of sentiment and sense itself. For Du Bos, these terms remain naive. They refer simply to the fact that one is moved both emotionally and perceptually. Within that perceptual framework, Du Bos remains quite traditional in his actual judgments. Hume, on the other hand, means by sense and sentiment something quite precise and systematic. If applied to art and aesthetic judgments, Hume is led to different kinds of judgments about beauty and taste. Hume undoubtedly shares with Du Bos a great many formulations, especially in placing sentiment above reason in the hierarchy of judgment. They have the same enemies, those rationalists and classicists who think of rules as eternal laws to be followed and applied to an imperfect world. But they do not think alike. Hume turns skepticism into a dialectical weapon to save reason from itself. Du Bos looks to positive facts for the correction of reason. Hume might embrace Du Bos, but it is doubtful if Du Bos could have embraced Hume's kind of reasoning. It is just what most frightened him. I have dealt in some detail with Du Bos's *Critique* because it represents what Hume is frequently mistaken to have been saying about the arts. The comparison is also helpful in understanding why Hume's approach to a standard of taste must be fundamentally different from a simple reliance on sentiment.



## HUME'S APPEAL TO SENTIMENT

The previous chapters have argued that 'sentiment' and 'taste' become epistemological terms in the course of the first half of the eighteenth century, but that their development is complex and open to a number of challenges from empiricist philosophers, rationalist forms of the new philosophy, and theological and religious writers. The attempts of Shaftesbury and Hume to bring the Lockean forms of ideas into aesthetics, with their apparent dependence on sentiment, taste, feeling, emotions, and the passions opens empiricist aesthetics to seeming contradiction, sentimental excess, and subjective emotivism. This is part of the challenge that Hume faces in reconstructing an epistemology that faces the dilemmas posed by a sole reliance on experience as the foundation of knowledge.

I will trace Hume's assimilation of sentiment to reason and argue that that assimilation implies an aesthetic as well as a moral epistemology. The first point might well be taken as established among Hume scholars at this point. As I have noted above, it has been argued by Páll Árdal<sup>1</sup> and Annette Baier,<sup>2</sup> among others, so that the basic outlines are clear, though how far one is prepared to go in recasting argumentation to include sentiment is still a matter of discussion. The second point is less obvious, but I believe that it is essential to understanding the possibilities that eighteenth-century aesthetics raise. That does not mean that Hume's aesthetic solutions to the problems raised by sentiment and taste find ultimate acceptance. They do not. Romanticism and the aesthetics of Kant and his followers in German idealism take aesthetics in a different direction. But there is more continuity than might be thought, and it may well be that Hume's solutions have more to offer now, especially since aesthetics seems at last to have abandoned the nineteenth-century formulations of attitude theories. If a total abandonment of aesthetic theory is not to follow, then something like Hume's solutions, minus his psychologically dated assumptions, may still prove useful. In any event, my contention is that one cannot understand either eighteenth-century aesthetics or its romantic and Kantian forms without dealing with Hume's formulations.

### Sentiment and experience

The first paragraph of the *Treatise* provides the division to which Hume adheres throughout.<sup>3</sup> It is extremely important to get it right and never to let go of its ordering. Hume begins:

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.

(T 1.1.1.1)

This is Hume's initial statement of his version of the theory of ideas. What follows, in the *Treatise*, is a detailed defense of Hume's own 'system' and a demonstration that it can explain what other contemporary philosophical systems cannot explain without falling into skepticism or confused and mistaken ideas. My claim in this section is that Hume's division of experience into impressions and ideas founds his implicit aesthetics, and without that aesthetic, which is essential to understanding sentiment and taste, Hume's philosophy fragments into a series of problems, none of which can be understood consistently.

Hume operates in a thought context in which imitation and representation are the fundamental expectations for both art and epistemology. Epistemologically, knowledge requires that 'ideas' be representational.<sup>4</sup> They copy impressions, and impressions originally provide both feelings and sensations that are prior to reasoning and definition. According to Hume's thesis, representation depends on a more basic experiential level, impressions, in every case. The fundamental problem for art, as well, is representational. Art is understood in the eighteenth century as imitation. Thus to solve the fundamental epistemological problem of how ideas can be representational of a world on the basis of impressions alone is also to explore how art can be representational of that world. The fundamental problem is the same in both cases: a psychological entity – the mind – through its own actions, construes a world. That psychology is for Hume and Locke a psychology of ideas. If one accepts some form of that psychology (perhaps in a more sophisticated version than the one available to Hume), then the foundation of Hume's epistemology also provides a foundation for the aesthetics of art by linking the felt, emotional nature

of ideas to their representational function. This is evidenced in the frequency with which Hume turns to aesthetic examples in order to build his epistemological case and the role that sentiment or emotion ultimately plays in determining the actions of the mind.

The initial problem is representational. One must account for how the world appears in the mind, how ideas, which have no Platonic substantiality, can retain their relation to a different order of being that is substantial – the external world. The order of the argument must go something like this: impressions and ideas are felt; what is felt is not itself substantive. The moves made by rationalists away from this insubstantial realm of feeling to a higher reality of ideas by means of logical purification, inference, and analysis are closed to the Humean empiricist because when one seeks their origin, one finds only more ideas. So feeling itself must assume a representational role. This is essentially the same problem that Alexander Baumgarten struggles with in the Leibnizian/Wolffian context. But Baumgarten, in that rationalist manner of arguing, need only give feeling a role as a helpful way to begin because ultimately representation belongs to reason. Hume, if he is successful, not only will have to save feeling; he also will have to legitimize it epistemologically as the representation of an aspect of the world. In the process, he will implicitly create a stronger foundation for aesthetics than anyone before Kant.

Thus, the first step in understanding the implications of Hume's epistemology for eighteenth-century aesthetics is to understand the representational force of his use of impressions and ideas. For all that Hume owes to Locke and earlier empiricists, he begins again from his own ground. Impressions include sensations, passions, and emotions 'as they make their first appearance in the soul.' They are, in their first appearance, direct and immediate. They are not just another word for Locke's simple ideas. Ideas are the material of thinking and reasoning (T 1.1.1, 1 ff.). Hume's ideas are not all complex, and his impressions are not all simple in Locke's terms.<sup>5</sup> Hume's ideas are images of impressions. The notion of an image, however, is itself a metaphor. Hume is not offering some proto-*Tractatus* picture theory of meaning.<sup>6</sup> To say that an idea is an image of an impression means literally that ideas reproduce all or part of the impression without the original stimulus continuing to be present.

Ideas are quite varied. Hume includes not only so-called simple ideas such as hot and cold, color and shape, but also complex emotions such as envy, pride, humility, and love. Ideas are directly related to impressions as copies, but they are not the same as impressions. One simply has an impression. Whether the impression is referential or not is not manifested by the impression itself. An impression of heat might refer to a flame, but it would still be an impression of heat if there were no flame – if our physiology and the causes of the impression were entirely different. Original impressions of pleasure or pain refer indirectly to the one who experiences them, but they need not be referential in the common sense of identifying some

particular pleasant or painful object or quality. Ideas, on the other hand, are essentially referential to what they are ideas<sup>7</sup> of to the extent that they *always* refer to some impression. Whatever ideas one has must have their origin in impressions, whether we can trace the connections or not. So, although Hume describes ideas as if they are simply impressions that have a lesser force and vivacity, ideas must be representational and referential in ways that impressions are not known to be. The epistemological priority remains with impressions, which must come first both temporally and logically. But ideas allow us to understand the representational and referential operations of impressions because ideas always have that function present.

Certainly Hume confuses the matter by the way he doubles back on 'subject' and 'object.' An impression such as beauty has as its subject something that is available through sense. So it is dependent on other impressions just as Locke's ideas of reflection are. But the object of beauty is the one who finds something beautiful because as an emotion, beauty is an unanalyzable internal impression. Passions such as pride and humility are even more complex. They require a double relation, so there is a potential further shifting of subject and object. A passion such as pride has as its subject the emotion of beauty or virtue, which in turn has as its subject something that gives pleasure in the ordinary sense. But since pride also requires an idea of possession, the object is double as well. The object of the idea, of course, has to be the one for whom possession is an idea – in ordinary parlance, the one who possesses what gives pleasure. But an idea is an image of an impression, so the idea of possession implies an object of the original impression as well. In the case of pride, that is not the one to whom the idea is present but the person or thing singled out by the emotion. In the case of the topics that directly occupy him, particularly religion, morality, causality, and probability, Hume consistently works out these referential problems if one pays close attention. The aesthetic examples he uses, however, are less detailed. It remains to be seen if they can be made to conform to the larger picture.

Art, in its turn, operates with ideas. While the work of art may be conveyed through impressions – the physical painting, the text, or the sounds – its existence and identity as art does not depend on those impressions except as a physically necessary condition. Famously, it does not matter whether a painting, a poem, or a musical work exists at all outside the mind as long as one has the ideas. The deaf Beethoven continued to compose music. The aesthetic dimension of art relies on its ability to give those ideas an additional vivacity that they would not have as ideas alone, especially when they are viewed independently of their referential presence as initial impressions. Art, in effect, reassembles ideas and is able to move them back in the direction of impressions by strengthening them. If ideas are the way we grasp and examine the referential and representational elements of

impressions, therefore, art and its aesthetic force provide us with a new philosophical tool.

By separating ideas and impressions in this way and giving each a basic epistemological role, Hume redefined the scope of experience. Experience need not consist entirely of simples in order to be at the level of impressions. Instead, the important distinction within experience is between that which is unmediated and that which is mediated by temporal reproduction. Each kind of experience has its advantages. Unmediated impressions provide an experiential bedrock. Because they are directly present, their felt import is cognitively significant, even if they are confused in the rationalist's sense of confused images, that is they may not be clear and distinct. Unlike the rationalists, Hume does not have to infer some hidden causality because impressions create their own habitual and associative force. By linking ideas and impressions, ideas then provide a repeated access and a way to view the representational function of the mind itself. Hume is able to rely on experience without having to appeal to anything not self-evident in experience because his account of experience is more complex and holistic than earlier empiricist accounts without conceding anything to rationalist demands for ideas independent of impressions.

Hume provided a bit of immediate phenomenology at the beginning of the *Treatise*. Reading the first paragraph of the *Treatise* consists of impressions of sight and touch and ideas that the words arouse from past impressions. There is one more element, however. Aesthetic objects include felt responses that arise from both art and the real world. The immediate pleasure or uneasiness that the reading of the first paragraph of the *Treatise* occasions is an impression, not an image of an impression. The introduction of immediate pleasure into the discussion of impressions is important as we try to put the pieces of Hume's aesthetic together. Pleasure and uneasiness belong to impressions. The pleasure that accompanies a perceptual experience is not an idea in Hume's terms. It belongs to the same level as sounds. In so far as aesthetics is a product of the pleasure one takes in some part of nature or artifice – and in Hume's time, that hedonistic association was commonplace – Hume initially locates our aesthetic response at the perceptual level. The problem will be how one is able to incorporate aesthetic impressions into an ideational structure, remembering that ideas are images of impressions, not abstract entities. A pleasing painting requires only a simple impression. That it shares an elegance of style with other paintings, or that it is good of its kind or that a Reynolds portrait is better than a Hoppner portrait requires ideas and judgment. The need for aesthetic theory is to get from one to the other. Hume does not confront those questions directly in the form that I raise them, but they are implicit in his whole scheme, and it is legitimate to try to extract answers to them from what he does say.

When Hume returns to the beginning at the start of Book II of the *Treatise*, he reiterates the distinction between ideas and impressions and re-casts the internal distinction within impressions. Initially, it was enough to distinguish impressions of sense and pleasure. To explain the emotions, passions are assigned to the operation of the mind itself. Since they are not impressions of sensation or ideas of impressions of sensation but 'original existences,' there must be an internal generation of impressions, which Hume calls indirect impressions or impressions of reflection. Impressions of pleasure and unease can accompany passions such as pride and anger that are internal to the one who experiences them just as they accompany impressions of sense. They are mind dependent. Sensation and reflection, in this context, become original and secondary, respectively. 'Of the first kind [original impressions] are all the impressions of the senses, and all bodily pains and pleasures: Of the second are the passions, and other emotions resembling them' (T 2.1.1, 275). The dominance of internal impressions is not because they are independent, therefore, but because they include everything that can make up mental life except pure pleasure and uneasiness. Pleasure and pain are the source of passions rather than passions themselves. This is important for the implicit aesthetic dimension that it supplies to Hume's system. By locating pleasure and pain as original impressions and then connecting other emotions to original impressions of pleasure and pain as well as ideas of objects, Hume implicitly accepts the sentimental grounding for aesthetic value. This will become central when the pleasures of the imagination are to be accounted for.

Impressions of reflexion require a little explication. Hume's scheme follows Locke's and differs from Francis Hutcheson's. All three writers acknowledge two sources of impressions, but Locke and Hume ascribe the second source to reflection or the internal workings of the mind itself while Hutcheson ascribes it to a second set of senses. For Hume, impressions of sensation come from 'outside' in a sense; they have an intentional object distinct from the mind that experiences them. They are imposed involuntarily on the sense organs of a conscious being after the manner of Locke's passive blank slate. But such a being is also aware of its own mental workings and states. These are secondary impressions. Ideas are a third level, which also may be reflexive. The ideas that I have of red and of my pleasure in red are images of those initial impressions. They differ, for example, because imagination can reinstate them without any additional stimulation. But when imagination or memory recalls anger, that is not the same thing as my initial experience of anger. I may remember that I was angry without being angry now. So the idea of anger is not itself necessarily angry, and if it is pleasant or uneasy, it is only because a reflex impression accompanies the idea.

Hume also acknowledges comparative variations in impressions. Impressions

are reproduced ideationally. Any impression thus occurs in a larger ideational context that can affect subsequent impressions. In other words, impressions are not given independently of the comparative context in which they occur. So some secondary impressions cannot be understood apart from what they are compared to. That does not keep them from being impressions. However, one does not have a 'bare' impression of a passion such as envy or malice. Malice and envy are comparative passions – I only envy someone if there is a comparison between my fortune and theirs, so the same degree of riches will produce envy only if related to greater riches in another. Just as something can be experienced as either hot or cold depending on the prior state of the experiencer, so a degree of riches will be experienced as envy depending on the prior situation of the experiencer.

When one is dealing with the life of the mind, secondary impressions involve directly whatever mental furniture has accumulated. Since a mind is, in a sense, just its ideational furniture, that must include ideas. One should still distinguish ideas from the passions and emotions to which they contribute to form secondary impressions. This becomes crucial in our ability to account for representational aspects of art. Understanding is ideational; passions are impressions. One may have ideas without producing new impressions. One can represent and understand relations of fortune and have an idea of envy without being envious oneself. But one can also transform an ideational relation into a secondary impression. Then one feels the envy. A similar process accounts for the effects of beauty:

Deformity of itself produces uneasiness; but makes us receive new pleasure by its contrast with a beautiful object, whose beauty is augmented by it; as on the other hand beauty, which of itself produces pleasure, makes us receive a new pain by the contrast with any thing ugly, whose deformity it augments.

(T 2.2.8, 375–376)

For example, one who knows the sound of a well-played piece of music will experience pain at a bad performance whereas one who does not may enjoy a lesser performance. Beauty and deformity operate like other secondary impressions.

Hume is able in this way to account for variations in emotional and passionate impressions. For aesthetics, the existence of wide variations in 'perceptions' of beauty – variations in passionate response in Hume's terms – is a fundamental problem.<sup>8</sup> Different people respond differently to sensations because the passions are produced in contextual relations and complex ideational situations. For some, pleasure and beauty are felt as a result of a sensation; for others, pain or indifference is felt, depending on what other ideas are already present. If aesthetic impressions

were simply atomistic responses to otherwise inaccessible qualities or stimuli, the only way to account for these variations would be inability or lack of uniformity in human nature. Such inabilities and variations could not be overcome (except, perhaps, by the extreme measures of changing nature itself – something that was contemplated in some forms of religious conversion). Hume's scheme of impressions makes variation a common feature. Uniformity can be introduced by recourse to rules and standards, which is less radical than having to change one's nature. Hume worked out the consequences of this position for both morals and taste.

Aesthetic phenomena depend on secondary impressions, though that need not deny the pleasurable nature of direct impressions. The sheer power of an organ chord may produce a visceral response. The beauty of the fugue requires the complex interplay of idea and impression, however. From a strictly empirical standpoint, any thought or poetic image is inferior to any direct sensation in the sense of 'inferior' that identifies the direct sensation as cognitively primary and unchallengeable. 'All the colours of poetry, however splendid, can never paint natural objects in such a manner as to make the description be taken for a real landscape. The most lively thought is still inferior to the dullest sensation' (EHU 2, 11/17). Hume takes that to be an empirical, phenomenal judgment. But he means only that one will not confuse a secondary impression with an original impression. He implicitly assumes that poetic images and sensory perception operate along a continuum. They differ only in the liveliness and strength of their impressions. It follows that aesthetic phenomena, like other secondary impressions, are not a different kind of experience. They depend on variations in strength and complexity.

Why aesthetic phenomena have a force that distinguishes them from memory and ordinary iterations of sensory perception remains to be explained. Hume does not rest the case on the greater detail of perception, and he does not consider that there might be a different perceptual quality from the poetic quality. Nor does he appeal to a different sense at work. Poetic images simply are not as strong as the real thing. 'Images' in this case refers to secondary impressions and not ideas, however, so the impressions can be strengthened by context – the work of art as a whole, for example, or the expectations that one brings to natural beauty from an acquaintance with art. For there to be a non-artistic idea, one would have to first see the landscape and then recall it, for example. Then one has an idea that is of lesser strength than the original and an image of the original. A poetic image, however, takes ideas and sensations and uses them to produce secondary impressions. Claude Lorraine is not simply copying a scene. He creates a beautiful image – one whose essential qualities include its passionate expression in the mind. There need be no such landscape, and if there were, it would be inferior to what Claude makes of it. Aesthetic impressions thus use the complex associations from ideas to increase



their own strength, much as direct perception uses the sensitivity of the sense organs – both natural and educated by practice – to increase the strength of primary impressions.<sup>9</sup>

Hume's theory of poetic and artistic images implies a neo-classical theory of imitation. An artistic image is an enhanced and idealized version of an original whose existence in nature is less important than its existence in the mind. But Hume does not rely on the quality of the imitation alone. Whatever ideas art makes use of are represented in secondary impressions that increase their force. Elsewhere, Hume suggests possibilities for a different theory. Much depends on the kind of secondary impression invoked. Passions and emotions imply aesthetic predicates such as 'elegant.' There need be no inconsistency. The point of a poetic imitation may be just to evoke an aesthetic 'sublimity.' Hume supplies a way to incorporate both at the most basic epistemological level.

Hume inherited a language of internal and external sense from Locke and Hutcheson, among others. His model was 'experimental' and the thrust of philosophy in the Lockean tradition made 'sense' an almost unquestioned term. In Hutcheson, 'sense' does real work. In the context of Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas, however, appeals to internal sense are more *pro forma*.<sup>10</sup> Their function is to distinguish sensation from secondary impressions. One's feelings of envy or love are internal. One's sensations of color or shape are external. Internal and external senses alike produce sentiments or feelings. For example, 'it is impossible for us to *think* of anything, which we have not antecedently *felt*, either by our external or internal senses' (EHU 7.1, 49/62). The distinction between internal and external senses seems to consist of nothing more than that external senses respond to situations external to the mind, and internal senses respond to the mind's own powers or content.

Hume must, therefore, supply a different account of the internal relations of original and secondary impressions than straightforward sense theorists such as Hutcheson appeal to. If aesthetic phenomena are to come under impressions, but are to include a strengthened secondary impression that moves them back in the direction of sensation, the internal working of impressions and ideas itself must be analyzed. Hume's catalogue here actually includes four possibilities for impressions. The first form of impression is sensation. Sensation encompasses various forms of perception. Seeing, smelling, hearing, touching, tasting (in its physical form) all have subjects that present an objective impression. The second form of impression is pleasure and pain or uneasiness. Pleasure and pain are impressions that may accompany sensation, but are distinct from the subject of the sensation. One is able to distinguish the taste of sugar (the subject) from the pleasure that one takes in it (the impression of pleasure). Hume operates here with the principle that 'Every

thing, that is different, is distinguishable; and every thing, that is distinguishable, may be separated' (T 1.2.3, 36), so pleasure is a separate impression. That leaves emotions and passions, which may be single or require a double relation.

Emotions or passions include beauty and deformity, vice and virtue. The sense in which beauty and deformity are emotions must be carefully considered. They are internal as opposed to external. Since one has only impressions and ideas, the internal/external distinction is not simply one between the mind that has the impression and a set of qualities. All impressions are 'internal' in the sense of belonging to a sentient being who has the impressions. (The impressions make the being and not the other way around.)<sup>11</sup> Impressions can have different intentional directions, however. External impressions point toward a subject external to the one who has the impression. Internal impressions point toward the experience of the one having the impression. A purely internal impression with no subject of its own would be a pleasure or pain that was undefined – a vague sense of well-being or euphoria, for example. When a purely internal impression also has a subject, one has an emotion or a passion.

Virtue is easier to understand as an emotion in this sense than beauty. Virtue is an organization of the person leading to actions or attitudes, but it also has a content that makes it a specific virtue – honesty or benevolence, for example. The honest person is one whose character includes honesty as its content. Hume had found it necessary to emphasize this in his correspondence with Hutcheson: 'Actions are not virtuous or vicious; but only so far as they are proofs of certain Qualitys or durable Principles in the Mind.'<sup>12</sup> He spells it out in detail in the *Treatise*: 'Actions themselves, not proceeding from any constant principle, have no influence on love or hatred, pride or humility; and consequently are never consider'd in morality' (T 3.3.1, 575). Actions themselves need have nothing in common at the level of character; a bad person may perform good actions. Virtue, therefore, belongs to the nature of the impression. So the virtue itself is an emotion in that it is both internal to the actor and characterized by the actor's qualities. An emotion, in this sense, is not simply a qualitative ego-state but a quality of the ego. Hume's psychology does not distinguish between an ego and emotional qualities as felt because he finds no place for a substantial sub-stratum independent of the emotional and passionate life of the ego. Thus emotions are themselves the stable principles that make up one's personal identity. Emotions are at once more stable and more individual than if they are regarded as fleeting psychological states of a substantive ego.

Beauty and deformity are also emotions in this sense, but they are harder to identify as subjects than virtues because the latter lead to actions while beauty and deformity correspond only to aesthetic 'qualities' that must be felt to be individuated. Hume never seeks a set of qualities such as uniformity amidst variety or color or

clarity or harmony as the characteristics of beauty. One might say, as Hume said of actions, that no thing is beautiful or deformed in itself. A twisted, contorted individual is just what it is; that is its shape. It has no more aesthetic significance when considered separately than does an action. As an internal impression, however, beauty and deformity are qualities of a mind. Their content is the beautiful or deformed thing, but the impression is an internal rather than external impression because no stable principle of beauty manifests itself externally. Without the action to individuate the internal impression, however, beauty is more difficult to identify.

To solve this problem, Hume is committed to a kind of experimental phenomenology in his analysis of beauty that allows him to associate beauty with a thing. A thing that is called beautiful can be perceived without its beauty being evident. Some will see it (or have a taste for it) and others will not. So beauty is never simply in the thing. But beauty is not an undirected or self-directed impression like pleasure or pain, though pleasure is its felt accompaniment. A different emotion, sublimity, has a different felt impression – a mixture of pleasure and pain. Beauty belongs to someone's mind or self. It is one of the secondary impressions that make a mind or character what it is aesthetically, just as the virtues make a mind or character what it is morally. It is a felt state in addition to any content that arises from sensation or other impressions or ideas. Thus beauty and deformity are emotions like virtue and vice. When Hume accepts that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, he is not admitting a subjective insubstantiality to beauty nor making it a fleeting impression. Quite the contrary. It is the stability of beauty *as an emotion* that makes it an appropriate topic for a standard. The fleeting impressions are feelings such as pleasure and pain, fear and awe. Those are simply felt. They come and go more or less depending on one's mood. Depending on my mood, I also may or may not be able to experience beauty. But beauty and virtue are not simply felt; they are felt as emotional qualities of things and actions. They belong to the one who has the impression, but they are about the subject of the emotion – that which is beautiful or virtuous.

It should be evident from this reading that Hume would not be a partisan of some more recent promotions of feeling to moral and aesthetic primacy any more than he was sympathetic to the excesses of enthusiasm and religion in his own day. The tradition of Shaftesbury and Hume does not think that one should act on the basis of a momentary impulse – a passing feeling. Nor is a thing valued aesthetically because of a momentary pleasure or feeling for it. Nothing in the way that their tradition treats virtue and beauty will support such undisciplined, unstable valuation. The sense in which feeling and emotion are central to both morality and aesthetics depends on a class of emotions that are, in Shaftesbury's term, 'characteristic.' The emotion, not the having of the emotion at a particular time or

place by a particular person, gives it moral or aesthetic authority. But only emotions, not some metaphysical other, can enter into the mind. Without emotions, we are morally and aesthetically blind. In fact, we do not even exist as moral or aesthetic beings. We lack a soul in the only surviving sense of 'soul,' though something of the Aristotelian intellectual soul remains in this reading of 'emotion.'<sup>13</sup>

Hume is thus a defender of emotion as a legitimate epistemological and ontological principle, but his interest in defending the authority of emotions and passions is often negative. Both the scholastics and contemporary seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalists made a logical leap from impressions to the causes of those impressions. Even Locke entertained the possibility that morality could be deduced from a given set of authoritative texts, though for Locke, the selection of texts required faith rather than experience. Hume denied the possibility of such deductions. Emotions and passions must stand as their own evidence. For example, from passions and emotions one cannot get ideas of space; only external impressions allow abstraction to space and time. So, if there is no purely internal source of such basic ideas, one refutes any rationalist appeal to innate ideas. One has the emotions of beauty and virtue themselves, however. They will be sufficient for whatever constitutes a mind. Value has an object therefore – the qualities of the mind itself. (This much of Hume's radical epistemology survives in the turn to aesthetic expression in writers such as Archibald Alison who holds that beauty is nothing more than the expression of qualities of mind.)

Hume uses a limited number of generic terms such as 'love' and 'hate,' 'pride' and 'humility' for specific passions, but he makes it clear that within those generic distinctions, each passion varies from instance to instance because each passion is the result of particular complexes of sensation and ideas. All love is not the same; every instance of love has its own characteristics. Again, whatever is distinct is separable. So each passion requires an impression of its own. When we use generic terms for emotions, we do not imply some distinct quality of that emotion. Beauty and virtue are impressions that we depend on as valuations because we experience them as stable impressions from one complex of sensations and ideas to the next. Like love and hate they also are different every time they are felt. They get their identity from the class of relations that engenders them. Beauty and honesty are qualities of mind. They are the same for everyone, but because they are emotions, they are also different for everyone. (Kant understands that kind of stability as the universality of judgments of beauty and the categorical imperative in morals.) I do not think that in any of the places that Hume refers to a particular quality of an emotion such as pride or beauty that he means to imply that there is some aesthetic or moral quality that is itself the cause of the pride or beauty. He means that, because the passions and emotions are internal, secondary impressions, they have the immediacy and distinctiveness of individual experience.

Hume's treatment of the passions centers on envy and malice, pride and humility, love and hatred. These passions are impressions that involve ideas in a crucial way. Hume posits a double relation without which these passions do not arise: 'I say then, that nothing can produce any of these passions without bearing it a double relation, *viz.* of ideas to the object of the passion, and of sensation to the passion itself (T 2.2.2, 333). The idea that I have of my self as one who possesses things relates the subject (what I take pride in) to me as my possession. That subject is provided by a sensation and, on reflection, it may also produce an emotion such as beauty. One way in which I take pride in my house is in its beauty, which I feel as a stable emotion that I expect others to share. Without the idea of a possessive self, however, the emotion of beauty will not be sufficient to make me take pride in the subject of the sensation. Nor, by itself, will the sensation of it, even if the sensation includes it's belonging to me. Simply having a perception of something that is within my control does not make me take pride in it, though it is sufficient to produce an idea of possession. Finding it beautiful does not make me love it, though it is sufficient for an emotional response. But combine the idea of possession and the emotion of beauty, and one produces the passions of love or pride. Love and pride are distinguished by *their* objects: love has as its object another (i.e. not only is the other the subject of the passion that has me as its object – I love *x*; that subject is also an object toward which a passion is directed as a secondary impression). Pride has as its object one's self both with respect to the idea required and with respect to its secondary impression (T 2.2.1, 329). Hume needs this complex (and terminologically confusing) account of some emotions and passions because he treats them as both epistemological and normative evidence. Beauty is at once the beauty of something and a value, but it lacks the double relation characteristic of pride and humility. It can give rise to both love and pride when it is combined with the necessary ideas. Those passions in turn must reflect both the value of beauty and the qualities that are being valued. They must show us both what is valued and how it is valued.<sup>14</sup>

I have compared beauty as a calm passion and the more violent passions, such as love and hate, to account for the relatively secondary place that aesthetics seems to occupy in Hume's epistemology. As Hume notes, however, the distinction between calm and violent passions is specious. Thus, Hume believes 'it may safely be establish'd for a general maxim, that no object is presented to the senses, nor image form'd in the fancy, but what is accompany'd with some emotion or movement of spirits proportion'd to it' (T 2.2.8, 373). Some emotions are 'stable' and serve a general evaluative function. Beauty and virtue are, by their very nature as emotions, positive evaluations. That is their function. In general, however, passions may be either positive or negative. Thus, I suppose, I am potentially disagreeing with Annette Baier when she says that Hume 'never says that morality arises from our

emotions.<sup>15</sup> She goes on to add that 'Strictly speaking, Hume is no emotivist. His theory of morality bases it on reflective passions and corrected sentiments, and thought is as essential to them as it is to pure reasoning.'<sup>16</sup> This is certainly correct; my point has been to argue that neither Shaftesbury nor Hume is an emotivist in the contemporary sense of that label, but that both rely on sentiment nevertheless when sentiment is understood as they understood it. Reflective passions and corrected sentiments are emotions. I believe that for Hume thought encompasses emotion, and in that sense, morality arises from emotion whenever emotion is understood as an evaluative secondary impression. On this topic, Páll Árdall makes a distinction that is clear and helpful. He distinguishes what he calls an 'emotionist' from an 'emotivist.' An emotionist holds that evaluations are emotions. An emotivist, on the other hand, holds that evaluative *expressions* express feelings one has; they are not true or false.<sup>17</sup> He can then go on to say,

In attributing Emotionism to Hume, we must bear in mind that he did not consider feeling and thinking to be different in kind; but this does not throw any doubt upon the view that, to him, evaluations are emotions. Hume nowhere suggests that emotions are more like thought than we realize. It is rather the other way round: it is our view about the nature of thoughts that, as Humeans, we should modify. To 'think' is to have ideas, and these ideas are like actual experiences, only fainter or less vivid.<sup>18</sup>

So Hume may not be an emotivist in the modern sense that that label is used in ethics, but he relies on emotions as the evaluative part of thought.

### **Sympathy and its aesthetic implications**

A key to the referential possibilities of art is Hume's theory of sympathy. Sympathy is easily misunderstood. Hume uses 'sympathy' almost exclusively in the sense of a transfer of ideas. It is not a feeling *for* someone else (a form of charity or benevolence), but a reproduction *of* their feelings.<sup>19</sup> The paradigm of sympathy is my wincing when you are cut; I may at the same time be quite happy to see you suffer or think that your own stupidity brought about the cut, so that I have no sympathy at all (in the more common sense) for you. Hume's sense of 'sympathy' easily becomes sympathy in the sense of caring about someone, and even very good commentators on Hume have a hard time resisting making 'sympathy' into a passion of its own. (Of course, once one has an idea or impression, it can become the basis for a secondary passion, so one can also feel sympathy in the ordinary sense for someone.) Perhaps that is why Hume moved away from sympathy as an

explanatory principle in the *Enquiries*. Nevertheless, sympathy, or something like it, is of crucial importance to Hume's aesthetic positions because sympathy provides a way for ideas and impressions to be shared that does not depend directly on one's interest either as the egoists or as the defenders of benevolence demanded. Even if Hume does not anticipate a Kantian form of disinterestedness, and he doesn't, he provides a way of understanding emotional experience that is free of the egoist/benevolence dichotomy. This can be demonstrated in three areas: fictions, the aesthetic appropriation of the older notion of a common sense, and the consequent need for public performance and instantiation of fictions.

Drama and public rhetoric affect an audience. Eighteenth-century aesthetics became increasingly aware of audience response as a problem. It is implicit in the Augustan emphasis on combining pleasure with didacticism, and it is of particular importance to the more thoughtful critics such as Addison and Hume who understand that as soon as one makes the pleasures of the imagination ends in themselves, one is committed to the response of the audience as a standard for success. It has been pointed out above that an extreme form of reliance on the 'public' was found in the Abbé Du Bos's *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* (1719). Du Bos formulated a near tautology: the object of poetry and painting is to move the heart. Sense infallibly perceives whether the heart has been moved. Therefore, the public cannot be wrong because it infallibly knows whether it has been moved or not. What does not please an audience will not be successful, and for writers such as Hume who were jealous of reputation and success and increasingly were dependent on it for their livelihood and status, it was a matter of immediate concern. If one cannot account for how one can affect an audience, therefore, one is not likely to succeed. Sympathy provides the basis for Hume's account of an audience's ability to respond to what an artist expresses.

At the same time, Hume's reliance on impressions makes responses to fictions problematic. A number of variations on this problem had attracted attention in eighteenth-century criticism. Fictions were regarded with moral suspicion, and, particularly in the rise of the novel, their formal status was in doubt. Novelists such as Defoe and Richardson felt it necessary to conceal the fictional nature of their narrative in order to reassure their audiences. Hume's problem at this point is that, on the one hand, when fictions are effective, they become indistinguishable from non-fictions because impressions are all fundamentally equal if they have equal vivacity and strength. On the other hand, if one is able to make a distinction, it seems to destroy the basis for audience response because the distinction will mean that the fiction is not strong enough to change an idea into a secondary impression. No one will respond emotionally to something that cannot, in principle, affect them. But fictions cannot have effects because there is nothing to produce an impression. As Colin Radford has pointed out, there is something fundamentally incoherent in

responding emotionally to that which one knows not to exist.<sup>20</sup> Radford does not deny that we do respond emotionally to fictions. The incoherence lies in our simultaneous belief that our emotional response is without an object. This is an especially Humean argument because it acknowledges that emotion is part of knowing because belief is a strongly felt idea. The misunderstandings of Radford and Hume begin with the denial that emotion need reflect what we know. Hume must explain not only why that incoherence is tolerable but also how the response could arise in the first place. If he cannot, he invites either some form of Platonic 'participation' as an alternative or a return to the separation of sentiment and sensible ideas that created the problems for Locke and Hutcheson. Both alternatives are unacceptable to Hume on more basic epistemological grounds, the former because it accepts the rationalist dependence on ideas independent of experience and the latter because it cannot avoid the skepticism and solipsism that Hume himself identifies as the fate of experience without sentiment. Sympathy provides a way to account for the initial effects of fictions as well as their ability to affect an audience by acknowledging a more or less direct transfer of ideas on the basis of the external expression and clues provided by the other person.

Sympathy must account for 'fictitious joy' in drama, not only because of the transference of the portrayed events to the audience but also because of the range of passions that can be depicted. What one responds to is not simply the events; one also responds to the portrayal of emotions. Acting is essential to dramatic effect. Tragedy must be able to represent a whole range of passions and changes of emotion by deploying fictional characters. Such shifts and representations would not be possible without the resemblance of basic emotions in human nature and between the passions themselves.<sup>21</sup> A tragedy can convey an idea that has a tragic character as its objective focus to an audience member. The emotion portrayed arises in the audience as an idea, and the double relation is such that a passion such as pity or hatred can be assigned to the character but experienced by the audience. 'Unless, therefore, it be asserted, that every distinct passion is communicated by a distinct original quality, and is not deriv'd from the general principle of sympathy above-explain'd, it must be allow'd, that all of them arise from that principle' (T 2.2.7, 369). Hume separates passions from causal qualities by this means. One does not require a whole set of pity-making or anger-making properties for the distinct passions. While ideas are distinct, passions and impressions can blend like colors (T 2.2.6, 366), and sympathy allows reflection back and forth, so that some impressions are blends from ideas that are reflected as impressions, which produce other ideas etc.

Subsequent to Hume, both Thomas Reid and Immanuel Kant returned to prominence a medieval notion of a 'common sense' to translate participation into empirically acceptable terms.<sup>22</sup> If one takes sense as basic, but if sense is obviously



inter-subjective at some points, then one can infer that sense is common to either a species or a transcendental level of apperception. For the school of Reid, this is sufficient to justify appeals to common sense as refutations of Hume's 'scepticism.' For Kant, it means that the aesthetic intuition itself is not existentially individualized in its pure form.

Neither of these expedients is open to Hume. He does not begin with sense but with impressions and ideas. Sense is merely a way of characterizing certain impressions. So Hume in the *Treatise* offers an explanation in terms of impressions themselves rather than in terms of senses. His recourse to sympathy is consistent with his psychological insight, but it still involves him in something like a common sense since he must postulate a common structure of impressions. Hume is closer to the older usage of common sense as the unification of the five senses than he is to Reid and Kant. In subsequent revisions and re-presentations of his position, association has to do much of the work of unifying the sensory input. That has the advantage of keeping the psychology clearer, but it makes it harder to deal with aesthetic issues.

One objection to sympathy as an explanation in both morals and aesthetics is that it would seem to vary depending on the relation of the persons – one would not have the same sympathy for an unknown person as for a friend etc. That would re-introduce interest into sympathy. The problem is not that we would be prejudiced in favor of our friends but simply that we know them better and are thus better attuned to the cues that they give us to their sentiments. Their impressions would be more likely to transfer sympathetically because we would be likely to be more aware of their impressions. The extreme form of this problem would be that for fictional characters, where no real relation is possible, no sympathy would be possible. Sympathy would be either self-interested or benevolent, neither of which is possible for fictions. Hume's analysis is more directly phenomenological than that. Sympathy is an immediate reproduction of impressions. We stabilize our reactions to fictions by a kind of generalization – one might say an ideal point of view – of the sympathetic object (in Hume's sense of 'object' as the locus of consciousness).

If sympathy did not work in this way, we would not even be able to use the words 'beauty' or 'good.' Those emotions require a qualitative reference to character. If the words applied only to oneself or to one's friends and kin, then their meaning would involve an idea of kinship and relation. They would not be the emotions that they are. So one must be able to assign the emotions themselves to their qualitative reference. Sympathy can work because impressions can be transferred independently of the other relations that made the original impressions possible. We do not need to be able to know a fictional character in order to respond to the emotions designated in the fiction. Of course, at some point, we must have learned the emotions from our own and other non-fictional sources. Art must imitate life

emotionally. Emotionally fantastic or improbable characters will have no effect. (Perhaps this accounts for why too much knowledge makes some science fiction and fantasy ineffective.)

The source and principle of sympathy remain emotional:

External beauty is determin'd merely by pleasure; and 'tis evident, a beautiful countenance cannot give so much pleasure, when seen at the distance of twenty paces, as when it is brought nearer us. We say not, however, that it appears to us less beautiful: Because we know what effect it will have in such a position, and by that reflexion we correct its momentary appearance.

(T 3.3.1, 582)

Sympathy depends not on some psychological identification but on the common ability of reflection to correct any impression by the complex of the mind's already existing ideas. In the process, one must be able to relocate the subject of the impression. Sympathy allows us to make corrections in emotional impressions. This is one point at which Hume does rely on an analogy between external sense and a sense of beauty or a moral sense. However, the analogy works not to account for the causal source of emotions and passions (common sense) but to account for how correction is possible through reflection just as correction is possible in our sensory perceptions.

Even though sympathy became less important as a term after the *Treatise*, it remains in principle. In a note to the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume backs off from the need for technical explanations of sympathy:

It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle of human nature. . . . It is not probable that these principles can be resolved into principles more simple and universal, whatever attempts may have been made to that purpose. But if it were possible, it belongs not to the present subject; and we may here safely consider those principles as original: happy, if we can render all the consequences sufficiently plain and perspicuous!

(EPM 5.2, 178/219–220, n. 1)

Hume implicitly recognizes that 'sympathy' was always more a name for a phenomenon than an explanatory concept. Nevertheless, Hume continues to pile up examples and to use the word: for example, 'I have a pleasing sympathy in the

prospect of so much joy' (EPM 5.2, 179/221). The examples include aesthetic as well as moral instances. The theater is more effective because of shared amusement. Actors and audience interact etc. 'Every movement of the theatre, by a skilful poet, is communicated, as it were by magic, to the spectators; who weep, tremble, resent, rejoice, and are inflamed with all the variety of passions, which actuate the several personages of the drama' (EPM 5.2, 180/221–222). This is essentially the doctrine of sympathy from the *Treatise* applied to dramatic performance.

It is also Hume's answer to the question about whether one shares in the emotions of fictional characters. It must be set over against his earlier claim that real sentiments are not aroused by imaginary events. They are not. The fictional event does not produce an impression, except the impressions of sense that allow us to see or read the work. We get the impression from a transfer of ideas that then produce a secondary impression. I suspect that part of the answer to this apparent contradiction is in the difference between fictions and imagination. Imagination is, for Hume, a specific faculty for producing ideas; it relates impressions by association and memory. But fictions, at least in the theatrical examples, are present impressions. In Hume's terms, one does not imagine fictions; one experiences them. That actors represent the fictional characters is part of the experience. Imagination may be deceptive, and when the deception is discovered, the sentiment disappears even though the imagined scene can be recalled. But fictions are not deceptions. They are quite real representations of certain subjects for sentiment. For imagination to have an affect, it must be related to events, even if the events are fictional. For example, applied to reported news or events, 'The imagination is sure to be affected.' Imagination is also the way one converts ideas back into impressions. Fictions can supply ideas. Hume uses 'imagination' in both ways. 'It is the business of poetry to bring every affection near to us by lively imagery and representation, and make it look like truth and reality: A certain proof, that, wherever that reality is found, our minds are disposed to be strongly affected by it' (EPM 5.2, 181/222–223). This is not really inconsistent. Poetry has the power to represent a situation so that it will produce sentiment. That implies an imaginative act that produces an impression and thus allows a real sentiment.

Hume does not allow an imaginary *interest* to produce a real sentiment, however. For example, I cannot desire an imaginary object that I know to be imaginary. (I may, of course, desire that the imaginary object be real, but that is not the same thing.) Hume distinguishes strongly between fictions and their sentimental correlates on the one hand and actual cases on the other. 'It is not conceivable, how a *real* sentiment or passion can ever arise from a known *imaginary* interest' (EPM 5.1, 176/217). While Hume acknowledges that imaginary dangers can produce real terrors, these cannot last. We are thus back to the same problem that sympathy itself raised.

Imagination is never a mere imaginary interest, therefore, if it is to have aesthetic or moral effect. 'The more we habituate ourselves to an accurate scrutiny of morals, the more delicate feeling do we acquire of the most minute distinctions between vice and virtue' (EPM 5.1, 176/217). The feelings themselves are delicate, as are the observations that produce them. In the case of virtue, they extend beyond ourselves to the interest of others. Hume, in effect, does allow imagination a direct role in the creation of real sentiments, therefore. It is not that we imagine ourselves in another place or situation but that we imagine what the interest of the other is and respond to that total scenario. In the *Treatise*, fictions supply a mechanism for this imaginative extension of interest. In the *Enquiries*, the principle of association of ideas is left to do that work: 'Experience being chiefly what forms the association of ideas, it is impossible that any association could establish and support itself, in direct opposition to that principle' (EPM 5.2, 177/218).

### **The analysis of beauty**

A potential solipsism threatens the aesthetic application of Hume's theory of ideas because beauty is an emotion in the mind of the beholder. Hume appeals to sympathy and imagination to assure our social nature and overcome that solipsism. Imagination projects impressions as ideas. Sympathy allows the creation of impressions from the ideas we have of other's impressions. In effect, imagination allows us to see our impressions as belonging to others. As Samuel Johnson has Imlac say, 'Every man may by examining his own mind, guess what passes in the minds of others.'<sup>23</sup> Conversely, sympathy lets us feel within our own minds what we take to be passing in the minds of others. Our ideas and impressions are both projected onto and influenced by others. With the aid of imagination and sympathy, solipsism is no longer a threat. Our appreciation of beauty can correspond to that of others. Hume's understanding of experience is very much a social phenomenon. A conclusion that a sharing of experience does not take place is unacceptable because it is part of the obvious content of experience itself.

Every idea is an adequate representation of its impression and hence back to the mind of the one who has the idea. So what really follows as a result of sympathy and imagination is that passions and emotions represent the mind itself, including whatever content those ideas bring to the mind. Instead of making passions and emotions 'contentless' feelings of no cognitive significance, Hume's strategy actually makes them the source of the content that can be given to one's mental life. This is the sense in which thought is transformed in Hume's system. One will *not* find the rationalist's objective, impersonal content formed by experience and logically abstracted to clear and distinct ideas. Instead, Hume consistently gives to passions

an epistemological role that radically reverses the neoPlatonic and rationalist denigration of emotion. This opens the way for beauty, which is the ultimate neo-Platonic connection between sense and mind, to be re-cast. In the neo-Platonic hierarchy, it is necessary for beauty to transcend emotion for it to have a place with truth as an ideal reality. For Hume, in contrast, beauty is an emotion that brings feeling and passions into contact with the mind and lets the mind know itself. Passions and emotions take on a new role as thought, and the aesthetic dimension of experience provides the surety that the mind requires with respect to its images.

In the *Treatise*, Hume worked out the double relation of impression and idea in order to distinguish emotions such as beauty and virtue from passions such as love and pride. That allowed him to account for the referential content of sentiments to the mind itself and to the subject matter of the ideas. By themselves, some sentiments would be indifferent. But when they produce an idea and that idea in turn produces an impression, one arrives at a complex sentiment that is at once full of content and fundamentally a part of the mind. Hume's system thus avoids the idealism of Berkeley simply because there is no need to distinguish ideas 'in the mind' from an external world. There is only one world, and it is both mental and physical, both in the mind and of the world. Hume has demonstrated that other systems cannot achieve that unity. They either embrace a false objectivity or slide into skepticism. By moving emotions and passions into epistemology, Hume's system leaves metaphysics by the way. So at the end of the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, matters of fact and relations of ideas stand on an equal footing and metaphysics is consigned to the flames.

Beauty presents a special problem for this epistemological passion, however. As an emotion, it lacks the double relation of passions such as pride although it is still a secondary impression and thus not merely a sensation. But unlike virtue, no interest, either private or public is appealed to by the emotion of beauty. So it makes sense to limit beauty to the eye of the beholder in a way that it does not make sense to limit virtue to the mind of the moral being. This might seem to leave beauty without any cognitive content – it tends to become a purely affective part of the mind's store of impressions. Still there is a subject for beauty – whatever is beautiful – as well as the pleasure of the sentiment. We speak naturally of qualities of beautiful objects, so some impressions or ideas must be part of what produces the emotion of beauty. It must be possible, therefore, to maintain the referential status of beauty in spite of the bald statement in 'Of the Standard of Taste' that 'Beauty is no quality in things themselves' (OST 230).

One must be very careful with Hume's arguments. They frequently seem to distinguish different pleasures. Hume does distinguish both moral and aesthetic pleasures and uneasiness as being of particular kinds (T 3.1.2, 471). His point in

making this distinction, however, is that our feeling is not the *cause* of approval or disapproval but is the approval: 'the very *feeling* constitutes our praise or admiration' (T 3.1.2, 471). What is distinctive, therefore, is simply that it is moral approval. The same thing holds for judgments of beauty, taste, and sensation. Hume proposes at the beginning of the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* to follow an experimental method based on how one actually responds to the imputation of some quality. He is to be guided by two kinds of observation: introspections – would one like to have *x* imputed to oneself; and language – does the word signify praise or blame. This is sufficient to distinguish the particular kind of approbation or blame. From this empirical basis, which Hume believes is virtually immune to mistake, he will conclude what the origin of moral attributions is.

Hume says explicitly that 'under the term pleasure, we comprehend sensations, which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distant resemblance, as is requisite to make them be express'd by the same abstract term' (T 3.1.2, 472). As an example, Hume refers to the difference between musical harmony and the flavor of wine, both of which produce pleasure. Harmony and flavor are not interchangeable descriptions. The argument context is to counter the claim that by relying on pleasure, Hume's system makes it possible for inanimate objects to have moral qualities in just the same way that he has charged that rational systems do. His reply is that the pleasure is not the same. But if the pleasure is not the same, it is also not distinct in the sense of a natural kind. Rather the distinction that Hume has in mind is that captured by different descriptions of forms of judgment. Such descriptions are themselves abstract terms that refer back to specific instances. So pleasure includes harmony and flavor, and harmony would include the music of Bach and Mozart. Just as there are differences between harmony and flavor, there are differences between harmonies. The peculiar kinds of pleasure suitable for judgments concerning music must be those which describe harmony. That is enough to establish that reliance on sentiment for moral judgments does not fall into the same error as the rationalist because one can always distinguish the different kinds of sentiments by their reference. Reason can make no such claim for distinctions since its claim is that there are immutable truths that are variously instantiated and whose truth is independent of their instantiations.

Hume provides a formal description of beauty in order to distinguish beauty from deformity.

If we consider all the hypotheses, which have been form'd either by philosophy or common reason, to explain the difference betwixt beauty and deformity, we shall find that all of them resolve into this, that beauty is such an order and construction of parts, as either by the primary constitution

of our nature, by custom, or by caprice, is fitted to give a pleasure and satisfaction to the soul.

(T 2.1.8, 299)

Hume is not abandoning his basic system in speaking this way, however.<sup>24</sup> First, beauty is a construction of parts. Hutcheson allowed for the possibility that beauty is a simple idea, at least in some cases. Hume abandons that kind of distinction. Neither simplicity nor complexity of ideas is relevant. The parts are parts of something, of course, but Hume has not abandoned his basic epistemology, so the arrangement of parts is essentially ideational. So beauty depends on an arrangement of the parts that appear in an idea. Second, its effect is pleasure and satisfaction. And third, that pleasure depends on the arrangement being fitted 'by the *primary constitution* of our nature, by *custom*, or by *caprice*' to have its effect. A good deal is crammed into this clause. I take it that it specifies three possible ways that the arrangement of parts may have its effect. One responds naturally to some things. So I may respond to the bright colors, the *claritas* of the thing. But some responses are customary. Different cultures find different facial features beautiful. And finally, the effect may be merely capricious, a matter of chance associations, for example. This reads the clause as a triple of possible ways of approaching beauty, not as modifications of nature by custom and caprice, and certainly not as some realist arrangement of parts that defines 'beauty.' So no particular means to an effect is specified in the description. Beauty may be either cultural or natural.

Hume complicates this description, however, by going on to relate beauty to convenience and utility. Clearly, the pleasure one takes in beauty may be a result of the construction of parts that please for reasons other than simply their form. So Hume does not ascribe to beauty only a formal and disinterested effect. For Hume at this point, form follows function. What we admire and what gives us pleasure is a relation between the formal properties of something and its function. Even in architecture where adjustments are made for perspective, Hume's account is not that this is pleasing because it fools the eye but because one would sense danger in what did not appear 'right' with regard to the function of the building. Instead of a definition that separates aesthetic and moral sentiments formally, Hume's description leads one back to the relation between form and effect in a way that keeps moral and aesthetic sentiments essentially related.

The description of beauty reduces to pleasure and pain: 'Pleasure and pain, therefore, are not only necessary attendants of beauty and deformity, but constitute their very essence' (T 2.1.8, 299). That is not the same thing as reducing beauty to pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain are the essence of beauty, and Hume is carefully trained enough in the scholastic forms of definition to mean that pleasure and pain

constitute defining properties for beauty – its essence. But pleasure and pain are also the essence of moral sentiments. In both cases, the impressions of pleasure and pain accompany but do not replace other secondary impressions. So one is led back to a common essence with a formal distinction based on the arrangement of the parts.

From the standpoint of reference, beauty has the epistemological advantage of being independent of certain kinds of interests (though this is still far from the Kantian aesthetic of disinterestedness). The other-directedness or self-directedness of virtue and of the stronger passions involves an assertion of existence about its content. It is foolish and perhaps irrational to be angry about something that one knows does not obtain or to be concerned about honesty when nothing will be affected. But since the emotion of beauty involves no such assertion about its content, its reference is affected only by the representational content itself. It refers to what it contains, free from the complications of the double intentionality Hume ascribes to strong passions and even of the active intentionality of virtue. It stops short of a Kantian denial of existence, however, because ideas of utility and fitness play a role.

The role of interest in connection with beauty is central because beauty is not the same sentiment as virtue. It lacks the direct interest in the other that virtue involves, and it does not depend on the double relation of ideas and impressions that pride and anger require. Hume does not distinguish kinds of beauty, nor is beauty limited to the emerging concept of fine arts. For example, love between the sexes is a compound of 'the pleasing sensation arising from beauty' (T 2.2.11, 394), with a bodily appetite for generation, and kindness. Kindness, in turn, originates in beauty, according to earlier principles, by an action of sympathy. So beauty is a principal means of identification with another person.

Even if sympathy is reduced to association, beauty still connects ideas of the other with the self since pleasure produces positive associations even if another person is the object of the emotion. Beauty also excites bodily appetite. Both beauty and kindness are pleasant, agreeable emotions. Both are parallel in their direction. So, 'from these two relations, viz. resemblance and a parallel desire, there arises such a connexion betwixt the sense of beauty, the bodily appetite, and benevolence, that they become in a manner inseparable' (T 2.2.11, 395). Hume means little more by 'sense of beauty' here than that the emotion that he calls beauty arises immediately. By connecting beauty and generation as having parallel ends, Hume has retained an element of teleology at this point. Beauty serves as a mediating passion between kindness and the appetite to generation which are 'too remote' from each other to combine.

In listing the causes of love and hatred, Hume characteristically includes beauty



and deformity, and argues that they produce love and hatred when 'plac'd on inanimate objects' only if they are related to a person or thinking being (T 2.2.1, 331). The locution is interesting. Virtue and vice are considered in their own right; but beauty itself is passive. It is placed on something or someone. Not only do love and hatred depend on a relation between the emotion and a person – Hume notes cynically but realistically that one gains respect from a beautiful palace only if one owns it – but the relation is interested in the later Kantian sense. Of the various emotions, only beauty seems to have to be assigned by some agent independently for its presence to have an interested effect. For beauty to become interested requires the action of some agent who 'places it on' some object. This, and not the muddled realism sometimes attributed to Hume, is the way that 'beauty' applies directly to objects. Unless there is someone to feel it, there is no beauty to place upon anything.

Not only can beauty become interested in that case, the action is most commonly accomplished as a result of utility. The beauty of a body is derived from the suitability of it to perform a function. These qualities become signs and correspond to the appropriate sentiments and pleasures or uneasiness. Hume is illustrating how sentiments are related to underlying considerations of utility. His examples suggest a direct causal connection. 'Ideas of utility and its contrary, though they do not entirely determine what is handsome or deformed, are evidently the source of a considerable part of approbation or dislike' (EPM 6.2, 200/244–245). One recognizes certain arrangements of an object or situation as conducive to an end and responds in accordance with the expected end.

Hume had objected to Hutcheson's use of final causes, and his identification of beauty as an emotion in its own right, independent of interest, makes his appeal to utility different. It is the formal properties of utility, rather than its actual usefulness, that link it to beauty. *Ideas* of utility contribute to the pleasure that makes utility a source of beauty. The test, therefore, is not whether something is a final cause, but whether its form is such that it suggests usefulness or, on the contrary, gives unease when it is 'placed on' something. Hume suggests, for example, that

There is no rule in painting or statuary more indispensable than that of balancing the figures, and placing them with the greatest exactness on their proper centre of gravity. A figure, which is not justly balanced, is ugly; because it conveys the disagreeable ideas of fall, harm, and pain.

(EPM 6.2, 200/245)

This has nothing to do with the didactic ends or the possession and use of the painting or statue. The look, not the actual utility, causes the uneasiness.

The ideas of utility also suggest a basic problem. If utility changes, then the

sentiment would change as well. So if force and vigor, for example, are no longer useful in a society, they should cease to be beautiful. Hume could of course account for the continued admiration for 'Broad shoulders, a lank belly, firm joints, tapered legs' (EPM 6.2, 200/244) in the same way that he accounts for the continued application of general rules beyond the specific kind of situation that produced the rule. Once established, convention and association continue to operate, even if the situation has changed. However, he would have a more difficult time accounting for some of the vagaries of fashion that seem utterly useless after a time but that were considered the height of beauty at the time. It is hard enough to see what use we ever thought leisure suits had. Now they just look ridiculous. It will not do to object that beauty is itself timeless or that such things are not really beautiful, because on Hume's principles the only test for the beauty of an object is that someone experiences the emotion and 'places it upon' some object, that is that the emotion is both pleasurable and an internal impression that sympathy or acts of association assign to an object. More seriously, one might ask Hume how one knows that hidden utility accounts for pleasure and beauty. There is something *ad hoc* about Hume's explanations. They verge on losing empirical force. However, Hume might well reply that as long as the sentiments provide evidence, the source may remain in dispute. That is, Hume does not try to say that one must feel in a certain way or be wrong. He argues that sentiments are a certain way, and that they are by sympathy, habit, or custom associated with certain uses. Hume never abandons the priority of sentiment.

Among the most prominent kinds of utilitarian association is convenience. This links the utilitarian descriptions of beauty to the descriptions of it as a sensation of pleasure. 'The observation of convenience gives pleasure, since convenience is a beauty' (T 2.2.5, 364). Such beauty is 'interested' because of the convenience of the object, but it is not my interest or a disinterested pleasure. Hume distinguishes a personal interest from a shared interest produced by sympathy. 'We enter into his interest by the force of imagination, and feel the same satisfaction, that the objects naturally occasion in him' (T 2.2.5, 364). Hume goes on to list a whole catalogue of domestic arts, 'it being an universal rule, that their beauty is chiefly deriv'd from their utility, and from their fitness for that purpose to which they are destin'd. But this is an advantage, that concerns only the owner, nor is there anything but sympathy, which can interest the spectator' (T 2.2.5, 364). On the one hand, without interest, there would be no connection of beauty to objects at all. On the other, since the emotion itself does not depend on interest, Hume must continue to appeal to sympathy and association to account for how one person has an emotion based on another's convenience.

It obviously does not matter to Hume what the source of pleasure is that he

classifies as beauty. Utility will do as well as a more esoteric *je ne sais quoi* or contemplation, and to the practical-minded Hume, it seems obvious that utility is a primary source of pleasure. All that matters is the emotion itself. The imagination, left alone, cannot come close to the reality of a productive field in the production of pleasure. 'Fertility and value have a plain reference to use; and that to riches, joy, and plenty; in which tho' we have no hope of partaking, yet we enter into them by the vivacity of the fancy, and share them, in some measure, with the proprietor' (T 2.2.5, 364). However, beauty is not listed among the direct passions. Direct passions are those that 'arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure' (T 2.3.1, 399). Even though beauty is directly linked to pleasure, so that whatever pleases is a candidate to be called beautiful, its status as an impression of reflexion involving utility shifts it out of this group (although Kemp Smith classifies all of the aesthetic sentiments as direct).<sup>25</sup> In spite of the fact that utility produces pleasure, beauty remains distinct from both the utility and the pleasure. Unlike the will, for example, which is a direct passion, beauty retains a passivity and an introverted limitation to the mind.

In addition to utility, many other causes of beauty are suggested. In these contexts, the word 'sympathy' continues to come into frequent use. 'In every judgement of beauty, the feelings of the person affected enter into consideration, and communicate to the spectator similar touches of pain or pleasure' (EPM 5.2, 182/224). In general, Hume is less consistent and systematic in his choice of language in these contexts. Here he speaks of a judgment rather than a sentiment of beauty. Does this matter? Probably not; because beauty and taste are closely linked, the judgment of taste easily includes beauty. Does it matter that fictional characters strictly speaking do not have feelings and that I know that? Not really, if one allows Hume a complex movement between ideas, emotions, and imagination. Still, it is hard to make all of the pieces of Hume's puzzle fit together. His point is that we respond to situations in which we have no interest and no direct impressions of our own.

The relation of beauty to pleasure is also somewhat imprecise. For example, Hume writes 'We seldom reflect on what is beautiful or ugly, agreeable or disagreeable, without an emotion of pleasure or uneasiness' (T 2.2.5, 358) as if pleasure were only contingently related to the beauty of what we reflect on. On the other hand, he says 'where any object has a tendency to produce pleasure in its possessor, it is always regarded as beautiful; as every object, that has a tendency to produce pain, is disagreeable and deform'd' (T 3.3.1, 576). In some situations, the relation is reversed; beauty produces pleasure: 'Men are vain of the beauty of their country, of their county, of their parish. Here the idea of beauty plainly produces a pleasure' (T 2.1.9, 306). Hume considers the possibility that beauty is in some way distinct from the

power of producing pleasure. However, 'Tis certain, then, that if the power of producing pleasure and pain forms not the essence of beauty and deformity, the sensations are at least inseparable from the qualities, and 'tis even difficult to consider them apart' (T 2.1.8, 300). He allows the question 'whether beauty be not something real, and different from the power of producing pleasure' (T 2.1.8, 301), but he finds that 'surprise,' which is defined as a pleasure arising from novelty, is not similarly characterized, and surprise produces pride. Hume implies, then, that since surprise is clearly 'not a quality in any object, but merely a passion or impression in the soul' (T 2.1.8, 301), beauty should likewise be thought of in this way though it may, hypothetically, be treated more objectively as a courtesy title.

Hume supplies an alternative account for how an idea of beauty might arise. Consider Hume's argument that time is not a separate impression. He examines five notes, played on a flute. We have an impression and idea of time. But there are only five impressions, not six – not five notes plus an impression of time but five notes that give an idea of time. What Hume says of time he could also say of beauty – it is not an impression distinguishable from the musical passage, but one can nevertheless have an idea of beauty. However, a second principle must be accounted for: 'Ideas always represent the objects or impressions, from which they are deriv'd' (T 1.2.3, 37). We have an idea of time. Time is not itself a separate, distinguishable object. But ideas always represent objects or impressions. So there must be some object or impression that time represents. Hume calls this a fiction, and it ties the objectification of beauty back to the theory of fictions discussed above. The fiction of a musical entity – the song or passage – is what our idea of beauty represents. That does not change the fact that beauty is essentially an emotion, however.

Hume thus distinguishes two kinds of ideas of reflection – those which have a mental object (such as *a* is greater than *b*) and those which do not represent something apart from the fictional unity given to a gestalt by the mind (*a* is beautiful; *a* is temporally extended). In the former case, a relation of ideas provides an objectifiable 'something' that we call 'greater than.' Hume is still close to Locke's use of reflection at this point. The ability to compare ideas implies both that the ideas themselves are the objects of further impressions and that the power of the mind to make the comparison can be the source of an impression of power. 'Greatness' is clearly something 'in the mind.' In the case of possible abstractions such as time and beauty, however, no comparable objectifiable relation is present. 'Beauty' is not the relation of note *a* to *b* or *b* to *c*. It objectifies only the total gestalt of the musical phrase. The abstraction seems to be a third element that exists independently of the other impressions. To have an idea of it, there must be some impression corresponding to it. Strictly, all that is present is a relation of ideas or impressions, and its availability is a matter of reflection. However, in order to avoid implying a

third thing as the source of that impression, Hume supplies a mental alternative – a fiction. Thus, Hume introduces a new element. In order to maintain the status of beauty and time as impressions and ideas that are images of impressions, Hume provides something of which they can be impressions but which does not reach beyond the mind. Ideas and emotions that arise from complexes of external impressions such as language and music are postulated fictions. Fictions in this sense supply the reference for an idea that the mind has produced for itself. Such fictions can even be realized in performances.

Hume's use of 'fiction' is thus a way to avoid a possible epistemological confusion that arises from our natural tendency to treat our ideas of reflection as if they were external impressions. As Annette Baier says, 'Fictions structure our version of ourselves and our environment, making both us and it 'real and durable'.'<sup>26</sup> His treatment of identity provides another useful example. Hume argued that identity is based on a mistake that depends on a fiction:

For when we attribute identity, in an improper sense, to variable or interrupted objects, our mistake is not confined to the expression, but is commonly attended with a fiction, either of something invariable and uninterrupted, or of something mysterious and inexplicable, or at least with a propensity to such fictions.

(T 1.4.6, 255)

The link that accounts for personal identity is provided by an association of ideas. A similar explanation would be available in the case of 'beauty.' Just as with identity, 'beauty' is often used in an 'improper sense.' The emotion is accompanied by impressions of the senses and by pleasure. Together, these form relations of causality and contiguity that would be sufficient for a fiction. Hume does not offer such an account of beauty, but it would fit with what he does say both about beauty as if it were a quality of an object and about our propensity to provide fictions by association. When one speaks of the beauty of some object, therefore, it should be thought of as an improper use, comparable to time or identity, which is assigned to an associated set of impressions.

While beauty is 'placed on' objects, and as an indirect passion varies with its sources, the emotion itself remains essentially the same in all cases. The *feeling* of beauty is the same regardless of its source. At least, it is not distinguished on the basis of its source or effect. 'Thus the beauty of all visible objects causes a pleasure pretty much the same, tho' it be sometimes deriv'd from the mere species and appearance of the objects; sometimes from sympathy, and an idea of their utility' (T 3.3.5, 617). This is another reason that the emotion of beauty should be kept distinct from passions such as love that vary greatly depending on their objects.

But there is a difference in feeling between moral and aesthetic pleasure:

A convenient house, and a virtuous character, cause not the same feeling of approbation; even tho' the source of our approbation be the same, and flow from sympathy and an idea of their utility. There is something very inexplicable in this variation of our feelings; but 'tis what we have experience of with regard to all our passions and sentiments.

(T 3.3.5, 617)

Coming at the end of the *Treatise*, this difference remains unexplained in Hume's system. One could find in it a pre-figuring of Kant's distinction between delight and agreeableness, but that does not seem justified. Hume keeps all sorts of non-Kantian aesthetic pleasures in beauty – utility, admiration, etc. Even his example here is of a convenient house, not some contemplative state. Rather, it seems that Hume is aware that by making both moral and aesthetic pleasure sentiments, he is undermining the distinction between morality and ordinary pleasure. But he does not have an explanation because to distinguish sentiments would require some principle beyond them and that Hume does not offer.

Finally, Hume acknowledges that for beauty, prior conditions come into play.

In many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection. There are just grounds to conclude, that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species, and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties, in order to give it a suitable influence on the human mind.

(EPM 1, 138/173)

I do not really think that Hume has abandoned his basic premise that reason follows sentiment and not vice versa. 'Reasoning,' here, must mean something like delicacy – the making of finer discriminations and more careful observations so that the utility of something becomes clear, for example. As Peter Jones notes with respect to 'The Sceptic,'

The only role for argument and reasoning is at the earliest stage of the causal sequence, namely, when an object is being surveyed; no reasoning can alter the constitution of the mind, and no reasoning can affect the epithets which come about causally upon the survey and its consequent sentiment.<sup>27</sup>

The attractiveness of aesthetics as a source of examples and experimental demonstration remains intact. Beauty is 'easy' compared to the abstruseness of speculative philosophy. It is also more useful and self-correcting.

A philosopher, who purposes only to represent the common sense of mankind in more beautiful and more engaging colours, if by accident he falls into error, goes no farther; but renewing his appeal to common sense, and the natural sentiments of the mind, returns into the right path, and secures himself from any dangerous illusions.

(EHU 1.4, 7)

The superiority of sentiment to trains of logical deduction and speculative philosophy is not just accidental, therefore. It is practical.

### **Association of ideas**

In spite of the difficulties just noted, the production of passions such as beauty operates regularly. Otherwise, one would be faced with a chaos of impressions, and any hope for an aesthetic theory would disappear. This is the point where Hume's use of the association of ideas becomes crucial. Hume appeals to the association of ideas to explain the observed regularity of impressions and ideas. Association of ideas was, of course, a common theme in much eighteenth-century philosophical psychology. Hume uses it in a largely intuitive sense. He provides no mechanism, and he is unconcerned with the inner workings to a point that one might suspect that the association of ideas was little more than a fiction itself:

It is evident that the association of ideas operates in so silent and imperceptible a manner, that we are scarce sensible of it, and discover it more by its effects than by any immediate feeling or perception. It produces no emotion, and gives rise to no new impression of any kind, but only modifies those ideas of which the mind was formerly possessed, and which it could recall upon occasion.

(T 2.1.9, 305)

Thus the association of ideas is not itself an idea or impression, and according to Hume's system, we have no proper idea of association as such. It is the way that ideas and impressions form relations that give order and regularity to the mind. But if it gives rise to no impression of its own, one might reasonably ask how association is known at all. It approaches a conventional fiction on the order of Maxwell's demon.

Nevertheless, the association of ideas can be analyzed to some extent. Association of ideas is dependent on three relations of ideas: 'The qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is, after this manner, conveyed from one idea to another, are three, viz. resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cause and effect' (T 1.1.4, 10). Since Hume will explain cause and effect as the result of an association of ideas, there is a danger of circularity in this way of approaching the subject. Nevertheless, Hume's point is clear enough. Impressions are not arranged randomly. That much is evident. If one then asks what arrangement is shown, one is led to resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Rather than circularity, therefore, these are really part of a descriptive definition. Thus Hume's use of the association of ideas is largely 'experimental' and observational in spite of the potential emptiness implied by the 'silent' and 'imperceptible' manner of its operation. Hume distinguishes the association of ideas from the association of impressions for this reason. Impressions produce ideas that, in turn, can produce impressions, and thus set off a round of secondary impressions that result in further ideas etc. Impressions, on the other hand, are strengthened and related more directly by resemblance.

Resemblance of impressions has seemed problematic to many commentators. The general line of argument goes that impressions could not resemble each other unless they could be further analyzed. But then they would not be impressions in Hume's sense but Lockean complex ideas. If Hume means to keep impressions as unanalyzable primitives, then resemblance cannot be the basis for association. However, this objection misunderstands the sense in which Hume means for impressions to be primitive. He does not claim that they are causally primitive; their unanalyzable nature is a result of our psychology, not of the source of the impressions. So resemblances will exist and be immediately apprehensible. Impressions of color, for example, resemble each other and are distinct from impressions of taste. We can account for these resemblances in terms of the source organs, but our knowledge of the resemblance precedes the causal account that would not be possible without it. Resemblances are themselves secondary impressions. As Wittgenstein might have said, one just sees the resemblance. Then, on that basis, analysis and the recognition of associations and habits are possible.

Association is aesthetically important at two points. In the first place, it is part of the means by which sympathy operates.

We may conclude that relations are requisite to sympathy, not absolutely considered as relations, but by their influence in converting our ideas of the sentiments of others into the very sentiments by means of the association betwixt the idea of their persons and that of our own.

(T2.1.11, 322)



In other words, once one has an idea of what another is feeling, that idea, by association completes the sympathetic chain by linking up with one's own ideas and impressions. Second, association brings the imagination into play in a way that suggests its aesthetic possibilities. On the one hand, the imagination does not do just anything. On the other, there are neither fixed relations nor prohibited combinations. The imagination orders impressions without being bound by their prior order. 'Nothing is more free than that faculty.' But it is 'in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places' (T 1.1.4, 10). Association is the guide that allows the faculty of the imagination to operate, giving it at once free play and order.

It is plain, that, in the course of our thinking, and in the constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination runs easily from one idea to any other that resembles it, and that this quality alone is to the fancy a sufficient bond and association. It is likewise evident, that as the senses, in changing their objects, are necessitated to change them regularly, and take them as they lie contiguous to each other, the imagination must, by long custom, acquire the same method of thinking, and run along the parts of space and time in conceiving its objects.

(T 1.1.4, 11)

Hume gives to the imagination an ordered, potentially cognitive function that it lacked as long as it was mere play and the generator of illusion.

Once imagination becomes cognitive, it is not far to the more positive role that the imagination assumes in nineteenth-century aesthetics. Hume's imagination is not creative, however, and it lacks any metaphysical overtones. It depends on association for both its mechanism and its control, and association is, in turn, the product of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect, at least some of which are surely social constructs. Hume also ascribes to association the ability to enhance impressions simply by combination, quoting with approval a passage on the increased pleasures of the imagination that arise from the combination of sounds, colors, etc. (Addison, *Spectator*, 412; T 2.1.4, 284–285). Imagination thus takes on a positive role when it is combined with association. It explains both the order of complex ideas and the operation of their source.

Hume puts imagination and association together into a causal explanation. The causality that links impressions is associative. Imagination extends the associations and reapplies them in different orders and situations. Only in that way is the mind able to extend its self-image to other subjects than its own immediate emotions. The extension of emotions with the aid of association amounts to an expressive theory of the imagination. For example, opposition provides stimulation to the mind, so

opposition is experience-enhancing. Rising, ascent is more difficult. So one thinks of ascent as enhancing the effect of what is higher. Higher things become expressive of ambition and mental reach. The sublime, distance, and greatness all contribute to expressive effects. Ultimately, all are traceable back to the operations of the imagination and association (T 2.3.8, 434–435). There is considerable continuity between Hume's use of imagination and the more strongly associative theory developed later by Archibald Alison, therefore, though Alison has none of Hume's epistemological acuity.

Imagination and association obviate the need for substance as an underlying principle. Throughout his system, Hume's opponents are the scholastics who rely on substance. This is as true of his implicit aesthetic theory as it is of his more explicit epistemology. Hume's ontology of art requires none of the contortions of Leibnizian possible worlds because his fictional entities are the product of mental operations covered by the faculty of imagination and the association of ideas. Hume's refutation of substance depends on distinguishing impressions of sense from impressions of reflection. The latter encompass the passions and emotions. Since substance is not an impression of sensation – not a color, sound, etc. – it would have to be an impression of reflection. But that makes it an emotion or passion, not a substance. So we have no impression of substance, and hence no idea of substance. External impressions and impressions of reflection are sufficient by themselves to supply all that is required for the construction of complex ideas, including those fictions that lead one to speak as if there were an external substance in addition to the various subjects of our impressions. One has impressions of sense, pleasure, emotions, and passions. No substantial beauty or matter is necessary to support what experience supplies.

Hume's examples at this point are of aesthetic interest in the way that they suggest an ontology of aesthetic objects. Hume seems to think of modes as general qualities. Modes cannot be the complex, compounded ideas that pass for substance because they are not 'substantial'; that is, they do not imply unity. 'Gold' implies some complex idea that we unite into the substance gold. The process of abstraction and fictional unification produces a unity to which we can continue to refer. But the quality of gold-colored applies variously and implies no substantial unity. To reveal how we can eliminate substantial modes analytically, Hume identifies two ways in which modes are formed: i) qualities, not united by contiguity and causation, and ii) qualities, united but not foundational to the complex idea. His example of the first is a dance; of the second, beauty. This is very interesting, if a little puzzling. By 'a dance,' Hume probably means something like a minuet or country dance – the kind of ritualized social performance that was a staple of polite eighteenth-century society. (Hume was, by all reports, rather clumsy and not very good at this sort of thing.) He almost certainly does not mean by 'dance' a fine art in the sense that was just

beginning to be ascribed to that classification. One might say that dance is a social art; it is not yet thought of as a fine art. However, the transition from the one to the other is in progress, in part because social ritual and the fine arts are continuous in the eighteenth century. The idea of the dance is made up of simple ideas of motion, position, etc. that are combined into the whole ritual. But one can point to nothing substantial even though 'this dance' has a specific reference in terms of a spatio-temporal complex. A play, regarded as a performance, would have the same mode of existence. Regarded as a text, a play also has a substantial location. A painting is substantial in a way that a dance is not. Hume says that the mode of the dance is 'not united by contiguity and causation.' That cannot mean that the steps of the dance are not contiguous and caused, because they obviously are. It must mean that the reference itself – this dance – lacks the stable contiguity of parts and causal relations that lead us to ascribe fixed identity to substantial entities like a gold coin or a written text. This is very important, because it indicates how radically Hume insists on his ideational foundations. He will not put dance and gold coins in the same modal categories.

Beauty is a different mode altogether. It is easier to understand Hume's example, but the tendency, even in empiricist aesthetics, to turn beauty into an abstract entity makes it all the more important to see how Hume understands Locke's characterization of beauty as a complex mode. Take some complex idea – of a painting, for example. The impressions that go into it include color sensations, impressions of pleasure or unease both direct and derived from impressions of reflection, ideas of shape and form, ideas of representational entities derived from the impressions of things in the world, etc. The complex idea is, say, Ramsay's portrait of Hume. If this complex idea is beautiful, then it belongs to a qualitative mode of the beautiful. But being beautiful is not 'the foundation of the complex idea.' The portrait would be just as recognizably Hume with the same colors etc. if it were not beautiful. Both 'a minuet' and 'a beautiful portrait of Hume' are names for complex ideas. Change the idea, and one changes the mode. The dance is no longer a minuet; the portrait is no longer beautiful, or if it is still beautiful, it is a different beauty. Hume clearly echoes Locke at this point, but his analysis takes him much farther in the direction of an explicit aesthetic. Both categories of 'mode' are fundamentally aesthetic in the most general sense of that term (mode of perception) that both German rationalism and idealism ultimately recognize as central to epistemology. Hume is concerned to show that they can be accounted for within the more metaphysically spartan scheme of his system.

### **Hume's reliance on sentiment: the legitimization of sentiment**

Hume's division of all perception between original or direct impressions and secondary, indirect, or reflexive impressions gives him two basic categories that, in the *Enquiries*, he simplifies into matters of fact and relations of ideas. I am claiming that Hume's system consistently treats all of the passions, emotions, and feelings, so called, as sentiments in the tradition of Shaftesbury. When sentiment is understood in this way, it becomes the primary evidence for knowledge, and Hume thinks that it escapes the contradictions and skepticism that destroy other systems. I am arguing also that when Hume incorporates sentiment into reason as the guide to knowledge, this implies an aesthetic more or less explicitly. I want now to try to see how these two claims can be supported. How does Hume's use of sentiment legitimize it as the leading form of judgment, and how is that judgment essentially aesthetic as well as moral?

Interpretations of Hume that give priority to sentiment can be traced back at least to Norman Kemp Smith. The priority of sentiment has been widely acknowledged by a number of Hume scholars since then as has the connection between Hutcheson and Hume that Kemp Smith emphasized.<sup>28</sup> However, as Donald Livingston has pointed out, that general line of argument divides reason and sentiment so that the priority of sentiment is taken to make Hume an irrationalist and a naturalist.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, I see Hume as reversing the priority of reason and sentiment in order to save reason. By showing that sentiment guides reason to conclusions that are consistent with common sense instead of the absurd conclusions and empty claims made by reason alone, Hume saves reason from its rationalist and scholastic excesses and at the same time shows that sentiment is not the irrational and naive sentimentalism that its orthodox critics made it in their parodies. If reason is understood as the rationalists in the Cartesian and Leibnizian traditions understand it or if it is placed in the metaphysical contexts that the Cambridge Platonists and the continuing Aristotelian tradition require, the result is chains of reasoning that cannot be maintained and metaphysical assumptions such as substance that cannot be experienced. Both of these traditions were alive and active as Hume's opponents. But if one follows Locke and Newton into a new empiricism, Hume finds that common sense is equally offended. What every child knows proves illusory. So to save reason itself, that aspect of the mind, sentiment, that informs us directly of our most fundamental relations with self and world must be given a place in reasonable, philosophical inquiry. That was the task of the *Treatise*, and it remains the task of Hume's subsequent philosophical and critical writings. The result is not an irrational sentimentalism or an unreasoned naturalism but a sentiment that, through its own resources, provides a disciplined, 'reasoned' mental life that is essentially social

and historical. Thus, sentiment, and with it aesthetics, is at the foundation of Hume's system.

'Sentiment' includes the whole range of indirect impressions and ideas. It excludes a normative reason, understood as a transcendental standard to which the individual mind must conform and by which its ideas can be tested, and replaces it with taste, which is both moral and critical judgment. It also excludes the whole apparatus of substance, essence, definition, and *a priori* argumentation upon which classical and scholastic epistemology and ontology relied. Hume's task is to show that sentiment, not that form of reason, is the guiding principle of knowledge and that sentiment alone is strong enough to be the master in the master/slave relationship. He does not abandon reason, but he radically re-thinks what reason is and how it works. In doing so, he makes a place for epistemological aesthetics and legitimizes the role of taste and feeling. It is important to recognize, however, that Hume is not fleeing from the integrity and clarity of reason to some 'felt' subjectivism. He is assigning to sentiment exactly the role that earlier epistemology assigned to reason. Sentiment provides the fundamental data and the checks on the mind's erratic errors that Platonists, Aristotelians, and rationalists all assign to an independent, metaphysical or logical reason. As a consequence, Hume must defend not only the 'easy' philosophy of aesthetic feeling (represented, for example, by Bouhours<sup>30</sup>) but also his own 'abstruse' version that is as analytical and closely observed as is the science of Newton that it seeks to emulate.

Lest one think Hume's emphasis on sentiment is a form of sentimentality, note that his attitude toward human nature is essentially pessimistic. Hume himself seems to have been both sociable and good-natured. That does not lead him to a wholehearted faith in progress,<sup>31</sup> nor, in spite of his admiration for Rousseau, does he subscribe to Rousseau's view of human nature. In fact, one suspects that after his experience with Rousseau himself, Hume was even more skeptical about the ability of humankind to function without regard to its own imagined interests. Hume tells the story of Themistocles' proposal to burn the ships of their neighbors. The Athenians, without knowing the details, but being assured that the proposal was both advantageous and unjust, rejected it. Hume concludes that the Athenians would not have rejected the proposal if they had known its details and thus had a vivid imagination of it. Only because the details remained unknown and unimagined could the Athenians adhere to justice: 'Otherwise 'tis difficult to conceive, that a whole people, unjust and violent as men commonly are, shou'd so unanimously have adher'd to justice, and rejected any considerable advantage' (T 2.3.6, 426). The story illustrates both the power of sentiment and the limits of human adherence to an abstract justice. Hume's defense of sentiment is by no means a blind retreat into sentimentality either about humankind or about the state of nature.

In order for sentiment to play the role that it does, Hume's psychological analysis

and his logical analysis must overlap in essential ways, and this is where aesthetics comes in. Logic is not a separate subject from the psychology of sentiment. In particular, Hume thinks of both as representational,<sup>32</sup> and Hume does not separate psychological representation from logical representation. This has two consequences. First, the idea/object relation must be 'adequate' representationally. Hume does not argue for this. It is, he says 'the foundation of all human knowledge' (T 1.2.2, 29). Second, it follows that logical contradiction and psychological contradiction are one and the same. 'Whatever appears impossible and contradictory upon the comparison of these ideas, must be really impossible and contradictory, without any farther excuse or evasion' (T 1.2.2, 29). 'Appears' in this context should be taken quite literally; it is not a metaphor for 'understands' but a mode of assessing ideas. Some ideas appear as contradictory; so they are contradictory. There is no separate logical standard apart from the appearance of the ideas.

The foundation for logic is a psychological comparison of ideas. Ideas are the psychological corollaries of impressions. Ideas, not impressions, must be compared, manipulated, etc. by the mind and imagination. Hume's position is that whatever one can do with ideas must correspond to the object of those ideas since there is nothing 'in between' so to speak. Hume's specific argument here is against the infinite divisibility of space (T 1.2.2, 30). Since each finite idea of a division augments extension, any infinitely divisible extension must itself be infinite. Therefore, no finite extension can be infinitely divisible. To the modern mind trained in mathematical logic, Hume's arguments seem perversely wrong. But if one restricts the context to representation, Hume is not so far off. The hierarchy of infinities that, as Hilbert said, Cantor opened for us is formal, not representational. In Hume's terms, we do not have an idea of those infinitely divisible parts because we never represent them as anything but formal entities. The conclusion to which one is led by following Hume includes the converse of Hume's own argument: representation is limited to what is psychologically available. Formal mathematics can represent only its own rules and nothing more.

This implies for aesthetics that the representational aspects of art and taste will have to be traceable to adequate ideas. In other words, Hume is implicitly committed to a form of ideational imitation. This may be significant because there is a strong tendency in writers such as Joseph Priestley and Archibald Alison to make mental activity itself the source of aesthetics, and Alison in particular links that activity to natural representation. According to Alison, certain natural occurrences are expressive of emotional qualities. A particular landscape is aesthetically pleasing only if it engages the mind without overwhelming it. So features must be carefully arranged to provide novelty without overloading the senses. What seems at first a conventional or arbitrary assignment of emotional content and aesthetic predicates to words and objects can be seen as the outcome of this Humean psychology of

representation if one follows it far enough along the path being laid down. Hume himself does not go very far along that path. But it puts him on a different course from Hutcheson and Burke for whom feelings themselves are the aesthetic objects. Hume is much more concrete than some of his contemporaries in requiring every idea to be essentially representational, even if it is an idea based on an impression of reflection or a fiction.

This representational combination means that formalism cannot find a justification in Hume's aesthetic psychology any more than it can in his mathematical psychology and thus that there is no place for a separate formalist emotion of beauty. Beauty of form is not distinguished from other kinds of beauty. The various causes of emotions – utility, sensation, other ideas – are all on the same epistemological level. We may produce a formal fiction – significant form, for example – but it will be representationally grounded in ideas that are no different in kind from others. In persons or animals, bodily advantage produces pleasure. We share in that satisfaction and so find it beautiful as well. The same thing can be said of health (T 3.3.5, 615). There is no difference in kind between that beauty and the beauty of a portrait or a dance. Hume does not reduce all emotion to the same qualitative level. Poetry is not the same as push-pin. The differences must rest on specific qualitative features, however. It is not a difference in kinds of emotions because such differences would require substantive kinds whose existence Hume denies.

In order to rely on sentiment, therefore, Hume must show that psychological phenomena control actions. In general, the stronger the emotion, the more significance it has. Hume's scheme runs thus. Custom modifies emotions. Passions are agitated; opposition stimulates them. Contrary passions will make the dominant one stronger. On the other hand, lack of stimulation leads to a decline of the strength of feeling. The same thing results from repetition. Ease (facility) may itself be a source of pleasure and can even convert pain into pleasure, but it also leads to a decline in strength. So something such as music that is too familiar or too easy becomes boring and disagreeable.

Hume does not cite the excitation of the mind as itself a source of pleasure and thus of beauty. Instead, he approaches that principle indirectly by identifying strength of passion with a mechanics of mental stimulation.

One can consider the clouds, and heavens and trees and stones, however frequently repeated, without ever feeling any aversion. But when the fair sex, or music, or good cheer, or any thing, that naturally ought to be agreeable, becomes indifferent, it easily produces the opposite affection.  
(T 2.3.5, 423–424)

The key point here is that the variation in the strength of the emotion makes it more or less effective aesthetically and as a guide to action.

The principal relation between sentiment and evidence depends on Hume's view of belief. Belief and passion go together.

As belief is almost absolutely requisite to the exciting our passions, so the passions in their turn are very favourable to belief; and not only such facts as convey agreeable emotions, but very often such as give pain, do upon that account become more readily the objects of faith and opinion.  
(T 1.3.10, 120)

At least at the moment of effect, enthusiasts believe whatever is affecting them. 'When any affecting object is presented, it gives the alarm, and excites immediately a degree of proper passion' (T 1.3.10, 120). Hume is working out how passion, assent (belief), and justified belief are related. By making belief a matter of strength and vivacity, Hume seems to have opened the door to anything that one believes strongly enough. But his argument turns belief the other way. Without belief, we cannot feel, so if we feel, we must believe. And the conditions for promoting belief are just the reality-conditions that exclude fictions and lies. Because belief must be promoted, the presence of sentiment becomes a test of what is believable. The justification of belief requires sentiment, therefore.

Poets themselves, tho' liars by profession, always endeavor to give an air of truth to their fictions; and where that is totally neglected, their performances, however ingenious, will never be able to afford much pleasure. In short, we may observe, that even when ideas have no manner of influence on the will and passions, truth and reality are still requisite, in order to make them entertaining to the imagination.  
(T 1.3.10, 121)

So while ideas are not original impressions, and the idea of pleasure is not the same as the impression of pleasure, ideas have their effects, and they get them by satisfying the conditions for justified belief. Vividly felt ideas become the warrants for epistemological confidence. We know that we know because of the strength of feeling that some ideas have as a result of their truth and not because of the rationalist's dispassionate examination of ideas in isolated or abstract settings. No abstract skepticism can counter the immediate feeling that a real presence of the world offers.

Now we can bring together the strands of Hume's argument. Random ideas are



fleeting and without influence. Those ideas that are habitual and supported by the conditions of causation are believable. Being believable, they approach the force of impressions themselves. As they do, they not only are ideas of pleasure, they are also pleasurable. Sentiment, therefore, is not just random passion. It is the way that the mind knows what it believes, and what it believes is what causality and experience lead it to believe. So if one's system is empiricist (as opposed to a system based on substance or innate ideas), one must have reference to sentiment as the primary form of evidence. Hume is castigated as a skeptic when in fact he is the defender of the empiricist faith. It is just that where he finds the defense is so radically empiricist that none of his contemporaries is prepared to recognize it for what it is – evidence based on the most direct form of experience. Moralists such as Hutcheson and common-sense philosophers such as Reid and Gerard fall back into a dogmatic teleology rather than accepting the full consequences of sense and common sense.

One must still account for the difference between fictions, which can be very believable, and justified belief. Fiction and belief cannot be distinguished by a separate idea. If they could, an idea could be voluntarily assigned to a fiction, turning it into a belief. But that is not how belief works. It is simply a stronger, more lively idea. If fictions are believed, it is because they provoke strong responses. Hume's position is that fictions cannot be believed and remain fictions. They are distinguished by sentiment. 'The difference between *fiction* and *belief* lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former, and which depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure' (EHU 5.2, 39/48). That cannot mean that belief is never mistaken into believing what turns out to be a fiction. But it cannot be as fiction that it is believed, and ultimately, the distinction will come down to some sentiment such as an immediate inevitability that a fiction cannot supply. Hume's faith is in experience itself, not in some fortunate coincidence of divine teleology within our experience. Sentiment, here, is dependent on the particular situation and is prior to any reasons that one might give. I take it that this does not imply that one does not tell the difference between fictions and real things on the basis of evidence. It is not just that one has feelings about real things that fictions do not have. The sentiment is the evaluation of empirical evidence because it is the response to the situation. Hume's concern is to limit evaluation to experience. One cannot tell simply from examining the believed object that it is actual and not fictional. One determines that it is actual only from the situation, and that determination is the result of a feeling or sentiment, not of faith or the application of some *a priori* standard.

That does not eliminate individual variations. Every individual has his/her own taste and sentiment. The question is how sentiment plays an evidential role. Appeals to sentiment are 'easy' in the sense that they appeal to what is directly felt. A

philosophy that presents its arguments as appeals to sentiment is thus more effective than one that works through the comparison of ideas and the analysis of their causes. Far from rejecting such 'easy' philosophy, Hume grants to it the stimulation both of action and of pleasure. His famous injunction, 'Be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man' (EHU 1, 5/9), is an argument in favor of sentiment and its primary role. When he considers metaphysics and profound philosophy, he is trying to save them from the charge of being neither useful nor pleasing, which in neo-classical terms would make such philosophy irrelevant. His claim is that the abstract can contribute to the useful by providing accuracy. Since delicacy is central to taste; the more precise and discriminating the knowledge and understanding available, the more pleasing and accurate will be the result whether in art or morals.

Hume's example is one of the most direct applications of philosophy to artistic practice he provides. The anatomist instructs the painter in the structure that allows him to paint well. 'Accuracy is, in every case, advantageous to beauty, and just reasoning to delicate sentiment. In vain would we exalt the one by depreciating the other' (EHU 1, 5/10). Examples from art and artistic practice are *a propos* just because the aesthetic is the most direct form of reliance on sentiment, and it is most often contrasted to abstraction. By arguing that abstract reasoning benefits art and the aesthetic, Hume both acknowledges the superiority of sentiment and provides a supporting role for the other form of philosophy. His argument depends not on reasoning influencing sentiment but on it supplying a finer-grained perception that constitutes the sentiment. Sentiment just is ideas and impressions of reflection, with their accompanying pleasures, felt with some degree of vivacity. Art could, of course, operate independently. But then it will only reproduce what its own causal habits make evident. The difference, for example, might be between building the Parthenon based only on common-sense engineering and building it with the knowledge of materials and perspective provided by physics and optics. So when the builder adjusts the columns in subtle ways to conform to the eye's distortions or takes account of the ways to distribute weight to achieve delicacy, he builds a more aesthetically pleasing as well as a more substantial and useful building. Reason did not dictate to the builder that he build in this way. It did not say 'this a better building'; only one's feeling for the building could say that. But knowing more makes a building better because knowing more produces impressions and ideas that the less well-engineered building *cannot* produce. Hume the philosopher is prepared to submit to the judgment of taste, but only if taste is responsive to the most accurate and detailed impressions.

Sentiments may be described but not defined. To define a sentiment, one would have to be able to give its genus and species. But no such *a priori* ordering is

possible apart from custom and experience. A description, on the other hand, approaches a definition in the way that Hume gives it. In particular, belief is itself the strength of a sentiment, and it is 'nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain' (EHU 5.2, 40/49). Belief in this usage is not a separate idea or emotion but a qualitative modification of an impression or idea of an object. Because sentiment is also the basis of the distinction between a believed object and a fictional object, it is important to recognize that it does not imply some additional content.

Let us, then, take in the whole compass of this doctrine, and allow, that the sentiment of belief is nothing but a conception more intense and steady than what attends mere fictions of the imagination, and that this *manner* of conception arises from a customary conjunction of the object with something present to the memory or senses.

(EHU 5.2, 40/50)

The characterization of belief itself as a sentiment and the 'manner' of a conception would extend to other sentiments. So when Hume makes sentiment the sole authority in moral or aesthetic matters, he is not avoiding evidence. He is appealing to the manner of the evidence. His argument is consistently that that manner is given naturally as a response to a situation. It may be modified behaviorally by modifying the situational response. This happens naturally through lived experience and artificially through education and social need. For example, when Hume classifies justice as an 'artificial' virtue, he is claiming that the sentiment of justice is developed as a response to social conditions having to do with the transfer of property, not to natural needs such as hunger or thirst. Since property is not a natural but an artificial concept, justice is artificial. That does not make it arbitrary or any less important.

On the other hand, aesthetic response may be either natural or artificial. For example, attraction to color, the medieval *claritas*, may be a natural sentiment that requires no social context.<sup>33</sup> But taste would normally be at least the product of a culture and age in Hume's system. In both cases, however, the parallel to belief works. Some object is conceived, and the manner of that conception qualifies as a sentiment. The sentiment is essentially a mode of presentation; as such, it is representational. It is prior to any rational justification or inference from the powers that produce it. As a sentiment in this sense, it is subject to the same causal analysis that explains how an idea is strengthened to the level of belief. Habit and association of ideas are as far as one can penetrate without circularity. But that is enough to make sentiment itself empirically evidential without any surrender to subjective relativism (which is a threat Hume did not worry much about).

We exercise little authority over our sentiments and passions. Hume observes this in the attempt to find some direct impression of power that would clarify that term. But since 'our authority over our sentiments and passions is much weaker than that over our ideas' (EHU 7.1, 53/68), one can also conclude that sentiments and passions are the original evidence from which other ideas arise. That is, one cannot get back any farther than the sentiments and passions themselves. We have no impressions of abstract ideas such as power, and we have no *a priori* reasons to which we can appeal.

The role of feeling with respect to power and necessary connection is decisive: 'We then feel a new sentiment or impression, to wit, a customary connexion in the thought or imagination between one object and its usual attendant; and this sentiment is the original of that idea which we seek for' (EHU 7.2, 61/78). When Hume says that the sentiment is the original of the idea, it is clear that sentiment and idea are related as impression and image. There are not two things, an impression of power and a sentiment. Rather, in this case, when one refers to a power, one is referring to an idea that is felt as connected to other impressions by the strong expectation necessary for power (as opposed to the weaker expectation that would give only probability). Every idea that could be used to explain actions and to justify belief will have a similar foundation in sentiment. One need only contrast this to both the medieval notion of a confused idea and the subsequent rationalist standard of clear and distinct ideas to see how different Hume's conclusion about the role of sentiment really is.

It remains the case that not everything is believed, and, of course, not everything that is believed is true, so not every belief is justified. Hume shifts ground very rapidly. He has said that 'Belief is almost absolutely requisite to the exciting our passions' (T 1.3.10, 120). But he also observes that 'the imagination can be satisfy'd without any absolute belief or assurance' (T 1.3.10, 122). This comes about because the poet uses either factual material (tragedy) or common, recognizable material (comedy) to ease the transition between the imagination and impressions and affections. The same principles are still at work, however. The poet weaves together a whole that takes on the character of some of its parts. If the whole were totally fantastic, it would have no effect. But because it uses events from history or common life, the whole acquires the character of its parts. Not only does belief stimulate the imagination; imagination also promotes belief. Vivacity really is the root cause. Can the imagination run away with someone – in the manner of a Frankenstein? Hume, to be consistent, has to concede that it could: 'a lively imagination very often degenerates into madness or folly' (T 1.3.10, 123). Then 'there is no means of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood' (T 1.3.10, 123). One cannot cure such madness by an appeal to reason. But imagination is linked to judgment. Both are

based on belief. So judgment has resources against all but the diseased imagination. The only permissible resource is feeling itself.

Simply put, poetry and madness share a vivacity that depends on mindgenerated objects. So the mind can distinguish its own objects by how they feel. 'In poetry it never has the same *feeling* with that which arises in the mind, when we reason, tho' even upon the lowest species of probability' (T 1.3.10, app. 630). Hume is not distinguishing an aesthetic feeling from a non-aesthetic feeling. He is distinguishing a believed feeling from a lesser belief constructed by the imagination out of associations with actually believed objects.

The problem all along has been that Hume seems committed to a counterintuitive position that imagination and poetic effects cannot be as strong as the effects of impressions of sense. But enthusiasm and imagination obviously produce very strong effects, while some impressions of sense that are believed are nevertheless quite weak and produce virtually no passion. To say that poetry is less affecting than history is psychologically wrong. Hume realizes that and in the appendix to the *Treatise* explains the difference.

A poetical description may have a more sensible effect on the fancy, than an historical narration. It may collect more of those circumstances, that form a compleat image or picture. It may seem to set the object before us in more lively colours. But still the ideas it presents are different to the *feeling* from those, which arise from the memory and the judgment. There is something weak and imperfect amidst all that seeming vehemence of thought and sentiment, which attends the fictions of poetry.

(T, app. 631, commenting on T 1.3.10)

The 'weak and imperfect' nature of the feeling is related to judgment and causality; such feelings are accidental, or at least *ad hoc*. So they produce no regularities and thus no general rules. The strength of belief should be considered not so much as an overwhelming of the mind that could be achieved by poetry but as a presence of the world that will not go away.

A second problem for a reliance on sentiment arises from the way sentiment is shared. If one must ultimately appeal to sentiment for evidence in epistemological matters, the fact that sentiment can be shared with others seems to raise problems. These are not my sentiments, so unless their importation is controlled in some way, it would seem that one might come to believe anything given sufficient sympathy. But obviously, to import some control would be to appeal to a rational standard outside of sentiment. So sympathetic sentiment must have an internal check if it is to avoid a false infection. That check arises from the limitations imposed because

sympathy depends on the imagination. The imagination produces passions from ideas conveyed by sympathy. But imagination can only go so far. 'The imagination has a set of passions belonging to it, upon which our sentiments of beauty much depend. These passions are mov'd by degrees of liveliness and strength, which are inferior to *belief*, and independent of the real existence of their objects' (T 3.3.1, 585). The imagination is not limited to original impressions but can produce impressions from ideas. General rules extend cause and effect even where some of the causal conditions are absent. A similar account explains why fictions can have the same effect as actual people. It would seem that the only limit on imagination is that 'it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas furnished by the internal and external senses' (EHU 5.2, 39/47). Several questions arise at this point. Does Hume really mean that imagination can do anything? Rationalists such as Alexander Baumgarten and later empiricists such as Bertrand Russell agree that there is one other limit. One cannot imagine what cannot be represented in the first place; so some kinds of contradictions cannot be imagined. A figure that is both round and square is contradictory and cannot be imagined. Hume arrives at the same point by a different route. Since he does not separate psychological and logical representation, not only does a psychological limitation act as a logical one, a logical restriction also prohibits a psychological representation. Hume does not include anything like round squares in his catalogue of imaginative examples and would be able to accede to Russell's claim that they cannot be thought. Second, does Hume mean to give scope to internal senses at this point, or is that merely a manner of speaking? Passions and sentiments arise from the mind's reflection on its own powers and from the response of the mind to ideas and impressions already present, so that there is a kind of feedback relation between original and secondary impressions and ideas. But Hume does not postulate a sense, as such, as the mechanism for these moves. Yet here he refers to an internal sense. I think that the explanation is that Hume's use of 'internal sense' continues to share more with earlier uses than it does with his own immediate predecessors. Aquinas, for example, in discussing the powers of the soul, cites Avicenna as including imagination among the five interior sensitive powers.<sup>34</sup> That broad use of 'internal sense' belonged to the traditional philosophical vocabulary, and Hume may be doing no more than reflecting that tradition. Neither logical limitation nor internal sense restricts the role of sentiment. The imagination takes on a larger role than one might expect, but it is limited ultimately by the stronger ideas that are already present. One may be infected by sympathy, but the imagination will have to rely on what one has experienced as well. That is the only kind of sentimental check that Hume can allow. Ultimately, in both morals and aesthetics, Hume finds that an external standard is necessary because of the imaginative possibilities that extend sentiment. The

imagination continues to present a problem that will eventually have to be resolved by attention to general rules and a standard of taste.

Nevertheless, the evidential value of sentiment is directly related to its sources. In this respect, the notion of an internal sense remains important. Sense provides the paradigm for the production of impressions, so it is natural to account for all impressions in terms of sense. The extent to which this paradigm is to be taken as more than a rather loose metaphor varies, however. Beyond the qualities that can be identified as naturally agreeable as moral virtues, an immediate sense is also a '*je ne sais quoi*,' a characterization drawn from seventeenth-century writings about the power of art. Hume rejects it as the sole explanation for our reliance on sentiment in determining virtues, however, because while it is plausible, 'almost all the virtues have such particular tendencies; and . . . these tendencies are sufficient alone to give a strong sentiment of approbation' (T 3.3.4, 612). So while Hume acknowledges something like a moral sense and even couches it in its aesthetically most suggestive form, he finds that 'advantage' plays a larger role. Clearly, the moral sense referred to here is not a direct moral judgment but a pleasurable response. We just like some people or things, and in a moral system based on sentiment, that liking must be given a place. But it is not different in principle from other sources of sentiment. If other sources can be identified – as Hume clearly believes that they can be – then they are equally a part of the moral system. More particular analysis replaces the vagueness of the language of sense and 'I know not what' with specific ways that sentiment is raised in response to impressions and ideas and thus limits what imagination can do.

Above, we saw that utility operates to provide an explanation of beauty arising through sympathy, independent of either self-interest or benevolence. Now we are in a position to see why utility must remain a central part of Hume's aesthetic appeal to sentiment. Without utility, the evidential role of sympathy would be incomplete and inaccessible because the most important of the particular ways that sentiment is raised in us comes from considerations of utility. Utility acts to produce sentiment that is evidentially qualified to play a role in judgments. The evidence is the sentiment itself. The cause of the sentiment is the perceived utility. Hume's examples suggest a more or less direct apprehension of utility. It is not a sense in the way that the eye perceives color because the eye for utility can be educated. But instinct or reason does not mediate the sentiment either.

A ship appears more beautiful to an artist, or one moderately skilled in navigation, where its prow is wide and swelling beyond its poop, than if it were formed with a precise geometrical regularity, in contradiction to all the laws of mechanics. A building, whose doors and windows were exact

squares, would hurt the eye by that very proportion; as ill adapted to the figure of a human creature, for whose service the fabric was intended.<sup>35</sup>  
(EPM 5.1, 172/212–213)

On the other hand, utility is not simply a response to properties since the same properties transferred to different objects have different effects. 'A small variation of the object, even where the same qualities are preserved, will destroy a sentiment. Thus, the same beauty, transferred to a different sex, excites no amorous passion, where nature is not extremely perverted' (EPM 5.1, 172/213, n.1). Sentiment is influenced by utility directly, but only in ways appropriate to the sentiment. Utility may be detached from specific occurrences or occasions, but it cannot be detached from an application. Utility plays the role for Hume that properties like uniformity amidst variety played for Hutcheson and earlier aestheticians. But the language of sense does not fit utility very well. Hume retains the language of sense in some contexts, but he can just as easily use the language of a hidden cause. Neither should be taken literally.

If the response to utility sometimes suggests the immediacy of sense when we assign utility to a look rather than an assessment of results, the production of sentiment also can be influenced in ways that sense cannot. Sentiment can be produced by education, for example. Hume cites superstition as an instance where what one has come to accept from others is accompanied by sentiment. 'This principle [education] . . . may even, in particular instances, create, without any natural principle, a new sentiment of this kind; as is evident in all superstitious practices and observances' (EPM 5.1, 173/214). Thus, particular sentiments, by themselves, cannot be decisive in any case. That is no different from any empirical evidence, however. Looking and seeing are also subject to correction. The evidential powers of sentiment remain empirical, and that implies that more than one source of sentiment must be appealed to if sentiment has evidential weight. Hume denies that education alone can account for all sentiment. We must begin, he believes, with some natural tendency to respond in certain ways:

The social virtues must, therefore, be allowed to have a natural beauty and amiableness, which, at first, antecedent to all precept or education, recommends them to the esteem of uninstructed mankind, and engages their affections. And as the public utility of these virtues is the chief circumstance, whence they derive their merit, it follows, that the end, which they have a tendency to promote, must be some way agreeable to us, and take hold of some natural affection. It must please, either from considerations of self-interest, or from more generous motives and regards.

(EPM 5.1, 173/214–215)



So one responds to the pleasure that utility or the expectation of utility conveys, and that is the true foundation of the sentiment that is variously either beauty or moral virtue.

No sharp distinction is made in the production of sentiment between moral and aesthetic sentiments. Hume's primary concern is virtue and morality. However, the sentiments themselves include beauty and the agreeableness of the sentiments produced. The role of utility, education, and sense all cooperate to produce the sentiments upon which one must rely for judgments. It makes little difference whether the judgment is aesthetic or moral in that respect. Exactly the same considerations will apply. That means, of course, that while there may be specifically aesthetic situations, there are no specifically aesthetic sentiments. The kind of separation of the aesthetic from ends and existence that Kant develops has no place in Hume's more concrete reliance on sentiment.

Some specifically aesthetic situations are treated along with the more common moral situations. For example, the sublime is a sentiment that, along with cheerfulness, does not depend on utility. In contrast to the discussion of utility, in these cases sympathy and the imagination are given sufficient scope to respond positively without consideration of the ends to which the sentiment belongs, probably because what they respond to is more directly accessible to the respondent. Instances of the sublime appeal not just because of the object but also because they reflect on the individual. The sublime is characterized by Hume, following Longinus, as 'the echo or image of magnanimity; and where this quality appears in any one, even though a syllable be not uttered, it excites our applause and admiration' (EPM 7, 204/252). Hume's examples could be described as instances of greatness of soul, for example Alexander or Medea. They have a universal appeal apart from their virtue because they exalt a human potentiality in the face of implacable opposition. Hume's point is that the sublime, even if it has utility (e.g. courage) also appeals directly and produces a sentiment of its own.

Sentiment, therefore, makes morality and aesthetics possible. The way that sentiment constitutes the subject matter for aesthetics and morals also gives it the role of regulating judgments in those areas. The sources, the ends, and the more strongly held impressions that allow the imagination, sympathy, and reflective impressions to arise enable sentiment to play a regulative role. Thus, there simply would be no moral nor aesthetic judgments without the dual role as subject and regulator assigned to sentiment. In order for there to be morals, Hume requires that two conditions be satisfied: there must be a common sentiment concerning some objects and a universal sentiment concerning actions and conduct (EPM 9.1, 221/272). In other words, morality requires a uniformity of response both to objects and to actions. That response just is morality as Shaftesbury had already argued. For

Hutcheson, morality implies a teleology and final causes. For Hume, on the contrary, it implies only that sentiment itself exhibits the contiguity and causality that give it a regulative role.

It might seem that aesthetic sentiments lack the commonalty and universality required for them to play a regulative role because they are so variable. Yet the greater variability of taste and sentiments of beauty when compared to moral judgments do not change the fundamental sense in which sentiment is the common source of objective judgments about beauty nor the universal nature of the sentiments of approbation. One must distinguish the variability that individual response tolerates in aesthetic matters from the commonalty and universality that characterize an appeal to sentiments. Kant uses the universality of judgment as a transcendental principle to separate aesthetic judgments from moral and theoretical judgments. Hume, in contrast, treats universality as a link between what one can say about moral judgments and their aesthetic counterparts.

Taste and sentiment can be associated with action. The 'easy' species of philosophy aims to persuade by making virtue appear most pleasing. It 'considers man chiefly as born for action; and as influenced in his measures by taste and sentiment' (EHU 1, 1/5). In this regard, poetry and the imagination stimulate sentiment in order to promote an action or set of actions. Aesthetic sentiments thus are associated with a more direct form of philosophical action. Reason itself is a form of behavior that involves sentiment. Understanding does not change that regulation; it merely makes it conscious. Hume's system makes evident 'the foundations of morals, reasoning, and criticism' in order to disclose the source of the distinctions between 'truth and falsehood, vice and virtue, beauty and deformity' (EHU 1, 2/6); that foundation is the same for all of the basic distinctions, both moral and aesthetic. The difference between a direct appeal to poetry and elegance and the more reasoned appeal of Hume's own philosophy is not the sentiments but how they are referred to. One form of philosophy is presentational; the other is reflective. Both have the same foundation.

Hume's use of sentiment as a regulative principle in morality and aesthetics faces the difficulty that the sentiments themselves that are needed may be difficult to apprehend. On Hume's view, mathematical sciences provide immediately perceptible distinctions. But the sentiments upon which morality is based are often confused.

The finer sentiments of the mind, the operations of the understanding, the various agitations of the passions, though really in themselves distinct, easily escape us, when surveyed by reflection; nor is it in our power to recal [*sic*] the original object, as often as we have occasion to contemplate it.

(EHU 7.1, 48/60)

The problem with sentiments apart from mathematical objects is that the objects themselves may not be clearly presented. The sentiment is as distinct as the object itself since sentiment and passion are modes or manners of presentation of objects. But we confuse objects and that leads to confusion of sentiments. This is essentially a practical difficulty, however. It can be overcome by a more accurate philosophical science, which Hume hoped to provide. In this respect, as elsewhere, Hume was fundamentally at odds with the contemporary aesthetics of the rationalists. Baumgarten faced a similar problem. Sensible perception lacks clarity and is only 'confusedly' present to the mind. For a rationalist, that is a distinction in kind. Either one must develop a new science of aesthetics (which was Baumgarten's goal) or one must progress to the clear and distinct ideas of universal reason. Hume had no such limitation in mind. The confusion he refers to is not built into the nature of the sentiments but is a limitation on our attention to detail. It can be overcome only by a more careful appeal to sentiment itself. Sentiment is both passionate (the easy philosophy) and reasoned. Hume completes the largely affective work of Shaftesbury in bringing sentiment into moral and aesthetic philosophy.

## 4

# THE AESTHETIC/ MORAL ANALOGY

Many of the arguments in Hume's work that bear on aesthetics must be based on parallels that Hume himself suggests between aesthetic and moral emotions. One is justified in extending what Hume says to a more developed aesthetic theory because of the analogy between the two forms of value theory.<sup>1</sup> Moral emotions are Hume's usual focus; typically, emotions of beauty or taste in the aesthetic realm play a supporting role. For example, Hume often will begin an analysis of some emotion or passion such as envy or pride and in the process discuss beauty and deformity. Or he will be concerned with the possibility of a public interest as opposed to a purely private interest and in the course of the discussion will say things that imply that aesthetic emotions are also interested in similar ways. The relation between aesthetic and moral emotions, beauty and virtue, and taste and moral judgment must be worked out if one is to understand Hume's position and influence on aesthetics.

### **The moral/aesthetic distinction**

At the beginning of Book II of the *Treatise*, Hume divides impressions into original and secondary impressions (T 2.1.1). Original impressions are impressions of sensation and bodily pains and pleasures. Secondary impressions are reflective; they include the passions and 'other emotions resembling them.' The passions are, in turn, divided into two classes of impressions. Passions are either calm or violent. The calm passions include the emotions of beauty and deformity while violent passions include love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility.<sup>2</sup> The basis of the distinction is force and vivacity. Hume admits that on that basis the division is inexact since poetry and music may produce very strong passions while the others may 'decay' into 'soft' emotions. Thus, the distinction is 'specious.' Like belief, it admits of degrees. 'All depends on the situation of the object, and . . . a variation in this particular will be able to change the calm and the violent passions into each other' (T 2.3.4, 419). Violent and calm emotions or passions are not different in kind

just because they are calm or violent.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it is a real distinction based on the felt strength of the emotions and not just a manner of looking at them. That Hume calls it 'specious' means only that no absolute distinction is implied, not that the distinction is unsound or of no use. In particular, near good or evil produces violent passions; distant good or evil, calm ones. So the difference between a calm and violent passion is not one of kind but of degree of agitation. This raises a question about beauty. The fact that it is classified as a calm passion would appear to be little more than an empirical description of how beauty affects the mind. Different effects can easily become different senses. For example, sublimity might suggest itself as a violent beauty, but that moves in the direction of Burke rather than Hume. Hume's ambivalence about where to locate beauty will have to be resolved in a different way.

Morals are related to action and require a strong mode of impression if they are to produce results effectively. 'Tis certain, that when we wou'd govern a man, and push him to any action, 'twill commonly be better policy to work upon the violent than the calm passions, and rather take him by his inclination, than what is vulgarly call'd his *reason*' (T 2.3.4, 419). A distinction between the calm and violent passions is needed because Hume treats belief as a mode of the passions. Action requires belief, and belief is an idea that is felt strongly enough potentially to produce action. Reason is incorporated into passions as a way of modifying beliefs by moving them in the direction of a very strong idea approximating an impression (certainty) or in the opposite direction (doubt). An autonomous reason cannot produce action at all by itself.<sup>4</sup> What is vulgarly called reason produces only a calm passion, which is not likely to be very effective. In other words, our ordinary use of 'reason' already includes some passion, and Hume is arguing that until that modification rises to a threshold level it will not produce action.<sup>5</sup>

Part of Hume's argument that demonstrative reason is not the source of moral judgments rejects relations of ideas as a motivating source. Reason's function is to compare ideas and thus reason depends on relations of ideas. If reason were a moral source, there could be internal relations that would be moral. 'If these relations cou'd belong to internal actions consider'd singly, it wou'd follow, that we might be guilty of crimes in ourselves, and independent of our situation, with respect to the universe' (T 3.1.1, 465). That, of course, is just what some forms of moral pietism took to be the case. Further, if the relations themselves were moral, then external relations between inanimate objects would be moral. Hume speaks in this context of moral beauty and deformity: 'If these moral relations cou'd be apply'd to external objects, it wou'd follow, that even inanimate beings wou'd be susceptible of moral beauty and deformity' (T 3.1.2, 465). The implicit argument is that beauty and deformity are passions, not relations of ideas. It is not the qualities of objects but the passions themselves that define beauty. By inference, moral beauty and deformity are also

not relations of ideas. Moral beauty and deformity have the same basis as their aesthetic cousins. They differ only in the situations that give rise to them as emotions and passions.

A possible difference between moral and aesthetic emotions lies in the ability of sentiment to influence action. When Hume argues that sentiment itself shows that one might reason well but not act, what he means is not just a rejection of the Socratic 'to know the good is to do it' but a more practical and almost analytical connection between action and feeling. If one acts, one has felt strongly enough to act. One might, for example, do one's duty in spite of inclination, but only if one feels that one must, so even in the apparent counter-example when one acts according to duty and against interest, on Hume's view one is actually following one feeling rather than another.

Extinguish all the warm feelings and prepossessions in favour of virtue, and all disgust and aversion to vice: render men totally indifferent towards these distinctions; and morality is no longer a practical study, nor has any tendency to regulate our lives and actions.

(EPM 1, 136/172)

This is clearly anti-Kantian in the role it assigns to feeling as the only motive for action. One may act according to duty alone, but only if one feels something for duty itself as a virtue strong enough to move one. In this sense, there is no difference between aesthetics and morals. Both rest on sentiment. But it does not follow that in aesthetics one will be moved to action. So one tenable way to distinguish the two fields of sentiment is that aesthetic sentiment does not move one to action; moral sentiment does. Not all calm passions such as beauty will be strong enough to move one to action. When they do, one of two things has happened: either beauty has entered the moral realm, or beauty and art have become more violent, as in the case of patriotic music and rhetoric.

In morals, the focus is upon character, and character is constructed from the impressions and ideas that are 'characteristic' of a person in Shaftesbury's sense of a 'characteristic.' The ability to feel strongly those passions that provide a moral foundation defines a virtuous character, and for moralists in the sentimentalist tradition, especially Hume, the sign of a moral foundation is the agreeableness of the feelings to oneself and others, based on utility and the good of one's kind. Moral and aesthetic phenomena are distinct because beliefs and passions that have the potential to provoke action and are based on a settled character guide the moral person. Strong passions will do this directly; the calm passions can only do so when they arise from a strong character. Then they are confounded with reason.<sup>6</sup>

Aesthetes (a term beyond the scope of Hume's philosophy) depend only on the agreeableness of their passions. Nothing is required of them, and nothing should be expected as long as their passions remain calm. (An aesthete motivated by a strong passion would move us in the direction of Werther; in the absence of the kind of character that Hume would think important, the result is disastrous.) This is certainly a very different sense of the phenomenon of 'distance' than that which evolves in later aesthetics. For Hume, aesthetic and moral passions operate on a continuum that is fundamentally epistemological because he is classifying the ways that impressions support actions.

Hume divides emotions into direct and indirect depending on whether they arise 'immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure' or 'from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities' (T 2.1.1, 276). This division in the passions differs from the calm/violent distinction Hume has made because it is based on the causal background of the passions, not on the strength of the passions alone. Hume is discussing violent passions, but one can construct a similar direct/indirect distinction for the calm passions. A calm passion such as beauty would be direct if it arises immediately from pleasure or from the sensuous impressions of an object; it would be indirect if it arises only in conjunction with other qualities. If Hutcheson's sense of beauty produces a simple idea, as most commentators believe, it would be empirically direct. Hume's usage permits both, but 'beauty' would seem to be predominantly indirect since it depends on other qualities such as utility. 'Calm' and 'violent,' 'direct' and 'indirect' serve to describe aesthetic and moral passions without having to appeal to distinctly aesthetic or moral qualities. As we shall see, some additional way of distinguishing moral and aesthetic values from other secondary impressions and from each other will be required. A classification of the passions and emotions on the basis of their source and strength provides a starting point for describing moral and aesthetic phenomena in relation to Hume's system, however.

Moral judgments have two characteristics: i) they are of greater concern than other judgments because we consider them to have more effect on society, and ii) moral judgments approve or condemn character (as opposed to actions) in the form of distinct perceptions. Moral judgments are perceptions – impressions and ideas – not demonstratively established conclusions of reason. 'To approve of one character, to condemn another, are only so many different perceptions' (T 3.1.1, 456). Aesthetic judgments differ in the first characteristic but share the second, at least in that their function is to approve or condemn taste. In neither aesthetic nor moral judgments is action the *object* of moral or aesthetic approval in the strict sense of 'object' – the content of an impression or idea – that Hume requires. Something is the cause of the perception, but the immediate source is internal – the

occurrence of an impression or idea in the organism or mind. An external cause is known only by a process of habitual inference. Since a perception is the result of either sense or reflection, its ultimate object is the one who is sensibly occupied. In moral judgments, actors rather than their actions are the object. Character is constituted by a consistent actor whose perceptions include moral passions. Who one is, not what one does, determines one's moral perceptions. A good person will perceive the morally right thing, which is morally right because such person's perceptions define moral rightness, not the other way around. However, since those violent passions that constitute moral judgment are the best way to provoke actions, we get back to actions. A person of good moral character will act morally. Even calm passions may play a moral role and provoke actions by someone whose moral character is strong enough to be motivated by the lesser strength of these emotions. Hume's theory is not a kind of moral navel gazing. While we cannot judge actions directly, it is by one's actions that one is known. Good persons may perform bad actions, but they will not act badly. Bad persons may perform good actions, but they will not be good as a result because their passions themselves will show their moral faults. It is implicit in Hume's theory that over time, a rule will evolve with respect to any moral character. The bad actions of good characters and the good actions of bad characters will appear as exceptions to the rule.

This provides a second kind of distinction between moral and aesthetic perceptions. Aesthetic perception is also a characteristic of the one who perceives. But it occupies a different part of the person – it is a matter of taste rather than character, *per se*. In aesthetic judgments, character is still the object of perception in an extended sense that a fully formed character will exhibit good taste. In fact, it is easy enough to imagine extending good taste into the moral realm as a form of good manners and social obligation, which is a primary source of the metaphor of aesthetic taste.<sup>7</sup> A work of art or a natural phenomenon produces pleasure or unease as impressions in the individual. So reason is not called upon to produce the judgment. That is the role of immediate perception. However, instead of moral character, the taste of the person involved is formed. Hume clearly belongs to Shaftesbury's camp at this point.

There is undoubtedly a closer relation between good taste and virtuous character in the eighteenth-century sentimentalists than we would find plausible.<sup>8</sup> Hume might be able to allow that someone could have good taste without being a good person, but it is more difficult for him to imagine than it would be for one that makes the separation between moral and aesthetic judgments common to Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics. It is even more difficult for the Shaftesbury-Hume tradition to imagine a morally good person who lacks good taste. For that tradition bores are just not good people. For Shaftesbury, who still acknowledged, at least nominally,



the neo-Platonic union of beauty and the good, it would not be possible. Hume distinguishes taste and virtue in such a way that they should remain parallel. So taste is the aesthetic correlate of moral character.

If, fundamentally, character is the object of both moral and aesthetic perception, then any further distinction between the two must depend on the causes of the respective perceptions. Hume's analysis of both aesthetic and moral character becomes eventually a virtue-by-virtue, taste-by-taste analysis of the origins of the impressions. In this respect, moral and aesthetic perceptions remain parallel but distinct. For example, not all virtues are natural. Justice is 'artificial.' 'The sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions' (T 3.2.1, 483). Not all conventions are relative. There necessarily must be conventions, and there is no reason to think that just any conventions will do. The sorting of conventions in the course of time and their ability to produce a rule is itself part of judgment and thus is a passionate, felt emotion, not an autonomous rational sorting. In particular, justice depends on the social conventions that create property. Justice cannot operate without some human framework. Ultimately different passions than those that arise from natural sources motivate the conventions that make justice possible.

Art, which depends on formal conventions for its structure, would parallel justice. Like justice, art is 'artificial.' On the other hand, the beauty of animal bodies parallels natural virtues. Both are emotions whose causes are qualities in nature. The cause for the beauty of animal bodies is proportion and fitness. For natural virtue and vice, actions must conform to a similar common measure and fitness. 'In like manner we always consider the *natural* and *usual* force of the passions, when we determine concerning vice and virtue; and if the passions depart very much from the common measures on either side, they are always disapprov'd as vicious' (T 3.2.1, 483). Beauty remains natural, and in that sense 'beauty' is a more basic aesthetic term than 'art,' which refers to an artificial form. Clearly the role of justice is of greater import in morals than beauty is in taste. A taste for natural beauty plays a minor role compared to a taste for art, and in our retrospective view of eighteenth-century tastes, we recognize the extent to which art formed even the taste for natural beauty.<sup>9</sup>

In analyzing pride, Hume distinguishes the cause of pride (what one takes pride in) from the object of the pride, which is the self. Then he distinguishes the quality and the subject within the cause. His example of a quality is beauty and of the subject a house. So a beautiful house stimulates pride in its owner. For pride to arise, the quality must be related to something that is related to someone. In speaking this way of beauty, Hume seems to have abandoned the classification of beauty as a calm passion or at least to have opened the way for a misunderstanding based on identifying it as qualities in the subject of pride. To maintain the coherence of Hume's system, one must take beauty as itself an emotion.<sup>10</sup> Qualities belong to

objects, but objects appear in perceptions. The object of the violent passion, pride, is a mind whose perceptions recognize a quality, which is really the subject within the cause of the calm passion, beauty. Both objects are united in that they belong to the self, but one's intentionality is external, while the other's is self-reflective. Pride, as Hume analyzes it, depends on the double relation that includes an idea of ownership. But Beauty is also 'mine' in the sense that no challenge to the emotion is possible, and it must be identified with someone. Beauty, however, does not require that the possessive be maintained for the emotion to occur. So beauty can be direct rather than indirect. It can arise immediately from the pleasure of the perception. Beauty does not require the same double relation as pride. Just as pride has a cause, however, beauty also has a cause, the house, which is independent of its emotional effect on someone, so the cause of beauty is also the subject of the passion of pride. An aesthetic quality, on this account, is the origin of an emotion with the same object (the person/self) as another impression (such as pride) whose cause is the subject of the stronger passion: 'From the consideration of these causes, it appears necessary we shou'd make a new distinction in the causes of the passion, betwixt the *quality*, which operates, and the *subject*, on which it is plac'd' (T 2.1.2, 279). Unless they share the same identity in the one who perceives and the cause of beauty (the aesthetic quality) is the subject of that perception, beauty will not be part of the cause of pride and pride will lack the double relation necessary to distinguish it from a direct passion such as approbation.

Whether it would make any sense to speak of a beauty that was not related both to a person and to some other object is a question that Hume does not consider. Such beauty might be disinterested in the Kantian sense if it were possible. However, Hume's account of the passions makes that impossible. Emotions, for Hume, are movements of the animal spirits. A totally disinterested emotion would be so calm that it would cease to be an emotion! Kant has a place for that kind of pure intuition. Hume's system does not. Certainly, beauty does not depend on disinterestedness for its origins. It is distinguished by what it constitutes directly (taste, rather than moral character, for example). At this point, beauty is simply a calm passion produced by an original impression of pleasure and usually associated with some qualities of an object. It may or may not link up with other impressions in such a way that it stimulates pride. Thus it may be either direct or indirect. But since the requisite link is something like ownership (of the house, for example), it would seem that for beauty to produce pride, it would have to be indirect and interested, at least in Kant's sense of 'interest.' One can only own what exists and take pride in what one has some other impression of.

When one examines the competing claims of demonstrative reason and sentiment to guide moral and aesthetic judgments, one finds a basic contrast between what can be proved – geometry, physics – and what is not subject to reasons – beauty.

One must be careful to keep ‘reasons’ distinct from ‘reason’ in this dispute. Hume attacks philosophical pretensions to make everything a deductive science, but he also distinguishes reason-giving more generally, which would include empirical reasoning, from what gives immediate pleasure. This seems to distinguish morals from aesthetics since one of the evident truths cited on behalf of reason is that ‘no man reasons concerning another’s beauty; but frequently concerning the justice or injustice of his actions’ (EPM 1, 135/171).<sup>11</sup> The other side of the argument points out that the ‘amiable’ and ‘odious’ are felt, not reasoned. The difficulty, which Hume acknowledges, lies in deciding between the competing claims of an immediate response that some aesthetic phenomena produce and the alternative perceptions that involve first drawing distinctions and ‘reasoning’ in the sense of finely drawn perceptions that allow one to give reasons. ‘There are just grounds to conclude, that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species, and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties, in order to give it a suitable influence on the human mind’ (EPM 1, 137/173). Beauty falls more on the side of immediate sense; moral judgment more on the side of intellectual discrimination. Ultimately, the only way to decide will be to determine the origins of the sentiment, however, so Hume’s concessions to moral and aesthetic reasoning are quite limited.

A different kind of control is more important. A consequence of the role of impressions in both morals and aesthetics seems to give the passions free rein. In the context of the dialogue with what one might take to be his own skeptical alter-ego concerning the effect of denying religious providence, the objection is voiced that restraint on passion is a good thing. The contention is that whether the reasoning is sound or not, it is good to restrain passion. Hume’s position is opposed to this bit of casuistry. Passions are the only motives for action, so a restraint on passion is a restraint on action. The result would be moral paralysis. Nevertheless, unrestrained passions are a danger. To free the passions from restraint makes ‘the infringement of the laws of society, in one respect, more easy and secure’ (EHU 11, 114/147). Hume does not think that passions are always useful or that all societal restraint is unnecessary. He is no believer that evil is only the result of society’s corruption of a natural innocence.

The bearing of this on aesthetics is indirect but important. Calm passions as well as violent ones may ultimately need restraint. The justification for liberty of thought is simply the lack of effect that philosophy can have. Hume’s irony is strong at this point. But in fact, the evidential value of passions does not imply that they deserve unrestricted play. It only implies that to be effective, restraint must itself be in terms of passions. The effects of fictions, art, and nature begin as calm passions. They are distinct from the more violent passions such as pride and envy. But since one is convertible into the other, the calm passions can be a danger to society, and they

have the potential to provide a form of restraint as well. Hume justifies free-thinking in aesthetic matters, but not an unrestrained incitement of moral passions. This becomes very important when one comes to understand the role of a standard of taste in Hume's system.

The calm passions do not require demonstrative reason in the sense that Hume is concerned to avoid but some active role for a person. Hume does suggest one reason that points toward why this limitation on reason may not be too restrictive:

Nature must have provided some other principle, of more ready, and more general use and application; nor can an operation of such immense consequence in life, as that of inferring effects from causes, be trusted to the uncertain process of reasoning and argumentation.

(EHU9, 84/106)

Of course, in aesthetics, any natural need is much more limited. One of the most striking absences in Hume's references to aesthetic emotions is any means of production of art. One should probably look to the imagination at this point. It is, Hume says, 'a kind of magical faculty in the soul, which tho' it be always most perfect in the greatest geniuses, and is properly what we call a genius, is however inexplicable by the utmost efforts of human understanding' (T 1.1.7, 24). However, Hume has no developed concept of genius as a productive faculty. Hume considers genius in the ordinary eighteenth-century sense of one with more acute faculties generally. One can leave the stimulation of aesthetic emotions to the invention and imagination of authors and artists, therefore, while nature cannot afford to do that in the moral realm. Ultimately, any distinction between moral and aesthetic emotions and passions for Hume is reduced to one of context and situation. The sentiments themselves often differ, as Hume has argued, between calm and violent passions and that in turn has impact on their ability to promote belief and stimulate action. But fundamentally, they are associated with pleasure or pain in the same way.

Virtue and vice produce impressions that are agreeable or uneasy, respectively. But that is just the way beauty is characterized. So Hume grants the conclusion. Moral actions can be characterized as beautiful. 'There is no spectacle so fair and beautiful as a noble and generous action' (T 3.1.2, 470). This breaks down any distinction between morality and beauty; they are not separate, distinct classes of perceptions, no matter how they differ in strength or effect. The same emotions can come from a play or romance as from real actions. What is the distinction, then? It can only be in the kind of context in which the emotions arise. Moral virtue arises from character that is productive of action: 'An *action*, or sentiment or character is virtuous or vicious; why? Because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a

particular kind' (T 3.1.2, 471; my italics). Beauty and deformity are responses of taste; they too are dispositions of character, but by themselves they are unlikely to produce any action, though they may strengthen passions to such an extent that they become moral. Transform the situation or context and drama or music may become the source of violent passions. Then character is exhibited, and beauty belongs to the moral rather than the aesthetic realm. Patriotic music or salacious fiction will not lead a person of taste and character astray. A lesser taste and character may be damaged morally.

One must be careful here in view of the use made by others of the notion of a particular kind of emotion. For Hume, one's sense of virtue is not distinguished by pleasure with different qualitative characteristics. The particularity of the pleasure comes from the manner in which it is directed to character. Hume goes on to compare moral feeling with its aesthetic occurrence. 'The case is the same as in our judgments concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations. Our approbation is implied in the immediate pleasure they convey to us' (T 3.1.2, 471). The manner, then, is immediate pleasure. That immediacy is what is implied by both particularity and by calling it a sense. It is being contrasted to the kind of pleasure one might take in reflective contemplation or memory. The idea of a good act is also pleasant to contemplate, but it is not in itself virtuous. Similarly, remembering a landscape may produce pleasure, but the pleasure that causes beauty was in the original sense, not in the remembering. Hume would thus have to reject the classical notion that aesthetic pleasure arises from the act of imitation rather than from what is imitated. In both moral and aesthetic cases, the idea may retain some of the pleasure, but the original is the source. That is, the only thing that distinguishes moral and aesthetic emotions is the emotions themselves as they enter into the mental life of someone and come to form the character and taste of that person. So we have a common emotion, beauty, that can apply equally to moral and non-moral situations as long as its subjects cause pleasure and we distinguish its ability to produce action.

Hume does not equate the *violence* of passion with its ability to influence action. A violent passion may become habitual and not appear as a strong passion. A calm passion is not necessarily a weak passion. But the violent passions have the greater potential for influence if one is looking to affect oneself or someone else. One is more likely to succeed by appealing to love or hatred than to beauty. A calm passion such as beauty would not be a primary moral force unless it becomes part of or productive of a stronger passion. But that is as far as one can get in distinguishing moral and aesthetic sentiments on the basis of the calm/violent distinction.

All that is left of a systematic distinction between aesthetic and moral sentiments is manner and means. Both virtue and vice and beauty and deformity may be

involuntary. They are not distinguished by control. Both depend on the distinction between pain and pleasure.

### **Links between the moral and aesthetic**

One is left, then, with a close link between moral and aesthetic sentiments. We must further explore the way that Hume analyzes that link. When considering the effects of moral actions, Hume places morality and aesthetic judgments on exactly the same footing. Both are immediate, and both should inform the speculative system, not the other way around:

Why should not the acknowledgment of a real distinction between vice and virtue be reconcilable to all speculative systems of philosophy, as well as that of a real distinction between personal beauty and deformity? Both these distinctions are founded in the natural sentiments of the human mind: And these sentiments are not to be controuled or altered by any philosophical theory or speculation whatsoever.

(EHU 8.2, 80/102–103)

Hume is explaining how it is that one is not consoled by the standard answers to theodicy problems. Rationalists of a Leibnizian variety resolve the problem of theodicy by reference to the good of the whole. But while Hume grants that that answer may be ‘obvious and convincing,’ it is totally ineffective. Shaftesbury had tried a similar line in his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, particularly in the 1699 version, but he recognized, like Hume, that it was only effective if it produced the necessary sentiment. Too large a view or too remote a chain of reasoning cannot affect the sentiments that control the basic distinctions. Hume’s view is that one’s immediate response to virtue and vice, like one’s response to beauty and deformity, is prior to philosophical reasoning. Whatever system one eventually uses as an explanation must conform to what sentiment has already established.

The claim for a real distinction in this passage could be ironic. Hume could mean that there is not a real distinction between virtue and vice any more than there is between beauty and deformity in the larger view, even though speculative systems that deny a distinction can never be convincing. In that case, he would be using a lack of cognitive significance in aesthetic distinctions to dissolve similar moral distinctions. But I do not think that he does. A real distinction in this case between beauty and deformity or between vice and virtue is based on the incompatibility of the sentiments and their subjects. If the distinctions were merely rational or relational, one would be able to change them by altering one’s relation to the subjects. But the

sentiment, whether mediate or immediate, does not change in that way. So, even though sentiment is all that there is, in both cases, it qualifies as a real distinction.

What must be explained is why this real distinction does not produce a *reductio* of the claims that moral necessity and liberty are both universally acknowledged.<sup>12</sup> The answer is psychological. The real distinction is local, not global. But that places morality on the same basis with aesthetics. It is not clear here that Hume will want to continue to maintain that equality. While moral sentiments are not controlled or altered by theory or speculation, they are alterable by consequences. Vice and virtue have immediate consequences that beauty and deformity do not have. Even if one keeps in mind that Hume assigns moral qualities to the character of a person, not to actions or events, it will still be the case that virtue and vice are subject to a different kind of judgment than beauty and deformity.

The most direct link between moral and aesthetic sentiments is pleasure and pain. As sentiments, virtue and beauty share the affective qualities of being pleasant. That does not reduce virtue and beauty to pleasure, however. Pleasure itself provides the connection between moral and aesthetic sentiments. In order to account for pride, Hume associates certain qualities with pleasure or pain. The subject of those pleasures or pains bears a near relation to a self. So non-moral qualities such as beauty produce pleasure, and the near relation of the beautiful thing to oneself produces the passion of pride, which is a stronger passion than beauty. Pride, in turn, is a moral passion that acts as a motive for duty and obligation. Hume links vice and virtue to both pride and humility and love and hatred. Virtue and vice show a double relation of impressions to the object of the passion and to the sensation.<sup>13</sup>

Pride and humility, love and hatred are excited, when there is any thing presented to us, that both bears a relation to the object of the passion, and produces a separate sensation related to the sensation of the passion. Now virtue and vice are attended with these circumstances. They must necessarily be plac'd either in ourselves or others, and excite either pleasure or uneasiness; and therefore must give rise to one of these four passions.

(T 3.1.2, 473)

That provides a way to distinguish virtue and vice from the pleasure and pain arising from inanimate objects that 'often bear no relation to us' (T 3.1.2, 473).

Still, Hume makes no distinction within the kinds of pleasure. Moral beauty is a fairly common locution, and one can infer that Hume would be equally tolerant of associating moral qualities with art and nature in their aesthetic occurrences. The neo-classicism of the mid-eighteenth century would have found a pure aesthetics puzzling, and there is no reason to think that Hume did not share that view. Now if

the particular kind of pleasure produced by virtue and vice were understood as a qualitative distinction of kinds, one would expect it to be characterized by a particular passion. But it is not. It may give rise to any of the four mentioned passions, depending on the double relation it produces. So the particularity of moral pleasure should be taken to arise from the impression itself, and the kind from the object and its relation to the self. That allows one to distinguish between interested and disinterested pleasure and between virtue and vice, beauty and deformity, without having to characterize them qualitatively in a way that the evidence does not support. Hume specifically rejects that alternative: 'tis absurd to imagine, that in every particular instance, these sentiments are produc'd by an *original* quality and *primary* constitution' (T 3.1.2, 473). Hume's system stays closer to particulars than either the teleology of Hutcheson or the aesthetic idealism of his successors. But it does not expect particulars to be traceable to a correlation of individual characteristics in the mind and object. That would require a structure that cannot be found in nature. That certainly links moral and non-moral passions by means of pleasure. Pride itself is a pleasant sensation. As we have seen above, the result is a 'double relation of ideas and impressions' (T 2.1.5, 286). 'Any thing, that gives a pleasant sensation, and is related to self, excites the passion of pride, which is also agreeable, and has self for its object' (T 2.1.5, 288). All of this is the product of natural dispositions.

Hume makes pride and humility contraries and antagonists. Would he say the same for beauty and deformity? Certainly, they seem to operate in exactly the same way. Hume argues that beauty and deformity provide one part of the double relation necessary for pride and humility respectively. Beauty produces a secondary pleasure upon reflection on some impressions. But such a pleasure is also an impression belonging to the self when it is directed toward one's own body, so it becomes a source of pride. In that respect, beauty is a direct source of a stronger passion. Humility is the contrary of pride; if an impression has the same relation to self, but is experienced as pain rather than pleasure; the result is a violent passion of unease with one's self, a sensation of inadequacy and thus of humility in Hume's terms. One might feel neither pride nor humility in the absence of the double relation to self, but one cannot feel both. Beauty and deformity would seem to be the calm correlates and similar contraries. Hume says 'But beauty of all kinds gives us a peculiar delight and satisfaction; as deformity produces pain, upon whatever subject it may be plac'd, and whether survey'd in an animate or inanimate object' (T 2.1.8, 298). In spite of the parallelism, beauty and deformity do not entail the same double relation as pride and humility, however. They are similar contraries, but they do not require the same kind of relation to self. While the self is a necessary condition for the pleasure and pain, it is not the subject of them. The role played by disinterestedness for Kant, and by negative capability for the romantics is a matter



of content for Hume. In this respect, the influence of Du Bos may be felt, though it is more likely simply a consequence of Hume's systematic development. Hume's 'peculiar delight' should not be taken in a Kantian sense in spite of the verbal echo. It is beauty of all kinds, including moral beauty, not some aesthetic beauty, and 'peculiar' is an indication of its distinctness with respect to its antithesis, not with respect to other kinds of pleasures.

Beauty nevertheless provides a prime example of why ethical egoism is untenable. Beauty shows that secondary impressions can continue to exist independently of self-interest, so pleasure is possible in the passions without their pleasure arising from self-interest. Virtue is explicitly benevolent and depends on our ability to assume the position of an observer, which requires both imagination and sympathy. Although Hume does not formulate it explicitly, a parallel argument (experiment in Hume's language) would hold for beauty. One continues to recognize beauty even if one no longer is drawn toward the beautiful object. One may continue to value what one no longer desires. While beauty may become indifferent as an emotion apart from the double relation of impressions (sensation and pleasure), it does not cease to be an emotion that implies a stable, positive assessment. (I may become indifferent to the beauty of something, but I could hate or despise what is beautiful only if I were perverse. The impulse to destroy what is beautiful is a sure sign of corruption and irrationality.) Beauty remains a form of judgment whether it leads to desire or not. Hume does not make this experiment with respect to beauty, but it is available on his principles.

Pleasure and pain relate both moral and aesthetic sentiments to other persons in complex ways. Hume offers an analysis of how pleasure and pain are affected by sympathy and comparison. As we have seen, sympathy causes us to have an impression of the pleasure or pain of the other. One feels the same as another feels. Sympathy works through an idea of another's state back to an impression. Comparison has the opposite effect. Comparison presents another's state in contrast to one's own, and thus affects the impression one already feels. The contrast between another's pleasure or pain and one's own state enhances the difference. 'Sympathy being the conversion of an idea into an impression, demands a greater force and vivacity in the idea than is requisite to comparison' (T 3.3.2, 595). So sympathy and comparison conflict. To enhance one's state, look for a contrasting state. But if one identifies too closely, sympathy will take over and the opposite effect will be achieved. Exactly the same analysis would apply to aesthetic effects in the case of dramatic performances.

Hume poses the question of the relation of morals to aesthetics explicitly at the beginning of the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. On the one side, he places the claim that the 'general foundation of Morals' is derived from reason,

attained from argument and the same for every 'rational intelligent being.' On the other side, one appeals to immediate feeling, a 'finer internal sense'; the question is then 'whether, like the perception of beauty and deformity, they [the general foundation of morals] be founded entirely on the particular fabric and constitution of the human species' (EPM 1, 134/170). It is, of course, obvious upon which side of this argument Hume will ultimately come down. The initial way of placing the contrast is somewhat confusing, however. One could deny rationalism without appealing to an internal sense. So it remains a question how far the link between moral and aesthetic sentiments requires an internal sense. If morals are derived from the constitution of the human species, they could still be the same for every rational being. Hume himself holds that reason follows sentiment, but that is not grounds for a chaos of sentiments. So this initial list of contrasts is not carefully constructed. It runs together distinctions that Hume had already carefully worked to keep apart in the *Treatise*. It should be taken as introductory rather than definitive. But it is significant that when Hume forms this contrast between reason and sentiment as competing foundations of morals, he turns immediately to the perception of beauty as the obvious instance of a clarifying example of sentiment. And he places the foundation of morals and of beauty on the same ground that includes a reference to an internal sense. The differences have to be inferred from more careful statements.

At bottom, moral and aesthetic sentiments have the same basis.

When you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind.

(T 3.1.1, 469)

Essentially the same comparison is used elsewhere to describe beauty.<sup>14</sup> So virtue and beauty have the same source in feeling. The obvious way to account for this sameness is suggested by the comparison. Sounds, colors, heat and cold are all impressions of external sense. Moral and aesthetic sentiments are internal. So one is to consider an internal sense. In this, Hume is no different than his predecessors, including Locke and Hutcheson. The analogy is too obvious to resist. The question remains, however, whether feeling can be distinguished into a sixth and seventh sense in some meaningful way. As far as the feeling is concerned, it is a sentiment of approbation or blame, approval or disapproval. When it is directed toward formal properties or objects, it is a matter of taste. When it is directed toward actions or

character with social consequences, it is a matter of virtue or vice. None of these requires that the feeling be the product of a sense in any distinct way. Therefore, we cannot conclude that because moral and aesthetic feelings are linked in essential ways that that link implies a sixth and/or a seventh sense.

Hume pretends to balance the arguments for reason and sentiment. One suspects, he says, ‘that *reason* and *sentiment* concur in almost all moral determinations and conclusions’ (EPM 1, 137/172). This is somewhat disingenuous because Hume establishes it on the basis of ‘some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species’ (EPM 1, 137/173). If a sense or feeling is the final arbiter, then as he has just argued, one is following sentiment instead of inference. Sentiment is stronger than reason. Here the similarities between aesthetic and moral response clarify the issues. In both cases, the internal sense must rely on reason to expose the actual situation to sense, particularly where human actions are involved.

Some species of beauty, especially the natural kinds, on their first appearance, command our affection and approbation; and where they fail of this effect, it is impossible for any reasoning to redress their influence, or adapt them better to our taste and sentiment. But in many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection.

(EPM 1, 137/173)

Morals are like this latter case. What seems common to both art and morals that requires reason is the presence of human as well as natural situations. Where no human action is involved, sentiment operates immediately. The analogy to a sense would be sufficient. Presumably the same process is followed in the case of painting and moral actions. The presence of a human agent requires that one respond to motives that may not be obvious to the senses. Structure and motives may be concealed. Only a correction of false impressions and of ‘a false relish’ discloses the true situation in painting and morals. When they are revealed, one’s sentiments change. The same thing could happen in natural situations. Perhaps I learn to see the structure of some natural event and instead of feeling uneasy I can respond to its beauty. But such functions of reason would be rare because there is no concealed motive in natural situations in the same way. Hume does not find arguments for a divine hand at work in nature convincing. To appreciate nature, one needs only an acute sense, and the response will be both immediate and not subject to reasons. Hume rests little on the idea of ‘sense’ therefore. What is important is not that one has a sense that responds but that responses fall into two categories, those that are

immediate because they are limited to external impressions and those that may involve human motives and agency.

The way to show the common features of moral and aesthetic sentiments is to begin with a catalogue of adjectives and qualities that are universally approved. They include 'beneficence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit, or whatever proceeds from a tender sympathy with others, and a generous concern for our kind and species' (EPM 2.1, 140/178). Then ask what is common to all. Hume concludes that a part of the answer must be utility; they arise from what is useful or beneficial. Included in this utility is the claim that what makes something beautiful is its utility, though 'an experienced eye is here sensible of many excellencies, which escape persons ignorant and uninstructed' (EPM 2.2, 142/179). By placing beauty among the softer affections and tracing its effects to the pleasure that arises from its utility, Hume seems to move decisively away from any notion of either a moral or aesthetic deontology. One does not arrive at the sentiment by some rational process of calculation or logical inference, however. 'An experienced eye,' not a sharp mind, responds to beauty. Utility is a cause, but it is not itself the object. Hume is offering a piece of natural history or folk psychology, not a utilitarian calculation. It is also clear, however, that the Hutchesonian sense with its immediate response is adjusted by a more considered response that takes account of consequences. Hume, in effect, 'naturalizes' teleology. He follows with several instances of how sentiment changes when one becomes aware of the consequences of something that had been considered a virtue (e.g. tyrannicide) or a vice (luxury) (EPM 2.2, 143/180–181).

Both aesthetic and moral judgments are limited to what one feels, but not all are limited by one's own situation. Sympathy and fictions could account for extending moral and aesthetic impressions in one way, but the basic assumptions that link causes of passions such as pride are the association of ideas and resemblance. Association depends on resemblance, contiguity, or cause (and hence habit and custom). Resemblance links impressions as well as ideas. So not only is there an association of ideas; there is also an association of impressions (T 2.1.4, 283). The ideas that are essential to the double relation necessary for pride and the impressions that link qualities into this complex can all be accounted for by various forms of association and resemblance. The problem is how this associationist mechanics relates to the immediacy of beauty. If one associates idiosyncratically, then one's responses will not follow those of humankind generally. One also will bring into any moral or aesthetic judgment extraneous elements. But if one limits the association and resemblance to what is common to all human situations, not only is one's moral and aesthetic judgment on the same ground; it is also open to impressions that are not limited to oneself. This is quite different from sympathy. It is a direct response

to qualities, and thus *like* a sense. But it is not limited by one's own particular situation. In that way, Hume introduces questions of interest. Rather than appealing to interest to link qualities and passions, Hume appeals to association and resemblance and uses interest to distinguish associations that are not limited to one's own situation. Hume's aesthetics is not only not disinterested; it uses interest as a basis for a common sense.

Hume does distinguish between interest and morality, however. Our particular interest changes a sentiment so that the moral sentiment is lost to a sentiment provoked by our own interested reaction: 'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil' (T 3.1.2, 472). But interested and disinterested (Hume does not use the word here) sentiments, though they are easily confused, can be distinguished by a 'man of temper and judgment.' Exactly the same distinction applies aesthetically:

In like manner, tho' 'tis certain a musical voice is nothing but one that naturally gives a *particular* kind of pleasure; yet 'tis difficult for a man to be sensible, that the voice of an enemy is agreeable, or to allow it to be musical. But a person of a fine ear, who has the command of himself, can separate these feelings, and give praise to what deserves it.

(T 3.1.2, 472)

In the light of later aesthetic distinctions, it is hard not to read this as a pre-figuration of the Kantian distinction between aesthetic delight and interested pleasure. Yet that distinction does not fit Hume very well. What allows one to separate the feelings is a command of oneself and a fine ear – self-awareness and discrimination with respect to the object – not qualitative differences in the sentiments themselves or in their relation to other sentiments. In fact, as we have observed, a true disinterestedness would produce no sentiments at all. Both aesthetic and moral sentiments gain their force just because they are responses to the full dimensions of a situation, including one's own commitment to it.

At some points, Hume does seem to fall back on a form of disinterestedness, however. After arguing that virtue and vice are natural in the sense of opposed to miracles but unnatural in the sense of being both rare and artificial, Hume concludes: 'Thus we are still brought back to our first position, that virtue is distinguished by the pleasure, and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment or character gives us by the mere view and contemplation' (T 3.1.2, 474). That last qualifier seems to suggest that a disinterested relation to the object produces the pleasure or pain of virtue or vice. That would allow that in morality and probably by extension in

aesthetics, one is dealing with a specific kind of double relation of impression and sensation. It would not be the pleasure or pain themselves that provide the distinction nor the relation itself but the double relation brought about by the mere view and contemplation of an action, sentiment, or character. It certainly is not a qualitative sentimental difference nor a quality of the object, in spite of the way Hume describes it elsewhere. However, such a reading of ‘mere view and contemplation’ is untenable. Hume is framing his question in terms of the origins of virtue and vice. One does not look for ‘incomprehensible relations and qualities, which never did exist in nature nor even in our imagination, by any clear and distinct conception’ (T 3.1.2, 476). So what distinguishes virtue and vice is how one feels, not a relation or quality that is responsible for the feeling. ‘Mere view and contemplation’ restricts the distinction to the feeling. This is the antithesis of a qualitative distinction in attitude or intuition. Hume’s strategy is to look for the origin of specific virtues and vices and trace them to the impressions of the mind. He does not exhibit principles or kinds but a catalogue of virtues and vices. Aesthetically, the parallel would be to exhibit beauties and deformities from works of art and nature. Hume does not do that in any systematic way, though he shows that he could in the essay on tragedy. But he could point to many practitioners who do – most explicitly to Hugh Blair and Henry Home who, whatever their incomprehension of Hume’s scheme, write the kind of specific aesthetics that Hume would recognize as empirically useful.

All along, Hume has rejected self-love as a sufficient explanation of why we feel a sentiment of approval toward what benefits others. The imagination is too limited to both put us in the place of another and make us aware of the difference:

No force of imagination can convert us into another person, and make us fancy, that we, being that person, reap benefit from those valuable qualities, which belong to him. Or if it did, no celerity of imagination could immediately transport us back, into ourselves, and make us love and esteem the person, as different from us. Views and sentiments, so opposite to known truth and to each other, could never have place, at the same time, in the same person.

(EPM 6.1, 191/234)

Hume has two uses of ‘imagination.’ One is epistemological; imagination produces ideas and images derived from impressions and perceptions. The other is looser; a force or faculty produces fictions and fancies. The looser sense gets blamed for illusions, falsehood, and deceit. But in neither use is the imagination separated from the self in the sense required by later theories of disinterestedness. It is a faculty, not a moral or aesthetic principle. A common nature or even a common sense link

moral and aesthetic sentiments. They share a common pleasure or pain. Further distinctions are possible on that basis and do not require an esoteric selflessness that in Hume's system is quite impossible.

If disinterestedness in its later, specialized sense plays no essential role in forming the sentiments upon which Hume depends, both moral and aesthetic sentiments could become chaotic. That they do not, Hume attributes to a general uniformity of human nature. That uniformity must be made explicit in some form, however, and it is essentially the same for both moral and aesthetic sentiments. In this instance, the aesthetic analogy takes precedence. The result is a theory of taste that operates with respect to both beauty and morals. We will return to taste when discussing standards and judgments. Here, it is important to see that taste provides a natural account for the uniformity and divergence in both morals and aesthetics.

Hume compares moral beauty to natural beauty and ends with a theory of taste that applies to both. Natural beauty depends on the proportion, relation, and positions of parts. (An artificial beauty would depend on specific cultural conventions as well. If the appreciation of natural beauty follows art, as it seems to do in the taste for the picturesque, then it may turn out that all beauty is artificial in this sense, just as justice is artificial. That is a complication that does not concern Hume, however.) But the perception of the relations is not the beauty. The perceptions are obvious. They cause us to feel a sentiment, and that sentiment is either agreeable or not. Thus the object is beautiful or not. 'But in all decisions of taste or external beauty, all the relations are beforehand obvious to the eye; and we thence proceed to feel a sentiment of complacency or disgust, according to the nature of the object, and disposition of our organs' (EPM app. 1, 242/291). Beauty is not a quality of the object; it is the effect that that object produces.

The beauty is not in any of the parts or members of a pillar, but results from the whole, when that complicated figure is presented to an intelligent mind, susceptible to those finer sensations. Till such a spectator appear, there is nothing but a figure of such particular dimensions and proportions: from his sentiments alone arise its elegance and beauty.

(EPM app. 1, 242/292)

Exactly the same description applies to morals. The relations and facts can be set out clearly. Unless there is some reaction to them, there is no morality.

We must at last acknowledge, that the crime or immorality is no particular fact or relation, which can be the object of the understanding, but arises entirely from the sentiment of disapprobation, which, by the structure of

human nature, we unavoidably feel on the apprehension of barbarity or treachery.

(EPM app. 1, 242/292–293)

Hume limits reason to making the case clear and showing the relations, and he assigns beauty and virtue to the sentiment that is produced. The parallel between aesthetics and morality seems exact. Both are decisions of taste.

Sympathy extends taste in the same way for beauty and for morals. Justice, for example, on Hume's analysis, arises artificially from the interest of society. It is neither a natural quality nor an individual virtue. Yet justice is a source of individual pleasure. This can only arise from sympathy, which allows the individual to feel what is the good more generally of others. 'It follows, that sympathy is the source of the esteem, which we pay to all the artificial virtues' (T 3.3.1, 577). This is exactly the same response that causes taste to function as a sense of beauty: 'Thus it appears, *that* sympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature, *that* it has a great influence on our taste of beauty, and *that* it produces our sentiment of morals in all the artificial virtues' (T 3.3.1, 577–578). All that distinguishes beauty from moral virtues is the source and kind of pleasure and both are equally a matter of taste. Beauty is a pleasure in objects. Moral sentiment arises from character or a quality (not actions). Thus Hume can easily speak of moral beauty.

Two points recur to link moral and aesthetic sentiments. First, moral good is based on pleasure and pain about which one cannot be mistaken. Moreover, the joint verdict is essentially additive – everyone is an infallible judge. The same holds true 'with regard to every quality, that is determin'd merely by sentiment' (T 3.2.8, 547, n. 1). So one is left with taste as both a moral and aesthetic sentiment. Second, Hume, nevertheless, is no more concerned by this conclusion than he is by the dangers of atheism or pyrrhonic skepticism. 'In what sense we can talk either of a *right* or *wrong* taste in morals, eloquence, or beauty, shall be consider'd afterwards. In the mean time, it may be observ'd, that there is such an uniformity in the *general* sentiments of mankind, as to render such questions of but small importance' (T 3.2.8, 547, n. 1). The reception of the *Treatise* and some of his later experiences in Edinburgh may have caused that conclusion to seem a bit sanguine. Moral taste is contrasted to barbarity; aesthetic taste to vulgarity. Hume deals explicitly with the former and implicitly with the latter.



## RULES

### **The production of general rules**

Hume's reliance on the uniformity of human nature leads him to formulate general rules both in aesthetics and morals. The question of what kinds of rules is a thorny one. We have already noted that Hume's relation to Newton is complex. As James Noxon has demonstrated, in spite of Hume's claims that he is following an experimental method, he does not produce anything approaching the natural laws of Newtonian science.<sup>1</sup> Yet to some extent, one should not expect such laws in human nature, and Hume is wise enough to avoid the kinds of failed laws that some, most notably David Hartley, offered. At the other extreme, Hume clearly rejects the kinds of logical rules for human thought that were offered by Arnauld and the Port Royal Logic. The kinds of rules that we should expect, therefore, are more like the explanatory inductions arrived at by Boyle than Newton's laws. The law of gases did not solve the micro problems of thermodynamics, but it fit the observable phenomena to an explanatory framework. Hume is dealing with history and psychology, so, while he speaks of experiments and inductions, his rules are predicative only to the extent that they must account for continued observations of the patterns of human actions and judgments. They belong to the realm of probability and not the certainty obtainable from pure relations of ideas.

Since he rejects final causes, Hume must seek and account for uniformity in human affairs in some other way. Rules serve that function. They are rules that tell us that persons can be expected to act according to their most strongly held beliefs, barring overriding hindrance, or that beauty, combined with ownership, will produce an approbation that we denominate pride. We will not be proud of every beautiful thing that we own, but every observable instance of pride must be accountable under Hume's system of impressions and ideas. He does not reason that if something is good or beautiful it must be pleasant. But pleasure or approbation is the observable feature of all good and beautiful impressions, so one is entitled to expect it. From those expectations arise Hume's kinds of general rules.

It follows that Hume's rules are not prescriptive or absolute. They cannot provide the kind of value principles that George Dickie seeks: rules of the form, 'Elegance in a work of art (in isolation from the other properties of the work) is always valuable.'<sup>2</sup> They can only have the form: we have an expectation that elegance will be regarded as an aesthetic value. Exceptions will then be handled in two different ways. If they are sufficiently numerous, one will have to limit the rule. If they are rare, one will look for other forms of explanation. Rules are obvious empirical facts raised to the level of causal expectation.

The very existence of rules presents a special problem for a reliance on sentiment, however. If sentiment is to have full epistemological weight, it cannot be subject to rules that are independent of sentiment. For example, if the Aristotelian unities take precedence over individual taste in determining the aesthetic merit of a Shakespearean tragedy, then sentiment would be subordinated to a general rule that is derived from some other source.<sup>3</sup> That would directly contradict Hume's whole system. Moreover, Hume makes a clear fact/value distinction that limits the transition from descriptive laws to judgments of virtue or taste. So general rules must be accounted for in terms of the same impressions and ideas that apply to individual emotions and passions. At the same time, they must be formulated as rules. This is a complex task that goes to the heart of Hume's application of an 'experimental' philosophy.

The first step is to recognize that human nature itself is one of the fictions required by the counter-move from ideas back to impressions. As I have argued above, fictions become necessary once Hume must account for complex ideas that approach the level of impressions.<sup>4</sup> The identity of the self is a fiction because there is no original impression of the self. Nevertheless, the relation of our ideas produces the strong feeling that we are 'someone' and that fiction sustains much of our subsequent reasoning and associations. Impressions that produce ideas and lead to associations on the basis of resemblance and contiguity exhibit regularity. Human nature follows from the regularity and uniformity of human actions and of their interaction with nature. Rules are the result of experience: 'The general observations treasured up by a course of experience, give us the clue of human nature, and teach us to unravel all its intricacies' (EHU 8.1, 65/85). This is the sense according to which rules are neither formal nor prescriptive. They are the accumulated expectations that are incorporated into human action as uniformities of expectations. They are the products of accumulated experience, and they have only the uniformity that one would expect from any other natural phenomenon.

Hume finds three standard ways that impressions are related to and strengthen ideas: resemblance, contiguity, and custom. Each contributes to the impression/idea link. Resemblance allows new impressions to strengthen ideas tied to older impressions. Contiguity offsets the weakening produced by distance. Custom eases the transition. The effect of all of these is to establish experimentally that impressions

are at the root of all ideas, and hence that ‘all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. . . . When I am convinc’d of any principle, ’tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me’ (T 1.3.8, 103). ‘Principle’ in this context is the basis for a general rule. A principle is not something that is necessarily formulated in specific terms for the purposes of conscious reasoning. Rather, the principles of human nature are uniformities that carry thought from one impression to another via a strongly associated idea. To be convinced of them, given Hume’s definition of belief as a strongly held idea, is just to have formed the expectation.

Custom operates without the need for demonstrative reason; one may be unaware of the transitions, and certainly there is no regulative appeal to higher principles of order. Experience simply makes the transitions so closely and naturally that one believes two ideas are related independently of any apparent connection. Hume examines the principle ‘that instances of which we have no experience, must necessarily resemble those, of which we have’ (T 1.3.8, 104). The reference to instances of which we have no experience is puzzling at first, because if one has no experience of something, one does not have any impression of it, and thus does not have it at all, so resemblance could not arise. But that is not the direction in which Hume is working at this point. When he says that we have no experience he means only that what we take to be an extension of our experience beyond its limits, as in induction, can only arise from the experience that we do have – the only true form of necessary connection that Hume can allow. He is rejecting the ability of reason to convince us of this principle. The principle presumably refers to the kind of association where having seen swans, one expects to see others that are identifiably swans even though they have not yet been seen. This is not a reasoned expectation, and it does not require reflection at all. Rather, one draws such inferences directly from past experience. One cannot come to expect something in this way that has no foundation in experience. Black swans might be expected if one has experience of variation and mutation. Swans with telekinetic powers are just fantastic, and invisible, intangible swans are inconceivable.

The operations of taste come under this principle in the same way. One does not produce rules – say the Aristotelian unities – and then conform taste to them. Rather, what operate as the implicit rules for taste are drawn directly from experience. Having seen tragedies, one expects other tragedies to resemble them. Tragedies can have their effect solely because custom and experience can operate with the directness and immediacy Hume describes. The implicit formulation of customary transitions locates a kind of rule that is a part of sentiment itself. These rule-like transitions have to be at work in the mind before reason can operate, even in the extended sense that Hume acknowledges.

The basis for all such transitions is in cause and effect, which requires repeated instances of associated occurrences. One instance can never be sufficient. So

general rules are essentially the result of cause and effect since they come down to our response to the expectation of continued associations. Such general rules are founded on the same evidence we have elsewhere: the feeling or sentiment that is produced by the conception itself. For example, in the case of power or necessary connection,

there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connexion, therefore which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion. Nothing farther is in the case.

(EHU 7.2, 59/75)

Hume's negative arguments against observed or rational causes are also arguments for the evidence of sentiment. General rules are the result of sentiment, therefore. In fact, they are themselves sentiments upon which we depend for our most basic ideas of order in life. They get their authority as representatives of the bedrock of sentiment.

The kinds of rules that experiences of cause and effect allow replace the rules of logic:

Our scholastic headpieces and logicians shew no such superiority above the mere vulgar in their reason and ability, as to give us any inclination to imitate them in delivering a long system of rules and precepts to direct our judgment, in philosophy. All the rules of this nature are very easy in their invention, but extremely difficult in their application.

(T 1.3.15, 175)

Any object might be the cause or effect of any other as long as one considers only the objects. These general rules appeal to custom and habit to tell which objects are causes of which effects. Only repeated, close attention can sort out the right associations from spurious ones.<sup>5</sup> This applies explicitly to moral and aesthetic passions as well as to more obviously experimental cases in natural philosophy.

General rules are not just effects themselves, however. They can also be causes. General rules can actuate passions, even if no original impression, which would normally be required, is present. This places general rules with other ideas that are strong enough to produce impressions. For example, Hume cites the feeling we

have for someone who ignores sorrow. Such persons do not feel the pain, or not to the extent that they should. There is thus no passion for us sympathetically to appropriate. That lack only makes us more feeling toward them. ‘The imagination is affected by the *general rule*, and makes us conceive a lively idea of the passion, or rather feel the passion itself, in the same manner, as if the person were really actuated by it’ (T 2.2.7, 371). General rules often fill a gap between what can be accounted for by distinct impressions and what needs explanation but does not have such impressions.

Rules are based on causes and contrary causes that may be hidden from less perceptive observers. Hume uses the example of the peasant who can only say that the clock does not go.

But an artist easily perceives that the same force in the spring or pendulum has always the same influence on the wheels; but fails of its usual effect, perhaps by reason of a grain of dust, which puts a stop to the whole movement.

(EHU 8.1, 67/87)

The choice of an artist as the one who perceives the more minute cause – the speck of dust in the wheel – is interesting. Even if the context suggests that Hume means by ‘artist’ something more like ‘artisan,’ it indicates that he associates acute observation of details with both rules and the kind of skill that a painter or craftsman requires. By shifting rules to sentiment, Hume does not produce a ‘sentimental’ aesthetic; he moves more in the direction of a scientific aesthetic based on more careful observation. General rules are thus the result of giving impressions and ideas at the basic level of their occurrence full authority in the causal process.

General rules also serve as a limiting factor. For example, in producing pride and humility, the complex double relation required is not simply mechanical. General rules establish expectations, and only falling below or rising above those expectations will produce the required passions. Aliens would not expect the same passions because they would not respond properly.

The passions are often vary’d by very inconsiderable principles; and these do not always play with a perfect regularity, especially on the first trial. But as custom and practice have brought to light all these principles, and have settled the just value of every thing; this must certainly contribute to the easy production of the passions, and guide us, by means of general establish’d maxims, in the proportions we ought to observe in preferring one object to another.

(T 2.1.6, 294)

If general rules work in that way, then circumstantial peculiarities and education can block secondary impressions.<sup>6</sup> Presumably, one can learn to take pride in something by coming to feel an association of it with the self that is produced by cultural or acquired relations and inculcated as a general rule. Patriotism and ethnic pride would be likely instances.

That raises the question whether one could learn to find something beautiful as a result of general rules. We have contradictory evidence. On the one hand, the emotion is immediate, so an educational process does not mediate it. One is not going to be convinced to experience something indifferent or painful as beautiful by the fact that others find it so. On the other hand, different cultures find different things beautiful. Independently of utility, every culture has its own standards of physical beauty, for example. So evidently beauty is culturally conditioned, and whatever can be learned must depend on the regularities of cause and effect that are productive of general rules. In the case of beauty, one must distinguish the individual from the cultural, the specific case from the general rule. Hume's argument is that custom and practice tell us how passions have been formed and thus provide regularities and principles that may in turn affect the production of passions. So in a sense one could learn to take pleasure in classical music or eastern half-tones, but only if the musical forms already had produced a sufficient practice in which one can participate. In order for such a practice to arise, it must have a basis in sentiments felt by someone. Utility can supply such a formal basis, for example. Thus, while one may find wide cultural variations in what is perceived as beautiful, one will not find beautiful those things that are contrary to the pleasure that beauty requires. Even if some Futurists claimed to find war beautiful, they do so only in the absence of its actual presence.

Beauty is described in terms of pleasure, but its relation to rules would be the same if it turned out that other factors than pleasure were essential. Hume considers, as an alternative, that the power to produce pleasure and pain are not the essence of beauty but only inseparable accompaniments: "'Tis certain, then, that if the power of producing pleasure and pain forms not the essence of beauty and deformity, the sensations are at least inseparable from the qualities, and 'tis even difficult to consider them apart' (T 2.1.8, 300). He stipulates two forms of beauty, natural and moral, both of which can be causes of pride. Their common effect is pleasure. Like effects require like causes, so since beauty is the common cause, pleasure, and from the double relation, pride, is the common effect even if it turns out not to be a defining property of beauty. This argument does not contradict Hume's theory of causality. 'Essence' in this sense is not part of the causal explanation but a result of it. Pleasure, or whatever is the essence of beauty, is a defining property because one has come to expect its constant conjunction with the passion denominated 'beauty.' Moreover, 'like effects require like causes' is at best an empirical

generalization; it is not an *a priori* principle. General rules require more than casual associations, however. They may be subject to exceptions, but they are never accidentally associated.

In fact, an emotion such as beauty depends on more than just the occurrence of a related sensation of pleasure. There are many pleasures that would not lead us to attribute beauty to the impression. The problem is that Hume's system also does not distinguish a particular set of qualities as peculiarly beautiful. Beauty does not require a substantial entity as it does in neo-Platonism where unity or the One is beauty or a particular qualitative relation such as uniformity amidst variety, as is the case for Hutcheson. Unlike Hutcheson, Hume's use of rules cannot result in the kind of qualitative formalism that leads Hutcheson to abstract comparisons that tell him that squares are more beautiful than triangles because they have equal unity but greater variety. Unless the comparison leads to a felt distinction, it will not produce a rule. For example, Hume argues that the difference between the beauty of our bodies and external objects does not depend on their form: 'there is nothing originally different betwixt the beauty of our bodies and the beauty of external and foreign objects, but that the one has a near relation to ourselves, which is wanting in the other' (T 2.1.8, 300[dt1]).<sup>7</sup> Pride enters only when it is *our* beauty. But he is creating problems about beauty. Beauty, it would seem, just is the pleasure one takes in some object or action that has a particular relation to the self. But Hume needs more distinctions than this hedonistic theory allows. Beauty is not wit, for example, but taste responds to wit with pleasure as well. The distinction between natural and moral beauty appears to be nothing more than a simple distinction between objects. But moral beauty is clearly more teleological than natural beauty. Yet they are both sources of pleasure. Does the distinction between natural and moral do no aesthetic work, then? Hume keeps bringing beauty into the discussion, but he vacillates between his own system in which beauty is a calm passion and a vulgar-speaking in which beauty is a quality or arrangement, or power of some object.<sup>8</sup> In that latter sense, he needs a distinction between natural and moral beauty because moral beauty does not have the same formal structural access that natural beauty has. Moral beauty is not caused by the qualities of objects that are present in impressions but by the relation of ideas themselves. When we find self-sacrifice morally beautiful, there is no arrangement of parts as there is when we find a daffodil beautiful. If beauty is simply a calm passion, there is no need for recourse to the object in this structural way, and when Hume makes taste the only judge, none is given. But when Hume cites utility and form, there is an entirely different appeal. In the latter cases, regularities are more important, and general rules bridge the gap between personal taste and educated taste. Thus large-scale cultural differences could be accounted for, if Hume were so inclined, by the influence of general rules

by which moral and acquired tastes supersede the simple natural tastes found more or less universally.<sup>9</sup> Rules, therefore, are as much a necessity for Hume's aesthetic explanations as they are for his moral theory. In neither case is he open to the charges of subjectivism or naive elitism that Berkeley was able to level at Shaftesbury in *Alciphron*.

The alternative to general rules as a way of extending emotional response is sympathy. The two should not be confused. General rules require the kind of regularity and habitual expectation that underlies cause and effect. Sympathy, on the other hand, depends on an imaginative transfer of an impression as an idea based on observable cues from another person. For example, Hume observes that riches produce esteem. Moreover, this esteem does not arise from any expectation of benefit; it is a 'disinterested esteem for riches' (T 2.2.5, 361). The source of this disinterested esteem is not general rules, though it might appear to be. One cannot expect regularly to benefit from the rich, so there is no general rule that will carry the imagination through in such cases. The alternative is sympathy:

Upon the whole, there remains nothing, which can give us an esteem for power and riches, and a contempt for meanness and poverty, except the principle of sympathy, by which we enter into the sentiments of the rich and poor, and partake of their pleasure and uneasiness.<sup>10</sup>

(T 2.2.5, 362)

Like general rules, in order to work, sympathy must produce sentiments in the one who experiences the emotion or passion. Both are essentially principles of repetition. Note that we repeat the emotions of the rich; it is not necessary that we identify with them. That would produce a contrast to our own situation that would be experienced as pain, not pleasure. But while sympathy operates by a kind of individual reiteration whose principle mechanism is association, general rules act causally to produce an expectation that is transformed ideationally into an impression.

The same kind of explanation applies even when the rules in question are intentional guides. Hume refers to rules in painting that are essentially formal – balance, for example. But his explanation of why balance is required in painting and why imbalance would be disagreeable is based on sympathy and utility. The argument goes i) there is a rule; ii) violation of that rule is disagreeable, because the rule itself is formed from the expectation of pleasure; iii) the source of the disagreeableness is the idea of harm; iv) though it is not harm to me, sympathy makes the very idea painful. Then, 'a figure which is not justly balance'd, is disagreeable; and that because it conveys the ideas of its fall, of harm, and of pain: Which ideas are painful, when by sympathy they acquire any degree of force and



vivacity' (T 2.2.5, 364–365). The same thing applies to personal beauty that is related to health. 'This idea of beauty cannot be accounted for but by sympathy' (T 2.2.5, 365). In both cases, a general rule might arise, but the specific sentiment depends on transferring what someone else feels to the experience of the perceiver.

### Limitations

A rule is not enough. For it to come into operation, it must be applied properly. A general expectation may arise from one's experience, but when applied to specifics, the new instance must be related to those summarized in the rule. The primary forms of relation depend on resemblance of the ideas and impressions, and they are formulated by comparison. This is how the rules of art work.

Shou'd an author compose a treatise, of which one part was serious and profound, another light and humorous, every one wou'd condemn so strange a mixture, and wou'd accuse him of the neglect of all rules of art and criticism. These rules of art are founded on the qualities of human nature; and the quality of human nature, which requires a consistency in every performance, is that which renders the mind incapable of passing in a moment from one passion and disposition to a quite different one.

(T 2.2.8, 379)

So from rules, one can condemn certain combinations, for example tragedy and comedy. Rules here are clearly empirical. They should not be used to condemn Shakespeare for introducing comic scenes into his tragedies, though this criticism was common enough, because what they prohibit is shifts that demand from us something of which the mind is incapable. If the scenes work, so much the better for Shakespeare. The rule itself summarizes what Hume believes to be a limitation on human nature – the mind will not be able to make the rapid transitions needed to mix modes. If that limitation is incorrect, or if a writer finds ways to facilitate the transition for the mind, then the rule is not violated but restricted to a more limited domain.

Comparisons as well as generalization also control the formation and application of such rules. The rules only apply to things that are related. If one regards two works or parts of works as wholly different, there is no comparison and a rule does not come into play at all. 'Resemblance and proximity always produce a relation of ideas,' but 'The want of a relation in the ideas breaks the relation of the impressions, and such a separation prevents their mutual operation and influence' (T 2.2.8, 378). Hume's reliance on the formation and application of rules is limited both by observation and by the need for some relation of ideas that allows the rules to

produce impressions. The absence of either leaves general rules inoperative in a specific case.

The function of rules is not simply to build expectations, however. Like justice, moral and artistic rules are often ‘artificial’ in Hume’s special sense of that word. They depend on elements of human behavior that are essentially social.

Those rules, by which property, right, and obligation are determin’d, have in them no marks of a natural origin, but many of artifice and contrivance. They are too numerous to have proceeded from nature: They are changeable by human laws: And have all of them a direct and evident tendency to public good, and the support of society.

(T 3.2.6, 528)

The same could be said, with some minor modifications, of rules of art. They too depend on artifice and contrivance, are changeable, as the history of taste exhibits, and tend to the public good and support of society if they are regarded, as the eighteenth century surely regarded them, as designed both to please and instruct. This has become much clearer from the work of contemporary writers on the arts such as Rudolf Arnheim and E. H. Gombrich who have stressed the ways that perception itself in the arts depends on assimilated conventions. The origin of rules in both art and morals is most frequently social, therefore.

In ‘the ordinary course of human actions’ the mind functions by ‘present motives and inclinations’ and not by general or universal rules. Where we extend to general rules, therefore, we act in such a way that we permit exceptions (T 3.2.6, 531). On the other hand, like justice and considerations of property, general rules do not really permit degrees except in difficulty of application. An action is either performed or not; one either has a right in property or not. In other words, general rules are themselves artificial products; they are not like gravity, which always applies, but they are also not like a speed limit that one can decide to obey and change as utility determines. Hume’s example is property laws. Both public and private interest can be imagined on one side and the law on the other, yet one maintains the law. The only purpose for such a choice can be that the alternative is too chaotic: ‘But ’tis easy to observe, that this wou’d produce an infinite confusion in human society, and that the avidity and partiality of men wou’d quickly bring disorder into the world, if not restrain’d by some general and inflexible principles’ (T 3.2.6, 532). Hume sounds a bit like a rule-utilitarian at this point, but that is misleading. The rules are not maxims but regularities that experience provides. Like the rules of art, they arise from human nature. What is at issue is when they will be extended in the face of other motives.

Let those motives [to just actions independent of morality] therefore, be what they will, they must accommodate themselves to circumstances, and must admit of all the variations, which human affairs, in their incessant revolutions, are susceptible of. They are consequently a very improper foundation for such rigid inflexible rules as the laws of nature; and 'tis evident these laws can only be deriv'd from human conventions, when men have perceiv'd the disorders that result from following their natural and variable principles.

(T 3.2.6, 533)

They are arrived at by extension from particulars, and they are subject to whatever exceptions one may want to make consistent with their remaining rules. Hume's use of 'general rule' is consistently to provide a standard or set a limit; it is not to derive a natural law. In human affairs, experiment does not extend to a science.<sup>11</sup> Hume's psychology is observational, not scientific. In this regard, morality and taste are on the same footing except that morality has much greater potential for producing disorder if it is not governed by rules.

One of the arguments for the effect of general rules is that people depend on them and so carry them beyond their foundation. In other words, we rely on rules even when they are no longer supported directly by evidence and even when they go against both private and public interest. 'General rules commonly extend beyond the principles, on which they are founded; and . . . we seldom make any exception to them, unless that exception have the qualities of a general rule, and be founded on very numerous and common instances' (T 3.2.9, 551). This 'addiction' to general rules as Hume calls it is itself a general rule! In this sense, general rules are neither absolute nor relative. One cannot change them at will because the mechanism for their change itself involves the same force of habit and expectation that produced the rule in the first place. But they are subject to change as time and practice erode their authority. Here, as elsewhere, Hume is conservative but not reactionary. It is no wonder that commentators find it hard to identify his political positions.

A basic need to extend general rules beyond the specific applications that first justified them arises because of the need to provide standards and avoid chaos. For example, Hume considers the extension of the rule of chastity to women beyond child-bearing age. Such rules arise from utility. Without them, one would not know who the father was, which would disrupt both family and the natural inclination of a father to protect his offspring and provide for them. But chastity remains the rule even for women who cannot bear children. It is a perfect example of both the artificial nature of such rules and of their extension. If it exhibits Hume's patriarchal thinking, that in no way diminishes its exemplary character. Given sufficient social changes – for example, if raising children no longer depends on the father – the rule

would lose its application. It continues to function as a regulative principle in an extended context as long as the context maintains the initial rule.

Hume links the general rules of morals with other matters of taste, treating them as all the same: ‘*General rules* are often extended beyond the principle whence they first arise; and this in all matters of taste and sentiment’ (EPM 4, 167/207). Taste and sentiment, of course, do not mean merely eccentric individual reactions. They are the source of the general rules in the first place. Hume is often accused of circularity in this regard. Taste and sentiment as individual experience give rise to general rules, which in turn are extended to provide a standard that can only be known by taste and sentiment. However, Hume’s standard is neither absolute nor easily culturally relative. If there is a circle, therefore, it is a very large one.

General rules remain strong, therefore, but they are not themselves a standard. They can lead to error, for example. The effects of general rules can over-ride even the understanding or senses:

When an object is found by experience to be always accompan’d with another; whenever the first object appears, tho’ chang’d in very material circumstances; we naturally fly to the conception of the second, and form an idea of it in as lively and strong a manner, as if we had infer’d its existence by the justest and most authentic conclusion of our understanding. Nothing can undeceive us, not even our senses, which instead of correcting this false judgment, are often perverted by it, and seem to authorize its errors.

(T 2.2.8, 374)

General rules are themselves a source of error and deceptions, therefore. They cannot themselves provide standards. They result from experience, and experience extends them because the alternative is chaos. But they can equally lead us astray, and the only recourse will be to further experience and correction by still further general rules. Hume’s rules are quite equivocal products of the mind.

### **Rules and probability**

Hume’s theory of knowledge is essentially psychological. He approaches the more modern distinction between a formal, logical certainty and a psychological certainty in the case of algebra and arithmetic, but even there it is because we have ‘a precise standard’ (T 1.3.1, 71) and not because Hume allows a purely formal distinction. Such a ‘pure and intellectual view’ is far too rationalistic for Hume. It conflicts with his fundamental principle ‘that all our ideas are copy’d from our impressions’ (T

1.3.1, 72). Geometry is a matter of appearances, not of formal relations of space. A consequence of this essential psychologism is that all reasoning is ultimately psychological,<sup>12</sup> and the rules that govern knowledge can only be applied by a process of association based on resemblance, comparison of ideas, and analogy.

For Hume, knowledge requires a consideration of probability. Although Hume considers some mathematical examples involving casts of a die, he does not mean by 'probability' what we would call mathematical probability. Probability is essentially the strength of belief associated with impressions and ideas. In that respect, the simplest contrast is between demonstrative knowledge and probable knowledge. Demonstration gives a felt certainty that cannot be challenged as long as the demonstration stands. All but the pure comparison of ideas, including all reasoning based on cause and effect, comes under the heading of probability. Hume is prepared to make a more psychologically based distinction, however. While certain knowledge may be limited to a comparison of ideas that is selfverifying, cause and effect produces proofs that provide psychological certainty, and 'probability' is limited to 'that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty' (T 1.3.11, 124). Under this latter heading, one locates causal relations that are controlled by an analysis of association and chance that is the negation of causes and depends on a kind of quantitative analysis. The latter is still not mathematical probability but the quantitative influence that more impressions are stronger than fewer. We have a greater expectation that the mark on four faces of a die will appear rather than one on only two because thinking of four impressions produces a stronger idea than thinking of two (T 1.3.11, 125–130). The 'philosophical' sense of probability, therefore, reduces to an analysis of what determines the vivacity of belief.

In order to carry out any analysis of this kind, Hume is always confronted with a double reflection that threatens an infinite regress. To apply any rule, make any judgment, consider any impression one must produce an idea that copies some impression.

Our reason must be consider'd as a kind of cause, of which truth is a natural effect; but such-a-one as by the irruption of other causes, and by the inconstancy of our mental powers, may frequently be prevented. By this means all knowledge degenerates into probability.

(T 1.4.1, 180)

Everything for Hume is forced back into probability. Reasonable beliefs are based on probability that is 'deriv'd from an *imperfect* experience and from *contrary* causes' and from 'Analogy, which differs from them in some material circumstances' (T 1.3.12, 142). In addition, however, there are unphilosophical probabilities 'that

are deriv'd from the same principles, tho' they have not had the good fortune to obtain the same sanction' (T 1.3.13, 143). What makes these probabilities unphilosophical is presumably that they operate to produce degrees of belief without our being aware of them. Insensibly, proximity of facts, distance of memory, and complication of argument affect the transitions from ideas to other impressions and increase or decrease the felt strength of the impressions. This is all that probability amounts to, so these unphilosophical probabilities are different only in being less analyzed and accepted by philosophers. Placing both philosophical probabilities and unphilosophical probabilities on the same footing contribute to the appearance that Hume is a skeptic.

Reliance on passion is qualified by difficulties in distinguishing and comparing minute differences in passions. This is another aspect of probabilities. While probabilities should be proportional to confirming instances, small differences are difficult to judge. Hume then adds that the same thing holds for passions. He treats passions as additive and cumulative, though not necessarily simply so (i.e. it need not be the case that each passion contributes equally to the whole). Nevertheless, the passions can be 'compounded' (T 1.3.12, 141). But one then has the same problem as in probabilities that small differences can hardly be felt. At this point Hume has recourse to general rules again. Rules do not operate simply to overcome the difficulties in compounding passions, however. The presence of a general rule that more is stronger contributes to one's feeling that more is stronger. The rule is the product of passion, and it produces passion in its turn.

General rules are themselves among the species of 'unphilosophical probability' (T 1.3.13, 146), therefore. Since habit and experience produce cause and effect judgments, the same operation of habit and experience will tend to be applied not only to observations but also to similar cases. In effect, one forms a habit of relying on habit and experience. Even when specific counter-examples occur, a general expectation is sustained and operates as a rule. The effect can be to support prejudice, but it can also extend cause and effect.

Imagination also depends on unphilosophical probability because of the influence of general rules. Judgment and imagination both are controlled by custom. But judgment and imagination can differ. The difference could only arise because the imagination is influenced by general rules. 'According to my system, all reasonings are nothing but the effects of custom; and custom has no influence, but by invivifying the imagination, and giving us a strong conception of any object' (T 1.3.13, 149). Everywhere, general rules extend experience in two directions. Immediate impressions have their own influence. But the past is only mediated through experience and the future only through inductive expectation. Neither have the same force and vivacity on their own that impressions have. But both can be increased by a habit of mind so

that they not only rival immediate impressions; they can overwhelm them also. 'The general rule is attributed to our judgment; as being more extensive and constant. The exception to the imagination; as being more capricious and uncertain' (T 1.3.13, 149).

General rules can oppose each other. On the one hand, they lead the imagination to expect what may not in fact occur. On the other, they reveal the irregularity of such imaginative conceptions because they disclose that the conception does not fit the required pattern. 'The following of general rules is a very unphilosophical species of probability; and yet 'tis only by following them that we can correct this, and all other unphilosophical probabilities' (T 1.3.13, 150). This is precisely the problem that will arise in 'Of the Standard of Taste' where critical judgments in the past create an expectation of like judgments, and yet individual judgments vary wildly. By linking general rules to the imagination and to unphilosophical probability, Hume brings them directly into the problems of taste. The neo-classical view of rules in art opposed them to taste. Taste was thought of as subjective, variable, and sensuous. Rules were disciplined, rational, and universal. But Hume cannot treat rules in that way. His rules are themselves subject to the same radical empiricist reduction to feelings. As a consequence, Hume relies on a double sense of 'general rule'; it is both expectation and regularity. As expectation, it creates anomalies. As regularity, it provides a means of condemning anomalies. Thus, Hume retains a positive sense of rule as a control on the imagination while introducing a negative sense of rule as a prejudicial extension of experience. In 'Of the Standard of Taste' the ways to control rules themselves become the issue.

One cannot get by without general rules, however. For example, when one asks where the basis for vice and virtue is to be found, the answer is in sentiments. But particular sentiments must then be traced to their sources if they are to be distinguished and judged. This cannot be done, Hume argues, on the basis of what he calls original qualities or the primary constitution of the objects or sentiments. They are too varied and too many would be required. So we constitute the fiction that there is a uniform human nature. But appeals to nature to provide a standard lead to a different problem. One sense of nature opposes it to rare and unusual (e.g. 'natural,' 'freakish'). Here disputes may arise and a standard cannot be very precise. 'Frequent and rare depend upon the number of examples we have observ'd; and as this number may gradually encrease or diminish, 'twill be impossible to fix any exact boundaries betwixt them' (T 3.1.2, 474). We are back to probabilities. Hume is thus appealing to general rules in this context as well, but acknowledges the special problems that constituting such rules raises. The stronger sense of rules in morality than in aesthetics depends on the greater uniformity of their appearance, a purely empirical judgment in itself: 'These sentiments are so rooted in our constitution and

temper, that without entirely confounding the human mind by disease or madness, 'tis impossible to extirpate and destroy them' (T 3.1.2, 474). Hume believes this, whether it is true or not.

### Examples

Among the general rules that are necessary for morality is one concerning the 'stability of possession' (T 3.2.3, 501). Property rights are not natural, and they cannot be derived from qualities. They 'have in them no marks of a natural origin, but many of artifice and contrivance' (T 3.2.6, 528). From specific instances of dispute, a general rule is developed that acknowledges that undisturbed possession produces greater pleasure than self-interest alone would warrant. The problem in this case is to move from an accepted general rule to specific applications – who gets what property. Hume rejects utility as a way of deciding because it could not be applied without discord. Equal utility might apply to more than one person, but more important, it would generate controversy. The purpose of rules is to make decisions. It counts against a rule if it cannot be applied, even if the rule is theoretically justified.

The same principle is at work with respect to taste. One might ask parallel questions to those that arise about property in the case of rules of taste. How are they to be applied? Can they resolve controversies, or are they themselves the source of controversy? Rules of taste do seem to have a natural origin since they arise directly from taste and require no justification in terms of conventions or utility. But the origin in both cases is unattainable for the purpose of settling disputes: 'The nature of human society admits not of any great accuracy; nor can we always remount to the first origin of things, in order to determine their present condition' (T 3.2.3, 508). Widespread agreement can be found on general matters of taste even though they are ultimately artificial in Hume's sense. The problem is how to apply the general rule to specific works – which works are the foundation of good taste? Such disputes cannot be settled either by the rules themselves or by sentiments alone. Sentiments are the ultimate authority and are indisputable, but they provide unreliable guidance to general taste. Rules provide guidance but cannot by themselves form taste, which must be experienced as individual pleasure in impression. In the case of possession, the answer must be in terms of relations that are sustained. This can justify title from long possession, for example, but only as long as time does not itself work to lessen the strength of the sentiment of possession. Similarly, inheritance depends on relation and associations that tie the property of the parent to the child. This casts a somewhat different light on the test of time in the case of taste. The test rests not on its ability magically to sort out the most deserving instances but on its



cumulative strengthening of some associations and expectations while others are lost.<sup>13</sup> In the instances of both property and taste, as one would expect on Hume's principles, only sentiment can settle a dispute, but the sentiment may be formed in a number of ways. General rules aid in forming and maintaining sentiments.

A second example illustrates how complex the application of general rules becomes. As we have seen, fictions play a central role for Hume by allowing imagination to form impressions and to extend those impressions to situations that do not provide direct impressions of their own. The role of fictions thus parallels that of general rules in many ways, and in the case of aesthetic sentiments and the imagination, rules make it possible to understand some of the more puzzling effects associated with fictions.

One of the persistent problems for aesthetics has been feeling emotions for what one knows is only a fictional object. We have had occasion to refer to this topic above, and it provides a relevant example here as well. A special version of that problem has received wide discussion under the topic of fearing fictions.<sup>14</sup> To some, it has seemed a special case of incoherence to fear fictional beings that one specifically does not believe in. Emotional responses that are appropriate when directed toward actual beings become incoherent when directed toward fictional beings just because one cannot believe in the fictional beings and thus the emotional response is without an original impression. Apart from momentary shock, why should one fear a screen monster. The impression arises from a fictional being and can only be believed if one is subject to a naive deception as was the case in Orson Welles' 'War of the Worlds' broadcast. The problem is related to a larger problem about why the same emotion should be encouraged in fictional cases while avoided in actual ones.

These problems are especially acute for Hume's position. Beginning as he does with sentiment, it seems that sentiments are oddly perverted when otherwise unpleasant sentiments appear to be enjoyed. Hume identifies two areas in which this occurs: religion and dramatic performances. His solution is brief. 'In these latter cases the imagination reposes itself indolently on the idea; and the passion, being soften'd by the want of belief in the subject, has no more than the agreeable effect of enlivening the mind, and fixing the attention' (T 1.3.9, 115). Lacking a threat, only the excitement and mental stimulation remain, and they are pleasurable. So crying for Anna Karenina is only a form of mental exercise since one's lack of belief indicates that no original impression is at the origin.<sup>15</sup> The imagination stops with an idea of Anna instead of looking for an impression according to this view. As a piece of folk psychology, this is less than convincing. It requires that the terror and 'gloomy passions' are secondary occurrences of their counterparts that are based on belief. (Hume's solution is not unlike Kendall Walton's recourse to make-believe and quasi-

belief, however.) The imagination does not reach back from the idea to a believed impression of its object but to some other impression that can be believed. To Hume's sentiment-based epistemology, this seems to introduce a shift in objects that is difficult to explain. In a similar situation where he needed to distinguish memory from imagination, Hume concluded that only the force and vivacity of the feelings could separate the two. Here, though, he seems to allow a causal appeal that requires a dual reference.

Moreover, it encounters another problem. Hume is forced to explain away what are apparently strongly held beliefs as not really beliefs at all.<sup>16</sup> For example, if one claims to believe in the immortality of the soul, then that belief, even though mistaken on Hume's principles, must arise from a strong, vivacious idea. Otherwise, it is not a belief. But the testimony of the believer seems unquestionable. Instead, Hume infers that since everyone has the same emotions toward death, the belief in immortality must not be real. Sensible Roman Catholics, Hume believes, agree in finding certain acts of religious zealotry barbarous; they have the same emotion as everyone else. They recognize the barbarity of religious massacres and persecution. So their sentiments and beliefs should tell them that it is wrong to persecute or harm such people. Nevertheless, they condemn those who are barbarously persecuted to eternal punishment. 'All we can say in excuse for this inconsistency is, that they really do not believe what they affirm concerning a future state; nor is there any better proof of it than this inconsistency' (T 1.3.9, 115). This is no more convincing from Hume than is Boswell's denial of Hume's own state of mind as death approached. Emotional responses for Hume are basic. What then are pseudo-beliefs? In principle, those who are mistaken and those who believe correctly cannot have different impressions and ideas that stimulate passions. If they did, then mistaken beliefs and correct beliefs would not really be contraries, and when one ceased to believe the passion would change because it would originate in a different idea or impression. Hume finds himself in the awkward position of having to tell people that they really do not believe what they strongly believe that they believe. Perhaps Hume does mean just that – if one is actually frightened at a performance of the *Duchess of Malfi*, that is different from the pleasurable fright one takes in a more appropriate response. The actual fright does not have the play but some other, perhaps personal, idea as its origin. The pleasurable fright has the impression of the play based on its performance of a fiction as its object. So one has two different passions directed toward two different causes. But it is hard to see how Hume can maintain such comparisons on purely emotional evidence.

The key for Hume seems to be a curious sentence: 'In the common affairs of life, where we feel and are penetrated with the solidity of the subject, nothing can be more disagreeable than fear and terror and 'tis only in dramatic performances and in

religious discourses, that they ever give pleasure' (T 1.3.9, 115). Being 'penetrated with the solidity of the subject' is, apparently, a kind of bedrock belief that amounts to the actuality of what is believed. But belief is still only a stronger emotional presence of the idea. So the explanation for religious superstition and dramatic performance, no matter how strongly they are believed, cannot depend on that kind of bedrock belief because those beliefs do not have solid subjects (i.e. real objects). They may be as emotionally strong, but they will not have the same *kind* of strength. If Hume does allow this kind of distinction (and the evidence is slight), it would also make it easier to see how his apparently counter-intuitive reliance on the greater strength and vivacity of impression-based memory can distinguish it from imaginative hallucination. Emotional evidence is not simply quantitative; 'strength' is a qualitative term as well. Those beliefs are 'strong' that can stand up to mental testing without changing their emotional character. The problem with religious and dramatic emotions is precisely that they do change as one's beliefs waver and shift from moment to moment.<sup>17</sup> In any given instance, imagination might produce a stronger, more vivid idea than memory or a play might produce a stronger, more vivid idea than the common affairs of life. But that is only a quantitative strength of the moment. As soon as one allows it to come under scrutiny as to resemblance, habit, and custom, the quantitative strength fades while memory or the ideas from life continues to be 'inescapable' – strong – in a quantitatively lesser but qualitatively more stable way. In that case, one might say that one does not experience different emotions, but that nevertheless, there is an emotional difference between believed and imagined situations. 'The force of our mental actions in this case [the fervor of poetry and eloquence] is not to be measur'd by the apparent agitation of the mind' (T app. 631). Resemblance, habit, and custom produce general rules, however. So one has come full circle.

Hume makes another distinction concerning pain and pleasure. Pleasure and pain may belong to an impression, in which case they are 'the chief spring and moving principle' to action (T 1.3.10, 118) (whether successfully or not might depend on other competing motive forces). Or one may have an idea of pleasure and pain. So a meal may be pleasant and that moves me to eat it. Or I may recall a meal and have an idea of the pleasure that it gave me. Pleasurable impressions are motive forces, but as ideas approach the strength of impressions, the idea may provide a counterbalancing force. If I remember the pain of over-eating, that idea may keep me from indulging the immediate act that is pleasurable and moves me to eat. Ideas of pleasure or pain gain their motive force by imitating impressions in strength and vivacity.

This does not seem to be quite the same distinction as that suggested earlier. The pleasure one feels in a tragedy is different from the emotion that an actual death

produces. There, two emotions must be distinguished. Here the difference is between impression and idea. The impression is active; the idea that it produces may not be. In the earlier discussion, the same performance elicited two different emotional responses. But the basis for the distinctions is the same. If the idea is closely connected to the impression in terms of its force and vivacity, it will lead to action; otherwise, not. Since belief is a matter of greater force and vivacity, 'the effect, then, of belief is to raise up a simple idea to an equality with our impressions, and bestow on it a like influence on the passions' (T 1.3.10, 119). So with respect to the same object, the difference between an action and non-action is belief. We have this situation. Fictions, by themselves, no matter how strongly they affect us, cannot be as strong as impressions just because they are fictions and are not believed. So any emotions that fictions produce will be non-active. I may weep copiously, but I will do nothing, and in doing nothing, I demonstrate that the idea lacks the kind of strength and vivacity that belief in the idea of a corresponding impression would have. A much 'cooler' response, more strongly held, will result in action, and thus it actually exemplifies a greater strength and vivacity than the emotionally more demonstrative idea. Hume does not just oppose enthusiasm and superstition; he does not believe that they are really strongly-held enough to compete with actual impressions and the ideas that approach those impressions. (Perhaps this accounts for his seeming lack of combativeness compared to radicals like John Toland or Thomas Paine who seek to turn the world upside down. Hume can be content to await the inevitable fading of superstition.) Evidence for Hume's position might come from the failure of enthusiasm to sustain itself. Its inconsistency and emotional transience are evidence for its lack of strength. Conversion experiences need to be repeated at frequent intervals – 'revivals'; they are emotional orgies that have great strength while they last, but they lack real belief. General rules cannot follow from such singular phenomena. The same could be said of fictions that do not survive the moment of presentation. The lasting influence of drama comes not from any direct emotion or spur to action, but from its ability to re-orient one's reception of present impressions over a long period of time.

In fact, there would be no dramatic effect if it were not possible to extend fictions to emotional ideas. From the existence of predictable dramatic effects, in turn, arises the possibility of criticism. Criticism depends on a generalizable necessity:

Where would be the foundation of morals, if particular characters had no certain or determinate power to produce particular sentiments, and if these sentiments had no constant operation on actions? And with what pretence could we employ our criticism upon any poet or polite author, if we could

not pronounce the conduct and sentiments of his actors either natural or unnatural to such characters, and in such circumstances?

(EHU 8.1, 70/91)

One must be able to project the conduct and sentiments of actors on the basis of a character that can be assigned to them. If there were no regularity and necessity, it would be impossible to say what a character should or should not do. Hume's appeal here places criticism in the same list and on exactly the same basis as history, politics, and morals. All are sciences of human behavior and all are based on the ability to predict human actions on the basis of observed regularities. The regularities belong to the work being criticized or the behavior being recorded. They are not regularities about the critic but about the actors. This is what is called 'necessity,' but it operates exactly like general rules that are strongly supported.

The ability to generate rules arises from regularity and repetition. The problem with poetry and fictions is that their effects are accidental: 'We observe, that the vigour of conception, which fictions receive from poetry and eloquence, is a circumstance merely accidental, of which every idea is equally susceptible; and that such fictions are connected with nothing that is real' (T app. 631). What I take Hume to mean is that by the manipulation of the circumstances, one can produce strong feelings of quite contradictory types from the same ideas. Webster can make Bosolo both evil and admirable. Shakespeare can manipulate the same character type and make Iago simply evil. Moliere can make the type comic. We take pleasure in the one and hate the other. There is a difference in feeling about the character type, and that difference is reflected in our inability to make any kind of generalization on the basis of fictional cases. They lack the regularity that produces rules. As Fielding noted with respect to *Tom Jones*, the author can make the story turn any way he decides. Hume concludes:

A like reflexion on general rules keeps us from augmenting our belief upon every encrease of the force and vivacity of our ideas. Where an opinion admits of no doubt, or opposite probability, we attribute to it a full conviction; tho' the want of resemblance, or contiguity, may render its force inferior to that of other opinions.

(T app. 632)

Hume does not use specific rules to judge epistemological principles. General rules correct sense, but the ability to produce rules at all resolves the systematic problem of distinguishing imagination from reality. That is, imagination is too erratic to produce rules; thus the ability to regularize experience is itself a way of distinguishing

the imaginary from the real. What matters is not just what the rule is but that one can produce a rule at all.

Hume's use of rules is neither law-like nor conventional, therefore. The process of rule generation is part of the sentimental basis by which the mind creates its own nature and extends its reach beyond its own immediate sentiments. Only a kind of rule that is itself productive of sentiment can do that. The rules of art are the paradigm for Hume's use of 'general rule.' Such rules do not themselves become standards, and that can even be the source of prejudice and error. But they are inescapable and they lead one back to experience. When one ventures into matters of art, fiction, and taste, the existence of general rules is both necessary and problematic. They are necessary because without them, fictional objects and imagination cannot function. But they are problematic because the very existence of general rules requires a more stable basis than fictions and imagination can supply. The problem becomes acute in matters of taste where the lack of consequences and effects that limit moral sentiment do not operate. Thus, Hume must confront the means by which general rules can be made to operate in matters of taste. He must deal with the question of a standard of taste.

## THE PROBLEM OF A STANDARD OF TASTE

‘Of the Standard of Taste’ has been extensively discussed as if it were the central and virtually the only applicable work by Hume on aesthetics. If the arguments in the preceding chapters is correct, this is a very misleading way to approach ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ and the other essays that deal with aesthetic issues, especially ‘On Tragedy’ and ‘On the Delicacy of the Passions.’ The essays are the consequences of more basic positions worked out in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries*. Hume’s aesthetic epistemology poses problems that were central to the critical discussion of the arts, and he uses the essay form to address those problems in a context that the public was prepared to understand. In particular, ‘On Tragedy’ addresses the problem raised by sentimental enjoyment of piteous and fearful events, and ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ addresses the problem of subjectivity that arises from reliance on sentiment. Neither can be understood fully apart from Hume’s more basic account of sentiment and taste. ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ is not about taste, *per se*. The essay is specifically about the problem of a standard – why one must have some standard to settle disputes and how such a standard can be made consistent with the empirical sentimentalism at the heart of Hume’s epistemology. I will approach these specialist essays in that light, therefore.

### **Hume’s defense of taste**

Hume’s discussion of taste follows along lines already laid down by Shaftesbury and traced in Chapters 1 and 2. He is a defender of taste and sentiment. The lines are clearly drawn, therefore. As a critical term, ‘taste’ is well established. It makes sense and pleasure primary evidence for moral virtue and for beauty. It has a judgmental function, and it is productive in the sense that it is linked to wit and genius. At the same time, it is suspect because it promotes sense and pleasure over any form of rule or reason. Reliance on good taste can be socially conservative, but it is more likely to be associated with free-thinking and the rejection of ancient wisdom. If Hume is to vindicate sentiment as evidence, he must account for taste.

In particular, Hume needs a concept of taste as a way to connect his systematic epistemology of impressions and ideas to the normative discrimination of some sentiments from others. Rules cannot make that kind of discrimination. They are limited to empirical indications of order. They can be used to produce sentiment in an orderly fashion and to extend experience both backward for the understanding and forward by expectation. But they cannot distinguish what sentiment itself can alone judge – how the complex of emotions, passions and primary impressions are felt. Taste mediates between felt sentiment and normative discrimination. On the one hand, taste just is a sense at work. It is rooted in its dual sensory meanings of primary sensation and a stimulation of a particular organ. On the other hand, it has acquired an analogical meaning associating it with character and pleasure. That analogy is central to Hume's aesthetic position.

Taste follows imagination.<sup>1</sup> While the primary sensations of taste belong to pure sense, the analogical and normative senses of taste depend on ideas and associations that are controlled by the faculty of the imagination. The simplest distinction is in strength. Sentiments may be stronger or weaker. Taste is not only reflective, therefore; it is subordinate to the passions that control action. 'Sentiments must touch the heart, to make them controul our passions: But they need not extend beyond the imagination, to make them influence our taste' (T 3.3.1, 586). Taste in this context is more limited than the direct passions and impressions that would arise if one were immediately involved with action. Because taste is limited in this way, it is subject to fluctuations and variations that can be tolerated whereas strong passions such as anger and love would have to be controlled.

When he wants to refer to purely physical sensation, Hume has available 'relish' as a synonym rather than 'taste' – for example, 'A Laplander or Negro has no notion of the relish of wine' (EHU 2, 15/20). 'Relish' retains the purely subjective sense of physical stimulation without bringing into play the analogical and normative meanings of taste. It is worth noting, however, that Hume's examples in this context are not limited to physical impressions. A similar reduction applies to other sentiments or passions of the mind, for example anger, cruelty, selfishness. If all that is involved is how one comes to feel an idea, then all that is required is an appropriate stimulation. Absent that stimulation, the passion will not occur.

A man of mild manners can form no idea of inveterate revenge or cruelty; nor can a selfish heart easily conceive the heights of friendship and generosity. It is readily allowed, that other beings may possess many senses of which we can have no conception; because the ideas of them have never been introduced to us in the only manner by which an idea can have access to the mind, to wit, by the actual feeling and sensation.

(EHU 2, 15/20)



Taste in its analogical sense is much more than just sensation, therefore.

Sentiment is basic, but all sentiment is not equal. Since he cannot appeal to a normative reason by itself, Hume is forced to consider the reasoner as well as the reasoning. Differences in sentiment must themselves be translated into sentiment. Hume recognizes the problem. For example,

In every judgment, which we can form concerning probability, as well as concerning knowledge, we ought always to correct the first judgment, deriv'd from the nature of the object, by another judgment, deriv'd from the nature of the understanding. 'Tis certain a man of solid sense and long experience ought to have, and usually has, a greater assurance in his opinions, than one that is foolish and ignorant, and that our sentiments have different degrees of authority *even with ourselves*, in proportion to the degrees of our reason and experience.

(T 1.4.1, 181–182; my emphasis)

It is not just that Hume here acknowledges that sentiments have different degrees of authority. It is how he does it. Basically, we have a sentiment in favor of certain kinds of sentiment.<sup>2</sup> We, ourselves, are dependent on our ability to feel the difference in confidence that we have in some sentiments because of our experience. Even though sentiment is itself distinguished, Hume consistently maintains '*that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures*' (T 1.4.1, 183). Belief, in turn, endorses certain objects and sentiments and rejects others. Taste is not merely subjective preference. It is founded on a distinction between what the imagination produces that can be believed and what cannot be believed. A person of taste is also a person of good sense.

The problem is that everything is not reducible to judgments that can be traced back to belief. This is particularly the case with beauty and pleasure. In spite of describing beauty as a construction or form that gives pleasure, Hume goes on to say 'that beauty like wit, cannot be defin'd, but is discern'd only by a taste or sensation' (T 2.1.8, 299). What beauty lacks is the kind of definition that would allow it to be identified independently of the pleasure it produces. What is missing from a definition of beauty is a specific difference that is an object of belief. Hume has no illusion that a sensuous line or uniformity amidst variety could form the kind of specific difference that sensations of color or shape provide for spatial objects. They may be part of a causal expectation, and thus form a rule, but they are not independent of the pleasure they produce. On the other hand, no subjective distinction is available either. Other things cause pleasure without being beautiful. If the pleasure of beauty were qualitatively different, then it would have a defining pleasure that would be at least phenomenologically available. But Hume does not

hold that there is a distinctive aesthetic pleasure, so beauty lacks a subjective distinction. Taste fills the gap. It is a *je ne sais quoi*, but one that has roots in sensation.

Hume has recourse to a class of agreeable sentiments that cannot be accounted for except by taste. One can no more account for these effects than one can explain a preference for chocolate over vanilla.

But besides all the *agreeable* qualities, the origin of whose beauty we can, in some degree, explain and account for, there still remains something mysterious and inexplicable, which conveys an immediate satisfaction to the spectator, but how, or why or for what reason, he cannot pretend to determine. There is a manner, a grace, an ease, a genteelness, an I-know-not-what, which some men possess above others, which is very different from external beauty and comeliness, and which, however, catches our affection almost as suddenly and powerfully.

(EPM 8, 216/267)

This appeal to *je ne sais quoi* is, of course, straight out of the French neo-classical tradition. It finds its place in Hume's theory because sentiment is the final evidence. But that does not make it any more satisfactory as a piece of aesthetic theory. Taste and sentiment are admittedly 'blind' at this point. An account of taste that will recognize its judgmental and productive aspect is needed. Pleasure provides that link.

Pleasure and pain are immediate sensations alongside qualities that may be the causes of other impressions. In other words, pleasure is not the same as beauty, nor is it antecedent to beauty. One has a sensation of pleasure, which is a primary sensation and for Hume need not be traced back to anything else. One just feels pleasure. Beauty is an emotion, but it can be treated as a quality because it refers to something that one denominates as beautiful. Now if pain and pleasure are original sensations, and qualities produce calm passions of reflection or secondary impressions that are pleasurable or painful, then qualities alone cannot produce the passions. Otherwise, one would identify certain qualities or objects as pleasurable as well as beautiful. But when we make that kind of reference (as we do), we do not mean that the object or quality is itself pleasurable but that it regularly produces pleasure in the normal course of producing sentiments. The difficulty this will cause if one takes it seriously is that a quality such as that implied by beauty must have separate identity criteria to distinguish it from other pleasures, and of course Hume does not attempt to supply them, nor on his system could he. Beauty is no more a primary impression than causality or necessity. Hence, taste becomes even more important.

Taste operates in advance of any explanations and principles, either directly in terms of qualities or by extension through rules. Whether principles can be found or not does not affect the evidence of taste. Wit, for example, 'is a quality immediately agreeable to others, and communicating, on its first appearance, a lively joy and satisfaction to every one who has any comprehension of it' (EPM 8, 212/262). Wit, in turn, is a mark of good company. Hume's defense of manners and good company could have been given on utilitarian grounds, but it is not. It rests directly on taste.

The role of taste throughout Hume's work remains essentially what it was in the *Treatise*. For example, Hume offers a description of taste in the context of a discussion of wit as a source of pride. Wit presents a problem because it is inexplicable in terms of causes. 'No one has ever been able to tell what *wit* is, and to shew why such a system of thought must be receiv'd under that denomination, and such another rejected' (T 2.1.7, 297). In such cases, one has recourse to taste. Taste, then, has two criteria: i) it is distinguished by a sensation of pleasure or uneasiness, and ii) one cannot further justify that pleasure or uneasiness. So taste covers all cases where pleasure is inexplicably present. Taste here is not particularly a form of sensation. Nor is it clear whether our inability to trace the causal sources of taste is an accidental or essential part of taste. It might be the case that if one had better reasons – a causal account, for example – one would not depend on taste. So if one really understood the chemical properties of good wine, wine-tastings would not be required to denominate good and bad wine.<sup>3</sup> But it is more likely that taste should be understood as an association of impressions – there is presumably some corpuscular or micro-explanation for how the mind associates impressions, but one does not need to know it in order to have a full knowledge of the associations. Hume seems to place taste outside rule-governed investigation, but it is not at all certain that he is proposing some proto-Sibleyan position in which taste is a separate area of judgment. The recourse to taste seems to be a matter of empirical necessity, not theoretical isolation for Hume.

Taste enters when one cannot separate multiple causes of the same phenomenon into an ordered set. 'There seldom is any very precise argument to fix our choice, and men must be contented to be guided by a kind of taste or fancy, arising from analogy, and comparison of similar instances' (T 3.2.3, 504, n. 1). Rather than utility, Hume proposes affinity within the mind as the principle that justifies present possession. The mind likes order, and where it finds resemblance or contiguity, it keeps those objects together. So,

As property forms a relation betwixt a person and an object, 'tis natural to find it on some preceding relation; and as property is nothing but a constant possession, secur'd by the laws of society, 'tis natural to add it to the present possession, which is a relation that resembles it.

(T 3.2.3, 504–505, n. 1)

Beauty is also a response to this order and natural affinity between objects. Hume promises a more detailed treatment of beauty than he ever supplied, but he hints that it would be based on the impulse to order and resemblance. Deformity would be parts that do not fit; beauty, a product of resemblance and contiguity either in the object or imposed by fancy and imagination. Taste is the guide to the difference.

Taste is also a productive faculty, however. In contrast to reason, which is eternal, taste varies with the constitution of the species, but taste is what gives sentiments. Reason

conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood: [taste] gives the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue. The one discovers objects as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution: the other has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation.

(EPM, app. I, 246/294)

How far taste should be treated as some new faculty is questionable, however. The description here fits the imagination and fancy equally well. Given the context, it is probably best to take this description of taste as an unsystematic condensation of the otherwise inexplicable causal role that taste already played.

The productive role of taste is limited to imaginative associations. Hume has a nice tongue in cheek reference to a poem on 'Cyder': 'Beer wou'd not have been so proper, as being neither so agreeable to the taste nor eye. But he [the poet] wou'd certainly have preferr'd wine to either of them, cou'd his native country have afforded him so agreeable a liquor' (T 2.2.5, 358). It does seem that 'taste' here has a double meaning – literally the taste of beer; figuratively, a lower class and English preference for beer. Hume, the Francophile, could not resist setting the priorities of taste. More seriously, however, what is agreeable to the senses also appeals to the fancy, according to Hume, and 'conveys to the thought an image of that satisfaction, which it gives by its real application to the bodily organs' (T 2.2.5, 358). The workings of taste depicted here proceed from bodily pleasure to an image to the thought of an image, which is the metaphorical taste. The utility of the analogy to physical sensations of taste in this context is not its subjectivity but its ability to supply immediate pleasure. Taste, more than any of the other senses, depends directly on sensual pleasure or uneasiness. The eye and the ear provide images that may be neutral. But taste carries with it its affective quality directly.

Taste also operates through desire, and there, too, the analogy with physical experience is helpful. Hume argues that the effect of beauty is to make one approach or desire something. Hence, he gives as one example that beauty makes us approach

food, and thus gives us a keener appetite (T 2.2.11, 395). In this context, Hume does not suggest that this has anything to do with taste, but it does suggest that the taste metaphor may have some foundation in a desire for pleasure. The path by which the metaphor is developed also supports this association. Alimentary metaphors were common as ways of linking the physical with the spiritual world.<sup>4</sup> The centrality of taste makes it natural to include under taste the desire that essentially pleasurable emotions invoke.

In general, Hume describes movements from one idea to another. If one begins with pleasant ideas, they suggest the person who possesses them. In the case of esteem for riches, for example, one moves from the pleasure associated with riches to esteem for the rich person. (Hume is under no illusion that poverty is blessed.) Beauty or agreeableness are not themselves the most important source of esteem for riches. Beauty is an impression that may produce more violent passions, but it should not be equated with them: 'riches and power alone, even tho' unemploy'd, naturally cause esteem and respect: And consequently these passions arise not from the idea of any beautiful or agreeable objects' (T 2.2.5, 359). In this respect, sympathy takes precedence over imagination and fancy in transferring the sentiments from one source to another. One should not expect taste to replace this process. Instead, the analogy of taste expands to include the person. In that way, one gets a person of taste, and taste becomes a character trait. In both the moral and aesthetic cases, the production of sentiment is a matter of taste. Taste is the alternative to reason, the internal feeling for good and evil, beauty and deformity. Taste is internal, a motive to action, a source of pleasure and pain. The standard of taste is peculiar to the 'nature' of the being that experiences it. Conversely, the character of someone is judged by their taste. In this respect, Hume draws no distinction between moral and aesthetic taste, though there is clearly one to be drawn. Both forms of taste are independent of the understanding. Both are dependent on the way that the individual is constructed and have their source in the complex interaction of imagination and pleasurable sensation. The latter is rooted in the physical sensation exemplified by the senses of 'taste' as a sensual impression, touch, and a testing experience. The former arises from the pleasures that accompany beauty and virtue with an immediacy that makes them otherwise inexplicable.

### **The nature of a standard**

The analogy of taste and the role that it plays in supplementing rules to explain moral and aesthetic judgments inevitably leads to a problem of standards. Rules are empirical products of time and habit. They counteract the naive sentimentalism of the moment that is antithetical to Hume's form of empiricism. But they do not

supplant sentiment. Taste is not formed by rule, so rules themselves do not provide a standard, and taste is a productive faculty that is itself in need of sorting if one is to avoid a chaos of judgments. Taste produces judgments, but even together with rules, it remains idiosyncratic. A standard, on the other hand, must be communal at least. The problem of a standard of taste essentially consists in extending the evidentiary value of sentiment to a community. Du Bos never makes the move from individual sense to communal taste; Hume does. What is at issue is not taste itself, which needs no defense, nor the sentiments produced by taste, which have their own legitimacy and motive force for action, but a way to choose between different tastes – something that is a matter of character and communal value.

Hume's idea of how a standard works is essentially pragmatic. For example, he grants mathematicians a defense of equality of surfaces based on indivisible points. But he calls such a procedure 'useless' because it cannot be put into practice by the mind. The mathematical issue is archaic. Hume's failure to distinguish formal from psychological properties of logical systems limits his forays into these issues to an historical interest. But what he says of a standard is important. The purpose of a standard is for the mind to be able to judge. What the mind cannot distinguish and determine conceptually, it cannot use as a standard. His phrase concerning mathematical properties is echoed exactly in the language of 'Of the Standard of Taste': 'such a composition will never afford us a standard, by which we may judge of proportions' (T 1.2.3, 45). In the case of taste, one requires something that will afford a standard by which one may judge of differing tastes. The operation of a standard in both cases is the same. It must be something that the mind can assemble that will do an essentially pragmatic job – the comparison of two surfaces or the comparison of two tastes. Appeals to *je ne sais quoi* or uniformity amidst variety will help no more than mathematical points.

Hume simply denies that there are really major differences in the sentiments themselves, either in morals or beauty: 'None of these revolutions has ever produced any considerable innovation in the primary sentiments of morals, more than in those of external beauty' (EPM A Dialogue, 336). There are variations, but they amount to no more than what can be accounted for by cultural differences and the influence of circumstances. The basic sentimental reactions are relatively uniform. But agreement in the nature of sentiments does not solve the problem of a standard of taste. In morals and in art alike, the problem is for the mind to be able to compare two sentiments and choose between them. For example, in dealing with property, the need for a standard is to decide disputes. No certain standard exists. One cannot distinguish impossibility from improbability from probability in cases of disputed possession, so the probable knowledge supplied by rules is of no assistance. But a standard is needed to 'Mark the precise limits of the one and the other, and shew the standard, by which we may decide all disputes that may arise,

and, as we find by experience, frequently do arise upon this subject' (T 3.2.3, 506). Again, the language is echoed in 'Of the Standard of Taste,' and the requirement is essentially pragmatic.

Hume extends what he has said about time and fictions to the musician's idea of 'a compleat *tierce* or *octave*' (T 1.2.4, 49). The appearance of a perfect standard is a natural but illusory extension of the kind of distinction that the mind can make. 'This standard is plainly imaginary. . . . The notion of any correction beyond what we have instruments and art to make, is a mere fiction of the mind, and useless as well as incomprehensible' (T 1.2.4, 48). This example links together three points. The musician depends on increasing delicacy. This implies that delicacy is something that can be improved and acquired, and it arises from reflection. With increased delicacy, musicians make comparisons and project a unity that is not actually present apart from the individual impressions. Thus they project a fictional entity, the octave. Thus far, one has a movement of ideas and impressions that produces a new idea – the octave – which is strong enough to be heard as a complex impression even though its reference is essentially fictional. The last move is different. The projection becomes a standard. It is taken as a perfect octave, and in spite of the fact that such a thing does not exist and can therefore have no actual use as a standard, it is set up as the ideal. If the question arises which piece of music is the more perfect, it is the delicacy of the musician that issues in a fictional projection that provides a standard. Since what is projected is a fiction, it cannot itself be directly examined. The ability to establish the precise octave as a standard of musical excellence actually depends both on delicacy and on a form of projection that provides a pragmatic standard.<sup>5</sup> The same analogy works for the painter with respect to color and with the mechanic with respect to motion. There is no difference in principle between the artist and the mechanic in this respect. Each is engaged in turning an impression that is essentially non-referential into a representational standard that can be applied to secure a judgment.

Everything turns on the delicacy of the senses of the one who judges. In 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion,' Hume distinguishes the undesirable effects of a delicacy of passion, which is to be corrected and avoided, from the positive effects of a delicacy of taste. Delicacy of passion is likely to produce a surplus of pains over pleasures. 'I believe, however, every one will agree with me, that, notwithstanding their resemblance, delicacy of taste is as much to be desired and cultivated as delicacy of passion is to be lamented, and to be remedied, if possible.'<sup>6</sup> Taste is the cure for delicacy of passion because delicacy of taste strengthens our judgment. However, delicacy alone cannot be a standard since it leads only to a fiction. Delicacy of imagination is a product of the influence of sensations of beauty or agreeableness on fancy. The more common ideas of pleasure (which approach

impressions in strength) are those that gain strength from resemblance, particularly the common resemblance of human creatures. So one is led from delicacy of imagination to the related objects and thence to the person with whom the objects are associated (T 2.2.5, 358). This is true of riches, and by extension of critical behavior. In attempting to establish a standard, one is led from the ideal to the one whose taste is able to project it.

When it comes to what can be compared, the parallel between Hume's position in the *Treatise* and in 'Of the Standard of Taste' is exact. In the *Treatise*, Hume discusses lines and curves and how they are distinguished. On his psychological principles, no exact comparison is possible because there is no specific idea to compare. But compare we do. What we do, therefore, is produce a rule. This rule is the product of experience in the sense of repeated trials. A rule then has the function of filling the gap between observation and comparison – a rule is essentially the generation of ideal cases from actual experience: 'And 'tis from these corrections, and by carrying on the same action of the mind, even when its reason fails us, that we form the loose idea of a perfect standard to these figures, without being able to explain or comprehend it' (T 1.2.4, 49). The same thing happens with respect to taste. The rule is comparable to the musician's perfect octave or the painter's exact color; it is a taste that judges exactly. The evidence that taste issues in a rule is the ability to go on from known cases to unknown cases according to the 'same actions of the mind.' So what confirms the rule is that new actions of the mind continue to extend the rule. Milton is better than Ogilby. To extend that rule to Bunyan and Addison, one continues to find the same aesthetic objects – elegance, style, precision, etc. By that extension, taste confirms that Addison is better than Bunyan. The failure of the comparison in this case comes only when literature has broadened its scope so that the mind can go on to Bunyan rather than Addison without violating a more comprehensive rule. Hume never says, nor does anything in his procedure imply, that the production of rules is not subject to correction and even change as one changes the scope of experience. Within the scope of the neoclassical rules, Addison *is* better than Bunyan. To change that judgment, one has to change the scope. To change the scope, one must change the observer. Du Bos thought that that required an organic change. Hume needs only a cultural change and a change in taste.

A standard takes precedence over an ideal case.

In vain shou'd we have recourse to the common topic, and employ the supposition of a deity, whose omnipotence may enable him to form a perfect geometrical figure, and describe a right line without any curve or inflexion. As the ultimate standard of these figures is deriv'd from nothing but the senses and imagination, 'tis absurd to talk of any perfection beyond



what these faculties can judge of; since the true perfection of any thing consists in its conformity to its standard.

(T 1.2.4, 51)

This appeal to a standard seems simple until one recalls that the standard itself is only the product of a fictional unity produced by a rule. Thus 'true perfection' works back through sense and imagination to the mind's own operations on its own impressions. Post-modernists might think that they are going to love this, but they won't. Instead of deriving a subjective priority for the observer, Hume derives a standard that will elevate certain observers according to their ability to produce rules.<sup>7</sup>

A standard in Hume's system is absolutely essential. It is not just a social or political necessity, though it is that. It is an epistemological necessity. Without a standard, a whole class of cases would not be explainable. It is not just that one would be unable to settle disputes on the order of Sancho's kinsmen's wine palates. One would not be able to project a 'taste' of the wine at all. One would have only its actual sweetness, acidity, etc., not its goodness or badness. The analogy that extends taste from physical impression to normative judgment would break down. The difference between a wine-tasting machine and a human palate is just taste, just as the difference between a musical spectrum analyzer and a listener is the taste of the listener. The former can say only that such notes are present. The latter can say that they are harmonious or discordant, beautiful or painful to the ear. That is not because the human is a subjective listener but because only with the human projection from experience do such qualities as harmony and beauty come to apply at all. If the machines work, it is because they conform to the rule of human taste. The standard produces the ideal case that has no existence for the machine.

In discussing taste and wit, Hume links taste and a standard in a way that suggests that taste itself is the standard: 'Tis only by taste we can decide concerning it [wit], nor are we possest of any other standard, upon which we can form a judgment of this kind' (T 2.1.7, 297). Hume seems to be saying that taste is itself the only standard for judgments of what is or is not wit. It is sufficient in the case of wit that if the sally produces pleasure and is not attributable to other causes (for example, flattery), it is true wit; if it produces uneasiness, it is not. Aside from the fact that this is arguably not true because true wit may well produce uneasiness as its legitimate goal (satire, political wit, for example Lenny Bruce, George Carlin), one must ask whether in the case of wit there is any other standard than pleasure. If there is not, of course, then not only is there no disputing about wit, but 'true wit' is not a real judgment. It is only a subjective preference. If there is a standard, then, it must be more than just a taste. It is someone's taste. No standard gets behind taste to some universal, rational

basis for comparison, but that does not reduce the question of a standard to the question of taste. The problem, of course, is that in this context, Hume is not pursuing these questions. They arise only in the context of an example designed to show that wit is a source of pride when one feels pleasure in it.

Elsewhere, Hume takes it for granted that there is a difference between taste and a standard of taste. For example, he acknowledges that moral reasoning takes place. 'Truth is disputable; not taste: what exists in the nature of things is the standard of our judgement; what each man feels within himself is the standard of sentiment' (EPM 1, 135/171). So a standard is a fact of sentiment and taste. A sentiment is felt immediately. It forms a standard when it is given an authority that extends one person's taste to others. The question is how that extension is possible if taste itself is not disputable. One feels both the beauty of an action and the rightness of that beauty. One might continue to feel the beauty without feeling its rightness, however.

There are two sources of moral judgments: sentiments that arise from the species or sentiments that arise from particular persons. 'My opinion is, that both these causes are intermix'd in our judgments of morals; after the same manner as they are in our decisions concerning most kinds of external beauty' (T 3.3.1, 589–590). Reflections on tendencies are the stronger, but particular tastes may dominate in specific instances – 'in cases of less moment, wherein this immediate taste or sentiment produces our approbation' (T 3.3.1, 590). Since all tastes and all impressions are ultimately particular, this can only mean that moral systems extend beyond what any individual can know. If the system is to be accepted, it must lead to new sentiments in its favor.

Hume clearly believes that such distinctions are not only possible but that they are natural. 'But there is this material difference between superstition and justice, that the former is frivolous, useless, and burdensome; the latter is absolutely requisite to the well-being of mankind and existence of society' (EPM 3.2, 159/199). What is interesting about this passage is not that it has any direct reference to taste or aesthetics but that the problem arises in the same way that the problem of taste arises, and Hume is quite clear that justice is required. He has just acknowledged that differences in justice may be arbitrary from one jurisdiction to another and that they cannot be founded on qualities or objects. Yet some system of justice is necessary. If it can be shown that a similar need arises in the case of taste, and that the erection of a standard is useful, then Hume's argument about justice will go through to taste as well. One might then say that the extreme sentimentalism of a Lawrence Sterne or a Rousseau was like superstition. It fails because it is frivolous, useless, and burdensome. The sentiment that issues in taste and a standard is artificial in the way that justice is artificial, but it is also productive of a standard.

The analogy is not very precise. Taste does not involve property or the regulation of desire. It is more like a state that offers sufficient goods for all indiscriminately. Everyone can enjoy art and nature at will, and my enjoyment does not deprive anyone else of anything. So taste in art is an instance where one is dealing with cases of less moment. In that condition, no justice arises because there is nothing to contend for. So a question continues to arise – why does one need a standard of taste? Certain judgments may seem absurd, but so what? Why not just tolerate absurdity? If art were merely private eccentricity, that might indeed be the appropriate conclusion. But only the most slight forms of art and beauty are isolated. Even landscape gardening is a public art. A partial *ad hominem* argument is appropriate. Hume's own sense of himself as a man of letters implies both reputation and its rewards. It is not the same if Robertson's inferior *History of Scotland* is lauded as highly as Hume's *History of England*. Ideas of intellectual property are just emerging in the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Hume has some concerns along those lines, but even more concerns for the importance of character and reputation. (Shaftesbury shared exactly those concerns.)

Two distinctions are drawn in dealing with jurisprudence that have a bearing on this issue. First, jurisprudence turns on close points. Thus the way is opened for taste and imagination to play a role: 'The preference given by the judge is often founded more on taste and imagination than on any solid argument' (EPM app. 3, 259/308–309). What public utility requires is stability. It is less important how the particulars are settled. Second, one must distinguish the general rule, which must be upheld, and the particular applications of it. From the standpoint of society and justice, property is important, but it is only important who gets the property to the extent that it not seem arbitrary or undermine the general rule. There may be a great many systems of distribution, and they too may depend on imagination. Thus there are two roles for taste and imagination. The first allows variations in specific close cases. The second allows variations in the systems of distribution themselves. Some of the same considerations apply to a standard of taste. In close cases, taste alone will settle the decision between say John Home's *Gordon* and Samuel Johnson's *Irene*. And the preferences assigned to genre – history over landscape, or the preference for comedy in youth – are at best the product of 'imagination.' But to the extent that a decision is needed in matters of taste, it must come from upholding general rules based on more specific systems.

At the same time, sympathy and sentiment alike dictate that the individual cannot be imposed upon by the standards. The link between taste and the qualities that make up a standard of taste suggests that those qualities ultimately are themselves approved of by taste. No application of a standard can escape the ultimate verdict of sentiment. There is a danger in this. Virtue rests on a feeling of approbation.

Hume's analysis of virtues becomes more and more conventional. For example, 'indecorum' takes its place alongside wit and beauty. Things are ugly if they are 'unsuitable' (EPM 8, 215/266). In Hume's defense, one might say that he is merely cataloguing the agreeable and disagreeable sentiments as he finds them. But there is an unfortunate tendency at this point to take the sentiments at a very superficial level. Hume's more careful analysis gives credit to experience and transfers that to sentiment as well. Hume never thinks that the reliance on sentiment is a reliance on mere sentiment – momentary impulse. Some sentiments are better than others. Hume's reasons why one man reasons better than another have a number of parallels to the criteria for a good critic. They include delicacy (greater powers of observation), the forming of general maxims, freedom from prejudice, and greater experience (EHU 9, 84/107, n. 1). What is added to this list for moral judgments are abilities to form and sustain arguments. The critic's abilities depend on taste alone. Moral reasoning depends on sentiment, but allows scope for reasoning since it must assess consequences and utility. A standard of taste is a standard for critics.

### A standard of taste

Hume's attempt to establish a standard of taste is one place where we have an explicit piece of aesthetic theory. It must be approached with care, however. It is an essay rather than a piece of systematic philosophy, and Hume was well aware of the difference in audience that that presupposed. Other essays of the same type, both French and British, also influence it. Instead of belonging explicitly to Hume's own system, the essay is part of a tradition that was already quite extensive. The essay on taste can be regarded as a kind of set piece for *belles lettres*.<sup>9</sup> Hume himself encouraged Alexander Gerard's *Essay on Taste*. So one must read 'Of the Standard of Taste' as only obliquely related to the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries*. Nevertheless, it is consistent with them, and it offers a clear argument for one aspect of applied aesthetics as Hume advanced it.

Hume's essay has produced a substantial secondary literature.<sup>10</sup> Two points lead me to conclude that there is still much work to be done. First, the tendency, even by the most careful readers (and there are some excellent essays in the literature) is to approach Hume's essay as an essay on taste. In contrast, I want to maintain that it is very important to read the essay as an essay on a *standard* of taste and to keep clearly in view the difference between establishing a standard and taste itself. Hume's theory of taste must be extracted from his whole philosophical corpus. Second, ambiguities in Hume's formulations, equivocation on the nature of rules, and the discursive style of the essay make it seem analytically suspect to the majority of commentators. Yet I believe that Hume is much more consistent and

careful than he is given credit for being. There is still much to be said in defense of his approach to the problem of a standard of taste, at least within the larger context of the positions he has staked out in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries*. It is worthwhile, therefore, to see what kind of contextual case can be made for the essay in the light of the accumulated criticism of twentieth-century scholarship.

The reading of Hume's essay that I am offering preserves a consistency with Hume's larger project. If I am right, the essay is a limited portion of an aesthetic and not an aesthetic whole. It presumes a view of beauty and taste that is implicit elsewhere. The price for the consistency I argue for is to make Hume rather more limited in two respects. First, his argument for a standard of taste does not mitigate the potential relativism implicit in his psychology of taste and sentiment. Many of the criticisms directed at Shaftesbury will apply to Hume as well. In particular, Berkeley's fear that while this sentimentalism may be tolerable from extremely able and sophisticated upper and upper middle-class philosophers such as Shaftesbury and Hume, it will mislead a less able public is not without foundation. I believe that there is a great difference between Hume's sentimentalism and the more extreme forms represented by Berkeley's Lysicles, but the differences are subtle and easily overlooked. Second, in order to attain a standard in the face of that relativism, Hume is unable to get beyond a culturally founded hierarchy that is elitist and potentially coercive with regard to standards. A standard does not arise directly from human nature, though it is the uniformity of human nature that makes a standard possible. The standard of taste has to be discovered in the practice of criticism. In order to be able to make choices, one must be willing to establish standards that, however justified they are by history and our culture, could be different. Those standards are natural only in so far as they are the product of our need to judge and avoid the chaos of taste. As with other forms of social contract, we surrender part of our aesthetic independence in order to attain a standard of taste. The only mitigation here is that in aesthetic matters, one risks less than in other normative realms.<sup>11</sup> The risks are much higher in moral judgments, and only Hume's optimism about the uniformity of human nature gives morals a more universal, and thus a more uniform, foundation. If I have to concede that even though my taste runs to Stephen King, William Golding gets the critical decision,<sup>12</sup> I still don't have to read Golding unless I am worried about the approval of a very small group of intellectuals. In morals, if my taste runs to acts depicted by Stephen King, I am likely to have to deal with a much more extensive, and coercive, group. My way of reading Hume is thus likely to provide little solace to those seeking aesthetic universals. I doubt that Hume would have found that very disturbing, however.

The whole problem for the essay arises from the location of beauty with 'sentiments.' 'Of the Standard of Taste' retains the basic epistemological structure

established in the *Treatise*. Imaginative impressions are sentiments that, while they are part of experience, are not themselves psychological atoms. The pleasure they produce is the qualitative accompaniment of the impressions. Beauty is an emotion, and the word 'beauty' is a class term for calm passions that are sentiments. Thus it is important to note that 'sentiments . . . differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds' (OST 227). Beauty is of plural kinds.

When Hume observes that 'those who found morality on sentiment, more than on reason, are inclined to comprehend ethics under the former observation' (OST 227–228), he clearly is among them. The specific sentiments mentioned are justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, and veracity. 'Sentiment,' here, is referential to specific situations. If a situation is felt to be just, it is also applauded, so 'justice' is connotatively positive; but the specific situation that is just varies, and situations that are felt as just or unjust are a matter of taste. The basis for the sentiment is both specific and variable from individual to individual.

The examination of the position that 'all sentiment is right' (OST 230) is placed in a hypothetical context. 'There is a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste.' But the object of the qualification is to determine whether this position makes a standard impossible, not to suggest that this position is not correct in what it says about taste. This is one of the places where one must keep clear the difference between an examination of taste and an examination of a standard of taste. The position described by Hume as holding that all sentiment is right contrasts with reference to matters of fact. It is exactly what both Hutcheson and Hume have argued for elsewhere. It is still easy in this summary to lose sight of how taste works, however. Hume was writing in a much more popular style than that he employed in the *Treatise*, and there is a consequent looseness in his language that one must be careful to understand. When he writes, 'Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty' (OST 230), this does not imply that beauty is the sentiment of taste. What is contemplated is the things themselves, or, more accurately, the impressions and ideas that present the things themselves in the mind. Beauty is the emotion or calm passion produced by these impressions. To say that beauty is not a quality in things themselves, then, is also to say that it is a secondary impression as the *Treatise* explained. So when one views Hutcheson's equilateral triangle, what one contemplates is a triangle (given ideationally). Where Hutcheson would find a further idea, uniformity amidst variety, Hume merely finds a taste for triangles. Each mind perceives a different beauty – in this case triangularity as perceived by this observer. Nothing in this implies a separate cause from the impression of the triangle – the beauty of the triangle – but Hume's position is made

more difficult, though more consistent and defensible than Hutcheson's, because Hutcheson does have some quality to point to while Hume does not. Hutcheson would, presumably, be able to say that while beauty is indeed not a quality in things, a quality in ideas of beauty (at least for humans) corresponds to qualities in things. Uniformity amidst variety is at once an idea in the mind and a complex quality belonging to the object (though still 'in the mind' in the sense that it is available as a complex idea of sides in relations of triangularity). Hume's position is similar in its mechanics, but different in that he assigns no specific idea to the sentimental contemplation of the triangle. It only marks a 'certain conformity or relation.' The emotion it produces is reflective. Hutcheson, one might say, provides a secondary reference for moral and aesthetic sentiments. The sentiments do not refer to anything beyond themselves, but that self-reference takes one back to a primary reference so it is possible to compare beauties on the basis of the primary properties as long as one is dealing with a normal observer. Hume provides a relational theory; beauty extends only to a relation of the secondary impression to an original impression, together with the impression of pleasure, and the reference is solely in terms of the original impression. So nothing in Hume's theory of taste provides a standard, which is the problem that he is considering at this point. Everyone *ought* to acquiesce in his own sentiment. Perceptions of beauty and deformity are not contradictories when they involve more than one observer. It is important to keep this straight, however. If one perceives beauty and another perceives deformity, there are not two different ideas upon which the sentiment rests. If there were, then the disagreement would merely be verbal. The problem would merely be that I do not see what you see. But the problem is deeper. I do see what you see, but my sentiment experiences it as deformity; yours, as beauty. It is very easy, given Hume's language, to slide over into separate ideas of beauty and deformity, but the argument makes a lot less sense that way (though I think Isenbergian types of criticism and many commentators influenced by Wittgenstein take it that way).

The counter-position from the side of common sense is just that – one would be 'thought to defend . . . an extravagance' (OST 230) if one denied that some things are more beautiful than others. The basis for this commonsense position is how one would be viewed by one's cultural peers. It is not an absurdity to assert an equality of elegance between Ogilby and Milton if Milton is not established culturally as the superior. For Hume's Muslim, for example, there would be nothing out of the ordinary. Note too that genius and elegance are compared, not beauty as such. Whenever it comes to a specific comparison, there will be specific aesthetic predicates, not just a generalized emotion of beauty. The verdict of absurdity is directed toward the eccentricity of this taste and rests on the widespread agreement of the judges

(compare the universal agreement of the faithful). In close cases, the absurdity evaporates. On neither side of the issue, then, is Hume concerned directly with a taste whose evidential power extends beyond itself. On the skeptical side, the difficulty arises because Hume rejects Hutcheson's theory of secondary reference. On the positive side, the only recourse is to what critics already have arrived at.

That Hume continues to believe in rules has been widely noted, and the nature of Hume's rules has been discussed in the preceding chapter. When he says that they cannot be fixed *a priori*, therefore, he is also acknowledging that there are rules of art discoverable by observation or genius. We have seen above how rules extend experience. What Hume's examples clearly indicate in 'Of the Standard of Taste' are specific aesthetic responses. Once again, as soon as one begins to look closely and compare examples, Hume gives us specific predicates: on the negative side, monstrous and improbable fictions, mixture of styles, want of coherence; on the positive side force and clearness of expression, readiness and variety of inventions, natural pictures (OST 232). These predicates replace uniformity amidst variety, but Hume limits them to empirical rules. So, I read Ariosto. I have an idea of a passage. It is an improbable fiction. My taste, if it conforms to the rules of art, finds this improbable fiction deformed, unpleasant, and an aesthetic fault. I have no taste for improbable fictions, and a wise artist will take note of that. The function of a rule here is to replace the perceptual and qualitative appeal that is at work in Hutcheson. Thus Hume's appeal to rules is not a way of making taste rule-governed but a way of acknowledging that it is not. If taste could be made to conform to rules, one would not need the kind of observation and/or genius that criticism requires. Hume's appeal to rules is a part of the problem of establishing a standard of taste, not a part of the solution, because of where he locates rules.

This is made clear when Hume ventures into his quasi-Newtonian explanation of how 'the least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine' (OST 232). The problem is not that this makes taste variable (though it does) but that it makes us 'unable to judge' (OST 233). Trying to establish rules is the aesthetic equivalent of a Newtonian problem of mechanics with three or more bodies. Newton does not pretend to be able to give the internal workings of force and gravity. (He has some marked tendencies toward a physical/theological occasionalism on the matter.) But for a simple two-body problem he can give the empirical laws. There is no aesthetic equivalent of the two-body simplification that makes Newtonian mechanics possible. The only recourse is to what has happened already. 'We shall be able to ascertain its influence not so much from the operation of each particular beauty, as from the durable admiration, which attends those works, that have survived all the caprices of mode and fashion, all the mistakes of ignorance and



envy' (OST 233). Note again that it is 'each particular beauty,' not a single idea of beauty that is the object of investigation. The particularity of the ideas is the source of the problem, but it is also the empirical basis for rejecting neoPlatonic causality. Neo-Platonism postulates a single unified idea of beauty with formal and final causes. That is Hume's ultimate opponent in 'Of the Standard of Taste.'

What one gets from all of this is a shift to consideration of the empirical conditions that may impede agreement. Hume's discussion of internal organs and causal relations does not try to say what or how those organs work to form relations. But 'proper sentiment' (OST 234) in this context can only mean common or widely shared sentiment or perception. What is proper is what conforms to normalized, empirical expectations – as in proper manners, or a proper procedure in science.

The role of critical language is to exhibit praise or blame, so aesthetic predicates have an emotive aspect; the application of the terms to which everyone agrees is their emotive connotation. Nothing in these predicates implies reference beyond the secondary impressions that they represent except for their reference, as ideas, to some original impression of sense. The meaning of the specific predicates varies, however. Hume's point is about the greater variance in particulars than in emotive applications, which is the opposite of the situation in 'matters of opinion and science' (OST 227) where one can establish agreement about 'the facts' but locate those facts differently in complex theoretical ideas. Hume shares with later writers, most notably Kant, the perception that aesthetics is radically particular and not conceptual or theoretical. But in order to make that point, he distinguishes the meaning and application of aesthetic predicates. The meaning is located in the particulars to which 'elegance,' for example, is applied. The application is the emotively positive connotation shared by 'elegance' in all usages.

One source of agreement is human nature, which exceeds the unanimity available to abstract sciences that depend on more difficult observations and reasoning. Hume makes the same argument elsewhere. Human nature is enough alike so that one can count on similar sentiments in moral areas. Abstract reasoning lacks a common human base and is more variable even though it can make use of reason. But a common positive language also can obscure disagreement about 'particular pictures of manners' (OST 228). For example, the lying of Odysseus does not produce the sentiment in us that it did in the Achaians. Hume is making a simple distinction: if Odysseus is virtuous, that is good. But I may not concur in the judgment that Odysseus is virtuous if I look directly at Odysseus's behavior. So far, so good. The important thing is to keep distinct the basis for Hume's argument. I do not reason that lying is bad, then fit Odysseus's behavior to that moral rule. I observe, by ordinary means (i.e. external sense or the ideas that the imagination draws from external sense through reference in Homer's text), that Odysseus lies. So I have a

complex idea of a lying Odysseus. I form a further idea from that complex idea of a lack of veracity. In my perception, lack of veracity is a matter of taste and moral sentiment. It is linguistically a negative form, and that negative rests upon the feeling that forms the moral sentiment. But Homer has a different moral sentiment and operating by different linguistic rules, locates Odysseus's form of lack of veracity with cunning, and cunning with virtue rather than vice. He would agree with me that if cunning were a vice, it would be a bad thing, but he does not experience the same sentiment with regard to Odysseus's behavior, so he locates cunning differently linguistically as well. Hume presupposes that the complex idea available to external sense and imagination is essentially the same. The evidence, though Hume does not investigate that here, would be that Homer and I would give a common description of the situation. Our causal, habitual, and perceptual patterns as they are evidenced in our language correspond, and reason can confirm that they do so (to the extent that reason gives probable knowledge of matters of fact) by comparing the ideas. But the evidence also indicates that as soon as we begin to form ideas of Odysseus's behavior in the moral sphere, we diverge. Here taste is supreme.

What Hume argues here, however, is not completely consistent with what he says elsewhere. Specifically, he is clearly aware that everyone does not take pride in the same positive way that he takes it (T 2.1.5). For Hume, pride is the positive. For Hume's puritan opponents, humility is positive and pride is a sin. One might suspect that the same would be the case with 'meekness' (OST 229) in Hume's example from the Koran. So it would appear that even basic emotive responses can vary; we do not all agree as to which are positive and which are negative. That does not change the basic point. A 'just sentiment of morals' (OST 229) is one that I perceive as just. 'Just sentiment' here can only mean one that I experience when I have that complex idea. It will be the task of the essay to reconcile my 'just sentiment' with the variety of other sentiments experienced. Hume complicates the matter by referring to a 'steady rule of right,' but that must be a rhetorical appeal at this point. Such a rule can only be a consequence of just sentiments, and establishing them is the point at issue. Rather than accuse Hume of begging the question, one must allow him the confidence he shares with his readers that the Koran is selfish, anti-utilitarian, and thus empirically falsified. In the long run, superstition will prove foolish and useless. I take it that this is an instance of a projective application of what the essay will attempt to justify.

We turn now to Hume's strategy to deal with the need for a standard when his consistent theory of sentiments seems to make one impossible. Jeffrey Wieand notes the ambiguity of the phrase 'a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another' (OST 229). Does the second clause refer to a rule by which a

decision is afforded, or does it refer all the way back to the standard, in which case the alternatives are a rule, or a standard that will do the job of a rule, at least to provide a decision, but will not be a rule itself?<sup>13</sup> This may seem crucial, but I take it that both the position of the sentence and its rhetoric dictate that Hume is discussing the possibility of a standard and the question is whether the standard will reconcile the opinions or perform the more limited task of affording a decision between them. A standard could be a rule, but Hume does not expect to be able to give such a rule, nor should we expect it from him if we have followed the rejection of reason's ability directly to affect action in the *Treatise* and the explanation of the variability of taste. Nor is Hume's kind of general rule suitable as a standard because it can only produce expectations and extend ideas and impressions to new contexts. But we can hope for a standard in the sense of a decision confirming one sentiment and condemning another. The key is that confirming is parallel to condemning. Those are the roles assigned to a standard. So the role of a standard of taste is satisfied by a decision between confirming and condemning sentiments. Nothing here implies that sentiments will be corrected or changed. Presumably they will remain just what they were.

The most direct challenge to the way that I am suggesting that 'Of the Standard of Taste' be read comes from Anthony Savile. Savile makes an important point by noting that the standard proposed by the essay is evidential for sound criticism, not constitutive of it. Savile writes: 'The standard is now, and, I surmise, for Hume always was, conceived of as evidential for sound criticism, not constitutive of it. If you like, 'Of the Standard of Taste' is a contribution to the theory of aesthetic evidence, not the theory of aesthetic nature.'<sup>14</sup> This is certainly correct. Savile goes on to suggest one way of reading this in which a dispute between Peter and Paul is settled by a decision of good judges in Paul's favor, even though Peter judges it differently.<sup>15</sup> But Savile rejects this alternative as incoherent on the grounds that transmittal of knowledge requires as a necessary condition that the sentiment be shared:

Hume's standard reconciles varying *sentiments* rather than just *judgments*, and this could only come about by people sharing their experiential responses to something rather than somehow sincerely agreeing in their judgments while differing sentimentally *in petto*. Nor will it do to suppose that Hume thinks that such agreement of sentiment comes about as a result of some prior agreement in judgment secured by consulting good critics first. What he makes plain is that the good judge tries to show the disputing parties what to see.<sup>16</sup>

Savile thinks, therefore, that Hume's appeals to rules and principles are ways that

the good critic gets others to see what she sees: ‘He operates not by enouncing what Peter is to believe, but by getting him to respond to the poem with which he is having difficulty in the light of suggestions about what to look for.’<sup>17</sup> Savile quotes Hume’s description of what we show the bad critic in support of this view. But I do not think that that passage supports Savile’s reading at all. First of all, it is addressed not to a reader but to a critic, and for Hume that means not an ordinary reader but one who offers his judgments as in line with the rules of the art. What that critic is shown is that his judgments are not in line with the rules and principles as they have emerged over time. Second, Savile’s reading is based on the claim that the transmittal of knowledge requires the replication of sentiment. But on Hume’s view of both demonstrative and probable reasoning, all that is required is the replication of ideas. One does not have to feel what Homer felt about Helen in order to understand the *Iliad*. There is a transmittal of knowledge, but it is a knowledge that there is a standard of taste and how that standard can be appealed to. Hume states that explicitly when he says that it is enough to have established that all tastes are not equal. So I conclude that indeed Peter may be left with the judgment against him without sharing the sentiment of Paul, though a good critic will have offered additional ways to experience the work in dispute. If that is incoherent from Kant’s point of view, that is part of what is wrong with Kantian aesthetics. It demands that aesthetic intuition, or sentiment in Hume’s terms, meet an impossibly high standard. As a result, one is led to look for some special state, contemplative or attitudinal, that ends by separating aesthetics from the real world of art and criticism. Hume is more pragmatic and more useful to real criticism. The Muslim will not be converted to our sentiments by a standard of taste. But our claim to have attained a just sentiment will be affirmed (we hope) by such a procedure. The argument here is about who gets to use the universal terms of approbation – just, virtuous, beautiful. That argument cannot be settled by appeal to the sentiments because the sentiments are just what is experienced. Fenelon is pleased by the honesty of Telemachus in his telling of the tale; Homer is pleased by the lying of Odysseus in his telling. I decide in favor of Fenelon (if I do), not because I share his taste (if I do), but because his taste is confirmed by the standard that at least affords a decision. It is logically possible that I share the taste of Homer (as I do) but conclude that the decision goes to Fenelon.

This is the first crucial divergence from the standard interpretation in my reading of the essay. Hume, I think, is consistent in holding both to his basic ideational principles that make sentiments of taste a privileged, evidential form and to his recognition that a standard is still needed. That separates the question of a standard of taste from taste. Perhaps because Hume’s position on aesthetic taste is so scattered outside of this essay, the tendency in the literature has been to try to extract Hume’s position on taste from this essay and to take the essay to be about

taste itself. But it is not. It presupposes a view of taste. The essay is about standards. There is a primary sense in which taste does not have any standards. One's taste just is what it is. It is an original existence (but not an original impression). Hume holds three compatible positions on this subject. First, taste is not subject to reason or rules. It is formed directly as an immediate response to impressions of pleasure, original impressions of sense, and other secondary impressions and ideas. Second, because human nature is very much the same for everyone, one can look for and expect to find regularities in taste. Finally, within limits, one's taste, as one's character, temper, and physical attributes, can be formed. But that process of formation is extrinsic to particular tastes. I cannot decide what my taste will be, but I can reshape the habits and associations that contribute to my taste in ways that are themselves predictable. Hume is, in this respect, a believer in behavior modification. But given the existence of diverse tastes and the basis for that diversity that Hume has demonstrated in the opening paragraphs of the essay, Hume recognizes both the need for and the possibility of sorting different tastes according to a standard. That standard must be external to particular tastes, and the question of what the standard of taste is cannot itself be a matter of one's taste for a particular work. Nor should one expect a standard of taste to do more than provide a choice. It will not guide the formation of taste itself, though some of the same considerations that establish a standard also may contribute to the behavioral modification program.

This is a point at which Peter Kivy is most helpful when he notes the tendency to a regress.<sup>18</sup> Hume always hovers on the edge of such a regress. If a standard of taste is operative, it will confirm a particular sentiment and condemn another. For example, that the Prophet had not attained a just sentiment will be decided according to what Hume (who shares the prejudice of his age) takes to be the emergent beliefs of human nature. But that in itself also uses moral language – 'just sentiment' – and so should be a report of a moral sentiment experienced by Hume, as it clearly is. How then can it be anything but in need of a further standard?<sup>19</sup> We are familiar with this kind of argument today when we are told that certain forms of logical reasoning are themselves 'Eurocentric' and perhaps 'masculine,' thus initiating a regress that is supposed to invalidate their status as standards. What makes logical reasoning the standard, we are asked? Hume has available, I think, the same line of reply one sometimes hears to these claims. On the one hand, the substance of his claim is only to provide a standard. It is not to place that standard beyond all dispute. On the other hand, some degree of cultural and biological bias seems inescapable. Hume specifically brings this up at the end of the essay, though it is nation, age, and temperament rather than race and sex that he is aware of. It does not follow from that that one cannot apply a standard, however. In other words, a degree of regress is acceptable, just as a degree of circularity need not be vicious. If it is universalized,

a standard of taste may well stand in need of a justification that it cannot attain, but our experience and vision is not universal, and we can push the standard far enough back so that it will work for virtually all of our experience. One cannot escape language into a language-free realm if Wittgenstein is correct; it does not follow from that that language is not referential within very broad language-games. One cannot attain a standard of taste for all cultures and possible beings for all times. But one can make choices in a very large cultural context. Hume believed that that context could be extended to be virtually coextensive with human nature. But if it were somewhat narrower, it would still be a standard.

Two problems are evident at this point. First, the only standard that Hume has made possible so far is retrospective. Looking backward, one can fit the data to a pattern that identifies Homer as great. But Hume has provided no grounds at this point for the projection of that standard. His rules are not laws in the Newtonian sense that provides the model here. Second, in the absence of either organs or reference to a standard set of qualities, it is not clear where one should look for clarification. This is where the problem of circularity really enters, not later. Since there are only beauties, not a single, qualitatively defined beauty, the claim that 'some objects, by the structure of the mind, [are] naturally calculated to give pleasure' (OST 234) does not tell us which objects to examine. Should I consider the pleasures of my mistress, of my dinner, of my horses and dogs? Such suggestions are absurd if one is dealing with criticism and taste, but they certainly predominate empirically. Since Hume identifies neither the structure of the mind, nor a kind of pleasure (except *ex post facto*), nor a single qualitative object, his ideational structure has an empirical problem when he tries to formulate rules that summarize the decisions of taste. The rules are about people's tastes, but those people are just the ones to which one applies the rules in order to choose between competing tastes. The circularity that has been widely noted and debated in the discussion of specific capacities actually should be located earlier. When Hume turns to delicacy etc., he is really looking for a way out of this empirical problem. Otherwise, he would be able to generate some general rules of art from the past and project them causally (by means of habit, custom, and fixed nature) into a version of neo-classical canons as many of his contemporaries did. What is most remarkable about Hume's procedure at this point is that he comes up with nothing of the sort. At a time when numerous critics in literature and the arts (from Pope to Reynolds, for example) were formulating rules along neo-classical lines, Hume gives us an entirely different approach. I think that this is an attempt to solve the circularity problem, not a fall into it.

Hume's problem is to find a way to extend and generalize the experience of taste. It is clear enough what the standard is once it emerges. Milton is preferred to Ogilby, and any taste that concurs in that decision is confirmed. But a standard

must be projective in some way. Even if one cannot predict prior to experience, one must be able to formulate the standard in such a way that it will account for future regularities. Hume's strategy is to examine the characteristics that will convince someone to accept the verdict of a critic, even if that verdict contradicts one's own immediate taste. Thus Hume is not simply trying to describe a good critic. He is trying to describe those characteristics of a critic that have emerged widely as belonging to a good critic because they are consistent with the most stable retrospective judgments. The characteristics that he ends up citing are already widely accepted and are just those that one must appeal to in order to convince both parties to a dispute.

Hume begins with delicacy. First, note that it is delicacy of imagination. Imagination can produce a secondary form of impressions. So delicacy of imagination should be an imagination that produces impressions from slighter originals. Since the reflective impressions which are of concern are usually among the calm kind (T 2.1.1, 276), delicacy is central. However, Hume is interested in delicacy because everyone 'would reduce every kind of taste or sentiment to its standard' (OST 234). Thus delicacy can serve as a standard for a critic because 'everyone' will acknowledge its relevance. The intention of the essay is 'to mingle some light of the understanding with the feelings of sentiment' (OST 234). Presumably this means finding some way for the understanding to operate on sentiments that do not refer beyond themselves. Delicacy thus becomes the central capacity that will link taste and a standard of taste if delicacy can be given 'a more accurate definition' (OST 234). I think delicacy is supposed to perform the function for impressions of the imagination that examination of the organs has in primary impressions. One defers to another's visual perception, for example, if it can be shown that the other person's eyes are more acute. Similarly, Hume claims, one defers (naturally) to another's taste if it can be shown to be more delicate. Yet delicacy is not an organ. Delicacy itself is a function of reflection, but its 'organ' is the production of sentiments that establish rules – at least rules allow one to examine delicacy. Hume needs a way to make delicacy evident if it is to serve as a standard. How this can be done is the crucial question.

Hume tries to unravel this question with the anecdote of Sancho's kinsmen.<sup>20</sup> Hume presents it as a way of giving a more accurate definition of delicacy. The task is complicated by the fact that delicacy is not directly examinable since we seem to have only introspective access to its operation. The initial conditions of the story are important. Sancho's claim is that his judgment is a hereditary quality. It is acquired only 'internally,' so it cannot be verified by examining the circumstances under which Sancho acquired it. The wine to be examined is already supposed to be excellent on the grounds of its age and vintage, so the judgment is not directly

about the quality of the wine. And the teller of the story is Sancho – whose reputation is that of a buffoon. The gist of the story is that Sancho's kinsmen are ridiculed for their judgment, but they have the last laugh when the key with the leathern thong is found and this in turn vindicates Sancho's claim to have inherited his taste from good judges.

Hume's application of the story emphasizes both the similarity and difference between mental and bodily taste. Something is tasted: leather and iron; mental taste would produce correspondingly specific aesthetic qualities, for example force and elegance. The discovery of the key only confirms the presence of leather and iron in the wine. It does not confirm the taste of Sancho's kinsmen directly. That is, one still does not have access to the taste itself; one only has access to the cause of the taste. Those who laughed are refuted not by coming to taste the leather and iron but by the discovery of the key. Their taste, not that of Sancho's kinsmen, is the duller. They are wrong to laugh not because their taste is wrong but because it is deficient. This gives Hume his definition: 'Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste' (OST 235). Two things are of note. First, this is not a definition in the traditional sense. It remains analogical. There is no organ identified for aesthetic taste, and the ingredients of taste are not specified. Literally, Sancho's kinsmen taste leather and iron; the metaphorical taste is presumably for things like elegance and force. But elegance and force do not have a chemical composition or a natural source. They are predicates assigned to sentiments, and unlike Hutcheson, Hume denies that sentiments can be linked, even experimentally, to some external cause such as uniformity amidst variety. So the appeal to delicacy remains somewhat mysterious. Second, they are Sancho's kinsmen. One presumes that Hume intends that part of the laughter at them arises not just from the pretensions of their taste but from its source. These are not connoisseurs. Literal delicacy is established by what is at the bottom of the barrel. How is metaphorical delicacy to be established?

Hume immediately answers this question, and in answering it confirms what I said above about the role of delicacy in linking general rules to taste:

Here then the general rules of beauty are of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in a high degree: and if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a smaller degree, affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy.

(OST 235)



The rules, formed retrospectively, identify the qualities in question. If I want to know what elegance is, I do not ask for its composition or source but for its models. They exhibit it in a high degree. Then delicacy is judged by the ability to find slighter examples that conform to the models. The rules also play the role of the key: 'To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leathern thong' (OST 235). 'Produce' in this context does not mean formulating the rules in the first place. The rules are not themselves a standard. That would make delicacy circular. It means something like being able to cite or demonstrate the application. If I claim that a particular poem is elegant, I confirm my claim by producing – pointing out – the rule that identifies the particular elegance. Hume escapes circularity because the rules themselves are determined independently of the judges by the taste over time of many perceivers.

There is still a problem in Hume's analogy, however. The laughter was not about whether iron had a taste, but whether it could be detected in this wine by these buffoons. Hume forms the analogy by appealing to rules as a 'key' to silence the bad critic. Taste is and remains the same regardless of whether it is confirmed or not – whether by rules or discovery of the causal source. Sancho's kinsmen would still taste iron and leather even if no key were found, and their critics do not taste either even after it is found. But Hume is forcing the analogy by asking the rules to do double duty both as exhibition of models and as confirmation of those models (the key). The bridge that makes this plausible is that rules can be used in the same way that discovering the key was used – it convinces the bad critics that the fault lies in themselves rather than in the other.

So we can see what will eventuate in a standard of taste. For a standard to operate in the absence of direct confirmation that is unavailable, a way must be found to convince someone that the fault lies on one side rather than the other. Delicacy can play that role, even if it is not precisely defined. But it can do so only if independent ways of establishing who has delicate taste are found. The circularity often charged to delicacy is not really present because delicacy is never appealed to directly. Sancho's kinsmen do have delicate taste, and their capability allows them to triumph. But the confirmation does not exhibit their delicacy but the key itself. In mental taste, delicacy allows one to triumph as well. But rules and the ability to exhibit precise applications of them serve as the confirmation, the 'key.' Escaping a circle that would arise if delicacy were both the standard and the means of verification has been the issue all along.

Thus far, Hume has been concerned to show us that delicacy can play the required role as standard. Now he must go on to try to give us a way to tell who has delicate taste. The question now is how the ability to produce rules can play the role of the key and who we can turn to to learn the rules. The answer comes with a twist: 'The

perfection of the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united' (OST 236). We are led back to the position explained in the *Treatise* and *Enquiries* where character and temper are the objects of both moral and aesthetic sentiment. If this can be established, not only will it break any circle since the perfection of the man does not depend on having a *standard* of taste already; it will also relate rules to qualities other than those of the source. The test that determines the qualities of the person is the degree of enjoyment as universally acknowledged. 'A delicate taste of wit or beauty . . . is the source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments, of which human nature is susceptible. In this decision the sentiments of all mankind are agreed' (OST 236). Delicacy of taste produces a high quality of enjoyment. Those who do not experience that quality of enjoyment acknowledge that those who exhibit it are in an enviable position. They have the 'temper' of the aesthetically perceptive person. So one can tell who has delicate taste by their ability to enjoy things that others do not (but wish they could) enjoy. What they enjoy is established by appeal 'to those models and principles, which have been established by the uniform consent and experience of nations and ages' (OST 237).

So now we have completed the connections. Rules do not establish directly that *a* is better than *b*. But in so far as rules exhibit models and principles, those who have the ability to produce models and principles with respect to *a* establish that they are able to enjoy *a* in a way that someone who does not 'see' the models will not. And that enjoyment, resting on one's greater delicacy, is acknowledged as superior, and thus as a standard of taste. There is still a circle evident: delicate taste is an enjoyment of what the rules identify (e.g. Milton) and the rules are rules because they identify what people of delicate taste enjoy (e.g. elegance). But two different senses of 'rule' help break the circle. The rules that identify Milton presumably operate because of Milton's elegance, but it is Milton who is the object of the rules. On the other hand, delicacy, while it depends on the rules for its verification, is a response to elegance. It is a delicacy of taste. The rule in the former sense is the cause of Milton's status as 'key'; in the latter sense, the rule is the effect of the elegance. 'Rule' is able to do both jobs by equivocating on 'rule,' but as long as the rules are pragmatically the same, the technique should work. Hume shifts at this point to the pragmatic side, therefore.

This is the way this is all supposed to work. Consider a country squire who likes horses. He has a taste for horses, gets pleasure from seeing them, riding them, owning them. They are a source of status and enjoyment to him. Confronted with a Stubbs painting of his horse and a Raphael Madonna, we will presume that his taste will prefer Stubbs. He lacks the delicacy to appreciate the more vibrant colors and more refined forms of Raphael, and the mythological and religious symbolism leave him cold. One is not likely to change his taste, and while one can point to features

of the Raphael that correspond to its coloration and symbolism, and the squire may even 'see' what one is pointing to, there is no reason to think he will feel them. The impressions of sense are simply not accompanied by the level of pleasure required for beauty to be felt. Moreover, the squire can point to features of his Stubbs. What establishes that the ability to respond to Raphael requires greater delicacy of taste and that the taste for Raphael is a desirable quality? Hume's answer is that one must convince the squire that he is missing something and that he is being left out. This is done not by an appeal to an experience that, *ex hypothesi*, he does not have, but by first pointing out that 'everyone' agrees that delicacy is enjoyable, and second, that all the best models, that is those established through the ages, fit Raphael better than Stubbs. In other words, the rules are on the side of Raphael and everyone agrees that whatever the rules select also produces the highest kind of enjoyment. So the poor squire is left wishing that he had a more delicate taste, and acknowledging that he is not the best judge of painting. He still prefers Stubbs and presumably will still buy Stubbs, however. There is little point in his buying that for which he has no taste. If he remains unconvinced, no matter. His taste has been condemned all the same. That is why one needs a standard of taste, but unlike moral taste, nothing in particular is harmed by his failure to follow the higher taste. (If, on the other hand, he is cruel to his horses, then his deformed moral taste does matter.)

This can't be the whole answer for a couple of reasons. First, Hume links beauty and utility widely and generally (for example, in T 2,1,8). So in some sense, beauty does matter because utility implies consequences. Second, it still doesn't allow one to project a standard of taste to new instances. Delicacy so far is limited to what the rules can identify, and the rules are essentially conservative. They can only identify that for which there are already models. But Hume is not a neo-classicist. Unlike Johnson, he is not philosophically opposed to new forms like Fielding's novels. By themselves, rules are not sufficient to establish the kind of delicacy Hume needs to provide a standard of taste. Practice provides a kind of projective assurance. Just as one will trust the judgment of a practiced scientist, but question and re-test the experiments of a novice, so practice provides some assurance of the taste of one who goes beyond established models.

Practice remains secondary to delicacy; its function is to improve delicacy of taste. This assumes that delicacy can be improved, so it is not simply an inherited response, though it may be an inherited capacity. 'Practice' here means experience of objects. With experience comes a greater ability to distinguish parts from wholes and to assign qualities to species. One's experience becomes more fine-grained, so to speak and is better able to perceive differences. The mechanics of practice as Hume envisages them do not involve reason. Rather a sentiment 'attends' the impressions of the eye or imagination, and that sentiment progresses from confusion

to specificity with experience. The sentiment comes to be identified with more discrete and detailed parts of the original impressions. One is led back to the rules that serve as models by practice only because the distinctions that practice allows make possible assigning qualities to species. The rules and models do not dictate to experience. The qualities are those of the object (strictly, those impressions for which the object is a causal source), but beauty is the generic term for those sentiments that ‘attend’ the now much more specific ideas.

With practice comes judgment, the fixing of ‘the epithets of praise and blame’ (OST 238). Hume has shifted gears at this point without quite noticing the shift. The kind of judgment he describes is based on sentiment, but since it is comparative, it really involves reason as well. The picture he gives is one of acquiring more ideas with their attendant sentiments and then arranging them in a hierarchy of greater or lesser beauties. Presumably, this is where imagination comes in. The comparison even extends to making coarse beauties deformities: ‘a great inferiority of beauty gives pain to a person conversant in the highest excellence of the kind, and is for that reason pronounced a deformity’ (OST 238). What results is a pronouncement, and it is for a reason. The evidence is slight, but comparison, while it naturally follows from the earlier discussion is really somewhat out of place. What Hume is trying to account for at this point is the ability to discriminate tastes within a single observer. But the standard of taste is not about such discrimination. Delicacy is to be the primary criterion for accepting the superiority of someone’s taste, even over one’s own. But while comparisons follow from delicacy, they do not contribute to it, because delicacy involves response to slighter impressions, not comparative choice. Nor can comparisons be convincing evidence of superiority independently of delicacy. Unless delicacy is established first, one does not have the same objects for comparison. At most, comparison provides a kind of negative evidence: one who does not make comparisons is, *prima facie*, lacking in the experience that leads to comparisons. Peasants or Indians who are pleased with everything (OST 238) are disqualified not because of their sentiment but because of their failure to be judgmental. The accuracy of judgments is not at issue; what one requires in a critic is ‘one accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances’ (OST 238). People who do not do that can be presumed to lack the requisite delicacy because if they did have it, they would naturally make such comparisons and exhibit the judgments that follow from them.

Freedom from prejudice is a matter of the situation of the observer. ‘A critic of a different age or nation . . . must place himself in the same situation as the audience, in order to form a true judgment of the oration’ (OST 239). What is peculiar here is the goal – a true judgment. On its face, this is puzzling since judgments based on sentiments are not true or false. True judgment, therefore, can only relate to

comparison. If one does not take account of the situation of the intended audience, one will form comparisons that lead to judgments based only on one's own situation. In itself, there would seem to be nothing wrong with this on Hume's principles. But Hume finds something wrong, which leads back to the foundation in sentiment.

By this means, his sentiments are perverted; nor have the same beauties and blemishes the same influence upon him as if he had imposed a proper violence on his imagination, and had forgotten himself for a moment. So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority.

(OST 239–240)

A perverted sentiment here can only mean one that departs from the models produced by a delicacy of taste. By operating from a self-centered position, an observer is unable to perceive the beauties that produce the models and rules over time. Hume does not really need a disinterested observer; he requires only an acute one. Placing one's self in the position of the audience and being self-aware go together. One does not give up one's own position in the process. Those who read Hume as requiring disinterestedness ask for something that, in Hume's system, cannot be achieved. The true standard is not the rules but the critics who give rise to the rules. The taste of critics who are prejudiced will contribute to no rules, no regularities. Their judgments are not 'true' in the sense that a ruler is 'true' if it is straight and gives accurate measurements. Such a critic will produce only eccentricities, which, however interesting and self-satisfying they may be, provide no standard. His/her taste loses all credit and authority.

At this point it is interesting to bring Hume into the contemporary debate over critical authority and judgment. There is a school of critical theory that, though it is easily parodied, nevertheless makes a sound point based on audience response. One can never get outside of one's own position as the primary audience, and thus, the argument goes, every 'text' is re-made by every audience and every age. There can be no 'right' reading of a text because every reading occupies the privileged position of successor to all previous readings. Hume's requirement that one assume the position of the original audience seems on its face a requirement that one occupy a kind of Newtonian absolute space outside of the historical frame of reference, and in contemporary physics and criticism alike, such an absolute frame is deemed impossible. But it is possible to read Hume as actually requiring a different kind of position. The sentiments of critics are not themselves in question. Whether one observes from the standpoint of the original audience or from the standpoint of an idiosyncratic present, the sentiments and beauties observed are still one's own.

What is at issue in Hume's treatment is what conditions will allow those sentiments to produce a standard of taste. If they remain idiosyncratic, they cannot produce such a standard. They would be just as idiosyncratic, perhaps more so, if, *per impossible*, I tried to become an ancient Greek. Hume holds that appeal to a standard is as natural and necessary as other forms of causal judgment. So his investigation is aimed at disclosing how such a standard is possible even given the radical subjectivity of sentiments (in his terms) or readings and texts (in contemporary terms). The standard itself is not absolute; it is part of what defines the reader response. Hume incorporates a standard of taste into his radical ideational epistemology, and he argues convincingly that such an incorporation is not only consistent but a natural outcome of taste itself. Therefore, it is wrong to reject Hume as a kind of Newtonian modernist who holds an absolutist view of critical judgment that post-modernism has revealed to be wrong. Many of Hume's contemporary neo-classical opponents were guilty of such absolutism. But Hume's position is much more interesting, and much more radical – which is undoubtedly one reason that it infuriated such writers as Thomas Reid and James Beattie.

The way I am reading Hume's essay is borne out by his reference to good sense. At this point, Hume explicitly acknowledges the reintroduction of reason, which I have noted. Reason is not, Hume grants, an essential part of taste, but it is 'at least requisite to the operations of this latter faculty' (OST 240). The question now becomes how reason can be requisite to the operation of good sense on Hume's view without abandoning the priority of the passions over reason in aesthetic and moral experience. The function assigned to reason here is not a direct operation on the ideas of taste or their sentiments. Hume does not argue – and elsewhere specifically rejects – that one can reason oneself into a particular sentiment or even into a pleasurable accompaniment to a sentiment. If I do not like the taste of carrots, no reasoning will make them taste better, and if I do not get pleasure from the taste of elegance, reason will not aid me there either. Nor will reason help me to experience some complex impression of the imagination as elegant if my own taste does not respond to it in that way. Instead, reason operates on prejudice that blocks the way to taste. In effect, I can apply my reason to my prejudices, and reason myself out of them. Then, freed from prejudice, taste *may* operate differently – and correspond more closely to the way it operates in other humans. Thus taste approaches the norm established by human nature as a result of reason. That is what good sense amounts to. 'It belongs to *good sense* to check its [prejudice's] influence' (OST 240).

Good sense works in another way as well. Works of art are extensive; 'there is a mutual relation and correspondence of parts' (OST 240). Reason cannot produce the sentiment, but there is a possible prior function for reason in putting the parts together and thus making possible the complex ideas of the imagination to which

taste responds. If all taste were for simple qualities and from simple ideas from impressions of sense, there would be no need for good sense. But in fact, the imagination is 'capacious,' and it requires good sense to extend to the kinds of objects that provide taste with its material. The opposite of good sense is simplemindedness, which is the inability to entertain anything more than simple ideas. Good sense also allows Hume to tie together his two different theories of what beauty is. On the one hand, beauty is simply the species of ideas that taste produces from its imagined impressions together with the pleasure that accompanies them. But on the other hand, Hume holds to a form of utilitarian theory where beauty is fitness for an end. The pattern that the complex ideas have and that reason discovers turns out to be this utilitarian pattern. Reason finds the pattern by matching means and end. The end of poetry, for example, is 'to please by means of the passions and the imagination' (OST 240). The function of reason is to recognize the internal relation between means and end. Once the means-end relation is recognized, taste can take over.

All of this is premised on a degree of uniformity in human nature. Given that uniformity, one can see why 'it seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding' (OST 241). It is important to keep the complex line of reasoning straight. Good sense does not judge of the beauty of art. Good sense provides the impressions of sense and the ideas from the 'nobler productions of genius' (OST 240); taste experiences them. Judgments of beauty are the result. (Hume does not seem to consider that one might not know that a particular taste was beautiful. At least as a linguistic matter, however, this is beside the point. Some cultures may lack the vocabulary and even the distinctions marked by the generic term 'beauty.' Nevertheless, beauty as the generic reference of taste is as incorrigible as pleasure itself with which it is analytically linked.) Good sense uses one's rational faculties to provide the widest possible impressions based on practice, comparison and freedom from prejudice. Human nature is very nearly the same in all men (OST 241). So the response of taste to these impressions makes possible rules and models. The rules and models, in turn, establish whose taste is normative and provide a way to convince others that their taste is duller than someone else's.

Again and again, Hume's language is quite precise. Only a few persons have an undistorted delicacy so that their sentiment becomes a standard of beauty. Others 'labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous' (OST 241). Hume does not say simply that the sentiment is erroneous. That would make no sense in his epistemological scheme. A sentiment just is; it cannot be erroneous or true. But

given a sentiment, it can be pronounced erroneous. The distinction is subtle but important. If I pronounce a sentiment erroneous, I disqualify it as a standard – or more precisely, I disqualify the person whose sentiment it is from serving as part of the model that produces the standard. That person's sentiment is condemned and falls outside the rule. But I do not do away with the sentiment as such, and if human nature were different, different sentiments would be pronounced erroneous. The majority does not rule necessarily because mass prejudice and ignorance can intervene to distort the result. Even if everyone were a Nazi and found lampshades made of human skin beautiful, they would not be so because it is not human nature but a distorted cultural filter that promotes their taste to the majority position and seems to give it the rule. But such an eccentric taste for what otherwise would be horrible is not impossible, and only time and good sense can correct it.

Thus Hume arrives at the famous five-fold characterization of the true judge and concludes that 'the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty' (OST 241). Even though this is as frequently quoted a passage as there is in the literature of aesthetics, it is still important to observe that the joint verdict of the true judges is the standard. The taste of the judges, *per se*, no matter how delicate, cannot provide a standard, because their tastes are still only their tastes. A joint verdict can arise from their taste, but there is no guarantee that such verdicts are available. A standard exists only where a joint verdict is to be found.<sup>21</sup> I take this to mean that new forms, such as the novel in the eighteenth century, lack standards at first. They must await the formation of a joint verdict. That is the way that rules re-enter.

Hume has established thus far what the standard of taste is and how it is possible. The five characteristics are not equal. Delicacy at one extreme is the basis since it alone leads directly to sentiments of taste. At the other extreme, good sense operates rationally and cannot affect taste directly. Practice, comparison, and freedom from prejudice help identify delicacy. A true judge is thus one who has delicacy of taste. One who has delicacy of taste will be practiced, unprejudiced, and able to make many comparisons. And in order to qualify for these abilities to have the widest field of operation, a true judge must also have good sense. From true judges arises a joint verdict in the form of rules and models. So we know what the standard of taste is – it is the joint verdict of true judges; and we know how it is possible even though taste remains completely subjective – delicacy, combined with the uniformity of human nature, makes the rules that issue from the sentiment of some observers into a potential standard. But by itself, what we know does not identify the true judges or the rules. In barbarous ages, for example, there may be no true judges and no rules or standards would be evident. In any specific age, the prejudices and cultural perversions of human nature may produce distorted models and standards.



How can we defend our right to be considered among the elite and who among us has the right to a place in the pantheon of judges?

Hume's answer gives little comfort to authority. It consists in two parts: one must acknowledge that a standard exists, and then one must present the best factual arguments available for the judgment of the understanding. Beyond that, the result is clearly a matter of who can muster the most support. The existence of a standard of taste does not mean the end of critical disagreement, nor does it guarantee that the best taste will be evident in every case. At this point, Hume is an unabashed optimist about the possibilities of sentiment. Not only is an appeal to sentiment direct and so not subject to the same distortions that one finds in metaphysics and science, but also the 'force of nature' is on the side of sentiment. So Hume expects that what ultimately is approved of by a 'civilized nation' will be indeed the choice of nature itself. And beyond that appeal, there is no standard.

However, anyone who thinks that Hume has promoted western European civilization to the place of true judge and established a standard for all times and all places ignores the last sections of the essay. Age and national culture place limits on any generalization. Age limits the uniformity of nature, and without that uniformity, there is no standard. National culture limits delicacy, shaping its objects. Nothing could make it clearer that the essay is about discovering a standard and not about taste itself. When the conditions of uniformity that make it possible to arrive at a standard do not exist, 'a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments' (OST 244). Outside the limits set out above, 'such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because here is no standard, by which they can be decided' (OST 244). A standard can decide between Milton and Ogilby, each of whom produced epics. If one were to try to extend Hume's argument to Aeschylus and Aristophanes, however, one would have difficulty deciding between them because one produces tragedy and the other comedy. This is in direct contrast to the standard eighteenth-century doctrine that held that there was a hierarchy within the arts, some of which were nobler than others, so that tragedy would be, by rule, always superior to comedy.

Hume's final examples confirm the radical nature of the essay. The only limit on cultural relativity is moral. One cannot respond to and approve what one finds morally offensive, even if it is Homer. Because the standard of taste works as it does, Hume turns at last to a moral standard to correct and limit an aesthetic standard of taste. 'Where a man is confident of the rectitude of that moral standard, by which he judges, he is justly jealous of it, and will not pervert the sentiments of his heart for a moment, in complaisance to any writer whatsoever' (OST 247). In other words, if I am morally offended, I will not feel the beauty of a piece, and I will not find the

judgments of those who do persuade, any more than I would find Soviet or Nazi critics persuasive, no matter how uniform their judgments. Their moral disability will disqualify their aesthetic taste. One must not allow Hume's obvious satisfaction in being a civilized European to obscure the limits he places on a standard of taste nor to mislead us about the appeal to moral sentiment. Speculative systems, which for Hume include all theology and positive religion, are perversions. The lack of uniformity in such systems must lead to the strictures on prejudice. But the moral sentiment must take precedence over aesthetic sentiment because moral sentiment issues in action and aesthetic sentiment does not, at least not directly. Hume does not make aesthetic sentiment disinterested. In Hume's thought, aesthetic sentiments are 'innocent' rather than disinterested. Within their own sphere, they are a form of private interest; in the public sphere, they are subject to moral disinterestedness. It is wrong to read a Kantian aesthetic disinterestedness back onto Hume. But Hume moves in the direction of disinterestedness by subordinating the aesthetic to the moral sentiment. The taste for beauty has a utilitarian side, and it has consequences – it is productive of the very civilization that judges it, and it is beneficial to the human organism by providing innocent pleasure. But it cannot be detached from moral judgment, and it must be subordinate to that sentiment.

Critics who support moral censure will find no comfort from Hume, however. His moral judgment, like the judgment of beauty, is traceable to a taste and sentiment. Moral law will have to be freed of the same hindrances that interfere with the taste for beauty. A delicacy of taste for beauty will be paralleled by a strong moral sense, and both are subject to the dictates of good sense for a clarification of the impressions that provoke them. Bigotry, superstition, and enthusiasm are Hume's moral enemies.<sup>22</sup>

'Of the Standard of Taste' never deviates from its adherence to sentiment as the sole origin of taste. It never pretends that that sentiment can be other than subjective and self-justifying. To look for objective qualities or rules of taste in Hume's essay is to misread him badly in one direction. But the essay attempts to show that nevertheless a standard is possible. A standard of taste is not itself a judgment of taste, nor is it a corrective or guide to good taste. This is Hume's major advance beyond Shaftesbury who is his model in aesthetics even more than Hutcheson.<sup>23</sup> Shaftesbury held to sentiment, but he sought to correct taste by selecting those models that would have a positive moral and aesthetic influence and testing them by raillery. Hume has no such illusions about the force of rules and reason, and his style is neither as convoluted nor as classically satirical as Shaftesbury's. Hume tends more toward irony, though he shares with Shaftesbury a form of soliloquy. So Hume's standard is external to taste itself. It rests on delicacy and the acknowledgment that if taste is a good thing, delicacy must be a good thing as well. But delicacy can be improved and influenced first by practice, comparison, and

freedom from prejudice, which shape it, and then by good sense, which regulates it and provides it with an improved set of impressions upon which to work. So rules, models, and the true judges who provide them function as a standard of taste within the limits of age and culture, but their only function is to condemn and confirm. They are never constitutive or productive as Shaftesbury hoped that they would be. Taste, and not the standard of taste, is the productive sentiment. Hume shares with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson a moral limit, however. Of the two classes of sentiment, moral sentiments must take precedence. Aesthetic sentiments, by themselves, are innocent; moral sentiments define a good nature and character. Innocent enjoyment must give way to moral duty, and if aesthetic enjoyment loses its innocence (as it does, Hume believed, when it indulges in religious superstition), it must be condemned.

It is easy to criticize Hume's aesthetic position in 'Of the Standard of Taste' for its obvious prejudices and false judgments. But that is a mistake. I hope I have shown that Hume is consistent here with his epistemology and that he can be defended against most of the charges that arise from a failure to observe how careful he is to stay within the limits set up by his epistemology.

# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), pp. 121–122.
- 2 Among those who have taken a wider view of Hume's aesthetic thought are Carolyn Korsmeyer, 'Hume and the Foundations of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35, 2 (1976), 201–215; and Peter Kivy, 'Hume's Neighbor's Wife: An Essay on the Evolution of Hume's Aesthetics,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 23, 3 (1983), 195–208.
- 3 William H. Halberstadt, 'A Problem in Hume's Aesthetics,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30 (1971), 210. The reference is to G. Lechariter, *David Hume, Moraliste et sociologue* (Paris, 1900), p. 186.
- 4 Peter Kivy, 'Hume's Neighbor's Wife: An Essay on The Evolution of Hume's Aesthetics,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 23, 3 (1983), 198–199.
- 5 When we speak and write of 'Continental Rationalism' and 'British Empiricism,' most of us are 'buying into' at least large tracts of the standard theory. These commitments are an inheritance from a philosophical movement, most likely nineteenth-century idealism, which had a vested interest in the general perspective the theory provided.' Louis Loeb, *Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 32.
- 6 Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941).
- 7 I am sure that specialists in Greek philosophy can cite counterexamples!
- 8 H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 2.
- 9 By Barry Stroud, for example. Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge, 1977), Chapter 2. See below, Chapter 3, note 3.
- 10 David Hume, 'The Sceptic,' *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), p. 172.
- 11 Philip Mercer characterizes sympathy as an emotional infection. *Sympathy and Ethics: A Study of the Relationship between Sympathy and Morality with Special Reference to Hume's Treatise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 36. 'Emotional infection' explains little, however.
- 12 Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p. 107.
- 13 Annette C. Bai®er, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 280.
- 14 Flint Schier, 'Hume and the Aesthetics of Agency,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 87 (1986–87), 127.
- 15 Ibid., p. 131.

## 1 SHAFTESBURY AND HUME

- 1 A number of commentators have argued that the distinction between rationalist and empiricist epistemology misstates the situation. Louis Loeb, for example, argues vigorously that the distinction is 'broken-backed' and that Locke should be viewed as a rationalist or at least a Cartesian in his view of knowledge; see Louis Loeb, *Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981). Donald Livingston begins his recent book, *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) with the question 'Was Hume an Empiricist?' I think that a careful reading supports many of these complaints, but they are overstated. A useful distinction between the Newtonian, Galilean physical approach and the Cartesian geometrical approach remains; see Norwood Russell Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 44–48.
- 2 Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982).
- 3 Most prominently, perhaps, by Páll Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989) and Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991).
- 4 It is common since Norman Kemp Smith's *The Philosophy Of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines* (London: Macmillan, 1941) to recognize and emphasize Hume's relation to Francis Hutcheson. I find Shaftesbury more important, however, and will devote considerably more attention to him. It is Shaftesbury, not Hutcheson, who makes sentiment central to both moral and aesthetic judgment, and Shaftesbury exhibits both the epistemological possibilities and dangers of relying on sentiment.
- 5 A. O. Aldredge, 'Two Versions of Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 13 (1949–50), 209.
- 6 I have compared the 1699 edition with Shaftesbury's copy of the first edition (1711) of *Characteristics* which is in the British Library and contains Shaftesbury's handwritten corrections for a new edition. For convenience, however, I quote from John Robertson's modern edition, republished with an introduction by Stanley Grean. Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 2 volumes, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964). In a number of instances, where there are significant changes of interest, I give the 1699 text in a note for comparison. Since I am not concerned with an exact comparison for its own sake, however, I have not noted minor changes that do not affect the argument. Abbreviations indicate the treatise as well as the page number in Robertson's edition.
- 7 *Inquiry* (1699): 'Thus have we computed in the best manner we were able, the good and Interest of Mankind, by enumerating and casting up all those Particulars from whence, as by way of Addition or Subtraction, that Sum or general Account of Man's Interest or Happiness in Life, is either swell'd or diminish'd: so that the method here taken may perhaps for this reason be call'd a sort of *Moral Arithmetic*, and be said to have an evidence as great as may be found in Numbers, and equal to Mathematical Demonstration. For it seems to us, that there has not bin any degree of certainty wanting in what has been said concerning the preferableness of the mental Pleasures to sensual' (pp. 196–197). The revision drops the phrase 'mathematical demonstration' which is closer to what Locke speculated about and replaces it with a somewhat vaguer reference to evidence.

- 8 *Inquiry* (1699): 'How far Virtue alone could go; And How far Religion was either necessary to support it, or able to raise and advance it' (pp. 3–4).
- 9 *Inquiry* (1699): 'A Creature in this sense is only good therefore when Good or Ill (that is to say, a good or an Ill in his System, or to that which he has a relation to) is the immediate object of some Affection moving him: it being then only to be truly said that he has good Affections, good Inclinations or Passions, a good Nature, or a good Soul' (p. 18).
- 10 *Inquiry* (1699): 'Nothing therefore being properly either goodness or illness in a creature, but what is from his natural Temper (or from those Passions or Affections which constitute natural Temper) as it respects that Good or Ill of his Kind or Species; a good Creature or a good Man is such a one as by his Affections or natural Temper, is carried *primarily and immediately*, and not *secondarily and accidentally*, to Good and against Ill; and an ill Man the contrary: who is wanting in right Affections of force enough to carry him towards good, and bear him out against Ill, or who is carried by his natural Affections just contrary-wise; to Ill, and against Good' (p. 25).
- 11 Philip Mercer finds Hume's reliance on the 'bent or tendency' of the passion to be 'sleight-of-hand.' Philip Mercer, *Sympathy and Ethics: A Study of the Relationship between Sympathy and Morality with Special Reference to Hume's Treatise* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 41. That is because Mercer isolates the passion from its larger context. But as the relation to Shaftesbury shows, this need not be the case. It is not a single passion but the whole character that determines the bent or tendency of any particular passion.
- 12 *Inquiry* (1699): 'In a Creature capable of forming general Notions of things, not only the sensible things that offer themselves to the sense, are the objects of the Affection; but the very *notions* themselves, and the *affections* of Pity, Charity, Kindness, Justice, and so their contraries, being brought into the Mind by reflection, become Objects. . . . So that, by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of Affection, which is towards the very Affections themselves that were first felt, and are now the subject of a new feeling, when either they cause a liking or aversion' (p. 27).
- 13 This is part of a long interpolation worked into the 1699 version of the *Inquiry*. Significantly, it adds not only a greater immediacy of sense but references to beauty and harmony. It is one of the sections which was most extensively revised again between the first and second edition.
- 14 *Inquiry* (1699): 'Yet if he cannot reflect on what he does, nor approve of what he does or sees others do by observing what that thing is that is generous, just, or honest; and making that idea or conception of goodness, or a good Action done through good Affection, to be an object of his Affection, he has not the name of being Virtuous: for this, and no otherwise, he is capable of having *a sense, in any Kind, of what is right or wrong*' (pp. 28–29). The reference to a sense is present, but it was not developed.
- 15 *Inquiry* (1699): 'If there be any sense of Right and Wrong which an absolute wicked Creature has not, it can be only the hatred and dislike of what is accounted morally ill' (p. 42). Note the addition of 'beauty'; by 1711, Shaftesbury, at this point, is more willing to refer to 'Nature' and 'Soul' and less to a 'deity.' He has substantially rewritten this section.
- 16 *Inquiry* (1699): 'Sense of Right and Wrong therefore being as natural to us as *Natural Attention* it self, . . . There is no speculative Opinion, Persuasion, or Belief, which is capable *immediately and of it self* to exclude or destroy it' (p. 44).

- 17 *Inquiry* (1699): 'If the will of God, or Law of god alone, be said to be that which makes *Right* and *Wrong*, then must this be a name only for what *is or is not his Will*: for thus if by his will one Person were to be punish'd for anothers faults, this would be Just and Right; and so the same, if arbitrarily and without reason, some Beings were made to suffer nothing but Ill, and others only to enjoy Good; which is to say is *just*, is to say nothing, or to speak without a meaning' (p. 50).
- 18 *Inquiry* (1699): 'Let us suppose a creature wanting Reason, or unable to reflect at all, who not withstanding has many good Qualities and Affections: as considering only that one of Pity or compassionateness: it is certain that if you give to this creature a reflecting faculty, it will at the same instant approve of Charity and Pity. . . . Think Pity amiable and good. . . . And this is to be capable of Virtue, and to have a sense of Right and Wrong. Before therefore that a Creature may be suppos'd to have any Notion or Opinion one way or other, concerning the subject of a God, he may be suppos'd to have a sense of Right and wrong, and to have Virtue and Vice in different degrees' (p. 54).
- 19 *Inquiry* (1699): 'To be virtuous and good, is for a rational Creature in the use of good Understanding and Judgment, to have all his natural Affections, or better Passions, his dispositions of Mind and Temper suitable and agreeing with the good of his Kind, or of that System (as explained before) where he is included, and of which he is a PART. So that to have all these Affections *right* and *intire*, by which we are kindly and naturally join'd to our PART in Society; this is nam'd *Rectitude*, *Integrity*: And to want any of these, or to have their contraries, such as alienate from hence, is *Depravity*, *Corruption*, *Nature vitiated*' (pp. 83–84).
- 20 John Balguy, *The Foundation of Moral Goodness*, in D. D. Raphael (ed.), *British Moralists* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §438.
- 21 *Inquiry* (1699): 'So that if the chiefest Happiness be from the *mental Pleasures*, and from the *constant succession or series of such in Life*; and that the chiefest mental Pleasures are such as we have treated of, and are founded in natural Affection; it follows, that *To have the natural Affections, is to have the chiefest enjoyment, possession, and happiness of Life*' (pp. 135–136).
- 22 Hume has a similar problem on a much deeper level. How can one feel what another feels? How can ideas, which are essentially images of impressions, be conveyed to one who has not had the impressions? Hume's solution, at least in the *Treatise*, is sympathy, which is certainly enhanced by nearness of relation.
- 23 'A Notion of the *Historical Draught* or *Tablature* of the Judgment of Hercules,' *Second Characters or The Language of Forms*, ed. Benjamin Rand (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997 reprint of the 1914 edition), p. 61.
- 24 The characterization of Hume as a skeptic that once was common has been replaced by a much more sophisticated reading in Hume scholarship. See, for example, David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Since Norton's book, the specialized literature on the subject is voluminous, but it largely agrees that Hume is only a skeptic in some very limited ways. Robert Foeglin attempts to correct Kemp Smith's 'one-sided emphasis on Hume's naturalism at the expense of his skepticism,' *Hume's Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. xiii but argues that the role of skepticism is to open the way for other arguments. This perspective goes back to John Passmore's point that 'The problem of scepticism as we in the twentieth century generally conceive of it does not even allow for Hume's answer to sceptical

argument – that of the philosophical sceptic.’ John Passmore, *Hume’s Intentions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 32. As Paul Russell has pointed out, ‘There is, on the other hand, a ‘positive,’ nonsceptical aspect to Hume’s teaching which argues that it is feeling, not reason, which regards how we think and act.’ Paul Russell, *Freedom & Moral Sentiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 66.

- 25 By this I mean to refer to the separation of the aesthetic and moral perceptions that develops into aesthetic attitude theories and the focus of much aesthetic theory in the first half of the twentieth century on questions of necessary and sufficient conditions of ‘art’ and aesthetic values.

## 2 TASTE

- 1 David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 78–86 and 103–104.
- 2 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 980a; p. 689. Summers, p. 33.
- 3 Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith in McKeon, III, 3, 429a; p. 589.
- 4 Summers cites both senses without making a clear distinction between their roles. Compare p. 81 where sight is primary with p. 103 where touch is primary.
- 5 *De Anima*, III, 13, 435a–435b; p. 602.
- 6 *De Anima*, II, 10, 422a; p. 575.
- 7 *De Anima* II, 9, 421a; p. 574.
- 8 *De Anima*, II, 10, 422b; p. 576.
- 9 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross in McKeon, X, 5; p. 1102. My emphasis.
- 10 Aristotle’s word is *tois diephtharmenois*.
- 11 *De Anima*, III, 1, 425a; pp. 581–582.
- 12 Summers, p. 80.
- 13 *De Anima*, III, 3, 427b; p. 587.
- 14 Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 110.
- 15 Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, bk vi, ch. 2; cited by Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 17.
- 16 Ernest Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1963), p. 296 and Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (np: Noonday Press, 1968), p. 193. See Jeffrey Barnouw, ‘The Beginnings of ‘Aesthetics’ and the Leibnizian Conception of Sensation,’ in Paul Mattick, Jr. (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 54, n. 4. So also, for example, Walter Jackson Bate: ‘Throughout the seventeenth century generally, and particularly as the rules became increasingly demanding and academic in application, the conception of taste as non-rational frequently found its keynote in the phrase, *je ne sais quoi*, a phrase which was given particular currency by the *Précieuses*, and which became a modish expression in both France and England by the close of the century. The critics who inclined towards the rather vague outlook which was represented by this phrase, and who had little general connection with each other except an antipathy to rules, have occasionally been called the ‘School of Taste.’ The designation is justified to the extent that the critical



- word, 'taste,' which had been popularized in Spain, was in general used as synonymous with a subjective *je ne sais quoi* sentiment until almost the middle of the eighteenth century.' *From Classic to Romantic* (New York: Harper & Row; Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 44.
- 17 'nee magis arte traditur quam gustus aut odor' (VI, v, 1–2). Quintilian, *Institutio Oratorio*, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). Croce, p. 194.
  - 18 Sabba di Castiglione, 'On the Decoration of the House,' in Robert Klein and Henri Zerner (eds), *Italian Art, 1500–1600: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 23–24.
  - 19 Ibid., p. 24.
  - 20 From Mantua, Nov. 7, 1546. Klein/Zerner, p. 50.
  - 21 Klein/Zerner, p. 59.
  - 22 Robert Klein, 'Judgment and Taste in Cinquecento Art Theory,' in *Form and Meaning: Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, trans. Madeline Jay and Leon Wieseltier (New York: Viking Press, 1979), p. 161.
  - 23 Klein/Zerner, p. 67.
  - 24 Ibid.
  - 25 Ibid., p. 75.
  - 26 Ibid.
  - 27 Klein, p. 162.
  - 28 Ibid., p. 164.
  - 29 Ibid., p. 165.
  - 30 Ibid., p. 164.
  - 31 Klein/Zerner, p. 78.
  - 32 Ibid., p. 80.
  - 33 Ibid., p. 83. My emphasis.
  - 34 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratorio*, X, ii, 14–18, pp. 81–85. The sentence translated as involving tasteless thoughts is 'Ideoque qui horride atque incomposite quidlibet illud frigidum et inane extulerunt, antiquis se pares credunt.' It does not refer to the sense, taste, *gustus*.
  - 35 Klein, p. 167.
  - 36 Federico Zucarro, *Idea de' Pittori, Scultori e Architetti* (1607) cf. Romano Alberti, *Origine e Progresso dell' Accademia del Disegno* (1604), p. 59 which contains the minutes of the Academy of Drawing for 1593–94 in which Zucarro is the only speaker. Cited by Blunt, p. 146.
  - 37 Blunt, pp. 154–155. Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, trans. Edward J. Olszewski (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), p. 160.
  - 38 Balthasar Gracian, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, trans. Joseph Jacobs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945). p. 37.
  - 39 Ibid., p. 160.
  - 40 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 4, ch. 46, p. 668, mp. 686.
  - 41 Croce, p. 192.
  - 42 George Berkeley, *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher; The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, vol. 3, ed. T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 1.11, 50. References in the text are to the dialogue, section, and page.
  - 43 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London: J. Danby, 1725), p. 11.

- 44 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), II, 1, 9; 108.
- 45 Locke, II, 1, 4; 105.
- 46 Ibid., II, 3, 1; 121.
- 47 Ibid., IV, 1; 525ff.
- 48 Francis Hutcheson, *Letters between the late Mr. Gilbert Burnet and Mr. Hutcheson in Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. Bernard Peach (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 216.
- 49 Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (third edition, 1780; reprint, Gainesville, 1963), pp. 145–146.
- 50 Hutcheson, *Letters between the late Mr. Gilbert Burnet and Mr. Hutcheson*, p. 230.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Locke, II, 21, 5; 236.
- 53 Abbé Jean Baptiste Du Bos, *Reflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1993). The French text given in subsequent footnotes is from this edition.
- 54 Abbé Jean Baptiste Du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, trans. Thomas Nugent (London: Printed for John Nourse, at the Lamb, opposite Katherine Street in the Strand, 1748).
- 55 Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), pp. 93ff.
- 56 Du Bos, 'Ces premières idées qui naissent dans l'âme lorsqu'elle reçoit une affection vive, et qu'on appelle communément des sentiments, touchent toujours, bien qu'ils soient exprimés dans les termes les plus simples. Ils parlent le langage de coeur.' p. 94.
- 57 Du Bos, 'Qu'on change les organes de ceux à qui l'on voudrait faire changer de sentiment sur les choses qui sont purement de goût.' p. 164.
- 58 Du Bos, 'Ne pourrait-il pas produire des objets qui excitassent en nous des passions artificielles capables de nous occuper dans le moment que nous les sentons et incapables de nous causer dans la suite des peines réelles et des afflictions véritables?' p. 9.
- 59 Du Bos, 'Voilà pourquoi la plupart des hommes sont assujettis aux goûts et aux inclinations qui sont pour eux des occasions fréquentes d'être occupés agréablement par des sensations vives et satisfaisantes. *Chacun est entraîné par son plaisir*. En cela les hommes ont le même but; mais comme ils ne sont pas organisés de même, ils ne cherchent pas tous les mêmes plaisirs.' p. 9.
- 60 Du Bos, 'Les peintres et les poètes excitent en nous ces passions artificielles, en présentant les imitations des objets capables d'exciter en nous des passions véritables.' p. 9.
- 61 Du Bos, 'L'impression que l'objet imite ferait, qu'en ce qu'elle est moins forte.' pp. 9–10.
- 62 Du Bos, 'Enfin comme l'impression faite par l'imitation n'affecte vivement que l'âme sensitive, elle s'efface bientôt. Cette impression superficielle faite par une imitation disparaît sans avoir des suites durables, comme en aurait une impression faite par l'objet même que le peintre ou le poète a imité.' p. 10.
- 63 Du Bos, 'L'expérience leur a fait connaître qu'on est trompé rarement par le rapport distinct de ses sens et que l'habitude de raisonner ret de juger sur ce rapport conduit à une pratique simple et sûre, au lieu qu'on se tend tous les jours en opérant en philosophe, c'est-à-dire en posant des principes généraux, et en tirant de ces principes une chaîne de conclusions.' pp. 281–282.

- 64 Du Bos, 'Nos deux illustres académies se contente donc de vérifier les faits et de les insérer dans leurs registres, persuadées qu'elles sont que rien n'est plus facile au raisonnement que de trébucher des qu'il veut faire deux pas au-delà du terme où l'expérience la conduit.' p. 282.
- 65 Du Bos, 'Leur déposition étant la règle de notre croyance sur les faits, se que peut être contraire à leur déposition ne saurait paraître vraisemblable. Or, comme la vérité est l'âme de l'histoire, la vraisemblance est l'âme de la poésie.' p. 82.
- 66 Du Bos, 'Un fait vraisemblable est un fait possible dans les circonstances où on le fait arriver. Ce qui est impossible en ces circonstances ne saurait paraître vraisemblable, Je n'entends pas ici par impossible ce qui est au-dessus des forces humaines, mais ce qui paraît impossible, même en se prêtant à toutes les suppositions que le poète saurait faire. Comme le poète est en droit d'exiger de nous que nous trouvions possible tout ce qui paraissait possible dans les temps où il met sa scène et où il transporte en quelque façon ses lecteurs.' p. 81.
- 67 Du Bos, 'Il ne me paraît donc pas possible d'enseigner l'art de concilier le vraisemblable et le merveilleux. Cet art n'est qu'à la portée de ceux qui sont nés poètes et grands poètes.' p. 81.
- 68 Du Bos, 'Enfin, la vraisemblance poétique demande que le peintre donne à ses personnages leur air de tête connu, soit que cet air de tête nous ait été transmis par des médailles, des statues ou par des portraits; soit qu'une tradition, dont on ne connaît pas la source, nous l'ait conservé, soit même qu'il soit imagine . . . En imitation l'idée reçue et généralement établie tient lieu de la vérité.' p. 89.
- 69 Du Bos, 'Il est en nous un sens fait pour connaître si le cuisinier a opéré suivant les règles de son art. On goûte le ragoût, et même sans savoir ces règles, on connaît s'il est bon. Il en est de même en quelque manière des ouvrages d'esprit et des tableaux faits pour nous plaire en nous touchant.' p. 276.
- 70 Du Bos, 'C'est ce sixième sens qui est en nous sans que nous voyions ses organes. C'est la portion de nous-mêmes qui juge sur l'impression qu'elle ressent, et qui, pour me servir des termes de Platon, prononce sans consulter la règle et le compas. C'est enfin ce qu'on appelle communément le sentiment.' p. 277.
- 71 Du Bos, 'Quand le public décide de leurs ouvrages, il porte son jugement sur un objet qu'il connaît en son entier et qu'il voit par tout ses faces. Toutes les beautés et toutes les imperfections de ces sortes d'ouvrages sont sous les yeux du public. Rien de ce qui doit les faire louer ou les faire blâmer, n'est caché pour lui. Il sait tout ce qu'il faut savoir pour en bien juger.' p. 287.
- 72 Du Bos, 'Mais tous les hommes peuvent juger des vers et des tableaux parce que tous les hommes sont sensibles, et que l'effet des vers et des tableaux tombe sous le sentiment.' p. 288.
- 73 When Du Bos speaks of a 'moral cause' he does not mean a moral sense. Moral causes are distinguished from natural causes. 'On trouve d'abord que les causes morales ont beaucoup de part à la différence sensible qui est entre les siècles. J'appelle ici causes morales celles qui opèrent en faveur des arts sans donner réellement plus d'esprit aux artisans; et en un mot, sans faire dans la nature aucun changement physique.' p. 213.
- 74 Du Bos, 'Ainsi le véritable moyen de connaître le mérite d'un poème sera toujours de consulter l'impression qu'il fait. Notre siècle est trop éclairé et, si l'on veut, trop philosophe pour lui faire croire qu'il faille apprendre des critiques ce qu'il doit penser d'un ouvrage composé pour toucher, quand on peut lire cet ouvrage, et quand le monde

- est rempli de gens qui l'ont lu. . . . pour connaître le mérite et l'excellence d'un poème, il faut examiner s'il plaît, et à quel point il plaît et il attache ceux qui le lisent.' p. 289.
- 75 Du Bos, 'Le mot de public ne renferme ici que les personnes qui ont acquis des lumières, soit par la lecture, soit par le commerce du monde.' p. 279.
- 76 Du Bos, 'Le public dont il s'agit ici est donc borné aux personnes qui lisent, qui connaissent les spectacles, qui voient et qui entendent parler de tableaux, ou qui ont acquis de quelque manière que ce soit ce discernement qu'on appelle *goût de comparaison*.' p. 279.
- 77 Du Bos, 'Avant que d'être jugés ils demeurent un temps, pour ainsi dire, sur le bureau, p. 280.
- 78 Du Bos, 'Les productions nouvelles sont d'abord appréciées par des juges d'un caractère bien différent, les gens du métier et le public. Elles seraient bientôt estimées à leur juste valeur si le public était aussi capable de défendre son sentiment et de le faire valoir qu'il sait bien prendre son parti. Mais il a la facilité de se laisser troubler dans son jugement par les personnes qui font profession de l'art auquel l'ouvrage nouveau ressortit.' p. 275.
- 79 Du Bos, 'Il ne se trompe point dans cette décision parce qu'il en juge avec désintéressement et parce qu'il en juge par sentiment.' p. 275.
- 80 Du Bos, 'Il y a soixante ans qu'on n'osait dire que Quinault fût un poète excellent en son genre. On n'oserait dire le contraire aujourd'hui.' p. 298.
- 81 Du Bos, 'Nous ne voyons pas de poèmes qui aient ennuyé les contemporains du poète parvenir jamais à une grande réputation.' p. 293.
- 82 Du Bos, 'Les personnes d'un goût exquis, celles dont nous avons dit qu'elles avaient la vue meilleure que les autres, prévirent même d'abord quel parti le public prendrait avant peu de jous.' p. 305.
- 83 Du Bos, 'Le bas étage des citoyens qui s'ennuyait, parce qu'il ne s'occupait pas à suivre la pièce, demandait quelquefois à grands cris, dès le troisième acte, des divertissements qui fussent plus à sa portée.' p. 307.
- 84 Du Bos, 'Je vois les arts nécessaires négligés, les préjuges les plus utiles à la conservation de la société s'abolir, et les raisonnements spéculatifs préférés à la pratique.' p. 319.
- 85 Du Bos, 'En un mot, comme le premier but de la poésie est de plaire, on voit bien que ses principes deviennent plus souvent arbitrages que les principes des autres arts à cause de la diversité du goût de ceux pour quoi les poètes composent.' p. 284.
- 86 Du Bos, 'Ce que l'analyse ne saurait trouver, le sentiment le saisit d'abord.' p. 285.
- 87 Du Bos, 'Le sentiment dont je parle est dans tous les hommes, mais comme ils n'ont pas tous les oreilles et les yeux également bons, de même ils n'ont pas tous le sentiment également parfait.' p. 285.

### 3 HUME'S APPEAL TO SENTIMENT

- 1 Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989).
- 2 Annette C. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- 3 A frequent tendency in Hume commentary has been to downplay the importance of the theory of ideas. Taken in isolation, there are many problems with Hume's development of the theory. For example, Jonathan Bennett points out that 'The salient points are that when Hume's theory is taken at face-value we cannot bring evidence to bear upon it; that

the evidence which Hume would probably have allowed has the effect of turning the theory into one not about ideas but about understanding; and that this transformation solves the evidence problem only because understanding consists not in having Humean ideas but in something for which there are public criteria.' Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 227–228. Barry Stroud characterizes the theory of ideas as follows: 'Hume gives a quick, not very careful or thorough, exposition of the theory of the mind that he adopts without criticism from his predecessors. . . . It is perhaps inaccurate to describe it as a 'theory' at all for Hume. It represents what for him was the unquestionable truth about the human mind. He never asks himself whether the theory of ideas is correct, and he never gives any arguments in support of it; he is interested in expounding only those details that he thinks will be useful to him later.' Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 17. Stroud goes on to argue that Hume fails to establish the distinction between impressions and ideas and that the theory of ideas does not preclude either innate ideas or the possibility of thought without impressions. Daniel Flage provides a more sympathetic treatment in which he argues that Hume allows not only the imagistic ideas based on perception but relative ideas that are much like definite descriptions (Daniel Flage, *David Hume's Theory of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1990)). At the other extreme, H. O. Mounce finds all of Hume's 'empiricism' unsatisfactory. Mounce would exorcise Hume's 'empiricism' and the theory of ideas in favor of a 'naturalism' better represented by Reid. To some extent, Donald Livingston, Annette Baier, and Paul Russell follow along these lines by emphasizing the common, 'careless,' or natural way that Hume construes our relation to the world. To do so, they not only have to follow Kemp Smith and read Hume backward; they almost willfully have to ignore what Hume says he is doing. I believe that if one pays attention to the implicit aesthetic woven into Hume's work, the criticisms leveled at his empiricism can be met and his naive theory of ideas can be seen as a philosophically defensible version of more sophisticated ways of expanding the account of our mental furniture in terms of concepts and language. See H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 1999). Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Paul Russell, *Freedom & Moral Sentiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

- 4 Hume seems to deny this for one class of impressions and ideas – the passions; see below, p. 89 and note 7.
- 5 Robert Fogelin concludes that 'It may be natural to think that impressions must always be of individuals but, as far as I can see, nothing in Hume's position requires this. *Hume's Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 34.
- 6 In fact, it is Hume's lack of such a theory that causes him difficulty when it comes to formal entities. He has no place for purely formal impressions, so he must reduce mathematical entities to psychological ones at some point if he is to account for their origins. A picture theory of meaning would at least allow for him to account for formal, logical entities as representations without having to make them psychological representations.
- 7 At one point, Hume seems to explicitly deny this claim with respect to one class of impressions and ideas when he says a passion is 'an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification' (T 2.3.3, 415). Annette Baier comments

that ‘Hume is partly to blame for the misunderstanding to which this one brief section has given rise . . . most deplorably, because he wrote one very silly paragraph that has perversely dominated the interpretation of his moral psychology – the paragraph asserting that passions are “original existences” that “contain not any representative quality.”’ Baier, p. 160. In context, however, this only denies that passions are ideas derived directly from other impressions; it cannot mean that passions are contentless and have no reference to a subject or object. Part of the problem of reading Hume here comes from our commitment to prepositional attitudes. If we think of emotions and beliefs as ‘I feel that P’ or ‘I believe that P,’ then a proposition and reference must be embedded in the attitude. But Hume does not think of impressions that way. They are psychological amalgams. If anger is a prepositional attitude of the form, ‘I am angry that P,’ then it has to be referential to what P refers to. But Hume does not think of anger as prepositional. He thinks of it as a psychological state, an original existence. His system requires that all ideas be explicated in terms of the impressions that they arise from. That does not mean that passions are not causally dependent on other impressions and ideas. A similar misunderstanding arises over ‘necessary connection’ if one looks for some original impression instead of explicating it in terms of cause and effect. Here, Hume’s point is that the impression itself is not identical with its cause or object. Where we would place a proposition, Hume places another impression. Pride, anger, and beauty all require other impressions, but they do not copy those impressions.

- 8 Robert Fogelin seems to deny this; *Hume’s Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 123–124. I think, however, that while Hume does not apply the variability of moral and aesthetic passions to a skeptical argument, it is because he has a different account of how that variability is overcome. See the discussion of general rules pp. 158–166.
- 9 Hume’s appeal to beauty as a secondary impression rather than a simple imitation distinguishes his position from the sensationalist imitation found in Du Bos. See Chapter 2, Section 4.
- 10 Peter Kivy notes ‘For a thoroughgoing empiricist the moral sense and sense of beauty are extra philosophical baggage. We are aware of the *sentiments*, not the *senses*; to say that we have a moral sense or sense of beauty can only be an elliptical way of saying that we have moral and aesthetic feelings.’ Peter Kivy, ‘Hume’s Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle,’ *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967), 58.
- 11 Impressions provide the subject, the content; the object of these impressions is the being that they constitute.
- 12 Letter of Sept. 17, 1739; *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. H. Greig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 34.
- 13 See the discussion of Shaftesbury and Hume pp. 20–25 for details of this relation. I have in mind also that in Aristotelian metaphysics as it developed in the Middle Ages under Arab influence, the active soul determines the intellect while a passive soul receives impressions. Hume’s secondary impressions might be compared to the active intellect, though I would not press the comparison.
- 14 The presence of reference to a ‘self’ in this account does not contradict Hume’s denial of a substantial self elsewhere. He is engaged in a piece of psychological phenomenology at this point. The passions require an idea of a self; they do not imply a metaphysical substance.
- 15 Baier, p. 180. See the note on emotions at the beginning of Chapter 4. If there is a

distinction between 'emotion' and 'passion,' it is only that 'emotion' implies a less specific form of secondary impression.

- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Árdal, p. 194. In general, many of the disagreements that I have with current Hume interpretations arise from the tendency that they have, in my opinion, to deal with expressions rather than emotions. Árdal avoids that.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 211–212.
- 19 Jennifer Herdt notes that 'Sympathy, understood generally as fellow-feeling with the passions or sentiments of others, became a near obsession for eighteenth-century thinkers.' Jennifer A. Herdt, *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 29. She traces carefully the history of the concept in the latitudinarian divines, but she tends to understand Hume's usage as a form of fellow-feeling rather than a more limited feeling transfer. Philip Mercer recognizes that 'we are justified in concluding that Hume's concept of sympathy is a limited, virtually technical one,' but for just that reason, Mercer accuses Hume of having failed to realize that sympathy 'entails having a benevolent disposition towards the other person,' and thus that his initial concept of sympathy is inadequate. *Sympathy and Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 41. On the contrary, I think that the restrictions that Hume observes, at least when he is being careful, are one way that he guards against sentimentality.
- 20 Colin Radford, 'How can we be moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplemental volume 49 (1975), 67–80.
- 21 Páll Árdal replies to John Passmore's objections that simple impressions could not resemble each other (John Passmore, *Hume's Intentions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. 109ff.) in *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*, pp. 13ff.
- 22 For the earlier history of common sense, see David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), particularly Chapter 5.
- 23 Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, Chapter 16.
- 24 Many commentators, if they notice what is being said about beauty at all, do take it to contradict Hume's identification of beauty as a sentiment and think that Hume is seeking a set of essential properties. So, for example, William Halberstadt proposes that 'for Hume the external qualities of objects which excite the approbation of taste are those qualities which give pleasure to a percipient because they are immediately agreeable to the objects themselves (if the objects are animate ones) or to others, or useful to the objects themselves (again, if animate) or to others.' 'A Problem in Hume's Aesthetics,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30 (1971), 211–212. And Patricia de Martelaere suggests that beauty should be interpreted as a special kind of secondary quality along the lines of Roger Scruton's tertiary qualities. 'A Taste for Hume,' *Ratio* 2, 2 (1989), 129. Hume seems to become a realist about beauty when read this way. Peter Jones accuses Hume of provoking 'a muddle' because 'If beauty is properly the name of a sentiment of pleasure, and only by courtesy a term applicable to what causes the pleasure, then the courtesy-use calls for no special explanation.' Peter Jones, 'Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed,' *Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1976), 49. There is indeed a muddle here, but I think it comes from the various readers not distinguishing what Hume means by 'beauty' from the way he understands the causes of beauty. The causes of beauty can still be described even if beauty is not definable. That does not commit Hume to anything more than he explicitly says: beauty is that which gives pleasure to the soul for

- any number of causal reasons. No essential set of characteristics is implied by that formulation.
- 25 Kemp Smith, p. 167.
  - 26 Baier, pp. 103–104.
  - 27 Peter Jones, ‘Another Look at Hume’s Views of Aesthetic and Moral Judgments,’ *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970), 54.
  - 28 Kemp Smith, Chapter II.
  - 29 Donald Livingston, *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 26–27.
  - 30 Dominique Bouhours, “‘The *Je Ne Sais Quoi*’” from “The Conversations of Arioste and Eugene” (1671), in Scott Elledge and Donald Schier (eds), *The Continental Model* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960), pp. 230–238.
  - 31 Hume rejected the view of Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot whose ‘Universal History’ (1751) argues that all history is the history of progress, according to David Wootton, ‘David Hume, “the Historian”’, in David Fate Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 295.
  - 32 This claim is controversial. I have defended it minimally above, and I will not go into greater detail here. Even if one finds exceptions, I believe that the consequences for an aesthetic epistemology will remain. Taste and sentiment as they relate to aesthetics are clearly representational because there is always some work of art or natural beauty that is referred to.
  - 33 Hume is in a much better position here than Hutcheson, who seems to have to deny that pure colors can be beautiful.
  - 34 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.78.4, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1944), vol. I, p. 742.
  - 35 So much for Hutcheson’s claim that greater uniformity increases beauty.

#### 4 THE AESTHETIC/MORAL ANALOGY

- 1 The analogy is widely recognized. The exact nature of the analogy is, of course, the issue. It is complicated by the nature of the is/ought relation. The standard view is that the relation is causal. Thus Peter Jones writes ‘moral and aesthetic judgments are caused by sentiments of certain sorts which are themselves caused by objects of certain sorts when perused by minds of a certain constitution.’ ‘Another Look at Hume’s Views of Aesthetic and Moral Judgments,’ *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970), 56. He continues, ‘The truth is, therefore, that ‘is’ and ‘ought’ propositions are not *themselves* related at all; the states of affairs to which they *refer* are related causally, the notion of cause being analysed in the usual Humean way,’ p. 59. On the other hand, Peter Kivy concludes ‘Clearly, Hume means to show, in Book III of the *Treatise* (and in the second *Enquiry* as well), that morals and aesthetics have the same principle of Utility in common. But, at least as it seems to me now, the principle functions in crucially different ways in those two areas. In morals it is, so to say, the principle of last resort. . . . It is only when the philosopher comes along to explain and defend the whole system of morality, or law, or the natural virtues, and their motivating principles, that appeal to utility need be made. . . . But in our perception of the beautiful, if I read Hume correctly here, where utility is relevant at all – which is most of the time, apparently – it must figure, as it does not in morals, on the everyday, case by case level. ‘Hume’s Neighbor’s Wife: An Essay on the



Evolution of Hume's Aesthetics,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 23, 3 (1983), 201. I am concerned primarily in this chapter to work out the way that moral values depend on aesthetic values and how we can draw inferences for Hume's aesthetics from what he says about morals.

- 2 Numerous problems center around this language. Many commentators distinguish the passions from emotion, but Hume's usage does not really support that distinction. An analysis of all of the occurrences of 'emotion' in Hume's work shows no systematic distinction. He either includes the passions among the emotions or parallels the two terms so that they are used interchangeably. If there is a distinction, it is that the passions are identified as specific qualities – pride and humility, love and hate, etc. – while the emotions are left more vague. Emotion is the more general term. But it still seems right to call beauty an emotion or a calm passion with the understanding that 'emotion' is being used only to distinguish beauty from the primary impressions of sense and pleasure or pain. It will not substantially affect my reading of Hume's system for aesthetics if one simply refers to passions, however. The more important point is that Hume is not talking about a sense of beauty but an impression that is the product of reflection on the pleasure and qualities that original impressions provide.
- 3 A further distinction between those passions such as pride or humility that require a double relation of idea and impression and direct passions has a different basis. In Hume's system, beauty is typically a calm passion but can be raised to the level of violence, but it can be either a direct or indirect impression of reflection depending on the causal relations that produce it.
- 4 Cf. T 3.1.1.1, 457: 'Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular.'
- 5 Robert Fogelin takes Hume to task for claiming that reason cannot produce passions or emotions. Robert Fogelin, *Hume's Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 110ff. I do not find Hume inconsistent, however. He does not deny that reason plays a role in the emotions we have. He claims only that until it does, it cannot produce action, and when it does, it is the passion, not reason itself that moves us. Hume may be unclear about the way pure relations of ideas interact with impressions and ideas, but that very lack of clarity also keeps him free from the kinds of mechanisms that would limit his psychology to eighteenth-century knowledge of the mind.
- 6 T 2.3.3, 418.
- 7 Cf. above, Chapter 2, Section 1.
- 8 Cf. above, Chapter 1.
- 9 Elizabeth Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965). I have worked out some of this in 'Art and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Philosophy, in Peter McCormick (ed.) *The Reasons of Art* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985), pp. 215–221, and 'The Picturesque,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55, 4, 365–376.
- 10 In making this claim, I am disagreeing here and elsewhere throughout with those who read Hume as referring to a sense of beauty. Hume's theory of ideas 'brackets' the internal-external distinction to a large extent. Hutcheson needs a true sense of beauty. Hume does not. Beauty just is the passion or emotion. Its causes and qualities are dealt with just as any other external causes and qualities are in the theory of ideas.
- 11 Alex Neill has pointed out to me that this reinforces the natural/artificial distinction. His

example is that it would be just as plausible to say 'No man reasons concerning another's cheerfulness (a natural virtue); but frequently concerning the genius or lack of it of his poetry.' If one tries to compare art to a natural virtue, however, the comparison becomes implausible: 'No man reasons concerning the genius of Cicero's writing; but frequently concerning the benevolence or lack of benevolence of Mother Teresa.' I think Neill is correct, so the issue here is limited to beauty.

- 12 John Passmore points out the underlying problem that Pritchard had identified: 'Pritchard complains that 'there is in Hume just as much unjustified transition from objects to ideas and vice versa as there is in Locke'. *Knowledge and Perception*, p. 178. Hume would reply that the transition although 'unjustified' – if all justification has to be rational – was nevertheless inevitable.

'Now, this, to many philosophers, would be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of ideas; if we cannot know, or rationally infer, that anything but ideas exist, and yet must at the same time believe that there are material objects, this 'inconsistency' shows that the theory of ideas must be abandoned. Hume's attitude is very different. The theory of ideas, he assumes, is established; no one can doubt that we are directly aware only of 'perceptions'; here is a point which his scepticism does not touch. It was a point in the favour of that theory, not an argument against it, that it shows reason to be impotent in all matters of fact. If the theory of ideas had not already been worked out, Hume would have had to invent it. As it was, the work was done for him: he had a foundation on which his scepticism, his psychological positivism, his insistence on the primacy of the moral sciences, could immediately be erected.' *Hume's Intentions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 89.

- 13 Not to be confused with the double relation of ideas needed for pride.
- 14 David Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste,' in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), p. 230.

## 5 RULES

- 1 James Noxon, *Hume's Philosophical Development: A Study of His Methods* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), particularly Parts II and III.
- 2 George Dickie, *Evaluating Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. 158.
- 3 This seems to be a difficult point for commentators to appreciate. For example, Patricia de Martelaere argues that 'These principles are, in their first derivation, empirical records of the qualities which were actually possessed by a public that had, over the years, unanimously and constantly appreciated a work of art in a certain way. Next, however, they are turned into general rules, dictating for the future what in a way should be felt. Though Hume had in the *Treatise* repeatedly and emphatically denied the applicability of the category of 'reasonableness' to human feelings and passions, in his aesthetics he definitely has a concept of a certain Tightness or appropriateness of feeling.' Patricia de Martelaere, 'A Taste for Hume,' *Ratio* 2, 2 (1989), 125. But in Hume's system, the future follows from the past only as habit and expectation, so general rules cannot dictate anything.
- 4 See above, Chapter 3, p. 100f. Fictions are not simply falsehoods or lies, as Annette Baier notes. They are mental constructs of the imagination that stand in the place of impressions of sense. Fictions play a positive and valuable role in human nature. Without them, we would be unable to refer to what the imagination does for us with original impressions.

- 5 Hume would be able to endorse I. A. Richards's critical practice, therefore, particularly the exclusion of 'mnemonic irrelevance' and spurious association. *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), pp. 223ff.
- 6 I take 'ought' in this passage not to be normative but merely predictive, as when a scientist says that one ought to see a certain result from an experiment.
- 7 I take 'original' here to refer to original impressions. In other words, we do not find some difference in the original impressions that makes the distinction that leads to some beauty producing pride and other beauty not producing pride. The distinction lies in the nearness to self.
- 8 Our tendency in reading Hume is to slip into the mind-set of the vulgar, as Hume fully expects us to. But in Hume's system, we have no need to get behind impressions and ideas in that way. Hume is not Berkeley. He does not reduce the world to mental entities. But he does hold that impressions and ideas are all that we need in order to fully account for our quite justified reliance on our own experience. If Reid had understood that, he would not have taken Hume for that kind of skeptic.
- 9 Hume has somewhat the same problem in keeping distinct the universal natural expectations such as belief in an external world, which no skepticism can touch, from moral expectations that he would like to think of as universal such as a distaste for cruelty. Clearly, they are not the same since some people and even cultures relish cruelty. Beauty as a natural emotional response and as a secondary phenomenon produced by general rules is also not the same, though they are easily confused.
- 10 An example of what Hume is describing may be found in the popularity during the depression of movies that depicted an affluent elegance. Instead of envy and anger at a life that neither they nor anyone else was able to experience, audiences took pleasure in these films.
- 11 This is one basic difference between Hume and the rationalist aesthetics begun by Alexander Baumgarten.
- 12 The recognition of Hume's psychologism is common in the literature. For example, Don Garrett observes that Hume's view of 'reason' is a univocal reference to an inferential faculty that includes two kinds of arguments – demonstrative and probable. He then concludes that 'Hume's conclusion, as stated, directly concerns the causation of inductive inferences – a question in cognitive psychology – rather than the justification of such inferences, which is a question of epistemology.' Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 94. Analytical commentators considered the confusion of epistemological and psychological reasoning a significant flaw in Hume's thought. For example, John Passmore writes: 'We suggest that the reduction of philosophy to psychology is, in fact, no more successful in the case of causality than it is in the case of identity.' John Passmore, *Hume's Intentions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 83. More recent naturalistic interpretations that bring psychology and epistemology closer together are more sympathetic to Hume's approach. They tend to consider his theory of ideas insufficiently psychological. James Noxon concludes, for example, that 'What appears in contemporary literature as Hume's confusion between logic and psychology amounts, in my opinion, to no more than the critics' confusion between two senses of the term 'psychology'.' *Hume's Philosophical Development: A Study of His Methods* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 133. It is important to note the distinction in any event.

- 13 Matthew Kieran notes something that supports this reading: 'The so-called test of time has something to tell us; because often what speaks to one culture will not to another. Yet that some works can do so and are highly valued across time and many cultures is symptomatic of their greatness. While acknowledging relativity we again recognize here that something's being good art is and cannot be merely a question of whether in some way or other it pleases me as an interested individual. Rather, it must have significant interrelations with the values and concerns of the form of life that values it as art.' 'Relative Values in Art,' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 28, 1 (1994), 101–102.
- 14 Kendall Walton, 'Fearing Fictions,' *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978), 5–27.
- 15 Colin Radford disagrees. 'How can we be moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 49 (1975), 67–80.
- 16 John P. Wright argues that Hume allows us to suppose what is inconceivable. *The Skeptical Realism of David Hume* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 106–107. Wright's notion of supposition seems at odds with Hume's basic reliance on impressions, however, and it conflicts with Hume's explicit claim that what cannot be imagined is really impossible.
- 17 Compare Shaftesbury's treatment of enthusiasm discussed above.

## 6 THE PROBLEM OF A STANDARD OF TASTE

- 1 Robert Fogelin points out that the same is true of causal inference. 'What we now call Hume's skepticism concerning induction, for all its independent importance, occurs as a step leading to the conclusion that causal inferences (so called) are the product of the imagination and not of any kind of reasoning.' *Hume's Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 56. Imagination plays two roles for Hume. It is a way of combining ideas. In that sense, it is a synonym for 'fancy.' But it is also a productive faculty that provides the mind with new ideas. As such, it is essential to understanding basic mental phenomena such as cause and effect.
- 2 Shaftesbury has a similar position. See above, pp. 26–29.
- 3 Kevin Sweeney has provided a helpful analysis of this example in a paper presented to the American Society for Aesthetics, Santa Barbara, 1993.
- 4 See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 134–136.
- 5 Hume is not in a position to consider the musical octave as a relation of frequencies of pitch.
- 6 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion,' *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), p. 5.
- 7 The usual way of explaining this is to attribute to Hume an ideal observer theory. Thus Annette Baier: 'Biases due to our particular historical and social position, and to where our own advantage or affections lie, all must be corrected in our moral discourse and moral evaluations. But it is not a "view from nowhere"; it is a view from a common human viewpoint, expressing the sentiments of "the party of humankind against vice or disorder (E. 275)," p. 182. I suggest that what Hume requires is not an ideal observer, however, but an acute rule-perceiver, which is not quite the same thing. For one thing, it avoids the fact that no observer is ideal and that the conditions for an ideal observer cannot be specified.
- 8 See Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art and the Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 35ff.

- 9 See Thomas B. Gilmore, Jr. (ed), *Early 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Essays on Taste* (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1972), for a collection of essays from the 1730s.
- 10 It is unnecessary to trace all of this literature here. That in no way diminishes its interest. The most common issues are whether Hume holds a causal theory of taste or not; whether Hume continues to hold to his skeptical conclusions about a standard of taste or compromises them for neo-classical standards; if he does, whether there is an inconsistency between that position and his even seeking a standard; and whether the criteria for true judges are circular, initiate an infinite regress, or impose an impossible criteria. Other interesting issues in reading difficult passages bear more or less directly on these questions, and there are also interesting meta-aesthetical questions about the nature of criteria etc. The causal theory holds that some qualities in the object are suitable to produce a sentiment in an appropriately normal human being and usually retains Hume's location of beauty in the beholder but understands secondary or tertiary qualities as causal in a dispositional analysis. The position is supported in one form or another by Carolyn Korsmeyer, 'Hume and the Foundations of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35, 2 (1976), 201–215; Patricia de Martaelere, 'A Taste for Hume,' *Ratio* 2, 2 (1989), 122–137; Peter Jones, 'Another Look at Hume's Views of Aesthetic and Moral Judgments,' *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970), 53–59; Theodore Gracyk, 'Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, 2 (1994), 169–182; and others. Mary Mothersill, 'In Defense of Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, 3 (1997), 312–317 has recently given a brief and straightforward defense of it in reply to Roger Shiner. It is opposed by those who either reject Hume's subjectivism and believe they can find some critical grounds in the essay or simply find Hume's position inconsistent with a standard of taste at all. Noel Carroll, 'Hume's Standard of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, 2 (1984), 181–194 and Roger Shiner, 'Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, 3 (1996), 237–249, among others, have rejected the causal theory. Circularity is a fairly common complaint. Peter Kivy, 'Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967), 57–66 denies the circularity but finds an infinite regress. Carroll and James Shelley accuse Hume instead of redundancy. Carroll, p. 191; James Shelley, 'Hume's Double Standard of Taste,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, 4 (1994), 441. Shelley and Jeffrey Wieand, 'Hume's Two Standards of Taste,' *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34, 135 (1984), 129–142 find Hume ambiguous between two standards, but Shelley concludes that 'Hume comes no closer to giving us an actual standard of taste in specifying the identifying properties of a true judge than he does in giving us vague instructions on how to formulate the rules of art' (p. 444). I am influenced by all of these issues, but I am trying to place Hume's essay in the context of his system and of eighteenth-century thought, so I will not engage them except where they bear directly on what I am arguing.
- 11 For example, 'No gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious. A gratification is only vicious, when it engrosses all a man's expense, and leaves no ability for such acts of duty and generosity as are required by his situation and fortune.' 'Of Refinement in the Arts,' in *Essays*, p. 279.
- 12 Carroll, p. 187.
- 13 Jeffrey Wieand, 'Hume's Two Standards of Taste,' pp. 129–142. James Shelley returns to this topic, but he takes the passage to be offering Hume's definition of a standard as

a rule. He concludes that Hume succeeds in giving us an actual standard neither in terms of true judges nor in the terms of rules of art. James Shelley, 'Hume's Double Standard of Taste,' pp. 437–445. Hume's rhetoric does not imply that a standard is being defined as a rule when he constructs such parallels, however. 'Rule' is a way of explicating 'standard,' but so is 'decision.' All Hume is asserting is that it is natural for us to seek a standard or a rule, or perhaps only a decision.

- 14 Anthony Savile, *Kantian Ethics Pursued* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 80.
- 15 Ibid., p. 81.
- 16 Ibid., p. 82.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Peter Kivy, 'Breaking the Circle,' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 7 (1967), 57–66. Kivy's solution for Hume is different from mine, however. He argues that some of the criteria for a good critic apply more widely than to questions of taste and so can be established independently of judgments of taste. I will argue below that the question of a standard raises different questions altogether. That does not mean that Kivy is not correct about the wider application of some of the criteria for good critics.
- 19 Noel Carroll rejects this as a disagreement either over a critic (this won't result in an infinite regress because there aren't enough critics) or over the definition of the criteria (the 'conjectured refusal to buy Hume's concept of sense as a mark of a good critic does not show that there is an infinite regress internal to Hume's theory.' 'Hume's Standard of Taste,' p. 190). I think the real threat of a regress lies in the need for a further standard, this time for good sense, however, and that is different from buying Hume's definition. Whatever definition one has, it will seem to need a standard if it is to serve its function.
- 20 This anecdote has been very widely discussed. Most commentators seem to think that its object is to vindicate a type of critic or a type of judgment. But that cannot be the case because the vindication provided merely confirms the claims of these judges to greater acuteness of taste than others were willing to allow them. I take Hume's object to be to explain what delicacy means. The vindication of Sancho's kinsmen is only a means to that end.
- 21 James Shelley raises the question whether Hume has not placed himself in an impossible position by appealing to a joint verdict that seems to imply that the good critics can never be wrong (p. 443). I think that this is another point where an unacceptable precision is being imposed on Hume's rhetorical tradition. The 'joint verdict' means only that there is an emergent consensus. It does not mean that any particular judgment cannot be wrong.
- 22 Cf. 'Of Superstition and Enthusiasm,' for example where Hume writes 'In such a state of mind enthusiasm, the imagination swells with great, but confused conceptions, to which no sublunary beauties or enjoyments can correspond.' *Essays*, p. 74.
- 23 I don't mean this literally since my evidence as to what Hume thought of Shaftesbury is limited and his dependence on Hutcheson in the literal sense is well documented. I am speaking of affinities of text and approach, not historical influence.

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