

# 4 EMPIRICISM

Hutcheson and Hume

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If philosophical disciplines can be said to define themselves in terms of the central terms they attempt to define, then modern aesthetics is that discipline that attempts to define 'art' and 'aesthetic.' The concepts governing both of these terms derive from the eighteenth century. It is true that the term 'art' was long in use before then, but it was not until the eighteenth century that the artforms now included in what Paul Oskar Kristeller famously calls "the modern system of the arts" began to be grouped together, and that the term thus became linked with the concept that now governs it (Kristeller 1951). The reverse is true of the concept of the aesthetic: though it was not until the nineteenth century that the term began to be linked, in the English-speaking world at least, with the concept that now governs it, that concept first took on recognizable shape early in the eighteenth century (Stolnitz 1961: 142-3). It is with justice, therefore, that we regard the eighteenth century as the formative period of modern philosophical aesthetics, since it was only then that its defining concepts assumed recognizable form, and only then, therefore, that the modern discipline itself assumed recognizable form.

The writings of eighteenth-century aestheticians thus make a particularly strong claim on the attention of contemporary aestheticians: their study promises us the kind of self-understanding that only a study of our origins can provide. In particular, a study of the philosophical forces that forged our central concepts promises both to reveal where they are necessary and where arbitrary, and generally to sharpen understanding of them in something like the way that a study of etymologies sharpens understanding of the meanings of words. One caveat must be kept in mind: to say that our central concepts can be recognized in the writings of eighteenth-century aestheticians is not to say that those concepts, and their attendant perplexities, have not undergone change during the past 200 years. Nothing, it seems, impedes our understanding of eighteenth-century aesthetics more than the tendency to read

twentieth-century aesthetics into it. We thus find ourselves in a seemingly paradoxical position with respect to our eighteenth-century predecessors: we will not succeed in understanding ourselves without remembering them, but will not succeed in remembering them without first forgetting ourselves.

We owe our concept of the aesthetic particularly to the British aestheticians of the eighteenth century: their theories of taste are the direct forebears of our aesthetic theories. John Locke and the third earl of Shaftesbury stand as their immediate influences. Locke, who took no interest in matters of taste himself, provided the empiricist framework within which they worked out their theories; Shaftesbury convinced them of the philosophical interest of the concept of taste, though the vein he worked in was perhaps as Neoplatonic as empiricist (Townsend 1991: 350). We may therefore say that eighteenth-century British aestheticians placed Shaftesbury's interest within Locke's framework (Kivy 1976: 23). Their most important works include: Joseph Addison's papers on "Good Taste" and "The Pleasures of the Imagination" from *the Spectator* (1712), Francis Hutcheson's *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* (1973 [1725]), David Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" (1985 [1757]), Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757/1759), Alexander Gerard's *An Essay on Taste* (1759), Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762), and Archibald Alison's *Essay on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) (Townsend 1999). Because a summary of the entire period is not possible here, attention will be confined to the two works that exert the greatest contemporary influence: Hutcheson's *Inquiry* and Hume's essay. The latter is universally regarded as the masterpiece of the period: it stands with Kant's third Critique as a foundational text of modern aesthetic theory.

### Hutcheson

Despite the untidy appearance it presents on a first reading, Hutcheson's *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* (the first of the two treatises constituting his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Hutcheson 1973)) can be viewed as a reasonably unified response to a single question: What is the source of the pleasure we take in beauty? It is among Hutcheson's chief merits to have grasped that this question will remain unanswered so long as our focus remains fixed on objects, as it had in rival rationalist accounts of beauty. For the source of the pleasure of beauty, it seems, lies in us as well as in objects, and Hutcheson, accordingly, treats the question as a compound of two simpler questions. First, what is the source of the pleasure of beauty in us? And second, what is its source in objects?

Hutcheson's answer to the first question is that it is in virtue of our

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possession of an 'internal sense' that we take pleasure in objects of beauty; his answer to the second is that it is in virtue of their possession of 'uniformity amidst variety' that objects of beauty give pleasure to us. Though both answers continue to be sources of inspiration in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the first is of considerably greater historical moment. For in carving out a category of internally sensible pleasure, of which the pleasure of beauty is but one; a corresponding category of internally sensible properties, of which the property of beauty is but one; and a corresponding category of internally sensible objects, encompassing both art works and natural phenomena, Hutcheson fashions the first philosophically sophisticated incarnations of our categories of aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic properties, aesthetic objects, and so on. In short, and with important modifications, what was 'internally sensible' for Hutcheson has become 'aesthetic' for us, and it is on this basis that Hutcheson lays claim to the title of founder of modern philosophical aesthetics.

Hutcheson opens his *Inquiry* with the complaint that there are but two acknowledged categories of pleasures. One is the category of 'sensible pleasures,' which comprises those pleasures that arise solely from external sources, namely the five bodily senses, and which includes the pleasures we take in colors and in simple sounds. The other is the category of 'rational pleasures,' which comprises the pleasures that arise only with the additional involvement of reason (the only acknowledged internal source), and which is apparently exhausted by the self-interested pleasures we take in acquiring things we believe to be personally advantageous and the disinterested pleasures we take in making intellectual discoveries (Hutcheson 1973: *Inquiry* Preface). To establish that the pleasure of beauty falls under neither category, Hutcheson argues both, one, that the pleasure of beauty cannot arise with the involvement of reason, and therefore must have its source solely in the senses, and two, that the pleasure of beauty cannot arise solely from external sources, and therefore can arise only with the involvement of some internal source (or sources). By establishing these two points, Hutcheson forces the acknowledgment of a new category of pleasures: to the (externally) sensible and the (internally) rational, we must add the internally sensible, a category consisting of those pleasures that arise only with the involvement of some internal sense, which includes the pleasure of beauty.

That the pleasure of beauty arises without the involvement of reason, and is therefore purely sensible, follows, Hutcheson maintains, from the fact that such pleasure arises 'naturally,' 'necessarily,' 'immediately,' and without 'increase of knowledge.' The precise meaning he assigns to each element of this description is a matter of some debate. But what is obviously true of the

final element appears equally true of the rest: each ascribes a kind of independence to the arising of the pleasure of beauty. To say that such pleasure arises ‘naturally’ is to say that it arises independently of “custom, education, and example” (Hutchinson 1973, *Inquiry* sect. VII, art. I). To say that such pleasure arises ‘necessarily’ is to say that it arises independently of mere acts of will: no mere “resolution of our own [can] vary the beauty of any object” (ibid.: sect. I, art. XIII), which means that we can “procure” the pleasure of beauty only by subjecting ourselves to beautiful objects (ibid.: Preface). To say that such pleasure arises ‘immediately’ is to say, in effect, that it arises independently of self-interest, since the determination of what is or is not in one’s interest may require “long deductions of reason” (ibid.: Preface). And to say, finally, that such pleasure arises without ‘increase of knowledge’ is to say that it arises independently of the kind of disinterested knowledge that we find exemplified in “knowledge of principles, proportions, and causes” (ibid.: sect. I, art. XII). (It is worth noting that acquisition of the same knowledge may give rise either to self-interested or to disinterested pleasure: the pleasure I take in acquiring the knowledge that  $e=mc^2$ , for example, will be disinterested if it arises merely and immediately from the discovery itself, though self-interested to the degree that it arises from the further realization that I can use this discovery to make atomic weapons which I can use to destroy my enemies.)

Hutcheson never explains how this fourfold description eliminates reason as a source of the pleasure of beauty. But to interpret him as maintaining that each facet of the description suffices individually to eliminate reason is to do him injustice, for he must be aware that no single facet will. Hutcheson concedes that all pleasures, sensible and rational, arise necessarily (ibid.: Preface). Moreover, he concedes that some rational pleasures – the self-interested ones, specifically – do not arise from “increase of [disinterested] knowledge,” and that other rational pleasures – those that arise, for example, from the discovery of “principles, proportions, and causes” – are disinterested, and therefore presumably immediate (ibid.: sect. I, art. XIV). And, finally, unless he holds the odd view that human beings must be taught to take pleasure in acquiring objects or knowledge that they believe will serve their interests, and must additionally be taught to take pleasure in intellectual discovery, he must also concede that some rational pleasures arise naturally.

Hutcheson, therefore, would appear to hold the following: while some rational pleasures arise naturally, some immediately, some without increase of disinterested knowledge, and all necessarily, no single rational pleasure arises at once naturally, immediately, without disinterested knowledge, and necessarily. That no rational pleasure does so arise, in fact, follows from the impossibility of any rational pleasure arising both immediately and without

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increase of disinterested knowledge: for all rational pleasures arise from some kind of knowledge, and all knowledge is either interested or disinterested. Therefore, given that the pleasure of beauty arises immediately and without increase of disinterested knowledge (as well as necessarily and naturally), it follows that reason cannot be a source of the pleasure of beauty. Moreover, that the pleasure of beauty arises in each of the four ways is consistent with – in fact, suggestive of – its arising from thoroughly sensible sources. The pleasure of beauty, therefore, must be purely sensible.

To establish that the pleasure of beauty is *internal* is simple by comparison. Hutcheson adduces two basic arguments for the conclusion that the external senses are by themselves insufficient to account for the pleasure we take in beauty. One is that some people possess all five external senses, each in perfect working condition, and are yet incapable of taking pleasure in acknowledged objects of beauty (Hutcheson 1973, *Inquiry* sect. I, art. X). The other is that not all objects of beauty are objects of external sense: Hutcheson observes, for example, that we sometimes report being struck by the beauty of certain particularly economical yet powerful “theorems” or “demonstrated universal truths,” such as the propositions of Euclid’s geometry or Newton’s gravitational principle. (ibid.: sect. I, art. XI; sect III, arts. I, II, V). To the premise that the source of pleasure is thoroughly sensible, then, we add the premise that it arises only with the involvement of some internal source. From these considerations Hutcheson’s conclusion then follows inescapably: the pleasure of beauty arises only with the involvement of an internal sense, or equivalently, the pleasure of beauty is internally sensible.

The equivalence of these two ways of putting Hutcheson’s conclusion may be puzzling. The thesis that the pleasure of beauty is internally sensible, where Hutcheson’s ‘internally sensible’ means *something like* our ‘aesthetic,’ may strike us as uninformative. But this is merely an artifact of the ultimate success of Hutcheson’s project in fashioning a new category to house the pleasure of beauty. The equivalent thesis that the pleasure of beauty arises via an internal sense, by contrast, may strike us as far-fetched, for it may seem to imply the existence of some as yet undiscovered internal, possibly physical, organ. But ‘sense’ carries no such implication in Hutcheson’s *Inquiry*, where it refers merely to the ‘power of receiving ideas’ in response to the ‘action’ of objects upon us (‘idea,’ following Locke’s usage, refers to any mental entity that can be the object of consciousness) (ibid.: sect. I, arts. I and IX). That some senses depend on (physical) organs for the reception of their ideas is therefore incidental to their classification as senses. To possess the sense of hearing is simply to be capable of receiving the set of ideas we call ‘sounds’ in response to the action of objects suited to give such ideas; to possess the

sense of beauty is simply to be capable of receiving the idea we call ‘the pleasure of beauty’ in response to the action of objects suited to give such pleasure.

This characterization of the sense of beauty prompts the question what quality (or complex of qualities) suits an object to give us the pleasure of beauty: the question, in other words, of the source of the pleasure of beauty in objects. The answer may seem obvious: it may seem that it is in virtue of their possession of the quality of beauty that objects give rise to the pleasure of beauty. Hutcheson rejects this answer not because it is uninformative, but because it is, strictly speaking, false. Following Locke, Hutcheson thinks of the idea of beauty as an idea of a secondary quality, which means that beauty exists as an idea merely, and not as a quality that inheres in objects (Hutcheson 1973, *Inquiry* sect. I, art. XVI). Thus Hutcheson’s quest for the objective source of beauty can only terminate in the discovery of a quality (or complex of qualities) that causes the idea of beauty, and that is not (strictly speaking) the quality of beauty.

The terminus of Hutcheson’s quest, as has been noted, is the discovery of the quality of ‘uniformity amidst variety,’ a ‘compound’ of the qualities of uniformity and variety (*ibid.*: sect. II, art. III). Hutcheson’s view, contrary to what this may appear to suggest, is not that the pleasure of beauty arises from the proper balance of the opposing qualities of uniformity and variety. It is, rather that the pleasure of beauty arises from the simple presence of these two non-opposing, independently variable qualities. The stronger the concentration of each, the stronger the resulting pleasure (*ibid.*: sect. II, art. III). Hutcheson’s notions of uniformity and variety, therefore, are somewhat non-standard: for ‘uniformity’ he sometimes substitutes ‘order’ and ‘regularity’ and he seems generally to regard ‘variety’ as synonymous with ‘complexity’ (*ibid.*: e.g. sect. VI, arts V–IX). Thus Hutcheson’s thesis, roughly speaking, is that objects give rise to the pleasure of beauty to the degree they possess complex order. His chief method of establishing this empirical thesis is to assemble a diverse body of beautiful objects – natural scenes (*ibid.*: sect. II, art. V), animal bodies (*ibid.*: sect. II, arts. VI–X), music (*ibid.*: sect. II, art. XIII), architecture (*ibid.*: sect. III, art. VII), gardens (*ibid.*: sect. III, art. VII), theorems (*ibid.*: sect. III, arts. I–V), and the imitative arts of painting, sculpture, and literary description (*ibid.*: sect. IV, arts. I–II) – observing of each that it possesses both uniformity and variety in high degree (*ibid.*: sect. II, art. III).

Hutcheson’s attribution of uniformity amidst variety to theorems and imitative arts calls for clarification and comment. The uniformity amidst variety of an imitative work consists, he claims, in the unification, via resemblance, of original and copy (Hutcheson 1973, *Inquiry*: sect. VI: art. I); the

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uniformity amidst variety of a theorem (a demonstrated universal truth) consists, he maintains, in the unification of “an infinite multitude” of particulars under a single principle (ibid.: sect. III: art. I). The classification of theorems as objects of beauty yields the pleasing result that Hutcheson’s own theorem is itself beautiful, unifying, as it does, the most diverse specimens of beauty under the single principle of uniformity amidst variety. But difficulties ensue. Hutcheson’s earlier conclusion that the pleasure of beauty is sensible depends crucially, as noted, on the premise that such pleasure does not arise from ‘increase of knowledge.’ To preserve this conclusion, Hutcheson later claims that the arising of the pleasure of beauty no more depends on the knowledge that the ‘beautiful’ object possesses uniformity amidst variety than the arising of the idea of sweetness depends on the knowledge that the ‘sweet’ object possesses the quality (or complex of qualities) responsible for the arising of that idea (ibid.: sect. II, art. XIV). But it is difficult to see how Hutcheson can maintain this line with respect to theorems. For what could it mean to take pleasure in the contemplation of a theorem (as theorem) that does not depend on the knowledge that the theorem unifies various particulars under a single principle? That a parallel problem arises involving imitative art works is of greater concern, given their status as paradigms of beauty. For what could it mean to take pleasure in an imitation (as imitation) that does not depend on the knowledge that the imitation imitates the original (Kivy 1995: 352–5)?

In answering his second question, then, Hutcheson appears to undermine his answer to the first. The conclusion that knowledge, and therefore reason, plays no role in the taking of aesthetic pleasure proves difficult to sustain once inquiry descends to the particulars of the objects that provoke it. It is significant that Hutcheson’s *Inquiry* should embody precisely this tension: perhaps none is more characteristic of the tradition it inaugurates.

## Hume

Hutcheson’s influence is difficult to perceive in the deceptively difficult “Of the Standard of Taste,” Hume’s primary contribution to aesthetic theory. This should not be surprising considering that Hume addresses neither of Hutcheson’s questions other than to dismiss, without argument, both of Hutcheson’s answers: Hume takes the pleasure of beauty to arise with the involvement of both senses and reason, and to have not one but irreducibly many causes in objects. But both points are incidental to Hume’s larger project: the seemingly hopeless search for a standard of taste.

Hume attributes the seeming hopelessness of his project to its apparent incompatibility with the Lockean thesis that “beauty is no quality in things

themselves,” but merely a ‘sentiment’ in “the mind that contemplates them” (Hume 1985: 229–30). If beauty were a quality in objects, judgements concerning their beauty would “have a reference to something beyond themselves,” namely to “real matter of fact,” that is, to the objects themselves, and would therefore be true or false according to presence or absence of beauty in those objects (ibid.: 230). Objects themselves would then provide a standard for judging individual tastes: good taste would consist in the ability to perceive beauty in, and only in, objects possessing it. Given, however, that beauty is merely a ‘sentiment’ of pleasure excited by the perception of objects, judgements concerning their beauty have “a reference to nothing beyond [themselves],” and are true or false (if either) according merely to the presence or absence of pleasure in the mind that perceives them. It thus appears that there can be no standard of taste, for assuming that we are capable of detecting the presence or absence of pleasure in our own minds, all judgements of beauty will be true, and all tastes therefore equally sound (ibid.: 230).

Hume’s strategy is not to dispute the Lockean thesis, but to argue that its truth does not preclude the existence of a standard of taste. At the basis of Hume’s argument is a partition of what might be called ‘the mechanism of taste’ into two stages: a perceptual stage, in which we perceive qualities in objects, and an affective stage, in which we feel the pleasurable sentiments of beauty, or the displeasurable sentiments of ‘deformity,’ that arise from our perceptions of those qualities. Because we pass through both stages in arriving at judgements of taste, differences in such judgements will divide into two categories: those arising merely at the latter stage, and which are therefore purely affective, and those arising in the former stage, and which are therefore perceptual in origin. Insofar as differences in taste are purely affective, insofar as they are *merely* differences in taste, Hume concedes that there is simply “no room to give the one the preference above the other” (ibid.: 244). But insofar as differences in taste arise from differences in perception, Hume believes that we have a standard for preferring some tastes above others because we have a standard for preferring some perceptions above others. Since we regard perceptions as accurate or inaccurate as they represent or fail to represent the nuances of the objects to which they refer, we may regard sentiments as ‘right’ or (presumably) ‘wrong’ as they arise from accurate or inaccurate perceptions (ibid.: 230). The questions whether and when there is a standard of taste thus reduce to the questions whether and when differences in taste result from differences in perception. When differences in taste do result from differences in perception, the former fall heir to the standard of the latter, and so end up having the very standard the Lockean thesis seemed to have deprived them of: “real matter of fact.”



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Hume opens his essay by conceding what is “too obvious not to have fallen under every one’s observation”: that a “great variety of Taste . . . prevails in the world” (Hume 1985: 226). Amidst that great variety, however, Hume remarks conspicuous instances of uniformity: the “same HOMER,” for example, “who pleased at ATHENS and ROME two thousand years ago, is still admired at PARIS and at LONDON” (ibid.: 233). That the works of Homer, Virgil, Terence, and Cicero, among presumably many others, have pleased minds in such diverse places and times indicates that they possess qualities that the mind, by its nature, takes pleasure in perceiving (ibid.: 233, 243). That the mind naturally takes pleasure in the perception of certain properties – and displeasure, he presumes, in the perception of certain others – means that it operates according to what Hume calls ‘principles of taste’ or ‘rules of art:’ principles stating simply that the perception of certain properties of objects always gives rise to pleasurable sentiments of beauty, or to displeasurable sentiments of ‘deformity,’ in the human mind (ibid.: 231–4). Hume’s interest in positing principles of taste – principles asserting universal causal links between the two stages of the mechanism of taste – is perhaps clear: insofar as the mind operates according to them, differences in taste can only be perceptual in origin, for insofar as uniform perceptions of objects lead inevitably to uniform affective responses, divergent affective responses lead inevitably back to divergent perceptions. It therefore follows that when, for example, we fail to take pleasure in works possessing properties “fitted by nature” (ibid.: 235) to please us, the blame falls neither on works, nor on principles, but on us. “Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please,” Hume writes, “and if they fail of their effect in any particular instance, it is from some apparent defect or imperfection in the organ” (ibid.: 233).

Hume devotes considerable attention to cataloging and describing the defects that prevent our taking pleasure in works ‘fitted by nature’ to please us. His catalogue includes five items: one, lack of ‘delicacy,’ two, lack of ‘good sense,’ three, failure to have practiced, four, failure to have formed comparisons, and five, prejudice. Delicacy is the ability to perceive each of the ‘ingredients,’ or aesthetically relevant properties, of works perceivable by the senses, particularly those that are difficult to detect because they are overshadowed by other properties or present only in small degree (Hume 1985: 234–7). Good sense is the ability to perceive each of the ingredients or properties of works perceivable by reason, such as “the mutual relation and correspondence” of a work’s parts, or the suitability of a work to achieve the particular end for which it was designed (ibid.: 240). To possess both delicacy and good sense is presumably to possess the ability to perceive all the

aesthetically relevant properties of works. Hume recommends practice, it appears, merely as the best method to acquire both delicacy and good sense (ibid.: 237–8). The formation of comparisons “between the several species and degrees of excellence” enables one to assign the proper comparative weight to each pleasure occasioned by the perception of each ingredient (ibid.: 238). To be prejudiced with respect to a work is to allow pleasures or displeasures arising from extraneous factors, such as biases for or against the artist’s person or culture, to distort one’s response to the work (ibid.: 239–40). We may summarize, then, by saying that persons free from each of these five defects are persons whose affective response to art works arises from the properly weighted perceptions of only and all the aesthetically relevant properties of those works. We may simplify still further, perhaps, by saying that persons free from the five defects are persons whose affective response to art works arises from the ideal perception of those works. Hume refers to persons free from the five defects as ‘true judges,’ and concludes that “the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty” (ibid.: 241).

Understanding the basis of Hume’s conclusion requires a grasp of the somewhat elusive relation between principles of taste and true judges. This may best be illustrated by example. Suppose that my verdict with respect to some particular art work differs from the verdict of a true judge: the true judge responds with a balance of pleasure over displeasure and I do not. Suppose, further, that universal principles of taste govern both responses: we are both disposed, given the common nature of our minds, to take the same pleasures and displeasures in the perception of the aesthetically relevant properties of the work. In such a case, the divergence in affective response can be explained only by a divergence in perception, presumably from the true judge’s success and my failure to have perceived certain of the work’s aesthetically relevant properties. The only way I can now avoid conceding that the true judge’s response is superior to mine, and not merely different from it, is to maintain that the true judge’s perception is not superior to mine, but merely different from it. But I cannot maintain this: “the sentiments of all mankind are agreed” in acknowledging it “to be the perfection of every sense or faculty to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation” (Hume 1985: 236). It follows, therefore, that where there exist universal principles linking the perception of the properties of a work to the arousal of sentiments of pleasure and displeasure in the mind, where, in other words, we would all respond uniformly to a work if we only ideally perceived it, the response of the true judge is the ideal response because the perception of the true judge is ideal perception.

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Hume acknowledges, however, the existence of cases in which principles of taste do not fully govern our affective responses: cases, in other words, in which differences in affective response do not result entirely from differences in perception. He notes, near the essay's end, that in addition to the five mainly perceptual defects under which "the generality of men labour" (Hume 1985: 241), there exist two additional sources of diversity of taste: "the different humours of particular men" and "the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" (ibid.: 243). Such constitutional and cultural differences, Hume maintains, will bring about divergent affective responses to the perception of certain properties of art works, which means that no principles of taste will specify those properties, and that uniform perceptions of works possessing them will not necessarily issue in uniform affective responses. When differences in taste with respect to such works arise without perceptual basis, then they are mere differences in taste, and "we seek in vain for a standard, by which to reconcile the contrary sentiments" (ibid.: 244). It is because of the possibility of such 'blameless' differences in taste that Hume maintains that we have a standard of taste only when true judges render a *joint* verdict. To say that a verdict of true judges is joint is to say that is the verdict that any ideal perceiver would give, regardless of particular constitution or cultural background: a verdict jointly rendered by true judges, it turns out, just is a verdict governed by principles of taste. There is a sense in which such verdicts belong to us all. They are fully expressive of our own affective dispositions; they are fully expressive, we might say, of our own tastes. They are the verdicts we would all give, if only we perceived better: the verdicts of our perceptually better selves.

One element of Hume's account has not aged well. In asserting that a property that pleases in one art work will please equally in all, Hume ignores a crucial role that context is now recognized to play in the value of art works: no property of art works, we now realize, is everywhere a merit. But it is far from clear that a more nuanced account of principles cannot calm contextualist worries while accomplishing what Hume's theory asks of it. Moreover, there is nothing in Hume's theory that drives his particular account of principles: it should be possible to substitute a sophisticated version with little violence to the rest of the theory. The rest is worth saving. In distinguishing mere differences of taste from perceptually based differences of taste, and in then arguing that the latter must have a standard in "real matter of fact," Hume provides a basis for understanding aesthetic norms that is as promising as any our discipline has seen.

*See also* The aesthetic, Aesthetic universals, Taste, Beauty, Value of art, Kant, Sibley.

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