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Hume Studies Volume 30, Number 1, April (2004) 87-126.

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Hume's Aesthetics: The Literature and Directions for Research

TIMOTHY M. COSTELLOE

Introduction

While there is hardly an aspect of Hume's work that has not produced controversy of one sort or another, deciphering and evaluating his views on aesthetics involves overcoming interpretive barriers of a particular sort. In addition to what is generally taken as the anachronistic attribution of "aesthetic theories" to any thinker of the eighteenth century, Hume presents the added difficulty that unlike the other founding-fathers of modern philosophical aesthetics, he produced no systematic work on the subject, and certainly nothing comparable to his efforts in epistemology, morals, politics, history, and religion.¹ Even interpreting Hume's most definitive expression of his views on aesthetic questions—the famous essay "Of the Standard of Taste"—is fraught with difficulties and, as the diversity of views on the piece demonstrates, only the most confident reader would take it as an unambiguous statement of Hume's position.²

Some have also emphasized Hume's relative neglect of phenomena to which one would expect an aesthete to be drawn. The *Treatise*, in Peter Kivy's estimation, for instance, reveals an "almost total lack of interest . . . in works of art"—the examples being confined to the beauty of nature and artifacts—and Peter Jones writes that with the exception of literature, Hume's "references to the arts . . . are infrequent and fleeting. He almost never refers to music or to sculpture,

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his asides on painting are inconsequential, and architecture gains more than a passing mention only in his letters from Europe in 1748; what little theoretical or philosophical writing was available to him on these arts gets almost no mention."³ Even the quality of Hume's own critical acumen has been questioned. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, for example, George Saintsbury could dismiss Hume's "literary opinions" as "almost negligible" when separated from his philosophical thought more generally; even if Hume had "worked them into an elaborate treatise," Saintsbury contends, ". . . this would probably, if remembered at all, be remembered as a kind of 'awful example.'"⁴ Some three decades later, one finds John Laird taking much the same view. While "It was natural," he says, "for [Hume] to regard literary criticism as one of the regions in which his philosophy should be developed . . . , [p]osterity . . . has declined to admit his eminence in this domain." "Wordsworth," Laird adds with seeming approval, "called him 'the worst critic that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced.'" Although few contemporary commentators would dismiss Hume's views on literature and the arts in such stark terms, his forays into criticism in the *History of England* do little to undermine John Stewart's blunt assessment that Hume's "judgment of poets and playwrights was notably bad." At best, what Hume has to say is at odds with what one might expect from a true judge in matters of literature.⁵

Hume's success or failure as a critic, however, can and should be distinguished from the form and content of any aesthetic theory his work suggests. The lack of any systematic treatment notwithstanding, aesthetic questions clearly play a central role in Hume's thinking and, as William Halberstadt writes, while his "major philosophical works are not directly concerned with aesthetics," a number of essays explicitly address themes which now fall under that rubric, and, significantly, "even in the major philosophical writings . . . there are numerous references to it."⁶ In the Advertisement to the *Treatise*, moreover, Hume declares his intention to extend the investigations of the understanding and passions to include an "examination of . . . criticism" (T 1.1; SBN xii). Although this task remained unrealized, the importance he accorded aesthetic questions in his overall system is evident in the inclusion of the same subject matter in his brief categorization of "moral reasonings" at the end of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (EHU 12.30, 33; SBN 165). Hume might never have treated the issues in a way he apparently envisaged early in his career, but the language of eighteenth-century aesthetics pervades his writings and is a resource on which he routinely draws. Hume's "interest in these issues was lifelong," as Mary Mothersill puts it,⁷ and it is not without reason that, although his views on beauty and taste are scattered and unsystematic, they have been awarded a privileged place in the history of aesthetics and have become, increasingly, a specific focus for students of his philosophy more generally.

When the first book-length study of Hume's aesthetics and its connections to other parts of Hume's philosophical system appeared in 1952, its author, Teddy Brunius, could remark on how the subject had "not been investigated to any great degree." As the bibliography in Dabney Townsend's recent (2001) monograph devoted to similar issues demonstrates, the intervening half century has witnessed a surge of interest in Hume's approach to aesthetics.⁸ Although a disproportionate part of the literature centers on "Of the Standard of Taste," aestheticians and Hume scholars alike have addressed a variety of issues raised by his work. In what follows my aim is to provide a sense of these and to offer an overview of both the debates that have ensued as well as the contributions different commentators have made to understanding this part of Hume's philosophy. The material is organized thematically: I begin with the origins and influence of Hume's aesthetics, before turning to the central doctrines of his approach and the commentary inspired by "Of the Standard of Taste." In the latter part of the paper I consider the literature on Hume's approach to tragedy and the various observations that have been made concerning the parallel he draws between natural and artistic beauty, on one side, and moral beauty, on the other. I conclude briefly with some suggestions for areas where further research into Hume's aesthetics might prove both interesting and useful.

The Historical Context

Dubos, Locke, and Hutcheson

Although, as Townsend has recently reminded readers, Hume's aesthetics cannot be separated from the early modern preoccupation with issues of taste, beauty, and sentiment more generally,⁹ three figures loom large in attempts to trace its philosophical forbears, namely, the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Dubos, John Locke, and Francis Hutcheson. The historical importance of Dubos's *Reflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* is well established, and Hume's references to it in the "Early Memoranda" and some of the *Essays* (including "Of Tragedy") is taken as clear evidence that he had read it.¹⁰ Although the references are few and, as James Noxon points out, Hume was equally sympathetic to Bernard de Fontenelle and Edmund Burke,¹¹ Jones has argued consistently that Dubos's influence goes deeper than one might at first suspect. This is true of Hume's position in "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" and "Of the Standard of Taste," which, Jones contends, is "heavily indebted to him."¹² Jones's case for the former connection rests on the fact that of four points Hume makes in the essay "three of [them] occur in Dubos": that the arts and sciences only arise amongst a free people, that rival states stimulate invention and check the territorial ambitions of their neighbors, and that, once established, the arts and sciences can be transferred from a free

state, with the arts flourishing best in a civilized monarchy and the sciences in a republic. The case for seeing Dubos as the inspiration behind “Of the Standard of Taste,” on the other hand, is based largely on Hume’s appeal to “sentiment,” his concept of judgment, and the “three traits mentioned by Dubos”—delicacy, good sense, and freedom from prejudice—which characterize, in part, Hume’s figure of the true judge.¹³ Jones’s thesis has been endorsed by Paul Guyer and, most recently, supported by Townsend who, while detecting important differences between the two philosophers, emphasizes how both Hume and Dubos are of one voice in privileging “sentiment and experience over reason and inference in judgments of taste.”¹⁴

While Jones, Guyer, and Townsend discover a significant source for Hume’s aesthetics in Dubos, other commentators focus on what is perhaps the more obvious, though no more straightforward, connections between Hume and the philosophical legacy of Locke and Hutcheson. Although the specifics of Hume’s debt to the latter have been a source of controversy,¹⁵ in the sphere of aesthetics, at least, there is consensus that significant elements of the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* appear, albeit reformulated, in Hume’s approach to beauty and taste. Harold Osborne, for example, places Hume squarely in the school of “British eighteenth-century Empiricists [who] grounded aesthetic judgments on felt pleasure and . . . who spoke of an ‘inner sense’ of beauty.”¹⁶ Others emphasize Hume’s specific debt to Hutcheson’s view that “the word beauty is taken for the idea raised in us, and a sense of beauty for our power of receiving this idea,” and, like Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, many discern Locke’s “way of ideas” between the lines of Hume’s writing.¹⁷

Hume’s close personal and philosophical relationship with Hutcheson is well-documented, and, given the central role played by Lockean thought in Hutcheson’s writing, one might expect elements of the former to exert some influence on Hume’s aesthetics as well. The situation is complicated, however, by the well-known scepticism with which he treats the “modern philosophy” in the *Treatise* and first *Enquiry*. Hume focuses his criticism on the distinction between primary and secondary qualities in particular, by means of which, “instead of explaining the operations of external objects . . . , we utterly annihilate all these objects, and reduce ourselves to the opinions of the most extravagant scepticism concerning them” (T 1.4.4.6; SBN 227–8). At the same time, Hume himself categorizes the “sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects” as a calm impression of reflection (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276), and commentators have gathered the fairly extensive textual evidence scattered throughout the *Treatise*, *Enquiries*, and *Essays* to confirm the sentimentalist approach he takes to both beauty and morals.

While the ambiguity in Hume’s position have led some, quite naturally, to downplay his commitment to the distinction between primary and secondary

qualities,¹⁸ writers on Hume's aesthetics are more sanguine in recognizing its role in his approach to beauty. Kivy expresses the view of many when he emphasizes how Hume substitutes "sentiment" for the Lockean "idea," and "like Hutcheson . . . thinks that beauty is a 'quality' in objects which is the cause of our aesthetic sentiments"; Hume "is not disinclined, at times," Kivy adds, even "to refer to a sense of beauty."¹⁹ Jones offers a similar evaluation, emphasizing how "important [it is] to remember that, properly speaking, beauty is the name of a sentiment, although it is often extended by courtesy to apply to the quality of the object that causes the sentiment."²⁰ For Hume, there are thus qualities in objects that account for the sentiment of beauty or deformity, but the latter only arise because there is a "fit"—a "match" or "natural aptness"²¹—between the object and a subject who is capable of being affected in a certain manner. At the same time, however, many are quick to emphasize that in his aesthetics, no less than in his epistemology, Hume is unwilling to embrace the sceptical absurdities of idealism to which, in the shape of Berkeley at least, Locke's "way of ideas" leads. Indeed, Theodore Gracyk argues that "Hume never commits himself to all of the premises of the sceptical position," and that "it is questionable whether he embraces an equation of beauty and sentiment."²² This assessment is perhaps difficult to square with Hume's own pronouncements to the contrary, but Gracyk does capture what Rochelle Gurstein has recently called the "very essence of taste," namely, that "qualities such as sweet and bitter, or beauty and deformity, are experienced as internal 'sentiments.' But at the same time they actually belong to the objects."²³ Hume's apparent acceptance of at least the logic of Lockean qualities has far-reaching consequences for his position, and informs what many see as the central problem in "Of the Standard of Taste," namely, the attempt to reconcile subjective sentiments with objective standards.

Yet, deciphering a debt to Locke and Hutcheson in Hume's aesthetics does not involve *reducing* his approach to the "way of ideas," and the important concomitant to recognizing the influence is to acknowledge the direction in which Hume takes their doctrines. Kivy, for instance, argues forcefully that whereas Hutcheson moves quite explicitly in the *Inquiry* "from the aesthetic to the moral . . . Hume moved in just the opposite way—from the moral to the aesthetic." This is significant because it means that Hume's view of aesthetics is colored by and extends his approach to morals, and this, Kivy argues, gives it a decidedly "epistemic" flavor: for Hume, that is, "we come to know, in a quite conscious and calculating way, that things are useful, or have parts well-adapted to ends, as a necessary prologue to the arousal of a sentiment of beauty." Aesthetic perception then involves the "acquisition of beliefs or knowledge," and whereas Hutcheson's principle of "uniformity amidst variety" is at least a *candidate* analogue for a Lockean "quality" in the micro-structure of matter, Kivy emphasizes, Hume's concept of "utility" is never intended to play such a role.²⁴

In different ways, various commentators have emphasized other important points of departure from Locke and Hutcheson. Halberstadt, for example, identifies “one area of significant change” between Hume and Hutcheson in the latter’s principle of “uniformity amidst variety” and the fact that the “Hutchesonian internal *senses* become internal *sentiments* or feeling in Hume’s treatment.” Carolyn Korsmeyer stresses how, as distinct from Hutcheson, Hume refuses “to commit himself to any surmise about the ‘real’ qualities in those objects are perceived as beautiful,” and George Dickie focuses on the idea that unlike Hutcheson and “other taste theorists” Hume makes no attempt to specify a “formula for the overall beauty of objects,” which leads him away from a Hutchesonian emphasis on a “faculty.” “Hutcheson,” Dickie argues, “uses the consideration of simple cases of uniformity to try to show that the sense of beauty is universal” while “Hume restricts his parallel argument solely to drawing conclusions about characteristics of experience rather than trying to infer an underlying faculty.” Thus, “Hume’s version of the argument proves that uniformity and many other characteristics are subjects of principles of taste.”²⁵

Kant

Whereas questions about the *origins* of Hume’s aesthetics have been raised with respect to Dubos, Locke, and Hutcheson, those concerned with its influence on later aesthetic theories have taken up Hume’s relationship to aspects of Immanuel Kant’s “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Some have emphasized Kant’s similar view that beauty is a feeling (*Gefühl*) in the subject and not a property of the object; others see in Hume intimations of Kant’s distinction between “dependent” and “free” beauty, and David Marshall emphasizes the “possibility of common sense, in the sense of Kant’s idea of a ‘Gemeinsinn’” as Hume’s focus in “Of the Standard of Taste.”²⁶ Opinion is divided, however, upon how far the influence extends. Some treat it as axiomatic. Dickie, for instance, claims that the “German rationalists were, no doubt, the historical source of Kant’s conception [of purpose],” but that his notion of beauty “has its antecedents in Hutcheson’s view that ‘beauty’ refers to a feeling (pleasure) in us and Hume’s view that ‘beauty is no quality in things themselves.’”²⁷ E. F. Carritt goes even further, stressing that “Kant’s philosophy of beauty owes nearly everything but its systematic form to English writers . . . [while] his debt to Baumgarten, who had inaugurated German aesthetics in 1750, is less,”²⁸ and Jones goes further still, declaring unequivocally that “Kant undoubtedly conceived the first part of his *Critique of Judgment* as a response to Hume.”²⁹

At the same time, there is no doubt some truth to the observation made by Gilbert and Kuhn who, responding to Carritt explicitly, observe how “We can . . . take piecemeal most of the topics treated by Kant and match his statements

to earlier ones by . . . people [other than Hume]." Kant's emphasis on the disinterestedness of aesthetic pleasure, the non-intellectual character of judgments of taste, and his distinction between pure and relative beauty, they claim, could have come from almost any of the contemporary British writers.³⁰ This possibility is reflected in commentary that takes a more sceptical view of Hume's presence in the third *Critique*. As early as 1881 Gustav Zart provides a survey of British influences on eighteenth-century German philosophy without mentioning Hume at all, citing Hutcheson and primarily Burke as thinkers who most influenced Kant's approach to beauty.³¹ More recently, Gracyk has defended the thesis that "while Kant borrows substantially from the British, his debt to Shaftesbury, Burke, and Hume is exaggerated in standard readings." The "primary influences on Kant, are Addison, Hutcheson, Gerard, and Kames," Gracyk argues, while "Hume and Burke contribute to Kant's mature aesthetics *primarily as opponents*."³²

Even those who decipher the prevalence of Humean doctrines in Kant are quick to highlight fundamental differences in their approaches. Jones, for example, emphasizes that the "moral and metaphysical implications of Kant's aesthetic judgments have no analogue in Hume," and that Hume does not "make Kant's mistake of holding that individuating judgments of the form 'This is beautiful' are possible without concepts."³³ Guyer comments on how Hume's "acceptance of the purely natural and thus contingent existence of the standard of taste . . . separates Hume . . . from Kant"; Gurstein points out how the Empiricists' emphasis on experience "set[s] them apart from Kant [who] . . . gave all emphasis to disinterestedness and the autonomy of aesthetic delight, thereby making experience irrelevant," and Kulenkampff takes Hume to be amongst those British aestheticians whose failure to inquire into the validity of aesthetic judgment (*welcher Art von Geltungsanspruch eines Ästhetischen Urteils eigentlich ist*) is what separates them from Kant's approach to taste in terms of an authoritative judgment (*Kategorie des Geschmacks als Urteilsinstanz*). With such differences between the two thinkers in view, one might concur with Anthony Savile's evaluation that Hume and Kant "are largely concerned with different issues . . . [and] we do better to see them as complementing each other rather than competing."³⁴

Important differences notwithstanding, there is one area where many commentators have identified a decisive Humean presence in the third *Critique*, and that is in the way Kant's "Antinomy of Taste" appears to reformulate the argument Hume develops in "Of the Standard of Taste." Kant does not cite the essay explicitly—although he does make reference to "The Sceptic" and parts of the *History of England*³⁵—and given Kant's imperfect English, it is doubtful that he knew "Of the Standard of Taste" in the original. However, a German translation by Johann Georg Sulzer appeared in 1758 (only one year after its publication in English) under the title "Von der Regel des Geschmacks,"³⁶ and commentators generally assume that Kant either owned a copy of the essay or had at least read it. Kulenkampff speaks for

many when he remarks that “Kant had in his library the german [sic] translation of Hume’s essay,” and that “to read one text in light of the other seems plausible . . . not only for reasons of interest in solving fundamental problems in aesthetics, but also for uncovering links in the history of ideas.”³⁷ Kivy seems to have been the first to have brought attention explicitly to the possibility of understanding “Of the Standard of Taste” in terms of a Kantian Antinomy. “Hume saw the problem of taste as Kant was to see it some years later,” he writes, “as the resolution of a dilemma which had, on one of its horns, the commonsensical notion that about taste there is no disputing, and on the other the (to Hume) equally self-evident precept that, as he put it, ‘where objects so disproportioned are compared together. . . . The principle of the natural equality of tastes is then totally forgot.’”³⁸ The point has been underlined subsequently by a number of other writers. Commenting on the *Kritik der Urteilkraft* §56, for example, Guyer observes how “Kant employs two ‘commonplaces’ of taste to set up a dialectic of taste reminiscent of Hume’s opening gambit in “The Standard of Taste,”” and Kulenkampff goes so far as to say that the “*Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* can be read as an answer to Hume’s essay.” Mothersill has also made this case forcefully, though she is inclined to see the connection in the “subtext” of the essay rather than in the “official” version defended by Hume. “Standards of taste are set by particular works of great and lasting beauty,” she argues, and the verdicts of true judges “serve to recommend the work judged to our attention.”³⁹

Any comparison between the two works is clearly tempered by the potential anachronism of rewriting an earlier argument in terms of a later one, as well as by the aforementioned differences between Kant’s Critical philosophy and Hume’s empiricism. When “Of the Standard of Taste” is understood in Kantian terms, however, striking parallels between the respective arguments do emerge.⁴⁰ Kant generates his Antinomy by juxtaposing two commonly held assumptions or “commonplaces” (*Gemeinorte*) about taste: on one side, the assumption that “everyone has his own taste” and, on the other, the view that “one can quarrel about taste (though one cannot dispute about it).” The Antinomy then consists of a thesis stating that an aesthetic judgment has subjective validity (not based on concepts) and an antithesis that it has universal validity (that it *is* based on concepts) (KdU, 338). Kant solves the dilemma by showing that the contradictory maxims take the same term in different but compatible ways. The conflict then arises because the determinate and indeterminate senses of “concept” become confused in the “commonplaces” about taste, and recognition of this fact transforms the contradiction into a dialectical illusion in which both principles “may both be true” (KdU, 341). In a comparable way, Hume’s argument in “Of the Standard of Taste” proceeds by juxtaposing two “species of common sense.” On the one hand, there is a general assumption that in matters of taste there is no dispute (*de gustibus non est disputandum*) and, on the other, recognition that there are in fact general stan-

dards governing aesthetic judgments such that to claim the superiority of Ogilby over Milton would be no less absurd than maintaining “a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFE or a pond as extensive as the ocean” (E 230–1). Hume, of course, does not have the technical apparatus of Transcendental Idealism to draw upon, but he proceeds to “solve” the contradiction by showing that, although beauty is a function of an individual sentiment, there are also standards governing judgments of taste. Although—as I detail below—precisely what Hume means by “standard” has been a source of considerable disagreement, Hume and Kant are apparently of one mind in recognizing the antithetical nature of human reason and the contradiction it produces as a fundamental issue in philosophical aesthetics.

The Central Doctrines of Hume's Aesthetics

As there is broad agreement concerning the sources of Hume's aesthetics and that it had at least some influence on Kant's thinking, commentators also concur in recognizing its central doctrines, and, further, that these constitute an application of principles familiar from his epistemology and moral philosophy. I have already touched on some of these in the preceding discussion, but for the sake of presentation, I want to specify two areas that have been taken as characteristic of Hume's theory.

Beauty as sentiment

First, as I indicated above, commentators are unanimous in emphasizing the sentimentalism of Hume's aesthetics and the concomitant view that there is a natural “fit” between objects such that certain qualities cause affects in individuals capable of being so affected. This is not to say that Hume takes “beauty” as a univocal category. Jones identifies three distinct kinds of beauty in Hume's writings—beauty of form, interest, and species—and emphasizes the role Hume gives to sympathy and comparison in making aesthetic judgments, and Guyer details Hume's distinction between natural beauty involving an “immediate response” to qualities of an object, and beauty as a “pleasurable sentiment which arises only when the perception of the form of an object is supplemented by a concept or concepts brought to bear on it by imagination or judgment.”⁴¹ All kinds of beauty, for Hume, however, as Jones notes, “have in common the fact that they cause ‘a pleasure pretty much the same.’” “Hume identifies beauty with pleasure, and pleasure with the main-spring of our active existence,” as Gilbert and Kuhn express the same point, and it “is clear in the main part of his writing,” they conclude, “that it is the natural, emotional part of our animal frame which accounts for our taste.”⁴² The emphasis Hume gives to “fit” and pleasure has led some to describe his theory as “causal,” “the view,” as Jones characterizes it, that “certain objects cause normal percipients

under normal conditions to have an aesthetic sentiment, which itself causes them to utter an aesthetic verdict or judgment.” Thus a “causal theory of taste . . . will argue,” as Roger Shiner puts it, “that the nature of taste, and of judgments expressing taste, are best understood as essentially parts of a causal process linking the artwork(s) or other object of taste and the critic or appreciator.”⁴³

Recognition that Hume holds such a view has not shielded him from criticism, however. Mothersill points out that this focus on “fit” does not correspond to our experience since people disagree over works of art rather than their sentiments; individuals who disagree in their judgments are not interested about the state of one another’s “organs and faculties,” but are curious to know what it is about a work that produces the approbation or disapprobation in question. Hume, Mothersill suggests, comes close to capturing this fact in his comment that the “same Homer who please at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and London”; particular works, that is, rather than any sentiment raised in individuals, set the standard for greatness in different genres.⁴⁴ Shiner also criticizes the causal theory—and by extension Hume—for its tendency to confuse genuine causal explanation with simple description (what Shiner refers to as “criterial justification”), and Noël Carroll argues that since for Hume “there are intellectual or cognitive pleasures to be had from artworks,” this makes it “less persuasive to think that the process of aesthetic response is essentially a causal one.” Finally, Gilbert and Kuhn even accuse Hume of some metaphysical sleight of hand, contending that the notion of “fit” involves a “sympathetic magic.” “Even for the sceptic Hume,” they remark polemically, “the standard of taste is fixed by God who arranged the several orders and classes of existence and gave to each its peculiar nature.”⁴⁵

Reason and education

Although Hume takes beauty to be a sentiment of pleasure in the observer rather than a quality in the object, he also recognizes that not all judgments of taste are on the same footing. It is not enough to have *a* sentiment, one must have the *correct* sentiment, and, as Kivy points out, “there are bounds of rationality to be trespassed” so that “someone who finds Rembrandt garish or Van Gogh subdued is slightly ‘off the rails,’ not merely of a different opinion.”⁴⁶ This part of Hume’s approach has led some to accuse him of elitism and to criticize what they see as an unacknowledged prejudice in favor of the tastes of a middle-class eighteenth-century gentleman; the same has also inspired praise for Hume’s apparently democratic view that the capacity to be affected by a given object—and thus the potential to become a person of good taste—is common to the species as a whole. Of course, even to speak of “good” and “bad” taste immediately raises the question of *standards* or criteria in terms of which such judgments can be made. On the face of it this poses a problem for Hume: he cannot have recourse to sentiment

as a way of settling differences in value because "Sentiments in themselves," as Cohen and others emphasize, "are not right or wrong, true or false";⁴⁷ at the same time, however, his apparently Lockean epistemology rules out any appeal to real correlates in objects, which would commit him to a species of speculative meta-physics he at the same time rejects.

Articulating and responding to this problem occupies much of Hume's attention in "Of the Standard of Taste" (which I consider below), but there are also two aspects of his aesthetics more generally that go some way to overcoming the difficulty. First, as Kivy's point about "bounds of rationality" indicates, Hume puts great emphasis on the role of reason and reflection in making aesthetic judgments. This is not only a matter of there being standards which rule some judgments out as absurd, but also, as Jones characterizes it, that Hume recognizes the need for a "rationally justified viewpoint"—including public language, public criteria, and debate—from which one's judgment can be evaluated, criticized, and, if necessary, corrected. Jones lists exactness of perception, freedom from prejudice, and good sense as the main characteristics of this general point of view.⁴⁸ Other commentators have recognized the same strain in Hume's thought. Steven Sverdluk, for instance, focuses on what he takes to be Hume's claim that "disagreements can be rationally settled," and Bennett Helm emphasizes that only "in light of 'steady and general points of view' . . . [can] we can make sense of . . . a standard of taste and so of the reasonable degree of certainty that the conclusions of our probable reasonings have." Claude MacMillan has even drawn comparisons between what he calls Hume's "point-of-view-principle" and the "aesthetic attitude" developed by Edward Bullough and others. Ultimately, as Gurstein points out, practices which involve such impartiality and lack of prejudice will include some obligation to defer to the "most practiced judges," and it is not surprising that, in the form of the true judge, the aesthetic version of a general point of view plays such a central role in "Of the Standard of Taste."⁴⁹

Second, and a corollary to the claims about reason and reflection, a number of commentators have emphasized the place Hume assigns to educating the sentiments or, as Sugg puts it, "cultivating taste, of broadening sympathy." Individuals have the potential for good taste, but, as Gilbert and Kuhn point out, the "assistance of our intellectual faculties" is always required to "'pave the way' for the right sentiment." Or in Jones's words, "since prejudice perverts both one's natural sentiments and one's intellectual operations [sic] conscious reasoning is needed to check for prejudice" and other factors that interfere with the natural fit between the individual and the world.⁵⁰ The "capacities of mind," as Guyer expresses Hume's view, ". . . are not just natural gifts. Rather, they must be cultivated," especially through practice and comparison. There are always "discrepancies," as Osborne puts it, which can intervene to disrupt the fit between world and individual, such that, in James Shelley's words, it is "only by the grace of education that the true

judge manages to transcend ‘his natural position.’” There might be “defects in the individual constitution,” or some reason why on a particular day somebody is not functioning at their best. There might well be “limits,” as Gurstein observes, “in the sense that some people are simply born with a more sensitive eye, ear, or palate,” but all aesthetic appreciation requires a “kind of worldliness [which is] . . . both the proving ground and end result of practiced taste.”⁵¹

“Of the Standard of Taste”

Reactions to the essay

The single and singular work which, for good reason, has attracted by far the most attention in the literature on Hume’s aesthetics, and to which I have had occasion to refer a number of times already, is “Of the Standard of Taste,” an essay which along with writings of Joseph Addison, Hutcheson, Burke, and Kant, has become a founding text of modern philosophical aesthetics. The work is also of particular importance for understanding Hume’s own approach to questions of taste and beauty since it represents, as Mothersill puts it, his “final and *indeed his only attempt* to deal with questions in critical theory . . . [such that] we may take it as definitive of Hume’s position.”⁵² That the piece has become so significant is not without irony given that it occupies only some 20 pages of Hume’s extensive corpus and that, as Hume himself makes clear in a letter to his publisher William Strahan, it was not composed as a position piece to express his views on aesthetics, but was born of the need to compose “a new Essay on the Standard of Taste” to replace two controversial essays—“On Suicide” and “On the Immortality of the Soul”—judiciously withdrawn after their first publication. If not for these peculiar circumstances the piece might never have been written at all.⁵³

Hume begins “Of the Standard of Taste” with the observation that ordinary language implies a general standard, and the philosophical mind naturally seeks this standard out (E 228–9). Since “beauty is not a quality in things themselves,” Hume then reasons, it must exist “merely in the mind which contemplates them.” From this observation he draws the relativist’s conclusion that “each mind perceives a different beauty” (E 230), a philosophical prejudice Hume confounds by suggesting that there are “general rules” (E 235) governing aesthetic judgments. These rules, he says, are to be met with most clearly in the person of the critic or true judge (E 241). Hume then raises a number of “embarrassing” questions that threaten to throw the whole endeavor “back into the same uncertainty, from which, during the course of the essay, we have endeavoured to extricate ourselves” (E 241). Hume responds to this threat by acknowledging the co-existence of both “peculiarities of manners” and uniformity of sentiments, an impossible juxtaposition, which is clarified as the essay draws to a close (E 242ff.).

While there is broad consensus *that* the essay and the argument it contains are important milestones in the history of aesthetics, there is widespread disagreement on precisely how to evaluate and interpret it. Even the essay's structure and coherence have been a matter of dispute. Many regard it as a self-contained argument and a first-rate piece of philosophy, and it has been variously described as Hume's "mature masterpiece," "a philosophical classic," "superb," "subtle and highly complex," "a marvelous piece of literature," and, according to Jonathan Friday's recent estimation, "generally agreed . . . [to be] the most valuable of the large number of works on what we now call aesthetics to emerge from the intellectual and cultural flowering of the Scottish Enlightenment."⁵⁴ Some have also commented on what they see as the well-crafted dialectic by means of which Hume develops his argument.⁵⁵ Other commentators, by contrast, are highly critical of the essay's construction and emphasize what they see as its internal incoherence. Guyer reminds his readers that "Of the Standard of Taste" is "just an essay and far from systematic"; R. F. Atkinson calls it a "not unsubtle . . . but relatively popular work, and not as a whole very tightly argued," and Dickie, though full of praise for the superiority of Hume's approach over those of his contemporaries, says the essay is "exceedingly brief and gives the impression of having been put together hastily."⁵⁶ Others go even further. Christopher MacLachlan says how he is "struck by . . . [the essay's] structural weaknesses . . . inconsistencies . . . [and] contradictions," and even suggests that Hume's use of irony "raises the question of just how seriously we are to take some of the more conventional views contained in [it]." In addition, Mothersill claims that a "careful reading [of the essay] discovers odd continuities and inconsequences in Hume's presentation—as if paragraphs, even whole pages, had simply been omitted." She goes on to argue that "something more interesting is going on," but only reconstructing the essay along different lines can rectify Hume's otherwise "gross . . . mistakes" and "want of coherence"; she takes the essay as it stands to be "a conscious but not altogether candid failure."⁵⁷

Others have identified circular reasoning as part of Hume's downfall. The criticism seems to originate with S.G. Brown who claims to identify a number of steps "which appear to involve either implicit or explicit contradictions," and finally reduce to an "elementary logical fallacy" of circularity where "Hume has assumed what was to be proved in order to establish a corollary to the main argument."⁵⁸ Others repeat the charge, although, unlike Brown, mostly they find ways to extract Hume from a dilemma apparently of his own making. Noxon accuses Hume of defining good art in terms of the good critic and the good critic in terms of good art, but sees the circularity as part of the phenomenon under investigation rather than as a weakness of Hume's reasoning. The circle "circumscribes the historical truth," Noxon remarks. "Perhaps Hume's logic here is better in reality than in appearance." Korsmeyer also comments on the same problem, although she thinks that the "suspicion of circularity" can be cleared away "by grounding a

factor of the standard of taste in the art object itself,” and Kivy argues that although Hume’s definition of beauty is “circular in some instances, [it] is not so in all.” The circle can be “broken,” he argues, by focusing on delicacy, lack of prejudice, and good sense, qualities of the true judge that are “all identifiable by marks other than the critics’ approval of good art.” Thus, “having defined good art in terms of good critics, Hume need not . . . ultimately define good critics in terms of good art.” According to Kivy, however, breaking the circle does not save Hume from an “infinite regress” involved in reducing aesthetic sentiment to matters of fact.⁵⁹ Carroll argues against Brown, Korsmeyer, and Kivy that Hume’s argument suffers from neither circularity nor infinite regress, suggesting instead that the issue of the figure of the critic is “redundant”: for “if the five qualities [which characterize the true judge] are understood as applying to anyone,” he asks, “then what need do we have for the ideal critics? If I can cultivate the five qualities on my own, then what reason would I have to consult [them]?” Finally, Jones takes the whole discussion to be based on a misunderstanding of the argument. “This is not Hume’s position,” Jones maintains. “He holds that when learning social practices, and the conventions that govern them, we learn at the same time who currently counts as the experts, and what are accepted as the best examples.”⁶⁰

Those who emphasize the intractable incoherence of the essay, however, generally trace Hume’s difficulties to the conventions of neoclassical criticism from which, they argue, he is unable to distance himself. (Others, it should be noted, view the essay as a significant *break* with the very same conventions.)⁶¹ This line of criticism has a long history, going back at least as far as Saintsbury who berates Hume for denying that rules of composition can be fixed by reasonings *a priori* while at once repeating the “orthodox cavils at Ariosto.”⁶² Brown attributes Hume’s apparent logical woes to “an unconscious incompatibility of assumptions”—adherence to a “subjective aesthetics” while assuming “an objective standard of evaluation”—which he explains by Hume’s unacknowledged allegiance to the “whole convention of neo-classic theory . . . [which] is inseparable from the principles of rules and invention.”⁶³ A similar assessment is made by Gilbert and Kuhn who charge Hume, along with the rest of the “eighteenth century school,” of producing a merely “conventional” aesthetics. “One is forced to admit,” they write, “that the kinship of taste [the school] found in inner sense, sentiment, passion, or intuition is more with Boileau’s neo-classical rules than with Ogier’s relativity of time and place. These writers worked with a new mechanism—the frame of human nature—they turn out a product that differs surprisingly little from the one that fits Descartes’ rationalism.”⁶⁴ The same criticism is made by John Stewart who emphasizes “the anomaly of Hume’s teachings which reinforce and encourage the tendency to search for subjective effects but which, at the same time, insist upon a formal and objective unifying quality in literature,”⁶⁵ and by Mothersill who blames what she sees as the essay’s “series

of bad arguments, non-sequiturs, and inconsistencies" on Hume's misguided adherence to the "official doctrine" of neoclassicism.⁶⁶

As I already noted while discussing the place of reason and reflection in Hume's theory, another source of dissatisfaction with "Of the Standard of Taste" is what some see as an insidious capitulation on Hume's part to the social prejudices of eighteenth-century society. Richard Shusterman takes the essay to reveal a "social and class-hierarchical foundation of aesthetic judgment" that contradicts the "idea of a natural uniformity of feeling and response" on which Hume otherwise bases his aesthetics. This foundation lurks in the subtexts of Hume's theory, Shusterman argues, and although it is hidden under "some vague notions of foundational universality," Hume cannot "get on without appealing to social privilege." Hume identifies a universal basis in the "common sentiments of human nature" and the idea of natural fit, but this is a "scandal of taste," Shusterman maintains, because it generalizes particular "historically privileged subjective preferences" into a "necessary standard for all subjects all times."⁶⁷ Charges of a similar sort are brought by Savile, who thinks Hume is open to the "charge of foreign (or subcultural) chauvinism or parochialism"; Korsmeyer, who traces the essay's "anomalies" to "Hume's uncritical reaffirmation of established standards of taste," and Osborne, who argues that Hume was unable to transcend the parochialism of his own century. "We have more extensive knowledge than ever before of historical fluctuations of taste," Osborne contends, "and the self-evident aesthetic preferences of the eighteenth century now seem to us complacently parochial prejudices."⁶⁸

Needless to say, not everybody finds this direction of criticism either appropriate or enlightening, and nobody has expressed their disquiet more polemically than Cohen. "The certainty [of such critics]," he writes, "is philosophically as obnoxious as the certainty they identify in Hume that there is no such standard . . . this carping against Hume in the name of our superior awareness of economic, political, and social influences is itself only one more dogma."⁶⁹ Shelley has responded to Shusterman specifically, by arguing that, since, on Hume's view, there is nothing special or "natural" about the taste of the true judge, there are no grounds for the charges Shusterman brings against him. Of course, people routinely fail to perceive certain qualities that account for the beauty of an object, but this does not undermine Hume's claim that "the human mind is so structured that the perception of certain qualities in objects naturally gives it pleasure and displeasure." What separates the true judge from everybody else, Shelley emphasizes, is perceptual acuity, and "while everyone's taste is not equal . . . everyone's taste is equally natural, in the sense that no one ever feels an inappropriate sentiment based on the qualities perceived."⁷⁰ Understood in this way, Hume's theory is "not elitist in our contemporary political sense," as Gurstein writes, because its practice does not exclude anyone "arbitrarily." On the contrary, "anyone who gives him or herself over to the rigors of the practice is welcome to join and dispute with the public

whose judgments do carry weight.” In fact, what makes true judges admirable is that they have achieved excellence in a particular field, and this is the reason why the joint verdict of true judges is binding. As Shelley puts it, the verdicts “express nothing but our own tastes: they are, in essence, nothing but the verdicts of our perceptually better selves.” If one emphasizes this strain of Hume’s thinking, then far from being elitist, Hume produces “a theory,” in Wieand’s words, “which makes the standard of taste an expression of the best potentialities of human nature.”⁷¹

The search for a standard

As my discussion of the literature so far should indicate, the various aspects of Hume’s approach to questions of beauty and taste converge, albeit from different directions, on a single fundamental question for philosophical aesthetics, namely, how to understand the apparent contradiction between the subjective character of aesthetic judgments, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fact that they are governed by general standards or criteria to which any reasonable person should assent. The paradox can be traced to various sources—Hume’s adherence to neo-classicism as Mothersill et al. argue, or, as S. K. Wertz proposes, to Hume’s view that rules can both create prejudice and correct it.⁷² Most commentators, however, take the central problem of Hume’s essay to be a philosophical consequence of the sentimentalist epistemology he takes from Locke and Hutcheson, and it is also raised, as I indicated above, by the emphasis on reason and education attached to the causal theory of taste. Further, as Hume makes clear at the outset of the essay, the issue of sentiment and standards has its source outside of philosophy as well. For even “the most careless enquirer,” he remarks, cannot but recognize the “great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world” and the tendency to dismiss as “*barbarous* whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension” (E 226–7). At the same time, Hume is as unwilling to accept the “extravagant scepticism” which follows from the logic of “the modern philosophy” as he is to deny common experience which teaches that certain things have been “universally found to please in all countries and in all ages” (E 231). Seen in this way, rather than committing an “elementary logical fallacy,” Hume is emphasizing that aesthetic judgments involve a contradiction, and articulating a fundamental philosophical puzzle and attempting to find its solution. “It is natural to seek out a *Standard of Taste*,” as he says in a much quoted passage, “a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another” (E 229).

Many commentators follow this train of thinking and understand the essay as Hume’s attempt to defeat the sceptic’s challenge by showing how general standards govern the aesthetic judgments that individuals make. Mothersill recognizes this challenge as the motivation behind the essay, as does Carroll; Guyer sees

Hume's aim as ruling out the sceptic's claim on the grounds that it is "not in fact genuine common sense"; Gracyk emphasizes how "Hume consistently grounds taste in sentiment . . . [while] at the same time [he] . . . consistently worries that this cornerstone is a stumbling block for the objectivity of standards of taste," and Wieand writes how "Hume agrees with the sceptic that beauty is not a property of objects," but at the same time "does not agree that there is no standard of taste." The "chief problem of his essay," Wieand concludes, "is to reconcile the existence of a standard with the subjective character of aesthetic objects." Savile also sees Hume to be searching for a "manner of resolving differences about taste that avoid the extremes of a scientific conception of aesthetic reality and of radical subjectivism"; Kulenkampff writes that "It is the very aim of his essay to reveal the nature of such a standard of taste, and to show how it works, thereby assuring the objectivity of aesthetic judgments,"⁷³ and Friday emphasizes how "'Of the Standard of Taste' discusses what support philosophy can give to the common-sense view that there is a right and wrong or a better and worse taste."⁷⁴

Having accepted that the aim of the essay is to reconcile the opposition between sentiments and standards, the difficulty lies in understanding exactly how this reconciliation is achieved and exactly what Hume *means* when he speaks of a "standard of taste." As Cohen writes, "It is clear that this essay is meant to be support for Hume's assertion that there is what he calls 'a standard of taste,' [but] [n]othing else is clear, not even what a standard of taste is, or would be."⁷⁵ Cohen's sense of bewilderment is hardly unwarranted given that Hume initially characterizes his search for a standard in terms of a "rule" or "rules of art," but then seems to discover it in the rare character of the true judge: "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty" (E 241). Not surprisingly, much of the literature attempts, in various ways, to reconcile or at least explain what Wieand has aptly referred to as Hume's "two standards of taste."⁷⁶

Wieand himself addresses the issue by finding a way to preserve the intelligibility of both definitions. He takes the first to be a claim about the causal relationship between the properties of an object and the observer, and the second as a "*guide* to what the rule is." Thus a "standard of taste consists in rules of art linking properties and sentiments of beauty and deformity," and when nothing intervenes to disrupt the fit between object and judge "certain properties of objects will cause us to have feelings of aesthetic pleasure and displeasure according to the rules, and such rules constitute the standard of taste." Of course, various factors usually do intervene and one consequence of this is the possibility that true judges—even in joint verdicts—will be mistaken. Thus, Wieand reasons, the joint verdict of such judges cannot itself constitute the standard of taste although it can serve as

a “practical standard of taste” indicating what the rule, albeit unrealized, amounts to. As such, there is a “sense,” Wieand concludes, in which the standard of taste is both a rule *and* a joint verdict.⁷⁷

In partial response to Wieand’s argument, Shelley has also attempted to preserve the integrity of what he calls Hume’s “double standard of taste” while explaining why Hume should move so ambiguously from one to the other.⁷⁸ According to the first definition, Shelley maintains, rules of art “constitute a standard by which we can determine whether any particular work of art merits our approval”; the appeal to critics specifies the criteria individuals must possess such that their joint verdict would be taken as the *de facto* standard. The important difference between the two, however, is that “whereas in the first Hume seeks to provide a standard for judging works of art, in the second he seeks to provide a standard for judging critics who provide a standard for judging works of art.” Shelley suggests that Hume actually prefers the “more powerful” appeal to rules since that would *settle* disputes by reconciling different sentiments. Since rules of this sort are difficult to specify (Hume, Shelley observes, does not provide any himself) he resorts to the weaker, but more reliable option: a joint verdict merely *confirms* or *condemns*, but at least the qualities required for such judgments (the five criteria marking the true judge) can be specified with relative ease.⁷⁹

With the exception of Shelley and Wieand, interpreters of the essay take Hume’s two standards as different expressions of a single definition, and attempt to reconcile them by favoring either one expression or the other. On the one hand, there are commentators who side with Hume’s emphasis on the critic, and are willing to *identify* the standard with the joint verdict of true judges. On this view, “The standard of taste,” as Kivy writes, “. . . is set by those qualified to give judgment on the basis of sentiment. And thus the question What is good art? is easily answered. Good art is the art which good critics—those who are fit to judge by sentiment—approve.”⁸⁰ “For Hume . . . there is no other standard than the joint verdict of the most practiced critics over time,” as Gurstein puts the same point, so that taste is “best understood as akin to practical wisdom . . . in judgments of quality.” Shiner makes a similar claim, identifying the standard of taste with the five criteria of the true judge, as does Korsmeyer as part of her explanation for “Hume’s uncritical reaffirmation of established standards of taste,” and Sugg, who endorses Hume’s claim that the “standard of taste is precisely ‘the joint verdict of such [judges], wherever they are to be found.’”⁸¹ The same emphasis is to be found in Osborne’s criticism of Hume’s putative parochialism, in Nick Zangwill’s claim that Hume’s “underlying idea” is that correct judgment is to be found in sound sensibility of the good critic, and in Christopher Perricone’s consideration of the body in aesthetic judgments. The latter identifies the standard of taste with the joint verdict of true judges, but with the added suggestion that the standard is always compromised by physical and physiological conditions, especially the

age of the critic in question. Finally, Malcolm Budd takes a similar view of the true judge, describing him as the “litmus paper of aesthetic value.” Budd goes on to criticize Hume for his “blithe optimism” that there will be uniformity amongst true judges, and the unwarranted assumption that “human sentimental nature . . . [is] uniform within and across cultures and unchanging over time.”⁸²

While these commentators focus on the figure of the true judge in order to clarify Hume's aim in the essay, others, in various ways, emphasize his characterization of the standard as a rule or principle for settling disputes; the rule is then generally seen as *manifest* in the joint verdict of true judges rather than being constituted by it. Jones emphasizes this as the way to understand Hume's standard, as does Mothersill, who takes Hume to accept (mistakenly in her view) that there are “laws of taste”; she sees the verdict of true judges doing no more than confirming one's judgment. If it were more than this, she insists, for “then without having ever read or appreciated any poetry at all, I could know which poems are beautiful and which not, and that is absurd.” Only Hume's allegiance to the “official doctrine” of neoclassicism, Mothersill argues, forces him to seek common qualities which, being impossible to discern, compels him to the “fall-back position” of requiring an expert—the “true judge”—who is capable of discerning them.⁸³ MacLachlan is inclined to the view that “the good critic bases his judgments on general rules of taste,” and Steven Sverdluk argues that Hume's theory “rests upon the idea that there are rules or principles of taste, and that aesthetic rationality consists in discovering and applying them.” The “correct position” is then “identified with the evaluation that an ideal critic would make under ideal conditions.” In this sense, to have a standard, as Helm puts it, “is to have a general rule that is endorsed” or, as Sugg emphasizes, a constant judgment open to correction.⁸⁴ Noxon takes a similar view, saying that the “Standard is to be formulated in terms of the features of the works which give . . . human satisfaction,” where “satisfaction” is to be measured in “what a succession of connoisseurs has chosen to preserve”; aesthetic standards cannot be reduced to the judgments of the critic, he argues, but they can be derived from them.⁸⁵ Finally, Guyer argues for the view that the standard of taste plays both a “regulative” and “constitutive” role—it specifies a “common canon of admired objects” for an individual's pursuit of aesthetic pleasure, and functions in “not merely redirecting an individual's pursuit of aesthetic pleasure but actually figuring in the origination of his pleasure or in related matters.”⁸⁶

Other commentators have combined this emphasis on rules with the causal aspects of Hume's approach. Cohen, for example, argues that there is a “causal law . . . linking certain properties of the object . . . with certain feelings, sentiments that occur in the observer. The form of such a rule would be just this: Property *P* causes feeling *F*.” These sorts of rules are “already there,” Cohen argues, and become correctly applied and thus manifest in the characteristics and joint verdict of true judges.⁸⁷ Townsend also emphasizes that rules arise from the causal relationship

between object and observer, but argues further that they “are not themselves the standard . . . because the rules . . . are determined independently of the judges.” Rules, however, can be cited “to identify the qualities in question.”⁸⁸ The strongest version of this interpretation is offered by Kulenkampff who locates the standard in aesthetic qualities that are “really in the object” and thus form “reliable indicators of objective matters of fact.” Rules discovered in this way “constitute an objective standard of taste,” Kulenkampff maintains, and true judges function as the “best epistemic instruments” for detecting the aesthetic qualities in question.⁸⁹ This sort of view is difficult to maintain in the face of Hume’s refusal to accept the consequences of the primary/secondary distinction, and others would find it more accurate to say with Savile that “conformity to [rules and principles] supposedly evokes the sentiments of good judges, and not the qualities themselves for which sound judges are claimed to serve as the standard.”⁹⁰

Another possibility suggested by some commentators is that although there are rules of art, they are not intended to *resolve* aesthetic disputes whether in terms of qualities or sentiments. Or, as Peter Railton characterizes it, the “‘joint verdict’ of expert opinion is offered . . . as a solution to the problem of finding a *standard* of taste, not as a way of saying what constitutes aesthetic value.”⁹¹ On this view, Hume’s standard of taste might be termed “sceptical,” as Friday has recently argued, because rules hold out only the *possibility* of agreement. This imposes “a more modest *restraint* upon the scope of the sceptic’s argument,” Friday maintains, and commits Hume to no more than providing descriptions about certain phenomena, rather than attempting a normative reconciliation of divergent tastes.⁹² Dickie takes a similar view. He understands Hume’s standard as a “way of making a decision that is sufficient for settling disputes” rather than a means for discovering criteria to distinguish between good and bad art. The standard consists of positive and negative principles (Dickie uncovers nineteen in all), and the joint verdict of judges then represents the “particular merits or demerits in works of art” based on these criteria. In Dickie’s view, Hume does not attempt an “overall evaluation” of a work of art or provide a way of distinguishing good critics, but is interested primarily “in giving us a general way of discovering the principles of taste, the method of experiencing or envisioning a candidate’s merit or defect singly and in high degree—a method available to everyone.”⁹³ In a similar way, Gracyk also rejects the idea that the standard is intended as a straight forward way of settling disputes. Hume’s emphasis, he argues, is on the fact that “Because there is uniform sentiment that one taste among the diversity of tastes is superior, that taste is indeed superior.” Even those lacking delicate taste can reflect upon the fact that there is a minority who do possess it, Gracyk argues, and this realization “yields sympathetic pleasure and thus approbation.” So Hume’s standard does not provide a rule for settling disputes at all, but characterizes a process for “evaluating pleasures”: the standard involves “a comparison of tastes in which sentiments becomes the object of sentiment.”⁹⁴

“Of Tragedy”

In addition to “Of the Standard of Taste,” the other essay that has generated interest and debate is “Of Tragedy,” Hume’s contribution to the long-standing question as to why, in a well-written tragedy, otherwise painful emotions are a source of pleasure. The essay’s appeal is due, in part, to its perennial theme, but also to the originality of Hume’s solution—his “Principle of Conversion” or “Conversion Hypothesis”⁹⁵—which, as Brunius emphasizes, represents a break with a tradition still dominated in the eighteenth century by Aristotle’s *Poetics*.⁹⁶ For the “impulse or vehemence, arising from sorrow, compassion, indignation,” as Hume expresses his central thesis, “receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotion, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves, at least tincture them so strongly as totally to alter their nature. And the soul, being, at the same time, roused by passion, and charmed by eloquence, feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful” (E 220).

There seems to be general and long-standing agreement concerning the outlines of this solution, that, as Walter J. Hipple, Jr. characterizes it, in a tragedy the “pleasures of art exceed the pain of the melancholy passions suggested by the subjects . . . , and by this predominance ‘convert’ the excitement of the distressful emotions to their own aggrandizement.” It is thus the “talents and faculties” of the artist and the beauty of language that “change a passion into another, even an opposite, passion under the influence of a predominating emotion.”⁹⁷ Margaret Paton expresses a similar view, though, criticizing Hipple explicitly, she takes Hume’s focus to be on tragedy as the object of a spectator’s emotions rather than its cause. Hume’s main principle, she writes, is that “if two passions are experienced simultaneously the predominant will absorb the subordinate and receive additional force from it, even although [sic] the passions are of a contrary nature. Thus the aesthetic emotion, the sentiment of beauty, being the predominant passion in the spectator’s experience, ‘seize[s] the whole mind’ and converting the subordinate passions of sorrow, terror, anxiety, etc. is strengthened by them.”⁹⁸ Thus, as Alex Neill puts it succinctly, Hume’s conversion theory rests on the thought that “the positive and negative elements in our experience of tragedy . . . have different sources. Our negative emotional responses result from our attention to *what is depicted* . . . [while] our pleasure, by contrast, is initially and primarily due to our awareness of *the manner of depiction*.”⁹⁹

While there is general agreement *that* Hume’s solution to the problem of tragedy involves a distinction between the pain of emotion and the pleasure of aesthetic depiction, however, opinion is divided over precisely what he means by “conversion.” Susan Feagin even criticizes him for failing to clarify “how the ‘dominance’ of imagination and expression is to be achieved,” thus leaving the precise “mechanics of conversion” entirely unexplained.¹⁰⁰ Brunius, on the other

hand, identifies this mechanism in the “mutual intercourse” of the passions, and Flint Schier finds it in the conversion of the emotion itself—“painful sorrow” becomes “pleasant terror.”¹⁰¹ Robert Yanal, by contrast, denies that Hume even holds a conversion theory at all “if such a theory,” he writes, “implies that the pain of ‘melancholy passions’ is converted into pleasure.” Sorrow *itself* is not made pleasant, Yanal emphasizes, but the “beauty and eloquence in the depiction of the tragic events cause pleasure sufficient to ‘overpower’ any other unpleasantness.” The tragedy as a whole will be a source of pleasure even while painful emotions remain the source of pain.¹⁰² Yet, as Neill points out in responding to Yanal, there is no reason to assume that this is the *only* way to understand the notion of conversion: conversion need not imply “eradication of one passion by another,” but might involve a process whereby passions “mingle and unite.”¹⁰³

Other commentators seem less worried about the “mechanics” of conversion than the general adequacy of Hume’s proposal for solving the paradox that the essay takes as its central theme. Eric Hill, for one, points out that Hume explains neither why the calm passions predominate (when it is more plausible that sorrow, terror, and anxiety should win out) nor why subordinate passions convert rather than simply strengthen the predominant ones. Moreover, the various examples Hume provides in the essay (E 221–4), Hill charges, hardly corroborate the Principle of Conversion, and there is difficulty even in *postulating* that a subordinate movement is converted into a predominant one.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Mark Packer points out that if Hume’s account of tragedy were correct “then the viewer would depart from the theater feeling only pleasure and no pain” when the “truth of the matter is that the two effects, the positive and the negative, are often felt simultaneously rather than one replacing or absorbing the other.” This, Packer argues, is precisely what needs to be explained, and by leaving this unanswered Hume does not produce a “solution . . . , but a subterfuge.”¹⁰⁵

Budd goes further, faulting Hume for the general implausibility of the associationist principle upon which his solution relies. Hume’s main focus, Budd argues, lies in explaining a pleasure which “retains all the features and outward symptoms of distress and sorry,” but without any of the unpleasantness involved when such emotions are “aroused by real, rather than artistically represented, tragic incidents.” Thus “he must explain how a negative emotion is transformed into a positive emotion, rather than merely add a specified pleasure to the negative emotion.”¹⁰⁶ According to Budd, then, there is no reason to think that the experience of a well-written tragedy involves a process of transformation at all. For “it is certainly *possible*,” he writes, “to experience two emotions concurrently (admiration and envy, say), one positive and the other negative, one stronger than the other, the ‘predominant’ emotion *not* effacing, overpowering and converting the weaker emotion: it is not a *sufficient* condition for the Humean transformation of concurrent emotions that one is stronger than the other.”¹⁰⁷

In a similar vein, Schier focuses on the “associationist principle of hedonic-charge transfer which Hume relies on” to explain “the metamorphosis of painful terror into pleasant terror.” On Hume’s account, Schier argues, either the violent emotions like pity and fear “change their hedonic value”—a view he considers implausible for the reasons laid out by Budd—or there is a “transfer of vivacity” where the liveliness of a subordinate emotion “is transferred to the dominant emotion.” Both alternatives, Schier charges, are “highly dubious operations” because while the tragic situation might be “painful and rare,” it is not impossible that two emotions of distinct charge or degree of liveliness—love and hate, for example—might co-exist rather than being “fused” in the way Hume supposes.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, as Schier expresses his view elsewhere, Hume simply “got the explanandum wrong. It seems just wrong,” he continues, “to suggest that our reactions to fictive terrors do not retain their painful or disturbing character. . . . It is not just that he [Hume] is wrong to suppose that terror and anxiety don’t retain their painfulness in the theatre. He is even wrong to suppose that we always enjoy or find delight in the experience of tragedies.”¹⁰⁹

As Neill points out, however, such charges are damning only if Budd and Schier have correctly characterized Hume’s position, and this they have failed to do, he maintains, since Hume has “something completely different in mind.”¹¹⁰ In fact, according to Neill, Hume takes unpleasantness to be *intrinsic* to some passions, and rather than conceiving of a “hedonic charge” which leads us to experience normally unpleasant passions as pleasurable, for Hume “what is converted or given ‘a new direction’ . . . is not the passion itself but rather the ‘emotion’ or ‘spirit’ which ‘attends a passion.’” Thus “On this picture,” Neill concludes, “our experience of tragedy has two main affective components: aesthetic delight, generated in us by the display of artistry in a well-written tragedy, and the ‘uneasiness’ of ‘the melancholy passions’ which are generated by our sympathy with the characters.”¹¹¹ This is not to say that Neill himself finds Hume’s account to be adequate: as he remarks elsewhere, Hume seems to have missed the “phenomenology of (at least much of) our experience of tragedy” since we take “real pleasure” in works where “real distress” remains *unconverted*.¹¹² Indeed, Neill’s own criticism of the essay is directed less at the vagueness of “conversion” or Hume’s reliance on a “discredited” Cartesian picture of the passions and the mind, than at the “more fundamental problem” that it “is not grounded in any sustained thought about *tragedy*” at all, representing instead Hume’s interest in the “general psychological mechanisms . . . that ‘account for’ and make this phenomenon possible.”¹¹³ There are a wide variety of works which involve the same paradox as tragedy, Neill points out, and Hume is unable to explain why tragedy *in particular*—whether “well-written” or not—involves the paradox of pleasure from pain. The problem, again, lies in Hume’s apparent failure to appreciate our complex and subtle experience of tragedy; how different works produce different kinds of pleasure, and that, in addition to being “happy or enjoyable or delightful,” tragedy can also be “overwhelmingly harrowing and disturbing.”¹¹⁴

Beauty and Morals

Perhaps one of the more intriguing aspects of Hume's aesthetics, and still one of the more unexplored, is the comparison he routinely draws between beauty in nature and art, and moral beauty. Hume does not develop the comparison in any systematic way, but his scattered remarks are highly suggestive, and they have inspired some to highlight ways in which Hume's aesthetics and moral theory might be compared and contrasted. There are three areas where the parallel is noteworthy.

First, commentators have focused on how Hume takes aesthetic and moral judgments to be similar in kind. Both kinds of judgment are made "without regard to our own desires," as Brunius emphasizes, and the only difference between them, as Mothersill puts it, "is that virtue pleases 'after one particular manner' and beauty after another"; there is an "elision of morality and taste," as she writes elsewhere, so that "the good poem, the fine house, the good deed, the virtuous man [sic] are all under the umbrella of being pleased by acquaintance." Or "moral beauty and deformity have the same basis as their aesthetic cousins . . . [in] sentiment," as Townsend writes, and "both depend on pleasure and pain."¹¹⁵ Jones points out more specifically how Hume's causal theory underlies both phenomena. "Moral and aesthetic judgments are caused by sentiments of certain sorts," he writes, "which are themselves caused by objects of certain sorts when perused by minds of a certain constitution."¹¹⁶ Halberstadt draws the comparison precisely, and attempts to show the direct parallel between the origin of both moral and aesthetic sentiments in agreeableness and utility. In "Hume's moral philosophy," he contends, "the approbation of the moral sentiment is excited by mental qualities useful or immediately agreeable to ourselves or others. There are numerous passages in Hume to suggest that he intended a similar analysis in aesthetics." Halberstadt does not claim that Hume presents the two cases in this way, but, he argues, the logic is clearly the same: "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 others."¹¹⁷

The second point of comparison which, as I noted above, forms a natural corollary of Hume's sentimentalism, is his claim that both aesthetic and moral taste presuppose general standards and the capacity of individuals to reflect upon and if necessary correct erroneous judgments. It is then only a short step to see in Hume's moral philosophy a figure comparable to the true judge in "Of the Standard of Taste." Atkinson, for instance, speculates on whether Hume considered the possibility of a true judge in the case of morals, especially as he takes Hume's aesthetics to yield "something not certainly provided in morality, namely, a normative standard. Hume might have tried to develop the notion of a competent 'critic' in morality too," Atkinson says, "but, apart from the odd reference . . . to

a man of temper and judgment, he did not do so. Whether this was a considered omission is hard to say."¹¹⁸ Geoffrey Sayre-McCord expresses greater confidence in the comparison, remarking that "the general point of view, as it describes a standard in morals, parallels to an extraordinary degree the point of view of a qualified critic." Both involve taking a standpoint beyond our own situation, he emphasizes, and depend upon a gift of nature, freedom from prejudice, and judging whether something is "well-suited to the serving of certain purposes."¹¹⁹ Cohen draws the same comparison by suggesting that Hume's aesthetic and moral philosophy involve a version of an "ideal creature" theory in which "although it is true that the object pleases some of us and not others, it remains to determine *whose* feeling is fit to count as a standard." In the moral philosophy, this question is answered in the figure of the "impartial spectator," while in "Of the Standard of Taste," the same role is played by the true judge. So, "in his moral theory Hume explains the difference between virtue and vice in terms of the feelings of an 'impartial spectator,'" Cohen concludes, and "[i]n this regard, his moral theory is formally the same as his theory of taste."¹²⁰

A third aspect that some commentators have noted is how Hume takes aesthetic judgment to be a significant factor in educating the moral sentiments. Gurstein makes the general point that in the eighteenth century taste "was as much a moral attribute of the self as it was a faculty of judgment about the world," and that "by attaining a delicacy of taste, one became a certain kind of person." Thus for Hume, as M. A. Box emphasizes, a "fine taste" for the sciences and liberal arts helps in two ways: in the collateral cultivation of judgment and good sense . . . and in channeling the passions from 'rougher and more boisterous emotions' toward the 'tender and agreeable.'" This is a point also emphasized by Sugg who connects a refined taste with autonomy and the capacity for critical thought. "Hume's aesthetics issues in a method of practical criticism and verification," he writes, "valuable as a moral conditioner and productive of provisional but careful judgments."¹²¹ Dickie, on the other hand, sees Hume making a connection between morality and works of art themselves. In "Of the Standard of Taste," he argues, Hume "goes to considerable length to try to show that the representation of immorality without the appropriate moral point of view is blamable and a defect in a work of art." So on Hume's view, art can be morally as well as aesthetically defective, and though the former does not contribute to the ugliness or beauty of a work of art, it will certainly reduce its value.¹²²

At the same time as they make these connections between aesthetic and moral beauty, however, commentators are careful not to press the analogy too far, and some have indicated differences between the two cases. Townsend, for example, writes that "beauty falls more on the side of immediate sense; moral judgment more on the side of intellectual discrimination," and emphasizes that, unlike their aesthetic counterparts, moral sentiments influence action that redounds to the

character of a person. Cohen also tempers his claim about Hume's "ideal creature" theory with the observation that "in the moral theory [Hume] refers to the feelings of only an individual person, one impartial spectator; while in the theory of taste he says that the standard of taste is the joint verdict of true judges, thereby requiring more than one." Anybody can be an impartial spectator, Cohen suggests, but being a true judge in the arts and the sciences is not open to everyone in the same way. Similarly, Atkinson's speculation on the lack of a true judge in moral theory leads him to conjecture that Hume recognized a "difference between the objectives of morality and criticism." For "the authority belonging to critics," Atkinson contends, "derives from their enhanced powers of discrimination, their capacity to point the way to the pleasures we go to art and literature to seek and can . . . recognize when we find them." Unlike morality, where normative agreement cannot be reached, "there is a real possibility of finding a standard in the consensus of competent critics through time." "The objectives of morality," by contrast, Atkinson emphasizes, "might very well be thought to be different from that of criticism, if the latter is so conceived, but whether this is the sort of point Hume had in mind must remain conjectural."¹²³

Michelle Mason, on the other hand, takes Hume's position on this issue to be less inscrutable, and questions the assumption that the true judge in aesthetics and morals can be compared unproblematically in the way that some have suggested. Mason urges that, unlike his counterpart in morals, the aesthetic judge does not adopt a view "from nowhere," but takes on the "point of view of the work's intended audience." Thus, in aesthetics, a critic who satisfies the "freedom-from-prejudice requirement" is "less an impartial observer than he is a cultural chameleon." As Mason goes on to argue, this understanding of "Of the Standard of Taste" puts Hume's true judge in a tricky "moral prejudice dilemma": when faced with works that prescribe moral sentiments that conflict with standards they know to be correct, critics will be forced either to overlook their moral convictions or abandon the freedom-from-prejudice requirement that constitutes in part their special status. According to Mason, this tension can be traced to Hume's elision of the "first person interpretation" position, required of the true judge in the arts, with the "third person interpretation" characteristic of specifically moral evaluation. The latter perspective requires only that one consider the effects of a work on an audience, while the former demands that critics imagine "*themselves* possessed of the audience's particular prejudices" so that they can come "to feel what the intended audience would feel in response to the work." In aesthetics, then, abandoning the point of view of the audience in evaluating any given work threatens to pervert the true judge by robbing him of his first person perspective; taking this perspective in the case of morals, by contrast, is to be avoided since it would involve taking pleasure in practices (such as slavery) that are morally repugnant.¹²⁴

Directions for Future Research

As I pointed out in my introductory remarks, and as I hope my discussion has confirmed, the wealth of literature on Hume's aesthetics ranges across a wide variety of areas and touches on issues that go to the very heart of his philosophy. Given the degree of difference that marks much of the debate, it would take a brave person to predict areas where sentiments might be reconciled, or to imagine evidence that would confirm one interpretive sentiment and condemn another. Philosophy is an endless task, and one cannot rule out that even "Of the Standard of Taste" will inspire new interpretations or corrections of old ones. On the other hand, there are aspects of Hume's approach to questions in aesthetics that call for further elaboration, both for the value of doing so in its own right, and for the promise it holds of elucidating or clarifying other parts of Hume's philosophy. There are certainly self-contained areas where this is true—Hume's efforts as a critic in the *Essays* and *History of England*, for example, have received little attention since the rather *en passant* remarks of Saintsbury and Laird, and Hume's relationship to Hutcheson and especially Locke is hardly exhausted. The attempts by Helm and J. J. A. Mooij to understand causality and the Is-Ought distinction, respectively, through "Of a Standard of Taste," also demonstrate how specific areas of Hume's system can be understood by way of his aesthetics.

The overview I have offered here, however, suggests two particular areas where interesting work remains to be done. The first concerns the connections with Kant. As I have indicated, many commentators have been intrigued by what they see as striking parallels between aspects of Hume's aesthetics and the third *Critique*, and though the historical record remains obscure, there are certainly questions that can be addressed by investigations of a philosophical sort. Perhaps because the parallels are so striking, with the exception of Kulenkampff, Shusterman, and my own very recent attempt to detail Hume's antinomical reasoning in "Of the Standard of Taste," the comparative work is largely confined to comments made in the course of discussing other matters. The aforementioned issue of Hume's "antinomy of taste" deserves further attention, and there is clearly room for a systematic treatment of the way in which he approaches *inter alia* the nature of aesthetic judgment, free and dependent beauty, and the relationship between aesthetics and morals.

This latter issue, in particular, points to the second area of Hume's aesthetics worth pursuing. As the literature considered above makes clear, there have already been enlightening attempts to document some of the ways in which Hume's approach to beauty and deformity in art and nature can be compared to the treatment of virtue and vice in his moral philosophy. Some of the literature in this area stands out—the contributions by Halberstadt, Kivy, Jones, Shusterman, Townsend, and Mason—but, as with the relationship between Hume and Kant,

the commentary tends to be suggestive rather than systematic, and there remains much to say about the way Hume draws the comparison and the similarities and differences between the two areas. Further, Hume's own limited treatment of the comparison need not preclude developing an independent philosophical theory that is Humean in spirit if not exactly Humean in substance.¹²⁵ One of the most interesting directions for research into Hume's own thinking is to consider how his approach to aesthetics can shed light on his moral philosophy, rather than the other way around. His sentimentalist approach in aesthetics; the search for a standard; the question of prejudice, reflection, and the general point of view; the figure of the true judge; and the concept of taste, can all serve to illuminate questions that have been raised in Hume's approach to morals: his purported realism; the idea of moral standards; the issue of relativism; the normative force of his theory; the general point of view; and the role he assigns to moral character. These latter areas have been the subject of discussion in their own right, and the debates can only be enriched and deepened by drawing parallels with Hume's approach to issues of taste and beauty. Stepping back even further, one can see how this might open up questions about the place of Hume's aesthetics in his philosophy more generally. Townsend's ambitious project of finding an "implicit aesthetic embedded in Hume's major philosophical works" is clearly an important step in this direction,¹²⁶ but the interpretive road is long and there is surely much ground still to cover.

As with the work of any major philosophical figure, certain issues will likely never be resolved, an observation apt in the case of Hume who stresses famously how the "ultimate springs of principle" are beyond the "narrow boundaries and slender acquisitions" of human reason. There might well be a true judge in matters of taste, but it is doubtful that there is a comparable figure with the qualities requisite to navigate definitively "those immense depths of philosophy" of which Hume's own thought now forms a part. Sometimes the best argument does win the day, but more often than not some passion or prejudice, however slight, intervenes to corrupt even the most honest inquirer. As Hume observes, all philosophers are touched by the tendency to "confine too much their principles" (E 159), and it is in the nature of the pursuit to seek final answers where none are to be found. If true, this will prevent agreement and reconciliation, but it will also guarantee further additions to the already rich and varied literature on the form and content of Hume's aesthetics.

NOTES

I am grateful to Alan Goldman, Adam Potkay, James Shelley, and the editors of *Hume Studies*, for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Research for the paper was supported by an Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung Visiting Research Fellowship at Ludwig Maximilians-Universität München in the summer and fall of 2003, and by a 2003 Summer Research Grant from The College of William and Mary. I would like to thank both the Humboldt-Stiftung and William and Mary for their support.

1 See, for example, Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), 93, who writes that Hume's work contains "no explicit theories of beauty, art, criticism or language to examine, because Hume never published his promised treatise on 'criticism.' . . . A reader who wishes to construct even a tentative theory can do so only on the basis of usually passing comments, and his understanding of Hume's general aims and tenets." See also Paul Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" in *Pursuits of Reason: Essays in Honor of Stanley Cavell*, ed. Ted Cohen, Paul Guyer, and Hilary Putnam (Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 43, and Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 74–5. For some assessment of Hume's place in the history of aesthetics, see S. G. Brown, "Observations on Hume's Theory of Taste," *English Studies* 20 (1938): 93–8; Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness,'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 131–44, 143, and Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003 [1976]).

2 References to Hume's works are given according to the following editions and abbreviations: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) (T); *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) (EHU); *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Ind., Indiana: Liberty Classics, 1985) (E); *The History of England, From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, with the author's last corrections and improvements, 6 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983) (H). For T and EHU, page references are also provided to the texts edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge and revised by P. H. Nidditch (SBN): *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), and *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

3 Peter Kivy, "Hume's Neighbour's Wife: An Essay on the Evolution of Hume's Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 23 (1983): 195–208, 201, and Peter Jones, "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 256. For a more generous evaluation of Hume's interest in the arts, see John Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature* (London: Methuen & Co., 1932), 276–7, and James Noxon, "Hume's Opinion of Critics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 157–62, 157 and 161.

4 George Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe from the Earliest Texts to the Present Day*, 3 vols., 4th. ed. (London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1922 [1900–1904]), 2: 160. Saintsbury adds that Hume's "taste in literature was in no sense spontaneous, original, or energetic" (162).

5 Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, 273, and John B. Stewart, *The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 263. For Hume's judgments on literature and the arts under the Tudors and Stuarts, see H IV, 381–6; V, 149–55; and VI, 150–4 and 540–5. See also Jones, "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 260, who says that "Hume's own artistic preferences and critical observations on particular works are entirely orthodox for the age, and . . . rather uninteresting." For a sympathetic overview of Hume's views and their relation to the criticism of his day, see Teddy Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, Figura 2, Studies Edited by the Institute of Art History, University of Uppsala (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1952), chap. 6. Brunius concludes that "Hume's taste mirrors both the tendencies, the classical looking back to the past, and the romantic looking forward, which side by side made themselves felt during the eighteenth century" (117).

6 William H. Halberstadt, "A Problem in Hume's Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30 (1971): 209–14, 210.

7 Mary Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, ed. George Dickie, Richard Scalfani, and Ronald Roblin, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989 [1977]), 269–70. See also Stewart, *The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 13ff., who speculates on Hume's original plans to complete "a kind of encyclopedia of all the sciences" of which criticism would have formed one part.

8 Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, and Dabney Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

9 Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 12–4. Townsend himself is inclined to make a connection between Hume and Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*.

10 See "Hume's Early Memoranda, 1729–1740: The Complete Text," ed. E. C. Mossner, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9 (1948): 492–518, and E 217, 314, 448–9, and 457. See Peter Jones, "Hume and the Origins of Modern Aesthetics," in *The "Science of Man" in the Scottish Enlightenment: Hume, Reid, and their Contemporaries*, ed. Peter Jones (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 57, and his "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 265; Walter J. Hipple, Jr., "The Logic of Hume's Essay 'Of Tragedy,'" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1956): 43–52, 45–6; Eric Hill, "The Delightful Tragedy Problem," *Philosophy* 57 (1992): 319–26, 319–20, and Alex Neill, "'An Unaccountable Pleasure': Hume on Tragedy and the Passions," *Hume Studies* 24 (1998), 335–54, 336. See also Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, 277, who characterizes "On Tragedy" as an attempt to "improve upon the theories of the Abbé Dubos and Fontenelle." For the place of Dubos in the history of eighteenth-century aesthetics, see Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 2nd ed. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishers, 1972 [1939]), 274ff., and Kivy, *The Seventh Sense*, 186 and 198–9. Neither of these latter studies mentions Hume as owing a particular debt to Dubos.

11 See Noxon, "Hume's Opinion of Critics," 158: "Hume's sympathetic comments on the work of L'Abbé Dubos and Fontenelle encouraged an interest in French aesthetics amongst readers of the English speaking world, and he continued to welcome and commend treatises such as Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* even after he had stopped writing on such subjects himself."

12 Jones, *Hume's Sentiments*, 101.

13 Jones, *Hume's Sentiments*, 101ff. and 109ff. See also Peter Jones, "'Art' and 'Moderation' in Hume's Essays," *McGill Hume Studies*, ed. David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi, and Wade L. Robison (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1979), 164ff.; "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 259–60, 266–7, and 269, and "Hume and the Beginnings of Modern Aesthetics." Cf. Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550–1960* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 117.

14 Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 41 and 65n5, and Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 76ff.

15 See, for example, David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), and "Hutcheson's Moral Realism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 397–418. For a response to Norton, see Kenneth Winkler, "Hutcheson's Alleged Realism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 179–94.

16 Harold Osborne, "Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 38 (1979): 135–44, 135.

17 See Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London, 1738, 4th ed., corrected), I, 9, and Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 241ff. For the influence of Locke on the development of seventeenth and eighteenth century aesthetics generally, see Dabney Townsend, "Lockean Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (1991): 349–61 (Townsend does not mention Hume in this connection), and Kivy, *The Seventh Sense*, chaps. 3–4 *passim*.

18 For the view that Hume did not take Locke's doctrine seriously, see Simon Blackburn, "Hume on the Mezzanine Level," *Hume Studies* 19 (1993): 273–88, and for a response, Kenneth P. Winkler, "Hutcheson and Hume on the Color of Virtue," *Hume Studies* 22 (1996): 3–22. See also Jones, "'Art' and 'Moderation' in Hume's Essays," 174.

19 Kivy, "Hume's Neighbour's Wife," 199. See also Halberstadt, "A Problem in Hume's Aesthetics," 209–11, and George Dickie, *The Century of Taste: The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 123–4. The same point is also emphasized by Mary Carman Rose, "The Importance of Hume in the History of Western Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 16 (1976): 218–29, 221 and 223.

20 Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 57. See also "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 261; Osborne, "Hume's Standard and the Diversity of Aesthetic Taste," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967): 50–6, 52–3, and Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, 37.

21 See Peter Railton, "Aesthetic Value, Moral Value, and Naturalism," in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 67 and 93, and Nick Zangwill, "Hume, Taste, and Teleology," *Philosophical Papers* 23 (1994): 1–18, 9. Zangwill also sees in Hume's idea that "certain things are somehow apt by nature for pleasurable contemplation," grounds for ascribing to him a "teleological account of aesthetics. Just as legs are for walking and eyes are for seeing and the heart is for pumping blood," Zangwill continues, "so our sensibility is for responding with pleasure to flowers and to Homer."

- 22 Theodore A. Gracyk, "Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 169–82, 169. Gracyk also argues that Hume modifies the Lockean view so that "beauty" comes to denote "both the sentiment and the object's 'power' to produce it" (172).
- 23 Rochelle Gurstein, "Taste and the 'Conversable World,' in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61 (2000): 203–21, 209.
- 24 Kivy, "Hume's Neighbour's Wife," 195, 197 and 200.
- 25 Halberstadt, "A Problem in Hume's Aesthetics," 211; Carolyn W. Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35 (1976): 201–15, 202, and Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 124 and 145.
- 26 David Marshall, "Arguing by Analogy: Hume's Standard of Taste," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 28 (1995): 323–43, 333. See also Osborne, "Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgment," 137; Jens Kulenkampff, "The Objectivity of Taste: Kant and Hume," *Noûs* 24 (1990): 93–110, 93; Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 49–50, and Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 44. For Kant's references to Hume, see Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (KGS), herausgegeben von der Deutschen (formerly Königlich Preussischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter [and predecessors], 1902–), Bd. 5, §16, 229–31, and §20–2, 237–40. On the influence of Hume on later aesthetic theories, see Rose, "The Importance of Hume in the History of Western Aesthetics," 223–4 and 228.
- 27 Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 85 and 104. See also 149–51 where Dickie argues for the superiority of Hume's aesthetics over those of Kant, and Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 323, who remark that, the origins of the "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" notwithstanding, the "important thing in Kant is not his debts, but his originality."
- 28 E. F. Carritt, "The Sources and Effects in England of Kant's Philosophy of Beauty," *The Monist* 35 (1925): 315–28, 315.
- 29 Jones, "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 277.
- 30 Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 322.
- 31 Gustav Zart, *Einfluss der englischen Philosophen seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18ten Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Dümmmler, 1881), 215ff.
- 32 Theodore A. Gracyk, "Kant's Shifting Debt to British Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986): 204–17, 204 and 215, emphasis added.
- 33 Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 49 and 52.
- 34 Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 39; Gurstein, "Taste and 'the Conversable World,'" 208; Jens Kulenkampff, *Kants Logik des Ästhetischen Urteils* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 165–6 n12, and Anthony Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 64. See also Steven Sverdlík, "Hume's Key and Aesthetic Rationality," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (1986): 69–76, 74–5, and Malcolm Budd, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 16 and 176n17.

35 *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 285 and 320 n55. See also Kant's scattered references to Hume's *Essays in Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (KGS 7), 173, 260, 309, and 311.

36 See Günter Gawlick and Lothar Kreimandahl, *Hume in der deutschen Aufklärung: Umrisse einer Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1987).

37 Kulenkampff, "The Objectivity of Taste," 109n1. See also Peter Kivy, "Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967): 57–66, 58, and "Hume's Neighbour's Wife," 203, and Mary Mothersill, *Beauty Restored* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 178; Eva Schaper, "Taste, Sublimity, and Genius: The Aesthetics of Nature and Art," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 380; Francis X. J. Coleman, *The Harmony of Reason: A Study in Kant's Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 135, and Werner S. Pluhar, "Translator's Introduction" in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), li–lii.

38 Kivy, "Hume's Neighbour's Wife," 203. See also Kivy's "Hume's Standard of Taste," 58, "Aesthetics and Rationality," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34 (1975): 51–7, 52, and *The Seventh Sense*, chap.7. For the view that Kant's emphasis on antinomial reasoning is also to be found elsewhere in Hume's work, see Manfred Kuehn, "Hume's Antinomies," *Hume Studies* 9 (1983): 25–45, and Dorothy P. Coleman, "Hume's Dialectic," *Hume Studies* 10 (1984): 139–55.

39 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 296; Kulenkampff, "The Objectivity of Taste," 95. See also Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," 271 and 280ff.; Dabney Townsend, *Aesthetic Objects and Works of Art* (Wolfboro: Longwood Academic, 1989), 38, and Schaper, "Taste, Sublimity, and Genius," 380. For an enthusiastic endorsement of Mothersill's view, see Jerrold Levinson, "Hume's Standard of Taste: The Real Problem," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 227–38.

40 I have recently attempted to work out the details of the comparison. See Timothy M. Costelloe, "Hume, Kant, and the 'Antinomy of Taste,'" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41 (2003): 165–85.

41 Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 49–50, and Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 43–4. Guyer goes on to enumerate three ways in which the imagination works to supplement the immediate pleasure of natural beauty (44ff.). See also Jones, "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 261.

42 Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 49, and Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 245. The same point is emphasized by *inter alia* Redding S. Sugg, Jr., "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 16, 1 (September 1957): 96–102, 97; Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," 201; Ted Cohen, "Partial Enchantments of the *Quixote* Story in Hume's Essay on Taste," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy*, ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 148, and Noël Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1984): 181–94, 182.

43 Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 58, and Roger A. Shiner, "Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 237–49,

238. See also Jones, "Hume and the Beginnings of Modern Aesthetics," 56–7, and Jeffrey Wieand, "Hume's Two Standards of Taste," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 129–42, 131ff.

44 Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," 283–4. See also Mothersill's "In Defense of Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 312–6, 315–6. The same point is made by Budd, *Values of Art*, 19. Cf. Christopher MacLachlan, "Hume and the Standard of Taste," *Hume Studies* 12 (1986), 18–38, who concludes with the remark that "it is not the art works but the critics who create standards of taste, by imposing order on them, and thus the crucial point is not the nature of the art-work but the nature of the critic and the society he reflects" (38).

45 Shiner, "Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," 239; Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," 186, and Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 253 and 246, respectively. Cf. Mothersill's response to Shiner, "In Defense of Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," and Sugg, "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," 98, who responds to Gilbert and Kuhn with the remark that what sounds like "sympathetic magic . . . refers pretty clearly to the existence of qualities in the object perceivable by the critic."

46 Kivy, "Aesthetics and Rationality," 52.

47 Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 148.

48 Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 48 and 57–8. Jones remarks that "From the psychological viewpoint Hume stresses the causal nature of aesthetic judgments; from the viewpoint of man as a social being, and of art as a social institution, Hume stresses the importance of public debate and assessment" (62). See also "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," 267 and 270, and Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, 40–1.

49 Sverdlik, "Hume's Key and Aesthetic Rationality," 70; Bennett W. Helm, "Why We Believe in Induction: Standards of Taste and Hume's Two Definitions of Causation," *Hume Studies* 19 (1993): 117–40, 132; Claude MacMillan, "Hume, Points of View and Aesthetic Judgments," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 20 (1986): 109–23, and Gurstein, "Taste and the 'Convertible World,'" 210 and 214.

50 Sugg, "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," 99; Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 246, and Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 59–60.

51 Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 41; Osborne, "Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgment," 135; James Shelley, "Hume and the Nature of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 29–38, 34, and Gurstein, "Taste and the 'Convertible World,'" 209. See also Osborne, "Hume's Standard and the Diversity of Taste," 53.

52 Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," 270, emphasis added. See also Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," 322, who describes it as Hume's "most sustained and subtle essay on aesthetics," and Gracyk, "Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste," 169, who emphasizes that "The essay on taste is his [Hume's] *only* direct defense of an aesthetic standard." Cf. S. K. Wertz, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste Again," *Southwest Philosophical Review* 7 (1991): 141–50, 144, who takes issue with Mothersill's characterization of the essay as "definitive."

53 See letter 465 in *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 2: 252–4. An account of the circumstances which produced the essay is given in Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980 [1954]), chap. 24, 319–35. See also Jones, “Hume’s Aesthetics Reassessed,” 56, and “Cause, Reason, and Objectivity in Hume’s Aesthetics,” in *Hume: A Re-evaluation*, ed. Donald W. Livingston and James T. King (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 342 n8.

54 Gracyk, “Rethinking Hume’s Standard of Taste,” 169; Carroll, “Hume’s Standard of Taste,” 181; Sverdlik, “Hume’s Key and Aesthetic Rationality,” 69; Jones, “Hume’s Aesthetics Reassessed,” 56; Cohen, “Partial Enchantments,” 145, and Jonathan Friday, “Hume’s Sceptical Standard of Taste,” *Journal for the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998): 545–66, 545.

55 See Guyer, “The Standard of Taste and the ‘Most Ardent Desire of Society,’” 38; Noxon, “Hume’s Opinion of Critics,” 158–9; Cohen, “Partial Enchantments,” 155, and Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued*, 65.

56 Guyer, “The Standard of Taste and the ‘Most Ardent Desire of Society,’” 42; R. F. Atkinson, “Hume on the Standard of Morals,” in *David Hume: Many-sided Genius*, ed. Kenneth R. Merrill and Robert Shahan (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 42, and Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 124. Dickie concludes that “Hume’s essay, nevertheless, in comparison with other writings of the other taste theorists, is well organized and well argued” (*ibid.*).

57 MacLachlan, “Hume and the Standard of Taste,” 18, and Mothersill, *Beauty Restored*, 180–1, and “Hume and the Paradox of Taste,” 285.

58 Brown, “Observations,” 194 and 196.

59 Noxon, “Hume’s Opinion of Critics,” 160–1; Korsmeyer, “Hume and the Foundations of Taste,” 205–6, and Kivy, “Hume’s Standard of Taste,” 61–4. See also Zangwill, “Hume, Taste, and Teleology,” 15–16, who sees a circularity in Hume’s method: the attempt to discover a normative standard of aesthetic judgment in the shape of the good critic (Hume’s “underlying idea”) involves deciphering the “virtues” and “vices” that constitute good and bad judgment, which presupposes in turn that some normative standard has already been discovered.

60 Carroll, “Hume’s Standard of Taste,” 191, and Jones, “Hume’s Literary and Aesthetic Theory,” 274. See also George Dickie, *Evaluating Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University press, 1988), 144.

61 See, for example, Friday “Hume’s Sceptical Standard of Taste,” 551, who remarks that “the position he [Hume] takes is decidedly opposed to the neo-classical conception of the relation between rules and criticism.” See also MacLachlan, “Hume and the Standard of Taste,” 34, and Sugg, “Hume’s Search for the Leather Key,” 97.

62 Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism*, 2: 161.

63 Brown, “Observations,” 196–7.

64 Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, 234.

65 Stewart, *The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 93.

66 Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," 270.

67 Richard Shusterman, "The Scandal of Taste: Social Privilege as Nature in the Aesthetic Theories of Hume and Kant," *The Philosophical Forum* 20 (1989): 211–29, 212–3.

68 Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued*, 76; Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," 202 and 212n2; and Osborne, "Hume's Standard and the Diversity of Aesthetic Taste," 56. See also Claudia Schmidt, *David Hume: Reason in History* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 316, and Osborne, "Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgment," 136, who concludes that "The failure of the Empiricists was not in their logic but in the fact that over the years empirical research has not revealed the level of uniformity which could reasonably be held to corroborate the assumption of an 'ideal' affective constitution in this field."

69 Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 155n4.

70 Shelley, "Hume and the Nature of Taste," 31–3. Shelley also remarks how "Hume attributes the collective sharpening of our perception simply to the tendency of the superior perceptions of good critics to spread, over time, to the less critically talented" (36).

71 Gurstein, "Taste and the 'Conversable World,'" 219; Shelley, "Hume and the Nature of Taste," 35, and Wieand, "Hume's Two Standards of Taste," 137. See also Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 136.

72 Wertz, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste Again," 148–9. Cf. Schmidt, *David Hume*, 337, who suggests that for Hume "the larger purpose of aesthetic criticism is not to establish final judgments concerning the merits of particular works of art, but to help the general public to discern, enjoy, and discuss the merits of artistic creations."

73 Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," 271 and 273; Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," 181; Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 38ff.; Gracyk, "Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste," 169 and 171; Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued*, 65, and Kulenkampff, "The Objectivity of Taste," 94.

74 Friday, "Hume's Sceptical Standard of Taste," 552. The same central problem is also identified by Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, 275; Sugg, "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," 98–9; Noxon, "Hume's Opinion of Critics," 159; Kivy, "Breaking the Circle," 59; Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," 201; Cohen, "Partial Enchantments, 146–7; Christopher Perricone, "The Body and Hume's Standard of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 371–7, 371, Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 125; Zangwill, "Hume, Taste, and Teleology," 3–4, and Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 180ff.

75 Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 147.

76 Cf. Levinson, "Hume's Standard of Taste," 230, who proposes that the "real problem" of Hume's solution is that it fails to show why "a person who is not an ideal critic should rationally seek, so far as possible, to exchange the ensemble of artistic objects that elicit his or her approval and enjoyment for some other ensemble that is approved and enjoyed by the sort of person he or she is not." Levinson's solution is to emphasize

that the judgments of ideal critics should be followed because such figures are "our best barometers of the artistic value of works of art generally" (see 223–4).

77 Wieand, "Hume's Two Standards of Taste," 137ff.

78 See the subsequent exchange between Wieand and Shelley, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995), 318–20.

79 James Shelley, "Hume's Double Standard of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 437–45, 440–1. See also Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, 275–6, who treats Hume's two definitions as complimentary.

80 Kivy, "Hume's Standard of Taste," 59. See also "Hume's Neighbour's Wife," 205–6.

81 Gurstein, "Taste and the 'Conversable World,'" 215; Shiner, "Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," 239–40; Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," 204–5, and Sugg, "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," 101.

82 Osborne, "Hume's Standard and the Diversity of Aesthetic Taste," 55–6; Zangwill, "Hume, Taste, and Teleology," 4–5; Perricone, "The Body and Hume's Standard of Taste," 374ff., and Budd, *Values of Art*, 18–20. See also Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 37; Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," 181 and 191–2; Marshall, "Arguing by Analogy," 324 and 325; J. J. A. Mooji, "Hume on Is-Ought and the Standard of Taste," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 14 (1980): 319–32, 325–6; Schmidt, *David Hume*, 329ff., and Railton, "Aesthetic Value," 68–9.

83 Mothersill, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste," 279–80. Cf. Wertz, "Hume and the Paradox of Taste Again," who responds to Mothersill by detailing the various places where Hume appeals to rules and principles.

84 MacLachlan, "Hume and the Standard of Taste," 32; Sverdlik, "Hume's Key and Aesthetic Rationality," 69; Helm, "Why We Believe in Induction," 133, and Sugg, "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," 98.

85 Noxon, "Hume's Opinion of Critics," 160–1.

86 Guyer, "The Standard of Taste and the 'Most Ardent Desire of Society,'" 52ff.

87 Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 148 and 150.

88 Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 206. Cf. *Aesthetic Objects and Works of Art*, 41, where Townsend writes that "There is no other standard than the joint verdict of the ideal critics," and that "Only agreement over time can validate either the critic or his judgments."

89 Kulenkampff, "The Objectivity of Taste," 96–7.

90 Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued*, 77.

91 Railton, "Aesthetic Value," 68.

92 Friday, "Hume's Sceptical Standard of Taste," 550 and 564–6.

93 Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 136 (for Dickie's account of Hume's standard more generally, see 125ff.). See also *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca:

Cornell University Press, 1974), 62–3, where Dickie emphasizes how, for Hume, judgments of taste are “empirical generalizations,” and *Evaluating Art*, 141ff.

94 Gracyk, “Rethinking Hume’s Standard of Taste,” 176–7.

95 Margaret Paton, “Hume on Tragedy,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 13 (1973): 121–32, 121, and Mark Packer, “Dissolving the Paradox of Tragedy,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989): 211–9, 212.

96 See Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, 57ff.

97 Hipple, “The Logic of Hume’s Essay ‘Of Tragedy,’” 48. Hipple also argues that both the problem and the solution can be traced back to the “rules of logic” that Hume discusses in *Treatise* 1.1.5 under the rubric of “Rules by Which to Judge Causes and Effects.” See also Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, 52.

98 Paton, “Hume on Tragedy,” 127. Cf. Eric Hill, “Hume and the Delightful Tragedy Problem,” *Philosophy* 57 (1982): 319–26, 324–6, who charges Paton with offering only a “partial statement” of Hume’s aim. Although it would be strengthened by concentrating on a “union” between the work and the audience, Hill argues, the superiority of Hume’s view over the likes of Fontenelle and Dubos lies in its focus on the objective features of the work of art rather than the response of the subject.

99 Alex Neill, “Hume’s Singular Phænomenon,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999): 112–25, 113.

100 Susan L. Feagin, “The Pleasures of Tragedy,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983): 95–104, 95. See Packer, “Dissolving the Paradox of Tragedy,” 212–4, who criticizes Feagin’s own solution to the problem.

101 Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, 56–7, and Flint Schier, “The Claims of Tragedy: An Essay in Moral Psychology and Aesthetic Theory,” *Philosophical Papers* 18 (1989): 7–26, 15–7.

102 Robert J. Yanal, “Hume and Others on the Paradox of Tragedy,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (1991): 75–6, 76.

103 Alex Neill, “Yanal and Others on Hume and Tragedy,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 151–4, 154n2 and 153–4. Cf. Yanal’s response in “Still Unconverted: A Reply to Neill,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992), 324–6.

104 Hill, “Hume and the Delightful Tragedy Problem,” 322–5.

105 Packer, “Dissolving the Paradox of Tragedy,” 212.

106 Malcolm Budd, “Hume’s Tragic Emotions,” *Hume Studies* 17 (1991): 93–106, 93.

107 Budd, “Hume’s Tragic Emotions,” 102.

108 Schier, “The Claims of Tragedy,” 15–17. Schier also thinks Hume’s account is circular: “terror gets its value from its connection with our delight in the artistry of the play, but this artistry would have no value, and hence would not provoke delight, unless we had independent reasons for valuing the disturbing experience which the acting and writing trigger in us. Unless we suppose nature has committed a sophistry, we must reject Hume’s account” (19).

- 109 Flint Schier, "Tragedy and the Community of Sentiment," *Philosophy and Fiction: Essays in Literary Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Lamarque (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1983), 79.
- 110 Neill, "An Unaccountable Pleasure," 345.
- 111 Neill, "An Unaccountable Pleasure," 345 and 347.
- 112 Neill, "Yanal and Others on Hume and Tragedy," 152.
- 113 Neill, "Hume's Singular Phænomenon," 115 and 117, emphasis added.
- 114 Neill, "Hume's Singular Phænomenon," 120. See also Neill, "Yanal and Others on Tragedy," 151.
- 115 Brunius, *David Hume on Criticism*, 36 and 41ff; Mothersill, *Beauty Restored*, 207, and "In Defense of Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," 313, respectively, and Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 139 and 147–8. See also Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 148.
- 116 Peter Jones, "Another Look at Hume's Views of Aesthetic and Moral Judgments," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970): 53–9, 56.
- 117 Halberstadt, "A Problem in Hume's Aesthetics," 211–2. See also Atkinson, "Hume on the Standard of Morals," 39 and 41, who refers to the "contrast" between morality and aesthetics, and speaks of "external beauty . . . as a case intermediate between morality/sympathy and sensation." See also Railton, "Aesthetic Value," 66, and 94–5. Railton emphasizes, in particular, the parallel between what he calls the "vertical" features ("what now pleases us") and "horizontal" features ("what would please us and others across time and place") of both moral and aesthetic judgments.
- 118 Atkinson, "Hume on the Standard of Morals," 42.
- 119 Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's General Point of View Isn't Ideal—And Shouldn't Be," in *Cultural Pluralism and Moral Knowledge*, ed. Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 220–1.
- 120 Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 148 and 153. See also Railton, "Aesthetic Value," 93–4.
- 121 Gurstein, "Taste and the 'Conversable World,'" 215 and 217; M. A. Box, *The Suasive Art of David Hume* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 134, and Sugg, "Hume's Search for the Key with the Leather Thong," 101.
- 122 Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, 139–41.
- 123 Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 139, 141, and 144; Atkinson, "Hume on the Standard of Morals," 42–3; and Cohen, "Partial Enchantments," 153–5.
- 124 Michelle Mason, "Moral Prejudice and Aesthetic Deformity: Rereading Hume's 'Of the Standard of Taste,'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001): 59–71, 59–61 and 66–7.
- 125 For contemporary approaches in aesthetics that takes Hume as their inspiration, see Alan H. Goldman, *Aesthetic Value* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), and Dickie, *Evaluating Art*, chap. 8, who sees in "Of the Standard of Taste" a basis for generating

“weak principles” for ranking aesthetic properties. For a response to Dickie’s use of Hume, see James Shelley, “The Character and Role of Principles in the Evaluation of Art,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002): 37–51. See also Simon Blackburn, *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 20, 78–9 *passim*, who draws on Hume’s aesthetics, and “Of the Standard of Taste” in particular, to develop his view.

126 See Townsend, *Hume’s Aesthetic Theory*, Introduction, 1–11. I have recently used Hume’s approach to beauty as a way of understanding his approach to character. See Timothy M. Costelloe, “Beauty, Morals, and Hume’s Conception of Character,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21 (2004): 171–85.