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Hume on Art Critics, Wise Men, and the Virtues of Taste

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Abstract: In this paper I compare two models of expert judgment: the art critic in Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" and the "wise man" in "Of Miracles." The art critic is a true judge of beauty because he has made himself into a person who is optimally receptive to beauty. He possesses the virtues of taste: "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice" ("Of the Standard of Taste," 241). But the virtues of the art critic, I argue, are also those of the "wise man," the person who consistently "proportions his belief to the evidence" (EHU 10.4; SBN 110). Comparison of these two characters reveals that for Hume the virtues fundamental to the art critic's critical competence are also epistemic virtues. Hume's exposition of aesthetic excellences should thus be of interest for virtue epistemology. Because contemporary virtue epistemologists have tended to focus almost exclusively on the relationships between intellectual and moral virtues, Hume offers something new: an account of epistemic virtues based on aesthetic virtues.

In the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume famously argues that beauty, "whether moral or natural, is felt, more properly than perceived" (EHU 12.33; SBN 165).[1] Beauty is thus discerned not by reason but "only by a taste or sensation" (T 2.1.8.2; SBN 299).[2] Although Hume identifies beauty with an internal sentiment, a subjective feeling in the mind, he does not believe that all expressions of

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aesthetic value are equally apt; some judgments of beauty really are better than others. In "Of the Standard of Taste," Hume offers a model of aesthetic expertise in the person of the art critic. The art critic is a "true judge in the finer arts" because he is optimally receptive to beauty; he possesses what I will call the virtues of taste: "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice" ("Standard of Taste," 241).[3] Together these virtues refine the art critic's sense of beauty; they perfect his aesthetic taste and thereby make his judgments most appropriate.

Hume's account of epistemic judgment is importantly similar to his account of aesthetic judgment. The foundation of belief in the real existence of matters of fact is also an internal sentiment—a feeling of necessity arising from the repeated experience of the constant conjunction of objects. Thus, Hume holds that "[a]ll probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation" (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103). Consequently, "we must follow our taste and sentiment" (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103) even when discerning matters of fact. Although Hume holds that the basis of belief is a subjective feeling in the mind, he no more thinks that all empirical beliefs are equally warranted than he thinks all aesthetic evaluations are equally appropriate. In "Of Miracles," Hume offers a model of expert empirical judgment in the person of the "wise man." The "wise man" is a competent judge—in this case of the reliability of testimony—because he consistently "proportions his belief to the evidence" of experience (EHU 10.4; SBN 110): he has perfected his ability to make causal judgments that line up with the empirical evidence. An examination of the "wise man's" character reveals that he, too, possesses the virtues of taste: strong sense, a delicate sentiment, practice, the ability to make comparisons, and a mind free from prejudice. It turns out that the essential components of the art critic's critical competence also contribute to the excellence of the judgments of the wise.

Placing Hume's two models of expert judgment—the art critic and the "wise man"—side by side, so to speak, and comparing their respective characters reveals something significant about the nature of Humean wisdom. My main claim in this paper is that for Hume the qualities perfected by the art critic—the virtues of taste—are not just aesthetic virtues; they are also forms of epistemic or doxastic virtues, cultivated excellences of mind essential to good causal reasoning, that is, to wise belief formation. Indeed, I suggest that Hume models the "wise man" on the expert critic. Thus, Hume's exposition of aesthetic excellences should be of interest to philosophers working in the area of virtue epistemology, particularly those interested in the character traits involved in forming and fixing beliefs. Contemporary virtue epistemologists have focused almost exclusively on the relationships between intellectual and moral virtues. There has been little exploration, however, of how or whether intellectual virtues are related to aesthetic virtues.[4] Hume offers us a different model of doxastic virtue, one based on aesthetic virtues.

In putting forth the "wise man" in "Of Miracles" as a model of doxastic wisdom, I do not mean to suggest that Hume thinks testimony is the central form of evidence evaluated well by wise men. In the *Treatise*, Hume describes the wise more generally as persons who have learned to "distinguish the accidental circumstances from the efficacious causes" (T 1.3.13.11; SBN 149). They are persons in the habit of forming empirical beliefs according to well-established standards of reliability, and not just with regard to the reliability of testimony. I focus on this particular model because it offers one important example of good causal reasoning. Reasoning from testimony is, after all, a species of causal inference. Hume says, "When we receive any matter of fact upon human testimony, our faith arises from the very same origin as our inferences from causes to effects, and from effects to causes" (T 1.3.9.12: SBN 113), that is, from experience of the constant conjunction of objects. In particular, it is our "observation of the veracity of human testimony and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of eyewitnesses" (EHU 10.5; SBN 111) that forms the basis of inferences that generate belief in testimony. In "Of Miracles," Hume himself refers to those who exercise good judgment concerning the credibility of testimony as "wise and judicious" (EHU 10.21; SBN 120). The "wise man" exemplifies what is required for good causal reasoning, and Hume presents a strong case for comparison with the critic. There are, of course, other exemplars of good empirical judgment—that is, persons who exemplify wise habits of reflection—to be found in Hume's writings.[5] The claims I make about the "wise man" in "Of Miracles" are intended to apply to these other models as well.

While my purpose is to show that the virtues of taste are shared by both critics and "wise men," there are at least a few significant points of divergence between these two models of expertise. Judgments of aesthetic taste, as Hume explains in "Of the Standard of Taste," must be informed by a cultivated sense of humanity or benevolence.[6] A "true judge" will not endorse a work of art that approvingly portrays cruelty and vice; such qualities "must be allowed to disfigure the [artwork], and to be a real deformity" ("Standard of Taste," 246). Humanity puts a check on how closely the critic can sympathize with an audience; it forms an important part of the standard of aesthetic taste. The sense of humanity does not play the same role for the wise. A wise man need not possess a refined sense of humanity.

Hume also identifies two "blameless" sources of variation in the judgments of critics: one, "the different humours of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" ("Standard of Taste," 243). Opinions stemming from these sources are both "unavoidable" ("Standard of Taste," 244) and impossible to reconcile. No similar allowance is made, however, in regard to judgments of testimony, especially regarding testimony concerning miracles.[7] In "Of Miracles" Hume describes those who deny the reality of a miracle as "judicious" and "learned," while those who believe in miracles are "ignorant."

Finally, the feeling that forms the basis of an aesthetic response is not the same sort of feeling as that which lies at the foundation of epistemic judgments. The "wise man" is not having an aesthetic response to testimony, because the qualities of testimony to which he is particularly well-attuned are not aesthetic qualities; they are not the properties that elicit feelings of beauty or deformity. The reliability of testimony depends on causal relations that give rise to impressions of necessity—a sense of confidence or conviction regarding an object's real existence. The feeling of necessity and the feeling of beauty are not the same sentiments. While the critic's response to art involves a sentiment that is lacking in the "wise man's" response to testimony, Hume nevertheless makes it clear that causal reasoning is still a matter of "taste and sentiment." The virtues of taste are important in both areas, even if aesthetic judgments and epistemic judgments rely on different sentiments.

Beauty and Aesthetic Judgment

Aesthetic judgments, for Hume, ultimately rest on certain feelings of pleasure and pain.[8] According to Hume, beauty "is not, properly speaking, a quality in any object, but merely a passion or impression in the soul" (T 2.1.8.6; SBN 301). The impression of beauty is a calm passion that gives a "peculiar delight and satisfaction" (T 2.1.8.1; SBN 298). This pleasurable sentiment is produced by the correspondence of certain properties of an object with a mind "whose peculiar fabric or structure renders it susceptible of such sentiments" (EPM App. 1.14; SBN 291–92).[9] Indeed, Hume holds that the very feeling of pleasure that arises from such a correspondence "constitutes our praise or admiration" for any work of art (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471). Conversely, we blame or disapprove any work that produces pain or uneasiness (T 2.1.8.2; SBN 299). Thus, an alteration in either the disposition of the mind or the object itself can affect our experience of beauty and deformity. However, when the object remains the same, when "all circumstances and relations are laid before us," it is taste that "makes us feel from the whole a new sentiment of blame or approbation" (EPM App. 1.21; SBN 294). Aesthetic taste is, for Hume, sensitivity to aesthetic sentiments.

Because Hume's account of beauty makes sentiments primary, we might conclude that aesthetic value is relative to the individual; Hume's sentimentalist account seems to imply that no aesthetic evaluation is preferable to any other and that there are no grounds for asserting that some works of art are more beautiful than others. Yet Hume clearly denies this. While he grants that it may sometimes seem that no standards exist, especially when works of art are proportionate, whenever we compare two obviously disproportionate works, we easily recognize that there are, indeed, standards of beauty and taste. As Hume puts it, "Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY and MILTON,

or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE, or a pond as extensive as the ocean" ("Standard of Taste," 231). Indeed, Hume's acknowledged aim in "Of the Standard of Taste" is to prove that some tastes really are preferable to others because some works of art really are more beautiful than others.

Hume's defense of the inequality of taste is based on the view that "[s]ome particular forms or qualities, from the original structure or the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease ("Standard of Taste," 233). The relation between an artwork's perceptible features and the mind's constitution dictates the "proper" critical response ("Standard of Taste," 234).[10] Dabney Townsend explains that a proper aesthetic response is one that accords with the common sentiments of human nature, that is, one in line with normalized, empirical expectations.[11] Because human nature is largely uniform, the principles of taste are nearly the same in all men. This explains why "the same Homer, who pleased at ATHENS and ROME two thousand years ago, is still admired at PARIS and at LONDON" ("Standard of Taste," 233). As long as human nature remains what it is, the qualities exhibited in Homer's epic poems will continue to impress. By reflecting on past experience, we can formulate general rules of art that specify the qualities that please or displease our aesthetic sensibility.[12] Here is just one example: "There is no rule in painting more reasonable than that of balancing the figures, and placing them with the greatest exactness on their proper centers of gravity. A figure, which is not justly ballanc'd, is disagreeable; and that because it conveys the ideas of its fall, of harm, and of pain" (T 2.2.5.19; SBN 364–65).

It should be noted that, for Hume, general rules, while they do not confirm the possession of good taste, are useful for proving the superiority of one taste over another in that they can rule out the judgments of those who lack delicacy of taste:

> Here then the general rules of beauty are of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in high degree: and if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a smaller degree, affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy. ("Standard of Taste," 235)

Hume himself employs general rules to justify his own judgments when, for example, he argues that Spencer's "harmonious versification, easy elocution" and "fine imagination" make him "the finest English writer of his age," whereas the "tediousness of continued allegory, the too great frequency of its description, and the languor of its stanza" make his *Fairy Queen* "peculiarly tiresome" to read.[13]

Despite the uniformity of human nature, not everyone is fit to be an authority on matters of beauty. Beauty is a type of response-dependent property; it exists by

virtue of the effects of objects on human subjects and is not an independent feature of objects themselves. Therefore, standards against which aesthetic judgments can be measured must be grounded in facts about human subjectivity and its response to external objects. According to Hume, expert aesthetic appreciation is possible only by placing the mind in circumstances that allow for the optimal perception of beauty, circumstances which, he admits, are rarely attained ("Standard of Taste," 241): The "organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect," they either suffer some "defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment which may be pronounced erroneous" ("Standard of Taste," 241). In order to perceive an artwork's real beauty, the mind must possess certain characteristics, certain virtues of taste. The critic is that "rare" and "valuable character" who possesses these virtues: "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice" ("Standard of Taste," 241).[14] He has made himself into a person who is optimally receptive to beauty, and that is why his aesthetic sentiments are authoritative; he is Hume's model of critical competence.

Belief and Epistemic Judgment

There are several parallels between Hume's account of aesthetic judgment and his account of epistemic judgment. According to Hume, causal reasoning is the basis of all our beliefs regarding the real existence of matters of fact outside those beliefs based on the senses and memory. Causation is unique because it is the only relation that takes us "beyond our senses" and informs us of the existence of objects not perceptually present (T 1.3.2.3; SBN 73). Cause and effect is the only relation, Hume says, "on which we can found a just inference from one object to another" (T 1.3.6.7: SBN 89). Reasoning from testimony is, for Hume, particularly important: "there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even more necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men" (EHU 10.5; SBN 111). Most of what we come to know about the world comes to us from the reports of other people.

Hume's account of causal inference is well known: past experience of the constant conjunction of two objects produces a customary transition of the imagination from a present impression to an associated idea. The transition from impression to idea involves a transfer of vivacity, and while this transfer does not affect the content of the associated idea, it does change the *manner* of its conception. It is this new manner of conception that Hume considers the basis of belief: "belief consists not in the nature and order of our ideas, but in the manner of their conception, and in their feeling to the mind" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629). A belief is an idea that feels more vivid, lively, forceful, firm, and steady than one merely conceived; it is closer in strength to that of an impression.[15] Thus, as Hume famously asserts,

"belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures" (T 1.4.1.8; SBN 183–84). In the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, he refers to this lively and forceful feeling as the "sentiment of belief" (EHU 6.3; SBN 57). The two other associative relations—resemblance and contiguity—also involve a transfer of vivacity, though they do not ordinarily transmit enough vivacity to cause belief, because the mental habit of associating impression and idea in these instances is not nearly as strong and settled as in the case of causal inference.[16]

The causal mechanism produces various degrees of belief, ranging from certainty to doubtful expectation depending upon how uniform our past experience of the conjunction of objects has been. The more uniform and regular the conjunction, the stronger is the force of custom operating on the imagination. The frequent repetition of conjoined objects affects the mind in a unique way; it "produce[s] something new" (T 1.3.14.16; SBN 163), some new impression of reflection. This new impression—the feeling of necessity—accounts for the idea that two objects are casually related. As there are all different degrees of probability, so there are all different degrees of assurance.[17] For Hume, there is an important structural parallel between beauty and causal necessity. Like beauty, causal power and necessity are "qualities of perceptions, not of objects, and are internally felt by the soul, and not perceiv'd externally in bodies" (T 1.3.14.22; SBN 166). Power is not an independent feature of objects themselves; it is a felt perception of the mind.

While the basis of belief in matters of fact is ultimately something "felt by the soul," Hume does not thereby think that all empirical judgments are on a par with one another: there are better and worse epistemic judges, just as there are better and worse aesthetic judges. True beliefs about the world depend upon one's ability to distinguish ideas enlivened by causation from ideas enlivened by other modes of association. Hume thinks the wise are especially good at doing this; it is what sets them apart from the "vulgar," who tend to engage in "common and careless way[s] of thinking" (T 1.4.3.9; SBN 223).

In the *Treatise*, Hume explains doxastic wisdom in terms of the influence of general rules on the imagination.[18] Rules of causal inference are formed on the basis of a natural generalizing propensity of the imagination. When we have been accustomed to observe two objects united to each another, we form the mental habit of associating them together as cause and effect. Custom operates in such a way that we tend to generalize causal claims to other non-identical but resembling objects. The generalizing propensity of the imagination, because its activity precedes reflection, often associates on the basis of resemblances that turn out to be "superfluous" rather than "essential" to the production of an effect (T 1.3.13.9; SBN 148). The problem is that this pre-reflective associative habit—what Hume refers to as the "first influence of general rules" (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150)—if left unchecked

or uncorrected, can result in false belief. The belief formed is illegitimate because it is based on an irrelevant quality that is *mis*perceived as a relevant one. The imagination has tied together two objects or qualities that were only "conjoin'd by accident" (T 1.3.13.9, SBN 48), not by causation. Hastily formed generalities are the source of what Hume calls "prejudice" (T 1.3.13.7; SBN 146).

If we are wise, however, we learn to correct this imaginative propensity by a "second influence of general rules" (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150). This second influence is based on "the more general and authentic operations of the understanding"; it is reflective in character (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150). When we compare past judgments and see which ones turned out false, which ones true, we can revise our rules so they are more in line with truth. The revised rules, because they assist us in determining when objects are genuinely related by causality, are principles "by which we ought to regulate our judgment" (T 1.3.13.11; SBN 149). Hume lists several such principles that guide the judgments of the wise in *Treatise* 1.3.15. From careful observation the wise know, for instance, that the same cause always produces the same effect, and where several different objects produce the same effect, it must be by means of some quality common among them.[19] The cautious application of these principles enables us to separate relevant from irrelevant qualities (T 1.3.13.11; SBN 149).[20] The second influence of general rules is to check the force of feeling arising from the pre-reflective transitions of the imagination and thus provide corrective normative principles for the evaluation of those feelings which form the basis of empirical beliefs (T1.3.13.12; SBN 149–50).[21] While both influences of general rules are operative in our causal judgments, which one prevails depends on "the disposition and character of the person. The vulgar are commonly guided by the first, and wise men by the second" (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150).

A "wise man's" assessment of testimony is further guided by general rules that specifically govern the reliability of human reports. There are numerous factors or features of circumstance that tend to correlate with credible and incredible reports. If, for instance, there is nothing about an eyewitness' report that is obviously inconsistent with past experience, we tend to accept what we are told at face value. Generally, we only doubt testimony when confronted with a "contrariety of evidence" (EHU 10.7; SBN 112).

In "Of Miracles" Hume is primarily concerned with how one assesses the credibility of testimony that conflicts in some way with our own or is not entirely self-consistent. The general approach to treating such evidence is to "balance the opposite circumstances, which cause any doubt or uncertainty; and when we discover a superiority on any side, we incline to it; but still with a diminution of assurance, in proportion to the force of its antagonist" (EHU 10.6; SBN 112).[22] We tend to be skeptical, for instance, when witnesses contradict each other, when they are few in number, when they deliver their testimony hesitantly, or when the fact reported is extremely unusual, because these features are often correlated

with false testimony; the probability of their being true is low because the weight of evidence is low (EHU 10.7; SBN 112–13).

The characters of witnesses and the nature of their motives also influence our evaluation. We know, for example, that a person of "undoubted integrity with no plans to deceive" will be a more reliable witness than one of ill repute because his testimony frequently turns out true, whereas "[a] man delirious, or noted for falsehood and villainy, has no manner of authority with us" because his testimony, by contrast, often turns out false (EHU 10.5; SBN 112). We also know that reports arising "among an ignorant people" are not to be trusted (EHU 10.23; SBN 120), and that witnesses motivated by "the spirit of religion" are unreliable because the conjunction between their testimony and what they report is seldom observed (EHU 10.17; SBN 117).

In weighing evidence, we also take into account the effects of principles inherent in human nature. Experience shows, for example, that human beings are naturally credulous: they have a "remarkable propensity to believe whatever is reported" (T 1.3.9.12; SBN 113), particularly if the facts reported are extraordinary and marvelous. The "passion of *surprise* and *wonder*" elicited by reports of unique (or miraculous) events, "being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency toward the belief of those events, from which it is derived" (EHU 10.16; SBN 117) and can, therefore, tip the balance in favor of testimony at odds with experience. A fantastic story can cause the idea of an event to have more influence on the imagination than it should and thus lead to false belief. By reflecting on his experience of reliable and unreliable reports, a "wise man" forms general rules of testimony and employs them as guides for right judgment.

Hume admits that while the principles of good causal reasoning may be "very easy in their invention," they are "extremely difficult in their application" (T 1.3.15.11; SBN 175). In the natural and moral worlds, phenomena are surrounded by a great complication of circumstances that makes it difficult to determine cause and effect. The same can be said regarding rules of reasoning from testimony. It is not always an easy matter to compute the relative strength of testimonial evidence and arrive at an all-things-considered judgment, especially in complex situations where the evidence is mixed and varied. In the real world, there are always multiple and varying influences contributing to the production of reliable testimony; so what is true of the causal judgment in general is also true of judgments of testimony: sorting out which of those influences are "absolutely requisite" for reliable testimony from those which are "only conjoined by accident" requires constancy and the "utmost sagacity" (T 1.3.15.11; SBN 175). A "wise man" is attuned to the various causes at work and is sensitive to how they affect his overall assessment of the evidence; his evaluation of testimony is a complex, sophisticated response to empirical evidence, much as an art critic's evaluation of beauty is a complex, sophisticated response to a work of art.

In Book 1 of the *Treatise*, Hume makes an interesting comparison between causal reasoning and aesthetic evaluation when he claims that both—being matters of sentiment—are ultimately guided by the pronouncements of taste:

> All probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments [i.e., inferences] above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103)

We find a similar thought in Book 3: "No questions in philosophy are more difficult, than when a number of causes present themselves for the same phaenomenon, to determine which is the principle and predominant. There seldom is any very precise argument to fix our choice, and men must be contented to be guided by a kind of taste or fancy, arising from analogy, and a comparison of similar instances" (T 3.2.3.4; SBN 504n). Hence, taste for Hume is not only a capacity to feel aesthetic pleasure, it is also a capacity to feel the impression of necessity that forms the basis of empirical judgments about the world.

Taste assesses the weight of evidence by distinguishing relevant from irrelevant qualities; it distinguishes which relations among the "complication of circumstances" are genuine causal relations and which are not. Hume's "wise man" is a good judge of testimony because he has what we may call a refined "sense of probability,"[23] a delicate taste, a perfected affective capacity for appreciating the strength of testimonial evidence, along the lines of an art critic's perfected affective capacity for appreciating degrees of aesthetic beauty. We could think of the "wise man" as a kind of *critic of testimony*. That the "wise man" does, indeed, possess the critic's virtues of taste is what I will now demonstrate. I begin with a discussion of the art critic's virtues as Hume describes them in "Of the Standard of Taste." I then show that the qualities contributing to the art critic's critical competence are also those that contribute to the excellent judgments of the "wise man."

The Virtues of Taste in the Art Critic

Hume identifies five qualities that the competent critic possesses: a delicate sentiment, practice, the ability to make comparisons, a mind free from prejudice, and strong sense. *Delicate sentiment* is defined as "a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity" ("Standard of Taste," 236), an immediate identification of and response to aesthetic properties. This kind of sensibility is analogous to that of the wine connoisseur who discriminates subtle scents, flavors, textures, and various

other qualities found in wine. A good art critic will be affected by impressions of, for example, elegance and force, when these impressions are exceedingly slight, whereas someone who lacks delicacy lets "[t]he finer touches pass unnoticed and disregarded" ("Standard of Taste," 241).

Delicacy, however, is not simply a matter of detecting subtle touches; it also involves awareness of more complex global properties of works of art. Malcolm Gladwell's story "The Statue That Didn't Look Right" offers a real-life example of delicacy at work in this way.[24] In 1983 an Italian art dealer offered to sell a marble kouros to the J. Paul Getty museum. The statue, he claimed, dated from the sixth century B.C. The Getty took the statue on loan and conducted a year-long investigation into its authenticity, employing the expertise of scientists, archeologists, and lawyers. They convinced the Getty it was authentic, so the museum moved to purchase the piece ("Statue," 4). A number of art critics who later saw the kouros confessed to having had an immediate impression that the statue was not genuine. They sensed there was something wrong with it: it just didn't look right. One critic said that he felt an "intuitive repulsion" ("Statue," 6), another that she had "an instinctive sense that something was amiss" ("Statue," 5). Their initial reactions led them to discover facts that told them the kouros was a fake. Its condition, for instance, was too "fresh" for a statue supposedly buried in the ground for two thousand years ("Statue," 5). As one critic put it, "The kouros looked like it had been dipped in the very best caffè latte from Starbucks" ("Statue," 6). Moreover, it exhibited "a puzzling pastiche of several different styles from several different places and time periods" ("Statue," 7) One critic even noticed that there was something wrong with its fingernails, and that its feet were too "modern" ("Statue," 7). As it turned out, the critics were right. This kouros came not from ancient Greece but from a modern-day forger's workshop in Rome ("Statue," 8). The critics' delicate sensibilities enabled them to discover, and almost immediately, what the Getty's team of researchers failed to learn in fourteen months: the statue was a fake ("Statue," 8). The delicacy of feeling exhibited by the critics who surveyed the kouros functioned by highlighting aesthetically salient aspects of the artwork.

Although the capacity to be affected by beauty is, in itself, a natural endowment, this capacity can be improved and refined by experience, or what Hume calls *practice*. Practice involves experience surveying works of art "in different lights and with attention and deliberation" ("Standard of Taste," 238). Initial impressions—of the eye or the imagination—are often attended with "obscure and confused" ("Standard of Taste," 238) sentiments, making it impossible to judge a work's true merits or defects. With repeated experience, however, sentiments gradually become "more exact and nice" ("Standard of Taste," 237). Practice improves sensibility because it helps to alleviate distortions arising from hasty inspections and thereby gives the critic a better sense of an artwork's true character ("Standard of Taste," 237–38).

Hume notes that experience inevitably involves making *comparisons* between different species and degrees of beauty; by comparing different works the critic acquires knowledge of the potential kind and range of qualities of those works. It is "by comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise and blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each" ("Standard of Taste," 238). For example, Ogilby might seem an elegant writer until we read Milton and compare the works of the two authors.

Freedom from prejudice concerns a critic's point of view. In order to form a "true judgment," a critic must impose "a proper violence on his imagination" ("Standard of Taste," 240) and take up a point of view common to the artist's intended audience, otherwise he risks misperceiving aesthetic qualities. A mind affected by prejudice does not comply with this condition, hence it fails to register the proper influence of beauty. Another Gladwell story—this one entitled "A Revolution in Classical Music"—can help to illustrate.[25] Until recently it was thought that women simply could not play classical music as well as men. It was argued that they lacked sufficient strength, their hands were too small, their lungs were not as powerful, and so on ("Revolution in Music," 249). So, it was rare that a woman would outperform a man in an audition. Since the introduction of blind auditions about thirty years ago, however, the number of women playing in orchestras across the country has increased fivefold ("Revolution in Music," 250). The classical music world came to realize that the audition process—a process they thought was objective—had been hopelessly biased. Judges were evaluating music quality based on what they *saw* not strictly on what they *heard.* Biases against women musicians, Hume would say, were "perverting" the judge's aesthetic sentiments; prejudice prevented them from perceiving the true qualities of the women's performances. But with the advent of audition screens, these barriers to good judgment were removed, and judges are now better able to assess the true aesthetic character of a musician's performance.

Finally, there is *strong* (i.e., *good*) *sense*. In "Of the Standard of Taste," Hume identifies good sense with "reason" and "judgment" ("Standard of Taste," 240). Reason does not affect sensibility directly. As Townsend notes, we cannot simply reason our way into a particular aesthetic sentiment (*Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 211). But we can use our reason to overcome our prejudices so that, with the barriers removed, taste may operate more delicately, more closely in line with the general principles of art (*Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 211). Good sense also sharpens discernment of those qualities on which the sense of beauty operates. In order to pave the way for a refined sense of beauty, "it is often necessary, we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distant comparisons formed, complicated relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained" (EPM 1.9; SBN 173). Reason informs us, for example, if persons introduced in tragedy or poetry are represented as thinking and acting

suitably to their character and circumstances; it discovers how well the parts of a work combine into one system and estimates how skillfully they prosecute the artist's intended design. Good sense identifies the typical interaction of multiple causes or principles and recognizes how different passions influence each other to create an overall impression of a work.[26] It puts the parts together and thus makes possible the complex ideas of the imagination to which taste responds (*Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 212). Lacking good sense, one may still have a general impression of an object's beauty but, Hume argues, one "is not qualified to discern the beauties of design and reasoning, which are the highest and most excellent" ("Standard of Taste," 247). In other words, taste can still operate, but without refinement. So, while beauty is a feeling, it is clearly not an unreflective feeling; there is an important cognitive component to all pronouncements of taste.

To summarize: An art critic possesses *delicate sentiment*, a quick and accurate perception of beauty. Delicacy comes through being *practiced* in the sense of having repeatedly experienced a certain kind of art as well as having repeatedly experienced the particular artwork judged. Experience facilitates the *comparison* of different works so that the critic acquires knowledge of the potential kind and range of qualities of those works. Moreover, a critic is *free of prejudice* that interferes with his adopting the right point of view. Finally, a critic has *good sense*: he employs his reason to overcome his prejudices, to make fine-grained distinctions among aesthetic properties, and to discern "complicated relations." This helps to ensure that his perception is discriminating and that his responses to art are appropriate. Together, these characteristics—the virtues of taste—distinguish accomplished art critics from persons of ordinary aesthetic sensibilities.

The Virtues of Taste in Hume's "Wise Man"

In "Of the Standard of Taste," Hume notes that the qualities that make up the art critic's critical competence are the same as those that contribute to the improvement of reason, thus identifying a clear point of contact between the critic and the "wise man": "the same excellence of faculties which contributes to the improvement of reason, the same clearness of conception, the same exactness of distinction, the same vivacity of apprehension, are essential to the operations of true taste, and are its infallible concomitants" ("Standard of Taste," 240–41).

The *good sense*—the reason—of the competent judge of testimony is showcased in Hume's own evaluation of the famous Ossian poems. In the 1760s James Macpherson published poems allegedly composed by the Scottish bard Ossian and handed down through fifteen centuries of oral tradition in the Highlands. The poems were widely regarded as authentic, both in Britain and on the continent, and were translated into several languages. In an unpublished essay entitled "Of the Poems of Ossian," Hume presents a number of reasons why they cannot be

authentic.[27] He argues, for example, that it is highly improbable that these supposedly unknown poems could have survived by oral tradition for so many centuries among "the most necessitous, the most turbulent, the most ferocious, and the most unsettled" of all European nations, when ballads barely lasting uncorrupted through three generations of oral tradition are not found among the Greeks or Italians, nations "the most fortunate in their climate and situation" ("Poems of Ossian," 391). Moreover, Macpherson could not give a credible account of how he compiled a two quarto volume from a work that was dispersed in fragments among the native Highlanders. Hume also notes that the poems themselves contain "no giants, no monsters, no magic, no incredible feats of strength or activity," as would be expected from stories of such supposed antiquity: the events are all "within the course of nature," which is uncharacteristic of poetry from "rude and ignorant ages" ("Poems of Ossian," 393). Hume finds additional evidence in the poems' portrayal of Highland manners, which appear in many ways more modern than ancient: "we see nothing but affected generosity and gallantry of chivalry, which are quite unknown, not only to all savage people, but to every nation not trained in these artificial modes of thinking" ("Poems of Ossian," 393.) Moreover, Macpherson himself has been dishonest in his other publications, which makes him an unreliable witness.

In "Of the Poems of Ossian," we find Hume comparing the social practices of ancient cultures to those of his own day, distinguishing between ancient and modern manners and values, discerning when persons are represented as thinking and acting suitably to their character and circumstance, and analyzing the character and actions of Macpherson himself. In the final analysis, Hume's own good sense convinced him that there were too many inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and anachronisms in the poems to believe Macpherson's claims of authenticity. Hume had a strong suspicion of fraud, based on his judgment of the low probability of the work's authenticity. And in the end, his suspicion was right: the poems of Ossian turned out to be modern forgeries.[28]

Having connected one of the virtues of taste—good sense—directly to competent testimonial evaluation, I now want to show that a critical reasoning capacity is not the only virtue the good judge of beauty and the good judge of testimony share. The other four distinctive qualities of the critic mentioned above (delicate sentiment, practice, comparison, and freedom from prejudice) also contribute to the excellent epistemic judgments of the wise. In other words, *all* the virtues of taste are important components of doxastic wisdom.

Delicate sentiment is "a quick and acute perception" of those properties that strengthen or weaken a testimony's reliability. Works of art have unique combinations of features, some of which enhance, and others which detract from, their overall beauty and, as we have seen, critics are highly sensitive to these features. There is a sense in which testimony is like a work of art in that testimony presents

us with evidence that strengthens or weakens its reliability, the counterparts to aesthetic properties of art. A "wise man" is highly sensitive to this evidence. Such delicacy, as we have seen, involves knowledge of the general marks of reliability. Yet, it is not enough simply to know general rules; a sign of delicacy is the ability to recognize how these principles are functioning in the particular case at hand. A "wise man" apprehends what it is about *this* testimony with its own unique set of variables that makes it credible (or incredible). He is well-attuned to the different kinds of evidence, to how different pieces of evidence interact with one another in this specific circumstance to render the report reliable (or unreliable). Similarly, an art critic does not just have propositional knowledge of general rules, though he has this, too; he also perceives how specific properties of a particular artwork combine to give an overall impression. There are no predetermined formulas to decide which particular facts are worthy of attention or whose testimony ought to be believed under the circumstances.[29] Usually, the rule is that the more numerous the eyewitness reports, the stronger the evidence in favor of the alleged event, but this is not always the case. Sometimes the testimony of a single witness, on account of his exceptional reputation for probity, may outweigh that of many witnesses.[30] On other occasions, however, the fact alleged may appear so incredible that a "wise man" will "*not believe such a story were it told by Cato*" (EHU 10.9; SBN 113). So sometimes a single piece of evidence may overbalance otherwise forceful evidence that normally strengthens testimony considerably in the opposite direction. Reliability judgments, like aesthetic judgments, are highly contextual evaluations, and weighing the force of conflicting evidence in particular cases often requires a delicate balancing act. As Hume points out in "Of Miracles," this is especially so "in any private or even public history" where "the scene is removed to ever so small a distance" (EHU 10.32; SBN 126). In such cases, records and witnesses will "have perished beyond recovery" (EHU 10.33; SBN 126) so that the only remaining historical evidence is "the very testimony itself of the reporters" (EHU 10.34; SBN 127). For the critics of testimony, this scant evidence is sufficient for proper evaluation, but it "is always too fine to fall under the comprehension of the vulgar" who lack a critic's discernment (EHU 10.34; SBN 127).

With regard to judgments of the veracity of testimony, delicacy comes through the *practice* of making judgments, reflecting upon them, and correcting mistakes one discovers, just as delicacy in art comes through the activity of judging things beautiful.[31] We accept testimonial evidence to the extent that it conforms to the evidence of experience, both of the natural world and of human nature (EHU 10.3,5; SBN 110, 112).[32] Of course, the experience that serves as our standard of judgment is not simply a matter of our own first-hand observations. When we weigh testimonial evidence, we also consult the experiences of other people and use their testimony to prove or disprove the reliability of a particular witness or of what they relate.[33]

Hume makes it clear that a "wise man" broadens his experience and enlarges his sentiments through "books and conversation" (EHU 9.5; SBN 107). Hume lists nine circumstances "that make a difference in the understandings of men;" the ninth emphasizes the importance of broad experience: "After we have acquired a confidence in human testimony, books and conversation enlarge much more the sphere of one man's experience and thought than those of another" (EHU 9.5; SBN 107n). The study of history is particularly advantageous in that it "[e]xtends our experience to all past ages, and to the most distant nations; making them contribute to our improvement in wisdom, as if they had actually lain under our observation."[34] Obviously, then, enlarged experience is crucial for assessing how far or to what degree a report conforms to past experience.

Studying history affords a seemingly limitless supply of examples and material for *comparison*. Making comparisons is as fundamental to good causal reasoning as it is to fixing "the epithets of praise and blame" with regard to works of art. Indeed, according to Hume, "all kinds of reasoning," and this includes reasoning from testimony, "consist in nothing but a *comparison*, and a discovery of those relations, either constant or inconstant, which two or more objects bear to each other" (T 1.3.2.2; SBN 73–74). Studying history widens experience in the way that comparing a great number of paintings widens aesthetic sensibility. The art critic knows, for example, that an impressionist style has such and such properties, which are not those of another style, and so can judge a particular work in the light of his experience. He judges whether a work is an artist's best work or whether good or bad in general by comparison with other works. The critic of testimony relies on wide experience of human affairs to judge the reliability of witnesses and their reports, including what can be provided by studying history. We saw that Hume's own arguments against the authenticity of the Ossian poems relied on a number of comparisons between ancient and modern cultures.

We can understand why practice and comparison improve delicacy if we remind ourselves what Hume says about causal reasoning in that section of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* immediately preceding his discussion of testimony:

> All our reasonings concerning matter of fact are founded on a species of Analogy, which leads us to expect from any cause the same events, which we have observed to result from similar causes. Where the causes are entirely similar, the analogy is perfect, and the inference, drawn from it, is regarded as certain and conclusive. . . . But where the objects have not so exact a similarity, the analogy is less perfect, and the inference is less conclusive; though still it has some force, in proportion to the degree of similarity and resemblance. (EHU 9.1; SBN 104–105)

Practice and comparison sharpen our "analogical observations" (EHU 9.1; SBN 104–105); they refine our ability to perceive similarities and differences in causes, which enables us to assess the weight of evidence by distinguishing those variables that tend to correlate with reliable and unreliable testimony.[35]

We have seen how an unbiased mind improves an art critic's sensibility to beauty; *freedom from prejudice* also improves a "wise man's" sensitivity to epistemically salient features of testimony. Hume's *History* account of the infamous Popish Plot offers an illustration. In 1678, Hume narrates, the Englishman Titus Oates informed Charles II that a group of Jesuit priests in France, on orders from the Pope, were secretly plotting his assassination. Oates supposedly became privy to the plot while a seminarian at a Jesuit college in France. Allegedly, the Jesuits secretly tried the king, found him guilty of heresy, and condemned him to death. Oates testified that in addition to tyrannicide, the conspirators also planned to orchestrate fires, insurrections, massacres, rebellions, and foreign invasions in England, Scotland, and Wales for the extirpation of the Protestant religion. According to Oates, large sums of money had already been collected from Catholic supporters in England to help finance the enterprise. Foreign aid, he alleged, was also secured in the form of money and troops from France and Spain (*History of England*, 6:335–37).

It is obvious from Hume's narration that he believes the evidence was overwhelmingly against the possibility of a Catholic uprising in England. Even if we set aside consideration of Oates's "most infamous" character for deception, the alleged facts were too extraordinary to be credible. Hume offers several examples.

> That the Roman pontiff could hope to assume the sovereignty of these kingdoms; a project, which, even during the darkness of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, would have appeared chimerical: That he should delegate this authority to the Jesuits; that order in the Romish church, which was the most hated: That a massacre could be attempted of the protestants, who surpassed the catholics a hundred fold, and were invested with the whole authority of the state: That the king himself was to be assassinated, and even the duke, the only support of their party: These were such absurdities as no human testimony was sufficient to prove. (*History of England*, 6:347)

To suggest that France and Spain were involved in this alleged cabal, Hume thinks, was equally absurd (*History of England*, 6:347). The reasonable thing to do considering the weakness of the evidence was to dismiss Oates's report of a conspiracy; there was just no legitimate basis for belief. Hume acknowledges, however, that most people were not in the right frame of mind to weigh the facts objectively; they "reasoned more from their fears and their passions than from the evidence

before them" (*History of England*, 6:340). The general prejudice against Catholicism and against the Jesuits in particular had so disturbed men's minds at the time of the Plot that few could reflect calmly and dispassionately on the circumstances of these events. "In this disposition of the nation," Hume remarks, "reason could no more be heard than a whisper in the midst of the most violent hurricane" (*History of England*, 6:342). Prejudice and violent passion overbalanced the evidence of experience and impaired men's capacity for critical judgment; they erroneously believed the country was on the brink of rebellion because they failed to recognize that the marks of reliability were absent from Oates's testimony. "The wise," Hume observes, "lend a very academic faith to every report which favours the passion of the reporter" (EHU 10.29; SBN 125), because history has shown that in these circumstances testimony has a poor track record; it "loses all pretensions to authority" (EHU 10.17; SBN 117). Where a witness is personally interested in the content of his testimony—as Hume thinks Oates clearly was—doubt is the appropriate attitude.[36] It is not surprising that Hume's "wise man" appears as a model of philosophical moderation and emotional calmness: he refuses to indulge violent passion and unreflective feeling or to take seriously the testimony of those who do. The art critic, likewise, responds with feeling, but not unreflective feeling.

The qualities of the "wise man" are thus the same as the qualities of a good art critic. Proper evaluation of testimony turns one's ability to consider carefully distinctive features of character and details of circumstance that combine to strengthen or weaken the credibility of witnesses's reports. Hence, the "wise man" is a man of *delicate sensibility* and *good sense*; his degree of belief is proportioned to the evidence. Good sense also ensures that he is *free from prejudice* and that his sentiments are not "perverted" by his own private interests. Wide experience of nature and of human affairs and *practice* judging as well as *comparison* of the various objects of experience enable the "wise man" to perceive relevant analogies along with the degree to which present evidence correlates with known causal patterns of reliability. In combination, the virtues of taste refine a "wise man's" sensitivity to epistemically salient features of testimony; they make him a model of doxastic wisdom.

Throughout this paper, I have been claiming that Hume's two models of expert judgment—the art critic and the "wise man"—share the same traits: the virtues of taste. Now I venture a step further and suggest, more speculatively, that the character of the "wise man" is actually modeled on that of the critic. This suggestion will appear not entirely implausible if we consider Hume's larger philosophical project. Scholars who have attempted to view Hume's philosophy more holistically have acknowledged the special influence of Francis Hutcheson on Hume's overall perspective. Kemp Smith claims that "it was under the direct influence of Francis Hutcheson" that Hume was led to recognize that judgments of value, whether aesthetic or moral, are based on feeling, not on rational insight.[37] He contends that

Hume then carried this view over into the theoretical domain; Hume discovered that Hutcheson's views regarding value judgments "can be extended to our beliefs regarding matters of fact and existence, and that 'logic', morals and 'criticism' may thus be brought within the scope of the same general principles" (Kemp Smith, 20.) Barry Stroud maintains that Hume's philosophy "is, in effect, a systematic generalization of Francis Hutcheson's views on aesthetics and morals," and that the elevation of feeling and sentiment over reason is, in Hume, "generalized into a whole theory of man."[38] D. D. Raphael has likewise asserted that Hume's "position in the theory of knowledge is a wider application of the moves that Hutcheson had made in ethics."[39] If Kemp Smith and others are correct in thinking that Hume came to 'logic' through the gateway of Hutcheson's anti-rationalist views on morals and criticism, then Hume may have viewed excellent causal reasoning along the lines of excellent aesthetic appreciation, extending the virtues of taste from the art critic to the doxastically wise.[40]

Conclusion

Hume's accounts of aesthetic and causal judgment emphasize the role of sentiment informed and corrected by reflection. He locates the evidence for an object's beauty and the evidence for the existence of what human testimony reports in "something felt by the mind" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629). Taste is the capacity to feel in response to aesthetic features and to testimonial evidence. Hence, the more cultivated and refined the taste, the better the aesthetic and empirical judgment. In this paper, I have tried to show that Hume's virtues of taste are not just aesthetic excellences; Hume also considers delicate sentiment, good sense, a mind free from prejudice, practice, and the ability to make comparisons essential characteristics for wise belief formation. I have also suggested that this understanding of doxastic wisdom derives from Hutcheson's sentimentalist views on aesthetics and morals, which influenced Hume early in his philosophical career.

If the virtues involved in wise belief formation are understood along the lines of aesthetic virtues, as I am suggesting they are in Hume, then Hume offers contemporary virtue epistemology a different way to think about epistemic virtue, one that may offer tools for addressing certain issues. I can here only gesture in a general direction. Linda Zagzebski, in *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*, observes that philosophers have long tended to separate thinking and feeling and to divide the intellect into a speculative domain (knowledge of necessary truths) and a practical domain (knowledge of what to make or to do). She writes, "What is so striking about this distinction to the contemporary mind is that it leaves out one of the most common uses of the intellect—grasping the contingent" (Zagzebski, 214). Thus, a contemporary account of intellectual virtues should include one or a set of virtues dealing with

beliefs about contingent matters of fact. Hume's virtues of taste may be useful here in that the concept of a well-educated, well-cultivated "taste" encompasses excellences of thought (good sense) and feeling (delicate sentiment), and it governs beliefs about contingent matters of fact. Hume's normative epistemology offers an alternative worth considering.

NOTES

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1 References to the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), hereafter cited in the text as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph number, and to *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, third edition, revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page numbers.

2 References to the *Treatise* are to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, and to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page numbers.

3 "Of the Standard of Taste" in David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 226–49, 241.

4 David M. Woodruff develops a theory of aesthetics that is modeled on recent work in virtue epistemology, but he does not use aesthetics as a foundation for a virtue-based epistemology. David M. Woodruff, "A Virtue Theory of Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35 (2001): 23–36.

5 Philo in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* is just one example. In Section 1 of the *Dialogues*, Cleanthes remarks that the practice of mitigated skeptics is "to consider each particular evidence apart, and proportion their assent to the precise degree of evidence which occurs" (*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and The Natural History of Religion*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 39). Philo then shows how mitigated skepticism works in practice when he and Cleanthes discuss the problem of evil and the nature of God in sections 10 and 11.

6 Jacqueline Taylor reminded me of this first point.

7 This second point was made by an anonymous referee.

8 According to Hume, moral judgments, likewise, ultimately rest on feeling: "An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind. . . . To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very *feeling* constitutes our praise or admiration. . . . We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471). In this passage Hume generalizes the point to encompass judgments of all kinds of beauty, whether natural or moral, "[o]ur approbation is imply'd in the immediate pleasure [our sentiments] convey to us" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471).

9 References to the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), hereafter cited in the text as "EPM" followed by section and paragraph number, and to *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, third edition, revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page numbers.

10 Some commentators have, therefore, attributed to Hume a "causal" theory of taste. See, for example, Jeffrey Wieand, "Hume's Two Standards of Taste," *Philosophical Quarterly* 34.135 (1984): 129–42 and Roger Shiner, "Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 237–49. Shiner, however, is critical of the causal theory of taste. For a defense of the causal view, see Mary Mothersill, "In Defense of Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 312–17.

11 David Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment* (London: Routledge, 2005), 198.

12 For a fuller discussion of the nature and role of Hume's general rules of art, see Townsend, "Rules," chap. 5 in *Hume's Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment*, London: Routledge, 2005, 158–79. For a different account, see Timothy M. Costelloe, "General Rules and 'Of the Standard of Taste'" chap. 1 in *Aesthetics and Morals in the Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–22.

13 David Hume, *History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688*, 6 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983), 6:386, appendix 3.

14 Costelloe argues that Hume's "true judge" is an "ideal" character, "a personification of general rules and a model, which, if followed, would always lead to correct judgment" (Costelloe, "General Rules in 'Of the Standard of Taste,'" 21). But this reading seems to give priority to the rules of art rather than to the actual, felt responses of real people, actual art critics, which is quite unlike what Hume says elsewhere. For example, Hume insists that there would be "true judges" even if no rules of art were ever articulated or excellent models ever acknowledged ("Standard of Taste," 236).

15 It should be noted, however, that beliefs are not distinguished solely by their introspective character, even though some passages in Hume's texts lend themselves to this interpretation. Hume acknowledges that beliefs affect our behavior; they are "the governing principles of all our actions" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629). In the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume also recognizes that beliefs affect our passions: "These

ideas [beliefs] take faster hold of my mind, than ideas of an enchanted castle. They are very different to the feeling, and have a much greater influence of every kind, either to give us pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow" (EHU 4.16; SBN 33).

16 Lorne Falkenstein has catalogued the various belief-forming mechanisms identified by Hume in "Naturalism, Normativity, and Scepticism in Hume's Account of Belief," *Hume Studies* 23 (1997): 29–72.

17 In the *Treatise*, Hume distinguishes between a "philosophical" and a "common" or practical sense of the word "probability." Probability, understood philosophically, is contrasted with demonstrative knowledge and refers broadly to all inductively-formed beliefs. Hume says he has "follow'd this method of expression" when discussing probability in the *Treatise* (T1.3.11.2; SBN 124). However, he recognizes that "one wou'd appear ridiculous, who wou'd say, that 'tis only probable the sun will rise to-morrow" (T1.3.9.2; SBN 124) since some causal inferences attain a very high degree of certainty and are, for all practical purposes, incapable of doubt. When Hume distinguishes between "proof" and "probability" in the context of degrees of belief, he is using the word "probability" to describe those inductive inferences that fall short of practical certainty. But even "proofs" are only probable insofar as they concern induction.

18 A recent article by Deborah Boyle emphasizes this point (Deborah Boyle, "The Ways of the Wise: Hume's Rules of Causal Reasoning," *Hume Studies* 38 (2012): 157–82.) For an influential article on the nature and use of general rules in causal reasoning, see Thomas A. Hearn, "General Rules in Hume's *Treatise*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 8 (1970): 405–22.

19 Hume lists eight causal rules in all. The rest are as follows: (1) cause and effect must be contiguous in space and time; (2) the cause must be prior to the effect; (3) there must be a constant union between cause and effect; (4) when any object increases or diminishes with the increase or diminution of its cause, it's to be regarded as a compound effect, derived from the union of several different effects, which arise from several different parts of the cause; (5) the difference in the effects of two resembling objects must proceed from that particular, in which they differ; and (6) an object which exists in its full perfection for some time without an effect requires to be assisted by some other principle which will produce its effect (T 1.3.15.2–10: SBN 173–74).

20 For further discussion of this point see Dorothy Coleman, "Baconian Probability and Hume's Theory of Testimony," *Hume Studies* 27 (2001): 205.

21 See Hearn, "General Rules in Hume's *Treatise*," 406. For an account of how general rules can have this normative authority, see Marie Martin, "The Rational Warrant for Hume's General Rules," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 245–57.

22 Hume has been criticized for using what commentators have called the "straight rule" for determining probabilities. See, for example, John Earman, "Hume's Straight Rule of Induction and His "Proof" against Miracles," chap. 9 in *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22–24. According to this principle, the likelihood of an event's occurrence is determined by numerical calculation; we count up the number of "experiments" that support a testimony and subtract it from the number that do not support a testimony, deciding in favor of the side with the most (numerical) experiments. Coleman claims that Hume's critics have wrongly invoked a Pascalian model of conditional probabilities—one based on the

probability of chances—in evaluating his theory of testimony. Coleman argues that their criticisms are irrelevant because Hume's account of testimony is Baconian rather than Pascalian in nature. Hume's emphasis on analogical probabilities and *degrees* of certainty shows that he relies on more than quantitative subtraction. A low probability means a low degree of analogy, a lower force or weight of evidence based on qualitative features, and not necessarily a lower rate of occurrence. For another defense of Hume against this charge, see William L. Vanderburgh, "Of Miracles and Evidential Probability: Hume's 'Abject Failure' Vindicated," *Hume Studies* 31 (2005): 37–61.

23 I borrow the phrase "sense of probability" from Don Garrett's paper, "Hume's Normative Sense of Probability," delivered at the 38th annual Hume Society conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, July, 2011.

24 Malcolm Gladwell, "The Statue That Didn't Look Right" in *Blink* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 3–8.

25 Gladwell, "A Revolution in Classical Music" in *Blink*, 248–52.

26 This operation of reason is showcased in the essay "Of Tragedy," wherein Hume explains the origin of the "unaccountable pleasure" one experiences from a well-written tragedy. The "uneasiness of the melancholy passions"—sorrow, despair, indignation—is "overpowered" and given "a new direction" from the sentiment of beauty that arises from a tragic scene forcefully and eloquently represented. Beauty, Hume observes, being the "predominant emotion," seizes the whole mind and causes the subordinate passions to be converted into itself; as a consequence, the mind "feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful" (David Hume, "Of Tragedy," in *Essays*, 216–25: 220).

27 David Hume, "Of the Poems of Ossian," in *David Hume: Philosophical Historian*, ed. D. F. Norton and R. Popkin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965): 389–400.

28 Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Forgotten Hume*, Le bon David (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 99–102. See also Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

29 C. A. J. Coady, a critic of Hume's account of testimony, complains that Hume's criterion of analogical probability does not provide a "hard and fast test of credibility" for determining reliable testimony and that there is no effective decision procedure for determining relevant analogies. See Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 2002) 188. But this objection misses the mark, or at least indicates a failure to understand that Hume never thought good judgment was simply the result of a decision procedure. Certainly, general rules of reasoning provide some decision-making guidance, but ultimately the wise rely on a refined sense of probability—on good taste—to make reliability judgments and not on a "hard and fast test of credibility." For a detailed response to Coady's criticism, see Dorothy Coleman's "Baconian Probability," especially 212–14. Annette C. Baier has pointed out that our capacity for judgment outruns our capacity to reduce judgments to rules in *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 281. I am arguing that, for Hume, choosing "the right way" involves exercising the virtues of taste.

30 Hume cites Sir Thomas More as an example of such a witness. More's "singular magnanimity, probity, and judgment, make him an evidence beyond all exception! No historian, either of ancient or modern times, can possibly have more weight" (*History of England*, 3:465nA).

31 For further discussion, see Costelloe, "General Rules," 16.

32 Hume is certainly aware that we do not *always* use experience as our standard of judgment. (See T 1.3.9.12; SBN 113). Hume calls "CREDULITY, or a too easy faith in the testimony of others" a "weakness of human nature" (T 1.3.9.12; SBN 112). The wise are able to overcome this natural weakness.

33 In arguing that we use testimony to evaluate testimony, it might seem that Hume's reasoning here is viciously circular. Coady, for example, makes this charge in *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Coady, 81). For a defense of Hume against the circularity charge as it applies to testimony, see Saul Traiger, "Humean Testimony," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (1993): 135–49. As this charge applies to Hume's aesthetic theory, see Peter Kivy, "Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967): 57–66.

34 "Of the Study of History" in David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, 563–68, 566–67.

35 The ability to suggest analogies is another characteristic of good reasoners described in the footnote to section 9 of the *Enquiry* (EHU 9.4; SBN 107).

36 Conversely, the force of any testimony increases where witnesses confirm or deny reports in opposition to their private interest so that something closer to belief is the appropriate attitude.

37 Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 13.

38 Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge, 1990), 10.

39 D. D. Raphael, "Hume's Critique of Ethical Rationalism," *Hume and the Enlightenment*, ed. William B. Todd (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 15.

40 James Moore has recently challenged the long-standing view that Hume was influenced by Hutcheson's views on morals and aesthetics. See James Moore, "Hume and Hutcheson," in *Hume and Hume's Connections*, ed. M. A. Stewart and John P. Wright (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 23–57. David Fate Norton has argued against Moore's view that Hutcheson exercised no formative or lasting influence on Hume in "Hume and Hutcheson: The Question of Influence," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 211–56.