Title	Accounting for Taste : Beauty, Secondary Qualities, and Delicacy of Taste
Sub Title	
Author	Yamaguchi, Mariko
Publisher	三田哲學會
Publication year	2005
Jtitle	哲學 No.113 (2005. 3) ,p.1- 24
JaLC DOI	
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Notes	投稿論文
Genre	Journal Article
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00150430-00000113-0001

Contributed Paper

Accounting for Taste—Beauty, Secondary Qualities, and Delicacy of Taste

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In his short article, 'Of the Standard of Taste', David Hume says that we have two commonsense beliefs with regard to judgements of taste:

(A) A thousand different sentiments excited by the same objects are all equally right, because no sentiment represents anything which is really in the object. Beauty is no quality in things themselves. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty.

(B) There are certain general principles of approbation or blame, and there are genuine judgements of taste. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton wouldn't be regarded as a man of taste.

Hume then goes on to say that (A) *opposes* (B), while denying neither of them. Is this a slip of the pen, or does he really think (A) opposes (B) while thinking they are both true? Does (A) really oppose (B)? If it does, how?

In this paper I would like to show that (A) and (B) are not contradictory (as Hume might have thought they were), and discuss whether beauty, which is subsumed under the class of secondary qualities by Hume, is really a secondary quality.

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We have two commonsense beliefs about aesthetic judgements, or judgements about matters of taste. In his short essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' (ST, henceforth), Hume characterises them as follows:

(A) 'All sentiment is right.... A thousand different sentiments excited by the same objects are all equally right, because no sentiment represents anything which is really in the object. Beauty is no quality in things themselves. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty.' (ST, p. 230)

(B) 'There are certain general principles of approbation or blame, and there are genuine judgements of taste.' (ST, p. 233) 'Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton ... would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as Tenerife.' (ST, pp. 230–231)

Hume says that (A) *opposes* (B) (ST, p. 230), but he does not deny either of them. Nor does he really explain or discuss how he thinks they oppose each other and whether this opposition raises a serious problem. It was Kant who first introduced these two beliefs as forming an apparent contradiction, or antinomy, and tried to show that they were not really contradictory. Compared with Kant, it's not clear why Hume thinks they oppose each other. He devotes most of the essay to defending (B), but does not deny (A). If both (A) and (B) are true for him, why does he think (A) opposes (B)? If he thinks (A) opposes (B), and if he defends (B), can we assume (without direct textual warrant) that he rejects (A)?

In order for (A) to oppose (B), (A) would have to imply the denial either of a standard of taste (or general principles of approbation) or of genuine judgements of taste. Hume says something to this effect at one point in the essay. He says, "It is natural for us to seek a Stan-

dard of Taste. . . . There is a species of philosophy which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste" (ST, p. 229)—and this species of philosophy is called scepticism, which Hume says agrees with our commonsensical belief (A).

(A) may well sound as if it declares that each person's judgement of taste is true for the person, but that this is just a subjective truth (if there's any such thing) and hence there is no objectively true judgement of taste. This might sound like a denial of a standard of taste, or general principles of approbation, which (B) accepts and defends. If (A) is true, it might seem to lead us to deny that there are genuine judgements of taste. Given Hume's statements above, we might be able to infer that Hume thought (A) was based on scepticism and hence to hold (A) would be to deny a standard of taste or existence of genuine judgements of taste.

However, it is not clear whether scepticism and his argument for (A) really establish the impossibility of a standard of taste. In this paper, I'd like to examine his notion of beauty and show how (A) and (B) are compatible (possibly against Hume's expectation). That is, I shall argue that Hume's discussions do not show that (A) opposes (B). I'd also like to consider whether beauty is a sort of secondary quality. His idea that beauty is a sort of secondary quality seems to work well in support of (B), but can we really take beauty analogously to secondary qualities such as colour? I will try to show that this interesting idea needs more elaboration in order to work as a real support for (B).

1. Hume's aesthetics

Hume says about beauty:

> . . . no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only

> marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality of things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them, and each mind perceives a different beauty. (ST, p. 230)

At the beginning of the essay, he says beauty is to be taken analogously to moral properties. In the *Treatise* he discusses this issue more clearly:

> Take any action allowed to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence which you call vice. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. (*Treatise*, p. 468)

> 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 go no farther; nor do we enquire into the cause of the satisfaction. 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. The case is the same as in our judgements concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensa-

> tions. Our approbation is imply'd in the immediate pleasure they convey to us. (*Treatise*, p. 469)

Beauty is no more a quality that resides in an object than virtue and vice are. For Hume, these properties can be characterised analogously to so-called secondary qualities such as colour and taste.

Hume also characterises beauty as a power to produce pleasure which things have because of their internal structures.

> Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric are calculated to please, and others to displease. (ST, p. 233)

> Though it be certain that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external, it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings. (ST, p. 235)

In the citation from ST, p. 230, Hume said that beauty is not something really in the object but in our mind, or sentiment. This may well sound as if beauty (and hence vice and virtue as well) were a mere subjective quality. We must notice, though, that, for Hume, although beauty is not a quality we find in an object itself, it does mark 'a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind', and that this conformity or relation is something real. That is, whatever it is in the object which produces the response 'Beautiful!' has a causal role. And the citations above (from p. 233 and p. 235) seem to put forward this same point. Given the assimilation to secondary qualities, the things we judge as beautiful, like the things we judge as green, for Hume, have certain qualities and structures, and when they are perceived by people

like us, having certain sense organs, faculties, and sentiments, they are judged as beautiful (or as green). It seems that the perception (or grasp) of beauty is, according to Hume's theory, a causal relation (or causal interaction) between the perceiver's organs and faculties and the object having certain qualities and structure.

(We must be careful here and note that Hume is not a reckless sceptic in this short article. He readily and happily accepts the validity of induction, causality, and the existence of an external world and self. He is writing as a man living in everyday life. This seems clear from expressions like 'what is really in the object' and 'quality of things themselves', which seems to presuppose the existence of the object and not all but at least some qualities. If he were writing as a sceptic who denies the existence of the external world, together with other things, he would be prohibited from presupposing the existence of 'things themselves'.)

Are the judgements 'This leaf is green' and 'This picture is beautiful' the same type of judgement, i.e., judgements depending particularly on our organs and faculties? Probably no one would think so. We see colours as long as we have healthy eyes. We can make judgements of colours as long as we have healthy eyes and normal linguistic ability. But it is insufficient for us just to be able to see, hear or read if we are to perceive and appreciate the beauty of certain works of art and make judgements of taste. We need something more than just seeing, hearing or reading. As Hume says, we need delicacy of taste in order to perceive beauty. What he calls 'delicacy of taste' seems like a sort of faculty, or ability, to find and grasp beauty.

> Where the organs are so fine as to allow nothing to escape them, and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition, this we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense. (ST,

p. 235)

> A good palate is not tried by strong flavours but a mixture of small ingredients . . . In like manner, a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste . . . A very delicate palate, on many occasions, may be a great inconvenience both to a man himself and to his friends. But a delicate taste of wit or beauty must always be a desirable quality, because it is the source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments of which human nature is susceptible. (ST, p. 236)

Here Hume seems to believe that having a capacity to tell exactly what the object is made of amounts to having a capacity to grasp and understand beauty. Whether this is plausible is an open question and we shall discuss it later. For the time being let us just keep in mind the following thing: Hume thinks that just as we need healthy eyes to make correct judgements of colour, we need delicacy of taste to make correct judgements of taste or beauty. He believes there is some uniformity in our sense organs, faculties and sentiments, and he seems to think that most of us agree in judging something as green or red, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, by virtue of this uniformity of organs and sentiments. He goes on to say as follows:

> If, in the sound state of organ, there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in day-light, to the eye of a man in health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses. (ST, p. 234)

The reason why we see much less uniformity in our judgements of beauty or taste, for Hume, is that not all of us have the delicacy of taste, which we need to perceive beauty. There are various types of people who lack this faculty.

> Particular incidents and situations occur which either throw a false light on the objects or hinder the true from conveying to the imagination the proper sentiment and perception. One obvious cause why many feel not the proper sentiment of beauty is the want of that delicacy of imagination which is requisite to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions. (ST, p. 234)

> But though there be naturally a wide difference, in point of delicacy, between one person and another, nothing tends further to increase and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. (ST, p. 237)

In other words, delicacy of taste can be improved by practice: the more one exposes oneself to good works of art, the more accurate one's taste becomes. So besides people who naturally lack delicacy of taste, there are, according to Hume, people who don't have it because of a lack of experience, practice, survey and contemplation. There is another type of person devoid of delicacy of taste: those disabled by prejudice.

> . . . to enable a critic the more fully to execute this undertaking [i.e. exposing oneself to good works], he must preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*. . . . So far, his taste evidently departs from the true standard, and of consequence loses all credit and authority. . . . [P]rejudice is destructive of sound judgement, and perverts all the intellectual faculties. (ST, p. 239)

Thus, according to Hume, there are three types of people who lack delicacy of taste:

(1) those who naturally lack it;
(2) those who haven't had enough opportunity to learn and experience works of art;
(3) those who have some mental obstacles (envy, prejudice, etc.).

Does everyone, perhaps except those who naturally lack delicacy of taste, share it unless they have poor experience and/or mental obstacles? Hume doesn't explicitly respond to this question. But if we are allowed to infer from his presupposition of the uniformity of sentiments, it seems to follow that we will naturally acquire the delicacy of taste if we have enough opportunity to learn and experience works of art and are immune from prejudice or other mental obstacles. However, even if we share delicacy of taste, there still is "a wide difference, in point of delicacy, between one person and another", as Hume says. This kind of "wide difference" is not seen in the case of our perception of colour. We shall come back to this point in the section 3 below.

2. Does (A) really oppose (B)?

Does (A) really oppose (B) in Hume's theory of beauty and taste? As described in the section 1, we need delicacy of taste in order to perceive beauty. This seems to imply that if we possess this faculty, we will naturally be able to find beauty in a thing having certain qualities and structure. If this is really what his theory of beauty and the notion of the delicacy of taste imply, then wouldn't we have to accept (B) and reject (A)? That is, if someone's judgement of taste is different from those who have delicacy of taste, wouldn't that mean

that the person's judgement was aesthetically wrong? (And wouldn't that mean that *not* all sentiment is right?) If people having delicacy of taste judge that Milton is greater than Ogilby, the judgement 'Ogilby is greater than Milton' is, according to Hume, wrong, even if someone really feels Ogilby to be greater than Milton.

So (A) and (B) look more contradictory than they did before. Although we accept (A) as one of our commonsense beliefs about aesthetic judgements, it now seems definitely to conflict with (B). Either (A) or (B) must be false.

Moreover, as Mothersill points out, one could even say Hume's theory defends neither (A) nor (B). (See Mothersill, pp. 203–204.)[1] (A) cannot be the case if there is a natural uniformity in our organs and faculties of mind and if some quality or structure universally pleases us. Nor can we defend (B) if beauty is not a quality in things themselves but something in us and hence reason has nothing to do with our judgements of taste. Although Hume carefully uses the term 'genuine' rather than 'true' in "Of the Standard of Taste", 'genuine judgements' are 'true judgements' after all, as long as genuine judgements are characterised as universally accepted judgements and distinguished from inappropriate or phony ones. Hume's argument for (B) thus amounts to accepting true judgements of taste. But this goes against what he says in the *Treatise*. He says there that only what can be an object of our reason can be either true or false:

> Reason is the discovery of truth and falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. (*Treatise*, p. 458)

According to Hume, there are no true or false judgements of our sentiments: for Hume sentiment is not an object of reason and it's our reason that judges something as true or false. In the *Treatise* he argues that morality is not an object of reason:

> If the thought and understanding were alone capable of fixing the boundaries of right and wrong, the character of virtuous and vicious either must lie in some relations of objects, or must be a matter of fact, which is discovered by our reasoning. (*Treatise*, p. 463)

He shows how morality fails to satisfy these conditions. As he says in the citation from *Treatise*, p. 468 above (see section 1), we cannot find vice or virtue in an object. Beauty, like morality, consists not in any matter of fact for Hume, nor in relations between objects, and thus it's not an object of our reason. Following these lines of thought, one may well wonder how (B) could be the case.

Is Hume's theory of beauty vulnerable to these attacks? Let us examine (A). Hume's statement of (A) is that all judgements of sentiment are right for those who make them. Perhaps the word 'right' could be misleading. It would be strange to say that one's sentiment or impression that s/he has at a given time was actually wrong. Even if we experience an illusion, the visual image or impression we have just then itself is not something wrong. Being short-sighted, one may well think and say to a friend, 'Look, a horse over there!', seeing some horse-like thing, though what is actually in the field was a slim cow. Her judgement was wrong, for what is in the field is not a horse but a cow. But the fact that she had such and such visual image or impression itself involves no mistake. We believe that first-person experiences are immune from mistakes: it would sound nonsensical to say that one makes a mistake in experiencing something or having such and such impressions. And if

it's nonsensical to say that, it would be also nonsensical to say that one is correct in having such and such impressions or that one's impression or image of something is right.

Hume says that all sentiment is right, and yet that

> [t]he difference, it is said, is very wide between judgement and sentiment. All determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Among a thousand of different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true. (ST, pp. 229–230)

Seeing a horse-like brown object in a distant field, one may judge 'There's a horse in the field', while someone else judges 'There's a brown cow there'. Who could deny the fact that the object did look like a horse to the person, or that the person did have a horse-like image? But we can surely dismiss the person's judgement, 'There's a horse in the field', as false, when the object that looked like a horse from a distance really was a cow. Given Hume's analogy between beauty and secondary qualities, the same would apply to aesthetic judgements. Seeing 'The Bath of Psyche' by Lord Leighton, a thousand people may have a thousand different opinions, depending on what sort of impression they've got from the picture. One may find it boring, another may dislike the classical style, whereas there may well be people who admire the picture for various reasons. However, according to Hume, there is only one correct opinion or judgement among them, just as there is only one correct judgement as to the colour of the sky. Everyone's sentiment towards the picture is OK as it is (we don't have any right to denounce someone as having an incorrect or impertinent sentiment), but not every judgement or opinion about the picture is correct.

Thus, it seems (A) doesn't mean that everyone has his/her own sentiment or taste so that there are no objectively or universally correct judgements of taste. Hume doesn't really deny the objectivity of taste by defending (A). His argument for (A) just amounts to accepting the certainty of first-person experience. If this is what (A) implies, (A) doesn't oppose (B) at all. Therefore, Hume's argument for (A) doesn't show that (A) opposes (B)—perhaps against Hume's supposition or expectation.

What about (B)? There could be at least two lines of criticism of (B):

1) How could we possibly get an objectively true judgement about beauty, if beauty is not a quality in a thing itself but depends on the perceiver's sentiment?
2) Judgement of taste does not come from our reason. According to Hume, reason is what discovers truth and falsity, and truth and falsity resides in the relation between real ideas or real matters of fact. Since beauty has no relation to real objects or ideas, judgements are neither true nor false.

As to 1), the fact that beauty is not a quality in a thing and hence judgements of taste are something subjective does not imply that there are no objectively true judgements of taste, as Mothersill also points out (Mothersill, p. 206). But this needs a little more explanation. The 'objectivity' here would be acquired by induction from the uniformity seen in many people's subjective judgements. It's not something that can be verified from God's points of view (or no one's point of view). Hume repeats that our sense organs, sentiment and faculty of mind do show uniformity and that some qualities universally please us. Works that are celebrated for a long time, and in many countries, are good works and this judgement is, for Hume, a genuine one (perhaps he means that those who have delicacy of

taste would judge that those works are good works). Probably most of us do not know who Ogilby was, while most of us know who Milton was and what he left for us. This very fact would show us that we cannot claim an equality in genius between these two people.

Hume often uses the words 'a standard of taste', 'universal principles' or 'universal laws', but doesn't explicitly or systematically explain what sort of standard, principles, or laws they are. Nevertheless he clearly says that these principles or laws are acquired not *a priori* but from our experience. He mentions Milton, Homer, and some other people as examples of writers whose works have been universally praised, and we might be able to take their works as demonstrating what the standard or laws represent. (However, it must be kept in mind that there are lots of non-aesthetic elements in the fact that some works have survived and others haven't. There must have been lots of works that vanished before their aesthetic value could be widely perceived.) One might wonder how a standard of taste can be inductively accepted as the standard, applying Hume's criticism of induction. But to this question, perhaps we could defend the standard of taste in the same way as we defend the validity of induction more generally (whatever that is).

As to 2), it's essential to reconsider whether Hume's idea that beauty is not a quality found in a thing implies that beauty doesn't have any real existence or relation to matters of fact. We must recall that Hume admits that although beauty is not a quality in a thing, our having such sentiment is a matter of fact. Also, in Hume's theory, our sentiment is caused by some quality in the thing. We find something beautiful when we perceive the thing having a certain quality or set of qualities. Perhaps the quality itself is not beauty (in the same sense that a surface of a thing or its microscopic structure itself is not 'green' or 'red'), but we feel something beautiful because of that quality. The relation between the thing

having such a quality and our sense organs or the faculties of our mind is real. Therefore, regardless of Hume's intention, judgements of taste are, like other judgements of secondary qualities, susceptible of truth or falsity.

To sum up: since the defence of (B) doesn't deny the certainty of first person experience, (A) doesn't oppose (B). Although Hume himself says that (A) opposes (B), his arguments for (A) doesn't show it opposes (B); nor does his argument for (B) show that it opposes (A). Our commonsensical belief (A) might seem to deny an objective standard of taste, but given that (A) is founded only on the certainty of first person experience, it doesn't imply the denial of the standard of taste.

So, (A) and (B) are compatible and both true. Does this mean Hume's aesthetic theory is absolved of all problems? The answer is no. Hume relies on the notion of 'delicacy of taste' and its objectivity when he defends (B). We must look critically at this notion in the next section.

3. Delicacy of taste: how is it to be characterised?

Hume cites a well-known story from Cervantes' *Don Quixote* to explain what he means by 'delicacy of taste':

> It is with good reason, says Sancho to the squire with the great nose, that I pretend to have a judgement in wine: this is a quality hereditary in our family. Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion on a hogshead, which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it, considers it; and, after mature reflection, pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine, but with re-

> serve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgement. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom an old key with a leathern thong tied to it. (ST, pp. 234–235)

Is this analogy plausible? Could the ability to perceive beauty amount to the ability to perceive minute qualities? Mothersill says that the ability to perceive minute qualities, which Sancho's kinsmen were said to have, is more like the ability to judge a certain work of art as genuinely created by a certain artist. She mentions Bernard Berenson, who examines what is presented as a Correggio, and on the basis of a barely perceptible (to the non-expert, imperceptible) swerve of line or brush stroke, infers that it is not Correggio, but a 'school-of' (or clever forgery). When the appropriate tests—pigment analysis, spectroscopy, whatever—are carried out, Berenson's opinion proves to be correct. This kind of ability, she says, is not constitutive of or even a necessary condition of critical competence, although it may be valuable, especially for the collector, gallery owner or the art historian (see Mothersill, pp. 194–195). I agree with her: it may well be the case that people who love Correggio's works also can tell Correggio's own brush stroke and discriminate works genuinely created by him from forgeries. But even if one cannot always correctly do this, that doesn't mean that the person lacks delicacy of taste or capacity to perceive artistic merit (forgeries may happen to be good works on their own). On the other hand, one who can tell every minute quality in things might have this useful ability without having ability to judge which thing is aesthetically *better.*

If Hume was wrong and if the delicacy of taste does not amount to the capacity to discriminate the barely perceptible, what could it be? Hume says that we need delicacy of taste in order to perceive

beauty. How then could we judge that someone has delicacy of taste? Perhaps by judging if the person can really perceive beauty (or the artistic merits) of certain works. So even to judge if a person has delicacy of taste, we already have to understand somehow what beauty is; and in this case the notion of delicacy of taste wouldn't help us explain what beauty is. As some philosophers have pointed out, Hume's argument gets into a circle here. We wouldn't admit someone has delicacy of taste and hence aesthetic sensitivity just because she or he believes and accepts so-called specialists' opinions and repeats what they say. There may well be quasi-specialists or pseudo-specialists, and a person of delicacy must be able to tell which specialists are genuine and which ones are charlatans, by nurturing his/her own keen sense of beauty. Experts' opinions surely serve as a guide in many cases, but when one confronts with two or more experts who have different opinions about the same thing, one has to judge which opinion is correct or better on his/her own. Hume stresses that one can improve one's delicacy by practice or training. But even for one to train oneself to have more or better delicacy of taste, one has to somehow understand which direction one should turn towards and what can help one improve one's taste. That is, what beauty is has to be already grasped somehow when one trains one's delicacy of taste. If we need delicacy of taste in order to grasp beauty, and if we need to understand what beauty is in order to acquire delicacy of taste, neither 'delicacy of taste' nor 'beauty' can help explain what the other is.

In fact, doesn't this imply that beauty is not a secondary quality? It would be close to secondary qualities because of its dependence on human minds. But unlike colours, which can be judged as, say, 'green' or 'red' by most people as long as they have normal eyes under normal light, beauty couldn't be so simply explained by its causal relation to our faculties of mind, or the faculty of taste. Hume himself mentions that reason is requisite to fully comprehend

the noble productions of genius:

> "It is well known, that, in all questions submitted to the understanding, prejudice is destructive of sound judgement, and perverts all operation of the intellectual faculties: it is no less contrary to good taste; nor has it less influence to corrupt our sentiment of beauty. It belongs to good sense to check its influence in both cases; and in this respect, as well as in many others, reason, if not essential part of taste, is at least requisite to the operation of this latter faculty. In all nobler productions of genius, there is a mutual relation and correspondence of parts; nor can either the beauties or blemishes be perceived by him whose thought is not capacious enough to comprehend all those parts, and compare them with each other, in order to perceive the consistence and uniformity of the whole. Every work of art has also a certain end or purpose for which it is calculated; and is to be deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end. . . . It seldom or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in art, cannot judge of . . . beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding." (ST, pp. 240–241).

So we need not only our sentiments but also reason to grasp beauty, or to have real delicacy of taste. We would also have to admit that one's cultural background affects one's judgements of taste. There is a tribe in which women try to have longer necks by accumulating lots of gold rings around their necks because they think long-necked women are beautiful. But people outside the tribe might find those long-necked women strange and unnatural, because their culture tends to regard unnatural things as strange or ugly, or just because those women look quite different from women in their own society. Some people tend to find rooms with lots of dec-

oration and furniture beautiful, while others find rooms with a few simple things beautiful, depending (at least partly) on their cultural preferences and history. The culture and history of a certain society are created accidentally (not necessarily), and yet, as Hume himself observes, they affect our judgements: we even mention them when we try to show how our culture and history justify our judgement of taste.

One might think, though, that the fact that one's cultural background affects one's judgement of taste would lead to relativism and a denial of (B), or of a universal law or principle of taste. There are nationalistic people who insist, say, 'Schubert's lieder cannot be understood or appreciated by non-German people', or 'Only Japanese people can fully understand the beauty of Basho's haiku', etc. But there are lots of non-musical Germans or unpoetic Japanese who aren't interested in Schubert's lieder or Basho's haiku, whereas there is at least one American vocalist who sings Schubert marvellously, and a British poet who understands and appreciates Basho's haiku. It's not nationality or the fact that one belongs to a certain cultural group that really matters in one's understanding of beauty of a certain work. We can surely appreciate the beauty of a work created by someone who belongs to a cultural group different from our own, by understanding what the work expresses, how well it expresses the object, and what sort of background it has, etc. And in understanding these things, we need not only sentiments but also reason. Reason, therefore, seems to play a much more significant role than Hume thought in understanding and judging a work of art.

4. Conclusion

We have argued that (A) does not oppose (B) in ST, even if Hume himself thought otherwise. It is also wrong to regard judgements

about secondary qualities as incapable of truth or falsity because they are subjective qualities: 'This curry is very hot' is true when the curry in question is very hot not only for the person making the judgement but also for most people. Over and above this point, however, it is still arguable whether beauty can really be taken quite analogously to secondary qualities. They surely have some properties in common, but the relation between delicacy of taste and beauty seems different from and more complicated than the relation between our eyes and colour or our tongues and taste. The defence of (B) depends on the thesis that beauty is a kind of secondary quality, which has a causal relation to our faculties of mind, or delicacy of taste. If beauty is not merely a secondary quality, then perhaps we would have to seek some alternative idea to fortify (B). Unlike grasping colours, tastes, sounds, heat, etc., grasping beauty requires not only the satisfaction of physical and biological conditions and linguistic skills, which in most cases we come to acquire without much effort. Grasping and understanding beauty seems to require something more than that. The fact that "[t]he great variety of Taste . . . is too obvious to have fallen under everyone's observation" (ST, p. 226) seems to show that the process in which we come to have a certain sense of aesthetic taste and make aesthetic judgements cannot be explained simply by the relation between the object's qualities and the physical/biological conditions of our faculties and linguistic ability. Perhaps, as suggested in the previous section, our understanding of the cultural background of each work of art and reason would help to fortify (B).

It would be interesting to recall Hume's claim, though not fully developed in ST, that although secondary qualities (which, for Hume, include beauty and moral properties) are not qualities in things themselves, some qualities in objects cause us to perceive those secondary qualities, so that the relation between our mental

faculties and these qualities in things themselves is real. Just like judgements about colour, sound or taste, there are judgements of aesthetic taste that are either true or false, quite objectively. Objectively true or false judgements don't have to be about objective qualities—if 'objective' here means something characteristic of our perception of so-called primary qualities and judgements about them (J. L. Mackie seems to take this word in this way). We could surely ask if secondary qualities are really subjective in the sense that they are characteristic of first person experience so that no one but the perceiver himself can know what it is like. As some philosophers maintain, secondary qualities are not subjective in this sense. For instance, McDowell says:

> Secondary-quality experience presents itself as perceptual awareness of properties genuinely possessed by the objects that confront one. And there is no general obstacle to taking that appearance at face value. An object's being such as to look red is independent of its actually looking red to anyone on any particular occasion; so, notwithstanding the conceptual connection between being red and being experienced as red, an experience of something as red can count as a case of being presented with a property that is there anyway—there independently of the experience itself.[2]

This view is convincing as to colours and other secondary qualities, and seems consistent with Hume's characterisation of secondary quality as a power to produce a certain sentiment, sensation or perception. If secondary qualities are caused to look or taste in the way they do by some qualities in an object, and if this causation is somehow guaranteed by the uniformity of our sense-organ and faculties of our mind, then the truth or falsity of judgements about these qualities is determined quite objectively. It is still arguable, though, if

we could explain our aesthetic experience in the same way, and this, as discussed in the last section, is part of the reason why it seems difficult to take beauty analogously to colours and taste. But, as Hume observes, there is considerable uniformity in our aesthetic experiences (though it is weaker compared with the uniformity found in our secondary-quality experience), which must surely help us understand our tendency to find something beautiful. If we come to acquire delicacy of taste and fortify it with reason so as to fully analyse and appreciate the beauty of works of art, objectively true judgements of taste are possible.

Let us compare our view with Mackie's, to conclude this essay. In his *Hume's Moral Theory*, Mackie says:

> In his essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' Hume rejects the 'principle of the natural equality of taste' and speaks repeatedly of a 'proper sentiment of beauty' and even of the 'true standard'. This might appear to be a retreat from sentimentalism or subjectivism with regard to aesthetics, and, by implication, with regard to morals. But a careful reading of the essay will show that there is no retreat. The standard of beauty is still essentially a matter of sentiment. But one judgement can be preferred to another if it is freer from prejudice, based on a more accurate, practised, and delicate discernment of its object, and (especially in literature) on a better understanding of the subject and the reasoning within the work. . . . In fact what Hume shows in this essay, is how far a theory which bases moral or aesthetic distinctions on sentiment can go in embracing what Simon Blackburn has called 'quasi-realism', how far it can, quite consistently, adopt and interpret what would seem to be objectivist ways of speaking. The fact that it can go so far constitutes a challenge to the view that a claim to objectivity is implicit in our ordinary ways of speaking.[3]

Are judgements free from prejudice merely *preferred* ? If so, Hume should have used the words 'preferable' and 'preferred judgements' in place of 'genuine' and 'genuine judgements'. Contrary to Mackie's suggestion, Hume is seeking a way in ST to make aesthetics something more than (A). We surely need sentiments in order to find something beautiful, but understanding or grasping the beauty, or artistic merits, of a work of art needs not only sentiments but also an unbiased, finer delicacy which requires reason. How do we judge that one judgement is "based on a more accurate, practised, and delicate discernment of its object" while others are not? Whether one has "a better understanding of the subject and the reasoning within the work" is *not* a matter of personal sentiment or preference. If each of us were allowed to judge something as *better* or more *accurate* according to one's personal taste or preference, (B) would be never attained, and training or practise in the fields of art would be totally meaningless. Because even for training or practice, one would need good teachers, guides, or good artists or good works of art that lead one to better state of understanding, and this 'goodness' is not something we can ascribe arbitrarily, according to one's personal preference.

Notes

[1] Mothersill mentions this view (see her *Beauty Restored*, pp. 203–204), though she thinks that "only the most superficial reading will support this interpretation".

[2] McDowell, 'Values and Secondary Qualities' in *Reason, Value, and Reality*, p. 134.

[3] Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory*, p. 75.

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