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## *Hume's Key and Aesthetic Rationality*

HUME THE AESTHETIC THEORIST has always been overshadowed by Hume the epistemologist, the metaphysician, and the moral theorist. Of late even Hume's political theory has come in for detailed attention. The same cannot be said for his aesthetic theory, though there have been a few incisive articles appearing on it in the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup> In the present essay I propose to look closely at some of the central tenets of Hume's aesthetic theory, especially as it appears in his superb essay "Of the Standard of Taste." I will argue that some of his most important claims have been misunderstood, and that the significance of his focal parable, the discovery of "the key with the leathern thong," has been lost. Hume's aesthetic theory rests upon the idea that there are rules or principles of taste, and that aesthetic rationality consists in discovering and applying these rules, especially in cases where people dispute about the aesthetic value of an object. This idea may seem self-evident, yet it was denied by no less a personage than Kant.<sup>2</sup> I conclude the paper with a comparison of the merits of the Humean and Kantian models of aesthetic rationality.

"Of the Standard of Taste," it will be recalled, focuses on the question of whether aesthetic disagreements can be rationally resolved. Hume grants at the outset that common sense seems to hold that they cannot be, given the popular maxim "there is no disputing about taste." But, he continues (with brilliant insight), common sense also seems to hold the contradictory position, since anyone who "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" (p. 7).<sup>3</sup> That is, common sense recognizes that *some* aesthetic judgments, at least, are as clearly false or unjustifiable as certain empirical statements. Of course the yoking of Bunyan to Addison is in retrospect unfortunate, given the later rise in Bunyan's critical reputation. But the general point about the comparability of some aesthetic judgments to factual statements can be made using different examples. What Hume next endeavors to do in the essay is to show how it is possible that aesthetic judgements can have this sort of objectivity. Moreover, he attempts to do this while granting all along that "beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them" (p. 6, cf. 11). In other words, Hume attempts to show that it is possible rationally to resolve a dispute about the aesthetic value of an object without assuming that the aesthetic value is a property of the object itself.

As is well known, Hume's solution is a sort of "ideal observer" theory of taste or evaluation in which the correct or rational position in a dispute is identified with the evaluation that an ideal critic would make under ideal conditions.<sup>4</sup> The ideal conditions he lists are "a perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object" (p. 8). The characteristics of the ideal critic he mentions are "delicacy" (perceptual acuity), "practice" in evaluating works, freedom from prejudice, facility at making comparisons, and "good sense." The last seems to include both a knowledge of the world and human psychology as well as the ability to judge the functional relations of parts to wholes in complex art works.<sup>5</sup> Hume considers the question of how we are to determine which people have the desired characteristics, and his position is that

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the possession of them is a matter of fact, like any other, and therefore poses no special obstacle to the task of showing that aesthetic disputes can be rationally resolved. He closes by noting that two residual sources of disagreement will likely remain even after the qualified critics have had their say: differences in temperament will incline some critics, for example, toward amorous art, others to sober reflection, and radical differences in moral standards will lead to disagreements about works where these moral standards are represented or flouted.<sup>6</sup> But the general tenor of the essay is that most aesthetic disagreements can be rationally settled, and that those that remain are innocent or understandable.

Let us now turn to look more closely at how Hume's theory can serve to show how aesthetic disputes may be rationally resolved. The first thing to note is that since the conditions and characteristics mentioned by Hume are clearly ideal, we are never going to find a situation in which A disagrees with B over some aesthetic judgment and where either A or B can be conclusively shown to be the ideal critic whose judgments settle the matter. The best that could happen would be that either A or B could establish that he or she more nearly approximates to the ideal than the other. The second point to notice is that, of course, as a practical matter whenever A and B disagree on some aesthetic question they are very likely to disagree about whose opinion has authority. It may be suggested that if A disagrees with B over the aesthetic merit of a Chinese vase and it emerges that B is an art historian specializing in Chinese pottery, A will immediately yield to B's judgment here. But this need not happen for the reason just noted. No *actual* critic is perfect in his or her "practice," "freedom from prejudice," "delicacy," and so on. Therefore, it is always open to A to maintain in the face of B's "practice," for example, that B is quite good as a critic of Chinese pottery but that this particular vase represents a certain blind-spot in his or her critical competence. It may well be that amateurs, when confronted with technical "practice," for example, *will* simply concede the matter in dispute without any further ado, but given the point about the ideality of critical characteristics specified by Hume, it is not clear why any clear-minded person *should* do this. My point is that in practice no one

has a decisive reason to concede a disputed aesthetic judgment to another person just because that person is known to be more qualified in one or more of the five characteristics listed by Hume. If A disagrees with B over the aesthetic value of *x*, and it is shown that B is, for example, more practiced in general in judging objects like *x*, A has no good reason to concede his or her judgment about *x* to B. For, after all, B is not an ideal critic, and *x* may be one of his or her blind spots. One may object: if B is more qualified than A, then at least A ought to concede that B is more *likely* to be correct. But this objection assumes that there is a smooth sort of convergence of opinion that goes on as people approach ideal qualifications, and this may surely be doubted. Does it not happen that when one acquires a little more familiarity with an art form one totally rejects one's previous views? A little more familiarity with classical music may lead one to think that Tchaikovsky not only is not great, but is meretricious.

One must say, then, that differences in Humean qualifications, even if conceded by both parties to a dispute, will rarely *by themselves* serve to settle such a dispute as it takes place in practice. This is not a criticism of Hume, however, since he seemed to be well aware of it. (The same cannot be said of his commentators.)<sup>7</sup> What is Hume's view as to how aesthetic disagreements are rationally resolved in practice? This is another way of asking what view Hume took of what I called aesthetic rationality. There is one section in his essay on taste in which Hume explicitly discusses an aesthetic disagreement, and he uses it to illustrate how it is rationally settled. I am referring to the passage about "the key with a leathern thong." There Hume retells the story found in *Don Quixote* about Sancho Panza's relatives. The two of them claim to be experts in judging wine and are asked to give their opinion of a particular hogshead. One tastes and approves, but with the qualification that it has a slightly leathery taste to it. The other tastes and approves, but with the qualification that it has a slightly iron taste to it. The two are ridiculed, but are vindicated later on when the hogshead is emptied and found to have the key with a leathern thong at the bottom (p. 10-11).

Hume is clear that the story is meant also as an analogy to an aesthetic dispute and its resolution, for he goes on to say that there is a

"resemblance" between "mental and bodily taste," thereby implying that the story is only an example of the latter (p. 11). But he insists that the resemblance is "great" and he makes no mention of any disanalogies. How, then, is the dispute settled? There are two different ways of understanding what is being illustrated by the story, one being the favored view of commentators. The common practice is to infer that the resolution consists in finding unimpeachable extrinsic evidence for the judgment of one of the disputants. The kinsmen held that there was a leathery or iron taste *in the wine* and the others disagreed, and the resolution consisted in finding something external to the wine itself that confirmed the first set of judgments. But this suggestion cannot be correct, for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons may not have been working in Hume's mind, but others certainly were. First, the sort of activity displayed by the wine-tasters is hardly typical of the skills needed when an aesthetic disagreement occurs. As Harold Osborne notes, critics often need to make overall or synoptic judgments about the organization or impression made by the whole work: they do not only rest their evaluations on the discerning of details.<sup>8</sup>

Second, it is not clear, especially given the first point, how often in general one could find evidence extrinsic to an art work that would confirm one judgment as against another. If the analogy is taken narrowly, and the point is to find evidence of impure elements in the art work, this can sometimes be done, but not often.<sup>9</sup> But the finding of impure elements is hardly typical of critical disagreements. If the analogy is taken more broadly, and the point of it is that critical disagreements rest on the question of whether some element is present, either impure or not, it is not clear how external evidence could be useful. Suppose that the dispute that Sancho's kinsmen had gotten involved in was concerned not with whether the wine had a leathery taste, but whether it had a fruity taste. What evidence extrinsic simply to tasting the wine more carefully could confirm that the wine had a fruity taste? A wine could taste fruity given any of an indefinite number of vintage patterns. In other words, many critical descriptions are phenomenological and carry no entailments as to how the qualities got to be in the object. Therefore no causal investigation

could confirm or disconfirm them. A ham that was not smoked could still have a "smoky" taste. As I indicated, this point becomes especially cogent when one keeps the first point mentioned in mind. When one is considering overall or gestalt or "regional" qualities the difficulty is great in seeing what could possibly correspond to finding the key at the bottom of the hogshead. If I describe a Scarlatti sonata as "bittersweet" and you disagree, what is there extrinsic to a more careful listening to the piece that could confirm or disconfirm my description? One, of course, might argue that finding something out about Scarlatti's intentions could help here. This opens up the great debate begun by Beardsley and E.D. Hirsch about the relevance of knowledge of an artist's intentions to the interpretation of an art work. I do not want to take sides here on this issue. For my purposes it will suffice to say that even if knowledge of an artist's intentions were relevant in principle, the fact that I just mentioned blunts its force. Many descriptions of "regional" or "gestalt" qualities in a work will be understood as phenomenological and hence immune to causal disconfirmation. Thus it would often be open to a critic who, for example, described a sonata as "bittersweet" and who was confronted by evidence that the composer intended it to be gay, to respond that whatever the composer's intention was it still *sounds* bittersweet.

These two reasons just given may seem too *a priori* and unmoored to Hume's text. But the following two cannot be thus accused. These two further points conclusively establish that the aim of the illustration was not to assimilate critical verification to causal detective work. The next point is that Hume himself goes on directly to say that "*though the hogshead had never been emptied*, the taste of the one was still equally delicate, and that of the other equally dull and languid, but it would have been more difficult to have proved the superiority of the former, to the conviction of every bystander" (p. 11, my emphasis). We must not take this concession too narrowly. Hume is not saying merely that in the case as originally described the differences in taste would have existed even had the key not been found. In this sense the point is almost trivial, since in the case as described the key was there, whether discovered or not. Surely Hume must have had a

broader point in mind, to wit, that even if in principle there is no extrinsic evidence available, it is still possible—though perhaps difficult—to establish who has better taste in this instance and therefore who is correct in the dispute that has arisen.<sup>10</sup> Thus the point of the story is not ultimately causal.

The final point is most decisive. It is that reading the analogy causally completely neglects the fact that the dispute ultimately is one as to *evaluation*. Sancho's kinsmen and their detractors were not only disagreeing about whether the wine had a leathery taste, but also whether it was *good* wine. It is true that in the story both men pronounce the wine to be good, but we are also told that the two are at first ridiculed for their judgments. Moreover, if the story is to serve as an analogy for a novice/sophisticate sort of dispute the interesting disagreement is not the one between the kinsmen, but the one setting them both on one side and the spectators on the other. Since Hume clearly states that "beauty and deformity . . . are not qualities in objects" (p. 11), learning about the causal properties of objects cannot settle for him the question of whether they are beautiful or aesthetically valuable in some way. After all, suppose that the kinsmen's disputants concede that the wine has slight leathery and iron tastes to it. Why may they not argue that these tastes are not defects, or indeed are even "interesting" or improvements? Aesthetic disagreements are not merely disagreements about whether some property is present in a work, they obviously mainly center around the question of whether the presence of that property is a virtue or not.

For these reasons, then, we must conclude that the point for Hume of the story from *Don Quixote* is not that aesthetic disagreement can be rationally resolved by finding evidence extrinsic to the experience of an art work which will disconfirm at least one of the disputant's aesthetic judgments. What is its point, though? At this juncture it will be worthwhile to quote Hume's thinking as it occurs immediately after the description of the dispute in *Don Quixote*:

. . . though the beauties of writing had never been methodized, or reduced to general principles; though no excellent models had ever been acknowledged, the different degrees of taste would still have subsisted, and the judgment of one man been preferable to that of another; but it would not have been so easy to silence

the bad critic, who might always insist upon his particular sentiment, and refuse to submit to his antagonist. But when we show him an avowed principle of art: when we illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation, from his own particular taste, he acknowledges to be conformable to the principle: when we prove that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence; he must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants the delicacy which is requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish in any composition or discourse (pp. 11-12).

Here Hume is considering the nature of an aesthetic disagreement, and showing how it is to be resolved. In step one, A and B disagree over the merit of some object. Returning to the illustration, having purged it of the misleading associations, let us suppose that A says that a sample of wine is good, and B says that it is not good. In step two, A appeals to some principle that both of them accept. Hume insists that both A and B must agree that the principle is well-founded, in the sense that it is agreed to apply to a number of other instances. In the illustration this would presumably be the situation where both A and B agree that a metallic taste in a wine is a serious defect, and they agree that this is borne out by samples 1, 2, 3 . . . of wine that have metallic tastes and are seriously defective. In step three A gets B to admit that the present sample has a metallic taste, too, though B originally did not notice it. In step four B admits that the wine is defective and that his or her taste is not as delicate as that of A. Thus the real point of the story was to illustrate how the enunciation and application of aesthetic principles or rules serves to settle disagreements. This is exemplified in the following statement of Hume. "To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition, is like finding the key with the leathern thong, which justified the verdict of Sancho's kinsmen, and confounded those pretended judges who had condemned them" (p. 11). It can be seen, then, how very misleading the story really is. It is natural to take the moral of the story to be that in aesthetic disagreements extrinsic causal evidence can rationally decide the matter. In fact, however, the point is to show how criticism rests upon principles and effective criticism consists in noticing how generally avowed principles apply to a disputed

case.

The model we now have before us obviously is more germane to the understanding of actual disputes over aesthetic matters. The logical structure of aesthetic reason is the same as in many other branches of discourse, strictly deductive. We have an argument of the form:

- 1) Property p makes an object aesthetically valuable. (Principle P)
- 2) Object x has property p. (Principle P applies to x.)

Therefore x is aesthetically valuable

A similar pattern applies when the point is to establish that x is defective aesthetically, as in the case of the wine. Hume's picture of aesthetic discourse is that it is logically identical to scientific discourse, the difference being that the *terms* involved have a different character (involving an implicit reference to the nature of the relevant percipient or percipients).

It is clear that there is at least one obvious problem here. Hume seems to neglect the possibility that A and B will go through both steps 1 and 2 (disagree in a concrete evaluation and agree on a relevant principle) yet not complete step 3. That is, he neglects the possibility that B will still not see that the principle applies in the present case. In the example given, B will not notice a metallic taste. How does the dispute then proceed? One cannot help suspecting that Hume at this point is falling back into the causal reading of the story, so that the rational thing to do in his eyes is to empty the cask and see if there is a key at the bottom. But we have already seen a number of reasons for holding that this tack can hardly represent a typical or even a possible mode of procedure in real disputes. Another possibility is that the discussion then turns to the capacities of the percipients, the aim being to see if one of them is perhaps defective in some sense organ. A third possibility is that one exposes a great number of people to the object and sees if a consensus emerges favoring one or the other. Ideally, of course, one would like all three tests to yield the same results. In any event, it is clear that Hume's model is too simple, since it doesn't explicitly describe what should happen if the application of acceptable principles is contentious.

The more serious problem, though, centers on the principles themselves. What is to be done

if one party to the dispute withdraws assent to the acknowledged rules governing the case at hand? This is the sort of situation I described before. Suppose that B admits that metallic taste in a wine is a serious defect, and that A gets B to acknowledge that the wine in question has a metallic taste (which B did not notice before). So far things have proceeded according to the Humean model. But now suppose that while admitting that the wine has a metallic taste B withdraws assent to the principle, finding that *this* wine's metallic taste is no defect, but is in fact "interesting." Surely just such anomalous results have been known to happen often in the arts, from Shakespeare's neglect of the Aristotelian unities down to Steve Reich's rejection of musical "drama." How is the discussion to proceed?

Hume is not unaware of the fact that purported rules of art may have exceptions. He remains convinced, however, that aesthetic reasoning is rule-governed, though conceding that the rules may be quite complex. He writes,

. . . though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art, discovered to the author either by genius or observation. If some negligent or irregular writers have pleased, they have not pleased by their transgressions of rule or order, but in spite of these transgressions: they have possessed other beauties, which were conformable to just criticism; and the force of these beauties has been able to overpower censure, and give the mind a satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from the blemishes (p. 7-8).

And speaking of Ariosto, a writer he regards as faulty but excellent in some of his characteristics, Hume writes:

Did our pleasure really arise from those parts of his poem, which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general: it would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blamable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults, let the pleasure which they produce be ever so unexpected and unaccountable (p.8).

What Hume does not consider, and what he must have regarded as palpably absurd, is the suggestion that aesthetic reasoning does not employ rules or principles at all. It has been said that "few people would disagree with Hume that there are what can be called 'rules of

art'.<sup>11</sup> Yet surely there is at least one philosopher of note who *does* disagree: Kant. In Section 8 of *The Critique of Judgment* he plainly says that "there can be no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful. Whether a dress, a house, or a flower is beautiful is a matter upon which one declines to allow one's judgment to be swayed by any reasons or principle. We want to get a look at the object with our own eyes . . . ."<sup>12</sup> And if Kant is correct then the bad critic is not nearly so easily silenced as Hume suggests, for any aesthetic principle must be regarded as an inductive generalization from previous experiences of artworks that has no probative force with respect to a new instance. Hence any person who assents to such a principle is in no way guilty of inconsistency if he or she dissents from its apparent application to a new artwork. If Kant is correct even our revised understanding of the *Don Quixote* episode is of little use in elucidating aesthetic rationality.

Of course the question straightaway becomes: *is* Kant correct? Hume and many others would naturally be skeptical. Various maneuvers might be taken to rebuild the rule-governed model. Some might suggest that there are rules of taste, but that they are complicated with numerous exceptions. (They might also submit that very few of these rules have yet been articulated by critics.) Others might suggest that many rules concern only very specific kinds of qualities. So one might suppose that the rule about the wine is not "metallic taste is a serious defect" but rather "a very *strong* metallic taste is a serious defect." Another tack could be to say that aesthetic rules are not exceptionless principles (though this is what Kant had in mind), but that they state what *tends* to be aesthetically good or bad.<sup>13</sup> Here aesthetic principles would be identical in structure to Ross's idea of *prima facie* rightness. From the Kantian perspective these possibilities represent useless epicycles to the claim that there are rules of taste that underlie aesthetic rationality.

On the other hand, the Humean has a potent challenge to Kant. If there are no rules of taste, the Humean will ask, how is it even *possible* to persuade another person to change his or her mind about the aesthetic value of an object? The following is an invalid inference:

This wine has a metallic taste

Therefore this is bad wine

Without the addition of a premise stating a principle or rule of taste, it is difficult to see how any sort of valid inference could reach an evaluative conclusion. The Kantian needs to explain how aesthetics incorporates *reasoning*, and to explain why evaluations are not simply arbitrary preferences.

It must be admitted that Kant himself does not, so far as I can see, address this challenge explicitly in *The Critique of Judgment*. But there are Kantians to be found who do address it. This is not the place to present a complete formulation of the position. A sketch is all that is possible. Consider the essay "Critical Communication" by Arnold Isenberg.<sup>14</sup> He makes two points that virtually paraphrase the quotation from Kant given above. He says, first, that reading criticism of a work one is unfamiliar with is "a blank and senseless employment." And he goes on immediately to say "There is not in all the world's criticism a purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, 'If it is true, I shall like that work so much the better'."<sup>15</sup> Isenberg concedes that critics do indeed cite reasons for their judgment, so that one may say that the "wavelike contour" of the four figures in El Greco's *The Burial of Count Orgaz* helps to make it a successful painting. Isenberg's crucial point is that human language is being used, naturally suggesting that some general standard is being appealed to. But it is absurd to suppose that one critic wishes to maintain that all figures having a wave-like contour are aesthetically valuable. That is, it seems like a general rule is being appealed to, since a general characteristic is being mentioned. But, in fact, says Isenberg, the critic's language is a "direction for perceiving" this particular painting, and it carries no implications about the value of other paintings that may also be correctly described as containing wave-like contours.<sup>16</sup> It does not matter how refined a language a critic develops, language will always be inherently general. Therefore no description could possibly avoid the suggestion that some general norm is being appealed to. What is necessary is for readers to interpret the critical statements properly, not as covert appeals to norms, but as directions for perceiving the

particular works being discussed.

Still, the Humean is unlikely to be appeased. If Isenberg's picture of aesthetic reasoning is correct then what ought to happen in an aesthetic disagreement is this. Step 1, A and B disagree about the aesthetic value of some object. In Step 2, A describes the object in a way that brings certain properties of the object into perceptual prominence. Step 3, B notices the property (which presumably he or she did not notice before). Step 4, B now agrees with the evaluation A originally gave. What the Humean will object to is the transition from Step 3 to Step 4. In Isenberg's picture there is no general principle being appealed to, therefore there is no logical necessity for someone who has gone through Steps 2 and 3 to go on to Step 4. Can't someone say "Ah yes, I see the wave-like contour that you are talking about, but I still think it's a poor painting"? Isn't it the case that in Isenberg's model there is no *reason* to move from Step 3 to Step 4, and that therefore the move is arbitrary?

To this the Kantian has two replies, I think. First of all, the argument just presented assumes that the only sorts of reasons that there are are linguistic reasons capable of serving as premises in arguments. This may be questioned. If I see my wife standing in plain daylight before me I have a reason to believe that she is there, and yet there are no statements or sentences at play here that logically compel me to this belief. This example must not be taken in an inappropriate way, for I do not wish to claim that the aesthetic value of an object is "just seen" in the way that a person or table is. Indeed, Kant, no less than Hume, denies that aesthetic value is inherent in objects external to our minds. My point is rather that it is possible to understand the idea of having a reason which is not linguistic. If Isenberg is correct, then in the case of aesthetic evaluation one may have a reason for evaluating an object in a certain way even though one's reason is not linguistic. Furthermore, the Kantian can fully grant that reasoning is possible in arriving at the most appropriate description of the object. If one critic describes the contours in the El Greco painting as "wave-like" and another describes them as "frantic," there can surely be rational discussion as to which of the two is more faithful to the actual form of the object. Hume himself exhibited

some sensitivity to the relevance of descriptions in aesthetic evaluation.<sup>17</sup>

Hume would have objections to these replies, though. The most telling, I think, would be this. It may be granted that a perceptual experience, which is nonlinguistic, can serve as a reason for accepting a certain *description* of an object. It is more difficult to see how a perceptual experience could by itself serve as a reason for an *evaluation*. Surely when we say that an object is beautiful there will be some description of it which licenses our saying so. So, we say that the painting's wave-like contours are what make it beautiful. But how can the description of the painting as having wave-like contours justify us in calling it beautiful, *rather than ugly*, if there is no premise at work here, whether explicit or not, that, for example, paintings with wave-like contours are beautiful?

So far as I can see there is a real impasse here. The Kantian is surely correct in saying that no sane person who values a particular painting because of its wave-like contours would be willing to grant that another painting unseen by him or her with wave-like contours is also valuable. But the Humean is undoubtedly right in wondering what sort of *reasoning* is going on when one moves without further ado from the statement that this painting has wave-like contours to the statement that it is beautiful. With apologies to Hume one might assert that to understand the role of rules in aesthetic rationality would be like discovering the key with the leathern thong at the bottom of the philosophy of art.

<sup>1</sup> Most notable, in my view, are Harold Osborne, "Hume's Standard and the Diversity of Aesthetic Taste," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 no. 1 (January 1967): 50-56; Marcus Hester, "Hume on Principles and Perceptual Ability," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 no. 3 (Spring 1979): 295-302; Carolyn W. Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35 no. 2 (Winter 1976): 201-15; Peter Kivy, "Hume's Neighbor's Wife: An Essay on the Evolution of Hume's Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 23 no. 3 (Summer 1983): 195-208.

<sup>2</sup> My understanding of the Kantian model of aesthetic rationality is deeply indebted to the teaching of Mary Mothersill. She has not seen this paper, however, and is in no sense responsible for any errors that are contained herein.

<sup>3</sup> Parenthetical page numbers refer to the edition of Hume's essay in "Of The Standard of Taste" and Other Essays, ed. John W. Lenz (Indianapolis, 1965).



<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Wieand, in "Hume's Two Standards of Taste," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (April 1984): 129-42, objects to the "identification" I attribute to Hume on the grounds that this would preclude the possibility of ideal critics making a mistaken evaluation. I think this objection can be met, but nothing in what follows is invalidated if it cannot.

<sup>5</sup> Kivy, *ibid.*, gives an especially insightful discussion of the role of "good sense" in Hume's essay.

<sup>6</sup> There is a curious tension in the essay at this point. Earlier on Hume notes that the passage of time tends to make critics more free of prejudice towards a work (p. 9), but at the end he says that distance in time makes the customs and values embodied in an art work more foreign and less easy to sympathize with (p. 20-22).

<sup>7</sup> See especially Peter Kivy, "Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 no. 1 (January 1967): 57-66. Kivy there represents Hume as holding that aesthetic disagreements will always turn into disagreements about the credentials of the people engaged in them. I am saying that Hume's position is that in theory this is so, but in practice quite the contrary is true. In practice the dispute centers on the object judged and stays focused there.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Hester, *ibid.*, p. 297. Hester goes too far here, however, for he says "I cannot even think of what detecting a foreign trace element in a painting for example, would be like." What about detecting an overlay of new paint, or a figure painted by a student? See Mary Mothersill, *Beauty Restored* (Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 194.

<sup>10</sup> Hester, *ibid.*, seems guilty of reading Hume in the overly narrow way when he objects to the analogy as question-begging, since it postulates in its very description a key that at least *could* be found.

<sup>11</sup> Wieand, *ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> Meredith translation (Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> This is the model proposed by Beardsley in his interesting discussion of aesthetic "canons." Beardsley has a specific meaning of "tends" in mind here. See *Aesthetics*, second edition (Indianapolis, 1981), pp. 462-70.

<sup>14</sup> Reprinted in his *Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1973).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup> See Kivy, "Hume's Neighbor's Wife"; Peter Jones, "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (January 1976): 48-62.