ISSN 1755-9928 (Print)
ISSN 2753-3298 (Online)

Journal of
Scottish Thought

Research Articles

Francis Hutcheson and the Aesthetics of Multitude

Author: Cairns Craig

Volume 7, Issue 1
Pp: 106-135
2016
Published on: 1st Jan 2016

1495
ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Francis Hutcheson and the Aesthetics of Multitude

Cairns Craig

1 The Strange Death and Revival of the Associationist Aesthetic

Histories of literature still tend to view the aesthetics of 'associationism' as an eighteenth century phenomenon, propelled by the Lockean psychology which needed to account for why, if human beings are fundamentally rational creatures, they should so regularly disagree about particular truths. Locke's answer was that people failed to recognise truths for which there was clear evidence because they were diverted by accidental associations that prevented them properly recognising what they were experiencing:

> Some of our ideas have a natural correspondence and connexion one with another: it is the office and excellency of our reason to trace these, and hold them together in that union and correspondence which is founded in their peculiar beings. Besides this, there is another connexion of ideas wholly owing to chance or custom: ideas, that in themselves are not all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds, that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it; and if they are more than two, which are thus united, the whole gang, always inseparable, show themselves together.[1]

Locke's rhetorical flourish by which associated ideas become a disruptive 'gang' reveals the extent to which such mental connections are not to be trusted, but the history of late eighteenth-century aesthetics is, in large measure, the outcome of that 'gang' invading the territory of the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque and establishing Locke's apparently disruptive principle not only as the foundation on which aesthetic experience was based but the

1 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes* (London, 1824, 12th edn; 1689), 5, 419 (I, xxxiii), accessed via http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/761, 27/10/2015.

principle which governed aesthetic judgment. As Archibald Alison puts it in his *Essay on Taste*,

> When any object, either of sublimity or beauty, is presented to the mind, I believe every man is conscious of a train of thought being immediately awakened in his imagination, analogous to the character or expression of the original object. The simple perception of the object, we frequently find, is insufficient to excite these emotions, unless, according to common expression, our imagination is seized, and our fancy busied in the pursuit of all those trains of thought, which are allied to this character or expression.[2]

Only by understanding the process of association can we understand why some people are susceptible to beauty while others are not –

> The beauty of a theory, or of a relic of antiquity, is unintelligible to a peasant. The charms of the country are altogether lost upon a citizen who has passed his life in town. In the same manner, the more that our ideas are increased, or our conceptions extended upon any subject, the greater the number of associations we connect with it, the stronger the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it.[3]

– and without studying peoples' processes of association neither artist nor critic will be able 'to determine, whether the Beauty he creates is temporary or permanent, whether adapted to the accidental prejudices of his Age, or to the uniform constitution of the human Mind'.[4]

For Peter Kivy, whose *The Seventh Sense: a study of Francis Hutcheson's aesthetics and its influence in eighteenth-century Britain* (1976) is still the most recent book-length study of Francis Hutcheson's aesthetic theory, Hutcheson's notion of an internal sense which provides an immediate response to the beautiful is, from the mid-eighteenth century, steadily displaced by associationist accounts of both beauty and taste. Where Hutcheson insists that we should 'call our Power of perceiving these ideas [of beauty and harmony] an Internal Sense, were it only for the Convenience of distinguishing them from other Sensations

2 Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Edinburgh, 1811; 2nd edn), Essay 1, 4–5.

3 Ibid., 35.

4 Ibid., xv.

of Seeing and Hearing which men may have without Perception of Beauty and Harmony',[5] associationists provided, according to Kivy, an alternative hypothesis which fitted better with the emergence of empiricist accounts of the workings of the mind:

> It is obvious that the role of association in aesthetic perception is very different for Gerard than it had been for Hutcheson. The latter looked upon the association of ideas as the chief corrupter of taste, joining what is innately pleasurable with what is not and thus poisoning aesthetic sensibility. The former, on the contrary, "usually treats the functioning of association not as a corrupter of taste but as one of the main occasions for its activity and one of the principal causes of its extension." For Gerard, in fact, association is the mainspring of aesthetic perception in general and the perception of beauty in particular: "There is perhaps no term used in a looser sense than *beauty*, which is applied to almost every thing that pleases us. … In all these cases, beauty is, at least in part, resolvable into association."[6]

For Kivy, Gerard's combination of an 'inner sense' account of beauty with an associationist aesthetic is the unstable transition which foretold that, by the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, associationism would entirely displace Hutcheson's 'inner sense' account of aesthetic experience:

> I have presented Gerard as rather an ambiguous figure because he seems to adopt two theories which do not keep very good company together: Hutcheson's doctrine of aesthetic senses, and the doctrine of associationism which, more than anything else, contributed to the downfall of the internal sense aesthetics. I conclude, however, with two thinkers who display no ambivalence in this regard: Archibald Alison and Dugald Stewart. They brought the associationist aesthetics to full

5 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, ed. Wolfgand Leidhold (Indianapolis, 2004), 23.

6 Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: a study of Francis Hutcheson's aesthetics and its influence in eighteenth-century Britain* (New York, 1976), 181; the quotations from Gerard are from Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste*, ed. Walter John Hipple, Jr. (Gainesville, 1963), 52, 43.

> flower and, in so doing, laid the ghost of Hutcheson and the sense of beauty to rest.[7]

By 1790, Locke's unruly 'gang' of associations has so effaced Hutcheson's notion of the 'inner sense' that it is, apparently, not even a ghostly presence in early nineteenth-century aesthetics.

The finality with which the 'inner sense' philosophy is replaced by associationism in Kivy's account is matched, in almost all accounts of the development of British aesthetics, by the finality with which an apparently mechanistic associationism was in turn displaced by romantic notions of the 'organic' imagination – or so, at least, it seems in the many critical accounts of Wordsworth and Coleridge that stress the parallels between their works and a Germanic idealism which was believed to have overthrown the sceptical presuppositions of British empiricism.[8] This critical tradition can be traced to M. H. Abrams' influential *The Mirror and the Lamp*, first published in 1953, in which Abrams notes the longevity of associationism through the nineteenth century – 'Indeed, the system only achieved its most detailed and uncompromising statement in 1829, with the *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* of James Mill[9] – but effectively dismisses its intellectual relevance in the light of Coleridge's 'antithesis between fancy and imagination', in which association is related to the lower faculty – fancy – and is incapable of the true creative potential of the higher faculty, imagination.[10] Ironically, however, Abram's title is taken from a quote by W. B. Yeats – 'soul must become its own betrayer, its own deliverer, the one activity, the mirror turn lamp'[11] – but Yeats, whether we see him as the 'last romantic' or the first of the 'modernists', continues assertively to use the language of association to explain the workings of art in general and poetry in particular, and defines the new 'symbolist' impulse in modern art in associationist terms:

> All sounds, all colours, all forms either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet

7 Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 192 (Chapter 11).

8 See Gavin Budge, 'Introduction' in idem (ed.), *Romantic Empiricism: Poetics and the Philosophy of Common Sense, 1780–1830* (Lewisburg, 2007), 22ff.

9 M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1958; 1953), 177.

10 Ibid., 179.

11 W. B. Yeats, 'Introduction' in idem (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935* (Oxford, 1936), xxxiii.

> precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions.[12]

Equally, it is a context invoked by T. S. Eliot in his influential early essays immediately after the First World War:

> …some of Donne's most successful and characteristic effects are secured by brief words and sudden contrasts:
>
> *A bracelet of bright hair about the bone*,
>
> Here the most powerful effect is produced by the sudden contrast of associations of 'bright hair' and 'bone'.[13]

Far from being an eighteenth-century theory which persisted dully into the nineteenth, failing to take account of the romantic revolution and providing intellectually uninteresting answers to aesthetic issues, associationist aesthetics was revived from the mid-nineteenth century by the development of empirical psychology which, in the work of exponents such as John Stuart Mill's co-worker, Alexander Bain, re-established associationism as the foundational structure of the mind and, therefore, as the foundational structure of aesthetics: 'all thinking for an end', Bain writes '– be it practical or speculative, scientific or æsthetic, – consists in availing ourselves of the materials afforded by association'.[14]

The continuing relevance of associationist accounts of aesthetics was to be underlined by two influential contributions to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, edited by William Robertson Smith, the Scottish theologian. James Ward was the author of the entry on 'Psychology', often cited as the beginning of the modern discipline of psychology, and James Sully was the author of the article on 'Aesthetics'. Ward's article is often read as challenging the empiricist tradition that derives from Locke, but Ward's essay aims to bridge the then divided philosophical universe of empiricists and idealists by suggesting that mind does indeed, as the empiricists argued,

12 W. B. Yeats, 'The Symbolism of Poetry' in idem, *Essays and Introductions* (London, 1961), 156–7.

13 T. S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1921) in idem, *Selected Essays* (London, 1951), 283.

14 Alexander Bain, 'On "Association" Controversies', *Mind*, 12 (1887): 46, 180.

work by associations but that the associations are not the result of each individual person's experience – rather they are laid down as 'engrams' in the brain, engrams that each of us inherits from the whole of our heredity. The individual mind does not start as a Lockean *tabula rasa* because it is, from birth, already shaped by the accumulated associations of every generation back to the beginning of humanity:

> What was experienced in the past has become instinct in the present. The descendent has not consciousness of his ancestors' failures when performing by 'an untaught ability' what they slowly and painfully found out. But if we are to attempt to follow the genesis of mind from its earliest dawn it is the primary experience rather than the eventual instinct that we have first of all to keep in view. To this end, then, it is proposed to assume that we are dealing with one individual which continuously advanced from the beginning of psychical life and not with a series of individuals of which all save the first have inherited certain capacities from its progenitors. The life-history of such an imaginary individual, that is to say, would correspond with all that was new, all that could be called evolution or development, in a certain typical series of individuals each of whom advanced a certain stage in mental differentiation.[15]

The 'innate ideas' that empiricists had always challenged in idealist philosophies become written into our genetic inheritance, so that our 'associations' are no longer individual but can access a vast reservoir of memories beyond our personal recollection. This was a view that had been anticipated in Herbert Spencer's *Psychology* (1855), and it was from Spencer that James Sully developed a parallel account of the nature of the aesthetic:

> The first and lowest class of pleasures, are those of simple sensation, as tone and colour, which are part organic and partly the results of association … The highest order of pleasures are those of the aesthetic sentiments proper, consisting of the multitudinous emotions ideally excited by aesthetic objects, natural and artistic. Among these vaguely and partially revived emotion Mr Spencer reckons not only those of the individual, but also many of the constant feelings of the race. Thus he

15 James Ward, 'Psychology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh, 1886), XX, 44–5.

> would attribute the vagueness and apparent depth of musical emotion to association with vocal tones, built up during the course of vast ages.[16]

The power of the aesthetic rested in part upon the depth of the memories and emotions provoked – their apparent lack of immediate connection with the individual – and the innumerable flow that was released – 'multitudinous emotions ideally excited' (– that is, excited as 'ideas'). Aesthetic experience was so powerful and significant precisely because it gave us a means of accessing the associative connections which had accumulated in the human mind since the very beginning of a recognisably 'human' existence: the aesthetic was, in part, the mind's rediscovery of its own inner resources. These were notions taken up and adapted by W. B. Yeats in an early essay on 'Magic' in which he offers three propositions:

> (1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
>
> (2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.
>
> (3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.[17]

The power of art and its relationship to magic rests on our access to a memory far beyond individual recollection, and that allows us to call down, through symbols, the contents of 'this great mind and great memory' and make them not only active again in our own experience but a part of the history of our times. In Yeats, Sully's 'multitudinous emotions' become 'the emotion of multitude':

> I have been thinking a good deal about plays lately, and I have been wondering why I dislike the clear and logical construction which seems necessary if one is to succeed on the Modern Stage. It came into my head the other day that this construction, which all the world has learnt from France, has everything of high literature except the emotion of multitude. The Greek drama has got the emotion of multitude from its

16 James Sully, 'Aesthetics', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. I (Edinburgh, 1875), 224.
17 W. B. Yeats, 'Magic' (1901) in idem, *Essays and Introductions*, 28.

> chorus, which called up famous sorrows, long-leaguered Troy, much-enduring Odysseus, and all the gods and heroes to witness, as it were, some well-ordered fable, some action separated but for this from all but itself. The French play delights in the well-ordered fable, but by leaving out the chorus it has created an art where poetry and imagination, always the children of far-off multitudinous things, must of necessity grow less important than the mere will. This is why, I said to myself, French dramatic poetry is so often a little rhetorical, for rhetoric is the will trying to do the work of the imagination. The Shakespearean Drama gets the emotion of multitude out of the sub-plot which copies the main plot, much as a shadow upon the wall copies one's body in the firelight. We think of King Lear less as the history of one man and his sorrows than as the history of a whole evil time. Lear's shadow is in Gloster, who also has ungrateful children, and the mind goes on imagining other shadows, shadow beyond shadow till it has pictured the world.[18]

For Yeats, the best art combines 'the little limited life of the fable, which is always the better the simpler it is, and the rich, far-wandering, many-imaged life of the half-seen world beyond it';[19] without 'multitude' art cannot plumb the depths of human experience. T. S. Eliot was to summarise his poetics in the same terms in his essay on 'The Music of Poetry':

> [The Music of Poetry is] a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association.[20]

'Association' was not simply a precursor to romantic organicism; it was also the means by which modernist poets, inheritors of nineteenth-century empirical psychology, sought styles that would combine the realistic and the suggestive, the simple and the sonorous, the objects and experiences of the present with the endless implications of the most distant past, styles based on

18 W. B. Yeats, 'The Emotion of Multitude' (1903) in idem, *Essays and Introductions*, 215.
19 Ibid., 216.
20 T. S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry' in idem, *On Poetry and Poets* (London, 1957), 32.

'a development by rapid associations of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader'.[21]

2 Aesthetic Multitude

In the first *Inquiry*, Hutcheson distinguishes two kinds of beauty, 'original' or 'absolute' beauty and 'comparative' or 'relative' beauty, a distinction which he elucidates as follows:

> We therefore by Absolute Beauty understand only that Beauty, which we perceive in Objects without comparison to any thing external, of which the Object is suppos'd an Imitation, or Picture; such as that Beauty perceiv'd from the Works of Nature, artificial Forms, Figures, Theorems. Comparative or Relative Beauty is that which we perceive in Objects, commonly considered as imitations or Resemblances of something else.[22]

A footnote clarifies that these are not actually separate in terms of their objects but are rather two different ways in which we respond to particular objects: the distinction rests on the 'different Foundations of Pleasure to our Sense of it, rather than from the Objects themselves: for most of the following Instances of relative Beauty have also absolute Beauty; and many of the Instances of absolute Beauty, have also relative Beauty in some respect or other'.[23] A representational painting, for instance, could be looked at in terms not of its accuracy to an original but rather in terms of its 'artificial forms'. These two categories are supposed to exhaust the nature of the beautiful, but Hutcheson's text is haunted by a third possibility, which regularly reasserts itself and has to be as regularly and insistently thrust aside, and that is the possibility of a sense of beauty that arises from the associations inspired in us by particular objects. Association, Hutcheson argues,

> is one great Cause of the apparent Diversity of Fancys in the Sense of Beauty, as well as in the external Senses; and often makes Men have an aversion to Objects of Beauty, and a liking to others void of it,

21 Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', 282.
22 Hutcheson, *An Inquiry*, 27.
23 Ibid.

> but under different Conceptions than those of Beauty or Deformity. And here it may not be improper to give some Instances of some of these Associations. The Beauty of Trees, their cool Shades, and their Aptness to conceal from Observation, have made Groves and Woods the usual Retreat to those who love Solitude, especially to the Religious, the Pensive, the Melancholy, and the Amorous. And do not we find that we have so join'd the Ideas of these Dispositions of Mind with those external Objects, that they always recur to us along with them? The Cunning of the Heathen priests might make such obscure Places the Scene of the fictitious Appearances of their Deitys; and hence we join Ideas of something Divine to them. We know the like Effect in the Ideas of our Churches, from the perpetual use of them only in religious Exercises. The faint Light in Gothick Buildings has had the same Association of a very foreign Idea, which our Poet shews in his Epithet,
>
> ———A Dim religious Light.
>
> In like manner it is known, That often all the Circumstances of Actions, or Places, or Dresses of Persons, or Voice, or Song, which have occur'd at any time together, when we were strongly affected by any Passion, will be so connected that any one of these will make all the rest recur. And this is often the occasion both of great Pleasure and Pain, Delight and Aversion to many Objects, which of themselves might have been perfectly indifferent to us: but these Approbations, or Distastes, are remote from the Ideas of Beauty, being plainly different Ideas.[24]

I have quoted this passage at length because it illustrates something that happens more than once in Hutcheson's text: when he discusses the association of ideas the text itself becomes an associative train, linking the 'the Religious, the Pensive, the Melancholy, and the Amorous' by a sudden leap to 'heathen priests', who, despite their beliefs inspire in us 'something Divine', which is then linked to 'Churches' because of their use in religious ritual and then to 'Gothick Buildings' which share the same kind of light as a church. Such a train of associations 'is often the occasion of great Pleasure and Pain, Delight and Aversion' but those emotions have to be resolutely distinguished 'from the Ideas of Beauty, being plainly different ideas'.

24 Ibid., 67–8.

The question which Hutcheson's associative reverie raises, however, is how are we to distinguish the 'plainly different ideas' in the experience of someone enjoying the associations which the 'Trees' provoke, from someone responding to their beauty? How is the observer to disentangle the 'original' beauty of the natural object from the memories it sets in motion? And what if, at a later point, those memories in turn bring back to the observer's mind the beauty of the trees: can the 'beauty' of the recollected scene be separated from the associations which call it up? Could such a distinction be made, for instance, in the context of the kind of experience described by Wordsworth in 'Tintern Abbey', when direct experience of a landscape recalls an earlier encounter with the same scenery and the memories that the earlier encounter later provoked:

> Though absent long
> These forms of beauty have not been to me,
> As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
> But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart…[25]

Such associational interconnections may, for Hutcheson, produce certain trains of emotions but the associations which accompany them cannot be any portion of the 'beauty' to which Wordsworth responds in the landscape. Any suggestion that beauty might be a function of associational recall would make beauty relative to the associational contexts within which it was experienced, so that perceptions of the same object would not be experiences of the same beauty. Hutcheson's 'internal sense' is a passive Power of receiving Ideas of Beauty from all Objects in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety'.[26] Its passivity is crucial: it receives and recognises the beautiful because it is as sensitive to beauty as the eye is sensitive to light. Association is, for Hutcheson, an active process which interferes with and potentially displaces our recognition of the beautiful. Thus,

> We know how agreeable a very wild Country may be to any Person who has spent the chearful Days of his Youth in it, and how disagreeable

25 William Wordsworth, 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' in Stephen Gill (ed.), *William Wordsworth* (Oxford, 1984), 132.

26 Hutcheson, *An Inquiry*, 67.

> very beautiful Places may be, if they were the Scenes of his Misery. And this may help us in many Cases to account for the Diversitys of Fancy, without denying the Uniformity of our internal Sense of Beauty.[27]

Where associative *activity* is strong it obscures the passive capacity of the internal sense to respond appropriately to cases of 'uniformity amidst variety'. This disruptive interaction of association and the 'internal sense' Hutcheson illustrates by reference to a Goth who,

> is mistaken, when from Education he imagines the Architecture of his country to be the most perfect: and a Conjunction of some hostile Ideas, may make him have an Aversion to Roman Buildings, and study to demolish them, as some of our Reformers did the Popish Buildings, not being able to separate the Ideas of the superstitious Worship, from the Forms of the Buildings where it was practised: and yet it is still real Beauty which pleases the Goth, founded upon Uniformity amidst Variety. For the Gothick Pillars are uniform to each other, not only in their Sections, which are Lozenge-form'd; but also in their Heights and Ornaments: Their Arches are not one uniform Curve, but yet they are Segments of similar Curves, and generally equal in the same Ranges.[28]

Associations peculiar to the individual or to a society thus intervene to blind the Goth to the recognition of the beauty of roman buildings, but his appreciation of his own architecture, however far it is from classical perfection, is still based on a uniformity which is the universal condition of the beautiful – 'yet it is still real Beauty which pleases the Goth'. An individual can, then, possess the 'internal sense' that recognises beauty in 'uniformity amidst variety' but can also, by particularly strong and active associations, be made insensitive to even the most perfect instances of uniformity amidst variety.

If Hutcheson's example were to be reversed, however, to focus on a roman citizen who thought his own culture's architecture was indeed the most beautiful, not because he recognised in its proportions a perfect instance of 'uniformity amidst diversity', but because he associated it so strongly with power and authority, how would we be able to distinguish that associative activity from an aesthetic response to 'uniformity amidst diversity'? In the case of the Goth it is easy, because his associations are preventing his recognition

27 Ibid., 69.
28 Ibid., 65.

of something we 'know' to be beautiful, but how would we distinguish the experience of someone whose response to that object was based not on the 'internal sense' but on an associative reaction, an associative reaction that was taken to *be* the experience of beauty? In such a case the person would describe the object as 'beautiful', would apparently respond appropriately to it *as* beautiful, and yet, according to Hutcheson, would be using the wrong criterion for distinguishing beauty. Hutcheson's problem with cases in which the beautiful is not obscured – indeed, may even be enhanced – by association is made clear in Kivy's account of Hutcheson's argument:

> Thus, Mr. A may mistake his pleasant feeling of security which, through the association of ideas, he has come to connect with a particular house, for the feeling of beauty and think the house beautiful when it is not; whereas Mr. B, free of this association, sees immediately that the house is totally lacking in beauty. The house lacks *uniformity amidst variety* and causes the idea of beauty neither in Mr. A nor in Mr. B. But it causes *another* pleasant idea in Mr. A which he mistakes for the idea of beauty. In this case, too, the association of ideas is responsible for Mr. A's and Mr. B's perceiving different phenomenal objects in response to the same primary qualities. There is, however, no idea of beauty involved in the case at all.[29]

What though, if the house were indeed beautiful? How would we distinguish between Mr A's 'pleasant idea' and Mr. B's *recognition* of its beauty – and how would we be able to tell that Mr. B didn't himself have a set of associations which enhanced the 'uniformity amidst variety' that he claimed to perceive? Hutcheson's attempt to purify aesthetic experience so that it cannot be distorted by the subjective workings of association does not lead to the recognition of a 'singular' object, unmodified by association, but leads to what his own examples imply to be an impossibility – a perception and a judgment on the part of an observer that is uncontaminated by any associations. Hutcheson's discussion is haunted by association because in any real situation where someone appears to be responding to beauty, it is impossible to be certain that their experience is not, or is not *also*, the product of association – a set of 'pleasant ideas' – rather than the receptivity of the 'internal sense' to the combination of unity and diversity that it is designed to recognise, and

29 Kivy, *The Seventh Sense*, 84.

which must be 'antecedent to all Custom, Education or Example'.[30] In any real case of the experience of the beautiful it will be impossible to be assured of such clarity of perception that we can be certain it is entirely free of 'Custom, Education or Example' – especially given that,

> The Effect of Education is this, that thereby we receive many speculative Opinions, which are sometimes true and sometimes false; and are often led to believe that Objects may be naturally apt to give Pleasure or Pain to our external Senses, which in reality have no such Qualitys. And further, by Education there are some strong Associations of Ideas without any Reason, by mere Accident sometimes, as well as by Design, which it is very hard for us ever after to break asunder.[31]

The power of association disrupts Hutcheson's argument as profoundly as that argument insists it disrupts the experience of beauty.

When associationism eventually displaced Hutcheson's 'internal sense' theory in the work of Alison and Stewart, it by no means, however, discarded Hutcheson's insights into the aesthetic, despite Kivy's belief that even the ghost of his theory was then laid to rest. When Alison and then Stewart analysed the beautiful and the sublime as the *product* of trains of associations rather than the perception of an 'internal sense', they abandoned neither 'uniformity' nor 'diversity' as key components in aesthetic experience. For Alison, what distinguishes aesthetic experience from all other experience is the freedom of the mind to follow the associations evoked by, and maintained by, a particular emotion: contemplating an autumnal scene, Alison asks,

> Who is there, who, at this season, does not feel his mind impressed with a sentiment of melancholy? Or who is able to resist that current of thought, which, from such appearances of decay, so naturally leads him to the solemn imagination of that inevitable fate, which is to bring on alike the decay of life, of empire, and of nature itself? In such cases of emotion, every man must have felt, that the character of the scene is no sooner impressed upon his mind, than various trains of correspondent imagery rise before his imagination; that whatever may be the nature of the impression, the general tone of his thoughts partakes of this nature

30 Hutcheson, *An Inquiry*, 70.
31 Ibid., 72.

> or character; and that his delight is proportioned to the degree in which this uniformity of character prevails.[32]

The emotion provides the 'uniformity of character' of the experience while the various attendant 'trains of correspondent imagery' provide the diversity that make possible an aesthetic experience: Hutchesonian 'passivity' on the part of the 'internal sense' is replaced by a passivity towards the active purposes of life in which the imagination is released into spontaneous activity:

> In such trains of imagination, no labour of thought, or habits of attention are required: they rise spontaneously in the mind, upon the prospect of any object to which they bear the slightest resemblance, and they lead it almost insensibly along, in a kind of bewitching reverie, through all its store of pleasing or interesting conceptions.[33]

The terms of Hutcheson's account are not discarded by Alison but transposed as the necessary characteristics of associational 'reverie': rather than the 'internal sense' model being overthrown by the associationists, it was in terms of the key elements of Hutcheson's theory that they explained why some trains of association – those both unified and various – produced experiences of the beautiful and the sublime while some – having a practical direction – did not. Associational *activity* in a context where associations are undirected by any practical purpose replaces Hutchesonian *passivity* as the ground of aesthetic experience, and the difference in each individual's associational capacity explains both why some people show no sign of recognising the beautiful and the diversity of tastes among those who do. Hutcheson's theories are adapted to explain why what he tried to dismiss as irrelevant to the perception of beauty – association – is actually its foundation.

Associationists could so easily adopt Hutchesonian categories, however, because Hutcheson had already included within his argument something which closely resembled an associationist account, though it was focused on the 'Absolute Beauty' in which 'we perceive in Objects without comparison to any thing external',[34] and which might seem, therefore, to be entirely antithetic to associationist theories of beauty. But Hutcheson's account of the beauty of mathematical theorems introduces the notion of 'multitude' as central to the

32 Alison, *Essays on Taste*, I, 17.
33 Ibid., 21–2.
34 Hutcheson, *An Inquiry*, 27.

experience of beauty: general theorems, Hutcheson argues, reduced apparently disorderly multitudes to a revelatory singularity:

> That we may the better discern this Agreement, or Unity of an Infinity of Objects, in the general Theorem, to be the Foundation of the Beauty or Pleasure attending their Discovery, let us compare our Satisfaction in such Discoverys, with the uneasy state of Mind in which we are, when we can only measure Lines, or Surfaces, by a Scale, or are making Experiments which we can reduce to no general Canon, but only heaping up a Multitude of particular incoherent Observations. Now each of these Trials discovers a new Truth, but with no Pleasure or Beauty, notwithstanding the Variety, till we can discover some sort of Unity, or reduce them to some general Canon.[35]

When 'a Multitude of particular incoherent Observations' is transformed into 'unity' we experience 'Pleasure' and 'Beauty', but the 'Pleasure' and the 'Beauty' depend on our awareness both of the multitude and the unity – it is the interaction of the potential 'infinite individuals'[36] of the multitude and the singularity of the unity of the theorem that produces our sense of 'how beautiful is the Theorem, and how we are ravish'd with its first Discovery!'[37] Indeed,

> in one Theorem we may find included, with the most exact Agreement, an infinite Multitude of particular Truths; nay, often an Infinity of Infinites: so that altho the Necessity of forming abstract Ideas, and universal Theorems, arises perhaps from the Limitation of our Minds, which cannot admit an infinite Multitude of singular Ideas or Judgments at once, yet this Power gives us an Evidence of the Largeness of the human Capacity above our Imagination. Thus for instance, the 47th Proposition of the first Book of Euclid's *Elements* contains an infinite Multitude of Truths, concerning the infinite possible Sizes of right-angled Triangles, as you make the Area greater or less; and in each of these Sizes you may find an infinite Multitude of dissimilar Triangles,

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.

> as you vary the Proportion of the Base to the Perpendicular; all which Infinitys of Infinites agree in the general Theorem.[38]

The aesthetic experience of mathematical truths requires the awareness of 'infintys of infinites' which are yet reducible to a singularity: 'original beauty' is not in the multitude of individual measurements, nor in the theorem which explains them, but in the interaction of the 'multitude' and the 'singular', and the mind's consciousness of their inter-relationship. It is precisely such a structure which underlies Alison and Stewart's associationist accounts of beauty: in Hutcheson's account, beauty is revealed when a multitude ('infinitys of infintes') is discovered to be contained within a singularity (the theorem), whereas for the associationists singularity (the original encounter with an aesthetic object) generates multitudes of the possible associations that can be discovered in 'reverie'. Both accounts depend on the interaction of singularity and multitude: the associationist aesthetic is, in effect, a mirror image of Hutcheson's account of this aspect of 'original' or 'absolute' beauty, its translation into the very domain which Hutcheson wanted to exclude from the conception of beauty. Associationism developed as the major aesthetic theory of the late eighteenth century – and, indeed of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – not by rejecting Hutcheson but by applying one aspect of his analysis – the theorems of mathematics – to another – his analysis of the disruptive effects of association – and discovering that the virtues of the former were, in fact, equally the virtues of the latter.

3 Interinanimations

When W. B Yeats was asked to edit the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, he chose as the starting point of the 'modern' a section from Walter Pater's *The Renaissance*, converting the original prose into lines of poetry:

> *Mona Lisa*
>
> She is older than the rocks among which she sits;
> Like the Vampire,
> She has been dead many times,

38 Ibid., 36.

> And learned the secrets of the grave;
> And has been a diver in deep seas,
> And keeps their fallen day about her;
> And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants;
> And, as Leda,
> Was the mother of Helen of Troy,
> And, as St Anne,
> Was the mother of Mary;
> And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes,
> And lives
> Only in the delicacy
> With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,
> And tinged the eyelids and the hands.[39]

Pater's description of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* is the associative recollection of a particular viewer as he traces all the memories of other women in art, religion and mythology that it suggests. Pater, however, turns the recollective power of an associationist epistemology into an ontology in which what is recollected appears to be not merely memory but the actuality of history. Each recollection, therefore, seems to be a version of *Mona Lisa* herself, as though she has lived not only her own life but the lives of the multitudes whom her image evokes. Pater's account of Leonardo's masterpiece is, for Yeats, the epitome of a modernity in which reality is structured like the associational workings of the mind: reality is composed by the memories which association calls up and sets in motion to disturb the world – as Leopold Bloom unknowingly calls Ulysses into the Dublin of 1906.

The intense subjectivity of this account of art might appear heroic to someone like Yeats, with his belief in an aristocracy that acted in defiance of 'what the blind and ignorant town/Imagines best to make it thrive',[40] but to others that emphasis on subjective response was likely to produce only a flaccid substitution of personal emotions for any substantial engagement with the work of art. It was to test the *relevance* of readers' responses that I. A. Richards set up the experiment which became, in 1929, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* – which might more rightly have been subtitled *A Study of*

39 Yeats, *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, 1.

40 W. B. Yeats, 'To a Wealthy Man who Promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were Proved the People Wanted Pictures', *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1950), 119.

Literary Misjudgment, since what Richards sought to identify were the ways in which the readings of poems produced by his students failed to engage with what the poem actually (in his view) sought to convey. What associationists would have accepted as the necessary divergence of the reading mind from the text on the page, as it passed into its own related memories in order to enter into that state of reverie in which it can discover beauty, Richards regards as an unhealthy evasion of reality:

> But images are erratic things: lively images aroused in one mind need have no similarity to the equally lively images stirred by the same line of poetry in another, and neither set need have anything to do with any images which may have existed in the poet's mind. Here is a troublesome source of critical deviations.[41]

Equally, many associations are, for Richards, either 'mnemonic irrelevancies', defined as 'misleading effects of the reader's being reminded of some personal scene or adventure, erratic associations, the interference of emotional reverberations from a past which may have nothing to do with the poem',[42] or 'stock responses', in which 'a poem seems to, or does, involve views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind, so that what happens appears to be more of the reader's doing than the poet's'.[43] 'Practical criticism' is the surgical removal from aesthetic experience of those personal recollections which associationist theories had encouraged – and even, presumably, of that larger body of associations which derived from the various versions of the unconscious that associationists used to 'depersonalise' the experience of beauty, whether it was Yeats's 'great memory' or the myths described in J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) that underpinned T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* of 1922. For Richards, associational misreading has been so pervasive that he has to insist that 'poetry is a mode of communication':

> What it communicates and how it does so and the worth of what is communicated form the subject-matter of criticism. It follows that criticism itself is very largely, though not wholly, an exercise in navigation. It is all the more surprising then that no treatise on the art and science of intellectual and emotional navigation has yet been written;

41 I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (London, 1964; 1929), 15.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.

> for logic, which might appear to cover part of this field, in actuality hardly touches it.[44]

Allowing the poem to *communicate* requires constant vigilance against the introduction of irrelevant materials, a level of vigilance which means we must 'look upon a successful interpretation, a correct understanding, as a triumph against odds' – indeed, 'we must cease to regard misinterpretation as a mere unlucky accident' but 'must treat it as the normal and probable event'.[45]

Richards's antidote to this pessimistic view of art's communicable potential and, therefore, the potential of a real – rather than a delusory – experience of beauty is the development of a technique – or techniques – of reading which would produce:

> …not only an accurate direction of thought, a correct evocation of feeling, an exact apprehension of tone, and a precise recognition of intention, but further it would get these contributory meanings in their right order and proportion to one another, and seize – though not in terms of explicit thought – their interdependence upon one another, their sequences and interrelations.[46]

Stripped of irrelevant associative material, our response to a work of art becomes a highly complex interaction between its multiple ways of communicating. These, however, must be teased out as being 'internal' to the poem rather than associative externalities, 'for the value of a passage frequently hangs upon this *internal order* among its contributory meanings',[47] an internal order in the work of art which subsequently produces an internal order in the person experiencing the art-work: 'It is an actual formation in the receptive mind of a whole condition of feeling and awareness corresponding, in due order, to the original meaning which is being discerned'.[48] The receptive mind and original meaning become one and the same thing. Richards' argument, in effect, replicates Hutcheson's 'internal sense', but instead of a sense which immediately apprehends the beauty to which it is designed to respond, Richards's receptive mind is the product of much training, training by which it

44 Ibid., 11.
45 Ibid., 336.
46 Ibid., 332.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 333.

is made capable of recognising the inner complexity of the work of art, allowing an effective communication to take place as the basis for a valid, rather than a merely personal, aesthetic experience:

> The poet is not writing as a scientist. He uses these words because the interest whose movement is the growth of the poem combine to bring them, just in this form, into his consciousness *as a means of ordering, controlling and consolidating* the uttered experience of which they are themselves a main part. The experience itself, the tide of impulses sweeping through the mind, is the source and sanction of the words. They represent this experience itself, not any set of perceptions or reflections, though often to a reader who approaches the poem wrongly they will seem to be only a series of remarks about other things. But to a suitable reader the words – if they actually spring from experience and are not due to verbal habits, to the desire to be effective, to factitious excogitation, to imitation, to irrelevant contrivances, or to any other of the failings which prevent most people from writing poetry – the words will reproduce in his mind a similar play of interests putting him for the while into a similar situation and leading to the same response.[49]

For Richards, the recognition of communicative meaning and aesthetic value will be as certain in the correctly trained and developed mind as they were to Hutcheson's 'internal sense' – it is a hard-won, rather than an inherent, response to beauty but it is no less certain. Winnowing and rejecting all the stock responses and the personal associations a poem might generate, the 'practical critic' will discover the interconnections between all the elements of a poem that allow him to experience it as a moment which 'brings into play as many as possible of [one's] positive interests'.[50] The artist is characterised by an ability to bring order to experience, or, rather to bring experience into order, thereby achieving what all of us seek at every moment in our lives:

> We should picture the mind as a system of very delicately poised balances, a system which so long as we are in health is constantly *growing*. Every situation we come into disturbs some of those balances to some

49 I. A. Richards, *Poetries and Sciences* (London, 1970; 1926), 33.
50 Ibid., 38.

> degree. The ways in which they swing back to a new equipoise are the impulses with which we respond to the situation.[51]

For Richards, 'every experience is essentially some interest or group of interests swinging back to rest',[52] and that state of balance is what is achieved in a good poem – it allows us to *experience indirectly* the balance of competing forces that we strive to achieve in our own lives. An effective poem is the model of a mind in harmony with itself and with the world it inhabits, and it is so because of its capacity to turn multitudinous experiences – in the case of a poem, multitudinous potential *meanings* – into a unity which the reader can recreate.[53]

Richards's ultimate object, however, is only fully realised when the reader or perceiver is able to generate the same multitudinousness by which Hutcheson was so impressed in mathematical theorems and which Alison adopted into his account of the workings of association. For Richards, a fully realised poem is a multitude of possible meanings poised in a unity. In 1942 Richards published an essay entitled 'The Interaction of Words', in which he described the process of mutual modification that words undergo when brought together in a poem. When he came to reprint the essay in 1973 he retitled it, 'The Interinanimations of Words' – adopting a word which Herbert Grierson had discovered in a manuscript version of John Donne's 'The Extasie', and which was first made available to the world in Grierson's edition of Donne's poetry published in 1912. No other editor of Donne had ever noticed this word and in his notes Grierson gives no example of Donne ever having used the word elsewhere, but Grierson makes it crucial to what he takes to be one of Donne's most important poems, which he presents as an exposition of Donne's 'philosophy of love', one in which the body and soul – unlike in earlier Renaissance literature – are seen as having equal value, and in which the union of two bodies and two souls is the ultimate unity to which human beings can aspire.

> But the body has its function also, without which the soul could not fulfil its: and that function is 'sense'. It is through this medium that human souls must operate to obtain knowledge of each other. The

51 Ibid., 25.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 39.

> bodies must yield their forces or faculties ('sense' in all its forms, especially sight and touch – hands and eyes) to us before our souls can become one.[54]

In an essay on 'The Exstasie' (1957), Richards glossed *interinanimates* as being 'like two logs each of which makes the other flame the better',[55] and adopts Grierson's discovery as the ultimate definition of what poetry, and, therefore, all art strives to achieve, because two minds, the mind of the artist and the mind of reader or observer, are united by the artwork in an experience which transcends and *interinanimates* them both.

Richards's essay on 'The Interinanimations of Words' is, in part, a comparison between Donne's kind of poetry and the poetry of John Dryden, designed to show that Dryden's words are 'in routine conventional relations' – 'they do not induce revolutions in one another'[56] – while,

> In the Donne, I suggest, there is prodigious activity between the words as we read them. Following, exploring, realizing, BECOMING that activity is, I suggest, the essential thing in reading the poem. Understanding it is not a preparation for reading the poem. It is itself the poem. And it is a constructive, hazardous, free creative process, a process of conception through which a new being is growing in the mind.[57]

As John Paul Russo notes, interinanimation, for Richards, 'stands above and includes the "equilibrium of opposed impulses" for mental integration and poetic wholeness. It calls attention to the fact that items do not necessarily stand in strict opposition or provoke their opposites. Rather, there is "multiplicity, the limitless variety, of the linkages among phrases", and likewise among thoughts.'[58] That 'multiplicity', that 'limitless variety' held within the unity of the poetic organisation is, I suggest, Richards's recapitulation of Hutcheson's fundamental principle of aesthetic experience, and, like Hutcheson's, is designed to circumvent the accidental impact of associations while replicating, in a contained and purified form, the emphasis in the associationist account of aesthetic experience of the force of multitude: 'interinanimations'

54 Herbert J. C. Grierson (ed.), *The Poems of John Donne* (Oxford, 1912), II, 44.

55 I. A. Richards, *Poetries: Their Media and Ends: A Collection of essays by I. A. Richards published to celebrate his 80th birthday*, ed. Trevor Eaton (The Hague, 1974), 90.

56 Ibid., 77.

57 Ibid.

58 John Paul Russo, *I. A. Richards: His Life and Work* (Baltimore, MA, 1989), 265–6.

is, for Richards, the multiplicity of meaning that a poem can generate without recourse to (merely) individual associations:

> I conceive then a word, as poetry is concerned with it, and as separated from the mere physical or sensory occasion, to be a component of an act of the mind so subtly dependent on the other components of this act and of other acts that it can be distinguished from these interinanimations only as a convenience of discourse. It sounds nonsense to say that a word is its interinanimations with other words; but that is a short way of saying what Poetics is always in danger of overlooking. Words only work together. We understand no word except in and through its interinanimations with other words.[59]

In the well-trained appropriate reader, a poem is limitless because it is always creating new interconnections that animate new possibilities of meaning.

4 Empiricism, Beauty and the Imagination

When I. A. Richards published *Coleridge on the Imagination* in 1935 it was taken by many of his critics as an apostasy from his earlier 'positivist' or 'empiricist' thought and an indication of his acceptance that neither 'positivism' nor 'empiricism' could give an adequate account of the workings of the imagination.[60] In this, of course, he seemed to be replicating the intellectual journey

59 Richards, *Poetries: Their Media and Ends*, 76.

60 See, for instance, John Crowe Ransom, 'A Psychologist Looks at Poetry', 'his change is like what evangelists call a "conversion". I applaud the regeneration', John Constable (ed.), *I. A. Richards and his Critics: Selected Reviews and Critical Articles* (London, 2001), 456; see also Richard Foster's commentary on Ransom's account, 'The Romanticism of I. A. Richards Author(s)', *ELH*, 26 (1959), 91–101: 'I think such passages as those we have been citing illustrate the essential meaning of Richards' "conversion." All of them implement the dethroning of the scientistic icon with its attendant statistical and instrumental imageries and its doctrines of precision and objectivity, and the elevation in its place of a modern romantic version of the humanistic icon: Man – sensitive, intuitive, complex, free and creative in his interminable quest to realize the splendor, and perhaps the tragedy, of his own nature. There is the tone almost of contrition in this sentence from a recent essay collected in his volume *Speculative Instruments*: "I did hold, and still do, that science is true – i. e. that it says verifiable things – but to protect us from thinking that it is true in other and equally important senses is just what we need Philosophy … for."'

of Coleridge himself, who, as Richards records, wrote to a correspondent on March 16, 1801 that,

> The interval since my last letter has been filled up by me in the most intense study. If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only *completely extricated the notions of time and space,* but have overthrown the doctrine of association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels.[61]

Richards also seems to be retracing the experience of the thinker whom he regards as providing the 'best introduction'[62] to Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, who famously recorded in his autobiography that he suffered some kind of breakdown as a result of the restrictions of his father's Benthamite educational principles, subsequently recovering by reading the literature which Benthamite empiricism regarded as being without significance.[63] This journey from empiricism to transcendentalism is thus both personal – the realisation of a higher potentiality of the mind than had been previously acknowledged – and historical – the overcoming of the limitations of an essentially eighteenth-century conception of our relationship to the world by the alternative possibilities opened up by a Kantian idealism: as George Santayana put it, 'empiricism, understood in this psychological way, [was] the starting point for transcendentalism'.[64]

But like John Stuart Mill, who ends his essay on Bentham and Coleridge by asserting his continued commitment to his father's empirical philosophy,[65] Richards resists such co-option: his account of Coleridge is written 'as a Benthamite also',[66] and one who believes that Coleridge's importance is that he sought to articulate what would, in fact, be posited by later theories of psychology:

61 I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London, 1934), 15.

62 Ibid., 17.

63 See John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, eds. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto, 1981; 33 vols), I, 137.

64 George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New York, 1920), 28.

65 Mill writes that the 'truth on this much debated question lies with the school of Locke and Bentham' for there is 'no ground for believing that anything can be the object of our knowledge except experience'. Mill, 'Coleridge' in idem, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Vol.* X, *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society* (Toronto, 1969), 128.

66 Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, 18.

> There can be little doubt, in the light of subsequent developments, that Coleridge as against Associationism of the Hartley-Condillac type was right all along the line. But, and here he exemplified a frequent pattern of philosophic advance, what has proved him right has been constructive developments on the part of the very materialistic-mechanistic doctrines that he was attacking – developments of a kind that he did not foresee, made in the teeth of the arguments and exhortations the Coleridge of 1817 was most attached to. Were Coleridge alive now, he would, I hope, be applauding and improving doctrines of the type he, as a metaphysician, thought least promising in his own day.[67]

Richards's Coleridge is the Coleridge whose psychology showed 'a very curious prescience of the developments to come',[68] which allows him to be re-read in terms of those later developments. And while Richards is keen to follow Coleridge's intuition about the difference between 'fancy' – according to Coleridge the mechanical connecting of ideas according to the principles of association – and 'imagination', which fuses ideas into new wholes, Richards reinterprets the products of 'imagination' as 'interinanimations', in which 'the more the image is followed up, the more links of relevance between the units are discovered'.[69] This is an insight traced not to the influence of German philosophy but to the empiricism of John Stuart Mill:

> A word then by this sort of definition is a permanent set of possibilities of understanding, much as John Stuart Mill's table was a permanent possibility of sensation. And as the sensations the table yields depend on the angle you look from, the other things you see it with, the air, your glasses, your eyes and the light … so how a word is understood depends on the other words you hear it with, and the other frames you have heard it in, on the whole setting present and past in which it has developed as a part of your mind. But the interinanimations of words with one another and with other things are far more complex than can be paralleled anywhere except by such things as pictures, music or the expressions of faces which are other modes of languages. Language, as

67 Ibid., 67.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 83.

> understood is the mind itself at work and these interinanimations of words are interdependencies of our own being.[70]

Coleridge's work may be prescient of later developments in psychology and may help us distinguish what characterises the greatest works of literature but those distinctions can be explained entirely within the ambit of an empiricist conception of the mind – in part, perhaps, as James Engell insists, because Coleridge's thought was also a summation of eighteenth-century theories of the nature of the imagination and of the beautiful, derived from his reading of 'nearly every other writer who discussed the subject'.[71] And here, Richards traces the origin of Coleridge's argument about the nature of the imagination to an argument which seems to recapitulate Hutcheson's account of the 'internal sense'; Richards quotes a passage from Coleridge which seems to be founded on the belief in an 'inner sense':

> One man's consciousness extends only to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations caused in him by external impressions; another enlarges his inner sense to a consciousness of forms and quantity, a third in addition to the image is conscious of the conception or notion of the thing; a fourth attains to notion of his notions – he reflects upon his own reflections; and thus we may say without impropriety that the one possesses more or less inner sense than the other.[72]

To a person from a primitive people, Coleridge suggests, 'our most popular philosophy would be wholly unintelligible' because 'the sense, the inward organ for it, is not yet born in him'.[73] Without the 'inward organ', the 'internal sense', that allows us to perceive the 'notion of [our] notions', we cannot begin to understand the 'coincidence of an object with a subject' which it is the business of the imagination to realise in us. The importance of this 'inner sense' is underlined in the second essay of 'On the Principles of General Criticism' where Coleridge, following Hutcheson, attempts to set aside the workings of association – whose accidents 'please us because they please us (in which case

70 Richards, *Poetries: Their Media and Ends*, 75–6.

71 James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 328.

72 Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, 46, quoting Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), I, 172.

73 Ibid., 1, 173.

it would be impossible either to praise or to condemn any man's taste ...)'[74] – in favour of the belief that,

> there exists in the constitution of the human soul a sense, and a regulative principle, which may indeed be stifled and latent in some, and be perverted in and denaturalized in others, yet is nevertheless universal in a given state of intellectual and moral culture; which is independent of local and temporary circumstances, and dependent only on the degree in which the faculties of the mind are developed; and which, consequently, it is our duty to cultivate and improve, as soon as the sense of its actual existence dawns upon us.[75]

But just as Coleridge founds his argument on the historical development of an 'inner sense' – one which Hutcheson, of course, takes to be God-given – so he concludes that beauty is indeed a Hutchesonian mixture of 'uniformity amidst variety': imagination, he states is 'the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others and by a sort of *fusion to force many into one*',[76] an outcome which is translated into Coleridgean vocabulary as 'unity in multeity':

> With regard to works in all the branches of the fine arts, I may remark that the pleasure arising from novelty must of course be allowed its due place and weight. This pleasure consists in the identity of two opposite elements, that is to say – sameness and variety. If in the midst of the variety there be not some fixed object for the attention, the unceasing succession of the variety will prevent the mind from observing the difference of the individual objects; and the only thing remaining will be the succession, which will then produce precisely the same effect as sameness. This we experience when we let the trees or hedges pass before the fixed eye during a rapid movement in a carriage, or on the other hand, when we suffer a file of soldiers or ranks of men in procession to go on before us without resting the eye on any one in particular. In order to derive pleasure from the occupation of the mind, the principle of unity must always be present, so that in the midst of the multeity

74 Ibid., 2, 227. ('On the Principles of General Criticism')

75 Ibid. Shawcross notes the parallel with Hutcheson (II, 310), and suggests the 'regulative principle' derives from Kant.

76 Thomas Middleton Raysor (ed.), *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism* (London, 1930), 1, 212–13.

> the centripetal force be never suspended, nor the sense be fatigued by the predominance of the centrifugal force. This unity in multeity I have elsewhere stated as the principle of beauty.[77]

Far from Hutcheson's 'ghost' having been laid to rest by the associationists, Hutcheson's notions of the 'internal sense', of 'uniformity amidst diversity', and of the multitudinous potential of the aesthetic object, haunt subsequent discussions of art and beauty with all the insistence of a very restless ghost. Indeed, Coleridge derives his notion of 'multeity' from precisely the same 'original' beauty that Hutcheson had identified:

> Nay, in order to express '*the many' as simply contra-distinguished from 'the one',* I have hazarded the smile of the reader, by introducing to his acquaintance, from the forgotten terminology of the old schoolmen, the phrase *multëity*, because I felt that I could not substitute *multitude*, without more or less connecting with the notion of 'a great many'. Thus the Philosopher of the later Platonic, or Alexandrine school, named the triangle the first-born of beauty, it being the first and simplest symbol of *multëity in unity*.[78]

For an intellectual historian like M. H. Abrams, Coleridge's *multëity in unity* is symptomatic of the romantic conceptions of the beautiful that he shared with German thinkers and that became characteristic of a post-associationist, romantic art:

> Coleridge, like the German critics with whom he has close affinity, elevated the variegated multeity in unity of modern or 'romantic' art over what he regarded as the simpler unity of more uniform materials in the in the products of the Greeks and Romans.[79]

Hutcheson's own aesthetic taste may have been for the classical, but his description of mathematical beauty is already an articulation of *multëity in unity* and, rather than being made redundant by later developments in aesthetic theory, provided the foundations of an account of aesthetic experience that was to continue to shape the responses of 'modern' sensibilities from the

77 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2, 262. ('On the Principles of General Criticism')
78 Ibid., 2, 230. ('On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts')
79 Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 221. Hutcheson does not feature in Abrams account.

period of 'romanticism' into that of 'modernism'. Kivy profoundly underestimates Hutcheson's influence on subsequent aesthetic theorising: Hutcheson's 'uniformity amidst diversity', along with his analysis of the beauty produced by 'Infinitys of Infinites', established the boundaries within which British aesthetic theory developed throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

University of Aberdeen