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Francis Hutcheson's Aesthetics and his Critics in Ireland: Charles-Louis de Villette and Edmund Burke

Daniel Carey

In his own time as much as in ours, the response to Francis Hutcheson's philosophy has concentrated above all on his contribution to moral thought, especially the articulation of a so-called 'moral sense'.¹ The moral sense as described by Hutcheson responds to events in the world by notifying the subject of pleasure when experiencing or observing acts of benevolence, and displeasure when witnessing their opposite. Hutcheson's aesthetic theory has not preoccupied critics to the same extent, despite the fact that it formed an important, indeed intrinsic part of his argument in *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). In a vein that Shaftesbury had influentially explored before him, Hutcheson began his account by establishing the model of an internal aesthetic sense which made experience of beauty, harmony, form and order possible. His confidence that his audience would accept the empirical existence of such a sense facilitated the transition to the argument about a parallel *moral* sense.

Quite apart from its structural significance in his system, there are reasons for attending to Hutcheson's aesthetic argument on its own terms. Paul Guyer has recently argued in his *History of Modern Aesthetics* that 'what we now call aesthetics as a specialty within academic philosophy began in Britain with the *Treatise Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* by Francis Hutcheson', i.e. the first of the two treatises that constituted the *Inquiry*.² Scholarly accounts of Hutcheson's impact in the field of aesthetics and the development of this area of discussion after him typically focus on his Scottish successors, from David

1 See Daniel Carey, 'Francis Hutcheson's Philosophy and the Scottish Enlightenment: Reception, Reputation, and Legacy' in Aaron Garrett and James A. Harris (eds.), *Scottish Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2015), I, 36–76.

2 Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, vol. 1: *The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2014), 98. According to Peter Kivy, 'the first of the two treatises [in the *Inquiry*]... is certainly the first systematic philosophical treatment in English of what we would now call "aesthetics"', Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics* (Oxford, 2003, 2nd edn), 24.

Hume to Archibald Alison, Alexander Gerard, Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. The purpose of this essay is to look specifically at the reaction Hutcheson received to his aesthetic philosophy in Ireland, where his career developed in running a dissenting academy in Dublin the 1720s and where he published his most significant work before taking up his appointment as Professor Moral Philosophy in Glasgow in 1730. The major Irish figure is of course Edmund Burke, whose *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, with its echo of Hutcheson's title, appeared in 1757. But I also discuss a now forgotten thinker who responded with a significant analysis of Hutcheson, the Huguenot pastor based in Dublin, Charles-Louis de Villette, writing in 1750 not long after Hutcheson's death.

1 Hutcheson's aesthetics

Before turning to these two critics, we need a fuller appreciation of the key commitments that characterize Hutcheson's aesthetics. His most important contribution was the formal identification and description of an internal sense, modeled on the external senses, which has the function of automatically and naturally registering responses. While the external senses supply sensory data, the internal sense of the aesthetic notifies us of pleasure attached to our experience of certain objects. Some things 'necessarily please us' according to Hutcheson. In other words, our reactions to them are both immediate, natural and in some sense obligatory. In the case of the aesthetic we respond pleasurably to 'the Beauty of Regularity, Order, [and] Harmony' in particular.³

The internal sense model had a number of advantages for Hutcheson. If aesthetic reactions are immediate and necessary then they are not subject to calculation of personal advantage or interest. In that respect they do not require ratiocination.⁴ In other words, they constitute disinterested responses, to the extent that they occur prior to some form of reckoning of the pleasure they will give us. The external senses are passive and so is the internal sense of beauty. Thus he could block the hedonist understanding of human nature, most famously expounded by Hobbes but which had been developed with polemical effect in the eighteenth century by Bernard

3 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis, 2008, rev. edn), 8, 9.

4 Kivy questions whether immediacy in Hutcheson's system can be used to distinguish the operations of sense from reason, cf. Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 40–2.

Mandeville. The sense model also enabled Hutcheson to deny another strand of Mandeville's argument, namely that custom and education accounted for our tastes and predilections. The internal sense, as a natural endowment, precedes education, which only supervenes on our untutored reactions. In a succinct statement of his convictions, Hutcheson argued:

the Pleasure does not arise from any Knowledge of Principles, Proportions, Causes, or of the Usefulness of the Object; but strikes us at first with the Idea of Beauty: nor does the more accurate Knowledge increase this Pleasure of Beauty, however it may super-add a distinct rational Pleasure from prospects of Advantage, or from the Increase of Knowledge.⁵

There was of course a built in danger of multiplying the number of internal senses indefinitely. Hutcheson seems to have been unmoved by the objection. Indeed, in the *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728), Hutcheson began elaborating such senses considerably.⁶ On his account, any ideas occurring independently of the will accompanied by pain or pleasure could be regarded as being received by a sense, and he thought, accordingly, that 'there were many other *Senses* besides those commonly explained'. He confirmed the existence of an aesthetic sense (now identified with the Addisonian pleasures of the imagination); a public sense – which determines us to take pleasure in the happiness of others and experience uneasiness in their misery, identified with the classical (and Shaftesburian) *sensus communis*; the moral sense; and a sense of honour and shame. But he was also prepared to entertain more classes of this kind, mentioning 'Decency, Dignity, Suitableness to human Nature' and their related opposites

⁵ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 25.

⁶ In the preface to the *Essay*, Hutcheson remarked that the number of external senses could be multiplied to '*Seven or Ten*', while '*Multitudes of Perceptions*' occurred without relation to the external senses – he noted ideas of number, duration, proportion, virtue, and vice, as well as '*Pleasures of Honour, of Congratulation; the Pains of Remorse, Shame, Sympathy, and many others*'. *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. A. Garrett (Indianapolis, 2002), 5. In the posthumously published *System of Moral Philosophy*, Hutcheson affirmed a 'sense of decency or dignity' (London, 1755; 2 vols), I, 27. For further discussion, see Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 34–6. It is clear from Hutcheson's brief discussion of grandeur and novelty as 'two Ideas different from Beauty' that they must also require a sense of their own, see Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 69.

of indecency, meanness and unworthiness, which suggested a potentially capacious array of senses.⁷

In articulating the sense model in his aesthetics (and elsewhere in his philosophy), Hutcheson followed Locke to the extent that he identified the internal sense as receiving 'simple' ideas. That is to say, sensory experience generates 'ideas' passively rather than the mind having responsibility for creating them. But the aesthetic is also, importantly, a domain in which we have 'complex' ideas, which also form a key part of Locke's account. Locke operates with two definitions of complex ideas: in the first, he understands complex ideas as those we acquire when we 'repeat, compare and unite' simple ideas given in perception;⁸ the second definition considers complex ideas as complex insofar as they can be analyzed into constituent simple ideas but that, in their complex form, they may nonetheless be given directly in experience.⁹ In Hutcheson's analysis, we form complex ideas of objects deemed beautiful, regular and harmonious, from which we derive 'vastly greater' pleasure than from mere simple ideas. He has in mind here complexity of the composition or of the components in a work of art or natural setting. Thus, for example, we experience more delight in a 'fine Face, a just Picture' than we do 'with the View of any one Colour, were it as strong and lively as possible', and similarly we are more taken with

a Prospect of the Sun arising among settled Clouds, and colouring their Edges, with a starry Hemisphere, a fine Landskip, a regular Building, than with a clear blue Sky, a smooth Sea, or a large open Plain, not diversify'd by Woods, Hills, Waters, Buildings ... So in Musick, the Pleasure of a fine Composition is incomparably greater than that of any one Note, how sweet, full or swelling soever.¹⁰

If complex ideas can be given in experience, then they require no additional reflection to assimilate but afford pleasure immediately and in greater abundance than more simple scenes and sounds.

Elsewhere the distinction between simple and complex ideas raises potential difficulties that Hutcheson does not address, specifically in relation to his

7 Hutcheson, *Essay*, 17–18.

8 John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), II, ii, 2.

9 Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 46–7.

10 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 22.

model of immediacy. The advantage of the sense model is that the reactions occur spontaneously and without our being able to resist them. But complex ideas – as combinations of simple ideas – seem to admit of a kind of delay to the extent that they are constructed. Later in his discussion, for instance, Hutcheson says of individuals' experience: 'according as their Capacity enlarges, so as to receive and compare more complex Ideas, [they] have a greater Delight in Uniformity, and are pleas'd with its more complex Kinds'.¹¹ An enlarged capacity on the one hand allows us to 'receive' complex ideas directly but on the other to compare such ideas. The former scenario preserves immediacy while the latter implies an interval or 'time delay' which not only militates against immediacy but also invites the cynical Mandevillian interpretation which described our aesthetic responses as essentially artificial and coached, so to speak, by social influences rather than emerging naturally and instantly.

Perhaps the solution runs like this. As Peter Kivy notes, the idea of beauty must be a simple idea in order to need a sense to perceive it (whether or not Hutcheson tells us explicitly that it is simple).¹² But if we suppose that the idea of beauty is identical with the pleasure we experience, then the idea of beauty can remain simple while the things that cause it are complex. This would hold regardless of whether we have a direct perception of a complex idea or construct it ourselves. Once the construction of the idea triggers a pleasure experience, the idea of beauty has been apprehended. There may be a parallel, too, with the fact that a sequence of deductions made from theorems, which entails an interval, is nonetheless accompanied by 'immediate Pleasure'.¹³

The pressing dilemma for Hutcheson, of course, is how to ground the structure of the aesthetic in nature while allowing for and recognising the capacity to develop, expand, and add nuance to our experience,

11 Ibid., 63. See also the change to the fourth edition of the *Inquiry* noted by Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 27, in which Hutcheson moves from defining the sense of beauty as a determination to be pleased 'with any Forms, or Ideas which occur to our Observation' with a determination to be pleased with 'certain complex Forms', *Inquiry*, 8, 199 (in the editions of 1738 known as D2 and D3; see Leidhold's 'Note on the Text', xxiii–xxviii).

12 Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 48–9. An alternative theory of the idea of beauty as a complex idea is advanced by Dabney Townsend, 'Lockean Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 49 (1991), 349–61, 351–3; and for Kivy's reply, *Seventh Sense*, 260–5. See also the discussion in Emily Michael, 'Francis Hutcheson on Aesthetic Perception and Aesthetic Pleasure', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 24 (1984), 241–55.

13 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 38; see also 39.

in part through greater cultivation and exposure to sophisticated forms. He addressed this side of the equation formally in a section ‘Of the Power of Custom, Education, and Example, as to our internal Senses’ (I, vii). Here he allowed that education and custom could indeed have an influence on our ‘antecedent’ internal senses. But it was crucial to recognize that education in itself could never make us ‘apprehend any Qualities in Objects, which we have not naturally Senses capable of perceiving’. With this important proviso, he accepted that education and custom enlarged ‘the Capacity of our Minds to retain and compare the Parts of complex Compositions’. As a result, when encountering ‘the finest Objects’ we ‘grow conscious of a Pleasure far superior to what common Performances excite’.¹⁴ It is worth noting that the pleasure/sense conjunction remains in tact but the process of retaining and comparing takes time and therefore departs from the immediacy model.

For Hutcheson, taste is understood not as aesthetic appreciation but as a power of perception: ‘This greater Capacity of receiving such pleasant Ideas we commonly call a fine Genius or Taste’.¹⁵ Perception can be heightened and cultivated, but it arises from the structure of faculties or ‘powers’ endowed in human nature. The alternative analysis, assigning taste to a capacity for appreciation, would make the aesthetic an affair of judgement and it would be difficult to rescue it from the territory of rational reflection and the cognitive, which would have ceded the ground to rationalist philosophers whom Hutcheson opposed in aesthetics and in morals. I would argue that one of the fundamental strategies adopted by Hutcheson in both of these domains (the moral and aesthetic) is to collapse the moment of perception and judgement.

We will return to this question after we consider what Hutcheson believes is responsible for causing us to designate figures as beautiful. In Section II of his treatise Hutcheson explains that figures exhibiting ‘Uniformity amidst Variety’, in compound ratio, seem to be those that ‘excite’ the idea of beauty in us (if bodies are equal in uniformity, the beauty is as the variety, whereas with those exhibiting the same variety, the beauty is as the uniformity).¹⁶ This first formulation is tentative but it later emerges as foundational.¹⁷ Of course this notion is open

14 Ibid., 72, 73.

15 Ibid., 23.

16 Ibid., 28, 29.

17 See *ibid.*, 35, 41.

to the objection that it comprehends too much or excludes too little and therefore lacks sufficient clarity or definition to do much philosophical work. Hutcheson advances the discussion through examples, consistent with the empirical framing of the argument and its appeal to the intuitive, consensual and proto-phenomenological. He begins with geometric figures which generally increase in beauty in terms of variety as they grow in the number of sides, while beauty in terms of uniformity increases with figures that have more regularity. In works of nature, beauty also stems from uniformity amidst variety, including the movement of the planets, the light and shade that diversify landscapes, and the vast array of species, whether animal or vegetable, which are similar in themselves and yet enormously diversified across the span of nature as a whole. He classes harmony under original or absolute beauty, which he regards as a 'sort of Uniformity' dependent on proportions. Discords in musical composition refresh the ear with variety, he supposes, by 'awakening the Attention, and enlivening the Relish for the succeeding Harmony of Concords'.¹⁸

In section III Hutcheson discusses the beauty of theorems. This is one of his most distinctive contributions.¹⁹ A great advantage of this topic for him is that the reaction to beauty in this context cannot be predicated on the usefulness of the theorem.²⁰ It is a pure reaction and, as such, supports his emphasis on the disinterested character of aesthetic responses.

One of the notable features of Hutcheson's position that he draws attention to more than once is the fact that, as he puts it,

There seems to be no necessary Connection of our pleasing Ideas of Beauty with the Uniformity or Regularity of the Objects, from the Nature of things, antecedent to some Constitution of the Author of our Nature, which has made such Forms pleasant to us.²¹

The voluntarist argument used here is a bit of a puzzle since Hutcheson had followed Shaftesbury as a moralist in making human nature sufficient

¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹ See Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge, 2013), 25–6.

²⁰ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 36, 38, 40.

²¹ Ibid., 46; see also 57, 80.

to grasp virtue and vice, although he emphasised the providential design of such a system.²² It was one of the objections Shaftesbury made about Locke that he had thrown everything into disorder in the moral world by making moral law subject to the will of the deity who could manipulate good and evil according to his wishes rather than their residing in the very structure of things, consonant with a beautiful and orderly universe.²³ Hutcheson seems to feel that ‘other Minds’ – by which he means the minds of animals – might be equipped differently and not respond aesthetically to uniformity. ‘We actually find that the same regular Forms seem not equally to please all the Animals known to us’.²⁴

What counter-arguments does Hutcheson particularly need to combat? Two of them are related. If the internal sense is natural and universal, as Hutcheson insists, it ought to follow that it should produce consensus in the world in aesthetic judgements and taste. Evidence of diversity in aesthetic preferences would seem to tell against both its universality and its naturalness.²⁵ Secondly if diversity can be shown to exist, then the more plausible explanation for it appears to be, as Hutcheson acknowledges, that ‘all our Relish for Beauty, and Order is either from prospect of advantage, Custom, or Education’.²⁶ This argument is particularly tempting for those who follow Locke in rejecting innate ideas and principles – presumably on the basis that too much variation exists to sustain the notion that we share a nature unified by inbuilt ideas and principles. Locke’s strategy with respect to innateness had been precisely to advertise cultural difference and incommensurability, on the premise that a unified nature should produce what he called ‘conformity of Action’.²⁷

22 Ibid., 9. Hutcheson’s former student Hugh Heugh (writing as Euzelus Philalethes, took him to task for claiming that knowledge of good and evil could be attained without knowledge of God’s existence (and therefore his will and law presumably). *Shaftesbury’s Ghost Conjur’d: Or, a Letter to Francis Hutcheson* (Glasgow, 1738), 6–7.

23 See Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge, 2006), 130–1.

24 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 46; see also 78, 80.

25 In the Preface, Hutcheson acknowledges: ‘In the first Treatise, the Author perhaps in some Instances has gone too far, in supposing a greater Agreement of Mankind in their Sense of Beauty, than Experience will confirm’, Ibid., 10. He explained that his goal was simply to establish a sense of beauty as natural to human beings and that the agreement it generated was equal to that of the external senses.

26 Ibid., 66.

27 Locke, *Essay*, I, iii, 13.

In his response to this potential dilemma, Hutcheson clarifies, first of all, that innate ideas or principles do not enter the scenario. An internal sense does not presuppose innateness any more than the external senses do.²⁸ Thus a further advantage of the sense analogy or model was the leverage it gave Hutcheson to evade Locke's critique. The internal sense, on his analysis, is a passive power to receive ideas of beauty from objects that display uniformity amidst variety rather than an implanted tendency to embrace certain notions.

Hutcheson's second strategy in replying to the problem of diversity is to provide an alternative theory to account for its existence. He traces the diversity of aesthetic preferences specifically to the association of ideas. Locke had in fact introduced the concept into discussion in the *Essay*, as a means of accounting for aberrant or adventitious ideas with no natural connection which nonetheless had significant (if unfortunate) influence on people's thinking (for example, the negative effect of stories about goblins told to children by their nursemaids).²⁹ These are distorted, psychological conjunctions of ideas, but they do not tell against the mind's 'normal' operations when they are properly policed. In the context of Hutcheson's moral thought, the usefulness of Locke's understanding of association remains its capacity to describe arbitrary and unwarranted connections, or what could be termed forms of intellectual interference caused by association. In the aesthetic sphere, Hutcheson initially followed Locke's lead in focusing on the way that certain 'casual Conjunctions of Ideas' cause us to react with disgust to things that actually have nothing disagreeable about them. Thus we might develop 'fantastick Aversions' to different animals and insects with real beauty to them (he mentions swine and serpents) on account of these 'accidental Ideas'.³⁰ Similarly, Goths who fancy their country's architecture superior to that of the Romans have allowed their patriotism and hostility to enemies to colour their response by means of association. Yet when he comes back to association in diagnosing the

28 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 67. For further discussion of Hutcheson and innateness, see Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson*, 161–72.

29 Locke, *Essay*, II, xxxiii (added to fourth edition in 1700). He described the relationship between these ideas as 'wholly owing to Chance or Custom' (II, xxxiii, 5), and as a 'wrong Connexion' with pervasive effect (II, xxxiii, 9). Thus goblins and 'Sprites' have no more to do with darkness than with light but darkness would engender 'frightful Ideas' in children when inculcated by nursemaids (II, xxxiii, 10).

30 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 63.

existence of diversity specifically, his approach is pitched less negatively or critically. He remarks for example on the way that woods and groves become places of retreat for the religious and pensive as well as the amorous, creating an association between location and such patterns of thought or romance. Similarly the dim light of gothic structures is associated with religion, as he notes in quoting lines from Milton's *Il Penseroso*. More generally, strong passions have a tendency to conjoin with the place, circumstances, and even dress, voice or song which attended the occasion of the passion. As a result, we experience delight or aversion in relation to various objects which are in themselves indifferent. For Hutcheson, the key is not to confuse one thing with another. The fact that people are prone to distinctive passions offers a way to explain how they 'disagree in their Fancys of Objects' despite the fact that their sense of beauty and harmony remains 'perfectly uniform'.³¹

2 Charles-Louis de Villette: a mid-century Huguenot response to Hutcheson

Accounts of the response to Hutcheson's aesthetic theory have largely focused, as I indicated, on a distinguished group of Scottish contemporaries and successors. But two figures in Ireland gave his work serious attention. Burke's engagement with Hutcheson – to which I will come in the next section – in his 1757 *Philosophical Enquiry* is one of lasting significance, but he was preceded by another interlocutor who has been almost entirely overlooked, the Dublin-based Huguenot pastor, Charles-Louis de Villette.³² Villette's 'Essai Philosophique sur le Beau, & sur le Gout' ('Philosophical Essay on Beauty and Taste') in his *Oeuvres Mêlées* appeared in Dublin in 1750 and set out his own philosophy at length, during which he engaged in frequent commentary on the shortcomings of Hutcheson's analysis. Villette was born in Lausanne in 1688, the son of a French refugee from Burgundy. He was minister in Carlow from c. 1723 to 1737 and rector of Kilruane in the diocese of Killaloe in 1726. In 1737 he arrived in Dublin as fourth minister of the French church at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1737 (seven years after Hutcheson's departure for Glasgow as

³¹ Ibid., 69.

³² For the only available study, which provides a useful summary of Villette's position, see Alfred Owen Aldridge, 'A French Critic of Hutcheson's Aesthetics', *Modern Philology*, 45 (1948), 169–84.

Chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow).³³ In Dublin, Villette published books on the problem of evil and the future life, in addition to his *Oeuvres Mêlées* which explored aesthetic questions relating to style, modern theatre, beauty and taste. As his *Dissertation sur l'Origine du Mal* (1755) indicates, he was clearly closely engaged with Irish intellectual life, including the work of Archbishop King on theodicy, and he has much to say there in praise of Hutcheson's moral philosophy. But in his *Oeuvres Mêlées* he strung together some quite powerful objections to Hutcheson's aesthetic position. He explained that he had written a long piece refuting Hutcheson as well as Jean-Pierre de Crousaz, author of the *Traité du Beau* (1715) – from whom Hutcheson borrowed – but he thought such a disquisition would not appeal to his readers.³⁴ Nonetheless he incorporated extensive remarks on both authors in the text, especially the notes.

There are several key issues that Villette raised in his critique of Hutcheson. The first is that Hutcheson's understanding of the passivity of the soul in aesthetic perception left his account purely mechanical and dry, as if aesthetic reactions required no further explanation.³⁵ In his view the aesthetic needed the contribution of 'Intelligence' or judgement missing in Hutcheson's analysis. Hutcheson was not only badly mistaken in his approach but he also threatened morality as a consequence. In Villette's estimation, ideas of uniformity, variety, regularity, and their opposites supposed Intelligence.³⁶ Brutes were capable of identifying that certain parts of an object were uniform with others parts, but that was not the same as possessing the idea of uniformity, which resulted from judgement. The faculty of judgement itself only belonged to an 'Être Intelligent' (intelligent being).³⁷ Similarly, brutes could recognize such things as circles, squares and triangles without understanding regularity or arrangement, for which a judgement based on reflection was essential. One merely had to consider the matter for a moment to become convinced that only with reflection was it possible to sense or grasp the beautiful. Later he clarifies that the recognition of

33 Thomas Philip Le Fanu, 'The Huguenot Churches of Dublin and their Ministers', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 8 (1905), 128, and more generally on the context, 87–139.

34 Charles-Louis de Villette, *Oeuvres Mêlées, dont les Sujets sont le Stile, le Théâtre Moderne, le Beau, et le Goût* (Dublin, 1750), 102–3n.

35 Ibid., 101, 103n.

36 'Tout cela est absolument du ressort de l'Intelligence' ('all of this is absolutely the territory of Intelligence'), ibid., 104n.

37 Ibid., 104n.

design which is crucial to appreciating the beauty, for example, of landscapes, did not occur promptly or immediately but required a degree of attention and reflection to make it known. He concluded that this single principle, '*Que le Sentiment du Beau depend en partie de l'attention, de la reflexion, met entre les idées de Monsieur Hutcheson & les miennes une très grande difference*'.³⁸

We can, as I have suggested, readily account for Hutcheson's inclination to frame things in this way. To position the aesthetic as an affair of judgement and not perception would have opened the door either to the rationalist analysis or the self-interested version of events. He needed to make aesthetic (as well as moral) reactions immediate in order to prevent this. Thus he collapsed the moment of perception and judgement into one. Villette took a very different view, distinguishing conceptually and phenomenologically between these moments: 'Quand on porte son attention sur un objet, & qu'on le trouve Beau, n'éprouve-t-on distinctivement qu'il y a là quelque chose de plus qu'une simple Sensation? Qu'il y a un Jugement tacite qui ne peut venir que de la Raison, de la Reflexion?'³⁹

As he clarifies the premises of his position, Villette notes that we have to distinguish between an active intellectual faculty and a passive 'susceptibility to sentiment' (*Susceptibilité de Sentiment*) or sense which operates independently of the will. Intelligence on its own does not 'excite' a sentiment; the sentiment derives from the senses. At the same time the agreeable sentiment or sensation that we experience must generate an idea or image to register as beautiful, which he believes can only come specifically from the senses of sight and hearing, interestingly.⁴⁰ Beauty, in turn, is an affair of the faculty of imagination. Thus he presents a more mediated account than Hutcheson, although it is not radically dissimilar insofar as sentiments provide the foundation. He also accepts Hutcheson's distinction between absolute and relative beauty;⁴¹ strongly supports his view that aesthetic reactions are disin-

38 'That the sentiment of beauty depends in part on attention, on reflection constitutes a very great difference between my ideas and those of Mr. Hutcheson', *ibid.*, 105n, 182, 188n.

39 'When we train our attention on an object and find it beautiful, do we not feel distinctly that we experience something more than a simple sensation? That there is a tacit judgement which could only come from reason and reflection?', *ibid.*, 105n.

40 *Ibid.*, 112, 119, 132.

41 Absolute beauty responds to objects whose beauty is apparent without reference

terested; and follows him in observing the distorting effect of the association of ideas.⁴² He articulates his own definition of the aesthetic by insisting that for objects to trigger the agreeable sentiment that registers their beauty, they must have a visible tendency towards an end, implying design in their formation (and reflection to appreciate this).⁴³ The sentiment attached to the beautiful is also defined, in his system, as a *moral* sentiment, which he explains in part by identifying love and gratitude (*reconnaissance*) towards the initiator(s) of this design.⁴⁴ In relation to the beauty of theorems alleged by Hutcheson, Villette was able to use the example to his advantage by claiming that what made them so was precisely the way that the long line of consequences drawn in connection with theorems fulfilled a sense of an end or design.⁴⁵ He also alleged, perhaps unfairly, that Hutcheson had very imperfectly explained the role of dissonance in musical composition, the purpose of which, in his estimation, was to introduce a singular diversity which did not disturb the overall design but was rather 'artistement entrelardées dans les accords' (artistically interlarded with the harmonies).⁴⁶

The second major point that seriously troubled Villette was Hutcheson's positioning of the aesthetic reaction – for example the connection between harmony and the sentiment of beauty – as, in effect, arbitrary. This voluntarist account made it possible that the Creator could have established the same connection or sentiment between beauty and disorder or confusion.⁴⁷ This conclusion followed

to comparison (Hutcheson cites 'Works of Nature, artificial Forms, Figures, Theorems'). Relative beauty relates to the perception of objects that are beautiful as they imitate or resemble something else, Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 27.

42 Villette, *Oeuvres Mêlées*, 109, 160–1; 145; 245.

43 Ibid., 115, 126.

44 Ibid., 135–7. Hutcheson was more explicit on this point in his *Essay*, 116, arguing that the aesthetic sense leads to an apprehension of the deity: 'Grandeur, Beauty, Order, Harmony, wherever they occur, raise an Opinion of a Mind, of *Design*, and *Wisdom*'.

45 'Cela flatte agréablement mon Imagination par l'idée d'apprendre, & de savoir' (this pleasantly flatters my imagination with the idea of learning and knowing), *ibid.*, 175; for additional examples see 175–8.

46 Ibid., 178.

47 '...il nous fait entendre que la Connexion qu'il y a entre l'Ordre, ou l'Harmonie et le sentiment du Beau est arbitraire: D'où il suit que le Créateur eût pu établir la même Connexion entre ce sentiment & le Desordre, ou la Confusion. Ces deux idées decoulent de la supposition de ce Sens Interne purement mecanique qui nous donne le Beau sans que notre Intelligence y aît aucune part' (...he would have us

from the first point in which Hutcheson made us entirely passive in the affair, exercising no intelligence in judgements of beauty. As far as Villette was concerned, 'Ce qui depend d'un acte de l'Intelligence, d'un Jugement, ne sauroit être plus Arbitraire que la Raison même'.⁴⁸ Once we allowed intelligence into the equation it also becomes clear that Beauty itself cannot be arbitrary. Intelligence simply could not give us a taste for the confused. On the contrary, 'Elle ne peut donc que me le faire trouver *Laid*, m'inspirer pour cet objet un sentiment de mepris, d'aversion, précisément le rebours de celui du *Beau*'.⁴⁹ He expressed particular dismay over what this would mean for our response to the beauty of moral objects which would make it possible for vice to appear beautiful and to require us to love it, on which he was succinct: 'Que de confusion, que d'horreurs!' (what confusion! what horrors!).⁵⁰

Villette proceeded to attack the privileging of uniformity amidst variety by Hutcheson as well as Crousaz, from whom the notion derived, as insufficient and often false.⁵¹ According to this principle a windmill would be more beautiful than a simply and elegantly furnished apartment exhibiting less uniformity and variety. In the same way, an elaborately fashioned lock would excel a prettily made snuffbox.⁵² He draws attention to something unsatisfying in Hutcheson's criterion, namely that if one applied it with any rigour it would produce a series of anomalies. Elsewhere, he commented that in Hutcheson's (and Crousaz's) work there was something vague, uncertain and incomplete.

understand that the connection between order or harmony and the sentiment of beauty is arbitrary: from which it follows that the Creator could have established the same connection between this sentiment and disorder or confusion. These two ideas stem from the supposition of a purely mechanical internal sense that gives us the beautiful without intelligence playing any part), *ibid.*, 103n.

48 'That which depends on an act of intelligence, on a judgement cannot be more arbitrary than reason itself', *ibid.*, 105n; he also equates this with the stability of truth, *ibid.*, 106n.

49 'Intelligence could not but make me find it [confusion] ugly and inspire in me contempt and aversion for such an object, precisely the reverse of that of beauty', *ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*, 179.

51 See J.P. de Crousaz, *Traité du Beau* (Amsterdam, 1715), 12–16, 63, 263 (on music). On the subject of Hutcheson's debt to Crousaz, see David R. Raynor, 'Hutcheson's Defence against a Charge of Plagiarism', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 2 (1987), 177–81.

52 Villette, *Oeuvres Mêlées*, 129n. Later he clarifies that the mistake in Hutcheson (and Crousaz) is to approve of all objects as beautiful that have a component of art, which would admit windmills, fortifications, and locks into the equation, *ibid.*, 170n.

'On sent un vuide qui fait de la peine: On y cherche la lumiere, & on ne la rencontre point',⁵³ a comment that could be applied to the uniformity amidst variety criterion.

In his positive account of his own aesthetics, Villette was more precise in defining variety as something that occurs within species and diversity as something between genera (or even more radically separate entities), from which it followed that variety always supposes uniformity but diversity does not.⁵⁴ These features (uniformity and variety) did not in themselves constitute the beautiful, although they might be important in the design or composition that made something beautiful. Regarding Hutcheson's view that the degree of beauty varied with the degree of mixture of variety and uniformity, the principle on its own was false unless one introduced the concept of arrangement, which Hutcheson had entirely neglected in Villette's view.⁵⁵

Villette's third substantive objection emerges in his argument that Hutcheson's system requires him to multiply the senses as he goes along. Hutcheson notes that there are different sorts of beauty that provide us with pleasure, but Villette emphasizes the implications of the fact that they do not act on the same sense organs. Thus the ear gives a different sensation from what is experienced from the eye. Equally we need a sense for the idea of uniformity, another for variety and another for diversity, along with a way to sense uniformity joined to diversity, and another sense for the unity of things in a theorem. 'Et que sai-je combien d'autres!' (And how many others, say I!), he exclaims.⁵⁶ For Villette, this point also tells against the universality of the internal sense, although he does not elaborate on the point.⁵⁷ Hutcheson, as I observed, seemed untroubled by similar objections lodged by his critics on the moral side of the argument who also asserted the needless manufacturing of senses implied by his system.⁵⁸

53 'We sense a void that distresses us: we search for light and do not encounter it at all', *ibid.*, 173.

54 *Ibid.*, 150–1.

55 *Ibid.*, 156, 157n. Hutcheson does in fact mention arrangement in the Preface, although it does not appear elsewhere, Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 8.

56 Villette, *Oeuvres Mêlées*, 174–5n.

57 Later, he observes that the taste in beauty of physical objects is much less general than in the case of morality. *Ibid.*, 183. The lack of immediacy of reactions to beauty and the reflection required to gain an appreciation to it tell against the sense of beauty being more widespread.

58 For Dugald Stewart's complaint, see Carey, 'Francis Hutcheson's Philosophy', 54.

The conjunction between moral and aesthetic thought, which forms such an important part of Hutcheson's argument, represents one of the most interesting aspects of Villette's engagement with him. First of all, Villette observed significantly that when Hutcheson turns in his second treatise of the *Inquiry* to consider the beauty of moral objects, he ceases to speak in terms of unity, uniformity, or variety as distinguishing features. He wondered if this was because moral beauty had no distinctive character for Hutcheson; Villette clearly thought that it did and furthermore that it had analogies with other objects of beauty (presumably in terms of design and intention). He remained in doubt whether Hutcheson simply could not accommodate moral beauty to his foregoing principles or whether he thought it was enough just to prove that we have a moral sense that gives us pleasure in witnessing good actions. Villette regarded this proposition as true, but that, on its own, it was unsatisfying.⁵⁹ For him there was a tighter connection between the moral and the aesthetic, in one respect. Although moral objects had no physical existence, remaining a matter of intentions, dispositions and sentiments, and therefore ideational, they nonetheless shared features of 'Arrangement, Unité de Dessen, Diversité, Rapports, Assortiments, Contraste' (arrangement, unity of design, diversity, connections, affinities, contrast).⁶⁰ In another respect he did not make his argument about moral beauty contingent on aesthetic beauty in the same way as Hutcheson. For Hutcheson they are structurally similar as senses, and therefore any undermining of one undermines the other, even if they respond to different things in the world. Villette was not constrained in this way. He set up a contrast between the immediacy and clarity of moral sentiments and our more reflective relationship to the aesthetic. An intelligent being with no susceptibility to the beauty of moral sentiments would be a monster and did not exist because the possibility contradicted the infinite goodness and wisdom of the Creator.⁶¹ With physical objects of beauty it was otherwise. Such things could make different impressions on people and be subject to diversity without throwing the good of the whole into disorder. In fact he was

59 Villette, *Oeuvres Mêlées*, 179–80n.

60 Ibid., 180.

61 Ibid., 188. Evidently this was not inconsistent with the fact that for a number of people 'les Sens Moraux sont trop grossiers, trop *durs*, pour *sentir*' (the moral senses are too coarse, too hard, to feel), *ibid.*, 235.

not disturbed by the conclusion that the beauty of design was relative to the observer, a notion that would have sat uneasily with his ethics.⁶²

Tying these points together in his theory is somewhat challenging. For Villette, the sentiment of beauty was in truth a moral sentiment and therefore part of the operation of the moral sense itself, based on design and the appreciation of 'ends'.⁶³ Yet the necessity of contemplation and reflection to arrive at this judgement; the apparent lack of universality of aesthetic appreciation (given these demands); and the variability of judgements did not destabilize morality. Here Villette was comfortable to insist on an order essential to mankind as created beings. For this reason he wholeheartedly embraced Hutcheson's account of the moral sense.⁶⁴ In his later *Dissertation sur l'Origine du Mal*, Villette praised Hutcheson repeatedly on this point and defended him against the criticism that he had turned the moral sense into an occult quality. On this point, Villette was unapologetic: 'Toute susceptibilité de Sentiment est une qualité occulte: Je ne comprends pas mieux pourquoi le Miel est doux à mon palais, ou pourquoi la brulure me fait du Mal, que je ne comprends l'Instinct qui produit la Compassion'.⁶⁵

3 Burke and Hutcheson

In 1757 Irish aesthetics rose to a new level of sophistication and significance with the appearance of Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. The title itself, as a number of critics have observed,⁶⁶ provides a deliberate echo of Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, but Burke engaged with a

62 Ibid., 189.

63 Ibid., 130, 134.

64 Ibid., 135n.

65 'All susceptibility of sentiment is an occult quality. I do not better comprehend why honey is sweet to my palate or why burning does me harm than I do the instinct that produces compassion.' Charles-Louis de Villette, *Dissertation sur l'Origine du Mal* (Dublin, 1755), 50–1.

66 Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, 2015), 120. F. P. Lock, 'The Politics of Burke's *Enquiry*' in Koen Vermeir and Michael Funk Deckard (eds.), *The Science of Sensibility: Reading Burke's Philosophical Enquiry* (Dordrecht, 2012), 126. Lock insists on the English context of Burke's work on aesthetics, without acknowledging that the echo of Hutcheson engages an Irish tradition.

much wider field of philosophers, synthesizing a range of ancient sources such as Plato, Aristotle and Longinus; contemporary interventions, including the work of various French authorities; and, in his 'Introduction. On Taste' added to the second edition (1759), with David Hume's essay on the subject of 1757.⁶⁷ Throughout the text there is evidence not only of Burke's wide reading in poetry and literature,⁶⁸ as well as his exposure to the aesthetics of art and landscape, but also his passionate engagement with the subject which surpasses Hutcheson's uplifting yet more limited repertoire of examples. Nonetheless Hutcheson remains an important figure for Burke to contend with, and his response to him forms a key part of the story of Irish reactions to Hutcheson's position. His awareness of Hutcheson is hardly surprising, of course. In fact Burke's close Irish friends Richard Shackleton and William Dennis understood the work as offering an answer to Hutcheson.⁶⁹ In early February 1747/8, a year-and-a-half after Hutcheson's death, Burke wrote a 249-line poem addressed to him, which hailed Hutcheson for showing 'The Structure of Man's Passions' and 'The source from whence they flow'. The invocation of Hutcheson's *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions* is clear in a reference to Longinus's lost treatise on the passions which Hutcheson had in effect now revealed.⁷⁰ The burden of the poem is to address the undeveloped account in Hutcheson's work of the passion of love, told through the powerful story of Samson and Delilah.

In terms of his intellectual debts, a common thread between Burke and Hutcheson appears in what they owe to Locke. Locke's influence is evident in Burke's commitment to a method informed by the way of ideas. Thus he speaks in the preface to the first edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry* of a 'confusion of ideas' between the sublime and beautiful and indeed 'an abuse of the word Beauty' which makes his

67 See Cressida Ryan, 'Burke's Classical Heritage: Playing Games with Longinus' in *The Science of Sensibility*, 225–45; Dario Perinetti, 'Between Knowledge and Sentiment: Burke and Hume on Taste' in *The Science of Sensibility*, 283–304.

68 See Paddy Bullard, 'Edmund Burke among the Poets: Milton, Lucretius and the *Philosophical Enquiry*' in *The Science of Sensibility*, 247–63; see also the table of quotations provided by Ryan, 'Burke's Classical Heritage', 245.

69 Paddy Bullard, *Edmund Burke and the Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge, 2011), 93; Bourke, *Empire & Revolution*, 120–1.

70 Edmund Burke, 'To Dr H———n' in Paul Langford et al. (eds.), *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. 1: *The Early Writings*, ed. T. O. McLoughlin and James T. Boulton, textual ed. William B. Todd (Oxford, 1997), 31–2.

analysis necessary.⁷¹ In a methodologically similar fashion to Hutcheson (following Locke), he refers in the body of the text to ideas of pain and pleasure which make an impression on the mind, and thus he is attempting to trace passionate responses to ideas – in the case of the sublime – such as ‘pain, sickness, and death’ which ‘fill the mind with strong emotions of horror’.⁷² Burke emphasises the limitations of Locke’s analysis in maintaining a simple model of reciprocity in which pain results in a depletion of pleasure or an increase in pleasure from a decrease in pain. For Burke, on the contrary, ‘both of these states represented self-contained ideas’, as Richard Bourke has recently observed, separated by a state of tranquility,⁷³ which allowed him to refine his account of experience and to attend to mixed states or emotions. He also questioned the adequacy of the notion of ‘uneasiness’ that Locke had introduced as part of his psychology of motivation.⁷⁴ The hedonist account adhered to by Locke is incomplete for Burke, who, in common with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, allowed the appreciation of beauty to occur in a disinterested fashion.

Burke shares, then, with Hutcheson, a determination to attend carefully to modifications of the passions in the aesthetic sphere and to attempt a proto-phenomenological description of them while also speculating on their efficient causes and ends within a providential framework. What he finds (as did Hume and Adam Smith, in different ways) is a far greater set of reactions and possibilities, which he ranges under the impulses of self-preservation (associated with fear and the sublime) and sociability (connected with pity, compassion and beauty). The account of the sublime, in particular, is a major advance over Hutcheson who included ‘grandeur’ among the things that the internal sense responded to, but without elaborating on its conditions or implications.⁷⁵

Burke allows a more positive role for the association of ideas than Locke, developing the potential that Hutcheson seems to have detected

71 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford, 1990), 1. On Shaftesbury as the particular target of this accusation, see Bullard, *Edmund Burke*, 97–8.

72 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 36.

73 Bourke, *Revolution & Empire*, 124–5.

74 For Burke’s reply, see *Philosophical Enquiry*, 37; and for discussion, Bullard, *Edmund Burke*, 94–5.

75 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 69; *Essay*, 17.

in the concept in the aesthetic sphere. But it still poses some interesting challenges that are instructive about the need to ground aesthetic responses. In a brief separate section on the topic of association, Burke notes that determining the cause of the passions is complicated by the fact that these processes begin early on, in a time prior to reflection. 'Things affect us 'according to their natural powers' but associations also occur at this stage 'which we find it very hard afterwards to distinguish from natural effects'. The truth is that we are affected by association, but it would also be absurd, he maintains, to say that this is the only source of our reactions 'since some things must have been originally and naturally agreeable or disagreeable, from which the others derive their associated power'.⁷⁶ He is determined to look for 'natural properties' in the first instance and to turn to association only when this preferred mode of analysis fails. The matter becomes pressing later in Part Four of the *Enquiry* when he responds to Locke's view that darkness has no necessary relationship to terror, i.e. the context in which Locke reported the effect of nursemaids connecting ideas of ghosts and goblins with the dark. Burke's objection is not so much to the view that such ideas are associated but that the universal connection between terror and darkness, apparent 'in all times, and in all countries', must derive from something less precarious or trivial than stories of this kind told in childhood. He searches, that is, for 'an association of a more general nature, an association which takes in all mankind [that] may make darkness terrible'.⁷⁷ But he goes on to suggest a stronger reading which embeds these reactions in nature. Drawing on a report in the *Philosophical Transactions* by the English physician William Cheselden, Burke reports on a boy born blind who attained the power of sight after the removal of cataracts at the age of 13 or 14. Among other things, the boy responded with uneasiness when presented with a black object for the first time, and that 'upon accidentally seeing a negro woman, he was struck with great horror at the sight'.⁷⁸ According to Burke, this reaction could not have arisen from association since there was no time for it to develop. Leaving aside the disturbing implications of the example,⁷⁹ he

76 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 118.

77 Ibid., 131, 130.

78 Ibid., 131.

79 On this subject, see David Lloyd, 'The Pathological Sublime: Pleasure and Pain in the Colonial Context' in Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (eds.), *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford, 2009), 98–9; Srinivas

wants to secure a foundation for the sublime, where possible, in nature, underwritten in this instance by empirical testimony. Burke shared this aspiration with Hutcheson and of course a wide array of eighteenth-century thinkers, resisting the conclusion that our reactions are merely arbitrary or conditioned by social forces of education and custom.

In his account of beauty, Burke adhered to a model made available by Hutcheson. Burke noted that beauty was 'no creature of reason' and concluded that it must result from 'some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses'.⁸⁰ As a consequence of this analysis he proceeded to attend closely to the 'sensible qualities' that experience taught us constituted the beautiful, running from smallness (as opposed to the giant scale of objects evoking the sublime) to smoothness, gradual variation, delicacy, and, in the case of the human form, physiognomy and the face which 'must be expressive of such gentle and amiable qualities, as correspond with the softness, smoothness, and delicacy of the outward form', a subject on which Hutcheson had also made pronouncements. One of the factors that led Burke to separate beauty from the claims of reason was that it 'strikes us without reference to use'. By rejecting utility as constitutive of the beautiful, Burke sided with Hutcheson against Berkeley.⁸¹ Fitness to an end had nothing to do with it, as the unattractive (yet highly useful and well designed) snout of the hog, bill of the pelican or hide of hedgehog demonstrated. Among the decisive instances was the fact that, in Burke's gendered analysis of human beings, if usefulness dictated the matter then 'men would be much more lovely than women'.⁸²

In affirming that effect occurred prior to use, a conclusion that Hutcheson would have embraced as a confirmation of disinterestedness, Burke repudiated proportion as a criterion of beauty since judgements of this kind required that we know what the entity was designed for.⁸³ But this was only part of his extended critique of proportion as a criterion. He devoted four sections of the discussion

Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Durham, 1999), 192–201.

80 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 102. Villette of course rejected this 'mechanical' approach.

81 See Hutcheson's comment added to the fourth edition (1738) of the *Inquiry*, 210–11.

82 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 107, 102, 95, 96.

83 *Ibid.*, 98.

of beauty to dispatching the commonly held view that beauty consists 'in certain proportions of parts', from vegetables to animals and then to the human species. Without pegging his account to usefulness, Hutcheson had argued that a defining element in the beauty of animals was precisely 'a certain Proportion of the various Parts to each other',⁸⁴ reflected in statuary for example – in itself a fairly conventional view. Burke offered some observations to contradict this suggestion. The swan was acknowledged to be a beautiful bird and yet it has a neck longer than the rest of its body and a short tail – no beautiful proportion here. The peacock, on the other hand had a comparatively short neck and a tale of very considerable length.⁸⁵ Meanwhile the horse offered a standard of beauty in terms of proportion, but what would we make of a dog or a cat in comparison? The argument from proportion quickly ran into difficulties.⁸⁶ Burke traced this mistaken way of thinking, this 'prejudice in favour of proportion', to the tendency to oppose deformity to beauty whereas the real contrast was between deformity and a 'compleat, common form'.⁸⁷

One of Burke's more striking contributions was his rejection of the equation between beauty and virtue. For him this was a confounding of ideas, resulting in 'an infinite deal of whimsical theory'.⁸⁸ The question is whether he intended Hutcheson as one of his targets. Burke mentioned proportion, congruity and perfection among the false notions that this way of thinking generated. Although Hutcheson had some attachment to proportion as an aesthetic concept it is not clear that it figured as a point of contact with his moral thought; nor did congruity and perfection. However, the bridge or analogy between the internal sense of beauty and the moral sense in Hutcheson is so strong that we are invited to identify one with the other.⁸⁹ Indeed in

84 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 33.

85 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 87.

86 See also Villette, *Oeuvres Mêlées*, 173 on this subject. In expressing his dissatisfaction with Hutcheson on proportion he too uses the example of the peacock and the horse, which makes it conceivable that Burke had encountered his work.

87 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 93.

88 *Ibid.*, 101.

89 For a valuable discussion of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson on this question, see Laurent Jaffro, 'Francis Hutcheson et l'héritage shaftesburien: quelle analogie entre le beau et le bien?' in Pierre Destrée and Carol Talon-Hugon (eds.), *Le Beau & le bien* (Nice, 2011), 117–33. He argues that Hutcheson abandons Shaftesbury's Socratic view of the identity of the beautiful and the good in favour of a subjective analogy between them founded in moral judgements and judgements of beauty.

the preface to the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson remarked on the acknowledged taste in beauty, harmony, and imitation before asking: 'may we not find too in Mankind a Relish for a Beauty in Characters, and Manners?' In the text proper, he confirmed that the desire for virtue could be offset by self-interest, but 'our Sentient or Perception of its Beauty cannot'. The moral sense 'makes rational Actions appear Beautiful, or Deform'd'.⁹⁰ For Burke, the assertion of a conjunction between morals and virtue represented 'a loose and inaccurate manner of speaking' which did damage in matters of taste as well as morals by resting them 'upon foundations altogether visionary and unsubstantial'.⁹¹ His moral philosophy depended on the concept of duty and we can certainly conclude that he rejected the internal sense argument made by Hutcheson.⁹²

Burke added an introduction on taste to the second edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry* 1759 which enunciates some important principles. There is a standard of taste, he insists, common to all human beings. He presupposes a shared nature that informs this experience and makes it susceptible to a description valid beyond himself: 'the pleasures and pains which every object excites in one man, it must raise in all mankind'.⁹³ The structure of argument parallels Hutcheson's approach in seeking a wider consensus. This means that Burke must also confront the diversity problem that Hutcheson encountered. The pressure to locate a shared nature even impinges on the imagination; Burke says that 'there must be just as close an agreement in the imaginations as in the senses of men', which follows presumably from the fund – the senses – and the sensory equipment being the same. He does however acknowledge what he calls 'a greater degree of natural sensibility' which sets some people off.⁹⁴ Taste, which consists of sensibility and judgement, can therefore vary considerably while still deriving from a shared foundation. Kant would of course provide a later solution to this problem in the *Critique of Judgement* in his notion of subjective universal validity.⁹⁵

90 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 9, 94–5, 91. Elsewhere his emphasis is on loveliness, e.g. 'Virtue [is] a lovely Form', *ibid.*, 9; we 'admire the lovely Action', *ibid.*, 91; 'The human Nature is a lovely Form', *ibid.*, 105. These comments suggest that virtue is worthy or inspiring of love but may also combine that response with an aesthetic appreciation.

91 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 102.

92 Bourke, *Revolution & Empire*, 143.

93 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 13.

94 *Ibid.*, 17, 21.

95 Mehmet Atalay, 'Kant's Aesthetic Theory: Subjectivity vs. Universal Validity', *Periphi*, 1 (2007), 44–52.

Burke sets himself off from Hutcheson in having a theory of the imagination. This seems, if I am not mistaken, to be largely absent from Hutcheson's aesthetics (unless one regards his willingness to identify his system with Addison's 'pleasures of the imagination' as sufficient).⁹⁶ The focus of Hutcheson's work is mainly on the position of the observer (or introspector) taking note of his or her own internal reactions, rather than on the generative power of the aesthetic imagination. By romantic standards, it must be said, Burke's provision is rather limited. On his view, the 'imagination is incapable of producing anything absolutely new; it can only vary the disposition of those ideas which it has received from the senses'.⁹⁷ The British tradition really only found a way of expanding this through association, which in turn was then surpassed through Coleridge's engagement with German idealism in the nineteenth century.

The key difference between Hutcheson and Burke in relation to taste is that Burke has a more traditional understanding of taste as a matter of judgement. Again, for Hutcheson it was a case of perception, for the peculiar reason that he wished to make it immediate and defensible against the predation of the rationalist tradition or the hedonist alternative. At the close of the piece Burke offers what looks like a rejoinder to Hutcheson on this issue. He takes notice of an opinion held by many people that makes taste a 'separate Faculty of the mind, and distinct from the judgement and imagination; a species of instinct by which we are struck naturally, and at the first glance, without any previous reasoning with the excellencies, or the defects of a composition.' Burke agrees that when it comes to the imagination and the passions that reason has little role.

But where disposition, where decorum, where congruity are concerned, in short wherever the best Taste differs from the worst, I am convinced that the understanding operates and nothing else; and its operation is in reality far from being always sudden, or when it is sudden, it is often far from being right.⁹⁸

In taking this line, Burke sided with Villette. Between them they provided an instructive Irish response to Hutcheson's aesthetics. The Scottish milieu has understandably dominated historical discussion of the uptake of Hutcheson's

⁹⁶ Hutcheson, *Essay*, 17; *System*, I, 15.

⁹⁷ Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 17.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

intervention in this field and his attempt to systematize the working materials he inherited from Shaftesbury. If the moral sense remains his most significant contribution, his aesthetic thought provoked important reactions and resistance in his native country.⁹⁹

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⁹⁹ I am grateful to Christopher Moran and Endre Szécsényi for assistance in completing this article.