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The Experience of Absolute Beauty in Hutcheson: Perception, Reason and Pleasure

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In the *Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* (hereafter *ICB*), Hutcheson's only treatise devoted to what we today call 'aesthetics' and 'aesthetic experience', he defends the idea that human beings have a natural sense over and above their external senses: 'a natural sense of beauty from uniformity',[1] which he calls an 'internal' sense. The basic outline of his argument for such a sense is as follows. He compares human sensitivity to beauty with the external senses; he details the similarities and the differences between them, and concludes (1) that the similarities are important enough to warrant attributing to human beings a natural, specific sense of beauty; and (2) that the differences explain why it is an internal sense. I am taking both conclusions as granted in this paper.

The similarities between the sense of beauty and the external senses have been well canvassed by commentators.[2] Among the differences that Hutcheson notes, there is one in particular that, I believe, expresses an interesting and important philosophical claim. The claim, in a nutshell, is that, contrary to the external senses, the sense of beauty is dependent on antecedent perceptions. The claim is not unknown to commentators, but I believe that its implications and explanatory potential have not been sufficiently explored. I wish to show that a great deal of Hutcheson's thought on our aesthetic experience depends on it.

The claim that the sense of beauty depends on antecedent perceptions does not appear forcefully in the first edition of the *Inquiry Concerning Beauty*

1 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*, ed. Peter Kivy (The Hague, 1973). References to this work indicate the section, the subsection and page number in that order; in the present case: *ICB*, VII, ii, 83. Although the term 'aesthetic' was not used in the eighteenth century as we use it today, I will use it liberally in the sense of 'pertaining to beauty'.

2 For example, Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense* (New York, 1976), 26–41. David Fate Norton gives a list of characteristics that the moral sense has in common with other senses; cf. 'Hutcheson on Perception and Moral Perception', *Archiv für die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 59 (1977), 182–6.

(1725). It appears, nevertheless, when Hutcheson writes: 'we are conscious that this pleasure necessarily *arises from the contemplation of the idea* which is then present to our minds, with all its circumstances'. (*ICB*, Preface, 24, my italics.) We shall see that it appears clearly in the fourth edition (1738), and sharply in several of Hutcheson's other publications, beginning with the first edition of *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of Passions and Affections* (1728).[3]

In the first Section I briefly discuss beauty and the idea of beauty in the first *Inquiry*. Because a great deal of Hutcheson's conception of aesthetic experience depends on the way he distinguishes the pleasures of the external senses and those of the internal sense of beauty, Sections 2 and 3 are devoted respectively to those two topics. Section 4 explores the significance of the claim that aesthetic pleasure always depends on previous perceptions, or complex ideas. The issue is pursued in Section 5, where I try to show that, because aesthetic pleasure depends on antecedent complex ideas it also depends, in varying degrees, on certain more or less conscious operations of reason. Their function is to make manifest the 'uniformity amidst variety' of the complex ideas. In Sections 4 and 5 I also defend the claim that, insofar as the sense of beauty depends on previous perceptions (complex ideas) of external objects, it is highly sensitive to the *way* we perceive the objects.

1 Beauty and the idea of beauty

Throughout his writings Hutcheson works with at least five aesthetic categories: absolute (or original) beauty; relative (or comparative) beauty, e.g., imitation; harmony; grandeur; and novelty. One might add design, although Hutcheson places this source of aesthetic pleasure under relative, or comparative beauty.[4] I shall discuss only the most basic of these categories, absolute (or original) beauty: 'that beauty which we perceive in objects without comparison

3 In the 'Preface' to the *Essay*, Hutcheson writes: 'In the references at bottom of the pages, the inquiry into *Beauty* is called *Treatise I*. That into the ideas of moral good and evil, is *Treatise II*. The Essay on the Passions, *Treatise III*. And the Illustrations on the moral sense, *Treatise IV*.' Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections,* ed. Paul McReynolds (Gainesville, 1969, 3rd edn; 1742), xx. (hereafter *Essay*). This shows that Hutcheson considered the two *Inquiries*, the *Essay* and the *Illustrations* as four parts of a consistent whole. So, it is not detrimental to our interpretation if the claim that the sense of beauty depends on prior perceptions is made more sharply in the *Essay* than in the *Inquiry Concerning Beauty*.

4 The beauty of design is the fitness of a complex structure, whether man-made or natural, to a certain end, or to an intention; cf. *ICB*, II, x, 45. and III, vii, 57–8.

to anything external, of which the object is supposed an imitation or picture, such as that beauty perceived from the works of nature, artificial forms, figures'. (*ICB*, I, xvi, 39.) Absolute beauty is perceived in many external objects, both natural and artistic, but also in abstract entities such as theorems, to which Hutcheson devotes Section III of the first *Inquiry*.

On the one hand, we have just seen that Hutcheson speaks of the 'beauty which we perceive in objects'. Yet, on the other hand, he warns his reader that beauty is an idea in the mind: 'Let it be observed that in the following papers the word *beauty* is taken for *the idea raised in us*, and a *sense* of beauty for *our power of receiving this idea*'. (*ICB*, I, ix, 34.) So a question arises: How can we perceive beauty *in* objects if beauty is only an idea in our minds? The question is made all the more pressing when we look at how Hutcheson applies the adjective 'beautiful'. There are some fifty-odd occurrences of the term in the *Inquiry Concerning Beauty* and, as far as I can see, Hutcheson always applies the term either to external objects – natural or artistic – or to abstract entities such as theorems. He does not say that our idea of beauty is beautiful, nor that our perceptions of things are beautiful. What he invariably says is that, for example, certain plants, animals, gardens, works of art and theorems are beautiful. Obviously, if he calls such things 'beautiful' so often, there must be a sense in which he holds that it is legitimate to call them so. If there is a legitimate sense, then it is only to be presumed that it is because, as we have seen, there is some 'beauty which we perceive in objects'. So, once again: How can we perceive beauty *in* them if beauty is only an idea in our minds?

At least part of the answer to the question, I believe, lies in the following passage, where Hutcheson denies that beauty is a mind-independent property of objects:

> by absolute or original beauty is not understood any quality supposed to be in the object [which] should of itself be beautiful, without relation to any mind which perceives it. For beauty, like other names of sensible ideas, properly denotes the *perception* of some mind; so *cold*, [*hot*,] *sweet*, *bitter*, denote the sensations in our minds, to which perhaps there is no resemblance in the objects which excite these ideas in us, however we generally imagine [otherwise]. (*ICB*, I, xvi, 38–9.)

A comparison is being made here between beauty and ideas of secondary qualities. Just as 'cold', 'hot', 'sweet' and 'bitter' denote 'sensations in our minds', 'beauty' denotes 'the perception of some mind'. As we will see further

on, Hutcheson calls this perception 'the idea of beauty'. In one respect, then, the idea of beauty is similar to ideas of secondary qualities: just as the secondary qualities we are aware of merely by our sensations do not resemble mind-independent properties of the objects that cause such sensations, the beauty that we perceive in an object does not resemble a mind-independent property of the object that causes our perception. The significance of the comparison is that, just as external objects appear to us as cold, hot, sweet, etc., by causing sensations of such secondary qualities in our minds, certain objects *appear* beautiful by causing 'the *perception* of some mind'. Thus, when Hutcheson speaks of our perceiving beauty *in* objects, he means to speak of objects as appearing beautiful to us: 'All beauty is relative to the sense of some mind perceiving it' (*ICB*, IV, i, 54.); 'all beauty has a relation to some perceiving power'. (*ICB*, VI, i, 74.)

So far, so good – hopefully. But what is it, then, for an object to appear beautiful, in the sense of appearing to have absolute beauty? This question requires a rather long answer, which I will try to develop further on by exploring some of Hutcheson's philosophy of mind involved in aesthetic experience. For the time being, let us note two essential components of his reply. The first is that an object – whether material or abstract – appears beautiful in virtue of our perception of a certain feature of the object, which Hutcheson calls 'uniformity amidst variety' (hereafter UAV), and which he considers, unlike beauty, to be a 'real quality in the objects'. (*ICB*, I, ix, 34.) This feature is 'the general foundation or occasion of the ideas of beauty among men' (*ICB*, II, ii, 40.); 'what we call beautiful in objects, to speak in the mathematical style, seems to be in compound ratio of uniformity and variety: so that where the uniformity of bodies is equal, the beauty is as the variety; and where the variety is equal, the beauty is as the uniformity'.[5]

5 *ICB*, II, iii, 40. Hutcheson's definition of UAV implies that there are different degrees of UAV. He acknowledges as much: '[I]t may perhaps appear that regularity and uniformity are so copiously diffused through the universe, and we are so readily determined to pursue this as the foundation of beauty in works of art, that there is scarcely anything ever fancied as beautiful where there is not really something of this uniformity and regularity' (*ICB*, VI, v, 77.); 'there may be real beauty where there is not the greatest, … there are an infinity of different forms which may all have some unity, and yet differ from each other'. (*ICB*, VI, vii, 78.) The following passages suggest that he does not think, however, that everything has some degree of UAV: 'Every particular object in nature does not indeed appear beautiful to us' (*ICB*, II, v, 42.); 'That many objects give no pleasure to our sense is obvious: many are certainly void of beauty'. (*ICB*, VI, i, 74.) Although there is a zero degree of UAV, there are no negative degrees.

The second essential component is that, when an object appears beautiful, it appears pleasing, or agreeable.[6] Thus, Hutcheson writes about absolute beauty: 'beauty has always relation to the sense of some mind; and when we afterwards show how generally the objects which occur to us *are beautiful*, we mean that such objects are *agreeable* to the sense of men'. (*ICB*, II, i, 39, my italics.) Notice that 'we' here, does not refer to the generality of mankind, but to Hutcheson himself, because it is he who intends to 'show how generally the objects which occur to us are beautiful'. Thus, he is not making a semantic claim as to what 'beautiful' means as ordinarily understood. What he is saying is that he, Hutcheson, is going to use 'beautiful' to mean 'agreeable to the sense of men', in conformity with his metaphysical claim that 'beauty has always relation to the sense of some mind'.[7]

I mentioned above a certain idea that Hutcheson calls 'the idea of beauty'. The last four decades of Hutcheson scholarship have proven it notoriously difficult to pin down what it is, exactly, that he calls our 'idea of beauty'. Two of the most plausible interpretations, in my opinion, are those of Kivy and Matthews, and I agree at bottom with Matthews. Her detailed analysis of Hutcheson's numerous and occasionally wavering pronouncements, and her critical discussion of alternative readings lead to the conclusion that, all said, the idea of beauty is a specific pleasure, and that what Hutcheson calls an 'internal sense' in the first *Inquiry* is a power of receiving such a pleasure.[8]

But, one might object, if the idea of beauty is just a certain pleasure, why not just call it a pleasure? Why also call it, additionally, 'the idea *of beauty*'? According to my reading, Hutcheson calls aesthetic pleasure an 'idea *of beauty*' because he holds that the pleasure plays an important role – along with perceived UAV – in explaining why certain things appear beautiful (i.e.

6 Hutcheson uses the expression 'appear pleasant' in this precise context; cf. Francis Hutcheson, 'A System of Moral Philosophy' (1755) in *Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson*, ed. Bernard Fabian (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 1990), V, 15.

7 This last point helps to explain why, in both treatises of the *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Hutcheson often speaks of *moral* beauty. For example, he speaks of 'this moral sense of beauty in actions and affections'. ('Preface' to the two *Inquiries*, 25.) Although pleasure received by the internal sense of beauty is quite different from the pleasure received by the moral sense (Hutcheson contrasts aesthetic and moral pleasure in *ICB*, I, xv, 38.), the former being based on the perception of UAV whereas the latter is not, it nevertheless remains that in both cases the objects that are called 'beautiful' are called so precisely because they are pleasing.

8 Cf. Patricia M. Matthews, 'Hutcheson on the Idea of Beauty', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 36 (1998), 233–59.

pleasing), and why we can thus legitimately call them 'beautiful' (i.e. pleasing) even though beauty is not a mind-independent quality.

Kivy, however, apparently holds that the idea of beauty is both a pleasure and an idea of a secondary quality. They are, according to Kivy, 'the same idea under different descriptions';[9] 'for Hutcheson the idea of beauty as something like a secondary quality, and the idea of beauty as a pleasure are one and the same idea, just as Berkeley's idea of intense heat and his idea of pain are one and the same idea'.[10] I disagree with this reading for several reasons. First, Kivy does not describe the quale of the purported idea of a secondary quality. Secondly, ideas of secondary qualities depend on the causal powers of physical objects. Theorems – the intellectual perception of which causes aesthetic pleasure – are abstract entities and have no causal powers. So, the idea of their 'beauty' cannot be, or be like, a secondary quality. Thirdly, ideas of secondary qualities *directly* depend on the causal powers of external objects, whereas aesthetic pleasures do not, as we shall see further on.[11] So, let us go ahead with the assumption that Hutcheson's idea of beauty is just a certain pleasure.

On the one hand, the idea of beauty is a pleasure of the internal sense. On the other hand, Hutcheson states that he will be using the term 'beautiful' to mean 'agreeable to the sense of men'. And we have seen that it is in virtue of such a pleasure, which is based on an object's perceived UAV, that the object *appears* beautiful, i.e. 'agreeable to the sense of men'. However, all of this

9 Cf. Kivy, *The Seventh Sense*, 56.

10 Ibid., 55. He writes: 'What stands in the way of a consistent interpretation is our easy acceptance of the disjunction: either a secondary quality or a pleasure. Can we not say *both*?' Ibid., 54.

11 In fact, there is a fourth reason, too, for objecting to Kivy's interpretation. Kivy underestimates the trouble Berkeley gets into when he says that an intense heat and its related pain are 'one simple, uncompounded idea'. George Berkeley, 'Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous' in *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. A. A. Luce & T. E. Jessop (Edinburgh, 1948–51), II, 176. The trouble is that if an intense heat and its related pain are one and the same sensation, how is it that both the vulgar and the learned situate the pain in themselves, whereas for both it is, say, a fire that appears to be hot? This would be problematic for any philosopher with Hutcheson's metaphysics, which affirms the existence of material substances and their causal powers. (But it is problematic even within Berkeley's immaterialist ontology of sensible bodies: the intense heat, according to Berkeley, is a member of a collection of sensible ideas that constitute a fire, whereas the pain is not. He surely does not want to say that the fire feels pain, which yet seems implied if, as he says, the pain and the intense heat are numerically identical.) So, again: how could the phenomenological difference of location of the intense heat and the pain be explained if they were numerically identical? It seems that Kivy's interpretation inadvertently, and needlessly infects Hutcheson with a difficulty.

leaves open a question that we should now address: What is the sense of the word 'beauty' that Hutcheson uses when he makes the negative metaphysical claim that beauty is not a mind-independent property? It cannot be something such as 'the power to be agreeable to the sense of men', or 'the power to (transitively) cause pleasure in a human internal sense', because in that case, although the concept of beauty (i.e. the concept of the power) would include the concept of a relation to some mind, beauty itself (i.e. the power) would nevertheless be mind-independent, and so the negative metaphysical claim would be false. Therefore, when making his negative metaphysical statement, he must be using 'beauty' in another sense, a sense presumably encoded in ordinary language, as at least some of his readers might be presumed to understand it. Yet, he does not say what that sense is. So, in order to find out, let us ask: What would it be for objects to have beauty in a way that would be both mind-independent and not purely dispositional? An answer may be gleaned from two features of aesthetic pleasure as Hutcheson understands it.

First, he holds that aesthetic pleasure, as all other pleasures, gives rise to a desire for the pleasing object. He speaks of a desire of beauty in *ICB*, I, v, 31. In the *Essay*, he says: ' Desires arise in our mind, from the frame of our nature, upon apprehension of good or evil in objects, actions, or events, to obtain for *ourselves* or *others* the *agreeable sensation*, when the object or event is good; or to prevent the *uneasy sensation*, when it is evil (*Essay,* 7.). The following lines on the same page clearly indicate that he has in mind, among others, 'the desires of the pleasures of imagination or internal sense', referring in a footnote to the first Treatise (i.e. the *Inquiry into Beauty*). And in the *Short Introduction* he speaks of our 'superadded' aesthetic perceptive powers, saying: 'Whatever is grateful to any of these perceptive powers is *for itself desirable*, and may on some occasions be to us an ultimate end'.[12]

Secondly, he says that aesthetic pleasure is – or at least elicits – an approbation.[13] An approbation is a positive evaluation, a mental state expressed by a positive value judgment, perhaps of the form 'this object is beautiful'. Doubtless, the concept of beauty as ordinarily understood is an axiological concept, albeit lacking descriptive content. In ordinary language a judgment such as 'this object is beautiful', as at least some understand it, might be taken

12 Francis Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy' (1747) in *Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson*, ed. Bernard Fabian (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 1990), IV, 13, my italics.

13 For example, cf. *ICB*, 'Preface', 26.; I, vii, 32.; VI, vii, 78–9. On the relation of aesthetic pleasure to approbation, cf. Mark Strasser, 'Hutcheson on Aesthetic Perception', *Philosophia*, 21 (1991–2), 113–14.

to state of a certain object that it has an objective, mind-independent axiological property, a property that would be metaphysically on a par with primary qualities. And this, I take it, is what Hutcheson is warning us against. It seems that when he says that beauty is not a mind-independent property of things, he means that our idea of beauty does not represent, or express a mind-independent value, or axiological property, and that a value judgment such as 'this object is beautiful' would be false if taken to attribute such a property to the object.

Understanding the nature and function of the idea of beauty depends crucially on understanding why Hutcheson holds that the idea belongs to an internal sense. In order to understand that, we must contrast the pleasures of the external senses with those of the internal sense of beauty; we do so in the next two sections.

2 Perceptions of the external senses

Hutcheson defines the external senses as 'determinations of nature by which certain perceptions constantly arise in the mind, when certain impressions are made upon the organs of the body, or motions raised in them'.[14] They 'depend on certain organs of the body, so constituted that upon any impression made on them, or motion excited, *whether by external impulses or internal forces in the body*, a certain feeling is raised in the soul'.[15] External sensations are those 'which arise in the mind as the result of a certain motion excited in the body or impressed upon it'.[16] Notice the disjunction: perceptions of the external senses arise *either* because of impressions made on the body by external objects (i.e. 'external impulses'), *or* because of motions raised in the body (i.e. 'internal forces in the body'. The former cause ideas of secondary qualities; the latter cause certain pleasures or pains that we feel in our bodies, in particular pains such as hunger, thirst, weariness and sickness.[17] Thus, Hutcheson

14 Hutcheson, 'A System of Moral Philosophy', 4.

15 Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction', 4, my italics.

16 Francis Hutcheson, 'A Synopsis of Metaphysics' (1744, 2nd edn) in *Logic, Metaphysics, and the Sociability of Mankind*, eds. James Moore & Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis, 2006), 114.

17 It is because of these pleasures and pains that Hutcheson is dissatisfied with the traditional classification of the external senses, and suggests that there may be more than five of them: 'The division of our external senses into the five common classes, seems very imperfect. Some sensations received *without any previous idea*, can either

includes among the perceptions of the external senses not only sensations proper to each of the five senses, but also bodily pleasures and pains that are independent of sensations of bodies external to ours.

These latter sensations must be distinguished from the pleasures and pains that also depend on our external senses, but that typically attend our sensations of secondary qualities of external bodies. Certain smells, tastes and tactile feelings, seem to be inherently pleasant or unpleasant; when pleasant, they count as what Hutcheson call 'sensual' pleasures. Sensations of sight and hearing are not in the same way unpleasant or painful; they are so only when very violent.[18]

Sensations proper to sight and touch are accompanied by ideas common to both, which Hutcheson calls 'concomitant ideas', basically a short list of Lockean ideas of primary qualities: extension, figure, magnitude motion and rest.[19] In the *Synopsis of Metaphysics* Hutcheson ranks these among the 'intellectual ideas', not because they are not given in sense perception, but because the concomitant ideas received in external sense perception can be made universal by abstraction, thus becoming objects of reason.[20] Two other concomitant ideas – duration and number – accompany all mental states, both those that depend on the external senses and those that are perceived by an internal sense, to which we shall turn shortly. Contrary to the sensations of secondary qualities, which are all simple, and several of which can be pleasant or painful, or just painful (as violent sensations of light and sound), there seem to be few or no pleasures or pains of the external senses directly attached to any of the concomitant ideas: 'the simpler ideas of this class, which some call the

be reduced to none of them, such as the sensations of hunger, thirst, weariness, sickness; or if we reduce them to the sense of feeling, they are perceptions as different from the other ideas of touch, such as cold heat, hardness, softness, as the ideas of taste or smell. Others have hinted at an external sense different from all of these'. *Essay*, 3, footnote, my italics.

18 Hutcheson, 'A System of Moral Philosophy', 5.

19 'Extension, figure, motion, or rest seem therefore to be more properly called *ideas accompanying* the sensations of sight and touch, than the sensations of either of these senses; since they can be received sometimes without the ideas of colour, and sometimes without those of touching, though *never without the one or the other*'. *Essay*, 3, footnote, my italics.

20 '[W]e judge that the ideas of these [qualities] *and of the relations which hold between them* are representations of external things, under the guidance of nature; hence they are classified as *intellectual ideas*, because in them the powers of reason are exercised with the greatest profit and pleasure'. 'A Synopsis of Metaphysics', 114, my italics. Cf. also Hutcheson, 'A Compend of Logic' (1756) in idem, *Logic, Metaphysics, and the Sociability of Mankind*, 12, 14–15.

concomitant ideas of sensation, are not generally either pleasant or painful'.[21] (The more complex concomitant ideas will be part of the basis of aesthetic pleasure, which relates to an internal sense.)

In sum, there are four sorts of perceptions from the external senses: (a) sensations of secondary qualities, directly caused by external objects; (b) the pleasures or pains attending the latter sensations; (c) the pleasures and pains we feel in our bodies independently of our perceptions of (secondary or primary qualities of) external objects; (d) perceptions of concomitant ideas, namely ideas of primary qualities, which are generally not attended with pleasures or pains of the external senses. According to Hutcheson, all of the first three [(a) – (c)] 'as the learned agree, are not pictures or representations of like external qualities in objects, nor of the impression or change made in the bodily organs'. Yet, all three have their proper, natural functions, as long as our senses are unaltered and operate optimally.

> They are either *signals*, as it were, of new events happening to the body, of which experience and observation will show us the cause; or *marks*, settled by the Author of Nature, to show us what things are salutary, innocent, or hurtful; or intimations of things not otherwise discernable which may affect our state.[22]

Obviously, the second of the three natural functions – '*marks* … to show us what things are salutary, innocent, or hurtful' – is basically biological, conducive to our health and survival.

All of the ideas received by the external senses are what Hutcheson calls 'direct and antecedent' perceptions (as opposed to 'reflex, or subsequent' perceptions, about which shortly). These are perceptions that do not depend on other perceptions: 'they presuppose no previous ideas'.[23] It is important to keep this in mind with regard to (b) the pleasures or pains related to the sensations of secondary qualities caused by external objects. Why? Although Hutcheson does not spell this out in so many words in the first *Inquiry*, the ranking of such pleasures and pains among the direct perceptions implies that the external objects that directly cause the ideas of secondary qualities

21 Hutcheson, 'System of Moral Philosophy', 6. Elsewhere he says that these perceptions 'are of a middle nature as to pleasure or pain, having a very small degree of either joined immediately with them'. Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction', 5.

22 Hutcheson, 'A System of Moral Philosophy', 5.

23 Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction', 6.

also directly cause their related pleasures or pains. One and the same external object directly produces, in each case, both a certain taste *and* its pleasantness or unpleasantness, both a certain smell *and* its pleasantness or foulness, both a violent light or sound *and* their respective pains.[24] In sum, it is not the case that, first, the external object causes the sensation of a secondary quality, and that, afterwards, this latter causes its related pleasure or pain.[25] It is this causal structure that explains why these pleasures and pains (as long as our senses are unaltered and function optimally) are reliable '*marks*, settled by the Author of Nature, to show us what things are salutary, innocent, or hurtful' from a biological perspective.

3 Internal sense, and a reflex, or subsequent sense

In the *Short Introduction* Hutcheson defines the 'internal senses' as:

> those powers or determinations of the mind, by which it perceives or is conscious of all within itself, its actions, passions, judgments, wills, desires, joys, sorrows, purposes of action. This power some celebrated writers call *consciousness* or *reflection*, which has for its objects the qualities,

24 Kivy says: 'The internal senses, for Hutcheson, receive pleasure from "ideas"; but so, too, do the external senses, on the Lockean model of "representative" perception, to which Hutcheson adhered'. Kivy, *The Seventh Sense*, 25. It is true that, for Hutcheson, the internal sense of beauty receives pleasure from the perception of a complex idea, as we shall see further on. However, Kivy is mistaken in holding that, for Hutcheson, the pleasures and pains of the external senses, too, depend on previous ideas. (And it is dubious that Hutcheson was a faithful Lockean.) Admittedly, Hutcheson is perhaps not entirely consistent on the cause of the pleasures or pains related to the sensations of secondary qualities, for he also speaks of a 'simple idea or perception' as *giving* pleasure or pain (cf. *ICB*, I, vii, 33, last sentence), thereby perhaps suggesting that the pleasure or pain might be directly caused by the idea, rather than by an external object. However, the evidence of an inconsistency is inconclusive because the whole sentence is negative.

25 As Matthews rightly says: 'the *object*, not the sensitive perception, causes the pleasure or pain'. Matthews, 'Hutcheson on the Idea of Beauty', 238. However, this leaves open the question whether the pleasure is part of the idea of the secondary quality, or whether they are distinct ideas. Matthews seems to hold that a sensation of a secondary quality and the pleasure (or pain) are two aspects of one and the same idea. Ibid., 238–9. I believe that Hutcheson's texts do not afford a clear answer to the question.

> actions or states of the mind itself, as the external senses have things external.[26]

In the same text Hutcheson goes on to distinguish both the external and the internal senses from a higher order of senses. The reason why the latter senses may not inappropriately be called 'higher-order' is because they are powers of receiving ideas or pleasures that depend on previous ideas or mental states: 'we next consider these senses we called *reflex* or subsequent, by which certain new forms or perceptions are received, *in consequence of others previously observed by our external or internal senses*.'[27] The italicised words indicate that there is a third set of senses that is dependent on – but distinct from – both the external and the internal senses. For, if there are senses that receive certain pleasures or pains *in consequence* of ideas received by the external and internal senses, then these latter senses do not themselves receive the pleasures and pains in question; hence, those that do so – the subsequent senses – must be distinct from them.[28]

At this point a terminological issue must be clarified. When defining 'internal sense' in the first quotation above from the *Short Introduction*, Hutcheson says: 'this power some celebrated writers call *consciousness* or *reflection*'. Among the celebrated writers is surely Locke, who called the awareness of our mental states 'consciousness', 'internal sense', or 'reflection'.[29] Thus, in that passage of the *Short Introduction*, Hutcheson is talking about the way Locke and his followers speak, which differs from Hutcheson's usual way of speaking. Consequently, we must beware of two things. First, we must not confuse

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26 Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction', 6. Hutcheson adds: 'these two classes of sensation, external and internal, furnish our whole store of ideas, the materials about which we exercise that noblest power of *reasoning*'. Ibid. Elsewhere he makes the same point about consciousness, which he there calls 'inward sensation'. Hutcheson, 'A System of Moral Philosophy', 6.

27 Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction', 12–13, my italics.

28 This is not to say that the mind is not aware of the pleasures received by one's subsequent senses; of course it is. Hutcheson's point is merely that in order for the mind to be aware of such a pleasure, it must first be received by a specific subsequent sense, which is distinct from the external senses.

29 'The other fountain, from which experience furnisheth the understanding with *ideas*, is the *perception of the operations of our own minds* within us … and such are, *perception, reasoning, knowing, willing*, and all the different actings of our own minds. … This source of *ideas*, every man has wholly in himself: and though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects; yet it is very like it, and might properly be called internal sense. But as I call the other *sensation*, so I call this *reflection*'. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1979), 105. (II, i, 4).

'consciousness or reflection' in the first quotation above with 'these senses we called reflex or subsequent' in the second quotation. The first expression denotes inner awareness, or consciousness, whereas the second refers to the higher-order senses, such as the aesthetic and moral senses, which are dependent on – but distinct from – both 'our external or internal senses'. Secondly, in the first *Inquiry* the expression 'internal sense' is used to refer to the sense of beauty, as it is, too, in the *Essay*.[30] It is abundantly clear, however, that 'internal sense' in the first *Inquiry* corresponds to what Hutcheson later calls a 'subsequent' sense.

The change of expression, I believe, is not a change in doctrine, and a good reason can be adduced to explain it. One of the reasons for which, in the first *Inquiry*, Hutcheson calls the sense of beauty 'internal' is because it has no bodily organ. Nevertheless, the pleasures received by the internal sense often depend indirectly on external objects, which appear perceptually to the mind by causing complex ideas. We are aesthetically pleased, or not, with external things as long as we perceive them, or at least retain an idea of them in our minds. What might be confusing, though, is that pleasures of the internal sense are thus often 'outward-looking', in the sense that they are directed towards external things.[31] Hutcheson's rewording in the *Short Introduction* eliminates a possible source of confusion, in two steps. First, he now uses 'internal sense' to refer to consciousness, which apprehends all of one's mental states. Secondly, he now calls the aesthetic and moral senses, not 'internal', but 'reflex or subsequent'.[32] He calls them so because by them 'certain new forms or perceptions are received, in consequence of others previously observed by our *external or internal senses*', underscoring that the subsequent senses are 'employed about the objects *of even the external senses*',[33] thereby avoiding talk of an internal sense that receives pleasures most of which are directed towards external objects. The shift in vocabulary clarifies something that had being going on since the

30 '[T]hese pleasures presupposing previous ideas, were called *perceptions* of an *internal sense*, in a former treatise' (*Essay*, 2–3), and he adds a footnote referring to the *Inquiry into Beauty* (Ibid., 3). The final part of Hutcheson's next footnote makes it clear that 'the perceptions of the internal sense' are those of the sense of beauty (cf. Ibid., 4).

31 Given Hutcheson's important distinction between external and internal senses, it is *prima facie* disconcerting to read that 'It is of no consequence whether we call these ideas of beauty and harmony perceptions of the external senses of seeing and hearing or not' (*ICB*, I, x, 34). Good sense can be made of the statement, however, if it is taken to allude to the fact that aesthetic pleasures are 'outward-looking'.

32 These two shifts also appear elsewhere, cf. Hutcheson, 'A Synopsis of Metaphysics', 113, 117–18.

33 Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction', 12–13, 6, my italics.

first *Inquiry*, namely a move away from Locke, who identified internal sense and consciousness. In discussing the first *Inquiry* from now on, I will be using the expression 'internal sense' as Hutcheson uses it in that work, namely to refer to what he later calls a 'subsequent' sense of beauty.

4 The internal, subsequent sense of beauty

Because aesthetic pleasure belongs to a subsequent sense, it necessarily depends on previous ideas. For this reason the proximate cause of aesthetic pleasure is a complex perception, or idea that manifests UAV. In other words, what directly causes the idea of beauty, or aesthetic pleasure, is our perception of an object's UAV. This holds whether the object is a theorem or a physical object, natural or artistic. Let us momentarily focus on physical objects. To say that the proximate cause of aesthetic pleasure is a complex perception, or idea that manifests UAV is not to say that the external object that causes the complex idea, and that the complex idea represents, plays no causal role with respect to aesthetic pleasure. Of course it does, because causation is transitive. The external object with its UAV is a mediate, or indirect causal factor of aesthetic pleasure insofar as a complex idea that manifests the object's UAV causally depends on the object: 'Objects, actions, or events obtain the name of good, or evil, according as they are causes, or occasions, *mediately, or immediately*, of a grateful, or ungrateful perception to some sensitive nature'[34].

Ideas of secondary qualities and their related pleasures do not resemble the causal power of the object that causes these ideas, nor do they resemble the sub-microscopic structure of the primary qualities on which the object's causal power depends. Just so, aesthetic pleasure bears no resemblance to UAV. Furthermore, one can enjoy the taste of a fruit without knowing *why* – or even *that* – eating the fruit is beneficial to our health, and also without knowing *what it is* in the fruit (the sub-microscopic structure of its primary qualities) that causes our pleasure, nor *how* it causes it. By analogy, we may have an aesthetic pleasure when looking at an object without knowing whether or not it might

34 *Essay*, 2, my italics ('grateful', i.e. pleasing, delightful). They cause a pleasure immediately when the pleasure is that of an external sense, mediately when the pleasure is that of an internal sense. Of course, if we are dealing with theorems, it is only the UAV presented by the complex idea of the theorem that causes aesthetic pleasure.

be put to any practical use, and without knowing *what it is* in the object (its UAV) that causes our pleasure, nor *how* it causes it.

> This superior power of perception is justly called a *sense* because of its affinity to the other senses in this, that 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 most accurate knowledge increase this pleasure of beauty*, however it may superadd a distinct rational pleasure from prospects of advantage, or from increase of knowledge. (*ICB*, I, xii, 36, my italics.)

> But in all these instances of beauty let it be observed that the pleasure is communicated to those who never reflected on this *general foundation*, and that all here alleged is this, that the pleasant sensation arises only from objects in which there is *uniformity amidst variety*. *We may have the sensation without knowing what is the occasion of it*, as a man's taste may suggest ideas of sweets, acids, bitters, though he be ignorant of the forms of the small bodies, or their motions, which excite these perceptions in him. (*ICB*, II, xiv, 47, my italics.)

In sum, in order to have an aesthetic pleasure of absolute beauty, it is necessary and sufficient to have a complex idea that displays an object's UAV, and thus it is necessary and sufficient to perceive an object's UAV*;* it is not necessary, however, to know that it is the object's perceived UAV that causes the pleasure. Kivy calls a perception 'non-epistemic' when it neither depends on, nor affords, knowledge of what quality in the object causes it.[35] Notice, though, that Hutcheson does not imply that it is necessary that the perception of UAV be non-epistemic. He implies that it can be either epistemic or not: 'We *may* have the sensation without knowing what is the occasion of it' (my italics). However, if in addition to perceiving UAV, we also know that it is the perceived UAV that causes our pleasure, such knowledge neither heightens nor diminishes the aesthetic pleasure:

> Many of our sensitive perceptions are pleasant, and many painful, immediately, and that without any knowledge of the cause of this

35 Cf. Peter Kivy, 'The 'Sense' of Beauty and the Sense of 'Art': Hutcheson's Place in the History and Practice of Aesthetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53 (1995), 350–1.

> pleasure or pain, or how the objects excite it, or are the occasions of it, or without seeing to what farther advantage or detriment the use of such objects might tend. *Nor would the most accurate knowledge of these things vary either the pleasure or pain of the perception*, however it might give a rational pleasure distinct from the sensible; or might raise a distinct joy from a prospect of farther advantage in the object, or aversion from an apprehension of evil.[36]

This highlights a fundamental difference between (1) sensations of secondary qualities and their related pleasures of the external senses, and (2) aesthetic pleasure. Whereas it is impossible in practice to perceive what it is, in an external object, that causes our sensible 'ideas of sweets, acids, bitters' and their related pleasures and pains (because the corpuscles and their motions are too small to be perceived), it is not only possible, but necessary, to perceive (at least non-epistemically) the UAV of an external object for it to cause an aesthetic pleasure. The reason for the difference is that the aesthetic pleasure belongs to a subsequent sense, not to an external sense. Contrary to the ideas of secondary qualities and their related sensible pleasures – which are 'direct and antecedent' perceptions – aesthetic pleasure always depends on a *previous* perception, and so, according to Hutcheson, the pleasure can only arise if we first perceive a complex idea that presents an object's UAV. The objective foundation of aesthetic pleasure, UAV*,* is not sub-microscopic; if it is to

36 *ICB*, I, vi, 31–2. (A) The expression 'sensitive perceptions' might suggest that Hutcheson is talking only about the pleasures of the external senses. That is not the case. In the lines just preceding the quotation he speaks of the desire of beauty; he is intent on highlighting what the external senses and our aesthetic sensitivity have in common, in order to argue that such a sensitivity is a proper sense. Thus, he is comparing the pleasures of the external senses and aesthetic pleasure. (B) As to the content of the quotation, I submit that Hutcheson is right. Suppose that, after admiring Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation of Christ*, you attend a lecture explaining all of the sophisticated geometrical proportions constitutive of the UAV exhibited in the painting. Your newly acquired 'most accurate knowledge' may well bring you to enjoy new pleasures in better understanding Piero's intentions, his craftsmanship, the formal structure of the work, and possibly part of its implicit meaning. Your pleasurable admiration for the man, his mathematical knowledge and his artistic skills is now heightened, and you gain in the joy of discovery and knowledge. So, you now have 'a distinct rational pleasure … from the increase of knowledge'. Indeed, because of your knowledge of the formal structure of the work, you can even understand its UAV in mathematical terms, and you now know that that is what caused your aesthetic pleasure. Yet, when you return to look at the painting itself, it appears neither more, nor less, beautiful (i.e. pleasing) than it did before your tutoring. Nor, I submit, would Piero have wished that it should.

produce an aesthetic pleasure, it must be observable at a macroscopic level. Thus, it can be perceived, and it can also be known.

Another difference, obviously, between the external senses and the sense of beauty is that the former have bodily organs, not so the latter. This difference is connected to the fact that the sense of beauty is a subsequent sense. For, the internal sense's not having a bodily organ implies that external objects cannot affect it directly, but can do so only indirectly, by causing a complex idea containing UAV, the perception of which by the mind affects the internal sense.[37] If the internal sense had a bodily organ, it would not be a subsequent sense, and aesthetic pleasure would not depend on a previous perception. That the internal sense requires no bodily organ is all the more obvious if what pleases aesthetically is an abstract entity such as a theorem, in which case no physical object plays a causal role. (cf. *ICB*, I, xi, 35.)

A further difference, related to the fact that the internal sense has no bodily organ, is that, contrary to the external senses, the internal sense cannot immediately receive displeasure or pain, because 'there is no form which seems necessarily disagreeable of itself'; '[d]eformity is only the absence of beauty, or deficiency in the beauty expected in any species'. (*ICB*, VI, i, 74.) (This is presumably because, although UAV varies in degrees and there is also a zero degree of UAV, there are no negative degrees.) Aesthetic displeasure can be received only indirectly. For, it depends, first, on the mistaken belief that we would receive an aesthetic pleasure from a certain object, and secondly, on the disappointment resulting from the discovery that the object does not afford any, or affords less than what we expected: 'Our sense of beauty seems designed to give us positive pleasure, but not positive pain or disgust, any farther than what arises from disappointment'.[38]

Now, because aesthetic pleasure depends on a perception that manifests an object's UAV, the question of what the causal powers are, in the object, that give rise to the complex idea containing UAV becomes irrelevant from an aesthetic point of view. First, because some objects we call 'beautiful' – abstract entities such as theorems – have no causal powers. Secondly, because as noted by Kail, it is doubtful that the UAV that we perceive in all the external

37 I agree with Matthews that it is not the subsequent sense of beauty that perceives the complex idea: 'it is a mistake to assume that the internal sense perceives or re-perceives the complex idea that is the cause of beauty. The internal sense is reactive, like other senses, except that it reacts to complex ideas'. Matthews, 'Hutcheson on the Idea of Beauty', 250.

38 *ICB*, VI, i, 75. Cf. also *Essay*, 163.

objects we call 'beautiful' share a type-identical causal property.[39] Thus, when we consider external objects from an aesthetic perspective, their primary qualities and their visual and auditory secondary qualities are on a par. Both are part of our complex ideas, and so are essential to our perception of the UAV of visible objects and of music. This is not to say, however, that our complex ideas are beautiful; the external objects are beautiful, but they are beautiful *as perceived*.

There is something that Hutcheson does not say, but that I believe he implies. Although UAV is a 'real quality in the objects' (*ICB*, I, ix, 34.), aesthetic pleasure depends on our perception of an object's UAV, and so it depends to a large extent on the *way* we perceive the object and its UAV. Consider some examples that illustrate the point. There are many ways of looking at the same countryside – with the same trees, same meadows, same pond, same houses, same paths – while feeling very little aesthetic pleasure. It often happens that one has to climb to a vantage point to appreciate the scenery, and then, perhaps only from a certain angle. So, the landscape may suddenly become aesthetically pleasing – it may all of a sudden fully manifest its UAV – but its UAV may be restricted to that single point of view.

Consider, next, one of Uccello's three great battle paintings. It may have all the UAV one can imagine in a painting, yet if looked at from too close up, or too far off, or from a very acute angle, it will display little or no UAV. It reveals its UAV to its full effect only once you are in a "correct" position, the notion of correctness being here the adequacy of the position with the painter's presumable intention.[40] Or, think of the pleasure taken in looking at many animals we call 'beautiful' – horses, deer, lions, swans; they certainly manifest UAV when seen laterally, but much less when viewed from beneath their underbellies. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to a great deal of classical sculpture and architecture.

Or, imagine a funeral march played at breakneck speed, or a scherzo played at a snail's pace. In both cases, all of the relations and proportions of the

39 'It is extremely implausible, to say the least, that, given the disparate kinds of things to which the predicate 'is beautiful' is applied, they should share some common causally relevant property'. Peter J. E. Kail, 'Function and Normativity in Hutcheson's Aesthetic Epistemology', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 40 (2000), 449.

40 More often than not, we do not consciously reflect on the painter's intention regarding the position from which to look at a painting; we just shuffle around unwittingly until we reach a suitable position. There are extreme cases: Holbein's 'The Ambassadors', with its anamorphosis of a skull, requires the spectator to discover two, perhaps three positions.

intervals between the notes would be objectively present, and so the objective UAV of both works would be intact. Yet, the complex ideas of such interpretations would not elicit an aesthetic pleasure, because our ability to discern the inherent relations and proportions would be impaired by the speeds. A virtue of Hutcheson's theory of a subsequent aesthetic sense is that it can accommodate and account for this sensitivity of our aesthetic pleasures to such perceptual factors. The reason is that according to Hutcheson aesthetic pleasure, or lack thereof, does not depend directly on the objects, but on our perception of them, and therefore on *how* we perceive them.[41]

5. Perception, reason and pleasure

There is another important difference between the external senses and the internal sense of beauty, a difference that is not strongly highlighted in the first *Inquiry*, but obviously present nevertheless. The difference is that pleasures of the internal sense of beauty depend to a great extent on what Hutcheson elsewhere variously calls 'the understanding', 'intellect' or 'reason', whereas those of the external senses do not. Let me explain.

In a passage added in the fourth edition to Section I, xii, Hutcheson distinguishes three levels in aesthetic experience: (1) the powers of perceiving ideas of primary and secondary qualities by the external senses; (2) 'the power of *comparing*, or of discerning the similitudes of proportions'; (3) the power of receiving aesthetic pleasure. Hutcheson distinguishes the levels by arguing that they are partly independent one from another. A certain being, he says, might have the first power and not the second. And a certain other being might have both of these, without having the third. Indeed, 'the bare idea of the form is something separable from pleasure' (*ICB*, I, xii, 35.), because there is no necessary connection between perceived UAV and aesthetic pleasure:

> *Similitude*, *proportion*, *analogy or equality of proportion* are objects of the *understanding*, and must be actually known before we know the natural causes of our pleasure. But *pleasure* perhaps is *not necessarily connected with*

41 In speaking of the sensitivity of our aesthetic pleasures to the ways we perceive the UAV of objects by means of our complex ideas, I have tried to give some examples, but have not attempted to list and classify systematically all of the possible 'ways'. Such a task lies far beyond the limits of this paper, and would be exceedingly speculative with regard to Hutcheson's texts.

> *perception of them*, and may be felt where the proportion is not known or attended to, and may not be felt where the proportion is observed.[42]

We learn later on in the first *Inquiry* that our being pleased with perceived UAV in the absence of any necessary connection between the latter and our aesthetic pleasure is due to God's good will.[43] Granting this, let us return to the second level: 'the power of *comparing*, or of discerning the similitudes of proportions'. As should now be clear, merely having a complex idea of an object's primary and secondary qualities is not sufficient to bring about an aesthetic pleasure. Much more is required, and that is to be able to *compare* the ideas that make up a complex idea, and thereby to discern the relations among these qualities. These relations are constitutive of 'similitude, proportion, analogy or equality of proportion'; they are constitutive, thus, of the UAV of absolute beauty. In sum, having a complex idea made up of certain primary and secondary qualities is one thing; perceiving – either epistemically or non-epistemically – the UAV that is constituted by their relations and proportions is another thing. In the passage under discussion Hutcheson says that the relations are 'objects of the understanding'. Elsewhere he attributes such objects to reason, or intellect.[44] Whatever the term, mental activity over and above mere sense perception is required in order to make the UAV of a complex idea manifest.

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42 *ICB*, I, xii, 35, my italics. (1) Notice that when Hutcheson says 'must be actually *known* before we *know* the natural causes of our pleasure' (my italics), he is speaking of knowledge, not perception. Throughout the first *Inquiry*, he maintains a strong distinction between perception and knowledge. So, the passage quoted does not contradict the claim that the *perception* of UAV may be non-epistemic. (2) The context shows that, when Hutcheson says that pleasure 'may not be felt where the proportion is observed', he is thinking either (a) of a non-human being without an internal sense, or (b) of a non-human being with an internal sense different from that of the human species, or (c) of a human being with an internal sense, but very dull. (Cf. also *ICB*, I, xi, 35. and V, i, 59–60.) The reason for which Hutcheson may be thinking about (c) can be drawn from the second and third editions of *ICB*, I, xii, where he speaks of 'that cold lifeless conception which we imagine in a dull critic, or one of the *virtuosi*, without what we call a *fine taste*'. (*ICB*, I, 36, footnote.)

43 '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'. (*ICB*, V, i, 59.)

44 On the role of reason in aesthetic experience according to Hutcheson, cf. Strasser, 'Hutcheson on Aesthetic Perception', 112ff.

For instance, at the beginning of the first *Inquiry*, Hutcheson speaks of our power of '*comparing* [objects] by means of the ideas, and of observing their *relations* and *proportions*'. (*ICB*, I, iii, 31.) In the *Essay* he explains that pleasures of the aesthetic sense 'arise only upon some previous idea, or image, or assemblage, or *comparison* of ideas … Thus regularity and uniformity in figures, are no less grateful than tastes, or smells; the harmony of notes, is more grateful than simple sounds'. (*Essay*, 2-3.) In a footnote he speaks of 'those pleasures perceived upon the previous reception and *comparison* of various sensible perceptions, with their concomitant ideas, or intellectual ideas, when we find *uniformity, or resemblance* among them. (*Essay*, 4, my italics.) Further on, he attributes such activity to the intellect: 'Reasoning or intellect seems to raise no new species of ideas, but to discover or *discern* the *relations* of those received'. (*Essay*, 241, my italics.) In *A Synopsis of Metaphysics*, Hutcheson writes:

> God himself seems to have made the forms or elements of all ideas, without our own minds contributing anything at this point. But once ideas have been admitted, the mind can ring the changes upon them, and vigorously exercise its powers in doing so. It can either retain ideas or dismiss them, *pay attention to them or turn to others*; it can divide concrete ideas by abstracting, or join simple ideas and compound them. It can in a certain manner enlarge ideas or diminish them, *compare them with each other and learn their relations*. In all these activities no less than in willed motions and appetites, *the mind is conscious to itself of truly doing something*.[45]

In *A Short Introduction* he explains that:

> 'Tis by this power of reason, that the soul perceives *the relations and connexions of things*, and their consequences and causes; infers what is to ensue, or what preceded; can *discern resemblances*, consider on one view the present and the future, propose to itself a whole plan of life, and provide all things requisite for it.[46]

In *A System of Moral Philosophy*, he says that, given our powers of 'judging and reasoning', '*the mind never rests in bare perception; it compares the ideas received, discerns their relations* …; it inquires into the natures, *proportions*, causes, effects,

45 Hutcheson, 'A Synopsis of Metaphysics', 116, my italics.

46 Hutcheson, 'A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy', 6–7, my italics.

antecedents, consequents, of every thing'.[47] A good example of the kind of relations that are constitutive of UAV, and are discovered by comparing and discerning, is found in classical architecture:

> In that kind of architecture which the Europeans call *regular*, the uniformity of parts is very obvious, the several parts are regular figures, and either equal or similar at least in the same range: the pedestals are parallelopipedons or square prisms; the pillars, cylinders nearly; the arches circular, and all those in the same row equal; there is the same proportion everywhere observed in the same range between the diameters of pillars and their heights, their capitals, the diameters of arches, the heights of the pedestals, the projections of the cornice, and all [the] ornaments in each of our five orders. (*ICB*, III, vii, 53–4.)

Although one must be able to grasp these relations and proportions – thanks to the more or less conscious use of reason in discernments and comparisons – in order to experience an aesthetic pleasure of absolute beauty, one need not have any explicit knowledge of them, nor know that their combined UAV is the proper cause of our aesthetic pleasure. In many cases, for human beings at least, the phenomenal, qualitative impact of these relations and proportions in non-epistemic perception is sufficient to bring about aesthetic pleasure. The many thousands of music lovers who have no technical knowledge of composition and harmony, and who cannot decipher a score, are confirmation of Hutcheson's insight. The point is that even the merely phenomenal, qualitative impact of a complex idea's non-epistemically perceived UAV on our sense of beauty depends on the role of the more or less conscious role of reason in making the UAV phenomenally manifest.

I wish, hereafter, to distinguish (1) the operations of reason I have focused on up to here from (2) the more ordinarily known operation of reason, namely reasoning, based as it is on propositional knowledge and inference.[48] Hutcheson

47 Hutcheson, 'A System of Moral Philosophy', 6–7.

48 Cf. Hutcheson, 'A Compend of Logic', 31ff. To say that (1) the activity of comparing and discerning relations and proportions constitutive of the UAV of our complex ideas, and (2) reasoning as involving propositional knowledge and inferences, can be distinguished is not to say that Hutcheson opposes them, as if they had nothing in common. They have a great deal in common; indeed, discerning, comparing and discovering relations are common to both. According to Hutcheson, in reasoning we make comparisons and discover relations between 'terms' (i.e. concepts) in order to construct syllogisms: 'When the *relation* or connection of two ideas or *terms* cannot

makes it clear that a great deal of reasoning is involved in the acquisition of all of the mathematical, physical, astronomical and biological knowledge necessary in order for us to grasp – i.e. to understand intellectually – the UAV of, *inter alia*, theorems in mathematics and in physics (*ICB*, III, i–v, 48–51.), and also the UAV of many natural things such as fluids (*ICB*, II, v, 46.), biological organisms, the solar system, indeed nature itself. (*ICB*, II, v, 41–3.) In such cases, of course, reasoning is bound to be quite conscious. However, I wish to set aside reasoning as such in this paper, and to focus on the operations of reason in discovering, discerning and comparing the relations and proportions constitutive of the UAV of our complex ideas comprising primary and secondary qualities.

Now, this latter activity of discerning and comparing has its limits. When Hutcheson illustrates the notion of UAV through the series of geometrical figures he discusses in *ICB*, II, he indirectly underscores both the necessity of the activity of discerning and comparing relations in order to have an aesthetic pleasure, and the *limits* of our power of discerning and comparing them. If the number of equal sides of a polygon is sufficiently great, then, although the resulting figure has a great deal of UAV, the proportion of the sides 'to the radius, or diameter of the figure, or of the circle to which regular polygons have an obvious relation, *is so much lost to our observation, that the beauty does not increase with the number of sides*'. (*ICB*, II, iii, 40, my italics.) In other words, at a certain level of complexity of our ideas, the degree of aesthetic pleasure taken in a complex idea of a polygon does not increase proportionately with the greater degree of UAV. A polygon with, say, 179 equal sides inscribed in a circle has greater UAV than, say, a regular octagon, because the uniformity of the two polygons is equal (all sides of each polygon are equal) and the diversity (i.e. the number of sides) is greater in the former than in the latter. Yet, at the level of complexity of the former, our power of reason meets a contingent limit: we can no longer compare and discern the inherent relations and proportions of the figure. This is why, Hutcheson believes, we have no more aesthetic pleasure in the former than in the latter. This highlights, once again, the fact that it is not merely UAV that causes aesthetic pleasure, but it is UAV

be directly perceived, the *relation* between them will often be able to be seen by a *comparison* of both of them with some third or middle [idea or term] or with several middle [ideas or terms] which are closely connected with each other. This mental process is dianoetic judgment or discourse' (Ibid., 31, my italics). Also, some of the quotations given above indicate that Hutcheson considers (1) and (2) as different sorts of the same generic mental activities. I wish to distinguish the sorts, and to focus hereafter on (1).

as perceived, in this case as made manifest by the more or less conscious activity of reason in discerning and comparing relations in our complex ideas.[49]

Although, the power of discerning and comparing relations has its natural limits, there is ample room to develop, improve and perfect the power within those limits. Indeed, Hutcheson aims to show that: 'all men, *according as their capacity enlarges*, so as to receive and compare *more complex* ideas, have a greater delight in uniformity, and are pleased with *more complex* kinds, both original and relative'. (*ICB*, VI, iv, 76, my italics.) And one way of developing the power of discerning and comparing relations is through custom. In order to explain this last point, let us take a step back and approach matters from a broader angle.

In Sections VI and VII of the first *Inquiry* Hutcheson wants to explain why it is that people differ to some extent in their aesthetic pleasures and judgments; but, he wants to 'account for the diversities of fancy, without denying the uniformity of our internal sense of beauty'. (*ICB*, VI, xii, 81.) In other words, he intends to explain the differences in aesthetic pleasures and judgments in such a way that they are shown to be compatible with the claim that the internal sense is natural, and so common to all humans. In his explanations of such differences, he appeals to associations of ideas (*ICB*, VI), custom, education and example (*ICB*, VII). Let us set aside education and example, and focus on associations of ideas and custom. It is not clear to what extent Hutcheson really distinguishes these two factors, because some examples he gives of the effects of custom are clearly cases of an association of ideas.[50] So, let us distinguish in Hutcheson two roles of custom.

The first role is the habitual association of ideas. However, what is peculiar to the way the habitual association of ideas functions to produce differences in persons' pleasures and judgments is that the resulting differences have little or nothing to do with the perception of UAV, and so they are not really relevant to our aesthetic experience.[51] The second role of custom, as now

49 Of course, the role of reason in comparing is even more important with regard to relative, or comparative beauty: cf. *ICB*, IV.

50 For example, in discussing the effects of custom, he says 'We are naturally capable of sentiments of fear, and dread of any powerful presence; and so custom may connect the ideas of religious horror to certain buildings'. (*ICB*, VII, ii, 82.) This is obviously a case of an association of ideas.

51 'The association of ideas above hinted at is one great cause of the apparent diversity of fancies 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, *but under different conceptions than those of beauty or deformity*'. (*ICB*, VI, xi, 80, my italics.) The results of associations of ideas are 'approbations and distastes … *remote from the ideas of beauty, being plainly different ideas*'. (VI, xi, 81, my italics.)

distinguished from the association of ideas, is related to the use of reason. Its outcomes, contrary to those of associations of ideas, are directly relevant in a positive sense to the enhancement of our aesthetic experience. 'Custom', Hutcheson explains, 'operates in this manner. As to actions, it only gives a disposition to the mind or body more easily to perform those actions which have been frequently repeated'. (*ICB*, VII, ii, 82.) It is in this sense of the term that he appeals to custom in order to explain the diversity of aesthetic pleasures and judgements: 'custom may make us capable of extending our views farther and of receiving more complex ideas of beauty in bodies, or harmony in sounds, by increasing our attention and quickness of perception'; 'custom may increase our power of receiving or comparing complex ideas'. (*ICB*, VII, ii, 83.) 'Custom makes us more capable of retaining and comparing complex ideas, so as to discern more complicated uniformity which escapes the observation of novices in any art'. (*ICB*, VII, ii, 84.) Indeed: 'education and custom may influence our internal senses, where they are antecedently, by enlarging the capacity of our minds to retain and compare the parts of complex compositions; and then if the finest objects are presented to us we grow conscious of a pleasure far superior to what common performances excite'. (*ICB*, VII, iii, 85.) The role of custom here is not that of associating ideas, but of repeated practice and experience in our operations of comparing and discerning relations. Thus, through practice and experience our power of reason (as relevant to aesthetic experience) can be developed and perfected. The implication is that, according to the degree to which persons severally develop the power of their reason to compare and discern relations constitutive of UAV, their natural aesthetic sensitivity will be more or less developed. Once fully developed, it is commonly called, '*fine genius* or *taste*'. (*ICB*, I, x, 35.) So, although the internal sense is natural and thus common to all human beings, there may be great differences in aesthetic sensitivity because of differences, due to custom, or lack thereof, in the practice and experience of reason. This helps to explain what Hutcheson says about 'many men':

> They can tell in separate notes, the higher, lower, sharper or flatter, when separately sounded; in figures they discern the length, breadth, wideness of each line, surface, angle; and may be as capable of hearing and seeing at great distances as any men whatsoever. And yet perhaps they shall find no pleasure in musical compositions, in painting, architecture, natural landscape, or but a very weak one in comparison of what others enjoy from the same objects. This greater capacity of

> receiving such pleasant ideas we commonly call a fine genius or taste. (*ICB*, I, x, 34–5, my italics.)

It is important to notice the terms 'separate' and 'separately'. Hutcheson's point is that such persons' external senses function correctly, and so they can perceive singly, one by one, all of the primary and secondary qualities contained in the UAV of a complex idea. What the passage suggests, therefore, is that the lack of such persons' aesthetic pleasure, or 'very weak one', in compositions, paintings, architecture, etc. is due to insufficient practice in comparing and discerning the relations and proportions of the qualities constitutive of the UAV of certain more complex ideas. Because of this shortcoming of their reason, the UAV of their complex ideas is not made sufficiently manifest.

Difference in aesthetic responses, in sum, is not to be explained only by education, example and the more or less arbitrary associations of ideas, but also by the various degrees to which persons develop their power of comparing, discovering and discerning the relations and proportions constitutive of UAV. The point here is not that Hutcheson is interested in theorising about a 'standard of taste', as Hume does, nor in showing how expertise in aesthetic judgment can be attained, as Hume also does. The point is rather as follows: (1) one of the roles Hutcheson assigns to custom is that of developing and perfecting the power of reason to make more subtle and wide-ranging comparisons and discernments of the relations and proportions constitutive of more complex UAV, so as to make the UAV manifest; (2) he thereby makes ample room for different degrees of aesthetic pleasure with regard to a certain object's UAV, *if and when* the degree of aesthetic pleasure varies proportionately to the degree to which persons have developed and perfected their reason; (3) he then argues that such differences in the degrees of aesthetic pleasure with regard to a certain object's UAV do not conflict with the general claim that the internal sense of beauty is natural, thus common to all persons.

The reading pursued up to here – to the effect that reason plays an important role in the perception of UAV – does not contradict Hutcheson's claim that aesthetic 'pleasures are necessary and immediate'. (*ICB*, I, xii, 36, marginal subtitle.) To say that an aesthetic pleasure is necessary, according to Hutcheson, is to say that, once we perceive an object that displays UAV, our having the pleasure is independent of any direct control of our will. To say that the pleasure is immediate is to say, as we have seen, that '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'. (*ICB*, I,

xii, 36.) Now, because the internal sense is a subsequent sense, it depends on a previously perceived complex idea that manifests UAV. This is why aesthetic pleasure arises from what Hutcheson calls the 'contemplation' of a complex idea. (*ICB*, Preface, 24, my italics.) The reading pursued up to here merely attempts to unpack the notion of contemplation, by showing that it involves the more or less conscious operations of reason in comparing and discerning the relations and proportions constitutive of UAV. Once such operations have been successfully performed so that UAV becomes perceptually manifest in our complex ideas, aesthetic pleasure follows necessarily and immediately.

Further confirmation of the role of reason in the contemplation of complex ideas presenting UAV can be gathered from the following consideration. We have seen that Hutcheson readily grants that our aesthetic sensitivity can be developed, improved and perfected through custom, in the sense of repeated practice and exercise. However, the internal sense, contrary to reason, is a passive power[52]. Therefore, one cannot develop and improve one's internal sense by practice or exercise, because one cannot actively practice or exercise a passive power. An improvement of our aesthetic sensitivity, inasmuch as the improvement depends on custom (i.e. practice), must depend on an active power. The texts we have seen indicate that the active power that heightens our aesthetic sensitivity is reason. It heightens our aesthetic sensitivity, not by modifying our internal sense, but by making the UAV of our complex ideas more perceptually manifest. Aesthetic sensitivity to UAV, in sum, depends not only on our internal sense of beauty, but also on reason.

It would be mistaken to assume that, for Hutcheson, the degrees of aesthetic pleasure *always* co-vary proportionately with the degrees of UAV of an object. His theory is happily subtler than this. We have already seen a case where the degree of aesthetic pleasure is not proportionate to the degree of UAV: if the UAV of an object is so complex that we are unable to discern the proportions between its parts, our aesthetic pleasure is no greater than with an object that has less UAV. Now, custom can have a similar effect. The repeated perception of things with great UAV results in our getting used to them. When this happens, our aesthetic pleasure becomes lesser than it first was with the same sort of objects:

> however custom may *increase our power of receiving or comparing complex ideas*, yet it seems rather to weaken than strengthen the ideas of beauty,

52 'The internal sense is a passive power of receiving ideas of beauty from all objects in which there is uniformity amidst variety'. (*ICB*, VI, x, 80.)

> or the impressions of pleasure from regular objects, else how is it possible that any person can go into the open air on a sunny day, or clear evening, without the most extravagant raptures, such as Milton represents our ancestor in upon his first creation? For such any person would fall into upon the first representation of such a scene. (*ICB*, VII, ii, 83, my italics.)

Thus, if at first, a high degree of our aesthetic pleasure was proportionate to that of the object's UAV, it happens that, with the repeated perception of the same sort of object, the degree of our aesthetic pleasure weakens, and it becomes disproportionately lesser than the degree of the object's UAV.

Furthermore, at least one passage suggests the contrary disproportion – cases where the degree of aesthetic pleasure is disproportionately higher than that of an object's UAV: 'We are indeed often mistaken in imagining that there is the greatest possible beauty, where it is but very imperfect; but still it is some degree of beauty which pleases, although there may be higher degrees which we do not observe'. (*ICB*, VI, v, 77.) If someone perceiving an object imagines that it has 'the greatest possible beauty' when it does not, it is surely because the degree of her aesthetic pleasure is disproportionately high in comparison with the degree of the object's real UAV. Aesthetic raptures brought about by the limited UAV of sugary ballads and heavy metal music are commonplace.

We have seen that (a) sensations of secondary qualities, (b) the pleasures or pains attending them, and (c) the pleasures and pains we feel in our bodies independently of our perceptions of external objects, are all '*signals* … of new events happening to the body'. Similarly, whether we know it or not, aesthetic pleasures are signals of some UAV in objects *as we perceive them*, because our internal sense of beauty is a reliable UAV-detector insofar as it always responds positively to perceived UAV in complex ideas. Thus, aesthetic pleasures afford a correct answer to the question: Does this object have UAV or does it not? However, according to Hutcheson, the lack of aesthetic pleasure does not necessarily signal an absence of UAV: this is so in cases where a complex idea presenting UAV is associated with ideas that cause a powerful non-aesthetic disgust. (cf. *ICB*, VI, iii, 75–6.) As to the respective degrees of aesthetic pleasure and of UAV, although it frequently happens that the degree of our aesthetic pleasure is proportionate to the degree of the perceived UAV of an object, it is not always the case. (As I have tried to show, its not being the case can be independent of associations of ideas, of education and of example.) It can happen that we have a degree of aesthetic pleasure that is

disproportionately low or high in comparison with the degree of an object's UAV. Thus, our internal sense of beauty is not always a reliable UAV-detector regarding the question: What is the relative *degree* of the UAV of this object in comparison with others?

Finally, what we have seen prompts a speculative question about our aesthetic experience of natural and artistic objects. Is there, according to Hutcheson, a connection between (1) the claim that beauty is not a mind-independent property, and (2) the fact that, although UAV is a real quality, the responses of our subsequent sense of beauty are highly sensitive, as I have tried to show, to the *way* we perceive such objects and their UAV by means of our complex ideas (regardless of the influence of associations of ideas, education and example)? A case could be made on theoretical grounds for an affirmative reply, but textual evidence is lacking.

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