

KANT, CRITIQUE OF THE POWER OF JUDGMENT

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Hume and Hutcheson on Beauty (26/9/2007)

**1 D. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature II.1.viii**

“If we consider all the hypotheses, which have been form’d either by philosophy or common reason, to explain the difference betwixt beauty and deformity, we shall find that’ all of them resolve into this, that beauty is such an order and construction of parts, as either by the primary constitution of our nature, by custom, or by caprice, is fitted to give a pleasure and satisfaction to the soul. This is the distinguishing character of beauty, and forms all the difference betwixt it and deformity, whose natural tendency is to produce uneasiness. Pleasure and pain, therefore, are not only necessary attendants of beauty and deformity, but constitute their very essence. And indeed, if we consider, that a great part of the beauty, which we admire either in animals or in other objects, is deriv’d from the idea of convenience and utility, we shall make no scruple to assent to this opinion. That shape, which produces strength, is beautiful in one animal; and that which is a sign of agility in another. The order and convenience of a palace are no less essential to its beauty, than its mere figure and appearance. In like manner the rules of architecture require, that the top of a pillar shou’d be more slender than its base, and that because such a figure conveys to us the idea of security, which is pleasant; whereas the contrary form gives us the apprehension of danger, which is uneasy. From innumerable instances of this kind, as well as from considering that beauty like wit, cannot be defin’d, but is discern’d only by a taste or sensation, we may conclude, that beauty is nothing but a form, which produces pleasure, as deformity is a structure of parts, which conveys pain; and since the power of producing pain and pleasure make in this manner the essence of beauty and deformity, all the effects of these qualities must be deriv’d from the sensation; and among the rest pride and humility, which of all their effects are the most common and remarkable.”<sup>1</sup>

**2 F. Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, XV.41**

“Hence it plainly appears, “that some Objects are immediately the Occasions of this Pleasure of Beauty, and that we have Senses fitted for perceiving it; and that it is distinct from that Joy which arises from Self-love upon Prospect of Advantage.” Nay, do not we often see Convenience and Use neglected to obtain Beauty, without any other prospect of Advantage in the Beautiful Form, than the suggesting the pleasant Ideas of Beauty? Now this shews us, that however we may pursue beautiful Objects from Self-love, with a view to obtain the Pleasures of Beauty, as in Architecture, Gardening, and many other Affairs; yet there must be a Sense of Beauty, antecedent to Prospects even of this Advantage, without which Sense, these Objects would not be thus Advantageous, nor excite in us this Pleasure which constitutes them advantageous. Our Sense of Beauty

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<sup>1</sup> from <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/hume%20treatise%20ToC.htm>

from Objects, by which they are constituted good to us, is very distinct from our Desire of them when they are thus constituted: Our Desire of Beauty may be counter-ballanc'd by Rewards or Threatnings, but never our Sense of it; even as Fear of Death, or Love of Life, may make us chuse and desire a bitter Potion, or neglect those Meats which the Sense of Taste would recommend as pleasant; and yet no prospect of Advantage, or Fear of Evil, can make that Potion agreeable to the Sense, or Meat disagreeable to it, which was not so antecedently to this Prospect. Just in the same manner as to the Sense of Beauty and Harmony; that the Pursuit of such Objects is frequently neglected, from prospects of Advantage, Aversion to Labour, or any other Motive of Self-love, does not prove that we have no Sense of Beauty, but only that our Desire of it may be counter-ballanc'd by a stronger Desire: So Gold out-weighing Silver, is never adduc'd as a proof that the latter is void of Gravity.”<sup>2</sup>

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