

Not Circular: Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste"

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Abstract: One of the gravest charges that has been brought against Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste" is that of circularity. Hume is accused of defining good art in terms of "true judges," and of defining true judges in terms of their ability to judge good art. First, I argue that Hume avoids circularity since he offers a way of identifying good art that is logically independent of the verdict of true judges. Second, I argue that this clarifies an enduring puzzle in the scholarship on Hume's essay: why he appears to offer not one but two standards of taste. Hume's standard does not consist of general rules; however, Hume needs general rules to establish that some individuals' tastes are more "delicate" than others'.

One of the gravest and most frequently cited charges that has been brought against Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste" is that of circularity.¹ According to the charge, the identification of some or all of the five qualities by which Hume defines "true judges," whose "joint verdict" he describes as the "true standard of taste and beauty" (E-ST 241), depends on works of art having been identified as good.² Thus, Hume is accused of defining good art in terms of true judges, and of defining true judges in terms of their ability to judge good art.

Perhaps the central exegetical puzzle that the essay poses is why Hume appears to offer two standards of taste, when the title of the essay promises only one.³ Apart from the joint verdict of true judges, Hume appears to offer another standard of taste comprising a set of general rules, which he variously refers to as the "rules of art," "rules of composition," and "rules of criticism" (E-ST 231–2). Although Hume expresses some reservations about these rules, he does not provide any clear reasons why he would not establish them as his standard of taste.

Any comprehensive interpretation of Hume's essay needs to take seriously the charge of circularity, fatal as it might be to his account of true judges, and to explain the relationship between what appear to be his two standards of taste. In this paper, I argue that the way Hume avoids the first problem reveals the answer to the second. First, I argue that Hume avoids circularity since he offers a way of identifying good art works (the "test of time") that is logically independent of the verdict of true judges.⁴ Second, I argue that Hume needs the rules of art, which are inducted from the works of art that pass the test of time, to ground his account of true judges—to establish that some individuals' tastes are more "delicate" than others'.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section 1, I briefly summarize Hume's essay and address the issue of whether his standard of taste consists of the verdict of true judges or the rules of art. In Section 2, I establish what is the charge of circularity and

identify the quality of true judges that is most susceptible to it: “delicacy of taste.” In Section 3, I show that delicacy of taste is an imaginative capacity for discerning qualities in art works that are naturally fitted to produce sentiments of approbation or blame, and I argue that the only way Hume can establish this delicacy is by referring to individuals’ judgements of taste. In Section 4, I show how Hume offers a viable way of identifying delicacy of taste by referring to works of art that have passed the test of time. I argue that Hume needs the rules of art for this purpose and that this clarifies the relationship between what appear to be his two standards of taste. Finally, in Section 5, I critically discuss some deeper problems concerning what grounds the normativity of taste in Hume’s account and suggest how his account might be revised to overcome these problems.

1. Hume’s Standard of Taste

Hume’s essay is an attempt to reconcile two apparently incompatible intuitions. On the one hand, “Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.” As such, “every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others” (E-ST 230). On the other hand, “Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY and MILTON, or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFE, or a pond as extensive as the ocean.” “The principle of the natural equality of tastes . . . appears an extravagant paradox, or rather a palpable absurdity, where objects so disproportioned are compared together” (E-ST 230–1).

Hume’s sentimentalism about taste appears to commit him to the first of these views. In the *Treatise*, for instance, he writes that beauty “is not, properly speaking, a quality in any object, but merely a passion or impression in the soul” (T 2.1.8.6), and at the end of the first *Enquiry*, he famously remarks that “Beauty, whether moral or natural, is felt, more properly than perceived” (EHU 12.33).⁵ Hume’s aim in the essay, then, is to show that sentimentalism does not commit him to the “palpable absurdity” that all taste is equally good; in other words, that subjectivism does not entail that taste is relative to the individual.⁶ Hume clarifies this aim when later in the essay he writes, “It is sufficient for our present purpose, if we have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing” (E-ST 242). The way that Hume aims to achieve this goal can be summarized as follows.

First, Hume observes that amidst the great diversity of judgments of taste, certain works of art have been found to please with unanimity through the ages; the same Homer who pleased audiences in ancient Athens pleases audiences in present day London. The fact that some works pass the test of time provides Hume with evidence that certain “forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease” (E-ST 233). Hume calls these observable regularities in human sentimental response the “principles of taste.”

But if Hume is right that the “principles of taste be universal, and, nearly, if not entirely the same in all men” (E-ST 241), why is there such variety of judgements of

taste? Hume's answer is that not everyone has an equal aptitude for discerning beauty and deformity: some people lack the capacity that it takes properly to discriminate the qualities that are calculated to produce sentiments of approbation or blame. "Many and frequent are the defects in the internal organs," Hume writes, "which prevent or weaken the influence of those general principles, on which depends our sentiment of beauty or deformity," but when these obstacles are removed, if "there be an entire or considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty" (E-ST 234). Hume identifies five qualities that make what he calls a "true judge": delicacy of taste, practice, comparison, lack of prejudice, and strong sense; "and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty" (E-ST 241).

The five qualities that Hume proposes make a true judge are key for understanding Hume's standard of taste. In one fashion or another, the charge of circularity concerns the existence of these qualities or how they can be known. Hence, some general remarks about them are in order.

Delicacy of taste is the primary quality of true judges. What Hume means by "delicacy," however, is less than clear—a difficulty compounded by the fact that he interchangeably refers to "delicate taste," "delicate sentiment," and "delicate imagination" (E-ST 241–3). I tackle this question in Section 3. For now, suffice it to say that "delicacy" refers to some discriminative capacity that results in differences of aesthetic sentiment.

Practice and comparison are both secondary to delicacy in that Hume describes them as means for proving taste. It is necessary for the critic to practice with works of art for "when objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is obscure and confused," but when the critic gains more experience, her "feeling becomes more exact and nice" (E-ST 237). Comparison is required for the critic to assign the due degree of praise or blame to works in "proportion to each other." Without comparison, a critic is apt to assign praise to the "coarsest daubing" or most "vulgar ballads" (E-ST 238). Although practice and comparison are often referred to as "characteristics" in the literature on Hume's essay, as Peter Jones has rightfully pointed out, they are not in fact characteristics but "procedures" for improving taste.⁷

Strong sense is not, according to Hume, part of taste, since taste is a matter of sentiment, not reasoning. Nevertheless, in many cases, strong sense is required for operations of taste for, as Hume writes in the second *Enquiry*, "in many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment" (EPM 1.9).⁸ Strong sense is needed to judge the mutual relations among components of complex works and assess the extent to which works fulfil their intended purposes. Finally, freedom from prejudice is required for the critic to forget as far as possible her "peculiar circumstances" and "individual being" (E-ST 239) to adopt the point of view of any work's intended audience. Hume notes that it belongs to good sense to "check" the influence of prejudice.

What we have, then, is one characteristic—delicacy of taste—that is proprietary to taste; two procedures—practice and comparison—for improving taste; and two

characteristics—strong sense and freedom from prejudice—that are not part of taste, but oftentimes are required for its operation.

This brief exposition overlooks many recalcitrant exegetical contentions, most of which constraints of space prevent me from addressing here. However, there is one issue I need to address before going any further: whether Hume’s standard consists of the verdict of true judges or general rules.⁹ The ambiguity about what is Hume’s standard is marked in the following sentence:

It is natural for us to seek a *Standard of Taste*; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another. (E-ST 229)

Whether Hume’s standard consists of a “rule” or a “decision” (or both) is perhaps the central interpretive problem that the essay poses. That Hume does not intend to establish the rules of art as his standard of taste seems clear: he discusses the rules of art comparatively briefly before laying out his account of true judges; he refers to the joint verdict of true judges as the “true standard of taste and beauty”; and his account of true judges is evidently fitted to his aim of showing that the “taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing.” *Why* Hume would not want to establish the rules of art as his standard, however, is frustratingly unresolved—hence the difficulty. In any case, this is what Hume has to say about the rules of art.

According to Hume, the rules of art cannot be known *a priori*; rather, they are based on “general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages” (E-ST 231). Hume is notably shy of examples of these rules in the essay, although it is possible to find some in his earlier writings. In the second *Enquiry*, for instance, he observes that “There is no rule in painting or statuary more indispensable than that of balancing the figures, and placing them with the greatest exactness on their proper center of gravity. A figure, which is not justly balanced, is ugly; because it conveys the disagreeable ideas of fall, harm, and pain” (EPM 6.28).

Hume offers several cautionary remarks about the limitations of such rules. He comments that poetry can never “submit to exact truth,” and that to “check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness” produces works “most insipid and disagreeable” (E-ST 231). Moreover, not all good works of art conform to empirical generalizations concerning what has been “universally found to please.” Nevertheless, many such works please despite, not in virtue of, their transgressions. Consider Hume’s discussion of the writing of Ariosto. Ariosto’s works please not in virtue of the parts that are deemed faults—by his “bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles” or the “want of coherence in his stories”—but rather by those that are deemed merits—by the “force and clearness of his expression” and the “readiness and variety of his inventions.” And “however his faults may diminish our satisfaction,” Hume writes, “they are not able entirely to destroy it” (E-ST 232). Crucially, however, even if Ariosto’s works *did* please in virtue of those parts that are deemed to be faults, this

would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure, which they produce, be ever so unexpected and unaccountable. (E-ST 232)

The exegetical difficulty is that none of this excludes the possibility that Hume might have wanted to establish the rules of art as his standard. One thing the passage above does clearly establish is the primacy of sentiment in Hume's theory of taste. As Dabney Townsend helpfully remarks, the rules of art can provide "probable knowledge," extending "experience both backward for the understanding and forward for expectation. But they cannot distinguish what sentiment itself can alone judge."¹⁰ The rules of art are only provisional; they provide only probably knowledge. But the same is true of the verdicts of true judges (recall that Hume requires a *joint* verdict of true judges). Moreover, in what follows, I will argue that Hume relies on evidence provided by the rules of art to ground his account of true judges. So why not simply establish the rules of art as his "true" standard of taste? Before I offer an answer to this question, we need to understand how it is that Hume's account of true judges depends on the rules of art. And to understand that, we now need to examine the charge of circularity.

2. The Charge of Circularity

According to the charge of circularity, the identification of some or all of the qualities of Hume's true judges depends on works of art having been identified as good. Thus, Hume is accused of defining good art in terms of true judges, and defining true judges in terms of their ability to judge good art. In what has become the seminal point of reference for discussions of this charge, Peter Kivy describes the apparent circle in Hume's account thus:

(1) good works of art are works of art approved by good critics; (2) good critics are critics possessing five requisite qualities; and (3) critics possessing the five requisite qualities are critics who approve good works of art. ("Breaking the Circle," 60)

In his paper, Kivy seeks to "break" this apparent circle by showing that only two of the qualities of true judges—namely, practice and comparison—depend on works of art having been identified as good. Now, we have seen that practice and comparison are not characteristics of true judges, but rather procedures for improving taste. So if Kivy is right, it appears the charge of circularity may not be fatal to Hume's account. Unfortunately, delicacy of taste—the one characteristic proprietary to taste—is more vulnerable to the charge than Kivy realizes. But before showing where Kivy goes wrong in his assessment, to help clarify what is at stake, it is worth considering Jeffrey Wieand's more general way of defending Hume against the charge of circularity.

Wieand points out that if it is the case that the *identification* of the qualities of Hume's true judges depends on works of art having been identified as good, that does not show that the *existence* of those qualities depends on works of art having been identified as good. In other words, circularity is an epistemic problem, not a metaphysical one. As Wieand writes, "it might conceivably be that the verdicts of true judges—whoever they are—make it the case that some things are beautiful and others deformed, even though we have no good way of identifying these judges."¹¹

This does not provide a viable defense of Hume, however. As Wieand notes, it would of course render Hume's standard practically useless.¹² But more importantly, even if it is enough to secure Hume the possibility that a standard of taste exists, it also leaves us without any reason for believing that there is a standard.¹³ According to Hume's epistemology, if the idea of a true judge is to mean anything, we must be able to trace it back to one or more impressions. The question of whether true judges exist thus collapses onto the question of if, and by what means, they can be identified.

So, what are the qualities by which Hume proposes to identify true judges, and can these be located independently of works of art that have been identified as good? Kivy is on firm ground when he claims that good sense and freedom from prejudice can be identified independently of good art works. Both are primarily epistemic rather than critical virtues, and neither are strictly part of taste because they refer to reason, not sentiment. Both can be identified independently of judgements of taste, for, as operations of reason, they can be measured against a standard that exists in the reality of things, in matters of fact.¹⁴ What the charge of circularity comes down to, then, is delicacy of taste and the two procedures for improving it, practice and comparison.

3. Delicacy of Taste

Practice and comparison do nothing to establish a true judge in the absence of delicacy of taste, and the problem is that Hume certainly appears to characterize delicacy in a way that involves him in an explanatory circle. For instance, he describes it in terms of a "quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity" (E-ST 236), but it is just based on those who possess such quick and acute perception that he proposes to identify beauty and deformity. There are two ways that Hume might avoid a vicious circle. Either delicacy of taste can be identified independently of taste, or there must be a way of identifying beauty and deformity independently of those who possess delicate tastes.

The passage most often cited to illustrate what Hume means by "delicacy" is that of the story from *Don Quixote* of Sancho Panza's two kinsmen, who claim to have good taste in wine. The kinsmen's taste is put to the test when asked to sample a hogshead of wine, "which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage" (E-ST 234). Both kinsmen pronounce the wine good; but each has a reservation, for one discerns in it the taste of iron, the other the taste of leather. At first the kinsmen are ridiculed; but their taste is vindicated when, upon the hogshead being emptied, an iron key attached to a leathern thong is discovered in it. Hume extrapolates the moral of the story thus:

Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense. (E-ST 235)

This has led to a standard interpretation of “delicacy,” according to which, in Paul Guyer’s words, “delicacy” refers to “perfection of perceptual discrimination.”¹⁵ If delicacy is just a capacity for perceiving qualities in art works, it seems it can be identified without referring to taste, by comparing an individual’s performance with close examination of an object. However, there are two difficulties for establishing delicacy that this standard perceptual interpretation elides.

The first is that in many cases (and certainly most, if not all, cases of the “finer arts”) the “ingredients” in question are complex, composite qualities that do not, strictly speaking, according to Hume’s metaphysics, exist in a work. Rather, in many cases, perceiving the qualities “in” a work depends on the productive capacity of the imagination. This is patently true in cases of literary arts, where the ingredients of a work are clearly not apprehended as sense impressions. Less obviously, it is also true in cases of perceptual art works. Consider the following passage from the *Treatise*:

A musician finding his ear become every day more delicate, and correcting himself by reflection and attention, proceeds with the same act of the mind, even when the subject fails him, and entertains the notion of a compleat *tierce* or *octave*, without being able to tell whence he derives his standard. (T 1.2.4.24)

Although Hume offers these remarks in the context of discussing the origin of abstract ideas, the musical example shows that it is not only ideas that the imagination produces, but also impressions. The delicate ear of the musician is one that hears the octave “in” the musical work, not only the individual sounds that comprise it. For the most part, then, “delicate taste” means “delicate imagination,” for it is the imagination that perceives the ingredients “in” a composition.¹⁶ Hume recommends practicing with art works since this is the best way of exercising the imagination to be able to perceive these ingredients.

How do we know that an individual has discerned such qualities? Certainly, one can point them out. “Many men, when left to themselves,” Hume observes, “have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them” (E-ST 243). Indeed, such, Hume suggests, is the value of good critics: that they can guide less adept audience members to better, more fulfilling, appreciations of a work.¹⁷ There is, however, a second difficulty in establishing delicacy of taste that is peculiar to taste in a metaphorical sense, which is to say, mental rather than bodily taste: namely, that taste, in this sense, depends not only (at least in many cases) on the productive capacity of the imagination to perceive the ingredients of a work, it also depends on the imagination to produce a secondary impression, an aesthetic sentiment of approbation or blame, consequent to that perception. Hume writes:

Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings. Now as these qualities may be found in a smaller degree, or may be mixed and confounded with each other, it often happens, that the taste is not affected with such minute qualities, or is not able to distinguish all the particular flavours, amidst the disorder, in which they are presented. (E-ST 235)

Delicacy of taste is not only a capacity for discerning qualities in art works, then; it is a capacity for discerning qualities in art works *that are naturally fitted to produce aesthetic sentiments of approbation or blame*. Since beauty and deformity are nothing without human feeling, the only way to know that a quality is thusly fitted is by referring to taste itself. The difficulty in establishing that a quality is fitted to produce an internal sentiment of beauty or deformity, in contrast to an “external” sentiment of sweet or bitter, is the great diversity of judgements of taste, which Hume so emphatically remarks upon at the outset of his essay. An audience member will never apprehend a stroke a fine one if her imagination is insufficiently delicate to feel it fine, no matter how many times it is pointed out to her. If everyone agreed what qualities are beautiful and what deformed, there would be no need for a standard of taste in the first place. And here lies the rub. For it appears that Hume has no way of establishing delicacy of taste without knowing what qualities are fitted to produce aesthetic sentiments of approbation or blame, and no way of identifying what qualities are thusly fitted without referring to those who possess more or less delicate tastes.

A possible way out of the bind is if delicacy of taste can be inferred from a non-aesthetic mental quality. Kivy makes this suggestion regarding “delicacy of passion,” which Hume claims “very much resembles” (E-DTP 4) delicacy of taste.¹⁸ On this basis, Kivy claims that the latter can be identified in a non-circular way: that by relating “aesthetic sensibility to emotive sensibility in general,” Hume implies that “individuals characterized by the latter are likely to possess the former as well.”¹⁹

Kivy’s proposal assumes that delicacy of taste and delicacy of passion involve the same mental capacity or capacities, but with different applications. Although Hume refrains from speculating on the nature of the connection between these two delicacies (E-DTP 5–6), the assumption is plausible.²⁰ Unfortunately, however, there is little to support Kivy’s inference that those possessing the latter are likely to possess the former as well. Hume recommends developing delicacy of taste to cultivate pleasures in art that will compensate for the sorrows that attend having a delicate of passion, and this suggests, on the contrary, that he thinks those who possess the latter are not likely to possess the former, unless they cultivate it. Moreover, although both may be described as “emotive sensibilities,” there is reason to think that the *delicacy* in each case is not the same. Delicacy of passion is a heightened emotional responsiveness to situations in life, not, presumably, a failure to notice situations. In contrast, an aesthetic sentiment is delicate only insofar as the (imaginative) perception of a quality in a work that elicits it

is delicate; there is nothing distinctively delicate about the sentiment itself.²¹ So again, how can we know that an individual has perceived such qualities aright?

The finding of the key was what vindicated Sancho's kinsmen's taste of the wine. What is missing from the parable is something linking the bodily taste of leather and iron with the mental taste of the wine—with a judgement of its quality. Hume needs something that will do for mental taste what the key did for bodily taste—something that will verify what qualities of a work are those fitted by nature to produce sentiments of approbation or blame. This is just what the rules of art do.

4. The Test of Time and the Rules of Art

I have argued that the only way Hume can establish delicacy of taste is by referring to individuals' judgements of taste. I will now show how Hume avoids circularity by offering a way of identifying good works of art that is independent of those who possess delicate taste.²²

The test of time is what grounds Hume's standard of taste. It is logically and historically anterior to the verdict of true judges, however, it serves a similar role to the latter insofar as both serve to remove obstacles that get in the way of the proper sentiment:

Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. (E-ST 233)

Now recall that Hume describes the rules of art as “general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages.” It is because the rules of art are inducted from the works that pass the test time, independently of the verdicts of true judges, that they can be used to identify individuals who possess delicate taste in a way that does not involve Hume in a circle:

Here then the general rules of beauty are of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in a high degree: And if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a smaller degree, affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy. (E-ST 235)

To see how an individual's delicacy of taste may be discerned by referring to works of art that have passed the test of time, consider Hume's discussion of how a good critic can silence her opponent by adducing an avowed rule of art. If the good critic can show the bad critic “an avowed principle of art” and “illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation” and from her “own particular taste” she “acknowledges to be conformable to the principle”; and if the good critic can then show that the “same

principle may be applied” to the case in question where the bad critic “did not perceive or feel its influence,” then the bad critic “must conclude” that the fault lies in herself. The reason for the fault that the bad critic acknowledges lies in herself is that she “wants the delicacy” to make her “sensible of every beauty and every blemish, in any composition or discourse” (E-ST 236).

To illustrate, imagine that you and I visit the National Gallery in London and become engaged in a dispute about which is the better Caravaggio: *The Supper at Emmaus* (1601) or *Salome Receives the Head of John the Baptist* (1609–10). You say the former, I say the latter. Then I point out something that you had not noticed in *The Supper at Emmaus*: the receding hand of the disciple with outstretched arms is disproportionately large. You acknowledge that your failure to notice the elephantine hand reveals a paucity of imagination. Multiply similar vignettes over the course of our visit, and you do well by the end to acknowledge my more delicate taste.

By his own lights, Hume’s use of “must” in the passage quoted above is surely too strong. A rule of art provides only a defeasible reason for deciding that a quality in a work is a beauty or a blemish.²³ Non-naturalistic figurative proportions may count as a blemish in a painting of the Italian baroque, but not in a cubist work, say. (Notice, in this regard, that Hume is careful to stipulate that both parties must agree that the rule is applicable to the case in dispute.) But though a rule of art cannot guarantee that a given quality is fitted to produce sentiments of approbation or blame, evidence it can provide nonetheless. And as my example of the gallery visit is intended to suggest, the more instances a budding critic can successfully apply an avowed rule of art to a work to support her judgements against her detractors, the greater the evidence for her more delicate taste.

If I am right that the viability of Hume’s identification of delicacy of taste depends on the independence of the test of time and the verdict of true judges, it must be acknowledged that the account nevertheless faces some challenges. Principally, these pertain to the reliability of the test of time as an indicator of good art works, independent of any specification of a good critic.²⁴ On the one hand, we can observe that many works that we tend to consider masterpieces have not in fact received “durable and general” approval. Caravaggio, for instance, fell out of favor in the mid-seventeenth century and was not “rediscovered” until the early-twentieth century.²⁵ On the other hand, many works that win popular approval run contrary to critical consensus. Think of the works of Thomas Kinkade. But perhaps these are not counterexamples after all: if, say, in another two centuries Caravaggio’s esteem has not again wavered, and Kinkade has been long been forgotten. In any case, it is not my intention in this essay to defend Hume’s account tout court, and what is at least clear is that, however grave these concerns may be, they are certainly not as grave as that of an “elementary logical fallacy.”²⁶ I will briefly return to these worries and suggest how they may be dealt with in the next section.²⁷

We have seen that Hume thinks the rules of art “can be of use” for identifying delicacy of taste. What is less clear is if he needs the rules of art for this purpose. One might think that he can establish delicacy of taste simply by observing who appreciates the works of art that pass the test of time. Jerrold Levinson, for instance, describes true

judges as “ones capable of appreciating to the fullest masterworks in a given medium.”²⁸ But how does one determine an individual’s capability of appreciating a masterwork to the fullest? Merely reporting one’s approbation is not enough. Works of art that pass the test of time are, by definition, those established by “uniform consent.” Hume’s parable of Sancho’s kinsmen is instructive here. All the parties agreed the wine was good (recall that the wine was “supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage”). What signaled the kinsmen’s superior appreciation was their ability to identify particular qualities that rendered it less than excellent, and what vindicated their discernment of these qualities was the discovery of the key. Hume needs the rules of art to identify delicacy of taste, since one demonstrates one’s superior appreciation of a work by identifying particular qualities in it that others miss. That is just what delicacy of taste is: the ability to discern in smaller measure qualities that are fitted to produce sentiments of approbation or blame. Consider Caravaggio’s *The Supper at Emmaus*. No one doubts that it is a great painting. But as with the taste of iron and leather in the wine, the error in foreshortening renders it less than wholly exemplary, and it is the ability to distinguish such errors that signals one’s superior appreciation. The rules of art are what verify that a blemish is a blemish. “To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition,” Hume writes, “is like finding the key with the leathern thong; which justified the verdict of SANCHO’S kinsmen” (E-ST 235). As a metaphor for the rules of art, the key in the story also represents the key to Hume’s standard of taste, for it unlocks vital evidence that Hume needs to establish that some individuals’ tastes are more delicate than others’.

The foregoing discussion shows that it is inconsistent to hold, as some commentators do, that true judges have some privileged role in constituting or guiding us toward the rules of art. For instance, Elisa Galgut claims that Hume’s standard consists both of the rules of art and the verdict of true judges, since, according to Galgut, the rules of art “are to a large extent constituted by the verdicts of true judges”;²⁹ and according to Wieand’s reading, Hume’s standard consists of general rules, but the verdicts of true judges “are a good guide to what the rules of art are, so function as a practical standard of taste.”³⁰ Neither position is tenable. True judges cannot, on pain of circularity, both constitute and be identified by the rules of art, nor can they serve as a practical guide to anything if we have no way of knowing who they are. The traffic between the two candidate standards can only be one way. And this puts pressure on the view that Hume’s standard consists of rules, for the defender of this view now owes an explanation for why Hume would spend the best part of his essay giving an account of true judges that is superfluous to his standard of taste.

The defender of the view that true judges play some special role in constituting or guiding us toward the rules of art may respond here that though it involves Hume in a circle, it does not involve him in a vicious circle. Circular arguments can be virtuous if they are informative.³¹ James Noxon offers a “defense” of Hume along these lines. He argues that Hume’s account is not viciously circular, for despite the “specious appearance of the logic,” the apparent circle in Hume’s account circumscribes the “historical truth.” “For it is not easy,” Noxon writes,

to see how a work would come to be preserved except through having won the admiration of those most deeply concerned with discovering and protecting the finest productions of human art. Nor is it any easier to see how the connoisseur becomes accredited other than by proving his capacity for appreciating just such works.³²

If Hume were only offering an historical account of taste, this may be well and good. But he is not. He is seeking to justify the superiority of some tastes over others, and were it to hold, the charge of circularity would nip in the bud any such justificatory force. Of course, Noxon is right that works of art that pass the test of time come to be preserved through those “most deeply concerned with . . . the finest productions of art.” All Hume needs to secure the independence of the test of time and the verdict of true judges is that true judges do not have any privileged position in preserving the masterpieces, and that they do not have such a privileged position is guaranteed by the fact that masterpieces are just those established by uniform consent.

I will now make good on my promise of offering an explanation for why Hume would not simply establish the rules of art as his standard of taste, given that his account of true judges depends on them. In short, it is because the rules of art are far more limited in their application than the verdicts of true judges.³³ It is for the same reason that Hume needs the rules of art to identify individuals who possess delicacy of taste that he needs true judges to form an overall assessment of a work’s merit: the rules of art specify what particular qualities of a work are beauties or blemishes, not what works are exemplary or to what degree. (Of course, the test of time does identify such works, and it is from these that the rules of art are inducted; but a set of exemplary works does not itself constitute a standard, for it does not function as a measure for anything else.) The rules of art provide only a piecemeal evaluation of a work’s features. Identifying the oversized hand in the Caravaggio does little to establish how good the painting is overall. Moreover, this evaluation is limited by the extent to which it is practically possible to formulate and apply such rules. Hume’s shyness of offering concrete examples of the rules of art in his essay is suggestive in this respect.³⁴

True judges, on the other hand, are tailor-made measuring devices of beauty and deformity. They can judge any work before them: apprehend the “beauties and defects of each part” and assign them “suitable praise or blame” (E-ST 237), comprehend its “mutual relation and correspondence of parts” (E-ST 240), and compare it with others of its kind to estimate them in “proportion to each other” (E-ST 238). This is to say that the qualities of true judges are just those that enable them to reach an optimally acute, well-informed, all-things-considered judgment of a work’s merit. Whether a judge can apply rules of art to a given case affects not the quality of the judgement, only the justification of its quality. “Though the hogshead had never been emptied,” Hume writes, the taste of the kinsmen would still be “equally delicate,” and that of the others “equally dull and languid” (E-ST 235). Hume needs the rules of art only insofar as he needs them to establish delicacy of taste. Once we recognize the essential epistemic role that the rules of art play in grounding his account of true judges, it is easier to see why he never intended them as his standard of taste.

By way of closing this section, let me briefly address the two other qualities of true judges that I identified as being susceptible to the charge of circularity: practice and comparison. By now it will be apparent that even if Hume did intend these qualities to refer to good works of art, that need not involve him in a circle, for he may simply mean the works that pass the test of time. When Hume describes practicing with “species of beauty” and comparing “degrees of excellence,” it certainly seems he has in mind good works of art. In fact, I do not think that Hume intends practice and comparison to refer to exclusively good works of art. Two main considerations support this interpretation. First, it is important to bear in mind that Hume uses “beauty” and “excellence” in his essay as synonyms for what we would now tend to refer to as artistic or aesthetic value. This is salient because to refer to different “species” and “degrees” of artistic or aesthetic value does not carry the same suggestion of works of exclusively high merit. As Hume points out, “even the most vulgar ballads are not entirely destitute of harmony or nature” (E-ST 238). Second, if Hume means comparison to involve exclusively good art works, that would appear to result in a curious asymmetry in the ability of good critics to judge works of art. Presumably, just as much as one needs to have compared a sufficient number and variety of good art works to affix the due degree of praise to a good work of art, one needs to have compared a sufficient number and variety of bad art works to affix the due degree of blame to a bad work of art. So unless Hume intends that true judges should be unable to assign accurately the due degree of blame to works of art that are less than good, he cannot mean comparison to refer to exclusively good works of art. The charitable way of interpreting Hume is that practice and comparison simply require a sufficient number and variety of art works.

This interpretation might appear to be at odds with Hume’s suggestion that good critics can help less-adept audience members better appreciate works of art. The inconsistency is only apparent, however. For if it is the case that budding critics do well at first to follow the advice of their established peers, it also seems right that to become a true judge of art, one cannot limit one’s practice and comparison to works that have already won critical acclaim.

5. Hume’s Appeals to “Universal” Sentiments

So far, my focus in this paper has been exegetical. In this final section, I offer some critical remarks on some deeper problems concerning what grounds the normativity of taste in Hume’s account and suggest how his account might be revised to overcome these problems.

Readers familiar with Kivy’s essay will know that apart from the charge of circularity, he identifies another, and equally grave, problem with Hume’s account of true judges: that of infinite regress. The worry is not whether true judges can be identified independently of good art works, but whether they can be identified independently of sentimental response. Kivy writes:

The phrase *good sense* describes; it also *approves*. What has happened is that in his attempt to reduce disagreements about aesthetic values to disagreements about facts, Hume has simply pushed the value judgement a step back.³⁵

What Kivy highlights is that the qualities of true judges have both a descriptive and an evaluative component. The question is, can these qualities be identified independently of their evaluative component? It is one thing identifying that someone has good sense, another thing identifying that good sense is a virtue. I have already shown that delicacy of taste can only be identified with reference to taste, and that Hume circumvents the difficulty this raises using the test of time. Practice and comparison, I have argued, only depend on a sufficient number and variety of works of art and can therefore be located independently of taste. And as epistemic virtues, good sense and freedom from prejudice can be measured against matters of fact, independently of sentimental response.³⁶

Though Kivy's charge of regress fails to land, it nevertheless points toward a deeper, and some think insurmountable, problem. This does not concern the identification of individuals who possess any of the qualities of true judges, but rather what it is that makes those qualities good and, more specifically, what makes them good as qualities of true judges. How can we know that these are good qualities for a critic to possess unless, as Nick Zangwill puts it, we already have "a prior grasp of the normativity of aesthetic judgement?"³⁷ This is basically a generalization of the problem of establishing delicacy of taste to the other four qualities in the aesthetic domain, and the solution Hume proposes is also basically the same: by an appeal to "universal" sentiment. Recall Hume's aim that it "is sufficient for our present purpose, if we have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing." Immediately after this, he writes, "and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others" (E-ST 242). In other words, Hume thinks it a matter of universal consent that good critics will be practiced in and have compared works of a given kind, have good sense, and be free from prejudice. But how convincing is this? Is this really a matter of "universal" sentiment?

To begin with, it is not difficult to see that the five qualities Hume proposes might not be sufficient.³⁸ Víctor Durà-Vilà, for instance, has made a convincing case that in some instances, true judges also need courage to champion works subject to prevailing prejudices.³⁹ On the other hand, it might seem difficult to countenance that a critic would be any the worse off for, say, lacking good sense or choosing to not practice with a work. Nevertheless, there are plausible exceptions. Some art forms, say, certain genres of dance music, may credibly be appreciated best in states of intoxication that inhibit or disorder sense; and at least one renowned critic, namely, Clement Greenberg, famously eschewed practicing with a painting before reaching a verdict. Hume's standard accommodates specialization in art forms via the qualities of practice and comparison. What it does not accommodate is that critics of different art forms might require different sets of qualities.

One might also worry that Hume's exclusion of personal and cultural preferences from his standard removes much of what makes a critic good for judging works of a certain kind. Hume demands that the critic must forget as far as it is possible her "individual being" and "peculiar circumstances." So far as it is not possible even for the best judges to escape individual and cultural preferences—"the different humours of particular men" and "the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" (E-ST 243)—Hume explicitly excludes this relativity from his standard. But is not the best judge of a work one who shares its author's "manners and opinions" and who has the disposition to enjoy works of its kind?⁴⁰

We also have the worry that I touched on in the previous section concerning the reliability of the test of time. Indeed, this worry runs deeper than the issue of being able to identify individuals who have delicate taste, for it is the observation that certain works receive "durable and general" approval across nations and ages that grounds Hume's claim that the "principles of taste be universal, and, nearly, if not entirely the same in all men." Without these principles linking qualities of objects with human sentiments of beauty or deformity, a standard of taste would not be possible. How many nations and ages are sufficient, or to what extent can a work fail to win approval and still pass the test, Hume does not address. Moreover, the limited diet of art works that Hume holds up as paradigms of excellence betrays his Western classical sensibilities and suggests a certain disingenuousness when he speaks of a "catholic and universal beauty" (E-ST 233).⁴¹

In sum, we can see that the soundness of Hume's account rests on two appeals to "universal" sentiments—those sentiments that ground the principles of taste, and those that ground the goodness of the qualities of true judges in the aesthetic domain—and that it is just at this most fundamental level that his account strains credibility.

We should, however, be cautious of overestimating the intended reach of Hume's project. The dependence of Hume's true judges upon established cultures of art practice and appreciation via the test of time shows that the sentiments he appeals to are "universal" only in a limited, contingent sense.⁴² Nothing can preclude the possibility that these artistic cultures could have been different. The principles of taste provide no guarantee because the only evidence for them exists within a cultural frame. Elsewhere, Hume is more explicit about the influence of culture on taste. In the *Treatise*, he acknowledges that certain forms and qualities are "fitted" to give pleasure not only "by the *primary constitution* of our nature," but also "by *custom*, or by *caprice*" (T 2.1.8.20). Hume's standard is certainly effective at excluding capricious sentiment, but it glosses the extent to which taste is culturally as well as naturally conditioned.

But if Hume's account lacks plausibility to the extent that it fails convincingly to contain the diversity of artistic and critical practices in a single "universe" of taste, the fact that his appeals to "universal" sentiments are, in any case, "universal" only in a limited, contingent sense suggests a way out: that he need not limit his account to just one set of principles of taste, or to one set of qualities that make a critic good for judging art works of a given kind. On such a revised account, what grounds the normativity of aesthetic judgment and the qualities that make a critic a good critic are domain-specific "worlds" of shared aesthetic sentiments.⁴³ What makes a work good is

that it possesses qualities that are both naturally *and* culturally fitted to arouse sentiments of approbation in appreciators of its aesthetic world, and part of what it takes to appreciate such works is to share the manners and opinions of its author and have the disposition to enjoy works of its kind.⁴⁴

6. Conclusion

For a long time, the allegation of circularity has dogged discussions of Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste." In this paper, I hope to have set the record straight. Hume's account is not circular, but only since he offers a way of identifying good art that is independent of the verdict of true judges. This clarifies what is perhaps the central exegetical puzzle that the essay poses: why Hume appears to offer two standards of taste, when the title of the essay promises only one. Hume needs the rules of art, which are inducted from the works of art that pass the test of time, to establish delicacy of taste by verifying what qualities of a work are fitted to produce sentiments of approbation or blame. Why Hume would not establish the rules of art as his standard of taste, however, the essay does not address. Hume prefers the verdict of true judges to the rules of art, I have suggested, for where the latter provide at best a piecemeal evaluation of a work's qualities, true judges are just those who can reach an optimally acute, all-things-considered assessment of a work's merit.

My focus in the paper has been on arguing for the epistemic viability of Hume's account. Nevertheless, Hume's account lacks credibility insofar as it rests on two dubious appeals to "universal" sentiments: those that ground the principles of taste, and those that ground the goodness of the qualities of true judges in the aesthetic realm. These difficulties may be resolved, I have suggested, by allowing for multiple "worlds" of shared aesthetic sentiments, which ground the normativity of taste within specialized domains.

NOTES

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¹ It has variously been described as a "notorious circle" (Jeffrey Wieand, "Hume's Two Standards of Taste," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 129–42, 138), a "traditional line of attack" (Noël Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1984): 181–94, 189), and a "standard criticism of

Hume's theory" (Richard Shusterman, "Of the Scandal of Taste: Social Privilege as Nature in the Aesthetic Theories of Hume and Kant," *The Philosophical Forum* 20 (1989): 211–29, 214). The first statement of the charge appears to be due to S. G. Brown ("Observations on Hume's Theory of Taste," *English Studies* 20 (1938): 193–8). An essay by Peter Kivy ("Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967): 57–66) has since become the seminal point of reference for discussions of the charge. Discussions of the state of the literature can be found in Timothy M. Costelloe, "Hume's Aesthetics: The Literature and Directions for Research," *Hume Studies* 30 (2004): 87–126, 99–100; and Theodore Gracyk, "Hume's Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2020) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/hume-aesthetics/>. It is worth highlighting that in his survey article, Costelloe mistakenly claims that in response to Kivy, Carroll argues that Hume's argument does not suffer from circularity (Costelloe, "Hume's Aesthetics," 100). In fact, Carroll argues that Hume's account is more susceptible to the charge than Kivy holds (Carroll, "Hume's Standard," 189–90).

² References to "Of the Standard of Taste" are to David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, revised edition, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 226–49, cited in text as "E-ST" followed by page number.

³ As James Shelley rightfully highlights, without understanding the relationship between the two candidate standards, "we simply do not know what Hume's standard of taste is." Fewer commentators address this relationship than they should, preferring instead to emphasize "the alternative of their choice while keeping generally silent about the other." ("Hume's Double Standard of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 437–45, 437–8). Apart from Shelley, authors who do address this relationship include Jonathan Friday ("Hume's Sceptical Standard of Taste," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998): 545–66); Elisa Galgut ("Hume's Aesthetic Standard," *Hume Studies* 38 (2012): 183–200); and Wieand ("Hume's Two Standards").

⁴ The phrase the "test of time" does not appear in Hume's essay, but it is often used in the literature to refer to what Hume describes in terms of durable admiration across nations and ages.

⁵ References to the *Treatise* are to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), cited in text as "T" followed by book, part, section, and paragraph number. References to the first *Enquiry* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), cited in text as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph number.

⁶ It is debateable if, or in what sense, it is appropriate to call Hume a subjectivist about taste (see Gracyk, "Hume's Aesthetics"). What is at least clear is that "beauty" and "deformity," for Hume, do not refer only to sentimental responses, but rather to relations linking certain qualities in objects and sentiments of approbation or blame. It is appropriate to call Hume a subjectivist about taste, I contend, insofar as beauty and deformity, for Hume, have no existence independent of subjective sentiment. For

elaboration, see Donald L. M. Baxter, “Hume on Virtue, Beauty, Composites, and Secondary Qualities,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1990): 103–18.

⁷ Peter Jones, “Cause, Reason, and Objectivity,” in *Hume: A Re-evaluation*, ed. Donald W. Livingston and James T. King (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 323–42, 334. Hereafter, I use “qualities” to include the attributes of being practiced in and having compared works of art, and reserve “characteristics” for delicacy, strong sense, and lack of prejudice. It is worth noting that at one point in the essay, Hume refers only to the latter as the characteristics of true judges (ST 148).

⁸ References to the second *Enquiry* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), cited in text as “EMP” followed by section and paragraph number.

⁹ Authors who maintain that Hume’s standard consists of rules include Timothy M. Costelloe, *Aesthetics and Morals in the Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Galgut, “Hume’s Aesthetic Standard”; and Wieand, “Hume’s Two Standards.”

¹⁰ Dabney Townsend, *Hume’s Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 181. I am especially indebted to Townsend’s reading of Hume’s essay.

¹¹ “Hume’s Two Standards,” 139.

¹² Some commentators accept this consequence for they hold that true judges are ideal, not actual. See Matthew Kieran, *Revealing Art* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 218; and Shelley, “Hume’s Double Standard,” 439. A compelling argument for why Hume must intend that true judges are actual is given by Stephanie Ross, “Humean Critics: Real or Ideal?” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008): 20–8.

¹³ It is worth noting that Susan Hahn takes a very different approach in “How Can a Sceptic Have a Standard of Taste?” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53 (2013): 379–92.

¹⁴ As Hume writes in the second *Enquiry*, the standard of reason, “being found in the nature of things, is eternal and inflexible” (EPM App. 1.21).

¹⁵ Paul Guyer, “The Standard of Taste and the ‘Most Ardent Desire of Society,’” in *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37–74, 41. Other commentators who endorse this reading include Peter Jones (“Hume’s Aesthetics Reassessed,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1976): 48–62); Ross (“Humean Critics”); and James R. Shelley (“Hume and the Nature of Taste,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 29–38).

¹⁶ Few commentators appear to recognize that “delicate taste” means (at least for the most part) “delicate imagination.” Notable exceptions are Townsend (*Hume’s Aesthetic Theory*) and Theodore Gracyk (“Delicacy in Hume’s Theory of Taste,” *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 9 (2011): 1–16).

¹⁷ Jerrold Levinson elaborates the value of true judges in terms of guiding lesser audience members to more fulfilling appreciations of art in “Hume’s Standard of Taste: The Real Problem,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 227–38.

¹⁸ David Hume, “Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion,” in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, revised edition, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 3–8, cited in text as “E-DTP” followed by page number.

¹⁹ “Breaking the Circle,” 61.

²⁰ As George Dickie notes, Hume departs from his contemporaries by not postulating a faculty or faculties peculiar to taste. *The Century of Taste: The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 123.

²¹ Shelley elaborates this interpretation in “Nature of Taste.” For a similar criticism of Kivy’s proposal, see Carroll, “Hume’s Standard,” 189–90.

²² Few commentators appear to recognize that the viability of Hume’s account depends on the independence of the test of time and the verdict of true judges. Notable exceptions are Townsend (*Hume’s Aesthetic Theory*, 206) and Levinson (“The Real Problem”).

²³ See Levinson, “The Real Problem.”

²⁴ See Anthony Savile, *The Test of Time: An Essay in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), Chapters 1 and 11.

²⁵ Caravaggio is an especially interesting case in the present context. Caravaggio’s loss of esteem is often attributed to ad hominem attacks by a rival painter and biographer, Giovanni Baglione, and so may be a good example of prejudice preventing the proper appreciation of his works. What is less easily accommodated by Hume’s account is that Caravaggio’s “rediscovery” is also typically attributed to an art critic, Roberto Longhi. This may be thought to show that the test of time does not function reliably independently of good critics. This worry highlights an important point.

Notwithstanding that the test of time must be prior to true judges (identified as such), logically and actually, all that Hume requires for a work to pass the test of time is that it receives “durable and general” approval; he is not committed to what instigates said acclaim. If it takes a critic to point out an artistic accomplishment before the majority come to appreciate it, so be it. For a nuanced discussion of Caravaggio’s critical reception, see Richard E. Spear, “The Critical Fortune of a Realist Painter,” in *The Age of Caravaggio* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 22–27.

²⁶ Brown, “Observations on Hume’s Theory,” 196.

²⁷ Circularity is not in fact a formal or logical fallacy, but as Michael P. Smith highlights, it is peculiar among informal fallacies for being “identifiable solely by its form” (“Virtuous Circles,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 25 (1987): 207–20, 207).

²⁸ “The Real Problem,” 234

²⁹ “Hume’s Aesthetic Standard,” 184

³⁰ “Hume’s Two Standards,” 129

³¹ See Smith, “Virtuous Circles.”

³² James Noxon, “Hume’s Opinion of Critics,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 157–62, 160.

³³ My reading puts me at odds with Shelley, who claims that where the rules of art have Hume's "preference," the verdicts of true judges have his "confidence" ("Hume's Double Standard," 443). What Shelley fails to appreciate is that Hume's confidence in the latter must be limited by his confidence in the former. I contend that the converse of Shelley's claim is true: the rules of art have Hume's confidence, the verdicts of true judges his preference.

³⁴ Shelley highlights this in "Hume's Double Standard," 441. However, Shelley risks overemphasizing the extent to which Hume fails to offer formulations of the rules of art. Several examples appear in the context of Hume's discussion of the writings of Ariosto, and numerous other examples can be found in the *Treatise*, second *Enquiry*, and "Of Tragedy" (in David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, revised edition, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 216–25). For discussion of the rules of art, see Carolyn W. Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35 (1976): 201–15.

³⁵ "Breaking the Circle," 64.

³⁶ See Carroll, "Hume's Standard," 190–1.

³⁷ Nick Zangwill, "Hume, Taste, and Teleology," in *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 149–65, 163. See also Brian Ribeiro, "Hume's Standard of Taste and the *de Gustibus Sceptic*," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47 (2007): 16–28.

³⁸ See Levinson "The Real Problem," 234. Ross ("Humean Critics") and Paul Guyer ("Humean Critics, Imaginative Fluency, and Emotional Responsiveness: A Follow-up to Stephanie Ross," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008): 445–56) both argue that the qualities of true judges should be supplemented with those of "imaginative fluency" and "emotional responsiveness." What they fail to realize is that delicacy of taste just is a kind of imaginative fluency.

³⁹ Víctor Durà-Vilà, "Courage in Art Appreciation: A Humean Perspective," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 54 (2014): 77–95.

⁴⁰ See Matthew Kieran, "Why Ideal Critics Are Not Ideal: Aesthetic Character, Motivation and Value," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008): 278–94.

⁴¹ See Shusterman, "Scandal of Taste."

⁴² Compare Townsend: "One cannot attain a standard of taste for all cultures and possible beings for all times" (*Hume's Aesthetic Theory*, 203).

⁴³ Compare Ross's proposal in terms of "critic clusters" ("Humean Critics," 26).

⁴⁴ Though anti-Humean in several respects, Dominic McIver Lopes's recent theory of aesthetic value is one example of how domain-specificity is being foregrounded in approaching questions of aesthetic normativity. *Being for Beauty: Aesthetic Agency and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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