

The origin of our ideas of beauty, order, harmony, design

Francis Hutcheson

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—The division into eight sections is Hutcheson's; so are the sixty-eight headings within sections, except that in the original they are in the margins rather than across the text.

First launched: March 2011

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Glossary

affection: In the early modern period, ‘affection’ could mean ‘fondness’, as it does today; but it was also often used, as in this work, to cover every sort of pro or con attitude—desire, approval, liking, disapproval, disliking, etc.

agent: In this work, as in early modern writings generally, an agent is simply someone who acts. There’s no suggestion of our present sense of ‘someone who acts *for* someone else’. Some occurrences of the word in this version replace Hutcheson’s ‘actor’.

amiable: This meant ‘likable’, ‘lovable’, ‘very attractive’. A good deal stronger than the word’s normal meaning today.

a priori, a posteriori: Before Kant, these phrases were seldom used to mark the difference between ‘independently of experience’ and ‘on the basis of experience’. Their usual meaning (as on page 25) was to mark the difference between ‘seeing something happen and working out what will follow from it’ and ‘seeing something happen and working out what must have caused it, i.e. causally arguing forward and causally arguing backwards’.

compare: Hutcheson several times uses ‘compare’ and ‘comparison’ in a now-obsolete sense in which to ‘compare’ two items is just to put them side by side in your thought to see how they are related; there needn’t be any question of their being *alike*. Most of his uses of these words mean by them what we do.

determine, determination: These are used an enormous amount in early modern philosophy. The absolutely basic meaning of ‘determine’ is *settle, fix, pin down*; thus, to determine what to do next is to decide what to do next, to settle the question. In our day ‘He is determined to do

x’ means that he resolutely intends to do x; but in early modern times ‘He is determined to do x’ would be more likely to mean ‘Something about how he is constituted settles it that he will do x’; it could be that he is made to do x, or caused to do x. But ‘determine’ can’t simply be replaced by ‘cause’ throughout; when on page 38 Hutcheson says that God’s goodness ‘determines’ him to act in a certain way, he would certainly have rejected ‘cause’.

disinterested: What this meant in early modern times is what it still means when used by literate people, namely ‘not *self*-interested’. I have ‘disinterested malice’ towards someone if I want him to suffer although there is no gain for me in this (apart, presumably, from the satisfaction of knowing that he is suffering).

education: In early modern times this word had a somewhat broader meaning than it does today. It wouldn’t have been misleading to replace it by ‘upbringing’ throughout.

equipage: This imprecise term covers: coach and horses, servants’ uniform, elegant cutlery and dishes, and so on. In some but not all uses it also covers furniture.

evil: Used by philosophers as a noun, this means merely ‘something bad’. We can use ‘good’ as a noun (‘friendship is a good’), but the adjective ‘bad’ doesn’t work well for us as a noun (‘pain is a bad’); and it has been customary to use ‘evil’ for this purpose (e.g. ‘pain is an evil’, and ‘the problem of evil’ meaning ‘the problem posed by the existence of bad states of affairs’). Don’t load the noun with all the force it has as an adjective.

indifferent: To say that some kind of conduct is ‘indifferent’ is to say that it is neither praiseworthy nor wrong.

liking: Today's meaning for Hutcheson's word 'relish' makes his use of it distracting, so it and its cognates have been replaced by 'liking' throughout. Remember, though, that these 'likings' are being thought of as something like *tastes*. In (8) on page 31 'liking' and '(dis)liking' replace 'fancy'.

luxury: This meant something like: *extreme* or *inordinate* indulgence in sensual pleasures. A 'luxurious' person was someone wholly given to the pleasures of the senses—mostly but not exclusively the pleasures of eating and drinking. In Hutcheson's use of the word on page 36 it seems to be confined to the sense of taste or the pleasures of eating and drinking.

mischief: This meant 'harm, injury'—much stronger and darker than the word's meaning today.

object: In early modern usage, anything that is aimed at, wanted, loved, hated, thought about, feared, etc. is an *object* of that aim, desire, love, etc. *Anything:* it could be a physical object, but is more likely to be a state of affairs, a state of mind, an experience, etc.

occasion: It is often used to mean the same as 'cause' (noun or verb), but it began its philosophical career in opposition to 'cause'. According to the 'occasionalist' theory about body-mind relations: when you are kicked, you feel pain; what causes the pain is not the kick but God, and the kick comes into it not as *causing* God to give you pain (because nothing causes God to do anything) but as the 'occasion' for his doing so. Perhaps something like a signal or a trigger. Writers who weren't obviously pushing the occasionalist line still used 'occasion' sometimes without *clearly* meaning anything but 'cause'.

performance: In 18th century Britain a published work was often referred to as a 'performance' by its author, especially

when it was being praised. Hutcheson's use of the word on page 34 seems not have that meaning or the other meaning (the one that is now current).

primary qualities: These are shape, size, texture, and perhaps a few others. They were thought by some early modern philosophers to be 'really in' the objects, in contrast with 'secondary qualities'—colour, taste, warmth, and some others—that were thought to be in the perceiver's mind, and perhaps not to resemble *anything* in the object. This nonsense arose from a misunderstanding of a truth that Descartes and Locke saw but sometimes fumbled: that

'All there is to a thing's being red (say) is its having a power to affect observers' perceptions in a certain way'

is plausible in a way in which

'All there is to a thing's being spherical (say) is its having a power to affect observers' perceptions in a certain way'

is not in the least plausible. This contrast does *not* imply that redness is in the mind!

principle: Hutcheson often uses this word in a sense, once common but now obsolete, in which 'principle' means 'source', 'cause', 'driver', 'energizer', or the like. (Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* is, as he explicitly tells us, an enquiry into the *sources in human nature* of our moral thinking and feeling.)

science: In early modern times this word applied to any body of knowledge or theory that is (perhaps) axiomatised and (certainly) conceptually highly organised. That is why on page 15 Hutcheson counts Pufendorf's theory of duty among the 'sciences'.

selfish: This is not a term of criticism. Think of it as 'self-ish', i.e. 'self-related' or 'concerned with one's own interests',

but *not* necessarily to the exclusion of proper care for the interests of others.

sensible: This means 'relating to the senses', and has nothing to do with being level-headed, prudent, or the like.

sentiment: This can mean 'feeling' or 'belief', and when certain early modern writers speak of 'moral sentiments' they may mean both at once, or be exploiting the word's ambiguity.

speculative: This means 'having to do with non-moral propositions'. Ethics is a 'practical' discipline, chemistry

is a 'speculative' one.

ugly: This word occurs only once in the original of this work, and 'ugliness' never. In the present version they replace 'deformed' and 'deformity', which mean something stronger and nastier to us but didn't do so in Hutcheson's day. The occurrence on page 28 of 'ugly or deformed' is puzzling.

vice: In this work, 'vice' simply means 'bad behaviour (of whatever kind)', and 'vicious' is the cognate adjective. Don't load either of these with the (different sorts of) extra meaning that they tend to carry today.

Preface

[This was the Preface not only for this work but also for Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*. The two works were published together as a linked pair.]

No part of philosophy is more important than a sound knowledge of human nature and its various powers and dispositions. There has recently been a great deal of investigation of our understanding and of the various methods of obtaining truth. It is generally agreed that the importance of any truth is simply its power to make men happy or to give them the greatest and most lasting pleasure; and 'wisdom' names the ability to pursue this goal by the best means. So it must surely be of the greatest importance to have clear conceptions of this goal itself and of the means necessary to obtain it, so that we can discover which are the greatest and most lasting pleasures, rather than wasting our highly trained reason in trivial activities. In fact, I am afraid that if we don't follow this line of inquiry most of our studies will be of very little use to us. Why? Because they don't seem to aim at anything much except the mere acquisition of speculative [see Glossary] knowledge itself. No-one has clearly explained how knowledge or truth can bring us pleasure.

That is what started me on an inquiry into the various pleasures that human nature is capable of receiving. In our modern philosophical writings we don't find much about this except for •a mere classification of them into 'sensible' [see Glossary] and 'rational', and •some trite commonplace arguments to prove that rational pleasures are more valuable than sensible ones. Our sensible pleasures are skated over, and explained only by some examples of tastes, smells, sounds etc. that are generally regarded by thoughtful people as very trivial satisfactions. And our rational pleasures have

been treated in much the same way. We are seldom given any notion of *rational pleasure* that goes beyond the notion we have when we think about our possession. . . .of things that may give rise to pleasure. We call such things 'advantageous'; but we can't get a clear concept of *advantage*, i.e. of what is in our interests, until we know

- what pleasures are apt to be provided by advantageous objects [see Glossary], and
- what senses, i.e. powers of perception, we have with regard to such objects.

We may be surprised by how important this inquiry will turn out to be in morals, where it will show that •virtue is something real, and that •it is the surest happiness of the agent.

Our experience of our external senses shows us clearly that our perceptions of pleasure or pain don't depend directly on our will: objects don't please or displease us according to whether we *want* them to do so. [Hutcheson is here discussing pleasure and pain received through our *external* senses, so the 'objects' [see Glossary] in question in this paragraph are material objects.] The presence of some objects necessarily pleases us, and the presence of others equally necessarily displeases us. The only way we can voluntarily get pleasure or avoid pain is by procuring objects of the pleasing kind and avoiding objects of the displeasing kind. It's because of the basic way we are built that one sort lead to delight and the other to dissatisfaction.

This holds equally for all our other pleasures and pains. We do have others, because many other sorts of objects please or displease us as necessarily as do material objects do when they operate on our sense-organs. Almost every object that comes before our minds is the occasion [see Glossary] of some pleasure or pain. Thus we find ourselves pleased with a regular form, a piece of architecture or painting, a composition of notes, a theorem, an action, an affection [see Glossary], a character. And we're aware that this pleasure arises necessarily from contemplating the idea that is then present to our minds, with all its details, although some of these ideas have nothing of what we call sensible perception in them; and in those that do involve sense-perception the pleasure arises from some uniformity, order, arrangement, imitation—not from the simple ideas of colour, or sound, or shape etc. separately considered.

My name for these determinations [see Glossary] to be pleased with forms or ideas that we become aware is 'senses'. To distinguish them from the powers that are ordinarily called by that name, I'll call our power of perceiving the beauty of regularity, order, harmony, an 'internal sense', and the determination to be pleased with the contemplation of the affections, actions, or characters of rational agents that we call 'virtuous' I'll give the name 'moral sense'.

My main purpose is to show that human nature was not left quite indifferent in matters of virtue, i.e. was not left with no immediate and instinctive reactions to good and to bad behaviour. If we had nothing of that kind, we would have to make our own observations regarding the advantage or disadvantage of actions, and to regulate our conduct accordingly. The weakness of our reason and the distractions caused by the infirmity and the necessities of our nature are so great that few men could ever have conducted the long inferences that show some actions to be on the whole

advantageous to the agent and their contraries pernicious. The author of nature has equipped us better for virtuous conduct than our moralists seem to imagine, by giving us *instructions* for it, ones that are almost as quick and powerful as the instructions we have for the preservation of our bodies. He has made virtue a *lovely* form, to spur us to pursue it, and has given us strong affections to serve as the springs of each virtuous action.

This *moral sense* of beauty in actions and affections may seem strange at first view. Some of our moralists themselves are offended by its appearance in Lord Shaftesbury's writings, for two reasons. They are accustomed to deduce every approval or disapproval from rational views of what is in our interests. . . . And they think that the notion of a moral sense comes close to the notion of *innate ideas*, of which they have a horror. In my second treatise, on Virtue, I'll show that this moral sense has nothing to do with innate ideas.

Our gentlemen of good taste can tell us of a great many senses, tastes, and likings [see Glossary] for beauty, harmony, imitation in painting and poetry; and mightn't we also find in mankind a liking for a beauty in characters, in ways of behaving? I suspect that our foolish management of philosophy (as well as religion) has made it so austere and unshapely that a gentleman can't easily bring himself to *like* it; and those who are strangers to it can scarcely bear to hear our description of it. What a change from what was once the delight of the finest gentlemen among the ancients—their *recreation* after the bustle of public business!

In the first treatise—the one on Beauty—I may sometimes assume a greater agreement of mankind in their sense of beauty than experience will confirm; but all I care about is to show

- that some sense of beauty is natural to men;
- that we find as much agreement in men's likings of

forms as in their external senses (which everyone agrees to be natural); and

•that pleasure or pain, delight or aversion, are *naturally* joined to men's perceptions.

If you are convinced about the mind's determination to be pleased with forms, proportions, resemblances, theorems, it won't be difficult for you to grasp the ideas of another sense, a superior one that is also natural to men, determining them to be pleased with actions, characters, affections. This is the *moral sense*, which is the subject of the second treatise.

The regular occasions [see Glossary] of perception by the external senses are presented to us as soon as we come into the world, and it may be this that makes it easy for us to regard these senses as natural; but the objects of the superior senses of beauty and virtue generally don't crop up as early as that. It probably takes a while for children •to reflect (or anyway to let us know that they reflect) on proportion and similarity, on affections, characters, temperaments, or •to come to know the external actions that are evidences of these. This leads us to imagine that their sense of beauty, and their moral sentiments [see Glossary] concerning actions, must be entirely a product of instruction and education [see Glossary]; •but that's a weak basis for that conclusion. It's no harder to conceive •how a character or temperament might be *constituted by nature* as the necessary occasion of pleasure or object of approval than to conceive •how a taste or a sound might have that same status, despite the fact that the character or temperament isn't presented to the child as

early in life as tastes and sounds are.

[Hutcheson now has three paragraphs gratefully praising three people who have supported him and given him useful criticisms of the two treatises' first editions. Only the third person need concern us here:]

There's no need for me to recommend Lord Shaftesbury's writings to the world: they will be admired as long as any careful thought remains among men. It is indeed to be wished that he hadn't mixed his noble performances [see Glossary] with some prejudices that he had against Christianity—a religion that gives us the truest idea of virtue, and recommends the love of God and of mankind as the sum of all true religion. Imagine that able nobleman finding a dissolute set of men who enjoy nothing in life but the lowest and most sordid pleasures, searching in Shaftesbury's writings for insinuations against Christianity so that they can be even less restrained in their debaucheries, although their low minds are incapable of savouring the noble sentiments of virtue and honour that he has placed in such a lovely light. How indignant that would have made him!

Whatever faults able people may find with this performance of mine, I hope that no-one will find anything in it contrary to religion or good conduct; and I'll be well pleased if I give the learned world an occasion for examining more thoroughly these subjects that I think are of very considerable importance. My main basis for confidence that my views are mainly correct is that the first hints of them came to me from some of the greatest writers of antiquity. . . .

1: Some powers of perception —distinct from what is generally understood by ‘sensation’

I shall start with something that may be needed to make the rest intelligible, namely some definitions and observations regarding •the perceptions we call ‘sensations’ and •the actions of the mind that they lead to. The observations are all truths that are either accepted by everyone or sufficiently proved by many writers both ancient and modern.

Sensation

(1) The ideas that are raised in the mind when external objects are present to us and act on our bodies are called ‘sensations’. We find that in such cases the mind is passive: it has no power directly to prevent the perception or idea, or to alter it as it occurs, as long as our bodies remain in a state fit to be acted on by the external object.

Different senses

(2) We say that two perceptions come to us through ‘different senses’ if they are entirely different from each other, having nothing in common except *being sensations*. Thus, ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ refer to the different powers of receiving the ideas of colours and of sounds. It’s true that colours have vast differences among themselves, as also have sounds; but even the most opposite colours have more in common than any colour has with any sound. . . . Each of the various senses seems to have its distinct organs, except feeling [= ‘the] sense of touch’, which is to some extent diffused over the whole body.

How the mind is active

(3) The mind has a power to

- take ideas that were received separately and put them together to make compounds;

- compare [see Glossary] their objects by means of the ideas, and note their relations and proportions;
- enlarge or shrink its ideas as it wishes, to any degree;
- take simple ideas that were jointly impressed in the mind in the sensation, and consider them separately.

The common name for this last operation is ‘abstraction’.

Substances

(4) The ideas of •substances are compounded out of the various simple ideas that were jointly impressed •on the mind• when •they presented themselves to our senses. We define substances only by listing these sensible ideas. Someone who has never directly encountered a substance of kind K can be given a clear enough idea of K by a definition, provided he has separately received through his senses each of the simple ideas that make up the complex idea of K. But not otherwise: he can’t get through a definition any simple ideas that he hasn’t received through his senses. . . .

Education. Instruction

(5) It follows from this that if someone x has a desire (or aversion) toward some object, this attitude must be based on x’s opinion that the object has some desirable (or undesirable) quality that x is sensorily equipped to perceive. If a blind man desires beauty, the desire must be aroused by some perceived regularity of shape, sweetness of sound, smoothness or softness or some other quality perceivable by the other senses, having nothing to do with the ideas of colour. This holds for any desire (or aversion), whether produced by instruction, education, or prejudice.

Pleasure. Pain

(6) Many of our sensitive perceptions are *immediately* pleasant (or painful), without our

- knowing what caused this pleasure (or pain) or how its object caused or was the occasion of it; or
- seeing what further benefit (or harm) we might receive from the use of such objects.

The most detailed knowledge of these things wouldn't make any difference to the pleasure (or pain) of the perception, though it might •provide a rational pleasure—the pleasure of gaining new knowledge—distinct from the sensible pleasure, or •create a distinct joy from the prospect of further benefits (or aversion from the thought of further harm).

Different ideas

(7) When two people disagree in their approval or dislike of some one object, there is probably some difference between them in what ideas the object creates in them; and when one person moves from liking something to later disliking it, this is usually because some disagreeable idea has been occurring when that object is presented, though the idea in question isn't essentially connected with the object. Examples of this are provided by this sort of case: a man takes an emetic preparation that includes a wine he used to like, and from then on he hates that wine because the •gustatory-idea he gets from drinking it has had added to it ideas of loathing and sickness of stomach. A similar change of idea [Hutcheson's phrase] can happen gradually through changes in our bodies—as when in our later years we don't care for foods that we were fond of in our childhood, or when we come to enjoy something by blocking the disagreeable ideas that it aroused when we first used it. •And a quite separate point: Many of our simple perceptions are disagreeable only because the quality is too intense: moderate light is agreeable, very strong light may be painful; moderate

bitterness may be pleasant, a higher degree may be offensive. A change in our organs may cause a change in the intensity of the perception, and sometimes it goes further and occasions a quite contrary perception: as when a bowl of tepid water feels cold to a warm hand and warm to a cold one.

We may find it harder to account for the diversity of fancy [Hutcheson's phrase] about more complex ideas of objects, in which we have to do with many ideas of different senses at once. . . . For instance, in the different fancies about architecture, gardening, clothing. I'll say something about the first two of those in Section 6. As for clothing: the differences in tastes about that can also be attributed to the influence of ideas about other things that somehow become joined with ideas of clothing. Examples:

- Someone dislikes glaring colours because something. . . has led him to think that a liking for such colours is evidence of frivolity (or whatever);
- Some colour or clothes-design is disliked because it is commonly used by peasants or other low-down people.

These additional ideas—•*frivolous*, •*peasant*—may constantly accompany some idea of •colour or •fashion in the minds of some people, causing *in them* a constant dislike for •it, although the colour or form in question is in no way disagreeable in itself, and actually pleases others who join no such ideas to them. Mightn't it be the case that human minds differ in such a way that one simple idea or perception gives pleasure to one person and pain to another, or to one person at different times? There seems to be no evidence that that's the case—and anyway it seems like a *contradiction* to suppose that one simple idea should do this.

Complex ideas

(8) The only pleasure of sense that our philosophers [Hutcheson's phrase] seem to consider is the kind that accompanies the •simple ideas of sensation: but there are vastly greater pleasures in the •complex ideas of objects that are called 'beautiful', 'regular', 'harmonious'. Everyone knows that he is more delighted with a fine face or a well-drawn picture than with the view of any one colour, however strong and lively it is; and more pleased with a view of

the sun arising among clouds, colouring their edges,
a starry sky,
a fine landscape,
a shapely building

than with a view of a clear blue sky, a smooth sea, or a large open plain that isn't diversified by woods, hills, waters, buildings (though even these latter appearances are not perfectly simple). Thus in music the pleasure of a fine composition is incomparably greater than that of any one note, however sweet, full, or swelling it may be.

'Beauty', 'Harmony'

(9) In this work I shall use the word 'beauty' to name •the idea that is raised in us, and the phrase 'the sense of beauty' to name •our power of receiving this idea. 'Harmony' also refers to •our pleasant ideas arising from a complex of sounds, and 'a good ear' (in its ordinary colloquial sense) to •our power of perceiving this pleasure. I shall try in what follows to discover what is the immediate occasion [see Glossary] of these pleasant ideas, i.e. what real quality in the objects ordinarily arouses them.

Internal sense

(10) These ideas of beauty and harmony—should we call them perceptions of the external senses of seeing and hearing? It doesn't matter. I *prefer* to call our power of perceiving

these ideas 'an *internal sense*', if only to distinguish them from other sensations of seeing and hearing that men can have without any perception of beauty and harmony. We know very well from experience that the following two things can be true of the same person:

- (1) He has good enough senses of seeing and hearing (in the ordinary sense of those words); he perceives all the simple ideas separately, and has the pleasures they can give; he can distinguish one from another. . . .; he can tell in separate notes which note is higher, lower, sharper or flatter, when they are separately sounded; in shapes he sees the length, breadth, width of each line, surface, angle; and he is as capable as anyone of hearing and seeing at great distances. And yet
- (2) he gets no pleasure from musical compositions, from painting, architecture, natural landscape; or only a very weak one compared with what others enjoy from the same objects.

When someone has a greater capacity for receiving such pleasant ideas we say that he has 'fine taste'; in music it seems that we all accept that there's something like a sense that is distinct from the external sense of hearing, and we call it a 'good ear'. . . .

Different from external sense

(11) We generally imagine the lower animals to have powers of perception of the same sort as our external senses, and sometimes to have them more acutely than we do; but we don't conceive of many, if any, of them as having any of the more elevated powers of perception that I am calling 'internal senses'; and if any of them do have them, it is in a much lower degree than we do.

Later on I shall present another reason for calling this power of perceiving the ideas of beauty an 'internal sense', namely the fact that sometimes in contexts where our ex-

ternal senses are not much involved we detect a sort of beauty that is in many ways similar to the beauty observed in sensible [see Glossary] objects, and accompanied with similar pleasure—for example, the beauty perceived in theorems, or universal truths, in general causes, and in some extensive principles [see Glossary] of action.

We generally think of the lower animals as having powers of perception that are of the same sort as our external senses, and sometimes sharper than ours; but we don't think of many—or even of *any*—of them as having any of the more lofty powers of perception that I am calling 'internal senses'. And if some of them *do* have such powers, they have them in a much lower degree than we do.

(12) Think about the perceptions that must occur when a poet is swept away by the view of any of those objects of natural beauty that capture us even in his description of them and when the same objects are perceived by someone who lacks what we call a 'fine taste'—a dull critic or a narrowly focused scientist.

What a difference! The latter class of men may have much more knowledge of the kind that is derived from external sensation; they can tell all the specific differences of trees, herbs, minerals, metals; they know the form of every leaf, stalk, root, flower, and seed of all the species, about which the poet may know almost nothing; but their conception of what they see is cold and lifeless, whereas the poet's is utterly delightful—and not only the poet but any man with fine taste. Our external senses may (with the aid of tape-measures) teach us all the proportions of architecture to the tenth of an inch, and the location of every muscle in the human body; and a good memory may retain these; but more than that is needed if one is to be

- an accomplished master in architecture, painting or sculpture, or even
- a reasonably good judge of such works, or
- capable of getting the highest pleasure from contemplating them.

Since •there are such different powers of perception where the external senses (as commonly so-called) are the same; and •since the most detailed knowledge of what the external senses reveal often doesn't give the pleasure of beauty or harmony that can be immediately enjoyed by a person with good taste who doesn't have much knowledge; we're entitled to give another name to these higher and more delightful perceptions of beauty and harmony, using the phrase 'internal sense' as a label for the power of receiving such impressions. The difference of the perceptions seems to justify the use of a different name. . . .

Its pleasures are necessary and immediate

(13) This superior power of perception is appropriately called a 'sense', because of its likeness to the other senses in this respect: rather than arising from any knowledge of principles, proportions, causes, or of the usefulness of the object, our pleasure comes from our being *immediately* struck by the idea of beauty. And this pleasure isn't increased by the most detailed knowledge of the object, though it may add a *further* pleasure, a rational pleasure, from prospects of benefit from the object or from the increase of knowledge. [See **(6)** on page 5.]

(14) Also, the ideas of beauty and harmony, like other sensible ideas, are **necessarily** pleasant to us as well as being **immediately** so. We can't vary the beauty or ugliness [see Glossary] of an object by any decision we make or by any expectation that the object will be good for us or bad for us. . . . Offer us the whole world as a reward for approving

an ugly object or disapproving a beautiful one, or threaten us with the greatest evil [see Glossary] if we don't—it won't make any difference. Rewards and threats might make us *pretend*, or might get us in our external conduct to •abstain from any pursuit of the beautiful and to •pursue the ugly; but our feelings and perceptions would still be the same.

This sense is independent of expectations of advantage

(15) This makes it clear that some things are *immediately* the occasions of this pleasure of beauty. . . , and that this pleasure is different from the joy that arises from self-love when we expect something good to come to us. Indeed, don't we often see someone neglect his own comfort and convenience in order to obtain beauty, with no expectation of gaining from the beautiful thing anything except the enjoyment of its beauty? This shows us that although we may pursue beautiful objects from self-love, wanting to obtain the pleasures of beauty (as in architecture, gardening, and many other pursuits), this couldn't happen if we didn't have a sense of beauty that precedes thoughts of advantage, even *this* advantage; if we didn't have that sense, these objects wouldn't be advantageous in that way because they wouldn't give us the pleasure that makes them advantageous. Our *sense of* the beauty of objects that makes them good to us is quite distinct from our *desire to have* them when they are good in this way. Our •desire for beauty may be outweighed by rewards or threats, but never our •sense of it; just as fear of death or love of life may make us choose and want a bitter potion. . . , but no prospects of good or evil can stop that potion from being bitter. . . . It's true that people will often forgo the pursuit of beauty and harmony because they are greedy for other things, or lazy, or for some other motive of self-love, but that doesn't show that we have no sense of beauty—merely that it can be outweighed by a stronger desire. Gold is heavier than silver, but no-one takes

that as a proof that silver is weightless!

(16) If we had no such sense of beauty and harmony, houses, gardens, clothing, equipage [see Glossary] might be praised as convenient, fruitful, warm, easy, but never as beautiful; and I can't see in faces anything that would please us except liveliness of colour and smoothness of surface. But it is perfectly certain that all these objects are recommended in quite different terms on many occasions. . . .

Beauty, original or comparative

(17) Beauty is either •original or •comparative; or, if you prefer this terminology, •absolute or •relative. Don't take 'original' or 'absolute' beauty to be a quality that the object itself has in such a way that it could be beautiful independently of any relation to a mind that perceives it. The fact is that 'beauty', like other names of sensible ideas, strictly refers only to the perception of some mind; just as 'cold', 'hot', 'sweet', 'bitter', refer to sensations in our minds that may have no resemblance to anything in the objects that arouse these ideas in us, however apt we are to imagine something in the object is just like our perception. The ideas of beauty and harmony that are aroused when we perceive some primary [see Glossary] quality. . . . may indeed have more resemblance to •external• objects than do these sensations that seem to be not so much •pictures of objects as •states of the perceiving mind; but if there were no mind with a sense of beauty to contemplate objects, I don't see how they could be called 'beautiful'. By 'absolute beauty', then, all I mean is 'beauty that we perceive in an object without comparing it with anything else of which it is supposed to be an imitation or a picture—for example the beauty perceived from [Hutcheson's preposition] the works of nature, artificial forms, figures, theorems. Comparative or relative beauty is the beauty we perceive in objects that are generally regarded as imitations or resemblances of something else.

This classification of beauties is based on the different reasons for the pleasure we get from objects rather than from anything in the objects themselves; for most of my examples of relative beauty have absolute beauty as well; and many of the examples of absolute beauty also have

relative beauty in some respect or other. But we can think separately about these two sources of pleasure—•uniformity in the object itself and •resemblance to some original. These two kinds of beauty occupy the next three sections.

2: Original or absolute beauty

Sense of men

(1) Since it is certain that we have ideas of beauty and harmony, let us examine what quality in objects arouses these ideas or is the occasion of them. The inquiry will only be about the qualities that are beautiful *to men*, i.e. about the foundation of *their* sense of beauty. . . . When I come to show how the objects that are presented to us are beautiful, I will mean that such objects are agreeable to the sense of men. There are plenty of objects that don't strike men as in any way beautiful but bring delight to a variety of other animals. Perhaps the senses of those animals are constituted differently from human senses; perhaps they have ideas of beauty that are aroused by objects of a quite different form from the ones we find beautiful. We see animals fitted for every place; and what to men appears rough and shapeless, or loathsome, may be to them a paradise.

(2) So as to get a clearer over-all view of the foundation or occasion of men's ideas of beauty we should consider it first in its simpler kinds, e.g. the simple beauty of some regular figures. Perhaps we'll find that the same foundation extends to all the more complex kinds of beauty.

Uniformity with variety

(3) The figures that arouse the ideas of beauty in us seem to be the ones that have uniformity amidst variety. Many thoughts of objects are *agreeable* on other accounts, such as grandeur, novelty, holiness, and some others that I'll talk about later. But what we call *beautiful* in objects seems to be (to put it in mathematical terms) a *compound ratio* of uniformity and variety: of two bodies that are equally uniform, the more beautiful is the one with more variety; and of two bodies that are equally variegated, the more beautiful is the one that is more uniform. Some examples will make this clear.

Variety

Where uniformity is the same, variety increases beauty. The beauty of an equilateral triangle is less than that of a square, which is less than that of a pentagon, which is surpassed in its turn by the hexagon. Similarly with solids: the icosahedron (with twenty sides) surpasses the dodecahedron (with twelve); and this surpasses the octahedron, which is still more beautiful than the cube, which in turn surpasses the regular pyramid. The obvious basis for all this is greater

variety with equal uniformity. (There are limits to this: when the number of sides is very large, we can't see how they relate in size to the diameter of the figure or of the obviously related circle, so that the beauty in such a case doesn't go on increasing with the number of sides. And there are exceptions: the lack of parallelism in the sides of heptagons and other figures with odd numbers of sides may diminish their beauty.)

Uniformity

Where variety is equal, greater uniformity increases the beauty. An equilateral triangle (three equal sides) or even an isosceles triangle (two equal sides) surpasses in beauty a scalene triangle (all three sides different). A square surpasses a rhombus (two sides of one length and two of another), which is more beautiful than the trapezium (no two sides the same) or any figure with irregular curved sides. So any regular solid *x* is much more beautiful than an irregular solid *y* that has the same number of plane surfaces as *x*; and this can be seen not only in the five perfectly regular solids but in all the ones that have any considerable uniformity—like cylinders, prisms, pyramids, obelisks—which please every eye more than any rough shape in which there is no unity or resemblance among the parts.

Compound ratio

We get examples of the compound ratio when we compare **(a)** circles or spheres with **(b)** ellipses or fairly regular spheroids [= 'figures that are not far from being spheres']. In this comparison we find that the lack of perfect uniformity observable in **(b)** is made up for by its greater variety, so that **(b)**'s beauty is nearly equal to **(a)**'s. And we get a similar result when we compare **(b)** compound solids [he names two of them] with **(a)** the perfectly regular ones of which they are compounded. [This paragraph has rectified Hutcheson's version, which is garbled.]

(4) These remarks would probably hold true for, and be confirmed by, the judgments of children concerning simpler figures where the variety isn't too much for them to take in. Some of my particular examples may seem uncertain, but there's no escaping the fact that children are fond of all regular figures in their games although they are no more convenient or useful for them than the figures of ordinary pebbles. Children *early* reveal a taste or sense of beauty when they want to see buildings, regular gardens, or even pictures of them.

The beauty of nature

(5) It's the same foundation that we have for our sense of beauty in the works of nature. In every part of the world that we call 'beautiful' there's a vast uniformity amidst an almost infinite variety. Many parts of the universe seem not to be designed for our use; indeed, it's only a tiny part of the universe that we even know anything about. The figures and motions of the great heavenly bodies are not obvious to our senses; we learn about them by reasoning and theorising on the basis of many long observations; and yet as far as we can

discover through our senses,
enlarge our knowledge by reasoning, or
stretch our imagination to regions that we don't know
about,

we generally find that the structure, order, and motion of those bodies pleases our sense of beauty. It's not true that every individual natural object strikes us as beautiful; but there's a vast profusion of beauty over most of the objects that our senses present to us or that we reach by reasoning on the basis of observation. . . . The forms of all the great bodies in the universe are nearly spherical; the orbits of their revolutions are generally elliptical, and without great eccentricity [= 'in ellipses that are not very different from circles']. . . .

These are figures of great uniformity, and are therefore pleasing to us.

Then consider the superb example of uniformity amidst variety that our planets provide. . . . **(i)** They rotate on their axes, and move around the central fire (the sun), in nearly equal times and in nearly the same orbit; so that after certain periods all the same appearances are again renewed. **(ii)** There's a succession of light and shade, or day and night, constantly pursuing each other around each planet, with an agreeable and regular diversity in the times they occupy the different hemispheres, in the summer, harvest, winter and spring. **(iii)** And then there are the various phases, aspects, and situations of the planets in relation to each other, their conjunctions and the oppositions in which they suddenly darken each other. . . .in eclipses, are repeated to us at their fixed periods with invariable constancy. These are the beauties that charm the astronomer, and make his laborious calculations pleasant.

The earth

(6) Then there's the dry part of the surface of our globe: much of it is covered with ·green·, a very pleasant inoffensive colour; and how beautifully is it variegated with different degrees of light and shade, according to the different situations of the parts of its surface, in mountains, valleys, hills, and open plains, which are variously tilted towards the great light-giver!

Plants

(7) If we descend to the tiniest works of nature, what vast uniformity there is among all the species of plants. . . .in how they grow and propagate! What an exact resemblance there is among all the plants of the same species, whose numbers surpass our imagination! And this uniformity is matched—indeed it is sometimes surpassed—in the structure of the

minutest parts of plants, which no eye can see without a microscope. In the almost infinite multitude of leaves, fruit, seed, flowers of any one species we often see an exact uniformity in the structure and situation of the smallest fibres. this is the beauty that charms an intelligent botanist. [Hutcheson goes on at some length about other beauties of regularity that come our way when we put individual leaves or flowers under a microscope, about tree-rings 'one for each year', and so on.]

Animals

(8) As for the beauty of animals, either in their outward form or their inner structure that we learn about through experiment and long observation, we shall find among all known species a vast uniformity in the structure of the parts on which life more immediately depends. And consider the amazing unity of *mechanism* underlying an almost infinite diversity of animal motions:

- all their actions in walking, running, flying, swimming;
- all their serious efforts for self-preservation,
- all their freakish contortions when they are playing

—all this, in all their various limbs, are performed by one simple contrivance of *a contracting muscle* applied with inconceivable variations to produce all these results! The work could have been done by a number of different engines; but then there would have been less uniformity, and the beauty of our animal systems (and of particular animals) would have been much less when this surprising unity of mechanism had been removed from them.

(9) Among animals of the same species, the uniformity is very obvious, and this resemblance is the basis on which we classify them into classes or species, despite the great differences of size, colour, and shape that are found even

in those that we put into the same species. And then in each individual animal, what vast beauty arises from the exact resemblance to each other of all the external double members! This seems to be nature's the universal intention when no accident prevents it. The lack of this resemblance always counts as an imperfection and a lack of beauty, even though no harm comes of it—as when the eyes are not exactly alike, or one arm or leg is a little shorter or thinner than its fellow. . . .

Proportion

(10) A further beauty in animals arises from the proportions of the various parts to each other; this pleases the sense of spectators, even though they cannot calculate it with the accuracy of a sculptor. The sculptor knows what proportion •of each part of the face to the whole face is most agreeable, and similarly with the proportion •of the face to the body or to any parts of it, and of •the diameter to the length of each limb. When the proportion of the head to the body is noticeably altered, we have a giant or a dwarf. That's how it is that a sculpture of any size can represent a giant or a dwarf, by making the head disproportionately small (in giants) or large (in dwarfs). There's a further beauty arising from the bodily shape that naturally indicates strength; but I shan't insist on this, because it will probably be alleged that our approval of this shape comes from our thought of the advantage •of strength• rather than from the form itself.

There's beauty arising from any mechanism that seems to be adapted to the needs and advantages of some animal; this pleases us, although it doesn't bring any advantage to ourselves. I'll consider it under heading of 'relative beauty' or 'design' [see Section 5, starting on page 20].

Birds

(11) The special beauty of birds can hardly be omitted! It

comes from •the vast variety of feathers, which are intricate machines adapted to many admirable uses, and are strikingly alike in structure across all the species; from •the perfect uniformity of parts—•beak to beak, tail to tail—in those of the same species; and from the likeness of the two sides of each individual bird; besides all the beauty of lively colours and gradual shades, not only in the external appearance of the bird. . . .but often visible even in one feather separately.

Fluids

(12) If our reasonings about the nature of fluids are sound—•i.e. if current scientific orthodoxy about fluids is correct—then the vast stores of water provide an unimaginably fine example of uniformity in nature. Think about the almost infinite multitude of small, polished, smooth spheres that we have to think are formed in all the parts of this planet. And there is probably the same uniformity among the parts of other fluids as well as water; and something similar must be found in many other natural bodies—salts, sulphurs, and such like—whose uniform properties probably depend on a uniformity in the shapes of their parts.

Harmony

(13) Under 'original beauty' we can include harmony, or—if you'll allow me the phrase—*beauty of sound*. •That beauty is original• because harmony isn't usually thought of as an imitation of anything else. Harmony often raises pleasure in people who don't know what is causing it; and yet the foundation of this pleasure is known to be a sort of uniformity. When the various vibrations of one note regularly coincide with the vibrations of another, they make an agreeable composition; and such notes are called 'concorde'. [Hutcheson gives some details about the mathematical relations involved in concords. Then:] In addition to this, a due regard must be

had to the key that governs the whole thing, and to the tempo and style [e.g. *largo*, *molto espressivo*] in which the composition is begun: frequent clumsy changes in any of these will produce the greatest and most unnatural discord. You can tell this by observing the dissonance that would come from tacking parts of ·two· different tunes together as one, although both were separately agreeable. . . .

Yet we find in the best compositions a mysterious effect of *discords*: they often give as much pleasure as continued harmony. Perhaps they do this

- by refreshing the ear with variety; or
- by awakening the listener's attention and increasing his enjoyment of the subsequent harmony of concords, as shadows enliven and beautify pictures; or

- by some other means that we don't yet know.

Anyway, it is certain that discords have their place, and have a good effect in our best compositions. I'll discuss some other powers of music later on [(12) on page 32]

(14) In all these examples of beauty, the pleasure is communicated to observers or listeners who have never given any thought to this general foundation. All I'm saying here is that the pleasant sensation arises only from objects in which there is uniformity amidst variety: we can have the sensation without knowing what is the occasion [see Glossary] of it; as a man's taste may suggest ideas of sweets, acids, bitters, though he knows nothing about the forms or motions of the small bodies that arouse these perceptions in him.

3: The beauty of theorems

Theorems

(1) the beauty of theorems, i.e. demonstrated universal truths, deserves to be separately considered, because it is considerably different from the kinds of beauty I have discussed; and yet there are none in which we'll see such an amazing variety with uniformity—which leads to a very great pleasure owing nothing to any prospect of further advantage.

(2) We may find included in one theorem. . . .an infinite multitude of particular truths—often, indeed, an infinity of infinities of them. ·There may be an irony here·. The reason that we *need* to be •able to form abstract ideas and universal theorems may be merely the limitation of our

minds, which can't manage an infinite multitude of singular ideas or judgments at once; and yet ·our exercise of· this •ability gives us evidence our having a ·mental· capacity that far exceeds our imagination. Thus, for instance, the 47th proposition of the first book of Euclid's *Elements* contains an infinite multitude of truths concerning the infinite possible sizes of right-angled triangles as you make the area greater or less; and for each of these sizes you can find an infinite multitude of dissimilar triangles, as you vary the proportion of the base to the perpendicular; and all the members of this infinity of infinities of results fit the general theorem. In calculations in algebra and calculus we'll find a still greater

variety of particular truths included in general theorems; not only by applying general equations to all kinds of quantity, but in more particular investigations of areas and tangents. In this branch of mathematics a single procedure will reveal theorems applicable to •infinitely many orders or species of curves, to •the infinitely many different sizes of each species, and to •the infinitely many points of the infinitely many individuals of each size.

The foundation of their beauty

(3) My thesis is that the beauty or pleasure we find when making certain mathematical discoveries is based on the agreement or unity of an infinity of objects within the general theorem. To see more clearly that this *is* what's going on, compare our •satisfaction in making such discoveries with the •uneasy state of mind we are in when we can only measure lines or surfaces using a ruler or tape-measure; or are making experiments that we can't bring under any general proposition, so that we can only heap up a multitude of particular isolated observations. Each of those trials reveals a new truth, but despite all the variety there is no pleasure or beauty until we can discover some sort of unity, or bring them under some general proposition.

There's little beauty in axioms

(4) Consider the metaphysical axiom *Every whole is greater than its part*: we don't encounter beauty when we think about it. It's true that this proposition contains many infinities of particular truths, but their unity is inconsiderable, because all they agree in is a vague, unspecific conception of whole and part, and in an indefinite excess—sometimes great and sometimes small—of the former over the latter. [In what follows, the 'inscribed sphere' of a cylinder is a sphere that is contained in the cylinder and tangentially meets each of its faces.] So when we are told that

- a cylinder is larger than its inscribed sphere, and that
- this sphere is larger than the largest cone that the cylinder contains,

we shan't get any pleasure from these unspecific bits of knowledge about larger/smaller; but when we see the universal exact agreement of all possible sizes of such systems of solids—i.e. see that *always* the cylinder is 3 times the size of the cone, and 1.5 times the size of the inscribed sphere—how beautiful that theorem is, and how bowled over we are by its first discovery! [This paragraph hasn't supported the cross-heading that introduces it, but that is not an artifact of this version. You have just seen the only two occurrences of 'axiom' in the whole work.]

Easy theorems

Easy or obvious propositions—even ones where the unity is sufficiently clear and determinate—don't please us as much as ones which, being less obvious, give us some surprise when they are discovered. Thus, we don't get much pleasure from learning that a line bisecting the vertical angle of an isosceles triangle bisects its base. . . ., or that equilateral triangles are equiangular. These truths we almost know intuitively—find them straight off to be almost self-evident—without demonstration: they are like goods that men have long possessed, which don't give such sensible joys as much smaller *new* additions may give us. But don't get the idea that the sole pleasure of theorems is from surprise, for the same novelty of a surprising single experiment doesn't please us much. Nor should we infer, from the greater pleasure accompanying a new or unexpected advantage, that surprise or novelty is the only pleasure of life or the only ground of delight in truth.

Corollaries

(5) Another beauty in propositions is what we find when one theorem contains a multitude of corollaries that are easily deducible from it. Thus, a theorem that gives us the equation of a curve, from which perhaps most of its properties can be derived, does somehow please and satisfy our mind above any other proposition. An example of such a theorem is proposition 35 of the first book of Euclid's *Elements*, from which the whole art of measuring straight-edged areas is deduced by resolving the area into triangles, which are the halves of parallelograms, each of which is equal to the rectangle with the same base and the same perpendicular altitude. Proposition 47 of the first book is another of similar beauty, and so are many others. [Euclid's 1:47 is famous in philosophical circles as the theorem that first hooked Hobbes into Euclid, making him 'in love with geometry', says his biographer Aubrey.]

In the study of nature there is a similar beauty in the knowledge of some great principles or universal forces from which countless effects flow. One example is gravitation in Newton's theory. Another is knowledge of the origin of *rights*, from which the greatest part of moral duties can be inferred in the various relations of human life, including knowledge of how a right can be transferred from one man to another. [Hutcheson mentions two classifications of rights, which will occur in the title of Section 7 of his second treatise, the one on Virtue.]

It is easy to see •how men are charmed by the beauty of such knowledge, quite apart from its usefulness; and •how this sets them to work deriving the properties of each figure from a single source, and demonstrating mechanical forces from a single theorem about the composition of motion, even after they have come to know these truths, with a high degree of certainty, through quite different demonstrations. And we take pleasure in thinking about this kind of derivation even

when we have no prospect of *getting* anything from it other than the immediate pleasure of contemplating its beauty. What about the prospect of fame? you may ask. Well, that couldn't motivate us if we weren't aware that such results please mankind immediately, through this internal sense of their beauty.

Fantastic beauty

It's equally easy see •what absurd attempts men have been led into by this sense of beauty, and •the silly pretence of obtaining it in sciences other than mathematics [meaning '... other than ones that can be treated mathematically?']. That is probably what set Descartes on that *hopeful* project of deducing all human knowledge from the single proposition *Cogito, ergo sum* [= 'I think, therefore I exist']. While others, just as foolishly, presented the proposition *Impossibile est idem simul esse & non esse* [= 'It is impossible for one thing to exist and not exist at the same time'] as having a much better claim to be 'the absolutely first principle of human knowledge' [Hutcheson gives that in Latin]. Leibniz had an equal affection for his favourite 'principle of a sufficient reason for everything in nature', and bragged to Clarke about the wonders it had helped him to achieve in the intellectual world; but his learned antagonist seems to think he didn't have *sufficient reason* for his boasting! If we look into the systems that learned men have given us in the particular sciences, we can see the drawbacks of this love of uniformity. Pufendorf tried to derive men's various duties to God, themselves, and their neighbours from his single basic principle of sociableness to the whole race of mankind—and what an awkward job he is forced to make of it! These examples (and I could easily give more) are a strong proof that men have a sense of beauty in uniformity in the sciences—even from the contortions of common sense they are led into by pursuing it.

(6) This delight that accompanies sciences [see Glossary] or universal theorems may really be called a kind of sensation: it necessarily accompanies the discovery of any proposition, and is distinct from bare knowledge itself, because it starts out as very violent and gradually becomes less so, whereas the knowledge is uniformly the same throughout time. It's true that knowledge enlarges the mind and makes us more capable of carrying out some projects that may bring advantage to us; but I leave it to you to look into yourself and find out whether you haven't often felt this pleasure without any such prospect of advantage from the discovery of your theorem. All we say about personal advantage in this topic is that with our internal senses as with our external ones the pleasant sensations generally arise from the objects that calm reason would have recommended if we had understood their use—objects that could have engaged our pursuits from self-interest.

(7) You may want to object: 'This pleasure in theorems happens only *at first*, when the discovered theorem is new and thus surprising.' Novelty is indeed generally very agreeable, and heightens our pleasure in contemplating beauty; but then the novelty of a particular truth discovered by laying a tape-measure along something (see (3) above) gives no considerable pleasure or surprise. What is pleasant and surprising, then, is the first observation of this *unity amidst such a great variety*. . . .

Products of human skill and labour

(8) As for the products of human skill and labour, if we went through all the various kinds of man-made contrivances

or structures, we would constantly find that the beauty appearing in them is some kind of uniformity or unity of proportion among the parts and of each part to the whole. There are ever so many different possible proportions, and different kinds of uniformity, so there's plenty of room for the varieties of taste and imagination that we see in the architecture, gardening, and so on in different nations; they can all have uniformity although the parts in one differ from those in another. Chinese or Persian buildings are not like Greek or Roman ones, but each of these has the uniformity of its parts to each other and to *itself* as a whole. In the kind of architecture that Europeans call 'regular', the uniformity of parts is very obvious: the several parts are regular figures, and either equal or similar. . . .; the pedestals have faces that are either square or parallelograms; the pillars are nearly cylindrical; the arches are circular, and all the arches in the same row are equal; in the same range we always find the same proportion of height to diameter of pillars, [and so on]. Other countries don't follow the Greek or Roman proportions; yet even with them a proportion is retained—a uniformity and resemblance among corresponding figures—and any deviation in one part from the proportion that is kept to in the rest of the building is displeasing to every eye, and destroys or at least reduces the beauty of the whole.

(9) The same can be observed through all other artifacts, right down to the most elementary utensil; we'll always find that the beauty of each of them has the same foundation of uniformity amidst variety, without which they appear low, irregular and ugly.

4: Relative or comparative beauty

Comparative beauty

(1) If I'm right in what I have said about the foundation of •absolute beauty, we can easily understand what •relative beauty is. All beauty is relative to some mind perceiving it; but when we use 'relative' to distinguish some cases of beauty from others, what it picks out is the beauty that is experienced in any object that is commonly regarded as an imitation of some original; and this beauty is based on a conformity—a kind of unity—between the original and the copy. The original may be either some object in nature, or some established idea—because with any known idea as a standard, and rules to fix this image or idea by, we can make a beautiful imitation of it. Thus a sculptor, painter, or poet may please us with a Hercules, if his work of art retains the grandeur and the marks of strength and courage that we imagine in that hero.

Another point: For something to have purely *comparative* beauty, there needn't be any beauty in the original. The imitation of absolute beauty may indeed make a more lovely piece; but an exact imitation will still be beautiful even if the original isn't; so the ugly features of old age in a portrait, the roughest rocks or mountains in a landscape, if well represented, will have abundant beauty, though perhaps not as much as if the original were absolutely beautiful and as well represented.

Description in poetry

(2) The same thing holds for the poets' descriptions of natural objects or of persons; and this relative beauty is what they should mainly try to achieve. By *moratae fabulae* or the [Greek word] of Aristotle, we are to understand not virtuous manners in a moral sense but a true representation

of manners or characters as they are in nature; and the requirement that in epic and dramatic poetry the actions and sentiments be appropriate for the persons to whom they are ascribed. The facts about our passions suggest some very good reasons why a poet shouldn't represent his characters as perfectly virtuous. It may be that perfectly virtuous characters, abstractly considered, would give more pleasure and have more beauty than the imperfect people that we encounter in life, with their mixture of good and evil; here are a couple of reasons why the poet shouldn't go that way. **(a)** We have livelier ideas of •imperfect men with all their passions than of •morally perfect heroes whom we never encounter in real life, so we aren't in a position to judge the accuracy of representations of the latter. **(b)** Also, because of our awareness of our own state, we are more nearly touched and affected by the imperfect characters; because in them we see represented outside ourselves the conflicts of inclinations—and the struggles between the passions of self-love and those of honour and virtue—that we often feel in our own breasts. This is the perfection of beauty for which Homer is rightly admired, as well as for the variety of his characters.

Simile and metaphor

(3) Many other beauties of poetry can be brought under this heading of 'relative beauty'... It is by resemblance that similes, metaphors and allegories are made beautiful, whether or not the subject or the thing compared to it has any beauty of its own; it's true that the beauty is *greater* when both have some original beauty or dignity, and this is the basis for the rule of taking care to have decency as well as likeness in metaphors and similes. The measures

and cadences are instances of harmony, and come under the head of absolute beauty.

We are apt to compare things

(4) Our minds have a strange proneness to make perpetual comparisons among all the things that we encounter, even ones that seem very unlike. How animals move when they have certain passions are like our own movements when our passions are like that, and this is an easy basis for comparisons; but our imagination demands more! Inanimate objects often have positions that resemble those of the human body in various circumstances; these airs or gestures of our body indicate certain dispositions in the mind; so that our very passions and affections come to resemble natural inanimate objects. For example:

- a tempest at sea is an emblem of wrath;
- a plant or tree drooping under the rain is like a person in sorrow;
- a poppy bending its stalk, or a flower withering when cut by the plough, resembles the death of a hero in his flowering prime;
- an aged oak in the mountains represents an old empire,
- a flame seizing a piece of wood represents a war.

In short, our strange liking [see Glossary] for resemblance brings it about that every thing in nature comes to represent other things, even the most unlike ones, especially the passions and circumstances of human nature that most closely concern us. To confirm this and provide examples we need only to look into Homer or Virgil. A fertile imagination would find in a grove, or a wood, an emblem for every person in a country and every kind of temperament or position in life.

Intention

(5) . . . Some works of art acquire a distinct beauty by how well they fit what everyone thinks to have been the intention of the artist or the persons who commissioned the work; and sometimes to obtain *this* beauty they don't form their works so as to attain the highest perfection of original beauty separately considered; because a work with this relative beauty—along with some degree of original beauty—may give more pleasure than a more perfect original beauty separately. So we see that when gardens are laid out in parterres, vistas and parallel walks, strict regularity is often departed from so as to obtain an imitation of some of the wild aspects of nature; and we are more pleased with this imitation, especially in a very large garden, than we would be with the narrower exactness of regular works. And again, in monuments erected in honour of deceased heroes, although a cylinder or prism or regular solid may have more original beauty than a very acute pyramid or obelisk, the latter pleases us more by matching better the supposed intentions of the monument-builders, namely, that the thing be stable and conspicuous. For the same reason, cubes or square prisms are generally chosen for the pedestals of statues, rather than any of the more beautiful solids that don't seem so secure from rolling. This may also be the reason why columns or pillars look best when made to taper a little from the middle or a third of the way up, so that they won't seem top-heavy and in danger of falling.

(6) The same reason may lead artists in many other cases to depart from the rules of original beauty that I have presented; but this isn't evidence that our sense of beauty is not based—as I have said it is—on uniformity amidst variety; all it shows is that our sense of beauty of the original kind may be varied and overbalanced by another kind of beauty.

(7) This beauty arising from something's corresponding to the intentions of its maker would present to thoughtful observers a new scene of beauty in the works of nature, by considering how the mechanism of any part of nature that we know seems to be •suitable for the perfection of that part and yet •subordinate to the good of some system or whole. We generally suppose that the Author of nature intended the good of the greatest whole, i.e. of all beings; and we can't help being pleased when we see any part of this design carried out in the systems we are acquainted with. Observations that have already been made on this subject are in everyone's hand, in the books of our late improvers of mechanical philosophy. [This must be a reference to (perhaps

among others) Robert Boyle, who was a fervent supporter of mechanistic physics and a fervent Christian.] I shall only remark here that everyone has a certain pleasure in •seeing any design well carried out by an intricate mechanism, even it doesn't bring any advantage to him, and also in •discovering the design that a complex machine is adapted for, even when he already had a general knowledge of the machine before, without seeing its aptness to carry out the design in question.¹

The arguments by which we go from •the beauty of something to •reason and design in its cause are so frequently used in some of the highest subjects that we ought to look in more detail into how they work, and to see what their scope is and how conclusive they are.

¹ It is surprising to see the able author of *Alciphron*, •Dr Berkeley•, claiming that when we perceive something as beautiful we are only perceiving or imagining some *use* for it, purely on the grounds that •the concept of *intended use* constantly enters the picture when we are judging the forms of chairs, doors, tables and other things that obviously have uses, and that •we like best the forms that are fittest for their intended use. But the fact is that similarity of parts is also valued in those very things, even when dissimilar parts would be equally useful. [Hutcheson gives several examples, such as our preference for a chair to have legs that are alike in more ways than merely length. He continues:] Is no man pleased with the shapes of any animals except those he expects to be useful? . . . Is there no beauty to be seen in plants, in flowers, in animals, whose use we don't know? [The footnote concludes with an accusation that Berkeley has misunderstood something Aristotle said, treating as part of the case against the idea of *moral sense* something that is really part of the case *for* it.]