

peculiar, to graphic novels, I would suggest that the listing of several authors' names on the cover of such a volume does not qualify as *prima facie* evidence for co-authorship of the work, but that this does not harm the case of nongraphic novels.

9. Interestingly, the King/Martin/Simmons collection was first published in hardcover in 1988 as *Night Visions 5* (ed. Douglas E. Winter [Arlington Heights: Dark Harvest, 1988]) with the cover reading, "Edited by Douglas E. Winter" and "All original stories by . . . Stephen King/Dan Simmons/George R. R. Martin."

10. Though, as per note 8 above, it may be that Winter is the volume's sole author—determining this, presumably, would depend on knowing the particular relationship between Winter, King, Martin, and Simmons.

11. Hick, "Authorship, Co-Authorship, and Multiple Authorship," p. 156, n. 36.

12. Hick, "Authorship, Co-Authorship, and Multiple Authorship," p. 153, and Bacharach and Tollefsen, "Co-Authorship, Multiple Authorship, and Posthumous Authorship," respectively.

## Shelley on Hume's Standard of Taste and the Impossibility of Sound Disagreement among the Ideal Critics

### I. INTRODUCTION

James Shelley, in an exciting and useful article, has sought to defend Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" from criticisms by Malcolm Budd, Alan Goldman, and Matthew Kieran to the effect that Hume does not successfully establish the plausibility of his postulated ideal critics agreeing on their judgments of taste.<sup>1</sup> If correct, such criticisms would be most serious since, at the heart of Hume's aesthetic theory, there is a defense of aesthetic objectivism based on positing a standard of taste that consists in the joint verdict of the ideal critics or true judges, namely, those with a maximal capacity to judge the beauty or artistic value of works of art. Indeed, a great deal of the interest prompted by Hume's essay on taste is due to its being one of the most promising defenses of aesthetic objectivism. I understand 'aesthetic objectivism' (sometimes used synonymously with 'aesthetic realism') to refer to positions that, one way or another, defend that aesthetic judgments are right or wrong, or correct or incorrect, where such judgments have intersubjective validity; consequently, aesthetic objectivism opposes expressivism, relativism, and error theory regarding aesthetic judgments. Hence, one can hardly

overestimate the importance of Shelley's vindication of Hume well beyond merely Humean exegetical matters.

Furthermore, and by way of terminological clarification, I take 'aesthetic judgments' to be synonymous with Hume's 'judgments of taste,' where the object of the judgment of taste is the artistic value of works of art, and 'artistic value' is, for Hume, "a species of beauty."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, I will use both terms, 'beauty' and 'artistic value,' interchangeably and unproblematically; moreover, I remain agnostic regarding whether 'artistic value' is equivalent to 'aesthetic value' or something over and above it.

In this brief article, I put forward a constructive emendation of Shelley's defense of Hume's work, which by and large I consider to be right. I first offer a correction to his broader proposal. Then I argue that once Shelley has established his overall strategy for dealing with the criticisms by Budd, Goldman, and Kieran, his proposal takes a wrong turn as he addresses a particular aspect of Budd's criticism of Hume: his response to Budd is inconsistent with his established defense of Hume and he saddles said defense with unnecessary commitments to positions that will limit the appeal of his project.

In what follows, I outline the criticisms and Shelley's answer to them (Section II), then produce a first correction of his stated view (Section III), and, finally, I develop, criticize, and amend Shelley's response to Budd's challenge (Section IV).

### II. CRITICISMS AND SHELLEY'S RESPONSE

The criticisms from Budd, Goldman, and Kieran that Shelley intends to answer boil down roughly to this: despite Hume's characterization of his ideal critics, there is good reason to be skeptical regarding the agreement of the ideal critics in matters of artistic evaluation (pp. 145–146). To be precise, given the diversity and variation in human temperament, upbringing, and experiences, the criticism goes, the prospects for agreement in judgments of taste are far more limited than what Hume recognizes and what aesthetic objectivists require in order to take advantage of Hume's essay to further their cause.

However, Hume readily acknowledges in his essay that psychological differences (owing to the

diversity of characters and ages, what Hume calls matters of “internal frame”) and cultural variations (of a historical or geographical nature, in Hume’s own nomenclature, matters of “external situation”) will color to some extent the pleasure or displeasure that guides the judgments of taste of the ideal critics. Therefore, the criticism aimed at Hume can be thus reformulated: Hume underestimates the extent to which the accepted differences among the ideal critics will prevent them from reaching the required joint verdict and, hence, from establishing a standard of taste.

Shelley’s response consists in establishing a clear demarcation between (1) the ideal critics’ judgments of taste and (2) their preferences, affinities, and proclivities regarding works of art of one kind or another. He contends that, while matters of internal frame and external situation will have an impact on (2), they will leave (1) unscathed, or at least sufficiently untarnished to serve well Hume’s proposal. In Shelley’s own words: “variation in predilections felt does not amount to disagreement in judgments made” (p. 147). Thus, Shelley’s strong claim is that, according to his interpretation, Hume is best read as postulating that the “true judges will *never* disagree” about their judgments of taste (p. 146, my emphasis) and, therefore, “their verdict is *necessarily* joint” (p. 148, my emphasis).

I much prefer Shelley’s formulation of the dichotomy in terms of “predilections” versus “judgments” rather than alternative (but seemingly equivalent) formulations that take “Hume as marking a distinction between merely feeling and judging by feeling” or “simply responding to a work with pleasure or displeasure and judging a work to be beautiful or deformed on the basis of pleasure or displeasure” (p. 146). While, in the context of his article, it is plain what Shelley means in every case, the formulations that I do not favor may be misleading in that they might seem to imply two different modes of engagement with a work of art: (i) one can *just feel* pleasure about a work of art, or (ii) one can *judge* the work of art based on the pleasure derived from engaging with it. I believe that such a reading would be wrong, since it implies that (ii) the judgment of taste requires something beyond (i) the feeling of pleasure or displeasure: an act of judgment. I do not think that this is a fruitful way to read Hume’s proposal, nor does it correspond to the psychological reality of our engagement with works of art,

where we do not put on the judge’s hat to form a judgment regarding the quality of the work that we are experiencing. I suggest that a better option is that matters of preference and inclination only color our pleasure in a work of art to a *certain* extent, an extent that does not trouble our *overall appraisal* of the work of art through the pleasure or displeasure that we feel upon experiencing it. For instance, an ideal critic might be more temperamentally driven toward the sunny delights of *opera buffa* than to the emotionally demanding pleasures of *opera seria*. Nonetheless, such an ideal critic will not fail to recognize a masterpiece in Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* however much she might be more inclined to attend a performance of, say, *L’elisir d’amore* or *Don Pasquale*. Incidentally, this is precisely what in real life we have every reason to expect from leading scholars and critics regarding their judgments and discussions of works of art: that they will rise above their own personal inclinations to yield judgments and explorations that address the true nature of the works of art under consideration. I take this to be perfectly consistent with Shelley’s overall account and argue that it does not require the (i) versus (ii) distinction outlined above.

Shelley’s clear demarcation between judgments about the artistic value of works of art and preferences or affinities for a given genre or author comes with the correct suggestion that what truly matters for Hume’s proposal are evaluative judgments regarding the beauty or artistic value of works of art, as opposed to comparative judgments concerning the relative value of works of art (p. 146). Often such comparative judgments will be unsound or baseless, either because there is no sufficient difference in the quality of the works to establish a preference, or because it is hard to see how one can establish a meaningful comparison given the dissimilar nature of the works being compared.

### III. CORRECTING SHELLEY’S INITIAL PROPOSAL: THE FALLIBILITY OF THE IDEAL CRITICS

An important emendation of the boldest aspect of Shelley’s proposal is in order. As explained, Shelley argues for the *impossibility* of disagreement in judgments of taste among ideal critics (pp. 146, 148). Nonetheless, contra Kieran’s

reading of Hume, Shelley rightly contends that Hume's proposal does not require that *all* ideal critics agree on *all* their judgments of taste (p. 150), since Hume's standard requires "an entire or a *considerable* uniformity of sentiment" among those whose verdict will be listened to.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he notes that absence of disagreement does not imply presence of agreement (p. 148). In this way he can reconcile these two proposed readings of Hume: (A) that ideal critics *never* disagree and (B) that ideal critics do *not always* agree. True: disagreement and agreement can both be avoided if an ideal critic simply does not produce a judgment and draws a blank. However, I find it very hard to accept that such an occurrence would be sufficiently widespread to be relevant for our purposes, particularly among ideal critics, given their prowess for making judgments. Moreover, there is nothing in the letter (or, I submit, spirit) of Hume's essay to allow for such a suggestion.

I propose a more natural reading of Hume, where the admission that agreement among ideal critics will *not always* ensue is followed by the qualification of total absence of disagreement among them. Ideal critics will *on occasion* disagree, because they will on occasion get things wrong, despite being ideal critics. In short, ideal critics are much better than the rest of us, but they are still *fallible*. Hence the importance of a joint verdict rather than individual judgments, where the joint verdict exhibits *considerable*, if not complete, uniformity: the joint verdict serves to minimize the risk of getting the judgment of taste wrong, since it avoids relying on just one or a handful of ideal critics. Conversely, if we were to take the statement that ideal critics never disagree at face value, there would not be any need for a joint verdict since an individual verdict would always point in the right direction; the joint verdict would thus be superfluous.

#### IV. CRITIQUE OF SHELLEY'S ANSWER TO BUDD'S DISSENTING IDEAL CRITIC

As Shelley ostensibly sees it, there is a criticism of Hume's proposal by Budd that resists Shelley's own offered solution up to this point. I believe that Shelley is wrong: he does not require a further development of his established strategy to stave off Budd's challenge. Moreover, I think that

Shelley's move in response to Budd is detrimental to Shelley's wider project: first, it makes it run into an inconsistency, and, second, it limits its appeal by unnecessarily saddling itself with positions in relation to Hume's proposal that many may find unappealing. In what follows, I briefly sketch out Budd's criticism, outline Shelley's answer, and, finally, show why this answer is unneeded and better left unstated.

The key idea from Budd is that it is beyond Hume's resources to deal with a dissenting minority of ideal critics.<sup>4</sup> Budd contends that it is hopeless to argue that the "majority preference is binding on the minority . . . because the response of the majority cannot properly be thought *better* merely in virtue of being experienced by a greater number, and the minority are not *wrong* merely because they are out of step."<sup>5</sup>

Shelley's reaction to this challenge consists in arguing that (a) there is *a sense* in which the outlier critics are not wrong, but (b) in *the relevant sense*, they are indeed wrong. Consequently, Shelley focuses on showing how the distinction between (a) and (b) can save his strategy from Budd's objection. In the first sense, a dissenting minority of ideal critics are not wrong because they are, after all, ideal critics and cannot be wrong in the sense that the rest of us can be (and often are) wrong (p. 151). In Shelley's second sense, they are indeed wrong because all that is involved in being right or wrong is to be or not to be in agreement with the majority of ideal critics. This move has deep philosophical consequences concerning the nature and motivation of Shelley's interpretation of Hume's standard of taste.

At the center of Shelley's strategy there is a *nonhedonic* account of artistic value, that is to say, the *excising of pleasure* from the justification of the value that Hume places on beauty. According to Shelley, while we track beauty and artistic value *through* pleasure, we do not care about beautiful or artistically satisfying objects *because of* the pleasure they afford us. It is rather a *primitive fact* about *human nature* that we are beings such that we care about beauty, where such value is to be established according to "what others—certain others [the ideal critics]—find beautiful" (p. 150).

Furthermore, Shelley's answer to Budd commits him to an interpretation of Hume's essay where the joint verdict is *constitutive* of the standard of taste, and such a joint verdict is understood

as a *majority verdict*: “the property we denominate ‘beauty’ just is that in virtue of which the sentiment of beauty arises in them, the considerable majority of those human beings whose faculty of taste is sound” (p. 151).

Finally, since Shelley concedes that there can be sound or correct judgments by outlier critics, he has to accept *two senses* of correctness in the judgments of taste: an ideal critic can be right qua ideal critic *simpliciter* (in opposition to the average art appreciator) and an ideal critic can be right qua ideal critic whose judgment coincides with that of the majority of ideal critics. The key assumption to enable for such an interpretation of the ideal critics is that Hume does not stipulate a sixth characteristic for the ideal critics, namely, “having sentiments expressive of human nature” (p. 151), where such sentiments are established by the majority verdict, while still allowing a minority of outlier critics to get their judgments right “from a nonanthropocentric point of view” (p. 151), that is, right in every sense except that these judgments do not coincide with those of the majority of critics.

It seems uncontroversial that Shelley’s defense of Hume’s essay would have a much wider and more ecumenical appeal if it did not require embracing the positions described in the preceding paragraphs.

First and foremost, while it is beyond the scope of this article to enter the debate between those who favor a hedonic account of artistic value and those who favor (as Shelley does) an alternative, there is no doubt that the hedonic option will appeal to many and can marshal several powerful arguments in its favor.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, robust objections can be put forward against every other position developed by Shelley’s defense of Hume from Budd. For instance, rather than postulating that Hume would admit nonanthropocentric ideal critics, it seems a certainly plausible (and possibly a much more natural) reading of Hume that he thought of having sentiments expressive of human nature as an implicit characteristic of his ideal critics, too obvious to need stating. There is certainly nothing in his essay to suggest a nonanthropocentric reading, nor is there any textual backing for the idea that there are two ways of getting the judgments right: qua nonanthropocentric ideal critic and qua anthropocentric ideal critic.

Finally, that the converging verdict of a majority of ideal critics *constitutes* or *defines* what is and is not beautiful will also have its detractors, where this disagreement does not need to be motivated by a rejection of other positions in Shelley’s strategy.<sup>7</sup>

I maintain that Shelley not only does not need to saddle his defense of Hume with the aforementioned theoretical commitments, but that he should discard his response to Budd because of its inconsistency. The striking slogan that sums up the full force of Shelley’s views in the article under scrutiny is that “Hume’s considered view . . . is that true judges will *never* disagree” (p. 146, my emphasis). Thus, accepting on behalf of Hume the notion that there can be dissenting ideal critics (as Budd suggests) seems simply incoherent. Properly qualified, I believe that the idea that ideal critics never disagree is right, where the qualification is one that allows for unproblematic differences at the level of preferences, on the one hand, and downplays the “never” a notch or two, admitting that even ideal critics can get things wrong on occasion, on the other hand. No amount of qualification, however, will make it possible for two ideal critics to disagree if they both make *in any sense* the right judgment, which is what Budd’s challenge amounts to and which is what Shelley concedes in addressing said challenge. I suggest that Shelley should neatly head off Budd’s challenge by pointing out that the very notion of an *outlier* ideal critic who is, nonetheless, in any sense making a *correct* or *sound* judgment is one that his own proposal rules out. The only discrepancies that Shelley’s interpretation of Hume admits among ideal critics making a correct judgment of taste are blameless ones, resulting in differences at the level of preferences and affinities, but not precluding the convergent judgment of taste. In short, ideal critics can disagree among themselves *on occasion* because they are fallible, but when it happens, it means that someone has got it wrong *in every sense*.

Importantly, while I have sought to extricate a number of positions from Shelley’s wider proposal, those positions can still be motivated independently of Shelley’s defense of Hume and they can be held while espousing said defense. Hence, my aim has been to make Shelley’s views compatible with as many theoretical commitments as possible.

## V. CONCLUSION

Shelley's defense of Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" against the combined challenges of Budd, Goldman, and Kieran is a welcome and fertile one. At its core there is a distinction between intersubjectively valid judgments about artistic value, on the one hand, and personal proclivities in matters of art, on the other. I believe that this distinction is true to the letter and, certainly, the spirit of Hume's text. Moreover, this way of thinking is helpful for those who wish to defend aesthetic objectivism. In this note, I have tried to constructively emendate Shelley's proposal with a view to making its appeal wider than it was when originally developed: one can embrace Shelley's proposal without renouncing a hedonic motivation for our interest in artistic value, among other theoretical positions, and while accepting that ideal critics are fallible and, hence, will disagree on occasion. However, ideal critics will never disagree when their judgments are sound.<sup>8</sup>

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1. James Shelley, "Hume and the Joint Verdict of True Judges," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71 (2013): 145–153. Unless otherwise stated, references are to this article. Shelley engages with the following texts: Malcolm Budd, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry, and Music* (London: Penguin, 1995); Alan H. Goldman, *Aesthetic Value* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Matthew Kieran, *Revealing Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

2. Budd, *Values of Art*, p. 16.

3. David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Selected Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 133–154, at p. 140, my emphasis.

4. Budd, *Values of Art*, pp. 20–21.

5. Budd, *Values of Art*, p. 21.

6. See, for instance, Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, ed. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Cornell University Press, 1982); Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cornell University Press, 1996); and Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). For defenses of the hedonic and nonhedonic interpretations in the Humean framework, see, respectively, Jerrold Levinson, "Hume's Standard of Taste: The Real Problem," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 227–238, reprinted in his *Contemplating*

*Art: Essays in Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 366–385; and James Shelley, "Hume and the Value of the Beautiful," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51 (2011): 213–222.

7. For an alternative interpretation to the constitutive one, see the evidential interpretation in Anthony Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued* (Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 64–86. Jerrold Levinson supports the evidential reading in "Hume's Standard of Taste," p. 228.

8. I am grateful to Anthony Savile and an anonymous referee for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

### When True Judges Differ: Reply to Durà-Vilà

I thank Víctor Durà-Vilà for his thoughtful response to my paper.<sup>1</sup> I take it as a very good sign that he finds my defense of Hume's aesthetic objectivism to be on the right track and indeed to be worth saving in spite of its deficiencies. While I am sure that my defense has its deficiencies, I am not sure that it has the ones Durà-Vilà seems to find. I explain why I am hesitant to accept his constructive emendation in what follows.

Durà-Vilà and I disagree over what I take to be a deep objection to Hume's account of the standard of taste. The objection owes to Malcolm Budd, who articulates it by means of a comparison between Hume's standard of beauty and Mill's standard of the intrinsic value of pleasures. In both cases, according to Budd,

the standard is set by the preferences of individuals who satisfy a certain condition; satisfaction of this condition does not ensure identity of preference; the suggestion that majority preference is binding on the minority lacks any force, because the response of the majority cannot properly be thought *better* merely in virtue of being experienced by a greater number, and the minority are not *wrong* merely because they are out of step.<sup>2</sup>

I argue, in the final section of my article, that Budd's objection fails because it overlooks two differences between Mill's standard and Hume's.<sup>3</sup> One difference is that Mill's is a standard of pleasure whereas Hume's is not. Hume does not hold that the value of a beautiful work consists in the pleasure it gives, but rather that the pleasure it gives is the means by which we judge the value of its beauty. The other difference is that Mill's standard is species neutral whereas Hume's is anthropocentric. The quality we denominate