TREATISE I:

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING BEAUTY, ORDER, HARMONY, DESIGN

Section I:

Concerning some Powers of Perception, distinct from what is generally understood by Sensation.

To make the following observations understood, it may be necessary to premise some definitions, and observations, either universally acknowledged, or sufficiently proved by many writers both ancient and modern, concerning our perceptions called *sensations*, and the actions of the mind consequent upon them.

Sensation

I. Those ideas which are raised in the mind upon the presence of external objects, and their acting upon our bodies, are called *sensations*. We find that the mind in such cases is passive, and has not power directly to prevent the perception or idea, or to vary it at its reception, as long as we continue our bodies in a state fit to be acted upon by the external object.

Different senses

II. When two perceptions are entirely different from each other, or agree in nothing but the general idea of sensation, we call the powers of receiving those different perceptions different *senses*. Thus seeing and hearing denote the different powers of receiving the ideas of colours and sounds. And although colours have [great][1] differences among themselves, as also have sounds, yet there is a greater agreement among the most opposite colours, than between any colour and a sound. Hence we call all colours perceptions of the same sense. All the several senses seem to have their distinct organs, except *feeling*, which is in some degree diffused over

[1] "vast" – 1st and 2nd eds.

the whole body.

Mind, how active

III. The mind has a power of *compounding* ideas which were received separately; of *comparing* [objects] [2] by means of the ideas, and of observing their *relations* and *proportions*; of *enlarging* and *diminishing* its ideas at pleasure, or in any certain *ratio* or degree; and of considering *separately* each of the simple ideas, which might perhaps have been impressed jointly in the sensation. This last operation we commonly call *abstraction.*

Substances

IV. The ideas of [corporeal substances] [3] are compounded of the various simple ideas jointly impressed when they presented themselves to our senses. We define substances only by enumerating these sensible ideas; and such definitions may raise [a clear enough idea] [4] of the substance in the mind of one who never immediately perceived the substance, provided he has separately received by his senses all the simple ideas which are in the composition of the complex one of the substance defined. [But if there be any simple ideas which he has not received, or if he wants any of the senses necessary for the perception of them, no definition can raise any simple idea which has not been before perceived by the senses.] [5]

Education. Instruction

V. Hence it follows that when instruction, education, or prejudice of any kind raise any desire or aversion toward an object, this desire or aversion must be founded upon an opinion of some perfection, or some deficiency in those qualities for perception of which we have the proper senses. Thus if beauty be desired by one who has not the sense of sight, the desire must be raised by some apprehended regularity of figure, sweetness of voice, smoothness, or softness, or some other quality perceivable by the other senses, without relation to the ideas of colour.

Pleasure, Pain

[VI. Many of our sensitive perceptions are pleasant, and many painful, immediately, and that without any knowledge of the cause of this pleasure or pain, or how the objects

[2] "their objects" – 1st and 2nd eds.

[3] "substances" – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd eds.

[4] "an idea clear enough" – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd eds.

[5] "But if he has not received any of these ideas, or wants the senses necessary for the perception of them, no definition can ever raise in him any idea of that sense in which he is deficient" – 1st ed.

excite it, or are the occasions of it, or without seeing to what farther advantage or detriment the use of such objects might tend. Nor would the most accurate knowledge of these things vary either the pleasure or pain of the perception, however it might give a rational pleasure distinct from the sensible; or might raise a distinct joy from a prospect of farther advantage in the object, or aversion from an apprehension of evil.] [6]

Different ideas

VII. The [simple] [7] ideas raised in different persons by the same object are probably [some way] [8] different when they disagree in their approbation or dislike, and in the same person when his fancy at one time differs from what it was at another. This will appear from reflecting on those objects to which we have now an aversion, though they were formerly agreeable. And we shall generally find that there is some accidental conjunction of a disagreeable idea which always recurs with the object, as in those wines [to which men acquire an aversion] [9] after they have taken them in an emetic preparation, [we] [10] are conscious that the idea is altered from what it was when that wine was agreeable, by the conjunction of the ideas of loathing and sickness of the stomach. The like change of idea may be insensibly made by the change of our bodies as we advance in years, [or when we are accustomed to any object,] [11] which may occasion an indifference toward meats we were fond of in our childhood, [and may make some objects cease to raise the disagreeable ideas which they excited upon our first use of them. Many of our simple perceptions are disagreeable only through the too great intenseness of the quality: thus moderate light is agreeable, very strong light may be painful; moderate bitter may be pleasant, a higher degree may be offensive. A change in our organs will necessarily occasion a change in the intenseness of the perception at least, nay sometimes will occasion a quite contrary perception: thus a warm hand shall feel that water cold which a cold hand shall feel warm.] [12]

[6] Passage in brackets occupied the position of article V in 1st ed.
[7] Word in brackets added in 2nd ed.
[8] Words in brackets added in 2nd ed.
[9] "which men acquire an aversion to" – 1st ed.
[10] "In this case we" – 1st and 2nd eds.
[11] Passage in brackets added in 2nd ed.
[12] Passage in brackets added in 2nd ed.

We shall not find it perhaps so easy to account for the diversity of fancy [about more complex ideas of objects, (including many) [13] in which we regard many ideas of different senses at once, as (some) [14] perceptions of those called *primary qualities*, and some *secondary*, as explained by Mr. Locke: for instance, in the different fancies about architecture, gardening, dress. Of the two former, we shall offer something in Sect. VI. As to dress, we may generally account for the diversity of fancies from a like conjunction of ideas. Thus] [15] if either from anything in nature, or from the opinion of our country or acquaintance, the fancying of glaring colours be looked upon as an evidence of levity, or of any other evil quality of mind, or if any colour or fashion be commonly used by rustics, or by men of any disagreeable profession, employment, or temper, these additional ideas may recur constantly with that of the colour or fashion, and cause a constant dislike to them in those who join the additional ideas, although the colour or form be no way disagreeable of themselves, and actually do please others who join no such ideas to them. But there [appears no] [16] ground to believe such a diversity in human minds, as that the same simple idea or perception should give pleasure to one and pain to another, or to the same person at different times, not to say that it seems a contradiction that the same simple idea should do so.

Complex ideas

VIII. The only pleasure of sense which [many] [17] philosophers seem to consider is that which accompanies the simple ideas of sensation. But there are [far] [18] greater pleasures in those complex ideas of objects, which obtain the names of *beautiful, regular, harmonious*. Thus every one acknowledges he is more delighted with a fine face, a just picture, than with the view of any one colour, were it as strong and lively as possible; and more pleased with a prospect of the sun arising among settled clouds, and colouring their edges with a starry hemisphere, a fine landscape, a regular

[13] Words in parentheses added in 4th ed.
[14] "in some" – 2nd and 3rd eds.
[15] "in our dress, and some other affairs; and yet this may arise from a like accidental conjunction of ideas: as for instance" – 1st ed.
[16] "does not seem to be any" – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd eds.
[17] "our" – 1st and 2nd eds.
[18] "vastly" – 1st and 2nd eds.

building, than with a clear blue sky, a smooth sea, or a large open plain, not diversified by woods, hills, waters, buildings. And yet even these latter appearances are not quite simple. So in music, the pleasure of fine composition is incomparably greater than that of any one note, how sweet, full, or swelling soever.

Beauty *Harmony*

IX. Let it be observed that in the following papers the word *beauty* is taken for *the idea raised in us,* and a *sense* of beauty for *our power of receiving this idea. Harmony* also denotes *our pleasant ideas arising from composition of sounds,* and a *good ear* (as it is generally taken) a *power of perceiving this pleasure.* In the following sections, an attempt is made to discover what is the immediate occasion of these pleasant ideas, or what real quality in the objects ordinarily excites them.

Internal sense

X. It is of no consequence whether we call these ideas of beauty and harmony perceptions of the external senses of seeing and hearing, or not. I should rather choose to call our power of perceiving these ideas an *internal sense,* were it only for the convenience of distinguishing them from other sensations of seeing and hearing which men may have without perception of beauty and harmony. It is plain from experience that many men have in the common meaning the senses of seeing and hearing perfect enough. They perceive all the *simple ideas* separately, and have their pleasures; they distinguish them from each other, such as one colour from another, either quite different, or the stronger or fainter of the same colour, [when they are placed beside each other, although they may often confound their names when they occur apart from each other, as some do the names of green and blue.] [19] They can tell in separate notes, the higher, lower, sharper or flatter, when separately sounded; in figures they discern the length, breadth, wideness of each line, surface, angle; and may be as capable of hearing and seeing at great distances as any men whatsoever. And yet perhaps they shall find no pleasure in musical compositions, in painting, architecture, natural landscape, or but a very weak one in comparison of what others enjoy from the same objects. This greater capacity of receiving such pleasant

[19] Passage in brackets added in 2nd ed.

ideas we commonly call a *fine genius* or *taste*. In music we seem universally to acknowledge something like a distinct sense from the external one of hearing, and call it a *good ear*; and the like distinction we should probably acknowledge in other [objects,] [20] had we also got distinct names to denote these *powers* of perception by.

Different from external

XI. [We generally imagine the brute animals endowed with the same sort of powers of perception as our external senses, and having sometimes greater acuteness in them; but we conceive few or none of them with any of these sublimer powers of perception here called *internal senses*, or at least if some of them have them, it is in a degree much inferior to ours.] [21]

There will appear another reason perhaps hereafter for calling this power of perceiving the ideas of beauty an *internal sense*, from this, that in some other affairs where our external senses are not much concerned, we discern a sort of beauty, very like, in many respects, to that observed in sensible objects, and accompanied with like pleasure. Such is that beauty perceived in theorems, or universal truths, in general causes, and in some extensive principles of action.

XII. [Let one consider, first, that 'tis probable a being may have the full power of external sensation, which we enjoy, so as to perceive each colour, line, surface, as we do; yet, without the power of *comparing*, or of discerning the similitudes of proportions. Again, it might discern these also, and yet have no pleasure or delight accompanying these perceptions. The bare idea of the form is something separable from pleasure, as may appear from the different *tastes* of men about the beauty of forms, where we don't imagine that they differ in any ideas, either of the primary or secondary qualities. *Similitude, proportion, analogy* or *equality* of proportion are objects of the understanding, and must be actually known before we know the natural causes of our pleasure. But pleasure perhaps is not necessarily connected with perception of them, and may be felt where the proportion is not known or attended to, and may not be felt where the proportion is observed.][22] Since then there are

[20] "affairs" – 1st ed.

[21] Passage in brackets added in 4th ed.

[22] "Let everyone here consider how different we must suppose the perception

such different powers of perception, where what are commonly called *external* senses are the same, since the most accurate knowledge of what the external senses discover [may often] [23] not give the pleasure of beauty or harmony which yet one of a good taste will enjoy at once without much knowledge, we may justly use another name for these higher and more delightful perceptions of beauty and harmony, and call the *power* of receiving such impressions an *internal sense*. The difference of the perceptions seems sufficient to vindicate the use of a different name, [especially when we are told in what meaning the word is applied.] [24]

Its pleasures necessary and immediate

This superior power of perception is justly called a *sense* because of its affinity to the other senses in this, that the pleasure does not arise from any *knowledge* of principles, proportions, causes, or of the usefulness of the object, but strikes us at first with the idea of beauty. Nor does the most accurate knowledge increase this pleasure of beauty, however it may superadd a distinct rational pleasure from prospects of advantage, or from the increase of knowledge.*

XIII. And farther, the ideas of beauty and harmony, like other sensible ideas, are *necessarily* pleasant to us, as well as immediately so. Neither can any resolution of our own, nor any prospect of advantage or disadvantage, vary the beauty or deformity of an object. For as in the external sensations, no view of interest will make an object grateful, nor [view

to be with which a poet is transported upon the prospect of any of those objects of natural beauty which ravish us even in his description, from that cold lifeless conception which we imagine [in] a dull critic, or one of the *virtuosi*, without what we call a *fine taste*. This latter class of men may have greater perfection in that knowledge which is derived from external sensation. They can tell 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 is often very ignorant. And yet the poet shall have a much more delightful perception of the whole, and not only the poet but any man of a fine taste. Our external senses may, by measuring, teach us all the proportions of architecture to the tenth of an inch, and the situation of every muscle in the human body; and a good memory may retain these. And yet there is still something farther necessary, not only to make [a man a] complete master in architecture, painting, or statuary, but even a tolerable judge in these works, or [capable of receiving] the highest pleasure in contemplating them" – 2nd and 3rd eds. The words in brackets have alternate readings in the first edition which are as follows: "to be in"; "a"; "to receive."

[23] "often does" – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd eds.

[24] Passage in brackets added in 2nd ed.

* See above, Article VI.

of][25] detriment distinct from immediate pain in the perception, make it disagreeable to the sense. So propose the whole world as a reward, or threaten the greatest evil, to make us approve a deformed object, or disapprove a beautiful one: dissimulation may be procured by rewards or threatenings, or we may in external conduct abstain from any pursuit of the beautiful, and pursue the deformed, but our *sentiments* of the forms, and our *perceptions*, would continue invariably the same.

This sense antecedent to, and distinct from prospects of interest

XIV. Hence it plainly appears that some objects are *immediately* the occasions of this pleasure of beauty, and that we have senses fitted for perceiving it, and that it is distinct from that *joy* which arises upon prospect of advantage. Nay, do not we often see convenience and use neglected to obtain beauty, without any other prospect of advantage in the beautiful form than the suggesting the pleasant ideas of beauty? Now this shows us that however we may pursue beautiful objects from self-love, with a view to obtain the pleasures of beauty, as in architecture, gardening, and many other affairs, yet there must be a *sense* of beauty, antecedent to prospects [even of][26] this advantage, without which sense these objects would not be thus advantageous, nor excite in us this pleasure which constitutes them advantageous. Our sense of beauty from objects, by which they are constituted good to us, is very distinct from our desire of them when they are thus constituted. Our desire of beauty may be counter-balanced by rewards of threatenings, but never our *sense* of it, even as fear of death [may make us][27] desire a bitter potion, or neglect those meats which the sense of taste would recommend as pleasant, [but cannot][28] make that potion agreeable to the *sense*, or meat disagreeable to it, which was not so antecedently to this prospect. [The same holds true of][29] the sense of beauty and harmony; that the pursuit of such objects is frequently neglected, from prospects of advantage, aversion to labour, or any other motive of [interest][30] does not prove that we

[25] Words in brackets added in 2nd ed.
[26] "of even" – 1st ed.
[27] "or love of life may make us choose and" – 1st and 2nd eds.
[28] "and yet no prospect of advantage, or fear of evil, can" – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd eds.
[29] "Just in the same manner as to" – 1st and 2nd eds.
[30] "self-love" – 1st and 2nd eds.

have no *sense* of beauty, but only that our desire of it may be counter-balanced by a stronger desire. [So gold outweighing silver is never adduced as proof that the latter is void of gravity.] [31]

XV. Had we no such sense of beauty and harmony, houses, gardens, dress, equipage might have been recommended to us as convenient, fruitful, warm, easy, but never as *beautiful*. [And in faces I see nothing which could please us but liveliness of colour and smoothness of surface.] [32] And yet nothing is more certain than that all these objects are recommended under quite different views on many occasions. ['Tis true, what chiefly pleases in the countenance are the indications of moral dispositions; and yet, were we by the longest acquaintance fully convinced of the best moral dispositions in any person, with that countenance we now think deformed, this would never hinder our immediate dislike of the form, or our liking other forms more.] [33] [And custom, education, or example could never] [34] give us perceptions distinct from those of the senses which we had the use of before, or recommend objects under another conception than grateful to * them. But of the influence of custom, education, example, upon the sense of beauty, we shall treat below.**

Beauty original or comparative

XVI. Beauty [in corporeal forms] [35] is either *original* or *comparative*; or, if any like the terms better, *absolute* or *relative*. Only let it be [observed] [36] that by absolute or original beauty is not understood any quality supposed to be in the object [which] [37] should of itself be beautiful, without relation to any mind which perceives it. For beauty, like other names of sensible ideas, properly denotes the *perception* of some mind; so *cold*, [*hot*,] [38] *sweet*, *bitter*, denote the sensations in our minds, to which perhaps there is no resemblance in the objects which excite these ideas in us,

[31] Passage in brackets deleted in 3rd and 4th eds.
[32] Passage in brackets deleted in 4th ed.
[33] Passage in brackets added in 4th ed.
[34] "And no custom, education, or example could ever" – 1st and 2nd eds.
* See Article VI.
** Section VII.
[35] Words in brackets added in 4th ed.
[36] "noted" – 1st ed.
[37] "that" – 1st ed.
[38] "*heat*" – 1st ed.

however we generally imagine [otherwise.][39] The ideas of beauty and harmony, being excited upon our perception of some primary quality, and having relation to figure and time, may indeed have a nearer resemblance to objects than these sensations, which seem not so much any pictures of objects as modifications of the perceiving mind; and yet, were there no mind with a sense of beauty to contemplate objects, I see not how they could be called beautiful. We therefore by * [40] absolute beauty understand only that beauty which we perceive in objects without comparison to anything external, of which the object is supposed an imitation or picture, such as that beauty perceived from the works of nature, artificial forms, [figures].[41] Comparative or relative beauty is that which we perceive in objects commonly considered as *imitations* or *resemblances* of something else. These two kinds of beauty employ the three following sections.

[39] "that there is something in the object just like our perception" – 1st and 2nd eds.

* This division of beauty is taken from the different foundations of pleasure [to] our sense of it, rather than from the objects themselves; for most of the following instances of relative beauty have also absolute beauty, and many of the instances of absolute beauty have also relative beauty in some respect or other. But we may distinctly consider these two fountains of pleasure, uniformity in the object itself, and resemblance to some original.

[40] Bracketed word in footnote reads "as to" in 1st ed.

[41] "figures, theorems" – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd eds.