

## **AESTHETIC TASTE: ON THE HISTORY OF THE ISSUE**

**Svetlana Arzumanyan**

PhD in Philosophy  
Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of NAS RA  
RA, Yerevan, M. Bagramyan 24/6  
Email: s.arzumanyan@inbox.ru  
ORCID: 0009-0002-9617-869X

The article has been delivered on 03.10.2024, reviewed on 12.02.2024, accepted for publication on 25.04.2024  
DOI: 10.53548/0320-8117-2024.1-127

### **Abstract**

Taste is one of the most important categories of aesthetics, an integral manifestation of aesthetic consciousness, by means of which one can determine the level of not only aesthetic, but also the general development of the individual. Taste can be compared with a kind of a "touchstone", with the help of which the criteria of aesthetic evaluation are found to correspond to certain norms and principles that exist in a particular space-time area, direct a person to the aesthetic organization of their environment, create artistic works, rules of conduct and so on. The result of the activity of aesthetic taste is the emerging feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which is predominantly characterized by disinterestedness. Having become the most important research problem during the Enlightenment, it has retained its significance today.

**Key words** – aesthetic taste, aesthetic consciousness, sensibility, normativity, subjectivity, judgments, culture.

### **Introduction**

It is difficult to imagine the formation of a person as a rational being without the formation and consistent expansion of their aesthetic experience, the most important manifestation of which is aesthetic taste. It is obvious that each new era in the development of mankind contributed to the enrichment of its aesthetic experience. From this point of view, any era can be distinguished, including, for example, the twentieth century, in which, despite the historical cataclysms that claimed millions of lives, there was a process of expanding the boundaries of the aesthetic, covering the entire sphere of human life, and most actively manifested in aestheticization of daily existence. The expansion of the sphere of aesthetic experience also implied an increased interest in the categories of aesthetics - the beautiful, the sublime, and so forth. However, in accordance with the serious transformations taking place in the aesthetic consciousness of a European since the mid nineteenth century, the attitude towards these

categories has also changed and has received a different sound in a new context. Thus, the category of beauty, which, since the creation of the first mythological texts, has acted as the main criterion for the aesthetic evaluation of art and the reality surrounding a person has receded into the background. Moreover, as Umberto Eco, a well-known Italian scholar and writer, figuratively put it, "today everyone (including the townsfolk who should be amazed and indignant) recognizes as "beautiful" (artistically) those works that horrified their parents. The avant-garde ugly is now the new model of beauty; they created a new market"<sup>1</sup>. Such a serious transformation of the consciousness of a modern person, which made it possible to replace the beautiful with the ugly, cannot but arouse interest in the mechanisms of action of "good" taste. The role of the latter, if we follow the tradition formed in the classical aesthetics, would be precisely to prevent such a replacement, to exclude the superiority of "bad" taste.

### **The Judgment of Taste in the Light of the Relative Freedom of the Individual**

Taste as a very significant aesthetic category is considered the most important characteristic of a person, expressing the level of his/her cultural development. Individual characteristics of taste depend on the national identity of the person, on the influence of the geographical environment, on their psychophysiological characteristics, temperament, as well as age, life circumstances, and so on. Taste appears as a special mechanism of human spiritual activity, which provides the possibility of creative exploration of the world, and is a form of free evaluation of what is perceived. Of course, this freedom has always been relative. After all, the aesthetic taste of the individual was formed in a certain space-time range, in the conditions of a certain social environment, in which the taste preferences of the social group with which the person was somehow connected, played an essential role. This means that the originality and uniqueness of the personality does not exclude the possibility of embodying in it some common, group ideals. Let us also remember that in the field of art, certain art pieces were singled out that, as if overcoming the spatial and temporal limits that restricted them, acquired the status of unsurpassed universal values – masterpieces, having a serious impact on the formation of the aesthetic taste of the individual for many centuries. Therefore, if two centuries ago it was impossible to assert the global nature of such influence, today it is more than obvious. The birth and active development of technological forms of art, the emergence of various means of its mass dissemination, the formation of the phenomenon of "mass culture", and development of the Internet – these are the main factors that led

---

<sup>1</sup> Эко 2008, 380.

---

to a change in the ratio of personal choice and the impact of non-personal, social factors on this choice.

Unfortunately, the personal aspect, which is of great importance for aesthetic taste, has lost its former significance today and, to a greater extent than before, has become dependent on the influence of external factors, which in recent decades have not always carried a positive charge. It must be admitted that, being strongly influenced by the stereotypes of "mass culture" and the latest information technologies, the personal component of taste only in rare cases retains its originality. The culture of postmodernism, aimed at creating simulacra, has greatly contributed to the deepening of this process. By deconstructing the cultural "texts", it undermined existing value systems. Mixing artistic styles, striving to unite them, to form a kind of "mix" that has an eclectic character, it tried to erase the boundaries between "high" and "mass" cultures. Moreover, everyday life itself was considered through the prism of the artistic world, from the point of view of identifying common features between ordinary and artistic cultures, in order to level their differences. Naturally, the establishment of new guidelines in the dominant culture should have led to a change in the taste of the individual.

The aesthetic taste of modern man will pass through new "tests" even if the principles of altermodernism in art are approved. We mean that proclaiming the death of postmodernism, the concept of altermodernity (2009) welcomes the birth of a new modernity, perceiving it simultaneously in economic, political and cultural aspects<sup>2</sup>. Culture is understood as a hypertext formed from various interacting cultural phenomena that were not previously taken into account. According to this concept, the globalized state of culture is the launching pad from which the modern artist begins their creative path. They are a nomad, an eternal wanderer who has abandoned their roots. N. Bourriaud believes that humanity should understand that in a state of globalization, it does not need "roots". Meanwhile, it is obvious that the taste of an artist who frees themselves from the influence of their own cultures and national identity, and adapts to creativity in a global context, must acquire universal qualities. Only in this case they will be able to work with the phenomena of world culture surrounding him. But such universalization, unfortunately, means a clear rejection of originality and identity. The course taken towards the further unification of culture, in our opinion, will lead to uniformity in art, thereby preventing the formation and development of the aesthetic taste of both the artist themselves and the consumer of their work.

---

<sup>2</sup> The author of the concept of altermodernism is the French art critic, author of various curatorial projects and scholarly works, Nicolas Bourriaud (Bourriaud 2015, 305-321).

Of course, in the light of such significant changes, when aesthetic taste itself has undergone significant modifications, the question arises about the degree of effectiveness of applying the principles of classical aesthetics to understand and explain it. It is necessary to decide whether to consider them obsolete and not able to adequately represent the special manifestations of taste in our time, or whether they can be taken as a basis. Indeed, in connection with the changes that have taken place, the problem of aesthetic taste, like almost all the main problems and concepts of classical aesthetics, has faded into the background, giving way to new ones. However, as it became obvious, it turned out to be impossible to completely abandon the already established concepts. On the contrary, in our opinion, a truly scholarly approach should rely on the experience gained in classical aesthetics, clarifying and enriching it as much as possible.

### **On the Process of Formation of Aesthetic Consciousness**

The fact that a person, from the first steps of their formation, mastering their environment, not only adapted to it, but also transformed it, is evidenced by the first manifestations of their objective activity, discovered already in the Late Paleolithic era. It is striking that the most ancient artifacts found unequivocally indicate that this substantive activity was not limited to the pursuit of practical goals. Surprisingly, it also contained something that went beyond the limits of pure practical interest, approaching what would be called "aesthetic" only millennia later. The point is that already the tools of labor of primitive man were "decorated" with various marks – rhythmically arranged pits and crosses, leaving the impression of an ornament, moreover, painted with paint (ocher). Furthermore, the Late Paleolithic was the time for the creation of magnificent examples of monochrome and polychrome cave paintings, various rock carvings and plastic samples, the creation of the first "musical instruments" and the conduct of "theatrical performances". It is possible that they were associated with the emerging rudiments of religious ideas, had a magical and symbolic meaning, but it is also undoubted that these ancient examples of human activity also contained artistic and aesthetic value. They corresponded to such characteristics as harmony, rhythm, proportionality, were an expression of some kind of emotion, thereby testifying to the active manifestation of the activity of aesthetic consciousness already in such an early period of the formation of humankind. It is no coincidence that researchers tried to understand what forces existing within or outside a person forced him to spend time and additional physical strength to create something that did not bring him immediate practical benefit.

Since ancient times, the reason for this was primarily sought in the influence of divine forces. Another point of view, formed much later, proceeded from the assumption that a person intuitively felt, and at the level of conscious-

ness understood the importance of this activity, the purpose of which was to reflect the reality surrounding them, allowing them to know not only the latter, but also themselves, while thus experiencing pleasure already from the very process of cognition that Aristotle wrote about<sup>3</sup>. It is possible that a significant factor contributing to a person's desire for creativity was a conscious (or perhaps unconscious) need to objectify one's internal energy, leading to liberation from mental tension, again contributing to the birth of a sense of pleasure. In our opinion, it could also be important that the creation of something new, allowed a person to stand out from the environment, feeling their superiority over others and realizing that "not everyone" can do this, that such a "skill" is not within everyone's power. All these reasons that explain the desire of a person for creative self-expression, pursued some goal that differs from a purely practical one. This feature of aesthetic activity was most accurately characterized by I. Kant, who defined beauty, to which a person always strives, as a form of the expediency of an object, perceived in it without any idea of the purpose. He notes: "Beauty is an object's form of purposiveness insofar as it is perceived in the object without the presentation of purpose"<sup>4</sup>. This is how the developed aesthetic consciousness functions, relating to the object of its perception from the positions of disinterest and disinterestedness, the most important mechanism of activity of which is aesthetic taste.

So, the formation of aesthetic consciousness is the result of a long process of the formation of humankind, associated with its ability to create cultural values that act as signs that are carriers of information that is important to it.

Aesthetic consciousness has a complex structure, manifesting itself both at the sensual and rational levels. The sensory level is primarily represented by aesthetic emotions, feelings and experiences that arise as a result of aesthetic perception. The rational level is revealed through aesthetic categories and para-categories, judgments, concepts, theories, norms, principles and the ideal. The special role of aesthetic taste, which is an integral element of aesthetic consciousness, is that it plays the role of a link between the sensual and rational levels of this consciousness.

### **On the Question of the Nature of Aesthetic Taste: from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century**

Aesthetic taste is one of the important categories of aesthetics. As a quality inherent only to humans, taste is defined and understood as the ability to distinguish from between the phenomena of beauty and ugliness in the surrounding

---

<sup>3</sup> Аристотель 1957, 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Kant 1987, 90.

reality (natural and artificial), including art, to apply "norms of beauty" in all spheres of one's life. Its peculiarity is manifested in the ability of a person to look at the result of their activity not only from a practical point of view, but to notice something that has a purely spiritual nature in it, defined as beautiful, sublime, harmonious, delivering selfless spiritual pleasure, while not ignoring what is pleasing to sight and hearing. The genetic basis of aesthetic taste is aesthetic feeling. It is on its basis that the ability of aesthetic judgment is formed, because taste is the evaluating ability of the subject, revealing the specific value of the object to which the subject's attention is directed. According to the J. Vartanova, "on the one hand, this is the social ability of a meaningful perception of reality and art, and on the other hand, based on sensuality, the ability to evaluate the perceived emotionally, in accordance with already formed ideas about the beautiful and the ugly"<sup>5</sup>.

Aesthetic taste is an indicator of the level of human development, the most important characteristic of a harmoniously developed personality, the formation of which was one of the tasks of those eras for which a person was given importance. This is, first of all, ancient Greece, the Renaissance and the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with its enlightening ideas and optimistic theses, and the belief that the body, mind and soul should and can be harmoniously developed. These are also some of the concepts of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, that placed great hope on genuine art as an exponent of the highest ideals and the refined taste of the creator, capable of becoming a means of forming a holistic and free personality.

It must be admitted that taste is a concept difficult to verbalize, its nuances are almost impossible to accurately convey via of specific words-concepts. But it is one of the very actively functioning phenomena, that orients a person to certain cultural patterns that play an important role in their formation. By the way, it is surprising that not one of the Greek philosophers who turned to aesthetic problems and paid much attention to the problem of beauty and art, uses the term "taste". Trying to understand the reason for such "indifference" to the problem of taste, we assume that, firstly, the life of the ancient Greeks was so closely connected with the sphere of beauty, organically fitting into all spheres of their life, that there was no need to specifically highlight any special physiological or a spiritual mechanism that reveals the correspondence or non-correspondence of any object or phenomenon to the beautiful. Secondly, such concepts as measure, proportionality of parts, symmetry, and so forth, identified with the help of mathematical calculations, had an objective status and unconditional significance. They were perceived as concepts corresponding to the essential manifestations of beautiful reality, which, in turn, was the subject of ade-

---

<sup>5</sup> Вартанова 2014, 36.

quate reproduction in art. As if "by default" it was recognized that the inconsistency with the above, the deviation from the established norms, is ugly. Thinking about what is more than obvious, apparently, was not of any interest and, perhaps, was considered redundant.

The same situation persisted in the Middle Ages, during which God was considered the manifestation of the highest beauty. There was no question of the taste of a person who selectively relates not only to the Creator, but also to everything created. After all, everything created by God is beautiful. In particular, one of the fathers of the Armenian Apostolic Church, apologist Yeznik Koghbatsi was convinced of this. In his work "The Refutation of the Sects", he writes that God "made beautiful everything that he created". Moreover, the creation of beauty is the absolute privilege of the Almighty<sup>6</sup>.

We can speak about a more or less serious consideration of such a phenomenon as aesthetic taste only starting from the Modern Period, or rather from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, because even the Renaissance, which combined the principles of antiquity and the Middle Ages into a single whole, continued the line towards the ontological justification of the beautiful and the ugly, again giving paramount importance to the concepts of harmony, proportion, proportionality, and so on, already listed above. In the conditions of the emerging new attitude to reality, when in the "subject-object" system of interaction more and more attention began to be paid to the subject, and above all to their cognitive abilities – sensuality and reason, interest in the aesthetic experience of a human arose with natural inevitability. In accordance with this, attempts were made to single out the concept of aesthetic taste. The question is that it was the aesthetic experience of a subject that began to be considered as the basis in which they tried to find some criteria that determine the nature of their aesthetic attitude to reality. Moreover, these criteria were perceived, on the one hand, as formed as a result of the reflection of already existing aesthetic norms, principles and assessments, recognized as "correct", "good" in a specific space-time continuum and functioning as some kind of guidelines for the development of aesthetic assessments of the individual, and, on the other hand, as deviations from the same norms. These deviations, depending on the spiritual climate of the time, could be perceived not only negatively, but also positively.

### **The Formation of the Category "Aesthetic Taste"**

The concept of aesthetic taste has been the subject of serious scientific debate only since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This means that in comparison with other aesthetic categories – beautiful, ugly, sublime, tragic, harmony and so on, some of

---

<sup>6</sup> Կողբացի 1994, 9, 23:

which are known from mythological texts, this concept has a relatively short life. However, it attracted the attention of a large number of thinkers already in the period of its birth, becoming one of the main problems especially for philosophers, creators and critics of the art of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which even received the definition of "the century of taste"<sup>7</sup>. Over time, this problem lost its former significance to some extent. Debates related to the problem of aesthetic taste have intensified due to the emergence of the phenomenon of "mass culture", which, according to popular belief, distorts the aesthetic taste of an individual. This problem continues to attract the attention of researchers even today, when mass culture, having strengthened its position and expanded its scale, has become a global phenomenon. On the other hand, it is impossible not to notice that, perhaps as a result of the influence of the same mass culture, the needs of humankind for the aestheticization of its environment, everyday life, and the development of fashion are activated. All this means that even today the question of the nature of aesthetic taste remains a topical subject of scientific research and controversy in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art and art history.

Turning to the history of the issue, we recall that the term "taste" (latin. *gustus*) received the status of an aesthetic category thanks to the Spanish thinker Baltasar Gracian y Morales, who in his work "The Pocket Oracle or the Science of Prudence" (1647) applied it in an aesthetic sense, thereby not only expanding the boundaries of this concept, usually associated with taste sensations, but also giving it the status of a spiritual category. In his opinion, it is taste that allows you to know the beautiful and appreciate works of art. Let us note that the first step taken in the study of the problem of taste turned out to be very fruitful, for this question gained extraordinary popularity and seriously interested many philosophers and art critics. That problem was given special attention by such well-known thinkers as F. La Rochefoucauld, Voltaire, Ch. Batteux, J. d'Alembert, J.-J. Rousseau, A. Shaftesbury, F. Hutcheson, B. Mandeville, E. Burke, D. Hume, J. Winkelmann, J. Herder, F. Schiller, I. Kant, G. Hegel, J. Sulzer and many others. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century T. Adorno, M. Heidegger, W. Benjamin, J.-F. Lyotard, A. Losev, U. Eco and other famous thinkers, the views of each of whom are of undoubted interest. However, we would like to single out Baltasar Gracian, whose ideas, in our opinion, basically determined the approach to the development of this problem and revealed its essential aspects.

It was this thinker of the Baroque era who drew attention to the commonality of certain norms and assessments that exist in society and are recognized as manifestations of "refined taste", which are opposed by other norms inherent in

---

<sup>7</sup> Dickie 1996.



"bad taste". He also recognized the possibility of cultivating good taste, which ennobles a person, considering it a great happiness to be in the company of people with refined taste. Gracian attaches paramount importance to culture, as it is necessary both for taste and for the mind. In his opinion good taste can be cultivated. He believes that "each individual is born a barbarian, and is saved from being a best by acquiring culture. Culture creates a true person; the more of it, the great person"<sup>8</sup>. It is not surprising that he recognizes the right of ancient Greece, on whose territory the highest examples of unsurpassed culture were created, to call the rest of the world barbaric. For Gracian, the most valuable thing is a universally developed personality. Such a person has superiority over another; they are more perfect than others. They fill life with joy and make everyone happy.

Gracian is a supporter of novelty. Based on the fact that over time even the best is subject to aging, he proposes to constantly reveal new beauties, renew their ability, and each time rising like the sun, appear in a new brilliance. As a subtle observer, he points out the variability of tastes and calls for living in accordance with the time. Noting that the preferences of the majority are always affirmed in society, he urges that they be taken into account. Calling to live in accordance with the modern generally accepted taste that prevails in all areas, at the same time he advises to be wary of the common people, the mob, which is everywhere. Don't heed what it says, far less what it thinks, states Gracian<sup>9</sup>.

The treatise ends with the statement that three important qualities are bestowed on man from above, "a fertile intellect, sound judgment, and outstandingly excellent taste". People with good taste find something good in everything. But you need to remember that you should not chase after pleasures in which danger is hidden. That is why "Even with physical thirst, god taste's trick is to stimulate it, not quench it"<sup>10</sup>.

So, one of the main conclusions arising from the content of the treatise can be considered that a person formed as a result of the influence of culture can become the owner of a "refined taste". This judgment was further developed in the concept of classicism, which, unfortunately, ignored the significance of other theoretical positions of B. Gracian.

### **From the Normativity of Classicism to the Ideas of the Enlightenment**

It is no secret that classicism, whose theoretical propositions are most clearly expressed by Nicolas Boileau, is guided by rationalism and strict normativity. Moreover, the most important thing in this theory is that this normativity ap-

---

<sup>8</sup> Gracian 2011, 40

<sup>9</sup> Gracian 2011, 80

<sup>10</sup> Gracian 2011, 111.

appears as a timeless, unchanging, absolute category that is not subject to any influence and change. In his treatise "Poetic Art"<sup>11</sup> (1674) Boileau subordinates taste to reason, believing that it's dictated only by the laws of reason and is in direct connection with these laws. Taste must certainly adhere to specific, already established rules and put them into practice, and only in this case can it claim the status of "good" or "correct". It can be said that all thinkers guided by classical principles had similar points of view, regardless of their nationality. For the classicists of all countries, the most important goal was the education of "good taste", which in art manifested itself through orderliness, clarity, rigor of form, which is the bearer and exponent of the content, which has a highly moral character. Uniform norms formed by the mind, which, in turn, are themselves considered a reflection of the laws prevailing in nature, become the basis of artistic creativity. Enlightenment, education – this is a tool that allows you to resist bad taste, ignoring the experience of the great art of the past and promoting shallow, frivolous in content and even obscene, devoid of morality spectacle<sup>12</sup>.

As already noted, the problem of taste occupies the minds of many 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers. It becomes one of the main ones in aesthetics. But among a large number of philosophers who have made an undoubted contribution to the study of the problem of taste, we decided to turn to the works of E. Burke and D. Hume. This choice is due to the fact that thanks to E. Burke, there was an expansion of the boundaries of the concept under study, since along with susceptibility to the beautiful, taste began to be considered as the ability to perceive the sublime. As for D. Hume, he is significant because he recognized the possibility and necessity of identifying the standard of taste. At the same time, surprisingly foreseeing the state in which the modern "world of art" resides, he attached a huge role to the art critics, who expresses a decisive opinion about both the creator of art and their work. Their concepts are also significant because they raise the question of the reasons for the variability of taste.

Following the chronology, let us first turn to the famous essay "Of the Standard of Taste" (1739-1740) by the Irish philosopher David Hume. Having become interested in the problem of the possibility of revealing the norm of taste, the thinker at the same time pointed out its uniqueness. He noted a huge variety of tastes and opinions, which are striking even to uneducated people. Hume pointed out the peculiarity that people consider as barbarism everything that goes beyond the boundaries of their taste and understanding. Meanwhile, to

---

<sup>11</sup> Буало 1957, 55-107.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the principles of classicism have become widespread in many European countries. They have become a source of inspiration for some Armenian thinkers as well. Among the Armenian classicists about the importance of aesthetic taste and the possibility and necessity of its education Eduard Yurmvyuzyan, Yeprem Setyan, Mikayel Sallanteants and others.

recognize the norm of taste means to determine the criterion that contributes to the reconciliation of the various feelings of people, to find a solution that allows you to approve one feeling and condemn another. But is it possible to find such a criterion, especially in the context of the widespread opinion that there is a big difference between judgment and feeling? Before answering this question, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that for Hume any feeling is correct and real, because it refers only to itself. Unlike feelings, the judgments of the mind are not always true, for they refer to something outside of themselves, to the outside. "Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being"<sup>13</sup>.

According to Hume, beauty is a subjective quality that arises in the process of spiritual contemplation. Moreover, the spirit of each person sees a different beauty. Therefore, it is not excluded that one person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty. But agreeing with the proverb that "tastes do not argue" and even admitting that it was confirmed by common sense, Hume points to the possibility of its refutation. He writes: "Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton or Bunyan and Addison, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a ...pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous"<sup>14</sup>.

For Hume, the true measure of the value of artistic creations is the duration of their influence on people's minds. Hume says: "The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and at London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory... and while the world endures, they maintain their authority over the minds of men"<sup>15</sup>. The great variety of tastes does not preclude the existence of some general principles for the evaluation of art, by which one can "silence a bad critic". However, there are reasons prevent-

---

<sup>13</sup> Hume 1987, 230.

<sup>14</sup> Hume 1987, 230-231.

<sup>15</sup> Hume 1987, 233.

ing their recognition. First of all, these are some shortcomings in the person's organs of perception, as well as an imagination devoid of refinement.

According to Hume, a true critic must be a connoisseur of the art of different ages and peoples, which will allow him to correctly evaluate and understand the work of a contemporary author. An important requirement for criticism is freedom from prejudices, as well as the ability to focus on the subject of their research. A critic also needs the ability to distance himself from his individual essence and the problems of his personal life. Hume supposes that only a few can make a correct judgment about any art piece. To do this, you need to have common sense, a subtle feeling, have rich experience, and be free from prejudices. Such individuals, according to Hume, should be generally recognized by all humankind as having an advantage over others.

Of interest is also the comparison of art with philosophical and theological teachings, which, dominating for some time, are subsequently replaced by others. But beautiful works of art that have won recognition are preserved forever. So, Hume says: "

Aristotle, and Plato, and Epicurus, and Descartes, may successively yield to each other: But Terence and Virgil maintain an universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men. ...Thus, though a civilized nation may easily be mistaken in the choice of their admired philosopher, they never have been found long to err, in their affection for a favorite epic or tragic author"<sup>16</sup>. And this indicates that it is not so difficult to find the norm of taste in art. Achieving a common agreement in matters of taste, according to the philosopher, is hampered by two reasons – differences in the inclinations of individuals and special customs and opinions that prevail in society. Indeed, people prefer some writers to others, one genre to another, which is quite normal and should not become "a subject of dispute", because there is no such norm on the basis of which one could judge them. Certainly, it is hard to argue with that.

A few years after Hume's essay, the problem of taste is considered by E. Burke in the introduction of his well-known work "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful". Burke claims, that the standard both of reason and taste is same in all human creatures. By the word "taste", the philosopher understands the special abilities of the spirit, by which one can judge the results of the work of the imagination and the fine arts. There are only three of them – senses, imagination and the faculty of judgment. And first appealing to the senses, he supposes that the manner of perceiving external objects is in all men the same, or with little difference. All men are agreed to call vinegar sour, honey sweet, and aloes bitter.

---

<sup>16</sup> Hume 1987, 242-43.

The philosopher believes that the pleasure obtained with the help of external senses is the same for all people, high and low rank, learned and unlearned. But in addition to feeling, there is another creative potential of the human spirit, called imagination. It is very valuable, because it includes such special manifestations of human nature as wit, fantasy, ingenuity and so on. However, according to Burke, the imagination is not capable of creating anything new. It can only record the feelings of pleasure or displeasure caused by the qualities of a natural object, and also capture the similarity between the original and the result that arose in the process of imitating it. The second point is important because, having discovered similarities, a person begins to create new images, they begin to create. Moreover, the imagination invades the sphere of rational ability, the area of the judgment, which is improving.

Burke comes to the conclusion that taste is a complex phenomenon and consists of a "perception of the primary pleasures of sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty, concerning the various relations of these, and concerning the human passions, manners, and actions. All this is requisite to form taste, and the ground-work of all these is the same in the human mind..."<sup>17</sup>. Sensitivity and judgment are the most important qualities of taste. Insufficient development of sensibility leads to a lack of taste, weakness of judgment leads to wrong or bad taste. Not all people are endowed with the ability of true judgment, and therefore have bad taste. The reason for this, according to Burke, may be the weak mental abilities of the individual, or the lack of well-directed practice.

Burke is sure that taste is not an instinctive ability of a person, given to them by nature and allowing them to instantly assess the merits or demerits of a work. Taste can be improved by increasing knowledge and expanding the scope of practice. So, having recognized the subjectivity of taste sensations, Burke is sure that the norm of taste undoubtedly exists. Finally, he notices that "there is rather less difference upon matters of taste among mankind than upon most of those which depend upon the naked reason, and that men are far better agreed on the excellence of a description in Virgil, than on the truth or falsehood of a theory of Aristotle"<sup>18</sup>. Let us recall that D. Hume also came to a similar conclusion. This indicates the actual existence of some general manifestations of aesthetic taste, and determine the possibility of a general scientific approach to it, leading to similar conclusions.

---

<sup>17</sup> Burke 1823, 23-24.

<sup>18</sup> Burke 1823, 25-26.

### Conclusion

So, as is obvious, a huge number of problems raised in the treatises of G. Baltasar, E. Burke and D. Hume are still unresolved, which convinces that their concepts as a whole have retained their relevance. It is difficult to answer the exact question why interest in the problem of taste faded after its active development of scientific thought in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps this happened due to the fact that during the Enlightenment, taste was associated with morality. In particular, in the "Philosophical Encyclopedia", it is indicated that "because of this connection, which many refused in the last century, theories of taste, as well as theories of beauty and greatness, suffered"<sup>19</sup>. Without excluding this, at the end of our presentation we note that, despite the dominance of bad taste, which has now established its dominance in culture and, in essence, is forced "from above", it is unlikely that it will be possible to "close" the problem of taste. It will remain a matter of personal choice for each individual. And this means that the problem of aesthetic taste and its scientific research cannot be ignored.

### Bibliography

- Շողրապի Ե. 1994, Եղծ աղանդոց, Երևան, ԵՊՀ հրատ., 349 էջ:  
 Օրտեգա-ի Գասսետ Խ. 1999, Մշակույթի փիլիսոփայություն, թարգ. Հ.Մ. Գրիգորյանի, Երևան, «Ապոլոն», 192 էջ:  
 Аристотель 1957, Об искусстве поэзии, Москва, Худ. лит., 184 с.  
 Буало 1957, Поэтическое искусство, пер. Линецкой Э.Л., Москва, «ГИХЛ», 234 с.  
 Вартанова Ж. 2014, О социальной обусловленности эстетического вкуса. Культура в зеркале самосознания, Ереван, «Эдит Принт», 330 с.  
 Эко У. 2008, История уродства, пер. Шабашникова А.А., Москва, «Слово», 456 с.  
 Bourriaud N. 2015, Manifesto Altermodern. David Rudrum, Nicholas Stavris, Supplanting the Postmodern: An Anthology of Writings on the Arts and Culture of the Early 21st Century, Bloomsbury, New York, London, Sydney, 432 p.  
 Burke E. 1823, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, London, Tomas M'Lean, Haymarket, <http://www.archive.org/details/philosophicaling00burk> (downloaded 15.04.2023).  
 Gracian B. 2011, The Pocket Oracle and Art of Prudence, "Penguin classics", translated from the Spanish by Jeremy Robbins, <https://www.akademika.no/humaniora/filosofi/pocket-oracle-and-art-prudence/978014144245> (downloaded 15.04.2023).  
 Dickie G. 1996, The Century of Taste: The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 156 p.  
 Hume D. 1987, Essays. Moral, Political and Literary, Edited and with a Foreword, Notes, Miller Eugene G., Indianapolis, <https://philpapers.org/rec/HUMEMP> (downloaded 15.04.2023).  
 Kant I. 1987, Critique of Judgment, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, 685 p.

<sup>19</sup> Aesthetic Taste. <https://iep.utm.edu/aesthetic-taste/>

## ԳԵՂԱԳԻՏԱԿԱՆ ՃԱՇԱԿ. ՀԱՐՑԻ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՇՈՒՐՋ

Սվետլանա Արզումանյան

Ամփոփում

Ճաշակը գեղագիտության կարևոր կատեգորիաներից է, գեղագիտական գիտակցության անկապտելի դրսևորումը, որի օգնությամբ կարելի է որոշել անհատի ոչ միայն գեղագիտական, այլև ընդհանուր զարգացման մակարդակը: Ճաշակը կարելի է համեմատել որոշակի «փորձաքարի» հետ, որի օգնությամբ հայտնաբերվում են գեղագիտական գնահատման չափանիշներ: Դրանք համապատասխանում են որոշակի նորմերի ու կանոնների, որոնք ճանաչվում են որոշակի տարածաժամանակային սահմաններում և մարդուն կողմնորոշում դեպի իր միջավայրի գեղագիտական կազմակերպումը, արվեստի գործերի ստեղծումը, վարքագծի կանոնների հաստատումը և այլն: Լուսավորականության դարաշրջանում գեղագիտական ճաշակը, դառնալով հետազոտության կարևորագույն խնդիր, իր նշանակությունը պահպանել է նաև մեր օրերում:

**Բանալի բառեր՝** գեղագիտական ճաշակ, գեղագիտական գիտակցություն, զգայականություն, նորմատիվություն, սուբյեկտիվություն, դատողություն, մշակույթ:

## ЭСТЕТИЧЕСКИЙ ВКУС: К ИСТОРИИ ВОПРОСА

Светлана Арзуманян

Резюме

Вкус является одной из важных категорий эстетики, неотъемлемым проявлением эстетического сознания, с помощью которого можно определить уровень не только эстетического, но и общего развития личности. Вкус можно сравнить с неким «пробным камнем», с помощью которого выявляются критерии эстетической оценки, соответствующие определенным нормам и правилам, признанным в конкретных пространственно-временных границах и ориентирующим человека на эстетическую организацию окружающей его среды, создание художественных произведений, правила поведения и т.д. Результатом деятельности эстетического вкуса является возникающее чувство удовольствия или неудовольствия, по преимуществу характеризующееся бескорыстностью. Став важнейшей проблемой исследования в эпоху Просвещения, эстетический вкус сохранил свою значимость и сегодня.

**Ключевые слова** – эстетический вкус, эстетическое сознание, чувствительность, нормативность, субъективность, суждение, культура.