Readings in the History of Æsthetics

An Open-Source Reader

Ver. 0.11

Lee Archie

John G. Archie

Readings in the History of Æsthetics: An Open-Source Reader; Ver. 0.11

by Lee Archie

by John G. Archie

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Comments. The current version of this open source textbook in philosophy is a work-in-progress and is being released here in draft form. The collaborators would be grateful for corrections or other suggestions to this preliminary draft. Please address comments to

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“Preface”

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Anyone with connection to the Internet has access to a vast number of philosophical documents *via* online etexts. Fortunately, quite a bit of the best work in philosophy is in the public domain, and a few of these readings provide a convenient access for almost anyone seeking information and help in the history of æsthetics. However, many of the historically significant writings in æsthetics are not presently available on the Internet, and this open source text helps somewhat to remedy that need. The collection of readings selected for this open-source text is “free,” subject to the legal notice following the title page.

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tarball.[1] The current release is, in a sense, a small test of the Delphi effect in open source publishing.

This edition of *Readings in the History of Æsthetics* (version 0.11) should not be viewed as a completed work. Our development process is loosely patterned on the "release early, release often" model championed by Eric S. Raymond.[2] When version 1.0 is complete, additional formats of the text will made available *via* the Internet for free distribution under the GNU Free Documentation License.[3] Our publication is based on Open Source DocBook, a system of writing structured documents using SGML or XML in a presentation-neutral form using open source programs. The functionality of DocBook is such that the same file can be published on the Web, printed as a standalone report, reprinted as part of a journal, processed into an audio file, changed into Braille, or converted to most other media types. If the core readings and commentary prove useful, successive revisions, readings, commentaries, and other improvements by users can be released in incrementally numbered "stable"versions.

A Note about Selections

The reading selections in this collection of papers often have considerable deletions of text *im passim*; additionally, the ideas of the writers are examined out of their precise literary and historical context. Many university professors will find our practice unacceptable and will choose to seek complete, unabridged texts for their students.[4] Obviously, there is much to be gained by that approach—especially for students seeking a career in philosophy. A second serious shortcoming of our text is that the core set of readings presently precludes Eastern philosophy. Perhaps, this second deficiency can be corrected in future versions. A third shortcom-

1. *artbook* (http://philosophy.lander.edu/cgi-bin/viewcvs.cgi/)
2. Eric Raymond. *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates. 1999. Online at The Cathedral and the Bazaar (http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/)
3. *What is Copyleft?* (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/)
4. For university study, a number of texts available provide more complete as well as more recent readings in traditional book form than that provided here. The following collections, although somewhat dated, are mentioned here as they were helpful for the selection of some of the readings in our text: (1)Hazard Adams, Ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. New York: Harcourt Brace. 1971. (2) Melvin Rader, Ed. *A Modern Book of Esthetics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1965.

ing, of course, is the lack in readings in contemporary æsthetics due to copyright restrictions.

The main focus for our approach to æsthetics in the present offering, however, is not so much on the historical understanding of one or two æstheticians as it is on the presentation of different germinal ideas from a wider range of thinkers in order to spark thinking about some significant issues in the philosophy of art.

In general, the difficulty of the reading selections is mitigated by the arbitrary division of the abridged readings into short sections. Specially constructed editorial headings are framed by braces (*i.e.*, [. . .]) and are inserted into the abridged texts. It’s important for readers to note that these headings are not part of the original sources. Additionally, questions at the beginning of each reading selection in effect outline the key ideas of the philosophers excerpted. Finally, questions at the end of each reading selection are designed to encourage a bit more thought—perhaps these questions may be found useful for position papers or class discussion.

Several sources on the Internet deserve special mention for authoritative and insightful analysis and commentary on æsthetics. Readers who wish to be conversant fully with the edited readings will wish to consult the following etexts.

1. *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*.[5] Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas, edited by Philip P. Wiener, was published by Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, in 1973-74. Now out of print, the *Dictionary* is published online with the help of Scribner’s and the Electric Text Center at the University of Virginia. The *Dictionary* includes articles on the historical development of a broad spectrum of ideas in philosophy, religion, politics, literature, and the biological, physical, and social sciences.
2. *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[6] This site (subtitled "A Field Guide to the Nomenclature of Philosophy") consists of regularly updated original articles by fifteen editors, one hundred academic specialists, and technical advisors. The articles are authoritative, peer-reviewed, and available for personal and classroom use. The general editors are James Fieser and Bradley Dowden. The site

5. http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/DicHist/dict.html
6. http://www.iep.utm.edu/

is most useful for students in obtaining secondary source information on the key terms and personages of philosophy. The *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* can also be recommended for obtaining an overview of the problems of philosophy for background readings for lectures and papers. In general, the articles are well researched and are accessible by undergraduates.

3. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*.[7] The electronic version of the well-known guide to literary theory has hyperlinked cross-references, names, topics, and subject entries as well as full text search capability. The work, edited by Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, includes references to the social and physical sciences as well as connections to historical, philosophical, and cultural theories.

4. *Meta-Encyclopedia of Philsophy*.[8] A dynamic resource by Andrew Chrucky accesses the following sources: Dagobert D. Runes (ed.), *Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1942, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind*, *The Ism Book*, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913), and *A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names*.

5. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[9] This continuously updated reference work is a publishing project of the Metaphysics Research Lab at the Center for the Study of Language and Information (CSLI) at Stanford University. The general editor of the *Stanford Encyclopedia* is Edward N. Zalta. Authors of subject entries are well-known scholars in their fields; even so, the subjects discussed are authoritative and well balanced. The *Encyclopedia* is the most scholarly general source for philosophy on the Internet and is essential as a starting point and background research for philosophy term papers.

6. *Thoemmes Encyclopedia*.[10] This free biographical and bibliographical database including major figures in the history of ideas includes a search function as well as a list of key personages. Thoemmes Press (pronounced as "Thomas") originated from Thoemmes Antiquarian Books and specializes in publishing the scholars of intellectual history. The biographical sources on this site are authoritative, accurate,

7. http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/g-contents.html
8. http://www.ditext.com/encyc/frame.html
9. http://plato.stanford.edu/
10. http://www.thoemmes.com/encyclopedia/list1.htm.asp

and helpful background summaries of the life and thought of important figures in the Western intellectual tradtion.

7. *The 1911 Edition Encyclopedia*.[11] The 11th Edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* contains articles from experts in their fields is still a widely used reference and a classic resource for the state of knowledge in 1911.

Our first consideration for the selection of readings in this book is to make primary sources accessible to a wide variety of readers—including readers curious about the subjects presented, readers with disabilities, readers in developing countries, as well as college, high school, and homeschooling students on a budget. In addition to the core set of readings presented here, supplementary readings in history of æsthetics are in process.

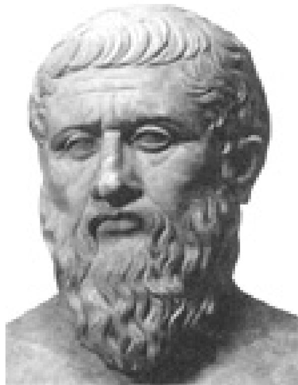
Please send questions or inquiries of interest to the "Editors" at

<philbook@philosophy.lander.edu>

11. http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/

Chapter 1

"Art as Imitation and the Form of Beauty" by Plato



Plato adapted from University of St. Andrews

About the author . . .

Early in life, Plato became interested in painting and poetry but soon became discouraged upon comparing his writing with Homer's verse. Chancing to hear the discourses of Socrates, he became fascinated with philosophy. Following the death of his mentor and time spent abroad, Plato founded the Academy, a school of philosophy named after Academus, the public garden in Athens where he had lectured years earlier. At the grove of Academus, persons would gather before monuments placed among the trees along the stream Cephissus. There Plato taught that the eternal soul existing before birth knows the essences of things, and the soul during life seeks to recollect what it knew in its former state: *viz.* the apprehension of the Ideas or Forms—the immaterial essences of all that

is real. The everyday world, he thinks, is a changing, vague imitation of the perfect beauty of universal concepts or the "World of Forms." Moreover, in his dialogue *Ion*, Plato debunks the classical ideal of the artist having an irrationally inspired intuition of the eternal world of the Ideal Forms. Even so, Plato's alternative account of the soul's quest for perfect beauty as told by Diotima in *The Symposium* perhaps has had more influence on Western æsthetics than his imitation theory of art expressed in *Ion* and in Book X of the *Republic*. The account of the divinely inspired artist described in the *Symposium*, whose work represents the quest for eternal truth, influenced Western philosophy through the fashioning of the neo-Platonic theory of Plotinus.

About the work . . .

In his Book X of *The Republic*,[1] Plato argues that artists and poets threaten the stability of an ideal government, and the works of painters, musicians, and poets should be censored since they can irrationally inflame the passions of the populace. Even so, he thought the arts, if carefully controlled, could help mold the character of the young. In this selection from Book X, Socrates explains how the artist and poet simply and imperfectly imitate the everyday world of sensations and appearances which are in turn merely poor copies of the unchanging "real" world of perfect essences. For Plato, the good life, is a life spent in the rational pursuit of universal knowledge. Such a pursuit, he thinks, can be achieved in an ideal society where philosophers become kings. In the selection from *The Symposium*,[2] Diotoma explains to Socrates that the desire for beauty is the ultimately part of the quest for attaining our immortality by means of "giving birth" to such eternal goods as virtue and wisdom.

From the reading . . .

Which is the art of painting designed to be—an imitation of things as they are, or as they appear—of appearance or of reality?

1. Plato. *The Republic*. 360 B.C. in *The Dialogues of Plato* Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1875.
2. *The Symposium*. 360 B.C. in *The Dialogues of Plato* Translated by Benjamin Jowlett. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1875.

Ideas of Interest from *The Republic* and *The Symposium*

1. Explain what Socrates means by the Ideas or Forms of things. What kinds of Ideas or Forms exist?
2. Why, according to the argument put forward by Socrates, cannot there be ideal or real things in the world of appearances or in art?
3. How does Socrates prove that artists lack concern for truth?
4. What are the two principles of soul discussed by Socrates? What do artists and poets have in common?
5. Why does Socrates believe poetry to be dangerous?
6. What does Diotima mean when she says “Love [is] neither fair nor good”?
7. Why is beauty to be desired? How does Diotima define love?
8. According to Diotima, what is the source of wisdom, beauty, temperance, and justice?
9. How does Diotima describe the attainment of the reality and essence of beauty?

The Reading Selection from *The Republic*

[The Artist as Imitator]

[A discussion between Socrates and his companion Glaucon. Socrates begins.]

Well then, shall we begin the enquiry in our usual manner: Whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have also a corresponding idea or form. Do you understand me?

I do.

Let us take any common instance; there are beds and tables in the world—plenty of them, are there not?

Yes.

But there are only two ideas or forms of them—one the idea of a bed, the other of a table.

True.

And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use, in accordance with the idea—that is our way of speaking in this and similar instances—but no artificer makes the ideas themselves: how could he?

Impossible.

And there is another artist,—I should like to know what you would say of him.

Who is he?

One who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.

What an extraordinary man!

Wait a little, and there will be more reason for your saying so. For this is he who is able to make not only vessels of every kind, but plants and animals, himself and all other things—the earth and heaven, and the things which are in heaven or under the earth; he makes the gods also.

He must be a wizard and no mistake.

Oh! you are incredulous, are you? Do you mean that there is no such maker or creator, or that in one sense there might be a maker of all these things but in another not? Do you see that there is a way in which you could make them all yourself?

What way?

An easy way enough; or rather, there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round—you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants, and all the, other things of which we were just now speaking, in the mirror.

Yes, he said; but they would be appearances only.

Very good, I said, you are coming to the point now. And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another—a creator of appearances, is he not?

Of course.

But then I suppose you will say that what he creates is untrue. And yet there is a sense in which the painter also creates a bed?

Yes, he said, but not a real bed.

And what of the maker of the bed? Were you not saying that he too makes, not the idea which, according to our view, is the essence of the bed, but only a particular bed?

Yes, I did.

Then if he does not make that which exists he cannot make true existence, but only some semblance of existence; and if any one were to say that the work of the maker of the bed, or of any other workman, has real existence, he could hardly be supposed to be speaking the truth.

At any rate, he replied, philosophers would say that he was not speaking the truth.

No wonder, then, that his work too is an indistinct expression of truth.

No wonder.

Suppose now that by the light of the examples just offered we enquire who this imitator is?

If you please.

Well then, here are three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say—for no one else can be the maker?

No.

There is another which is the work of the carpenter?

Yes.

And the work of the painter is a third?

Yes.

Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter?

Yes, there are three of them.

God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed in nature and one only; two or more such ideal beds neither ever have been nor ever will be made by God.

Why is that?

Because even if He had made but two, a third would still appear behind them which both of them would have for their idea, and that would be the ideal bed and the two others.

Very true, he said.

From the reading . . .

But would you call the painter a creator and maker? . . .

I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.

God knew this, and He desired to be the real maker of a real bed, not a particular maker of a particular bed, and therefore He created a bed which is essentially and by nature one only.

So we believe.

Shall we, then, speak of Him as the natural author or maker of the bed?

Yes, he replied; inasmuch as by the natural process of creation He is the author of this and of all other things.

And what shall we say of the carpenter—is not he also the maker of the bed?

Yes.

But would you call the painter a creator and maker?

Certainly not.

Yet if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed?

I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.

Good, I said; then you call him who is third in the descent from nature an imitator?

Certainly, he said.

And the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth?

That appears to be so.

Then about the imitator we are agreed. And what about the painter?—I would like to know whether he may be thought to imitate that which originally exists in nature, or only the creations of artists?

The latter.

As they are or as they appear? You have still to determine this.

What do you mean?

I mean, that you may look at a bed from different points of view, obliquely or directly or from any other point of view, and the bed will appear different, but there is no difference in reality. And the same of all things.

Yes, he said, the difference is only apparent.

Now let me ask you another question: Which is the art of painting designed to be—an imitation of things as they are, or as they appear—of appearance or of reality?

Of appearance.

Then the imitator, I said, is a long way off the truth, and can do all things because he lightly touches on a small part of them, and that part an image. For example: A painter will paint a cobbler, carpenter, or any other artist, though he knows nothing of their arts; and, if he is a good artist, he may deceive children or simple persons, when he shows them his picture of a carpenter from a distance, and they will fancy that they are looking at a real carpenter.

Certainly.

And whenever any one informs us that he has found a man knows all the arts, and all things else that anybody knows, and every single thing with a higher degree of accuracy than any other man—whoever tells us this, I think that we can only imagine to be a simple creature who is likely to have been deceived by some wizard or actor whom he met, and whom he thought all-knowing, because he himself was unable to analyse the nature of knowledge and ignorance and imitation.

Most true.. . .

Now do you suppose that if a person were able to make the original as well as the image, he would seriously devote himself to the image-making branch? Would he allow imitation to be the ruling principle of his life, as if he had nothing higher in him?

I should say not.

The real artist, who knew what he was imitating, would be interested in realities and not in imitations; and would desire to leave as memorials of himself works many and fair; and, instead of being the author of encomiums, he would prefer to be the theme of them.

Yes, he said, that would be to him a source of much greater honour and profit.. . .

The poet is like a painter who . . . will make a likeness of a cobbler though he understands nothing of cobbling; and his picture is good enough for those who know no more than he does, and judge only by colours and figures.

Quite so.

In like manner the poet with his words and phrases may be said to lay on the colours of the several arts, himself understanding their nature only enough to imitate them; and other people, who are as ignorant as he is, and judge only from his words, imagine that if he speaks of cobbling, or of military tactics, or of anything else, in metre and harmony and rhythm, he speaks very well—such is the sweet influence which melody and rhythm by nature have. And I think that you must have observed again and again what a poor appearance the tales of poets make when stripped of the colours which music puts upon them, and recited in simple prose.

Yes, he said.

They are like faces which were never really beautiful, but only blooming; and now the bloom of youth has passed away from them?

Exactly.

[The Three Arts]

Here is another point: The imitator or maker of the image knows nothing of true existence; he knows appearances only. Am I not right?

Yes.

Then let us have a clear understanding, and not be satisfied with half an explanation.

Proceed.

Of the painter we say that he will paint reins, and he will paint a bit?

Yes.

And the worker in leather and brass will make them?

Certainly.

But does the painter know the right form of the bit and reins? Nay, hardly even the workers in brass and leather who make them; only the horseman who knows how to use them—he knows their right form.

Most true.

From the reading . . .

Imitation is only a kind of play or sport. . .

And may we not say the same of all things?

What?

That there are three arts which are concerned with all things: one which uses, another which makes, a third which imitates them?

Yes.

And the excellence or beauty or truth of every structure, animate or inanimate, and of every action of man, is relative to the use for which nature or the artist has intended them.

True.

Then the user of them must have the greatest experience of them, and he must indicate to the maker the good or bad qualities which develop themselves in use; for example, the flute-player will tell the flute-maker which of his flutes is satisfactory to the performer; he will tell him how he ought to make them, and the other will attend to his instructions?

Of course.

The one knows and therefore speaks with authority about the goodness and badness of flutes, while the other, confiding in him, will do what he is told by him?

True.

The instrument is the same, but about the excellence or badness of it the maker will only attain to a correct belief; and this he will gain from him who knows, by talking to him and being compelled to hear what he has to say, whereas the user will have knowledge?

True.

But will the imitator have either? Will he know from use whether or no his drawing is correct or beautiful? Or will he have right opinion from being compelled to associate with another who knows and gives him instructions about what he should draw?

Neither.

Then he will no more have true opinion than he will have knowledge about the goodness or badness of his imitations?

I suppose not.

The imitative artist will be in a brilliant state of intelligence about his own creations?

Nay, very much the reverse.

And still he will go on imitating without knowing what makes a thing good or bad, and may be expected therefore to imitate only that which appears to be good to the ignorant multitude?

Just so.

Thus far then we are pretty well agreed that the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates. Imitation is only a kind of play or sport, and the tragic poets, whether they write in iambic or in Heroic verse, are imitators in the highest degree?

Very true.

And now tell me, I conjure you, has not imitation been shown by us to be concerned with that which is thrice removed from the truth?

Certainly.

[Two Principles of Soul]

And what is the faculty in man to which imitation is addressed?

What do you mean?

I will explain: The body which is large when seen near, appears small when seen at a distance?

True.

And the same object appears straight when looked at out of the water, and crooked when in the water; and the concave becomes convex, owing to the illusion about colours to which the sight is liable. Thus every sort of confusion is revealed within us; and this is that weakness of the human mind on which the art of conjuring and of deceiving by light and shadow and other ingenious devices imposes, having an effect upon us like magic.

True.

And the arts of measuring and numbering and weighing come to the rescue of the human understanding—there is the beauty of them—and the apparent greater or less, or more or heavier, no longer have the mastery over us, but give way before calculation and measure and weight?

Most true.

And this, surely, must be the work of the calculating and rational principle in the soul.

To be sure.

And when this principle measures and certifies that some things are equal, or that some are greater or less than others, there occurs an apparent contradiction?

True.

But were we not saying that such a contradiction is the same faculty cannot have contrary opinions at the same time about the same thing?

Very true.

Then that part of the soul which has an opinion contrary to measure is not the same with that which has an opinion in accordance with measure?

True.

And the better part of the soul is likely to be that which trusts to measure and calculation?

Certainly.

And that which is opposed to them is one of the inferior principles of the soul?

No doubt.

> But we have not yet brought forward the heaviest count in our accusation:—the power which poetry has of harming even the good . . .

This was the conclusion at which I was seeking to arrive when I said that painting or drawing, and imitation in general, when doing their own proper work, are far removed from truth, and the companions and friends and associates of a principle within us which is equally removed from reason, and that they have no true or healthy aim.

Exactly.

The imitative art is an inferior who marries an inferior, and has inferior offspring.. . .

Were we not saying that a good man, who has the misfortune to lose his son or anything else which is most dear to him, will bear the loss with more equanimity than another?

Yes.

But will he have no sorrow, or shall we say that although he cannot help sorrowing, he will moderate his sorrow?

The latter, he said, is the truer statement.

Tell me: will he be more likely to struggle and hold out against his sorrow when he is seen by his equals, or when he is alone?

It will make a great difference whether he is seen or not.

When he is by himself he will not mind saying or doing many things which he would be ashamed of any one hearing or seeing him do?

True.

There is a principle of law and reason in him which bids him resist, as well as a feeling of his misfortune which is forcing him to indulge his sorrow?

True.. . .

Yes, I said; and the higher principle is ready to follow this suggestion of reason?

Clearly.

And the other principle, which inclines us to recollection of our troubles and to lamentation, and can never have enough of them, we may call irrational, useless, and cowardly?

Indeed, we may.

And does not the latter—I mean the rebellious principle—furnish a great variety of materials for imitation? Whereas the wise and calm temperament, being always nearly equable, is not easy to imitate or to appreciate when imitated, especially at a public festival when a promiscuous crowd is assembled in a theatre. For the feeling represented is one to which they are strangers.

Certainly.

Then the imitative poet who aims at being popular is not by nature made, nor is his art intended, to please or to affect the principle in the soul; but he will prefer the passionate and fitful temper, which is easily imitated?

Clearly.

And now we may fairly take him and place him by the side of the painter, for he is like him in two ways: first, inasmuch as his creations have an inferior degree of truth—in this, I say, he is like him; and he is also like him in being concerned with an inferior part of the soul . . . because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason. As in a city when the evil are permitted to have authority and the good are put out of the way, so in the soul of man, as we maintain, the imitative poet implants an evil constitution, for he indulges the irrational nature which has no discernment of greater and less, but thinks the same thing at one time great and at another small-he is a manufacturer of images and is very far removed from the truth.

Exactly.

[The Dangers of Poetry]

But we have not yet brought forward the heaviest count in our accusa-

tion:—the power which poetry has of harming even the good (and there are very few who are not harmed), is surely an awful thing?

Yes, certainly, if the effect is what you say.

Hear and judge: The best of us, as I conceive, when we listen to a passage of Homer, or one of the tragedians, in which he represents some pitiful hero who is drawling out his sorrows in a long oration, or weeping, and smiting his breast—the best of us, you know, delight in giving way to sympathy, and are in raptures at the excellence of the poet who stirs our feelings most.

From the reading . . .

Few persons ever reflect, as I should imagine, that from the evil of other men something of evil is communicated to themselves.

Yes, of course I know.

But when any sorrow of our own happens to us, then you may observe that we pride ourselves on the opposite quality—we would fain be quiet and patient; this is the manly part, and the other which delighted us in the recitation is now deemed to be the part of a woman.

Very true, he said.

Now can we be right in praising and admiring another who is doing that which any one of us would abominate and be ashamed of in his own person?

No, he said, that is certainly not reasonable.

Nay, I said, quite reasonable from one point of view.

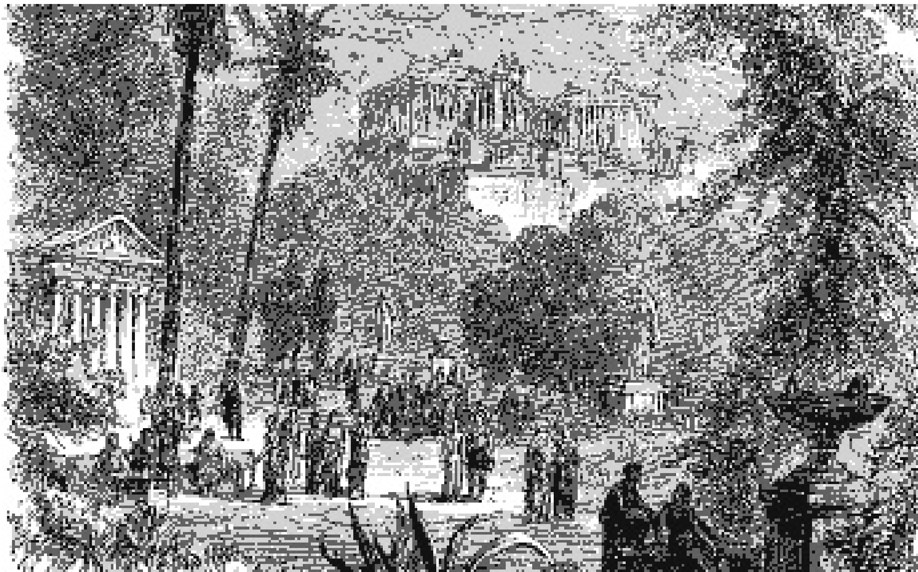
What point of view?

If you consider, I said, that when in misfortune we feel a natural hunger and desire to relieve our sorrow by weeping and lamentation, and that this feeling which is kept under control in our own calamities is satisfied and delighted by the poets;—the better nature in each of us, not having been sufficiently trained by reason or habit, allows the sympathetic element to break loose because the sorrow is another's; and the spectator fancies that there can be no disgrace to himself in praising and pitying any one who comes telling him what a good man he is, and making a fuss about his troubles; he thinks that the pleasure is a gain, and why should he be

supercilious and lose this and the poem too? Few persons ever reflect, as I should imagine, that from the evil of other men something of evil is communicated to themselves. And so the feeling of sorrow which has gathered strength at the sight of the misfortunes of others is with difficulty repressed in our own.

How very true!

And does not the same hold also of the ridiculous? There are jests which you would be ashamed to make yourself, and yet on the comic stage, or indeed in private, when you hear them, you are greatly amused by them, and are not at all disgusted at their unseemliness;—the case of pity is repeated;—there is a principle in human nature which is disposed to raise a laugh, and this which you once restrained by reason, because you were afraid of being thought a buffoon, is now let out again; and having stimulated the risible faculty at the theatre, you are betrayed unconsciously to yourself into playing the comic poet at home.



Grove of Academus adapted from John D. Quackenbos, *Illustrated History of Ancient Literature*

Quite true, he said.

And the same may be said of lust and anger and all the other affections, of desire and pain and pleasure, which are held to be inseparable from every action—in all of them poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of

drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue.

I cannot deny it.

Yes, I said, my dear Glaucon, for great is the issue at stake, greater than appears, whether a man is to be good or bad. And what will any one be profited if under the influence of honour or money or power, aye, or under the excitement of poetry, he neglect justice and virtue?

The Reading Selection from the *Symposium*

[Love as a Mean]

And now, taking my leave of you, I would rehearse a tale of love which I heard from Diotima of Mantineia, a woman wise in this and in many other kinds of knowledge, who in the days of old, when the Athenians offered sacrifice before the coming of the plague, delayed the disease ten years. She was my instructress in the art of love, and I shall repeat to you what she said to me, beginning with the admissions made by Agathon, which are nearly if not quite the same which I made to the wise woman when she questioned me—I think that this will be the easiest way, and I shall take both parts myself as well as I can. As you, Agathon, suggested, I must speak first of the being and nature of Love, and then of his works. First I said to her in nearly the same words which he used to me, that Love was a mighty god, and likewise fair and she proved to me as I proved to him that, by my own showing, Love was neither fair nor good. "What do you mean, Diotima," I said, "is love then evil and foul?" "Hush," she cried; "must that be foul which is not fair?" "Certainly," I said. "And is that which is not wise, ignorant? do you not see that there is a mean between wisdom and ignorance?" "And what may that be?" I said. "Right opinion," she replied; "which, as you know, being incapable of giving a reason, is not knowledge (for how can knowledge be devoid of reason? nor again, ignorance, for neither can ignorance attain the truth), but is clearly something which is a mean between ignorance and wisdom." "Quite true," I replied. "Do not then insist," she said, "that

what is not fair is of necessity foul, or what is not good evil; or infer that because love is not fair and good he is therefore foul and evil; for he is in a mean between them." "Well," I said, "Love is surely admitted by all to be a great god." "By those who know or by those who do not know?" "By all." "And how, Socrates," she said with a smile, "can Love be acknowledged to be a great god by those who say that he is not a god at all?" "And who are they?" I said. "You and I are two of them," she replied. "How can that be?" I said. "It is quite intelligible," she replied; "for you yourself would acknowledge that the gods are happy and fair of course you would—would to say that any god was not?" "Certainly not," I replied. "And you mean by the happy, those who are the possessors of things good or fair?" "Yes." "And you admitted that Love, because he was in want, desires those good and fair things of which he is in want?" "Yes, I did." "But how can he be a god who has no portion in what is either good or fair?" "Impossible." "Then you see that you also deny the divinity of Love."

"What then is Love?" I asked; "Is he mortal?" "No." "What then?" "As in the former instance, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two." "What is he, Diotima?" "He is a great spirit (*daimon*), and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal." "And what," I said, "is his power?" "He interprets," she replied, "between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all, prophecy and incantation, find their way. For God mingles not with man; but through Love. all the intercourse, and converse of god with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom, such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these spirits or intermediate powers are many and diverse, and one of them is Love.. . . "

From the reading . . .

"What then is Love?" I asked . . .

"But that which is always flowing in is always flowing out, and so he is never in want and never in wealth; and, further, he is in a mean between ignorance and knowledge. The truth of the matter is this: No god

is a philosopher. or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom. Neither do the ignorant seek after Wisdom. For herein is the evil of ignorance, that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself: he has no desire for that of which he feels no want." "But—who then, Diotima," I said, "are the lovers of wisdom, if they are neither the wise nor the foolish?" "A child may answer that question," she replied; "they are those who are in a mean between the two; Love is one of them. For wisdom is a most beautiful thing, and Love is of the beautiful; and therefore Love is also a philosopher: or lover of wisdom, and being a lover of wisdom is in a mean between the wise and the ignorant. And of this too his birth is the cause; for his father is wealthy and wise, and his mother poor and foolish. Such, my dear Socrates, is the nature of the spirit Love. The error in your conception of him was very natural, and as I imagine from what you say, has arisen out of a confusion of love and the beloved, which made you think that love was all beautiful. For the beloved is the truly beautiful, and delicate, and perfect, and blessed; but the principle of love is of another nature, and is such as I have described."

[Why Beauty Is Desired]

I said, "O thou stranger woman, thou sayest well; but, assuming Love to be such as you say, what is the use of him to men?" "That, Socrates," she replied, "I will attempt to unfold: of his nature and birth I have already spoken; and you acknowledge that love is of the beautiful. But some one will say: Of the beautiful in what, Socrates and Diotima?—or rather let me put the question more dearly, and ask: When a man loves the beautiful, what does he desire?" I answered her "That the beautiful may be his." "Still," she said, "the answer suggests a further question: What is given by the possession of beauty?" "To what you have asked," I replied, "I have no answer ready." "Then," she said, "Let me put the word 'good' in the place of the beautiful, and repeat the question once more: If he who loves good, what is it then that he loves?" "The possession of the good," I said. "And what does he gain who possesses the good?" "Happiness," I replied; "there is less difficulty in answering that question." "Yes," she said, "the happy are made happy by the acquisition of good things. Nor is there any need to ask why a man desires happiness; the answer is already final." "You are right." I said. "And is this wish and this desire common to all? and do all men always desire their own good,

or only some men?—what say you?” “All men,” I replied; “the desire is common to all.” “Why, then,” she rejoined, “are not all men, Socrates, said to love, but only some them? whereas you say that all men are always loving the same things.” “I myself wonder,” I said, “why this is.” “There is nothing to wonder at,” she replied; “the reason is that one part of love is separated off and receives the name of the whole, but the other parts have other names.” “Give an illustration,” I said. She answered me as follows: “There is poetry, which, as you know, is complex; and manifold. All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers.” “Very true.” “Still,” she said, “you know that they are not called poets, but have other names; only that portion of the art which is separated off from the rest, and is concerned with music and metre, is termed poetry, and they who possess poetry in this sense of the word are called poets.” “Very true,” I said. “And the same holds of love. For you may say generally that all desire of good and happiness is only the great and subtle power of love; but they who are drawn towards him by any other path, whether the path of money-making or gymnastics or philosophy, are not called lovers—the name of the whole is appropriated to those whose affection takes one form only—they alone are said to love, or to be lovers.” “I dare say,” I replied, “that you are right.” “Yes,” she added, “and you hear people say that lovers are seeking for their other half; but I say that they are seeking neither for the half of themselves, nor for the whole, unless the half or the whole be also a good. And they will cut off their own hands and feet and cast them away, if they are evil; for they love not what is their own, unless perchance there be some one who calls what belongs to him the good, and what belongs to another the evil. For there is nothing which men love but the good. Is there anything?” “Certainly, I should say, that there is nothing.” “Then,” she said, “the simple truth is, that men love the good.” “Yes,” I said. “To which must be added that they love the possession of the good?” “Yes, that must be added.” “And not only the possession, but the everlasting possession of the good?” “That must be added too.” “Then love,” she said, “may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good?” “That is most true.”

[The Eternal Nature of Love]

“Then if this be the nature of love, can you tell me further,” she said,

"what is the manner of the pursuit? what are they doing who show all this eagerness and heat which is called love? and what is the object which they have in view? Answer me." "Nay, Diotima," I replied, "if I had known, I should not have wondered at your wisdom, neither should I have come to learn from you about this very matter." "Well," she said, "I will teach you:—The object which they have in view is birth in beauty, whether of body or, soul." "I do not understand you," I said; "the oracle requires an explanation." "I will make my meaning dearer," she replied. "I mean to say, that all men are bringing to the birth in their bodies and in their souls. There is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation—procreation which must be in beauty and not in deformity; and this procreation is the union of man and woman, and is a divine thing; for conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature, and in the inharmonious they can never be. But the deformed is always inharmonious with the divine, and the beautiful harmonious. Beauty, then, is the destiny or goddess of parturition who presides at birth, and therefore, when approaching beauty, the conceiving power is propitious, and diffusive, and benign, and begets and bears fruit: at the sight of ugliness she frowns and contracts and has a sense of pain, and turns away, and shrivels up, and not without a pang refrains from conception. And this is the reason why, when the hour of conception arrives, and the teeming nature is full, there is such a flutter and ecstasy about beauty whose approach is the alleviation of the pain of travail. For love, Socrates, is not, as you imagine, the love of the beautiful only." "What then?" "The love of generation and of birth in beauty." "Yes," I said. "Yes, indeed," she replied. "But why of generation?" "Because to the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity and immortality," she replied; "and if, as has been already admitted, love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good: Wherefore love is of immortality."

All this she taught me at various times when she spoke of love. And I remember her once saying to me, "What is the cause, Socrates, of love, and the attendant desire? See you not how all animals, birds, as well as beasts, in their desire of procreation, are in agony when they take the infection of love, which begins with the desire of union; whereto is added the care of offspring, on whose behalf the weakest are ready to battle against the strongest even to the uttermost, and to die for them, and will, let themselves be tormented with hunger or suffer anything in order to maintain their young. Man may be supposed to act thus from reason; but why should animals have these passionate feelings? . . . "

From the reading . . .

Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality.

"Marvel not," she said, "if you believe that love is of the immortal, as we have several times acknowledged; for here again, and on the same principle too, the mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: and this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always leaves behind a new existence in the place of the old. Nay even in the life, of the same individual there is succession and not absolute unity: a man is called the same, and yet in the short interval which elapses between youth and age, and in which every animal is said to have life and identity, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation—hair, flesh, bones, blood, and the whole body are always changing. Which is true not only of the body, but also of the soul, whose habits, tempers, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, never remain the same in any one of us, but are always coming and going; and equally true of knowledge, and what is still more surprising to us mortals, not only do the sciences in general spring up and decay, so that in respect of them we are never the same; but each of them individually experiences a like change. For what is implied in the word 'recollection,' but the departure of knowledge, which is ever being forgotten, and is renewed and preserved by recollection, and appears to be the same although in reality new, according to that law of succession by which all mortal things are preserved, not absolutely the same, but by substitution, the old worn—out mortality leaving another new and similar existence behind unlike the divine, which is always the same and not another? And in this way, Socrates, the mortal body, or mortal anything, partakes of immortality; but the immortal in another way. Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality."

I was astonished at her words, and said: "Is this really true, O thou wise Diotima?" And she answered with all the authority of an accomplished sophist: "Of that, Socrates, you may be assured;—think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are ready to run all risks greater far than they would have for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of toil, and

even to die, for the sake of leaving behind them a name which shall be eternal.. . . "

[Creation and Science of Beauty]

"Those who are pregnant in the body only, betake themselves to women and beget children—this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and giving them the blessedness and immortality which they desire in the future. But souls which are pregnant—for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions?—wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor. But the greatest and fairest sort of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states and families, and which is called temperance and justice. And he who in youth has the seed of these implanted in him and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate. He wanders about seeking beauty that he may beget offspring—for in deformity he will beget nothing—and naturally embraces the beautiful rather than the deformed body; above all when he finds fair and noble and well-nurtured soul, he embraces the two in one person, and to such an one he is full of speech about virtue and the nature and pursuits of a good man; and he tries to educate him; and at the touch of the beautiful which is ever present to his memory, even when absent, he brings forth that which he had conceived long before, and in company with him tends that which he brings forth; and they are married by a far nearer tie and have a closer friendship than those who beget mortal children, for the children who are their common offspring are fairer and more immortal. Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory? . . . "

"These are the lesser mysteries of love, into which even you, Socrates, may enter; to the greater and more hidden ones which are the crown of these, and to which, if you pursue them in a right spirit, they will lead, I know not whether you will be able to attain. But I will do my utmost to inform you, and do you follow if you can. For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form

only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will proceed; please to give me your very best attention:"

"He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven or in earth, or in any other place; but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and

from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates," said the stranger of Mantineia, "is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute . . . "

But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean, pure and dear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?" . . .

Related Ideas

Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry.[3] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A summary article by Charles Griswold analyzing philosophy and poetry in Plato's *Ion*, *Republic*, *Gorgias*, and *Phædrus*.

Plato on Eros and Friendship.[4] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A discussion of the art and psychology of love and friendship in *Lysis* and the *Symposium* by C.D.C. Reeve.

From the reading . . .

"This, my dear Socrates," said the stranger of Mantineia, "is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute. . . "

3. *Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/)
4. *Plato on Eros and Friendship* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-friendship/)

Plato’s Academy Roman Fresco adapted from University of St. Andrews

Topics Worth Investigating

1. It has often been written that Plato opposed a democratic form of government because his teacher Socrates was convicted to death by the Athenian democracy. Plato writes in this reading:

   > The imitative artist … imitates only that which appears to be good to the ignorant multitude.

   To what extent do you think the effects of art upon the emotions of a democratic citizenry influenced Plato’s attitude toward the place of the arts in the Republic?

2. Plato writes that the arts are “thrice removed from the truth”:

   > Thus far then we are pretty well agreed that the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates. Imitation is only a kind of play or sport, and the tragic poets, whether they write in iambic or in Heroic verse, are imitators in the highest degree?

Both Frederich Schiller[5] and George Santayana[6] also describe æsthetic creation as play. Schiller sees play as a synthesis of sensuous and formal impulses; Santayana notes the distinction between work and play in terms of the difference between moral and æsthetic value. How, then, does Plato see art as play? Would he agree that just as children play at being grown-up, so likewise artists play at another kind of pretense? Compare the various senses of "play" among these philosophers.

3. Contrast Socrates' discussion of the rational and irrational principles of soul as expressed first in Book X of *The Republic*, second with Diotima's account of *eros* and wisdom in the *Symposium*, and third in the myth of volition and desire represented as the two horses of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*.
4. What, if any, aspects of Plato's imitative theory of art survive as part of Plotinus' account of beauty in the first *Ennead*, Sixth Tractate? Compare Plotinus' account of Beauty with that of Diotima in the *Symposium*.
5. Explain what kinds of things participate in Forms? Are there different *kinds* of forms, *i.e.*, moral and æsthetic ideals, natural kinds, physical objects, or even opposites to moral and æsthetic ideals (such as forms of evil or the ugly)? Would there be a form of "animal" as well as a form for "horse," "dog," and "man"?[7]
6. Discuss whether or not Socrates' account of Forms in this reading selection is subject to an infinite regress, somethimes termed "Third Man Argument." The argument can be summarized as follows:

   > If a form exists for any collection of things which have something in common (*i.e.*, One Over Many premise) and the form which is the form of the group, itself, is part of the form (*i.e.*, the Self-Predication premise) and the form of the form is not in the collection of things (*i.e.,* Non-identity premise), then Plato's theory is inconsistent.

5. Frederich Schiller. "Letter VXI." *Letters on the Æsthetical Education of Man*. 1794. Trans. Tapio Riikonen and David Widger. In *Literary and Philosophical Essays: French, German and Italian.* New York: Collier. 1910.
6. George Santayana. "The Nature of Beauty. "*The Sense of Beauty*. New York: Scribner's. 1896. Ch 1.
7. *C.f.*, A. E. Taylor. *Plato: The Man and His Work*. London: Methuen, 1926. 518.

Specifically, all instances of beauty are beautiful. But what is beautiful would seem to be another instance of beauty. Consequently, all instances of beauty and what is beautiful would compose a new and higher form of the beautiful. And so, an infinite regress seems to result. The Self-Predication premise and the One Over Many premise seemingly cannot both be true.

7. Plato writes of the goal of the artist:

   > Now let me ask you another question: Which is the art of painting designed to be—an imitation of things as they are, or as they appear—of appearance or of reality?
   >
   > Of appearance.

   And has Socrates conclude:

   > I mean, that you may look at a bed from different points of view, obliquely or directly or from any other point of view, and the bed will appear different, but there is no difference in reality. And the same of all things.

   Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque developed a radically different form of painting in the early twentieth century, labelled Cubism, to create multiple viewpoints instead of a static perspective from one point of view. In this manner, the Cubists hoped to represent more accurately three-dimensional reality. To what extent is the Cubists' attempt to reject the theory of "art as imitation or representation" and to present convincing evidence of the theory of "art as reality" successful?

8. Is Diotima's account of beauty in the *Symposium* consistent with Plato's Theory of Forms? Are the doctrines of immortality and transmigration of the soul consistently described?

Chapter 2
"Art As Idealization" by Aristotle

Aristotle adapted from University of St. Andrews

About the author . . .

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) studied at Plato's Academy for over twenty years. On one occasion when Aristotle was the only student in attendance, Plato lectured anyway—noting in passing that if Aristotle was present, the better half of Athens was present. Upon Plato's death, at the order of Philip of Macedon, Aristotle was required to tutor the young Alexander, the future Alexander the Great. Apparently many years later, Alexander repaid the debt with specimens, supplies, and money garnered from his extensive expeditions. With this support, in 335 B.C. Aristotle founded at the Lyceum (Apollo's Temple), the Peripatetic School so named from the covered walkways. Upon the death of Alexander, Aristotle was suspected of impiety, and he left Athens lest he follow the similar

fate of Socrates' last days.

About the works . . .

These short selections relating to Aristotle's æsthetics are taken from *Nicomachean Ethics*,[1] *Metaphysics*,[2] *Poetics*,[3] and *Rhetoric*.[4] Where Plato plied imaginative insight, Aristotle sought method, classification, and evaluation. Aristotle, as Plato does, argues that the origin of the artistic impulse is imitation. Yet, he thinks that art seeks the universal in the individual representation; hence, art is, in a sense the idealization of nature. Thus, good art does not "just" copy nature. The various arts are distinguished, he thinks, according to the means of rhythm, language, and harmony. The notion of *katharsis*[5] is essential to *mimesis* as the pleasure derived from an essentially cognitive process. For him, art is the product, not the creative process, whose source is intellectual desire and whose effect is more intellectual than emotional. The import of these short reading selections continue to be elucidated in contemporary æsthetic debates.

From the reading . . .

Thus a master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses this—the intermediate not in the object but relatively to us.

1. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. 367-323 B.C. Translated by W.D. Ross. In *The Works of Aristotle*. London: Oxford University Press. 1915. Volume 9.
2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 350 B.C. Translated by W.D. Ross. In *The Works of Aristotle*. London: Oxford University Press. 1915. Volume 9.
3. Aristotle, *Poetics*. 350 B.C. Translated by S.H. Butcher. 3rd. Ed. London: MacMillan & Sons. 1902.
4. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*. 350 B.C. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. London: Oxford University Press. 1924
5. Katharsis is "that moment of insight which arises out of the audience's climactic intellectual, emotional, and spiritual enlightenment, which for Aristotle is both the essential pleasure and essential goal of mimetic art." Leon Golden. *Aristotle on Tragic & Comic Mimesis*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press. 1992. 1.

Ideas of Interest from Aristotle's Æsthetics

1. Explain what Aristotle means when he states that the master of any art seeks excellence through the intermediate relative to us, not the object. What kind of mean forms the standard of good art?
2. What is Aristotle's argument against æsthetic relativity?
3. How does Aristotle distinguish between the good and beautiful? Does Aristotle believe beauty has a formal cause?[6]
4. According to Aristotle what do the various forms of poetry, music, and dance have in common? And how do they differ?
5. How does Aristotle account for the origin of poetry? Is poetry's origin essentially emotional or intellectual? What, according to Aristotle, is the pleasure appropriate to tragedy?
6. Why does Aristotle consider poetry more philosophical than history?
7. What are the main factors Aristotle enumerates as subject for criticism in poetry?
8. What does Aristotle mean when he notes that beauty is relative to the individual in terms of life-span. Is the selected passage from the *Rhetoric* an instance of æsthetic relativism?

Æsthetic Selections

Nicomachean Ethics Bk. II [Æsthetic Standards]

We must, however, not only describe virtue as a state of character, but also say what sort of state it is. We may remark, then, that every virtue or excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is

6. The pattern, shape, or essence or of a thing, and the structural relationships of the parts— for Aristotle, the abstract universal. *Ed.*

the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well; *e.g.* the excellence of the eye makes both the eye and its work good; for it is by the excellence of the eye that we see well. Similarly the excellence of the horse makes a horse both good in itself and good at running and at carrying its rider and at awaiting the attack of the enemy. Therefore, if this is true in every case, the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well.

How this is to happen we have stated already, but it will be made plain also by the following consideration of the specific nature of virtue. In everything that is continuous and divisible it is possible to take more, less, or an equal amount, and that either in terms of the thing itself or relatively to us; and the equal is an intermediate between excess and defect. By the intermediate in the object I mean that which is equidistant from each of the extremes, which is one and the same for all men; by the intermediate relatively to us that which is neither too much nor too little—and this is not one, nor the same for all. For instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the object; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount; this is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion. But the intermediate relatively to us is not to be taken so; if ten pounds are too much for a particular person to eat and two too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds; for this also is perhaps too much for the person who is to take it, or too little- too little for Milo, too much for the beginner in athletic exercises. The same is true of running and wrestling. Thus a master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses this—the intermediate not in the object but relatively to us.

If it is thus, then, that every art does its work well—by looking to the intermediate and judging its works by this standard (so that we often say of good works of art that it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and defect destroy the goodness of works of art, while the mean preserves it; and good artists, as we say, look to this in their work), and if, further, virtue is more exact and better than any art, as nature also is, then virtue must have the quality of aiming at the intermediate. I mean moral virtue; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and

in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Similarly with regard to actions also there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. Now virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and being praised and being successful are both characteristics of virtue. Therefore virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate.

Metaphysics

Bk. XI [Beauty, Not Relative in Things]

The saying of Protagoras is like the views we have mentioned; he said that man is the measure of all things, meaning simply that that which seems to each man also assuredly is. If this is so, it follows that the same thing both is and is not, and is bad and good, and that the contents of all other opposite statements are true, because often a particular thing appears beautiful to some and the contrary of beautiful to others, and that which appears to each man is the measure. This difficulty may be solved by considering the source of this opinion. It seems to have arisen in some cases from the doctrine of the natural philosophers, and in others from the fact that all men have not the same views about the same things, but a particular thing appears pleasant to some and the contrary of pleasant to others.

From the reading . . .

The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree.

That nothing comes to be out of that which is not, but everything out of that which is, is a dogma common to nearly all the natural philosophers. Since, then, white cannot come to be if the perfectly white and in no respect not-white existed before, that which becomes white must come from that which is not white; so that it must come to be out of that which is not (so they argue), unless the same thing was at the beginning white and not-white. But it is not hard to solve this difficulty; for we have said

in our works on physics in what sense things that come to be come to be from that which is not, and in what sense from that which is.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [T]hose who assert that the mathematical sciences say nothing of the beautiful or the good are in error.

But to attend equally to the opinions and the fancies of disputing parties is childish; for clearly one of them must be mistaken. And this is evident from what happens in respect of sensation; for the same thing never appears sweet to some and the contrary of sweet to others, unless in the one case the sense-organ which discriminates the aforesaid flavours has been perverted and injured. And if this is so the one party must be taken to be the measure, and the other must not. And say the same of good and bad, and beautiful and ugly, and all other such qualities. For to maintain the view we are opposing is just like maintaining that the things that appear to people who put their finger under their eye and make the object appear two instead of one must be two (because they appear to be of that number) and again one (for to those who do not interfere with their eye the one object appears one).

Bk. XIII [Forms of Beauty]

Now since the good and the beautiful are different (for the former always implies conduct as its subject, while the beautiful is found also in motionless things), those who assert that the mathematical sciences say nothing of the beautiful or the good are in error. For these sciences say and prove a great deal about them; if they do not expressly mention them, but prove attributes which are their results or their definitions, it is not true to say that they tell us nothing about them. The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree. And since these (*e.g.* order and definiteness) are obviously causes of many things, evidently these sciences must treat this sort of causative principle also (*i.e.* the beautiful) as in some sense a cause.

Poetics

I. "Imitation" The Common Principle of the Arts of Poetry

I propose to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each; to inquire into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry. Following, then, the order of nature, let us begin with the principles which come first.

Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic: poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one: another in three respects,—the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.

For as there are persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form, or again by the voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or "harmony," either singly or combined.

Thus in the music of the flute and of the lyre, "harmony" and rhythm alone are employed; also in other arts, such as that of the shepherd's pipe, which are essentially similar to these. In dancing, rhythm alone is used without "harmony"; for even dancing imitates character, emotion, and action, by rhythmical movement.. . .

Such, then, are the differences of the arts with respect to the medium of imitation.

II. The Objects of Imitation

Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. It is the same in painting.

Polygnotus depicted men as nobler than they are, Pauson as less noble, Dionysius drew them true to life.

Now it is evident that each of the modes of imitation above mentioned will exhibit these differences, and become a distinct kind in imitating objects that are thus distinct. Such diversities may be found even in dancing,: flute-playing, and lyre-playing.. . .

III. The Manner of Imitation

There is still a third difference—the manner in which each of these objects may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration—in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged—or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us.

These, then, as we said at the beginning, are the three differences which distinguish artistic imitation,—the medium, the objects, and the manner.. . .

This may suffice as to the number and nature of the various modes of imitation.

IV. The Origin and Development of Poetry

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, "Ah, that is he." For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the

imitation as such, but to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause.

From the reading . . .

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from . . . two causes . . . [T]he instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood . . . Next, there is the instinct for "harmony" and rhythm . . .

Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for "harmony" and rhythm, metres being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry.. . .

VII The Plot Must Be Whole

. . . Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment of time. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long. As, therefore, in the case of animate bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view; so in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory. The limit of length in relation to dramatic competition and sensuous presentment, is no part of artistic theory. For had it been the rule for a hundred tragedies to compete together, the performance would have been regulated by the water-clock,—as indeed we are told was formerly done. But the limit as fixed by the nature of the drama itself is this: the greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous. And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad.. . .

IX Dramatic Unity

It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen- what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered.. . .

XIV The Tragic Emotions of Pity and Fear Should Spring Out of the Plot Itself [Description of *Katharsis*]

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet. For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes Place. . . . [F]or we must not demand of Tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it. And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon the incidents.. . . [W]hen the tragic incident occurs between those who are near or dear to one another—if, for example, a brother kills, or intends to kill, a brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother, or any other deed of the kind is done-these are the situations to be looked for by the poet.. . .[7]

7. This passage is one of few extant concerning *katharsis* in Aristotle's works; the others are *Politics* (1341b36-1342a16), *Nicomachean Ethics* (1106b16-1106b23), and *Poetics* (1453b8-143b14). *Ed.*

Stage Wall Theater of Dionysus (detail) Library of Congress

XXV. Critical Objections Brought Against Poetry, And The Principles On Which They Are To Be Answered

With respect to critical difficulties and their solutions, the number and nature of the sources from which they may be drawn may be thus exhibited.

The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate one of three objects,—things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be. The vehicle of expression is language,—either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors. There are also many modifications of language, which we concede to the poets. Add to this, that the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics, any more than in poetry and any other art. Within the art of poetry itself there are two kinds of faults, those which touch its essence, and those which are accidental. If a poet has chosen to imitate something, [but has imitated it incorrectly] through want of capacity, the error is inherent in the poetry. But if the failure is due to

a wrong choice if he has represented a horse as throwing out both his off legs at once, or introduced technical inaccuracies in medicine, for example, or in any other art the error is not essential to the poetry. These are the points of view from which we should consider and answer the objections raised by the critics.

First as to matters which concern the poet's own art. If he describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error; but the error may be justified, if the end of the art be thereby attained (the end being that already mentioned), if, that is, the effect of this or any other part of the poem is thus rendered more striking. A case in point is the pursuit of Hector. If, however, the end might have been as well, or better, attained without violating the special rules of the poetic art, the error is not justified: for every kind of error should, if possible, be avoided.

Again, does the error touch the essentials of the poetic art, or some accident of it? For example,—not to know that a hind has no horns is a less serious matter than to paint it inartistically.

Further, if it be objected that the description is not true to fact, the poet may perhaps reply,—"But the objects are as they ought to be": just as Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be; Euripides, as they are. In this way the objection may be met. If, however, the representation be of neither kind, the poet may answer,—"This is how men say the thing is." This applies to tales about the gods. It may well be that these stories are not higher than fact nor yet true to fact: they are, very possibly, what Xenophanes says of them. But anyhow, "this is what is said." Again, a description may be no better than the fact: "still, it was the fact"; as in the passage about the arms: "Upright upon their butt-ends stood the spears." This was the custom then, as it now is among the Illyrians.

Again, in examining whether what has been said or done by some one is poetically right or not, we must not look merely to the particular act or saying, and ask whether it is poetically good or bad. We must also consider by whom it is said or done, to whom, when, by what means, or for what end; whether, for instance, it be to secure a greater good, or avert a greater evil.

Other difficulties may be resolved by due regard to the usage of language.. . .

Sometimes an expression is metaphorical . . .

Again, the solution may depend upon accent or breathing.. . . Or again,

the question may be solved by punctuation … Or again, by ambiguity of meaning … Or by the usage of language … Again, when a word seems to involve some inconsistency of meaning, we should consider how many senses it may bear in the particular passage.

From the reading …

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet.

In general, the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion. With respect to the requirements of art, a probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible. Again, it may be impossible that there should be men such as Zeuxis painted. "Yes," we say, "but the impossible is the higher thing; for the ideal type must surpass the reality." To justify the irrational, we appeal to what is commonly said to be. In addition to which, we urge that the irrational sometimes does not violate reason; just as "it is probable that a thing may happen contrary to probability."

Things that sound contradictory should be examined by the same rules as in dialectical refutation whether the same thing is meant, in the same relation, and in the same sense. We should therefore solve the question by reference to what the poet says himself, or to what is tacitly assumed by a person of intelligence.

The element of the irrational, and, similarly, depravity of character, are justly censured when there is no inner necessity for introducing them. Such is the irrational element in the introduction of Aegeus by Euripides and the badness of Menelaus in the Orestes.

Thus, there are five sources from which critical objections are drawn. Things are censured either as impossible, or irrational, or morally hurtful, or contradictory, or contrary to artistic correctness. The answers should be sought under the twelve heads above mentioned.

Rhetoric Bk. I [Beauty Relative to Us]

Beauty varies with the time of life. In a young man beauty is the possession of a body fit to endure the exertion of running and of contests of strength; which means that he is pleasant to look at; and therefore all-round athletes are the most beautiful, being naturally adapted both for contests of strength and for speed also. For a man in his prime, beauty is fitness for the exertion of warfare, together with a pleasant but at the same time formidable appearance. For an old man, it is to be strong enough for such exertion as is necessary, and to be free from all those deformities of old age which cause pain to others.

From the reading . . .

[T]he virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well.

Related Ideas

Mimesis in Aristotle and Pollock.[8] *PhiloSophos.com*. A discussion of Aristotle's conception of art as *mimesis* in relation to twentieth century abstract art by Andrew Watson.

Aristotle.[9] *Wikipedia*. An excellent summary outline of Aristotle's life, works, and influence.

Aristotle.[10] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. A summary of Aristotle's æsthetics emphasizing the *Poetics* with special attention to *katharsis* by Leon Golden.

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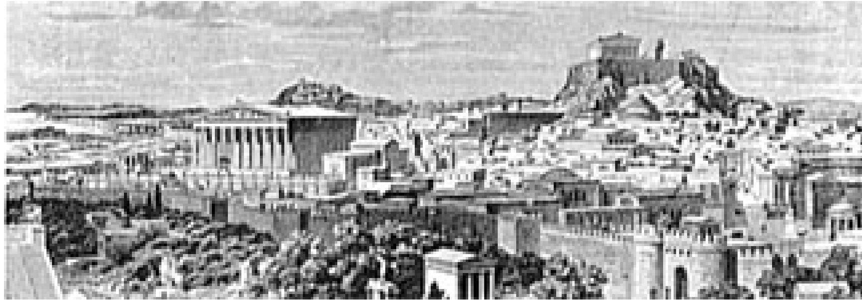
8. *Mimesis in Aristotle. . .* (http://www.philosophos.com/philosophy_article_113.html)
9. *Aristotle* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle)
10. *Aristotle* (http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/free/\
aristotle.html)



Athens, Greece 400 B.C., Theodor Horydazak, Library of Congress

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Compare Aristotle's and Plato'stheories of *mimesis* with respect to truth in art.
2. What is the fundamental basis of the difference between Aristotle's and Addison's doctrine of magnitude? Aristotle writes:

   > [A] beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful . . . Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long. . . . [11]

   Joseph Addison, on the other hand, argues that the intellect dislikes limits and restraints:

   > Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them. The Mind of Man naturally hates every thing that looks like a Restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy it self under a sort of Confinement, when the Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortned on every side by the Neighbourhood of Walls or Mountains.. . . [W]ide and undetermined

11. *Poetics*. VII.

> Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding. [12]

3. *Katharsis* has been interpreted to mean (1) a purging of emotion,[13] (2) a moral purification[14] and (3) an intellectual clarification.[15] In Aristotle's works, how is the notion of *katharsis* best understood?
4. According to Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* the good is that for which all things aim; something is good if it performs its proper function. Moreover, different goods correspond to different arts and sciences. On this view, discuss what would be the good for the arts? What would be the specific excellence or *areté* of art?
5. Contrast Aristotle's mimetic theory with Plato's theory of forms—with special attention to the idea that art is the idealization of nature and the realization of the abstract universal from individual representation.
6. How do you think Aristotle would respond to the nineteenth century æsthetician Eugene Véon's objection to the imitation theory of art:

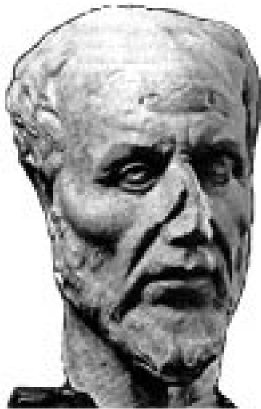
   > If an artist were really able to reduce himself to the condition of a copying machine; if he could so far efface and suppress himself as to confine his work to the servile reproduction of all the features and details of an object or event passing before his eyes: the only value his work would possess would be that of a more or less exact *proès verbal*, and it would perforce remain inferior to reality. Where is the artist who would attempt to depict sunlight without taking refuge in some legerdemain, calling to his aid devices which the true sun would despise?[16]

   Is it possible there is more that one type of imitation?

12. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. 1891. Letter 413.
13. Jacob Bernays. *Articles On Aristotle 4: Psychology and Æsthetics*. Edited by J. Barnes *et. al.* London: Duckworth. 1979. 154-165.
14. G. E. Lessing *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. 1767. Quoted in Bernays, 155.
15. Leon Golden. *Aristotle on Tragic &Comic Mimesis*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press. 1992. 1-3.
16. Eugene Véron, *Æsthetics*. Translated by W.H. Armstrong. London: Colliers. 1879.

Chapter 3

"Authentic Beauty Is Not Sensuous" by Plotinus



Plotinus, Ostia Museum

About the author . . .

Plotinus (203—270 A.D.) began his study of philosophy in Alexandria in his late twenties. When he was almost forty years old, he joined Emperor Gordian III's expedition against the Persians in order to experience Persian and Indian Philosophy. His philosophical writings were very much influenced by Plato as well as Indian Philosophy; he sought mystical union with the Good or the One. Interestingly, he asked to have two cities in Campania rebuilt by the Emperor Gallienus in order to test the practical applications of governing in accordance with the ideal laws of Plato. The Emperor feared however that the establishment of "Platonopolis" might undermine his authority.

About the work . . .

In his chapter on beauty in *The Enneads*[1]Plotinus rejects the Stoic belief that beauty is in the symmetry of things; instead, he believes divine thought or ideal-form is the source of beauty in objects. He describes music, love, and metaphysics are three ways of manifesting the truth of absolute and infinite beauty. Plotinus is sometimes cited as the first philosopher to develop a mystical, romantic æsthetics. His metaphysics is described as NeoPlatonism—the philosophy that the existence of all things emanates from the Ideal Form of the Good. Reality is not material or physical but composed of objective Ideas.

From the reading . . .

" . . . all the virtues are a beauty of the soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of these others . . . "

Ideas of Interest from *The Enneads*

1. What does Plotinus describe as the natural beginning to the study of beauty?
2. Clearly state Plotinus' argument against the belief that beauty is the pattern or symmetry in objects.
3. According to Plotinus, what is the source of beauty in this world? Why is this so? Also explain how he accounts for the origin of ugliness and evil in the everyday world.

1. Plotinus, "Beauty". In *The Enneads*. Translated by Stephen Mackenna and B. S. Page. London: Faber and Faber. 1917-1924. First Ennead, Sixth Tractate.

4. Characterize Plotinus' characterization of man's perceptive faculty—the discernment of the beauty in natural and cultural objects.
5. According to Plotinus, how does a soul become corrupted?
6. On Plotinus' view, what is authentic beauty and how is it related to the Good? Is the Good an end-in-itself or a means to an end? Does he characterize love as an end-in-itself or as a means to an end?
7. Contrast the beauty found through the perceptive faculty and the beauty found through "inner vision." According to Plotinus, how does one develop the ability of inner vision?
8. How does Plotinus relate the principles of the Good, the Beautiful, the True, with the Divine or God?

The Reading Selection from *The Enneads*

1. [Beauty Is Not Based on Symmetry or Pattern]

Beauty addresses itself chiefly to sight; but there is a beauty for the hearing too, as in certain combinations of words and in all kinds of music, for melodies and cadences are beautiful; and minds that lift themselves above the realm of sense to a higher order are aware of beauty in the conduct of life, in actions, in character, in the pursuits of the intellect; and there is the beauty of the virtues. What loftier beauty there may be, yet, our argument will bring to light.

What, then, is it that gives comeliness to material forms and draws the ear to the sweetness perceived in sounds, and what is the secret of the beauty there is in all that derives from Soul? . . .

Consider that some things, material shapes for instance, are gracious not by anything inherent but by something communicated, while others are lovely of themselves, as, for example, Virtue.

The same bodies appear sometimes beautiful, sometimes not; so that there is a good deal between being body and being beautiful.

What, then, is this something that shows itself in certain material forms? This is the natural beginning of our enquiry.

What is it that attracts the eyes of those to whom a beautiful object is presented, and calls them, lures them, towards it, and fills them with joy at the sight? If we possess ourselves of this, we have at once a standpoint for the wider survey.

Almost everyone declares that the symmetry of parts towards each other and towards a whole, with, besides, a certain charm of colour, constitutes the beauty recognized by the eye, that in visible things, as indeed in all else, universally, the beautiful thing is essentially symmetrical, patterned.

But think what this means. . . .

All the loveliness of colour and even the light of the sun, being devoid of parts and so not beautiful by symmetry, must be ruled out of the realm of beauty. And how comes gold to be a beautiful thing? And lightning by night, and the stars, why are these so fair?

In sounds also the simple must be proscribed, though often in a whole noble composition each of several tones is delicious in itself.

Again since the one face, constant in symmetry, appears sometimes fair and sometimes not, can we doubt that beauty is something more than symmetry, that symmetry itself owes its beauty to a remoter principle?

Turn to what is attractive in methods of life or in the expression of thought; are we to call in symmetry here? What symmetry is to be found in noble conduct, or excellent laws, in any form of mental pursuit?

What symmetry can there be in points of abstract thought? . . .

Then again, all the virtues are a beauty of the soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of these others; but how does symmetry enter here? The soul, it is true, is not a simple unity, but still its virtue cannot have the symmetry of size or of number: what standard of measurement could preside over the compromise or the coalescence of the soul's faculties or purposes?

Finally, how by this theory would there be beauty in the Intellectual-Principle, essentially the solitary?

2. [The Source of Beauty in the World]

Let us, then, go back to the source, and indicate at once the Principle that bestows beauty on material things. . . .

We hold that all the loveliness of this world comes by communion in Ideal-Form.

All shapelessness whose kind admits of pattern and form, as long as it remains outside of Reason and Idea, is ugly by that very isolation from the Divine-Thought. And this is the Absolute Ugly: an ugly thing is something that has not been entirely mastered by pattern, that is by Reason, the Matter not yielding at all points and in all respects to Ideal-Form.

But where the Ideal-Form has entered, it has grouped and coordinated what from a diversity of parts was to become a unity: it has rallied confusion into co-operation: it has made the sum one harmonious coherence: for the Idea is a unity and what it moulds must come to unity as far as multiplicity may.

And on what has thus been compacted to unity, Beauty enthrones itself, giving itself to the parts as to the sum: when it lights on some natural unity, a thing of like parts, then it gives itself to that whole. Thus, for an illustration, there is the beauty, conferred by craftsmanship, of all a house with all its parts, and the beauty which some natural quality may give to a single stone.

This, then, is how the material thing becomes beautiful— by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine.

3. [Unity in Diversity]

And the soul includes a faculty peculiarly addressed to Beauty-one incomparably sure in the appreciation of its own, never in doubt whenever any lovely thing presents itself for judgement.

Or perhaps the soul itself acts immediately, affirming the Beautiful where it finds something accordant with the Ideal-Form within itself, using this Idea as a canon of accuracy in its decision.

But what accordance is there between the material and that which antedates all Matter?

On what principle does the architect, when he finds the house standing before him correspondent with his inner ideal of a house, pronounce it beautiful? Is it not that the house before him, the stones apart, is the inner idea stamped upon the mass of exterior matter, the indivisible exhibited in diversity?

So with the perceptive faculty: discerning in certain objects the Ideal-Form which has bound and controlled shapeless matter, opposed in nature to Idea, seeing further stamped upon the common shapes some shape excellent above the common, it gathers into unity what still remains fragmentary, catches it up and carries it within, no longer a thing of parts, and presents it to the Ideal-Principle as something concordant and congenial, a natural friend: the joy here is like that of a good man who discerns in a youth the early signs of a virtue consonant with the achieved perfection within his own soul.

From the reading . . .

"It is that you find in yourself, or admire in another, loftiness of spirit; righteousness of life; disciplined purity; courage of the majestic face; gravity; modesty that goes fearless and tranquil and passionless; and, shining down upon all, the light of god-like Intellection."

The beauty of colour is also the outcome of a unification: it derives from shape, from the conquest of the darkness inherent in Matter by the pouring-in of light, the unembodied, which is a Rational-Principle and an Ideal-Form. . . .

And harmonies unheard in sound create the harmonies we hear, and wake the soul to the consciousness of beauty, showing it the one essence in another kind: for the measures of our sensible music are not arbitrary but are determined by the Principle whose labour is to dominate Matter and bring pattern into being. . . .

4. [Beauty Induces the Spirit of Love]

. . . As it is not for those to speak of the graceful forms of the material world who have never seen them or known their grace. . . .

Such vision is for those only who see with the Soul's sight—and at the vision, they will rejoice, and awe will fall upon them and a trouble deeper than all the rest could ever stir, for now they are moving in the realm of Truth.

This is the spirit that Beauty must ever induce, wonderment and a delicious trouble, longing and love and a trembling that is all delight. For the unseen all this may be felt as for the seen; and this the Souls feel for it, every soul in some degree, but those the more deeply that are the more truly apt to this higher love—just as all take delight in the beauty of the body but all are not stung as sharply, and those only that feel the keener wound are known as Lovers.

5. [The Ugly As Descent Into Matter]

These Lovers, then, lovers of the beauty outside of sense, must be made to declare themselves.

What do you feel in presence of the grace you discern in actions, in manners, in sound morality, in all the works and fruits of virtue, in the beauty of souls? When you see that you yourselves are beautiful within, what do you feel? What is this Dionysiac exultation that thrills through your being, this straining upwards of all your Soul, this longing to break away from the body and live sunken within the veritable self?

These are no other than the emotions of Souls under the spell of love.

But what is it that awakens all this passion? No shape, no colour, no grandeur of mass: all is for a Soul, something whose beauty rests upon no colour, for the moral wisdom the Soul enshrines and all the other hueless splendour of the virtues. It is that you find in yourself, or admire in another, loftiness of spirit; righteousness of life; disciplined purity; courage of the majestic face; gravity; modesty that goes fearless and tranquil and passionless; and, shining down upon all, the light of god-like Intellection. . . .

Let us take the contrary, the ugliness of the Soul, and set that against its beauty: to understand, at once, what this ugliness is and how it comes to appear in the Soul will certainly open our way before us.

Let us then suppose an ugly Soul, dissolute, unrighteous: teeming with all the lusts; torn by internal discord; beset by the fears of its cowardice and

the envies of its pettiness; thinking, in the little thought it has, only of the perish able and the base; perverse in all its the friend of unclean pleasures; living the life of abandonment to bodily sensation and delighting in its deformity. . . .

An unclean thing, I dare to say; flickering hither and thither at the call of objects of sense, deeply infected with the taint of body, occupied always in Matter, and absorbing Matter into itself; in its commerce with the Ignoble it has trafficked away for an alien nature its own essential Idea. . . .

So, we may justly say, a Soul becomes ugly—by something foisted upon it, by sinking itself into the alien, by a fall, a descent into body, into Matter. The dishonour of the Soul is in its ceasing to be clean and apart. Gold is degraded when it is mixed with earthy particles; if these be worked out, the gold is left and is beautiful, isolated from all that is foreign, gold with gold alone. And so the Soul; let it be but cleared of the desires that come by its too intimate converse with the body, emancipated from all the passions, purged of all that embodiment has thrust upon it, withdrawn, a solitary, to itself again—in that moment the ugliness that came only from the alien is stripped away.

From the reading . . .

"These are no other than the emotions of Souls under the spell of love."

6. [*Sophrosyne*]

For, as the ancient teaching was, moral-discipline and courage and every virtue, not even excepting Wisdom itself, all is purification.. . .

Courage is but being fearless of the death which is but the parting of the Soul from the body, an event which no one can dread whose delight is to be his unmingled self. And Magnanimity is but disregard for the lure of things here. And Wisdom is but the Act of the Intellectual-Principle withdrawn from the lower places and leading the Soul to the Above.

The Soul thus cleansed is all Idea and Reason, wholly free of body, intellective, entirely of that divine order from which the wellspring of Beauty

rises and all the race of Beauty.

Hence the Soul heightened to the Intellectual-Principle is beautiful to all its power. For Intellection and all that proceeds from Intellection are the Soul’s beauty, a graciousness native to it and not foreign, for only with these is it truly Soul. And it is just to say that in the Soul’s becoming a good and beautiful thing is its becoming like to God, for from the Divine comes all the Beauty and all the Good in beings.

We may even say that Beauty is the Authentic-Existents and Ugliness is the Principle contrary to Existence: and the Ugly is also the primal evil; therefore its contrary is at once good and beautiful, or is Good and Beauty: and hence the one method will discover to us the Beauty-Good and the Ugliness-Evil.

And Beauty, this Beauty which is also The Good, must be posed as The First: directly deriving from this First is the Intellectual-Principle which is pre-eminently the manifestation of Beauty; through the Intellectual-Principle Soul is beautiful. The beauty in things of a lower order-actions and pursuits for instance—comes by operation of the shaping Soul which is also the author of the beauty found in the world of sense. For the Soul, a divine thing, a fragment as it were of the Primal Beauty, makes beautiful to the fulness of their capacity all things whatsoever that it grasps and moulds.

7. [The Struggle for the Absolute Beauty of the Good]

Therefore we must ascend again towards the Good, the desired of every Soul. Anyone that has seen This, knows what I intend when I say that it is beautiful. Even the desire of it is to be desired as a Good. To attain it is for those that will take the upward path, who will set all their forces towards it, who will divest themselves of all that we have put on in our descent . . . until, passing, on the upward way, all that is other than the God, each in the solitude of himself shall behold that solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, that from Which all things depend, for Which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being.

And one that shall know this vision—with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be molten into

one with This, what wondering delight! If he that has never seen this Being must hunger for It as for all his welfare, he that has known must love and reverence It as the very Beauty; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror; he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire; all other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair.

This, indeed, is the mood even of those who, having witnessed the manifestation of Gods or Supernals, can never again feel the old delight in the comeliness of material forms: what then are we to think of one that contemplates Absolute Beauty in Its essential integrity, no accumulation of flesh and matter, no dweller on earth or in the heavens—so perfect Its purity—far above all such things in that they are non-essential, composite, not primal but descending from This?

Beholding this Being—the *Choragos* of all Existence, the Self-Intent that ever gives forth and never takes—resting, rapt, in the vision and possession of so lofty a loveliness, growing to Its likeness, what Beauty can the soul yet lack? For This, the Beauty supreme, the absolute, and the primal, fashions Its lovers to Beauty and makes them also worthy of love.

And for This, the sternest and the uttermost combat is set before the Souls; all our labour is for This, lest we be left without part in this noblest vision, which to attain is to be blessed in the blissful sight, which to fail of is to fail utterly. . . .

8. [Inner Vision]

But what must we do? How lies the path? How come to vision of the inaccessible Beauty, dwelling as if in consecrated precincts, apart from the common ways where all may see, even the profane?

He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away for ever from the material beauty that once made his joy. When he perceives those shapes of grace that show in body, let him not pursue: he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows, and hasten away towards that they tell of . . .

. . . all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see: you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use.

9. [Training the Soul]

And this inner vision, what is its operation?

Newly awakened it is all too feeble to bear the ultimate splendour. Therefore the Soul must be trained—to the habit of remarking, first, all noble pursuits, then the works of beauty produced not by the labour of the arts but by the virtue of men known for their goodness: lastly, you must search the souls of those that have shaped these beautiful forms.

But how are you to see into a virtuous soul and know its loveliness?

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smoothes there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty and never cease chiselling your statue, until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness surely established in the stainless shrine.

When you know that you have become this perfect work, when you are self-gathered in the purity of your being, nothing now remaining that can shatter that inner unity, nothing from without clinging to the authentic man, when you find yourself wholly true to your essential nature, wholly that only veritable Light which is not measured by space, not narrowed to any circumscribed form nor again diffused as a thing void of term, but ever unmeasurable as something greater than all measure and more than all quantity—when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision: now call up all your confidence, strike forward yet a step—you need a guide no longer—strain, and see.

From the reading . . .

"When you know that you have become this perfect work . . . nothing from without clinging to the authentic man . . . when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision"

This is the only eye that sees the mighty Beauty. If the eye that adventures the vision be dimmed by vice, impure, or weak, and unable in its cowardly blenching to see the uttermost brightness, then it sees nothing even

though another point to what lies plain to sight before it. To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sun-like, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful.

Therefore, first let each become godlike and each beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty. So, mounting, the Soul will come first to the Intellectual-Principle and survey all the beautiful Ideas in the Supreme and will avow that this is Beauty, that the Ideas are Beauty. For by their efficacy comes all Beauty else, but the offspring and essence of the Intellectual-Being. What is beyond the Intellectual-Principle we affirm to be the nature of Good radiating Beauty before it. So that, treating the Intellectual-Kosmos as one, the first is the Beautiful: if we make distinction there, the Realm of Ideas constitutes the Beauty of the Intellectual Sphere; and The Good, which lies beyond, is the Fountain at once and Principle of Beauty: the Primal Good and the Primal Beauty have the one dwelling-place and, thus, always, Beauty’s seat is There.

Related Ideas

Chain of Being.[2] in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. The Great Chain of Being is traced through the history of metaphysics, religion, and natural science.

A.O. Lovejoy. *The Great Chain of Being*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. 1953.

Perfectibility of Man.[3] in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. The concept of perfectibility of man is described from the æsthetic, transcendental, functional, and historical standpoints.

Plotinus.[4] in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The life and works of Plotinus are discussed with sections on his metaphysics, epistemology and ethics.

2. “Chain of Being” (http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhiana.cgi?id=dv1-45)
3. “Perfectibility” (http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhiana.cgi?id=dv3-57)
4. “Plotinus” (http://www.iep.utm.edu/p/plotinus.htm)

“Plotinus”[5] in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The life and writings of Plotinus are summarized with emphasis on his metaphysics, psychology, and axiology.

Great Chain of Being Didacus Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana*, 1579

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> “Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful. ”

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Are Absolute-Beauty and Absolute-Ugly polar opposites or is the Ugly merely the absence of a Principle or Ideal-Form? Is matter the polar opposite of the Divine for Plotinus? Note that Plotinus states,

5. “Plotinus” (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plotinus/)

"... Beauty is the Authentic-Existents and Ugliness is the Principle contrary to Existence: and the Ugly is also the primal evil ..."

2. If, as Plotinus writes, "... soul includes a faculty peculiarly addressed to Beauty-one incomparably sure in the appreciation of its own, never in doubt whenever any lovely thing presents itself for judgement," then how does Plotinus account for disparate views of what is beautiful?

3. Leibniz describes the beauty of music in a manner similar to Plotinus's description. Plotinus writes of the soundless origins of the beautiful in music:

 > And harmonies unheard in sound create the harmonies we hear, and wake the soul to the consciousness of beauty, showing it the one essence in another kind: for the measures of our sensible music are not arbitrary but are determined by the Principle whose labour is to dominate Matter and bring pattern into being.

 Leibniz notes that the beauty in music is that of intellect:

 > The pleasures of the *senses* themselves come down in the end to *intellectual* pleasures—they strike us as sensory rather that intellectual only because they are known in a confused way. Music that we hear can charms us, even though its beauty consists only in relations among numbers, and in the way the beats or vibrations of the sounding body return to the same frequency at certain intervals. (We are not *aware* of the numbers of these beats, but the soul counts them all the same!) Our pleasure in the proportions of things we see are of the same kind; and those that the other senses produce will come down to something similar, even though we could not explain them so straightforwardly.[6]

 Contrast these two theories of the beauty in music.

4. Compare Plotinus' description of the perceptive faulty with Aristotle's notion of the active intellect (the understanding of the intelligible structure of the world) and Lord Shaftesbury's description of a special faculty called the "moral sense" which "feels the soft and harsh, the agreeable and disagreeable, in the affections; and finds a foul and fair, a harmonious and a dissonant, as really and truly here,

6. G. W. Leibniz. *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*. Trans. Jonathan Bennett. ¶17.

as in any musical numbers, or in the outward forms or representations of sensible things."[7]

5. Do you think that Plotinus believes in "the perfectibility of man"? Or does his philosophy imply that the "authentic" person, what he terms "the perfect work," becomes the inner vision itself, apart from physical representation?

6. Clarify in some detail to what extent Plotinus would agree with Francis Hutcheson's view of relative or comparative beauty:

   > Deformity is only the absence of Beauty, or deficiency in the Beauty expected in any Species.[8]

   Plotinus states the relation between beauty and ugliness in the manner:

   > We may even say that Beauty is the Authentic-Existents and Ugliness is the Principle contrary to Existence: and the Ugly is also the primal evil; therefore its contrary is at once good and beautiful, or is Good and Beauty: and hence the one method will discover to us the Beauty-Good and the Ugliness-Evil.[9]

   More precisely, is the divergence between these two æstheticians's explication of "Good" a difference in degree or a difference in kind?

7. Earl of Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper). *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. 1711. II, 83.
8. Francis Hutcheson. *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*. Part I of *An Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. London: J. Barby, *et. al.* 1725. VI: I.
9. Plotinus, ¶ 7.

Chapter 4

"Beauty is a Kind of Knowledge" by Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas Geldsetzer, *Philosophengalerie: Bildnesse van Philosophen 11-17 Jahrhundert*

About the author . . .

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275) is generally considered to be the most prominent thinker during the Medieval period. The formative influence on his philosophy was the study of Aristotle under Albertus Magnus, a student of the newly discovered writings of "the Philosopher's" writings. Thomas, although primarily a theologian, argues philosophically in many of his works and clearly distinguishes between the methods of philosophy and religion. He uses the scientific thought of Aristotle as

a method of theological and philosophical understanding. Nevertheless, for Thomas, philosophy is primarily based on the use of reason, whereas religion is primarily based on the use of divine revelation provided by faith. Both kinds of knowledge, according to Thomas, are consistent and compatible. He is convinced metaphysics is the most important aspect of philosophy.

About the work . . .

In his *Summa Theologica*,[1] Thomas Aquinas assumes an essentially Aristotelian theory of beauty as the contemplation of that which pleases. His æsthetic doctrines can, to some extent, be extracted from his theology, although his remarks about beauty are brief. A thorough understanding of medieval philosophy is not essential to understand the influence of his thought on what constitutes beauty. Thomas lists three essential conditions of beauty: integrity, proportion, and clarity. He notes that beauty is not entirely sensuous since, although sight and hearing are cognitive senses and we do speak of beautiful sights and sounds, “we do not speak of beautiful tastes, and beautiful odors.” Finally, Thomas distinguishes between beauty of the body (proportion and clarity) and beauty of the spirit (virtue or honesty). Beauty, for Thomas, is not a subjective response or an intellectual concept; beauty in existent things is objectively or actually perceived through a cognitive process of seeing or hearing.

From the reading . . .

Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty.

1. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Bros. 1947.

Ideas of Interest from *Summa Theologica*

1. Are goodness and being two aspects of the same form for Thomas?
2. What does Thomas believe the final cause of goodness to be? What is it’s formal cause?
3. How does Thomas distinguish between goodness and beauty? In what ways are goodness and beauty the same? What does Thomas mean by saying beauty is a formal cause?
4. How does Thomas explain the teleology of desire or appetite?
5. What does Thomas list as the three conditions of beauty?
6. What is Thomas’ argument that beauty is related to the intellect?
7. How does Thomas distinguish good for the body and good for the soul?
8. How does Thomas explain the relation among beauty, love, and honesty?

The Reading Selection from *Summa Theologica*

I, Q5 Of Goodness in General, A1 Whether goodness and being are the same really?

“Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea; which is clear from the following argument. The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* i): Goodness is what all desire.” Now it is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. But everything is perfect so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual, as is clear from the foregoing . . .). Hence it is clear that goodness and being

are the same really. But goodness presents the aspect of desirableness, which being does not present.

I, Q5 of Goodness in General, A4 Whether goodness has the aspect of a final cause?

Since goodness is that which all things desire, and since this has the aspect of an end, it is clear that goodness implies the aspect of an end. Nevertheless, the idea of goodness presupposes the idea of an efficient cause, and also of a formal cause. For we see that what is first in causing, is last in the thing caused. Fire, *e.g.* heats first of all before it reproduces the form of fire; though the heat in the fire follows from its substantial form. Now in causing, goodness and the end come first, both of which move the agent to act; secondly, the action of the agent moving to the form; thirdly, comes the form. Hence in that which is caused the converse ought to take place, so that there should be first, the form whereby it is a being; secondly, we consider in it its effective power, whereby it is perfect in being, for a thing is perfect when it can reproduce its like, as the Philosopher says (*Meteor.* iv); thirdly, there follows the formality of goodness which is the basic principle of its perfection.

From the reading . . .

[S]ince knowledge is by assimilation, and similarity relates to form, beauty properly belongs to the nature of a formal cause.

Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty. But they differ logically, for goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire); and therefore it has the aspect of an end (the appetite being a kind of movement towards a thing). On the other hand, beauty relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen. Hence beauty consists in due proportion; for the senses delight in things duly proportioned, as in what is after their own kind—because even sense is a sort of reason, just as is every cognitive faculty. Now since knowledge is by assimilation, and similarity relates to form, beauty properly belongs to the nature of a formal cause.

I, Q5 Of Goodness in General, A6 Whether goodness is divided into the virtuous, the useful and the pleasant?

This division properly concerns human goodness. But if we consider the nature of goodness from a higher and more universal point of view, we shall find that this division properly concerns goodness as such. For everything is good so far as it is desirable, and is a term of the movement of the appetite; the term of whose movement can be seen from a consideration of the movement of a natural body. Now the movement of a natural body is terminated by the end absolutely; and relatively by the means through which it comes to the end, where the movement ceases; so a thing is called a term of movement, so far as it terminates any part of that movement. Now the ultimate term of movement can be taken in two ways, either as the thing itself towards which it tends, *e.g.* a place or form; or a state of rest in that thing. Thus, in the movement of the appetite, the thing desired that terminates the movement of the appetite relatively, as a means by which something tends towards another, is called the useful; but that sought after as the last thing absolutely terminating the movement of the appetite, as a thing towards which for its own sake the appetite tends, is called the virtuous; for the virtuous is that which is desired for its own sake; but that which terminates the movement of the appetite in the form of rest in the thing desired, is called the pleasant.

Part I, Question 39 Of Persons in Relation to the Essence, Article 8 Which attributes shoud be be appropriated to each person?

Species or beauty has a likeness to the property of the Son. For beauty includes three conditions, "integrity" or "perfection," since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due "proportion" or "harmony"; and lastly, "brightness" or "clarity," whence things are called beautiful which have a bright color. . . .

I, Q91 The Production of the First Man's

Body, A3 Whether the body of man was given an apt disposition?

All natural things were produced by the Divine art, and so may be called God's works of art. Now every artist intends to give to his work the best disposition; not absolutely the best, but the best as regards the proposed end; and even if this entails some defect, the artist cares not: thus, for instance, when man makes himself a saw for the purpose of cutting, he makes it of iron, which is suitable for the object in view; and he does not prefer to make it of glass, though this be a more beautiful material, because this very beauty would be an obstacle to the end he has in view. Therefore God gave to each natural being the best disposition; not absolutely so, but in the view of its proper end. This is what the Philosopher says (*Phys.* ii, 7): "And because it is better so, not absolutely, but for each one's substance."

II, First Part, Q2 Of Those Things in Which Man's Happiness Consists, Q6 Whether man's happiness consists in pleasure?

Because bodily delights are more generally known, "the name of pleasure has been appropriated to them" (*Ethic.* vii, 13), although other delights excel them: and yet happiness does not consist in them. Because in every thing, that which pertains to its essence is distinct from its proper accident: thus in man it is one thing that he is a mortal rational animal, and another that he is a risible animal. We must therefore consider that every delight is a proper accident resulting from happiness, or from some part of happiness; since the reason that a man is delighted is that he has some fitting good, either in reality, or in hope, or at least in memory. Now a fitting good, if indeed it be the perfect good, is precisely man's happiness: and if it is imperfect, it is a share of happiness, either proximate, or remote, or at least apparent. Therefore it is evident that neither is delight, which results from the perfect good, the very essence of happiness, but something resulting therefrom as its proper accident.

But bodily pleasure cannot result from the perfect good even in that way. For it results from a good apprehended by sense, which is a power of the soul, which power makes use of the body. Now good pertaining to the body, and apprehended by sense, cannot be man's perfect good. For

since the rational soul excels the capacity of corporeal matter, that part of the soul which is independent of a corporeal organ, has a certain infinity in regard to the body and those parts of the soul which are tied down to the body: just as immaterial things are in a way infinite as compared to material things, since a form is, after a fashion, contracted and bounded by matter, so that a form which is independent of matter is, in a way, infinite. Therefore sense, which is a power of the body, knows the singular, which is determinate through matter: whereas the intellect, which is a power independent of matter, knows the universal, which is abstracted from matter, and contains an infinite number of singulars. Consequently it is evident that good which is fitting to the body, and which causes bodily delight through being apprehended by sense, is not man's perfect good, but is quite a trifle as compared with the good of the soul. Hence it is written (*Wis.* 7:9) that "all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand." And therefore bodily pleasure is neither happiness itself, nor a proper accident of happiness.

II, First Part, Q27 A1 Whether good is the only cause of love?

. . . Love belongs to the appetitive power which is a passive faculty. Wherefore its object stands in relation to it as the cause of its movement or act. Therefore the cause of love must needs be love's object. Now the proper object of love is the good; because, as stated above . . . , love implies a certain connaturalness or complacency of the lover for the thing beloved, and to everything, that thing is a good, which is akin and proportionate to it. It follows, therefore, that good is the proper cause of love.

The beautiful is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire, by being seen or known. Consequently those senses chiefly regard the beautiful, which are the most cognitive, *viz.* sight and hearing, as ministering to reason; for we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds. But in reference to the other objects of the other senses, we do not use the expression "beautiful," for we do not speak of beautiful tastes, and beautiful odors. Thus it is evident that beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty: so that "good" means that which simply pleases the appetite; while the "beautiful" is something pleasant to apprehend.

II, First Part, Q27 Of the Cause of Love, A2 Whether knowledge is a cause of love?

As stated above ... good is the cause of love, as being its object. But good is not the object of the appetite, except as apprehended. And therefore love demands some apprehension of the good that is loved. For this reason the Philosopher (*Ethic.* ix, 5,12) says that bodily sight is the beginning of sensitive love: and in like manner the contemplation of spiritual beauty or goodness is the beginning of spiritual love. Accordingly knowledge is the cause of love for the same reason as good is, which can be loved only if known.

II, Second Part, Q145 Of Honesty, A2 Whether the honest is the same as the beautiful?

As may be gathered from the words of Dionysius (*Div. Nom.* iv), beauty or comeliness results from the concurrence of clarity and due proportion. For he states that God is said to be beautiful, as being "the cause of the harmony and clarity of the universe." Hence the beauty of the body consists in a man having his bodily limbs well proportioned, together with a certain clarity of color. In like manner spiritual beauty consists in a man's conduct or actions being well proportioned in respect of the spiritual clarity of reason. Now this is what is meant by honesty, which we have stated ... to be the same as virtue; and it is virtue that moderates according to reason all that is connected with man. Wherefore "honesty is the same as spiritual beauty." Hence Augustine says ...: "By honesty I mean intelligible beauty, which we properly designate as spiritual," and further on he adds that "many things are beautiful to the eye, which it would be hardly proper to call honest."

Related Ideas

Saint Thomas Aquinas.[2] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The

2. *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aquinas/)

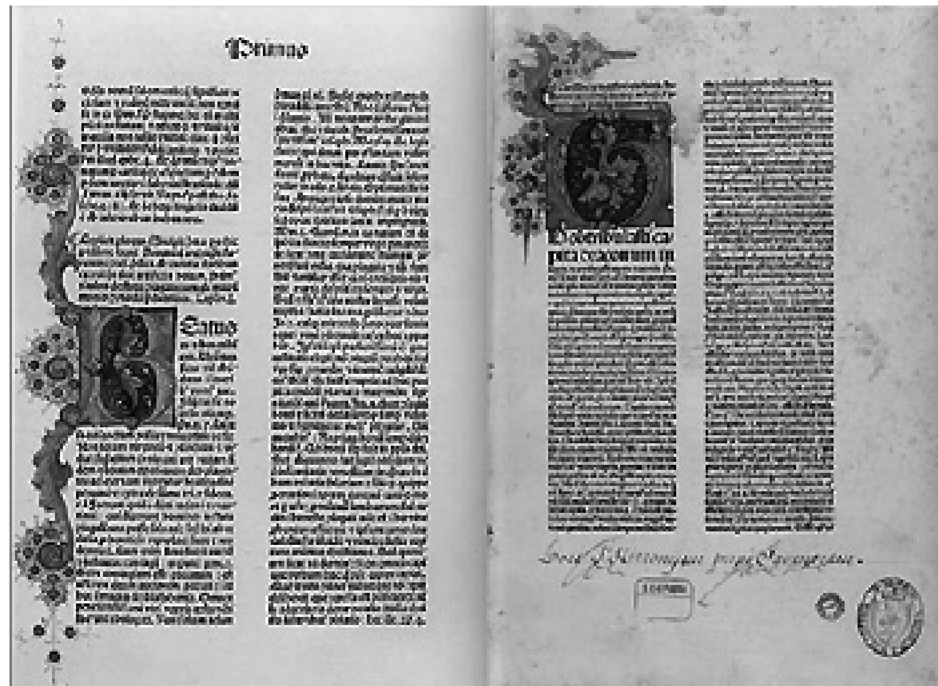
life, philosophical writings, and bibliograhpy of Thomas are clearly and skillfully discussed by Ralph McInery and John O'Callaghan.

Thomas Aquinas in English.[3] *Duquesne University*. Links to translated works by Thomas listed by categories by Thérèse Bonin.

Umberto Ecco. *The Æsthetics of Thomas Aquinas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1988.

From the reading . . .

[B]eauty relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen.



Summa Theologica, I, Franz Renner, 1474; Niccolò III, Jenson, 1477

3. *Thomas Aquinas*. (http://www.home.duq.edu/%7Ebonin/thomasbibliography.html)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. For Thomas, since beauty is what pleases when contemplated or seen, what is seen or contemplated is the form. Consequently, experiencing beauty is a cognitive process. Clarify Thomas' idea that beauty is not intuited but is an object of an "intellectual sense."
2. Contrast Hume's empiricist or, as it is sometimes described, subjective account[4] of æsthetic experience with Thomas' realist,[5] objective explanation of æsthetic experience.
3. The last of the conditions of beauty Thomas details is "'brightness' or 'clarity,' whence things are called beautiful which have a bright color." Yet many of Mark Rothko's paintings are noted for their indeterminate shapes and muted colors. Rothko is quoted as stating, "Mute icons are the only kind of beauty we find acceptable today," and claims that he seeks to communicate basic human emotions. Explain carefuly whether or not Thomas would argue that the successful communication of basic human emotions in art does not necessitate the art being beautiful or whether he would conclude, " this very beauty would be an obstacle to the end he has in view."[6]
4. Thoroughly explain according to Thomas how beauty can be a defect in the objects of nature.

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4. David Hume. "Of the Standard of Taste." In *Four Dissertations*. London: A. Millar. 1757.
5. Aristotelian realism includes the view that human beings percieve the universal and real forms of order in nature—in the things themselves. Platonic realism is the view that universal or real forms of objects exist apart from the objects in nature as objective Ideas or Concepts. *Ed.*
6. *Summa*, I, 91, 3.

Chapter 5
“Pleasures of the Imagination” by Joseph Addison

Joseph Addison, (detail) portrait by Michael Dahl, Library of Congress

About the author...

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) studied classics at Queen’s College, Oxford and subsequently became a Fellow of Magdalen College. During his life, he held several governmental posts but is perhaps best known for his founding of the daily *The Spectator* with Richard Steele. Addison’s *Cato*, a play tracing the Roman statesman and stoic Cato’s opposition to Cæsar, was immensely popular. In fact, George Washington had the play performed for his troops at Valley Forge. Addison’s optimistic writing style constructed with gracious mannerisms is one reason for his abiding influence in English literature.

About the work...

In his and Richard Steele's *The Spectator*, [1] Addison developed an essay style which greatly influenced the writings in eighteenth-century periodicals. In the short well known passages in our readings on the pleasures of the imagination, Addison clearly notes some first suggestions towards an æsthetic theory. His contribution represents a shift in emphasis from the creations of the artist to the pleasures of the connoisseur. Addison's essays had great appeal to the rising middle class seeking to improve their refinement and taste in the arts. Samuel Johnson praised his work, "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the study of Addison."

From the reading...

"[A] Man in a Dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with Scenes and Landskips more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole Compass of Nature. "

Ideas of Interest from *The Spectator*

1. How does Addison distinguish among the pleasures of the imagination, the pleasures of the senses, and the pleasures of the understanding?
2. What qualities of objects in the world does Addison list which occasion pleasures of the imagination?
3. What two kinds of beauty does Addison describe?

1. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. 1891. Letters 411-413.

4. What, according to Addison, is a final cause of æsthetic pleasure? Why has the Supreme Being created mankind with the capacity of experiencing pleasure from the greatness, novelty, humanness, and the sensation of objects in the world?
5. How does Addison relate the beauty of art to the beauty of nature?

The Reading Selection from *The Spectator*

No. 411. Saturday, June 21, 1712. [Pleasures of the Imagination]

Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
Trita solo; juvat integros accedere fonteis;
Atque haurire:—[2]

—Lucr.

Our Sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our Senses. It fills the Mind with the largest Variety of Ideas, converses with its Objects at the greatest Distance, and continues the longest in Action without being tired or satiated with its proper Enjoyments. The Sense of Feeling can in-

2.
I travel unpathed haunts of the Pierides,
Trodden by step of none before. I joy
To come on undefiled fountains there,
To drain them deep.

—Lucretius, *De reum Natura*, I, 926-8.

deed give us a Notion of Extension, Shape, and all other Ideas that enter at the Eye, except Colours; but at the same time it is very much streightned and confined in its Operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular Objects. Our Sight seems designed to supply all these Defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of Touch, that spreads it self over an infinite Multitude of Bodies, comprehends the largest Figures, and brings into our reach some of the most remote Parts of the Universe.

It is this Sense which furnishes the Imagination with its Ideas; so that by the Pleasures of the Imagination or Fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean such as arise from visible Objects, either when we have them actually in our View, or when we call up their Ideas in our Minds by Paintings, Statues, Descriptions, or any the like Occasion. We cannot indeed have a single Image in the Fancy that did not make its first Entrance through the Sight; but we have the Power of retaining, altering and compounding those Images, which we have once received, into all the varieties of Picture and Vision that are most agreeable to the Imagination; for by this Faculty a Man in a Dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with Scenes and Landskips more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole Compass of Nature.

From the reading...

"There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a Relish of any Pleasures that are not Criminal; every Diversion they take is at the Expence of some one Virtue or another, and their very first Step out of Business is into Vice or Folly"

[B]y the Pleasures of the Imagination, I mean only such Pleasures as arise originally from Sight, and that I divide these Pleasures into two Kinds: My Design being first of all to Discourse of those Primary Pleasures of the Imagination, which entirely proceed from such Objects as are before our Eye; and in the next place to speak of those Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination which flow from the Ideas of visible Objects, when the Objects are not actually before the Eye, but are called up into our Memories, or formed into agreeable Visions of Things that are either Absent or Fictitious.

The Pleasures of the Imagination, taken in the full Extent, are not so

gross as those of Sense, nor so refined as those of the Understanding. The last are, indeed, more preferable, because they are founded on some new Knowledge or Improvement in the Mind of Man; yet it must be confest, that those of the Imagination are as great and as transporting as the other. A beautiful Prospect delights the Soul, as much as a Demonstration; and a Description in Homer has charmed more Readers than a Chapter in Aristotle. Besides, the Pleasures of the Imagination have this Advantage, above those of the Understanding, that they are more obvious, and more easie to be acquired. It is but opening the Eye, and the Scene enters. The Colours paint themselves on the Fancy, with very little Attention of Thought or Application of Mind in the Beholder. We are struck, we know not how, with the Symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the Beauty of an Object, without enquiring into the particular Causes and Occasions of it. . . .

There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a Relish of any Pleasures that are not Criminal; every Diversion they take is at the Expence of some one Virtue or another, and their very first Step out of Business is into Vice or Folly. A Man should endeavour, therefore, to make the Sphere of his innocent Pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with Safety, and find in them such a Satisfaction as a wise Man would not blush to take. Of this Nature are those of the Imagination, which do not require such a Bent of Thought as is necessary to our more serious Employments, nor, at the same time, suffer the Mind to sink into that Negligence and Remissness, which are apt to accompany our more sensual Delights, but, like a gentle Exercise to the Faculties, awaken them from Sloth and Idleness, without putting them upon any Labour or Difficulty.

We might here add, that the Pleasures of the Fancy are more conducive to Health, than those of the Understanding, which are worked out by Dint of Thinking, and attended with too violent a Labour of the Brain. Delightful Scenes, whether in Nature, Painting, or Poetry, have a kindly Influence on the Body, as well as the Mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the Imagination, but are able to disperse Grief and Melancholy, and to set the Animal Spirits in pleasing and agreeable Motions. For this Reason Sir Francis Bacon, in his Essay upon Health, has not thought it improper to prescribe to his Reader a Poem or a Prospect, where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtile Disquisitions, and advises him to pursue Studies that fill the Mind with splendid and illustrious Objects, as Histories, Fables, and Contemplations of Nature. . . .

No. 412. Monday, June 23, 1712. [Sources of Pleasures]

—Divisum sic breve fiet Opus.[3]

—Mart.

I shall first consider those Pleasures of the Imagination, which arise from the actual View and Survey of outward Objects: And these, I think, all proceed from the Sight of what is Great, Uncommon, or Beautiful. There may, indeed, be something so terrible or offensive, that the Horror or Loathsomeness of an Object may over-bear the Pleasure which results from its Greatness, Novelty, or Beauty; but still there will be such a Mixture of Delight in the very Disgust it gives us, as any of these three Qualifications are most conspicuous and prevailing.

By Greatness, I do not only mean the Bulk of any single Object, but the Largeness of a whole View, considered as one entire Piece.… Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them. The Mind of Man naturally hates every thing that looks like a Restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy it self under a sort of Confinement, when the Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortned on every side by the Neighbourhood of Walls or Mountains.… [W]ide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding. But if there be a Beauty or Uncommonness joined with this Grandeur, as in a troubled Ocean, a Heaven adorned with Stars and Meteors, or a spacious Landskip cut out into Rivers, Woods, Rocks, and Meadows, the Pleasure still grows upon us, as it rises from more than a single Principle.

Every thing that is new or uncommon raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprize, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest. We are indeed so often conversant with one Set of Objects, and tired out with so many repeated Shows of the same Things, that whatever is new or un-

3. Divided the work will thus become brief.

—Martialis *Epigrams*, IV, 82: 8.

common contributes a little to vary human Life, and to divert our Minds, for a while, with the Strangeness of its Appearance: It serves us for a kind of Refreshment, and takes off from that Satiety we are apt to complain of in our usual and ordinary Entertainments. It is this that bestows Charms on a Monster, and makes even the Imperfections of Nature please us. It is this that recommends Variety, where the Mind is every Instant called off to something new, and the Attention not suffered to dwell too long, and waste it self on any particular Object. It is this, likewise, that improves what is great or beautiful, and make it afford the Mind a double Entertainment.. . .

But there is nothing that makes its Way more directly to the Soul than Beauty, which immediately diffuses a secret Satisfaction and Complacency through the Imagination, and gives a Finishing to any thing that is Great or Uncommon. The very first Discovery of it strikes the Mind with an inward Joy, and spreads a Chearfulness and Delight through all its Faculties. There is not perhaps any real Beauty or Deformity more in one Piece of Matter than another, because we might have been so made, that whatsoever now appears loathsome to us, might have shewn it self agreeable; but we find by Experience, that there are several Modifications of Matter which the Mind, without any previous Consideration, pronounces at first sight Beautiful or Deformed. Thus we see that every different Species of sensible Creatures has its different Notions of Beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the Beauties of its own Kind. This is no where more remarkable than in Birds of the same Shape and Proportion, where we often see the Male determined in his Courtship by the single Grain or Tincture of a Feather, and never discovering any Charms but in the Colour of its Species.. . .

There is a second Kind of Beauty that we find in the several Products of Art and Nature, which does not work in the Imagination with that Warmth and Violence as the Beauty that appears in our proper Species, but is apt however to raise in us a secret Delight, and a kind of Fondness for the Places or Objects in which we discover it. This consists either in the Gaiety or Variety of Colours, in the Symmetry and Proportion of Parts, in the Arrangement and Disposition of Bodies, or in a just Mixture and Concurrence of all together. Among these several Kinds of Beauty the Eye takes most Delight in Colours. We no where meet with a more glorious or pleasing Show in Nature than what appears in the Heavens at the rising and setting of the Sun, which is wholly made up of those different Stains of Light that shew themselves in Clouds of a different Situation. For this Reason we find the Poets, who are always addressing themselves

to the Imagination, borrowing more of their Epithets from Colours than from any other Topic. As the Fancy delights in every thing that is Great, Strange, or Beautiful, and is still more pleased the more it finds of these Perfections in the same Object, so is it capable of receiving a new Satisfaction by the Assistance of another Sense. Thus any continued Sound, as the Musick of Birds, or a Fall of Water, awakens every moment the Mind of the Beholder, and makes him more attentive to the several Beauties of the Place that lye before him. Thus if there arises a Fragrancy of Smells or Perfumes, they heighten the Pleasures of the Imagination, and make even the Colours and Verdure of the Landskip appear more agreeable; for the Ideas of both Senses recommend each other, and are pleasanter together than when they enter the Mind separately: As the different Colours of a Picture, when they are well disposed, set off one another, and receive an additional Beauty from the Advantage of their Situation.

No. 413. Tuesday, June 24, 1712. [Final Causes of Beauty]

> *—Causa latet, vis est notissima—*[4]
>
> —Ovid

Though . . . we considered how every thing that is Great, New, or Beautiful, is apt to affect the Imagination with Pleasure, we must own that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary Cause of this Pleasure, because we know neither the Nature of an Idea, nor the Substance of a Human Soul, which might help us to discover the Conformity or Disagreeableness of the one to the other; and therefore, for want of such a Light, all that we can do in Speculations of this kind is to reflect on those Operations of the Soul that are most agreeable, and to range under their proper Heads, what is pleasing or displeasing to the Mind, without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient Causes from whence the Pleasure or Displeasure arises.

4. The cause is secret, but the effect is known.

   —Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4: 287.

Final Causes lye more bare and open to our Observation, as there are often a great Variety that belong to the same Effect; and these, tho' they are not altogether so satisfactory, are generally more useful than the other, as they give us greater Occasion of admiring the Goodness and Wisdom of the first Contriver.

One of the Final Causes of our Delight, in any thing that is great, may be this. The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness. Because, therefore, a great Part of our Happiness must arise from the Contemplation of his Being, that he might give our Souls a just Relish of such a Contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited. Our Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind, immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great deal of Room in the Fancy, and by Consequence, will improve into the highest Pitch of Astonishment and Devotion when we contemplate his Nature, that is neither circumscribed by Time nor Place, nor to be comprehended by the largest Capacity of a Created Being.

Formal Garden, Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University

He has annexed a secret Pleasure to the Idea of any thing that is new or uncommon, that he might encourage us in the Pursuit after Knowledge,

and engage us to search into the Wonders of his Creation; for every new Idea brings such a Pleasure along with it, as rewards any Pains we have taken in its Acquisition, and consequently serves as a Motive to put us upon fresh Discoveries.

He has made every thing that is beautiful in our own Species pleasant, that all Creatures might be tempted to multiply their Kind, and fill the World with Inhabitants; for ’tis very remarkable that where-ever Nature is crost in the Production of a Monster (the Result of any unnatural Mixture) the Breed is incapable of propagating its Likeness, and of founding a new Order of Creatures; so that unless all Animals were allured by the Beauty of their own Species, Generation would be at an End, and the Earth unpeopled.

In the last Place, he has made every thing that is beautiful in all other Objects pleasant, or rather has made so many Objects appear beautiful, that he might render the whole Creation more gay and delightful. He has given almost every thing about us the Power of raising an agreeable Idea in the Imagination: So that it is impossible for us to behold his Works with Coldness or Indifference, and to survey so many Beauties without a secret Satisfaction and Complacency. Things would make but a poor Appearance to the Eye, if we saw them only in their proper Figures and Motions: And what Reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those Ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the Objects themselves, (for such are Light and Colours) were it not to add Supernumerary Ornaments to the Universe, and make it more agreeable to the Imagination? We are every where entertained with pleasing Shows and Apparitions, we discover Imaginary Glories in the Heavens, and in the Earth, and see some of this Visionary Beauty poured out upon the whole Creation; but what a rough unsightly Sketch of Nature should we be entertained with, did all her Colouring disappear, and the several Distinctions of Light and Shade vanish? In short, our Souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion, and we walk about like the enchanted Hero of a Romance, who sees beautiful Castles, Woods and Meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling of Birds, and the purling of Streams; but upon the finishing of some secret Spell, the fantastick Scene breaks up, and the disconsolate Knight finds himself on a barren Heath, or in a solitary Desart. It is not improbable that something like this may be the State of the Soul after its first Separation, in respect of the Images it will receive from Matter; tho indeed the Ideas of Colours are so pleasing and beautiful in the Imagination, that it is possible the Soul will not be deprived of them, but perhaps find them

excited by some other Occasional Cause, as they are at present by the different Impressions of the subtle Matter on the Organ of Sight.. . .

No. 414. Wednesday, June 25, 1712. [The Art of Nature]

—Alterius sic Altera poscit opem res et conjurat amicè.[5]

—Hor.

If we consider the Works of Nature and Art, as they are qualified to entertain the Imagination, we shall find the last very defective, in Comparison of the former; for though they may sometimes appear as Beautiful or Strange, they can have nothing in them of that Vastness and Immensity, which afford so great an Entertainment to the Mind of the Beholder. The one may be as Polite and Delicate as the other, but can never shew her self so August and Magnificent in the Design. There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless Strokes of Nature, than in the nice Touches and Embellishments of Art. The Beauties of the most stately Garden or Palace lie in a narrow Compass, the Imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratifie her; but, in the wide Fields of Nature, the Sight wanders up and down without Confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of Images, without any certain Stint or Number. For this Reason we always find the Poet in Love with a Country-Life, where Nature appears in the greatest Perfection, and furnishes out all those Scenes that are most apt to delight the Imagination.. . .

But tho' there are several of these wild Scenes, that are more delightful than any artificial Shows; yet we find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art: For in this case our Pleasure rises from a double Principle; from the Agreeableness of the Objects to the Eye, and from their Similitude to other Objects: We are pleased as

5. Each by itself is vain but together their force is strong and each proves the others friend.

—Horace, *Ars pœtica*, 410-11

well with comparing their Beauties, as with surveying them, and can represent them to our Minds, either as Copies or Originals. Hence it is that we take Delight in a Prospect which is well laid out, and diversified with Fields and Meadows, Woods and Rivers; in those accidental Landskips of Trees, Clouds and Cities, that are sometimes found in the Veins of Marble; in the curious Fret-work of Rocks and Grottos; and, in a Word, in any thing that hath such a Variety or Regularity as may seem the Effect of Design, in what we call the Works of Chance.

If the Products of Nature rise in Value, according as they more or less resemble those of Art, we may be sure that artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural; because here the Similitude is not only pleasant, but the Pattern more perfect. . . .

We have before observed, that there is generally in Nature something more Grand and August, than what we meet with in the Curiosities of Art. When therefore, we see this imitated in any measure, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of Pleasure than what we receive from the nicer and more accurate Productions of Art. On this Account our English Gardens are not so entertaining to the Fancy as those in France and Italy, where we see a large Extent of Ground covered over with an agreeable mixture of Garden and Forest, which represent every where an artificial Rudeness, much more charming than that Neatness and Elegancy which we meet with in those of our own Country. . . .

From the reading. . .

"[W]ide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding."

If the Writers who have given us an Account of China, tell us the Inhabitants of that Country laugh at the Plantations of our Europeans, which are laid out by the Rule and Line; because, they say, any one may place Trees in equal Rows and uniform Figures. They chuse rather to shew a Genius in Works of this Nature, and therefore always conceal the Art by which they direct themselves. They have a Word, it seems, in their Language, by which they express the particular Beauty of a Plantation that thus strikes the Imagination at first Sight, without discovering what it is that has so agreeable an Effect. Our British Gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humouring Nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible.

Our Trees rise in Cones, Globes, and Pyramids. We see the Marks of the Scissars upon every Plant and Bush. I do not know whether I am singular in my Opinion, but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a Tree in all its Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a Mathematical Figure; and cannot but fancy that an Orchard in Flower looks infinitely more delightful, than all the little Labyrinths of the finished Parterre.. . .

Related Ideas

Steele and Addison.[6] *Bartleby.com: Great Books Online*. Howard Routh’s thorough analysis of the works and lives of Addison and Steele from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol IX.

The Spectator Project.[7] An interactive site for the study of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* and other eighteenth-century periodicals at Rutgers.

Chinese Garden, Library of Congress

6. *Steele and Addison* (http://www.bartleby.com/219/index.html#2)
7. *The Spectator Project* (http://tabula.rutgers.edu/spectator/)

From the reading. . .

"[We] find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art"

Topics Worth Investigating

1. The essays in this reading are sometimes cited as having an influence on David Hume's *Of the Standard of Taste*. Specifically, which of Addison's points influenced Hume thoughts on taste?
2. Addison's series of articles on the pleasures of the imagination is often cited as the dawn of modern æsthetic theory. Prior to the publication of these essays in *The Spectator* in 1712, little sustained thought on æsthetics had been forthcoming in Western literature. Do you think the rise of the middle class and the resulting increase in leisure activities can be historically and economically associated with the development of modern æsthetics?
3. Explain what Addison means when he writes loathsome and offensive objects might still bring a kind of delight if the qualities of greatness, novelty, and beauty are present.
4. Addison writes in essay 411:

   > [We] immediately assent to the Beauty of an Object, without enquiring into the particular Causes and Occasions of it.

   Discuss whether or not beauty is a primary or a secondary quality for him.

Chapter 6
"The Sense of Beauty" by Francis Hutcheson

Francis Hutcheson (adapted) portrait by Alan Ramsay

About the author . . .

Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), born in Ireland, studied philosophy, jurisprudence, and theology and later taught moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow. However, his *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony and Design*, as well as the other works for which he is best known, were published anonymously prior to his accepting the moral philosophy chair at Glasgow. During the remainder of his life he became a somewhat controversial, though well-liked, teacher because of his religious dissent from Calvinist doctrine. In particular, Hutcheson thought the right action is that action productive of the greatest good for the greatest number and moral knowlege could be prior to, and independent of, knowledge of God—both beliefs conflicted with the Westminster Con-

fession.

About the work . . .

In the first major study in Western philosophy devoted exclusively to æsthetics, *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*,[1] Hutcheson argues that objects in the world are perceived to be beautiful by specific qualities acting upon our "inner sense" or "sense of beauty." The qualities are framed by a ratio of the uniformity and variety in the objects which form the basis of an absolute standard of beauty. Beauty, then, on this view, is simply the idea "raised" in us *via* our power or inner sense of receiving this idea. Our inner sense, this sense of beauty, Hutcheson argues, is independent of intellectual judgment, personal utility, volition, or association with other ideas. Ugliness, he thinks, is simply some degree of absence of harmony and uniformity of objects.

From the reading . . .

Beauty has always relation to the Sense of some Mind; and when we afterwards shew how generally the Objects which occur to us, are beautiful, we mean that such Objects are agreeable to the Sense of Men. . .

Ideas of Interest from Hutcheson's *Inquiry*

1. How does Hutcheson define "beauty"?
2. How does he distinguish between internal and external senses? What is his argument that people have a "sense of beauty"?

1. Francis Hutcheson. *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*. Part I of *An Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. London: J. Barby, *et. al.* 1725.

3. What is Hutcheson's distinction between relative and absolute beauty? What are some examples of absolute or "original" beauty? Is this distinction of relative and absolute beauty merely a distinction between beauty in nature and beauty in art?
4. How does Hutcheson relate standards of beauty to relative or comparative beauty?
5. Explain Hutcheson's argument concerning the relation of our perception of beauty to the role of custom or education.
6. In Hutcheson's view, what is the ultimate purpose of our inner sense of beauty?

The Reading Selection from Hutcheson's *Inquiry*

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

VIII. The only Pleasure of Sense, which our Philosophers seem to consider, is that which accompanys the simple Ideas of Sensation: But there are vastly 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 pleas'd with a Prospect of the Sun arising among settled Clouds, and colouring their Edges, with a starry Hemisphere, a fine Landskip, a regular Building, than with a clear blue Sky, a smooth Sea, or a large open Plain, not diversify'd by Woods, Hills, Waters, Buildings: And yet even these latter Appearances are not quite simple. So in Musick, the Pleasure of fine Composition is incomparably greater than that of any one Note, how sweet, full, or swelling soever.

IX. Let it be observ'd, that in the following Papers, the Word Beauty is taken for the Idea rais'd 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."

> **From the reading ...**
>
> This greater Capacity of receiving such pleasant Ideas we commonly call a fine Genius or Taste...

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 chuse 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 Sense 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... This greater Capacity of receiving such pleasant Ideas we commonly call a fine Genius or Taste: In Musick 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, had we also got distinct Names to denote these Powers of Perception by.

XI. There will appear another Reason perhaps afterwards, 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 concern'd, we discern a sort of Beauty, very like, in many respects, to that observ'd in sensible Objects, and accompany'd with like Pleasure: Such is that Beauty perceiv'd in Theorems, or universal Truths, in general Causes, and in some extensive Principles of Action. ...

XIV. And further, 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 of 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 deform'd Object, or disapprove a beautiful one; Dissimulation may be procur'd by Rewards or Threatings, or we may in external Conduct abstain from any pursuit of the Beautiful, and pursue the Deform'd; but our Sentiments of the Forms, and our Perceptions, would continue invariably the same.

From the reading . . .

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?

XV. 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 from Self-love 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 shews 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 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. . .

XVII. Beauty is either Original or Comparative; or, if any like the Terms better, Absolute, or Relative: Only let it be observ'd, that by Absolute or Original Beauty, is not understood any Quality suppos'd to be in the Object, which 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, Sweet, Bitter, denote the Sensations in our Minds, to which perhaps there is no resemblance in the Objects, which excite these Ideas in us, however we generally imagine that there is something in the Object just like our Perception. 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, see not how they could be call'd beautiful. We therefore by[2] Absolute Beauty understand only that Beauty, which we perceive in Objects without comparison to any thing external, of which the Object is suppos'd an Imitation, or Picture; such as that Beauty perceiv'd from the Works of Nature, artificial Forms, Figures,Theorems. 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.

Section II: Of Original or Absolute Beauty

I. Since it is certain that we have Ideas of Beauty and Harmony, let us examine what Quality in Objects excites these Ideas, or is the occasion of them. And let it be here observ'd, that our Inquiry is only about the Qualitys which are beautiful to Men; or about the Foundation of their Sense of Beauty: for, as was above hinted, Beauty has always relation to the Sense of some Mind; and when we afterwards shew how generally the Objects which occur to us, are beautiful, we mean that such Objects are agreeable to the Sense of Men. . .

II. That we may more distinctly discover the general Foundation or Occasion Of the Ideas of Beauty among Men, it will be necessary to consider it first in its simpler Kinds, such as occurs to us in regular Figures; and we may perhaps find that the same Foundation extends to all the more complex Species of it.

III. The Figures which excite in us the Ideas of Beauty, seem to be those in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety. There are many Conceptions of Objects which are agreeable upon other accounts, such as Grandeur, Novelty, Sanctity, and some others, which shall be mention'd hereafter. But what we call Beautiful in Objects, to speak in the Mathematical Style, seems to be in a compound Ratio of Uniformity and Variety. . .

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2. 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 it self, and Resemblance to some Original.

IV. It is the same foundation which we have for our Sense of Beauty in the Works of Nature. In every Part of the World which we call Beautiful, there is a vast Uniformity amidst an almost infinite Variety. . . .

From the reading . . .

That the pleasant Sensation arises only from Objects, in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety. . .

XIII. Under Original Beauty we may include harmony, or Beauty of Sound, if that Expression can be allow'd, because Harmony is not usually conceiv'd as an Imitation of any thing else. Harmony often raises Pleasure in those who know not what is the Occasion of it: And yet the Foundation of this Pleasure is known to be a sort of Uniformity. When the several Vibrations of one Note regularly coincide with the Vibrations of another, they make an agreeable Composition; and such Notes are call'd Concords. . . .

XIV. But in all these Instances of Beauty let it be observ'd, That the Pleasure is communicated to those who never reflected on this general Foundation; and that all here alledg'd is this, "That the pleasant Sensation arises only from Objects, in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety:" We may have the Sensation without knowing what is the Occasion of it; as a Man's Taste may suggest Ideas of Sweets, Acids, Bitters, tho he be ignorant of the Forms of the small Bodys, or their Motions, which excite these Perceptions in him.

Section III: Of the Beauty of Theorems

I. The Beauty of Theorems, or universal Truths demonstrated, deserves a distinct Consideration, being of a Nature pretty different from the former kinds of Beauty; and yet there is none in which we shall see such an amazing Variety with Uniformity: and hence arises a very great Pleasure distinct from Prospects of any further Advantage. . . .

V. There is another Beauty in Propositions, which cannot be omitted; which is, When one Theorem contains a vast Multitude of Corollarys easily deducible from it. . . . In the search of Nature there is the like Beauty in the Knowledge of some great Principles, or universal Forces, from which

innumerable Effects do flow. Such is Gravitation, in Sir Isaac Newton's Scheme. . .

It is easy to see how Men are charm'd with the Beauty of such Knowledge, besides its Usefulness; and how this sets them upon deducing the Propertys of each Figure from one Genesis, and demonstrating the mechanick Forces from one Theorem of the Composition of Motion; even after they have sufficient Knowledge and Certainty in all these Truths from distinct independent Demonstrations. And this Pleasure we enjoy even when we have no Prospect of obtaining any other Advantage from such Manner of Deduction, than the immediate Pleasure of contemplating the Beauty: nor could Love of Fame excite us to such regular Methods of Deduction, were we not conscious that Mankind are pleas'd with them immediately, by this internal Sense of their Beauty.. . .

VIII. As to the Works of Art, were we to run thro the various artificial Contrivances or Structures, we should constantly find the Foundation of the Beauty which appears in them, to be some kind of Uniformity, or Unity of Proportion among the Parts, and of each Part to the Whole. As there is a vast Diversity of Proportions possible, and different Kinds of Uniformity, so there is room enough for that Diversity of Fancys observable in Architecture, Gardening, and such like Arts in different Nations; they all may have Uniformity, tho the Parts in one may differ from those in another. The Chinese or Persian Buildings are not like the Grecian and Roman, and yet the former has its Uniformity of the various Parts to each other, and to the Whole, as well as the latter.. . .

Trinity College, Oxford University; Wuhan University, Wuchang, China, Library of Congress

IX. The same might be observ'd thro all other Works of Art, even to the meanest Utensil; the Beauty of every one of which we shall always find to have the same Foundation of Uniformity amidst Variety, without which

they appear mean, irregular and deform'd.

Section IV: Of Relative or Comparative Beauty

I. If the preceding Thoughts concerning the Foundation of absolute Beauty be just, we may easily understand wherein relative Beauty consists. All Beauty is relative to the Sense of some Mind perceiving it; but what we call relative is that which is apprehended in any Object, commonly consider'd as an Imitation of some Original: And this Beauty is founded on a Conformity, or a kind of Unity between the Original and the Copy. The Original may be either some Object in Nature, or some establish'd Idea; for if there be any known Idea as a Standard, and Rules to fix this Image or Idea by, we may make a beautiful Imitation. Thus a Statuary, Painter, or Poet, may please us with an Hercules, if his Piece retains that Grandeur, and those marks of Strength, and Courage, which we imagine in that Hero.

And farther, to obtain comparative Beauty alone, it is not necessary that there be any Beauty in the Original; the Imitation of absolute Beauty may indeed in the whole make a more lovely Piece, and yet an exact Imitation shall still be beautiful, tho the Original were intirely void of it: Thus the Deformitys of old Age in a Picture, the rudest Rocks or Mountains in a Landskip, if well represented, shall have abundant Beauty, tho perhaps not so great as if the Original were absolutely beautiful, and as well represented.. . .

III. Many other Beautys of Poetry may be reduc'd under this Class of Probabilty, relatve Beauty: The Probability is absolutely necessary to make us imagine Resemblance; it is by Resemblance that the Similitudes, Metaphors and Allegorys are made beautiful, whether either the Subject or the Thing compar'd to it have Beauty or not; the Beauty indeed is greater, when both have some original Beauty or Dignity as well as Resemblance: and this is the foundation of the Rule of studying Decency in Metaphors and Similys as well as Likeness. The Measures and Cadence are instances of Harmony, and come under the head of absolute Beauty.. . .

Section VI: Of the Universality of the Sense of Beauty Among Men

I. We before insinuated, "That all Beauty has a relation to some perceiving Power;" and consequently since we know not how great all Variety of Senses there may be among Animals, there is no Form in Nature concerning which we can pronounce, "That it has no Beauty;" for it may still please some perceiving Power.. . .

Many Objects are naturally displeasing, and distasteful to our external Senses, as well as others pleasing and agreeable; as Smells, Tastes, and some separate Sounds: but as to our Sense of Beauty, no Composition of Objects which give not unpleasant simple Ideas, seems positively unpleasant or painful of itself, had we never observ'd any thing better of the Kind. Deformity is only the absence of Beauty, or deficiency in the Beauty expected in any Species.. . .

From the reading . . .

Deformity is only the absence of Beauty, or deficiency in the Beauty expected in any Species.

IV. But as to the universal Agreement of Mankind in their Sense of Beauty from Uniformity amidst Variety, we must consult Experience and as we allow all Men Reason, since all Men are capable of understanding simple Arguments, tho few are capable of complex Demonstrations; so in this Case it must be sufficient to prove this Sense of Beauty universal, "if all Men are better pleas'd with Uniformity in the simpler Instances than the contrary, even when there is no Advantage observ'd attending it; and likewise if all Men, according as their Capacity enlarges, so as to receive and compare more complex Ideas, have a greater Delight in Uniformity, and are pleas'd with its more complex Kinds, both Original and Relative." . . .

V. Nay further, it may perhaps appear, "That Regularity and Uniformity are so copiously diffus'd thro the Universe, and we are so readily determin'd to pursue this as the Foundation of Beauty in Works of Art, that there is scarcely any thing ever fancy'd as Beautiful, where there is not really something of this Uniformity and Regularity." We are indeed often mistaken in imagining that there is the greatest possible Beauty, where it

is but very imperfect; but still it is some degree of Beauty which pleases, altho there may be higher Degrees which we do not observe; and our Sense acts with full Regularity when we are pleas’d. . .

VI. . . . The superior Pleasure then of History must arise, like that of Poetry, from the Manners; as when we see a Character well drawn, wherein we find the secret Causes of a great Diversity of seemingly inconsistent Actions; or an Interest of State laid open, or an artful View nicely unfolded, the Execution of which influences very different and opposite Actions, as the Circumstances may alter. Now this reduces the whole to an Unity of Design at least: And this may be observ’d in the very Fables which entertain Children, otherwise we cannot make them relish them.. . .

VIII. It will deserve our Consideration on this Subject, how, in like Cases, we form very different Judgments concerning the internal and external Senses. Nothing is more ordinary among those, who after Mr. Locke have shaken off the groundless Opinions about innate Ideas, than to alledge, “That all our Relish for Beauty, and Order, is either from prospect of Advantage, Custom, or Education,” for no other Reason but the Variety of Fancys in the World: and from this they conclude, “That our Fancys do not arise from any natural Power of Perception, or Sense.” And yet all allow our external Senses to be Natural, and that the Pleasures or Pains of their Sensations, however they may be increas’d, or diminish’d, by Custom, or Education, and counterballanc’d by Interest, yet are really antecedent to Custom, Habit, Education, or Prospect of Interest. Now it is certain, “That there is at least as great a variety of Fancys about their Objects, as the Objects of Beauty:” Nay it is much more difficult, and perhaps impossible, to bring the Fancys or Relishes of the external Senses to any general Foundation at all, or to find any Rule for the agreeable or disagreeable: and yet we all allow “that these are natural Powers of Perception.”

IX. The Reason of this different judgment can be no other than this, That we have got distinct Names for the external Senses, and none, or very few, for the Internal; and by this are led, as in many other Cases, to look upon the former as some way more fix’d, and real and natural, than the latter. The Sense of Harmony has got its Name, *viz.* a good Ear; and we are generally brought to acknowledge this a natural Power of Perception, or a Sense some way distinct from Hearing: now it is certain, “That there is as necessary a Perception of Beauty upon the presence of regular Objects, as of Harmony upon hearing certain Sounds.”

From the reading . . .

[T]here is scarcely any thing ever fancy’d as Beautiful, where there is not really something of this Uniformity and Regularity.

X. But let it be observ’d here once for all, “That an internal Sense no more presupposes an innate Idea, or Principle of Knowledge, than the external.” Both are natural Powers of Perception, or Determinations of the Mind to receive necessarily certain Ideas from the presence of Objects. The internal Sense is, a passive Power of receiving Ideas of Beauty from all Objects in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety. Nor does there seem any thing more difficult in this matter, than that the Mind should be always determin’d to receive the Idea of Sweet, when Particles of such a Form enter the Pores Of the Tongue; or to have the Idea of Sound upon any quick Undulation of the Air. The one seems to have as little Connection with its Idea, as the other: And the same Power could with equal ease constitute the former the occasion of Ideas as the latter.

XI. The Association of Ideas above hinted at, is one great Cause of the apparent Diversity of Fancys in the Sense of Beauty, as well as in the external Senses; and often makes Men have an aversion to Objects of Beauty, and a liking to others void of it, but under different Conceptions than those of Beauty or Deformity. . . .

XII. . . . We know how agreeable a very wild Country may be to any Person who has spent the cheerfull Days of his Youth in it, and how disagreeable very beautiful Places may be, if they were the Scenes of his Misery. And this may help us in many Cases to account for the Diversitys of Fancy, without denying the Uniformity of our internal Sense of Beauty.

Section VII: Of the Power of Custom, Education, and Example, as to our Internal Senses

I. Custom, Education, and Example are so often alledg’d in this Affair, as the occasion of our Relish for beautiful Objects, and for our Approbation of, or Delight in a certain Conduct in Life, in a moral Sense , that it

is necessary to examine these three particularly, to make it appear "that there is a natural Power of Perception, or Sense of Beauty in Objects, antecedent to all Custom, Education, or Example."

From the reading . . .

. . . Education never makes us apprehend any Qualitys in Objects, which we have not naturally Senses capable of perceiving.

II. Custom, as distinct from the other two, operates in this manner. As to Actions, it only gives a disposition to the Mind or Body more easily to perform those Actions which have been frequently repeated, but never leads us to apprehend them under any other View than what we were capable of apprehending them under at first; nor gives us any new Power of Perception about them. . . .

. . . Custom makes us more capable of retaining and comparing complex Ideas, so as to discern more complicated Uniformity, which escapes the Observation of Novices in any Art; but all this presupposes a natural Sense of Beauty in Uniformity: for had there been nothing in Forms, which was constituted the necessary occasion of Pleasure to our Senses, no Repetition of indifferent Ideas as to Pleasure or Pain, Beauty or Deformity, could ever have made them grow pleasing or displeasing.

III. . . . But in all these Instances, Education never makes us apprehend any Qualitys in Objects, which we have not naturally Senses capable of perceiving. . . . Did ever blind Men debate whether Purple or Scarlet were the finer Colour? or could any Education prejudice them in favour of either as Colours?

Thus Education and Custom may influence our internal Senses, where they are antecedently, by enlarging the Capacity of our Minds to retain and compare the Parts of complex Compositions: And then if the finest Objects are presented to us, we grow conscious of a Pleasure far superior to what common Performances excite. . . .

Section VIII: Of the Importance of the Internal Senses in Life, and the Final

Causes of Them

I. The busy part of Mankind may look upon these things as airy Dreams of an inflam’d Imagination, which a wise Man should despise, who rationally pursues more solid Possessions independent on Fancy: but a little Reflection will convince us, “That the Gratifications of our internal Senses are as natural, real, and satisfying Enjoyments as any sensible Pleasure whatsoever; and that they are the chief Ends for which we commonly pursue Wealth and Power.” For how is Wealth or Power advantageous? How do they make us happy, or prove good to us? No otherwise than as they supply Gratifications to our Senses or Facultys of perceiving Pleasure.... In short the only use of a great Fortune, above a very small one (except in good Offices and moral Pleasures) must be to supply us with the Pleasures of Beauty, Order, and Harmony....

II. As to the final Causes of this internal Sense, we need not enquire, “whether, to an almighty and all-knowing Being, there be any real Excellence in regular Forms, in acting by general Laws, in knowing by theorems?” We seem scarce capable of answwering such Questions any way...

But to return to the Questions: What occurs to resolve them, may be contain’d in the following Propositions.

1. The manner of Knowledge by universal Theorems, and of Operation by universal Causes, as far as we can attain it, must be most convenient for Beings of limited Understanding and Power; since this prevents Distraction in their Understandings thro the Multiplicity of Propositions, and Toil and Weariness to their Powers of Action: and consequently their Reason, without any Sense of Beauty, must approve of such Methods when they reflect upon their apparent Advantage.

2. Those Objects of Contemplation in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety, are more distinctly and easily comprehended and retain’d, than irregular Objects; because the accurate Observation of one or two Parts often leads to the Knowledge of the Whole...

3. From these two Propositions it follows, “That Beings of limited Understanding and Power, if they act rationally for their own Interest, must chuse to operate by the simplest Means, to invent general Theorems, and to study regular Objects, if they be as useful irregular ones; that they may avoid the endless Toil of producing each Effect by a separate Operation, of searching out each different Truth by a different Inquiry, and of imprinting the endless Variety of dissimilar Ideas in irregular Objects.”

4. But then, beside this Consideration of Interest, there does not appear to be any necessary Connection, antecedent to the Constitution of the Author of Nature, between regular Forms, Actions, Theorems, and that sudden sensible Pleasure excited in us upon observation of them, even when we do not reflect upon the Advantage mention'd in the former Proposition.. . .

5. . . . And hence we see "how suitable it is to the sagacious Bounty which we suppose in the Deity to constitute our internal Senses in the manner in which they are; by which Pleasure is join'd to the Contemplation of these Objects which a finite Mind can best imprint and retain the Ideas of with the least Distraction; to those Actions which are most efficacious and fruitful in useful effect; and to those Theorems which most enlarge our Minds."

Related Ideas

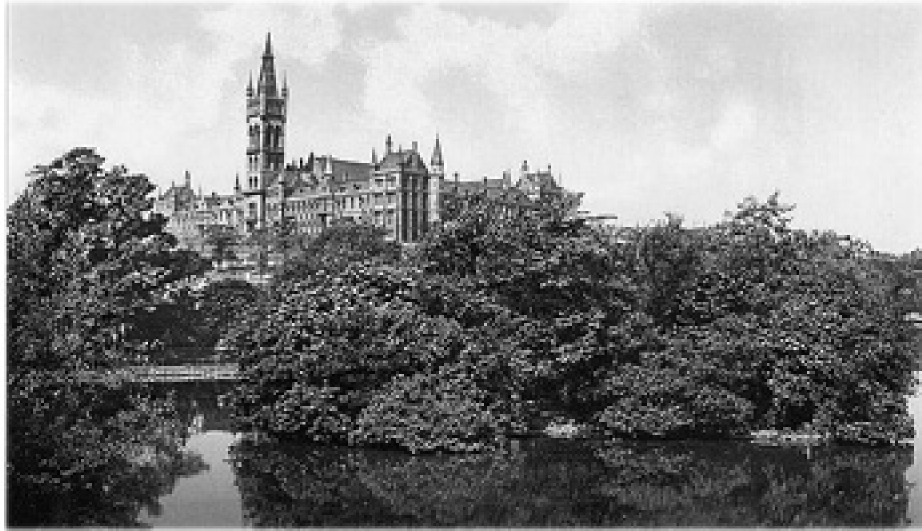
Francis Hutcheson.[3] *Thoemmes Continuum: The History of Ideas Encyclopedia*. A thorough summary of Hutcheson's life and works by Daniel Carey from the *The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century British Philosophers*. Thoemmes Press. 1999. Eds. John W. Yolton, *et. al.*

History of Ethics Lectures.[4] *Classical Utilitarianism Web Site*. Four lectures by Stephen Darwall including observations about Hutcheson's æsthetics.

From the reading . . .

Beauty has always relation to the Sense of some Mind; and when we afterwards shew how generally the Objects which occur to us, are beautiful, we mean that such Objects are agreeable to the Sense of Men. . .

3. *Francis Hutcheson*. (http://195.12.26.123/encyclopedia/hutcheson.htm)
4. *History of Ethics*. (http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/poltheory/darwall/histeth/)



University of Glasgow, Library of Congress

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Hutcheson rejects the notion of innate ideas of beauty, yet apparently his "inner sense" or "sense of beauty" is the methodological equivalent of innate ideas. Clarify as precisely as possible the nature of moral sense and whether or not this inner sense is instinctual in human beings.
2. Compare Hutcheson's argument in this treatise as to the standards of beauty with Hume's arguments in Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste."[5] (Note that Hutcheson's "sense of beauty" is the same thing as what Hume terms "taste.")
3. Hutcheson emphasizes in this reading the ubiquity of uniformity and diversity in beautiful objects:

   > In every Part of the World which we call Beautiful, there is a vast Uniformity amidst an almost infinite Variety.. . . The same might be ob-

5. David Hume. "Of the Standard of Taste." In *Four Dissertations*. London: A Millar. 1757.

> serv'd thro all other Works of Art, even to the meanest Utensil; the Beauty of every one of which we shall always find to have the same Foundation of Uniformity amidst Variety, without which they appear mean, irregular and deform'd.[6]

Is this observation meaningful in light of the fact that order and difference of objects is not so much intrinsic to the objects themselves as it is a construction of the mind? Also, whether or not objects are beautiful or ugly, uniformity and diversity is present in the contemplation of those objects. How does Hutcheson account for these rather ordinary objections?

4. Explain how in Hutcheson's view comparative or relative beauty can be more beautiful than the absolute or original beauty upon which it is based? Why wouldn't an argument based on polar concepts be relevant to comparative beauty (*i.e.*, we could not know beauty without thereby knowing what is ugly)? Note that Hutcheson writes, as well, "Deformity is only the absence of Beauty, or deficiency in the Beauty expected in any Species."[7]

5. Hutcheson writes concerning the origin of the idea of beauty in us:

> As to the Works of Art, were we to run thro the various artificial Contrivances or Structures, we should constantly find the Foundation of the Beauty which appears in them, to be some kind of Uniformity, or Unity of Proportion among the Parts, and of each Part to the Whole.. . . [8]

> The same might be observ'd thro all other Works of Art, even to the meanest Utensil; the Beauty of every one of which we shall always find to have the same Foundation of Uniformity amidst Variety. . . [9]

Clive Bell writes of "significant form" in a similar fashion:

> What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our æsthetic emotions? . . . Only one answer seems possible—significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our æsthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these æsthetically moving forms, I call

6. Hutcheson. II: IV.
7. Hutcheson. VI: I.
8. Hutcheson. III: VIII.
9. Hutcheson. III: VIII, IX.

> "Significant Form"; and "Significant form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.[10]

Compare the two æsthetic theories of Hutcheson and Bell and trace out the extent to which Hutcheson anticipated Bell's notion of "significant form."

6. Plotinus describes a faculty of persons distinct from other perceptive faculties which he names "inner vision":

> When he perceives those shapes of grace that show in body, let him not pursue: he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows, and hasten away towards that they tell of . . . all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see: you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use.[11]

In what ways does Plotinus's use of "inner vision" in his æsthetic theory differ from Hutcheson's use of "inner sense" or "sense of beauty"?

10. Clive Bell. *Art*. London: Chatto & Windus. 1914.
11. Plotinus, "Beauty". In *The Enneads*. Translated by Stephen Mackenna and B. S. Page. London: Faber and Faber. 1917-1924. First Ennead, Sixth Tractate. ¶ 9.

Chapter 7

“Æsthetic Principles Are Not Universal” by Voltaire

Voltaire Thoemmes

About the author . . .

Voltaire (1694—1778), whose pen name is François-Marie Arouet, is a French literary moralist greatly influenced by the epistemology of John Locke and Issac Newton. In his *Candide*, he caricatures Leibniz’s doctrine that this is the “best of all possible worlds.” He is perhaps best known for a humanism entailing an empirical skepticism of dogmatic religious and social doctrine; for these views, he was briefly imprisioned and then exiled to England. While there, when he became subject to a mob of British ridiculing him as being French, he is reported to reply, “You wish to kill me because I am a Frenchman. Am I not punished enough in not being born an Englishman?” It is said the mob was won

over.[1] Later, while in Prussia, he served as an ambassador-spy.

About the work . . .

In the entry "Beauty" in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, [2] Voltaire argues that "artistic beauty is in the eye of the beholder" although some virtuous actions are considered "beautiful" universally across cultures. This short essay is an entry in a polemical book, an epitome of French Enlightenment writing. Voltare described his *Dictionary* as expressing "common sense" which is "not so common."

From the reading . . .

"Ask a toad what beauty is. . . "

Ideas of Interest from "Beauty"

1. How does Voltaire show that beauty cannot be defined in terms of fulfilling the purpose of a work of art?
2. What is Voltaire's evidence that artistic standards are not universal?
3. According to Voltaire, how does the beauty of virtue become known? How is the beauty of virtue unlike the beauty of the senses, of intelligence and of imagination?

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1. Edmund Fuller, *2500 Ancedotes for All Occasions* New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952.
2. Voltaire, "Beauty" in *Philosophical Dictionary*, trans. H.I. Woolf, New York: Knopf, 1924.

The Reading Selection from "Beauty"

[Beauty Varies]

Ask a toad what beauty is, the *to kalon*[3]? He will answer you that it is his toad wife with two great round eyes issuing from her little head, a wide, flat mouth, a yellow belly, a brown back.. . . Interrogate the devil; he will tell you that beauty is a pair of horns, four claws and a tail. Consult, lastly, the philosophers, they will answer you with gibberish: they have to have something conforming to the arch-type of beauty in essence, to the *to kalon*.

[Beauty Not Teleological]

One day I was at a tragedy near by a philosopher. "How beautiful that is!" he said.

"What do you find beautiful there?" I asked.

"It is beautiful," he answered, "because the author has reached his goal."

From the reading . . .

"There are actions which the whole world finds beautiful."

The following day he took some medicine which did him good. "The medicine has reached its goal," I said to him. "What a beautiful medicine!" He grasped that one cannot say a medicine is beautiful, and that to give the name of "beauty" to something, the thing must cause you to admire it and give you pleasure. He agreed that the tragedy had inspired these sentiments in him, and that there was the *to kalon*, beauty.

3. "Highest good or beauty" from the Greek, *Eds.*

[Beauty Often Relative]

We journeyed to England: the same piece, perfectly translated, was played there; it made everybody in the audience yawn. "Ho, ho!" he said, "the *to kalon* is not the same for the English and the French." After much reflection he came to the conclusion that beauty is often very relative, just as what is decent in Japan is indecent in Rome, and what is fashionable in Paris, is not fashionable in Pekin; and he saved himself the trouble of composing a long treatise on beauty.

[Beauty In Morality Often Universal]

There are actions which the whole world finds beautiful. Two of Caesar's officers, mortal enemies, send each other a challenge, not as to who shall shed the other's blood with tierce and quarte[4] behind a thicket as with us, but as to who shall best defend the Roman camp, which the Barbarians are about to attack. One of them, having repulsed the enemy, is near succumbing; the other rushes to his aid, saves his life, and completes the victory.

A friend sacrifices his life for his friend; a son for his father.. . . The Algonquin, the Frenchman, the Chinaman, will all say that that is very beautiful, that these actions give them pleasure, that they admire them.

They will say as much of the great moral maxims, of Zarathustra's—"In doubt if an action be just, abstain. . . "; of Confucius'—"Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses."

. . . The wicked man even will recognize the beauty of these virtues which he dare not imitate. The beauty which strikes the senses merely, the imagination, and that which is called "intelligence," is often uncertain therefore. The beauty which speaks to the heart is not that. You will find a host of people who will tell you that they have found nothing beautiful in three-quarters of the *Iliad*; but nobody will deny that Codrus' devotion to his people was very beautiful, supposing it to be true.

There are many other reasons which determine me not to write a treatise on beauty.

4. Positions in fencing, *Eds.*

From the reading . . .

“‘Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses.’ ”

Voltaire, Lithograph of Carmontelle painting, Library of Congress

Related Ideas

Voltaire: The Philosophical Dictionary.[5] *Hanover Historical Texts Project*. Topics from *Dictionnaire Philosophique* scanned by the Hanover College Department of History.

5. *Voltaire Dictionary* (http://history.hanover.edu/texts/voltaire/volindex.html)

Voltaire.[6] Thomas S. Vernon’s chapter from his book *Great Infidels*. Fayetteville, AR: M&M Press, 1989.

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Voltaire implies in his essay on “Beauty” that judgments in æsthetics are relative, but judgments in morality are universal. How would Voltaire answer the critic who points out that different cultures have different moral standards?
2. Compare and contrast Hume’s position on æsthetics with Voltaire’s position. Note especially their thoughts on the teleology of æsthetics.
3. Explain thoroughly why Voltaire believes that beauty of the senses, imagination and intelligence is uncertain, yet the beauty of the heart is not. What is “the beauty of the heart”? Is his argument essentially empirical or rational?
4. Francis Huthcheson argues for the objectivity of æsthetic judgments as follows:

   > [T]he 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… so propose the whole World as a Reward, or threaten the greatest Evil, to make us approve a deform’d Object, or disapprove a beautiful one… but our Sentiments of the Forms, and our Perceptions, would ontinue invariably the same.[7]

   Explain how Voltaire would respond to this argument.

6. *Voltaire* (http://http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/voltvern.htm)
7. Francis Hutcheson. *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*. Part I of *An Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. London: J. Barby, *et. al.* 1725. I: XIV.

Chapter 8

"Æsthetic Principles Are Universal" by David Hume

David Hume Thoemmes

About the author . . .

David Hume's (1711-1776) early interest in philosophical questions, at the age of 16, led to his work on an observationally based science of human nature described his celebrated *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*. By his early twenties, he had read most, if not all, of the influential books in Latin, French, and English in the fields of classical literature, science, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, and history. Although Hume's philosophy is empirically based, his remark concerning the essential place of the passions in human nature is often overlooked: "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions."[1] The passions are, Hume thinks, integral qualities of persons—feelings attributable to the

1. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 1739-40. Edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge,

ideas of, or the experience of, pleasure or pain. Reason alone is insufficient to explain emotional responses of composed of feelings.

About the work . . .

In "Of the Standard of Taste" in *Four Dissertations*,[2] Hume argues that reference to standards of taste can prove some æsthetic preferences to be mistaken. He believes æsthetic judgments are inductively established through experience and education: highly trained, unprejudiced, and practiced critics establish reliable standards of taste and beauty. Nevertheless, æsthetic preferences vary to some degree with an individual's age, temperament, and culture. Hume's standard of taste is an empirical and not an *á priori* criterion, a point Immanuel Kant sought to remedy.

From the reading . . .

"...all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature..."

Ideas of Interest from Of the Standard of Taste

1. Explain the commonly held "principle of the natural equality of taste." Why does Hume believe the principle is mistaken?
2. According to Hume, what is the role of reason in the evaluation of purpose in the arts?
3. Is the quality of beauty in æsthetic objects or is it in the feelings evoked by those objects?
4. Why does Hume believe the principles of taste can be thought of as universal standards? How can these principles be proved?

2nd Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. II, iii, 3/416.
2. David Hume. *Four Dissertations*. London: A. Millar. 1757.

5. How does Hume think disagreements in taste should be settled?
6. According to Hume, what are the main reasons for variations in taste among persons of refined taste?

[The Reading Selection from Of the Standard of Taste]

[Standards of Taste]

The great variety of taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world is too obvious not to have fallen under everyone's observation.. . . We are apt to call barbarous whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension, but soon find the epithet of reproach retorted on us. And the highest arrogance and self-conceit is at last startled on observing an equal assurance on all sides, and scruples, amidst such a contest of sentiment, to pronounce positively in its own favour.. . .

It is natural for us to seek a "Standard of Taste": a rule by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least a decision afforded confirming one sentiment and condemning another.

[Principle of Natural Equality of Tastes is Mistaken]

There is a species of philosophy which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. The difference, it is said, is very wide between judgment and sentiment. All sentiment is right, because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right, because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact, and are not always conformable to that standard. 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. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them, and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity where another is sensible of beauty, and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment without pretending to regulate those of others. To seek the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. According to the disposition of the organs, the same object may be both sweet and bitter; and the proverb has justly determined it to be fruitless to dispute concerning tastes. It is very natural, and even quite necessary, to extend this axiom to mental as well as bodily taste; and thus common sense, which is so often at variance with philosophy, especially with the sceptical kind, is found, in one instance at least, to agree in pronouncing the same decision.

[Rules of Art Not Fixed by Reason But Experience]

But though this axiom by passing into a proverb seems to have attained the sanction of common sense, there is certainly a species of common sense which opposes it, at least serves to modify and restrain it. 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 molehill to be as high as Tenerife, or 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. The principle of the natural equality of tastes is then totally forgot, and while we admit it on some occasions where the objects seem near an equality, it appears an extravagant paradox, or rather a palpable absurdity, where objects so disproportioned are compared together.

It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings *á priori*, or can be esteemed abstract conclusions of the understanding,

from comparing[3] those habitudes and relations of ideas which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience; nor are they anything but general observations concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages. Many of the beauties of poetry and even of eloquence are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning. To check the sallies of the imagination and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism because it would produce a work which, by universal experience, has been found the most insipid and disagreeable. But though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art, discovered to the author either by genius or observation.. . .

But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine that on every occasion the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules.. . .

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. Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator, but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with.. . .

[The Proper Sentiment of Beauty]

It appears, then, that amidst all the variety and caprice of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind.. . . In each creature there is a sound and a defective state, and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true standard of taste and sentiment. If in the sound state of the organ there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in daylight to the eye of a man

3. arrived at by comparing

in health is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses.

One obvious cause why many feel not the proper sentiment of beauty is the want of that delicacy of imagination which is requisite to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions. This delicacy everyone pretends to; everyone talks of it, and would reduce every kind of taste or sentiment to its standard. But as our intention in this essay is to mingle some light of the understanding with the feelings of sentiment, it will be proper to give a more accurate definition of delicacy than has hitherto been attempted. And not to draw our philosophy from too profound a source, we shall have recourse to a noted story in “Don Quixote.”

Don Quixote, Library of Congress

It is with good reason, says Sancho to the squire with the great nose, that I pretend to have a judgment in wine: this is a quality hereditary in our family. Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hogshead which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it, considers it; and, after mature reflection, pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions,

gives also his verdict in favour of the wine, but with the resene of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom an old key with a leathern thong tied to it.

The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story. Though it be certain that beauty and deformity, no more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external, it must be allowed that there are certain qualities in objects which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings.… Here then the general rules of beauty are of use, being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in a high degree; and if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a smaller degree, affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy. To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leathern thong, which justified the verdict of Sancho's kinsmen, and confounded those pretended judges who had condemned them. Though the hogshead had never been emptied, the taste of the one was still equally delicate, and that of the other equally dull and languid; but it would have been more difficult to have proved the superiority of the former, to the conviction of every bystander. In like manner, though the beauties of writing had never been methodized, or reduced to general principles; though no excellent models had ever been acknowledged, the different degrees of taste would still have subsisted, and the judgment of one man been preferable to that of another; but it would not have been so easy to silence the bad critic, who might always insist upon his particular sentiment, and refuse to submit to his antagonist. But when we show him an avowed principle of art; when we illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation, from his own particular taste, he acknowledges to be conformable to the principle; when we prove that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence: he must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants the delicacy which is requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish in any composition or discourse.

It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation.… In this decision the sentiments of all mankind are agreed. Wherever you can ascertain a delicacy of taste, it is

sure to meet with approbation; and the best way of ascertaining it is to appeal to those models and principles which have been established by the uniform consent and experience of nations and ages.

From the reading . . .

"Though it be certain that beauty and deformity . . . are not qualities in objects but belong entirely to the sentiment . . . it must be allowed that there are certain qualities in objects which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings."

[Æsthetic Sentiment Is Improved Through Education]

But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to increase and improve this talent than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. When objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment which attends them is obscure and confused; and the mind is, in a great measure, incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects.. . . But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: he not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame. A clear and distinct sentiment attends him through the whole survey of the objects. . . In a word, the same address and dexterity which practice gives to the execution of any work is also acquired by the same means in the judging of it.

It is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty without being frequently obliged to form comparisons between the several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any abject presented to him. By comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each.. . . A great inferiority of beauty gives pain to a person conversant in the highest excellence of the kind, and is for that reason

pronounced a deformity; as the most finished object with which we are acquainted is naturally supposed to have reached the pinnacle of perfection, and to be entitled to the highest applause. One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances admired in different Ages and nations can alone rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.. . .

From the reading . . .

"It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation."

. . . In all the nobler productions of genius, there is a mutual relation and correspondence of parts; nor can either the beauties or blemishes be perceived by him whose thought is not capacious enough to comprehend all those parts and compare them with each other, in order to perceive the consistence and uniformity of the whole. Every work of art has also a certain end or purpose for which it is calculated; and is to be deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end. The object of eloquence is to persuade, of history to instruct, of poetry to please, by means of the passions and the imagination. These ends we must carry constantly in our view when we peruse any performance; and we must be able to judge how far the means employed are adapted to their respective purposes.. . . It seldom or never happens that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding.

Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely, the same in all men, yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty.. . .

Whether any particular person be endowed with good sense and a delicate imagination, free from prejudice, may often be the subject of dispute, and be liable to great discussion and inquiry: but that such a character is valuable and estimable will be agreed in by all mankind. Where these doubts occur, men can do no more than in other disputable questions which are submitted to the understanding: they must produce the best arguments that their invention suggests to them; they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact; and they must have indulgence to such as differ from them

in their appeals to this standard. It is sufficient for our present purpose if we have proved that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others.

[Scientific Standards More Disputed]

But in reality the difficulty of finding, even in particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as it is represented. Though in speculation we may readily avow a certain criterion in science,[4] and deny it in sentiment, the matter is found in practice to be much more hard to ascertain in the former case than in the latter. Theories of abstract philosophy, systems of profound theology, have prevailed during one age; in a successive period these have been universally exploded, their absurdity has been detected; other theories and systems have supplied their place, which again gave place to their successors, and nothing has been experienced more liable to the revolutions of chance and fashion than these pretended decisions of science.… 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 favourite epic or tragic author.

From the reading …

"…we have proved that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing…"

[Sources of Varaiation in Standards]

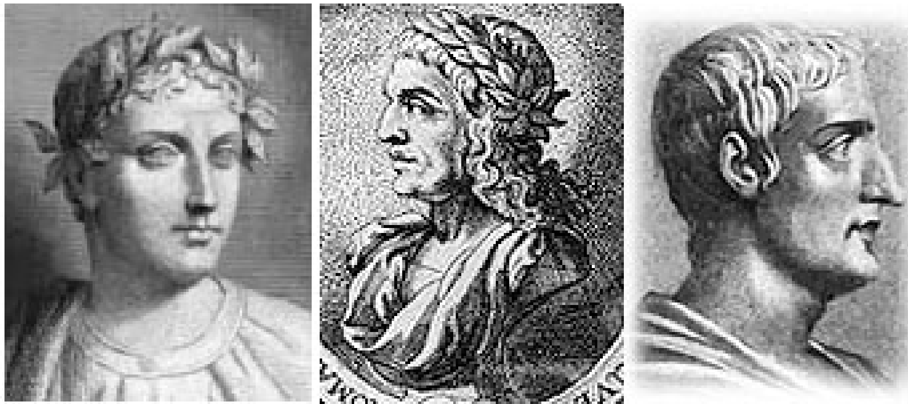
But notwithstanding all our endeavours to fix a standard of taste, and reconcile the discordant apprehensions of men, there still remain two sources of variation, which are not sufficient indeed to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbations or blame. The one is the

4. branches of knowledge

different humours of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country.. . .

A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and tender images than a man more advanced in years, who takes pleasure in wise, philosophical reflections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. At twenty, Ovid may be the favourite author, Horace at forty, and perhaps Tacitus at fifty. Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others and divest ourselves of those propensities which are natural to us. We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humor and disposition.. . .

For a like reason, we are more pleased in the course of our reading with pictures and characters that resemble objects which are found in our own age or country than with those which describe a different set of customs.. . . A man of learning and reflection can make allowance for these peculiarities of manners; but a common audience can never divest themselves so far of their usual ideas and sentiments as to relish pictures which nowise resemble them.



Ovid, Horace, and Tacitus, George Sandy 1652; wikipedia.com

From the reading . . .

"We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humor and disposition."

Related Ideas

"Hume and the Standard of Taste".[5] *Hume and the Standard of Taste*. An article by Christopher MacLachlan published in *Hume Studies* XII, 1 (April, 1986), 18-38.

Taste.[6] *The Literary Encyclopedia*. The history of the concept of taste is traced throught the eighteenth century.

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Compose a refutation of æsthetic relativism, a view described by Hume as "the principle of the equality of tastes":

   > All sentiment is right, because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it.

   Would Hume agree with the common belief of *de gustibus non est disputandum*? What arguments does he present with respect to this cliché.

2. In this reading, Hume claims that æsthetic sentiment and judgment are improved through proper experience and education. How could he distinguish between a proper artistic education and a training which produces a prejudicial view—*i.e.*, one not in accordance with the universal principles of beauty?
3. Explain why Hume's argument to the conclusion "the best way of ascertaining [a delicacy of taste] is to appeal to those models and principles which have been established by the uniform consent and experience of nations and ages" is not the fallacy of *Argumnetum ad Populum*. Nevertheless, state several good objections to his criterion of good taste.

5. *Occidental University* (http://departments.oxy.edu/philosophy/hs/issues/v12n1/maclachlan/maclachlan-v12n1.pdf)
6. *Taste* (http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1091)

4. Hume believes that principles of taste are uniform in nature, given some variations. Clarify this view. Does he mean general principles of taste are universal *ceteris paribus*, or does he mean general principles of taste are similar from culture to culture?

Chapter 9

“Art is Ideal Imitation” by Joshua Reynolds

Sir Joshua Reynolds adapted from Duykinck, *A Portrait Gallery*

About the author . . .

Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), the predominant portrait artist of the Enlightenment, clarified the principles of the æsthetic theory of ideal representation. Reynolds grew up in Devon, but learned his art under Thomas Hudson in London. He founded “the Club,” *i.e.*, the well known Literary Club of Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, and James Boswell. As the elected president of the Royal Academy, his philosophy of art developed through his lectures to the members and students of the Academy at the annual awarding of student prizes.

About the work . . .

In "Discourse VII," in his *Seven Discourses on Art*, [1] Joshua Reynolds sets out some of the principles of artistic education and æsthetic criticism. For Reynolds, beauty is an intellectual quality and is obtained in art as a kind of rational reconstruction of nature, whereby the general forms of objects are become represented. Although Reynolds assumes that general rules or principles account for artistic excellence, artistic genius applies these precepts in an original manner.

From the reading . . .

[T]he main scope and principal end of this discourse to demonstrate the reality of a standard in taste.

Ideas of Interest from *Discourses On Art*

1. What does Reynolds mean by the assertion that the foundations of art are established in science?
2. What is it that Reynolds believes the beginning artist can particularly learn, not from reading, but from "learned and ingenious" persons?
3. With what kinds of philosophy does Reynolds believe that the young artist should be conversant?
4. How does Reynolds define artistic taste? How is taste related to genius? Why does Reynold believe artistic genius is not intuitive?
5. Describe Reynold's characterization of the two levels of principles or truth to which art should conform. What is Reynolds' first presiding principle of art?

1. Joshua Reynolds. "Discourse VII: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10th, 1776, by the President." *Seven Discourses on Art*. London: Cassel. 1901.

6. According to Reynolds, how does one form a true idea of the imagination? How is agreement and uniformity of opinion (*i.e.* of standards of taste) in the arts obtained?
7. What does Reynolds say is the main purpose of art?
8. According to Reynolds, why should the artist study philosophy?

The Reading Selection from *Discourses on Art: VII*

[Learning the Science of Art]

As our art is not a divine gift, so neither is it a mechanical trade. Its foundations are laid in solid science. And practice, though essential to perfection, can never attain that to which it aims, unless it works under the direction of principle.. . .

But without such exaggeration, we may go so far as to assert, that a painter stands in need of more knowledge than is to be picked off his pallet, or collected by looking on his model, whether it be in life or in picture. He can never be a great artist who is grossly illiterate.

Every man whose business is description ought to be tolerably conversant with the poets in some language or other, that he may imbibe a poetical spirit and enlarge his stock of ideas. He ought to acquire a habit of comparing and divesting his notions. He ought not to be wholly unacquainted with that part of philosophy which gives him an insight into human nature, and relates to the manners, characters, passions, and affections. He ought to know something concerning the mind, as well as a great deal concerning the body of man.

For this purpose, it is not necessary that he should go into such a compass of reading, as must, by distracting his attention, disqualify him for the practical part of his profession, and make him sink the performer in the critic. Reading, if it can be made the favourite recreation of his leisure hours, will improve and enlarge his mind without retarding his actual industry.

What such partial and desultory reading cannot afford, may be supplied by the conversation of learned and ingenious men, which is the best of all substitutes for those who have not the means or opportunities of deep study. There are many such men in this age; and they will be pleased with communicating their ideas to artists, when they see them curious and docile, if they are treated with that respect and deference which is so justly their due. Into such society, young artists, if they make it the point of their ambition, will by degrees be admitted. There, without formal teaching, they will insensibly come to feel and reason like those they live with, and find a rational and systematic taste imperceptibly formed in their minds, which they will know how to reduce to a standard, by applying general truth to their own purposes, better perhaps than those to whom they owed the original sentiment.

[Artistic Taste]

Of these studies and this conversation, the desired and legitimate offspring is a power of distinguishing right from wrong, which power applied to works of art is denominated taste. Let me then, without further introduction, enter upon an examination whether taste be so far beyond our reach as to be unattainable by care, or be so very vague and capricious that no care ought to be employed about it.. . .

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> We apply the term taste to that act of the mind by which we like or dislike, whatever be the subject.

Genius and taste, in their common acceptation, appear to be very nearly related; the difference lies only in this, that genius has superadded to it a habit or power of execution. Or we may say, that taste, when this power is added, changes its name, and is called genius. They both, in the popular opinion, pretend to an entire exemption from the restraint of rules. It is supposed that their powers are intuitive; that under the name of genius great works are produced, and under the name of taste an exact judgment is given, without our knowing why, and without being under the least obligation to reason, precept, or experience.

One can scarce state these opinions without exposing their absurdity, yet they are constantly in the mouths of men, and particularly of artists.. . .

The common saying, that tastes are not to be disputed, owes its influence, and its general reception, to the same error which leads us to imagine it of too high original to submit to the authority of an earthly tribunal.. . .

We apply the term taste to that act of the mind by which we like or dislike, whatever be the subject. Our judgment upon an airy nothing, a fancy which has no foundation, is called by the same name which we give to our determination concerning those truths which refer to the most general and most unalterable principles of human nature, to works which are only to be produced by the greatest efforts of the human understanding. However inconvenient this may be, we are obliged to take words as we find them; all we can do is to distinguish the things to which they are applied.

We may let pass those things which are at once subjects of taste and sense, and which having as much certainty as the senses themselves, give no occasion to inquiry or dispute. The natural appetite or taste of the human mind is for truth; whether that truth results from the real agreement or equality of original ideas among themselves; from the agreement of the representation of any object with the thing represented; or from the correspondence of the several parts of any arrangement with each other. It is the very same taste which relishes a demonstration in geometry, that is pleased with the resemblance of a picture to an original, and touched with the harmony of music.

[Criticism: Two Kinds of Truth]

All these have unalterable and fixed foundations in nature, and are therefore equally investigated by reason, and known by study; some with more, some with less clearness, but all exactly in the same way. A picture that is unlike, is false. Disproportionate ordinance of parts is not right because it cannot be true until it ceases to be a contradiction to assert that the parts have no relation to the whole. Colouring is true where it is naturally adapted to the eye, from brightness, from softness, from harmony, from resemblance; because these agree with their object, nature, and therefore are true: as true as mathematical demonstration; but known to be true only to those who study these things.

But besides real, there is also apparent truth, or opinion, or prejudice.

With regard to real truth, when it is known, the taste which conforms to it is, and must be, uniform. With regard to the second sort of truth, which may be called truth upon sufferance, or truth by courtesy, it is not fixed, but variable. However, whilst these opinions and prejudices on which it is founded continue, they operate as truth; and the art, whose office it is to please the mind, as well as instruct it, must direct itself according to opinion, or it will not attain its end.

From the reading . . .

In fact, as he who does not know himself does not know others, so it may be said with equal truth, that he who does not know others knows himself but very imperfectly.

In proportion as these prejudices are known to be generally diffused, or long received, the taste which conforms to them approaches nearer to certainty, and to a sort of resemblance to real science, even where opinions are found to be no better than prejudices. And since they deserve, on account of their duration and extent, to be considered as really true, they become capable of no small decree of stability and determination by their permanent and uniform nature.

As these prejudices become more narrow, more local, more transitory, this secondary taste becomes more and more fantastical; recedes from real science; is less to be approved by reason, and less followed in practice; though in no case perhaps to be wholly neglected, where it does not stand, as it sometimes does, in direct defiance of the most respectable opinions received amongst mankind.

Having laid down these positions, I shall proceed with less method, because less will serve, to explain and apply them.

[Principles of Art]

We will take it for granted that reason is something invariable and fixed in the nature of things; and without endeavouring to go back to an account of first principles, which for ever will elude our search, we will conclude that whatever goes under the name of taste, which we can fairly bring under the dominion of reason, must be considered as equally exempt from

change. If therefore, in the course of this inquiry, we can show that there are rules for the conduct of the artist which are fixed and invariable, it implies, of course, that the art of the connoisseur, or, in other words, taste, has likewise invariable principles.. . .

The arts would lie open for ever to caprice and casualty, if those who are to judge of their excellences had no settled principles by which they are to regulate their decisions, and the merit or defect of performances were to be determined by unguided fancy. And indeed we may venture to assert that whatever speculative knowledge is necessary to the artist, is equally and indispensably necessary to the connoisseur.

The first idea that occurs in the consideration of what is fixed in art, or in taste, is that presiding principle of which I have so frequently spoken in former discourses, the general idea of nature. The beginning, the middle, and the end of everything that is valuable in taste, is comprised in the knowledge of what is truly nature; for whatever ideas are not conformable to those of nature, or universal opinion, must be considered as more or less capricious.

The idea of nature comprehending not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organization, as I may call it, of the human mind and imagination: general ideas, beauty, or nature, are but different ways of expressing the same thing, whether we apply these terms to statues, poetry, or picture. Deformity is not nature, but an accidental deviation from her accustomed practice. This general idea therefore ought to be called nature, and nothing else, correctly speaking, has a right to that name. But we are so far from speaking, in common conversation, with any such accuracy, that, on the contrary, when we criticise Rembrandt and other Dutch painters, who introduced into their historical pictures exact representations of individual objects with all their imperfections, we say, though it is not in a good taste, yet it is nature.. . .

[Standards of Taste]

I shall now say something on that part of taste which, as I have hinted to you before, does not belong so much to the external form of things, but is addressed to the mind, and depends on its original frame, or, to use the expression, the organisation of the soul; I mean the imagination and the passions. The principles of these are as invariable as the former, and are to be known and reasoned upon in the same manner, by an appeal

to common sense deciding upon the common feelings of mankind. This sense, and these feelings, appear to me of equal authority, and equally conclusive.

Now this appeal implies a general uniformity and agreement in the minds of men. It would be else an idle and vain endeavour to establish rules of art; it would be pursuing a phantom to attempt to move affections with which we were entirely unacquainted. We have no reason to suspect there is a greater difference between our minds than between our forms, of which, though there are no two alike, yet there is a general similitude that goes through the whole race of mankind; and those who have cultivated their taste can distinguish what is beautiful or deformed, or, in other words, what agrees with or what deviates from the general idea of nature, in one case as well as in the other.

The internal fabric of our mind, as well as the external form of our bodies, being nearly uniform, it seems then to follow, of course, that as the imagination is incapable of producing anything originally of itself, and can only vary and combine these ideas with which it is furnished by means of the senses, there will be, of course, an agreement in the imaginations as in the senses of men. There being this agreement, it follows that in all cases, in our lightest amusements as well as in our most serious actions and engagements of life, we must regulate our affections of every kind by that of others. The well-disciplined mind acknowledges this authority, and submits its own opinion to the public voice.

From the reading . . .

[W]e can show that there are rules for the conduct of the artist which are fixed and invariable, it implies, of course, that the art of the connoisseur, or, in other words, taste, has likewise invariable principles.

It is from knowing what are the general feelings and passions of mankind that we acquire a true idea of what imagination is; though it appears as if we had nothing to do but to consult our own particular sensations, and these were sufficient to ensure us from all error and mistake.

A knowledge of the disposition and character of the human mind can be acquired only by experience: a great deal will be learned, I admit, by a habit of examining what passes in our bosoms, what are our own

motives of action, and of what kind of sentiments we are conscious on any occasion. We may suppose a uniformity, and conclude that the same effect will be produced by the same cause in the minds of others. This examination will contribute to suggest to us matters of inquiry; but we can never be sure that our own sensations are true and right till they are confirmed by more extensive observation.

One man opposing another determines nothing but a general union of minds, like a general combination of the forces of all mankind, makes a strength that is irresistible. In fact, as he who does not know himself does not know others, so it may be said with equal truth, that he who does not know others knows himself but very imperfectly.

A man who thinks he is guarding himself against Prejudices by resisting the authority of others, leaves open every avenue to singularity, vanity, self-conceit, obstinacy, and many other vices, all tending to warp the judgment and prevent the natural operation of his faculties.

This submission to others is a deference which we owe, and indeed are forced involuntarily to pay.

In fact we are never satisfied with our opinions till they are ratified and confirmed by the suffrages of the rest of mankind. We dispute and wrangle for ever; we endeavour to get men to come to us when we do not go to them.

He therefore who is acquainted with the works which have pleased different ages and different countries, and has formed his opinion on them, has more materials and more means of knowing what is analogous to the mind of man than he who is conversant only with the works of his own age or country. What has pleased, and continues to please, is likely to please again: hence are derived the rules of art, and on this immovable foundation they must ever stand.

This search and study of the history of the mind ought not to be confined to one art only. It is by the analogy that one art bears to another that many things are ascertained which either were but faintly seen, or, perhaps, would not have been discovered at all if the inventor had not received the first hints from the practices of a sister art on a similar occasion. The frequent allusions which every man who treats of any art is obliged to draw from others in order to illustrate and confirm his principles, sufficiently show their near connection and inseparable relation.

All arts having the same general end, which is to please, and addressing

themselves to the same faculties through the medium of the senses, it follows that their rules and principles must have as great affinity as the different materials and the different organs or vehicles by which they pass to the mind will permit them to retain.

We may therefore conclude that the real substance, as it may be called, of what goes under the name of taste, is fixed and established in the nature of things; that there are certain and regular causes by which the imagination and passions of men are affected; and that the knowledge of these causes is acquired by a laborious and diligent investigation of nature, and by the same slow progress as wisdom or knowledge of every kind, however instantaneous its operations may appear when thus acquired.

It has been often observed that the good and virtuous man alone can acquire this true or just relish, even of works of art. This opinion will not appear entirely without foundation when we consider that the same habit of mind which is acquired by our search after truth in the more serious duties of life, is only transferred to the pursuit of lighter amusements: the same disposition, the same desire to find something steady, substantial, and durable, on which the mind can lean, as it were, and rest with safety. The subject only is changed. We pursue the same method in our search after the idea of beauty and perfection in each; of virtue, by looking forwards beyond ourselves to society, and to the whole; of arts, by extending our views in the same manner to all ages and all times.

From the reading . . .

It is the very same taste which relishes a demonstration in geometry, that is pleased with the resemblance of a picture to an original, and touched with the harmony of music.

Every art, like our own, has in its composition fluctuating as well as fixed principles. It is an attentive inquiry into their difference that will enable us to determine how far we are influenced by custom and habit, and what is fixed in the nature of things.. . .

t has been the main scope and principal end of this discourse to demonstrate the reality of a standard in taste, as well as in corporeal beauty; that a false or depraved taste is a thing as well known, as easily discovered, as anything that is deformed, misshapen, or wrong in our form or outward make; and that this knowledge is derived from the uniformity of senti-

ments among mankind, from whence proceeds the knowledge of what are the general habits of nature, the result of which is an idea of perfect beauty.

If what has been advanced be true, that besides this beauty or truth which is formed on the uniform eternal and immutable laws of nature, and which of necessity can be but one; that besides this one immutable verity there are likewise what we have called apparent or secondary truths proceeding from local and temporary prejudices, fancies, fashions, or accidental connection of ideas; if it appears that these last have still their foundation, however slender, in the original fabric of our minds, it follows that all these truths or beauties deserve and require the attention of the artist in proportion to their stability or duration, or as their influence is more or less extensive. And let me add that as they ought not to pass their just bounds, so neither do they, in a well-regulated taste, at all prevent or weaken the influence of these general principles, which alone can give to art its true and permanent dignity.

To form this just taste is undoubtedly in your own power, but it is to reason and philosophy that you must have recourse; from them we must borrow the balance by which is to be weighed and estimated the value of every pretension that intrudes itself on your notice.

The general objection which is made to the introduction of philosophy into the regions of taste is, that it checks and restrains the flights of the imagination, and gives that timidity which an over-carefulness not to err or act contrary to reason is likely to produce.

It is not so. Fear is neither reason nor philosophy. The true spirit of philosophy by giving knowledge gives a manly confidence, and substitutes rational firmness in the place of vain presumption. A man of real taste is always a man of judgment in other respects; and those inventions which either disdain or shrink from reason, are generally, I fear, more like the dreams of a distempered brain than the exalted enthusiasm of a sound and true genius. In the midst of the highest flights of fancy or imagination, reason ought to preside from first to last, though I admit her more powerful operation is upon reflection.

I cannot help adding that some of the greatest names of antiquity, and those who have most distinguished themselves in works of genius and imagination, were equally eminent for their critical skill. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Horace; and among the moderns, Boileau, Corneille, Pope, and Dryden, are at least instances of genius not being destroyed by atten-

tion or subjection to rules and science. I should hope, therefore, that the natural consequence likewise of what has been said would be to excite in you a desire of knowing the principles and conduct of the great masters of our art, and respect and veneration for them when known.

Related Ideas

Seven Discourses on Art.[2] *Project Gutenberg*. The eBook of Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art* in HTML and plain text.

Joshua Reynolds.[3] *Wikipedia*. Encyclopedia entry on life, works and links to books and art.

Sir Joshua Reynolds. [4] *ArtCyclopedia* Links to Reynolds' paintings in museums throughout the world.

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From the reading . . .

The true spirit of philosophy by giving knowledge . . . substitutes rational firmness in the place of vain presumption.

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Reynolds states in the opening paragraph of this reading that the foundations of art are "laid in solid science." Carl Gustave Jung states:

   > Art by its very nature is not science, and science by its very nature is not art; both these spheres of the mind have something in reserve that is peculiar to them and can be explained only in its own terms.[5]

   Is the apparent disagreement between Reynolds and Jung a factual disagreement or a merely verbal disagreement?

2. Reynolds states that the principles or rules of æsthetic creation are not intuitive but are based on science. Explain, then, how he accounts for artistic genius, which seems to go well beyond the rules for artistic accomplishment.

3. If the principles or rules of art were based on science, then Hegel points out some difficulties:

   > [A] work of art is a human activity . . . [With] such an activity, being the conscious production of an external object . . . one is able to effect or to imitate, when he has once simply mastered the way of doing it.. . . But if rules are really to suffice for such a purpose their directions ought to be formulated with such directness of detail that, without any further co-operation of mind, then could be executed precisely in the manner they are prescribed. Such rules being, in respect of this content, abstract, clearly and entirely fall short of their pretension of being

5. Carl Gustav Jung. "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry." In *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature. Collected Works.* New York: Macmillan, 1922. Vol. 15.

> able to complete the artistic consciousness. Artistic production is not a formal activity in accordance with a series of defintions; it is, as an activity of soul, constrained to work out of its own own wealth, and to bring before the mind's eye a wholly other and far richer content, and a more embracing and unique creation thatn ever can be thus prescribed.[6]

Speculate how Reynolds would answer this objection which seems to be common sense. In fact Reynolds, himself, writes:

> Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would be no longer taste and genius. But though there neither are, nor can be, any precise invariable rules for the exercise or the acquisition of those great qualities, yet we may as truly say that they always operate in proportion to our attention in observing the works of nature, to our skill in selecting, and to our care in digesting, methodising, and comparing our observations. There are many beauties in our art, that seem, at first, to lie without the reach of precept, and yet may easily be reduced to practical principles.[7]

Can these two points of view be reconciled by recognizing Hegel's argument that "we at once exclude the beauty of Nature from the scientific exposition of Fine Art?"[8] Or, perhaps they can be reconciled by distinguishing, as C.G. Jung does, two different forms of art:

> For in the one case it is a conscious product shaped and designed to have the effect intended. But in the other we are dealing with an event originating in unconscious nature . . .[9]

4. Compare Reynold's notion of the intersubjective agreement of those who have acquired artistic taste with David Hume's account of empirically establishing standards of taste.[10]

5. Benedetto Croce held that art is expression—it is identified with intuitive knowledge just as science is identified with logical knowledge. He writes,

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6. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*. London: G. Bell Ltd., 1920. Ch. III.
7. Joshua Reynolds. "Discourse III: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 14th, 1770, by the President." *Seven Discourses on Art*. London: Cassel. 1901.
8. Hegel, "Introduction" I.
9. C. G. Jung. "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry." In *British Journal of Medical Psychlogy*. Translated by C.F. and H.G. Baynes. London. 1928.
10. David Hume. "Of the Standard of Taste." In *Four Dissertations*. London: A. Millar. 1757.

> As to what is art—I will say at once, in the simplest manner, that art is *vision* or *intuition*.... [I]ntuition means, precisely, indistinction of reality and unreality, the image with its value as mere image, the pure ideality of the image; and opposing the intuitive or sensible knowledge to the conceptual or intelligible ... [W]e deny that the universal is rendered logically explicit and is thought in the intuition.[11]

Explain whether or not Reynold's notion of ideal representation could be translated to Croce's representation of the coherence of intuition in the feeling or expression of emotion.

11. Benedetto Croce. *The Essence of Æsthetic*. Trans. by Douglas Ainslee. London: William Heinemann, 1921.

Chapter 10

“Taste Is Universal” by Edmund Burke

Edmund Burke (adapted) Thoemmes

About the author . . .

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was born in Dublin, studied at Trinity College, and moved to London to study law. Instead of pursuing law, however, he became involved with Samuel Johnson’s Literary Club. Burke is best known now as a conservative English statesman who, opposing British policies in India and the American colonies, nevertheless published two influential works in philosophy. The first, *A Vindication of Natural Society* was meant to satirize Bolingbroke’s political philosophy, although most readers mistakenly thought either Bolingbroke, himself, wrote the work or thought the views expressed were Burke’s genuine beliefs. The second, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful*, introduces the element of terror as es-

sential to the sublime and, in an introductory essay, as a secondary issue, concludes that æsthetic abilities are improved through experience and knowledge. Burke served in the English Parliment, and, upon the debate of the question of the American colonies, Burke is said to have stated, “ If we have equity, wisdom, and justice, it will belong to this country; if we have it not, it will not belong to this country.”

About the work . . .

In his essay “On Taste,” an introduction to the second edition of his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful*,[1] Burke argues for the uniformity of taste among persons on the basis of sensibility—not on the basis of judgment as Hume had done in his essay on taste.[2] His *Enquiry* was widely read during the late 1700’s. In the essay, Burke utilizes the empiricism of Locke to conclude that the imagination (or the “fancy”) cannot produce new ideas; instead, the imagination represents perceptual images either accurately or in new combinations. The pleasures arising from novel similarities in art, Burke thinks, are a matter of a taste common to all men, even though æsthetic appreciation can be enhanced through knowledge and experience. In sum, for Burke, the logic of taste is often less controvertible than the logic of reason. Burke’s influence is not so much in his originality as it is in the sensationalist æsthetics characteristic of eighteenth century English and French writers. Where Burke does prove original, however, is in his romantic refashioning of Longinus’s classical analysis of the sublime.

From the reading . . .

[I]t is probable that the standard both of reason and taste is the same in all human creatures. For if there were not some principles of judgment as well as of sentiment common to all mankind, no hold could possibly be taken either on their reason or their passions, sufficient to maintain the ordinary correspondence of life.

1. Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful*. 2nd Edition. 1759.
2. David Hume. “Of the Standard of Taste.” In *Four Dissertations*. London: A. Millar. 1757.

Ideas of Interest from "On Taste"

1. Why does Burke think a logic of taste has not been systematized whereas the logic of reason has been systematized?
2. How does Burke define "taste"?
3. What is Burke's argument that the pleasures of the senses are similar for all persons?
4. How does Burke distinguish between imagination and judgment?
5. According to Burke, how do differences in critical taste arise?
6. How does Burke define taste?
7. According to Burke what causes a person to have poor taste? What are the causes of good taste?
8. How does Burke account for the different æsthetic effects of a work of art on different persons?
9. Why does Burke believe taste is not a unique faculty?
10. What is Burke's main distinction between beauty and the sublime?

The Reading Selection from "On Taste"

[Logic of Taste]

On a superficial view, we may seem to differ very widely from each other in our reasonings, and no less in our pleasures: but notwithstanding this difference, which I think to be rather apparent than real, it is probable that the standard both of reason and taste is the same in all human creatures. For if there were not some principles of judgment as well as of sentiment common to all mankind, no hold could possibly be taken either on their reason or their passions, sufficient to maintain the ordinary correspondence of life. It appears indeed to be generally acknowledged, that with regard to truth and falsehood there is something fixed. We find peo-

ple in their disputes continually appealing to certain tests and standards, which are allowed on all sides, and are supposed to be established in our common nature. But there is not the same obvious concurrence in any uniform or settled principles which relate to taste. It is even commonly supposed that this delicate and aerial faculty, which seems too volatile to endure even the chains of a definition, cannot be properly tried by any test, nor regulated by any standard. There is so continual a call for the exercise of the reasoning faculty, and it is so much strengthened by perpetual contention, that certain maxims of right reason seem to be tacitly settled amongst the most ignorant. The learned have improved on this rude science, and reduced those maxims into a system. If taste has not been so happily cultivated, it was not that the subject was barren, but that the labourers were few or negligent; for, to say the truth, there are not the same interesting motives to impel us to fix the one, which urge us to ascertain the other. And, after all, if men differ in their opinion concerning such matters, their difference is not attended with the same important consequences; else I make no doubt but that the logic of taste, if I may be allowed the expression, might very possibly be as well digested, and we might come to discuss matters of this nature with as much certainty, as those which seem more immediately within the province of mere reason. And indeed, it is very necessary, at the entrance into such an inquiry as our present, to make this point as clear as possible; for if taste has no fixed principles, if the imagination is not affected according to some invariable and certain laws, our labour is likely to be employed to very little purpose; as it must be judged a useless, if not an absurd undertaking, to lay down rules for caprice, and to set up for a legislator of whims and fancies.

The term taste, like all other figurative terms, is not extremely accurate; the thing which we understand by it is far from a simple and determinate idea in the minds of most men, and it is therefore liable to uncertainty and confusion.. . .

But to cut off all pretence for cavilling, I mean by the word Taste no more than that faculty or those faculties of the mind, which are affected with, or which form a judgment of, the works of imagination and the elegant arts. This is, I think the most general idea of that word, and what is the least connected with any particular theory. And my point in this inquiry is, to find whether there are any principles, on which the imagination is affected, so common to all, so grounded and certain, as to supply the means of reasoning satisfactorily about them.. . .

[Senses of All Persons Are Similar]

All the natural powers in man, which I know, that are conversant about external objects, are the senses; the imagination; and the judgment. And first with regard to the senses. We do and we must suppose, that as the conformation of their organs is nearly or altogether the same in all men, so the manner of perceiving external objects is in all men the same, or with little difference. We are satisfied that what appears to be light to one eye, appears light to another; that what seems sweet to one palate, is sweet to another; that what is dark and bitter to this man, is likewise dark and bitter to that; and we conclude in the same manner of great and little, hard and soft, hot and cold, rough and smooth, and indeed of all the natural qualities and affections of bodies. If we suffer ourselves to imagine, that their senses present to different men different images of things, this sceptical proceeding will make every sort of reasoning on every subject vain and frivolous, even that sceptical reasoning itself which had persuaded us to entertain a doubt concerning the agreement of our perceptions. But as there will be little doubt that bodies present similar images to the whole species, it must necessarily be allowed, that the pleasures and the pains which every object excites in one man, it must raise in all mankind, whilst it operates naturally, simply, and by its proper powers only; for if we deny this, we must imagine that the same cause, operating in the same manner, and on subjects of the same kind, will produce different effects; which would be highly absurd. Let us first consider this point in the sense of taste, and the rather, as the faculty in question has taken its name from that sense.... [S]hould any man be found who declares, that to him tobacco has a taste like sugar, and that he cannot distinguish between milk and vinegar; or that tobacco and vinegar are sweet, milk bitter, and sugar sour; we immediately conclude that the organs of this man are out of order, and that his palate is utterly vitiated. We are as far from conferring with such a person upon tastes, as from reasoning concerning the relations of quantity with one who should deny that all the parts together were equal to the whole. We do not call a man of this kind wrong in his notions, but absolutely mad. Exceptions of this sort, in either way, do not at all impeach our general rule, nor make us conclude that men have various principles concerning the relations of quantity or the taste of things. So that when it is said, taste cannot be disputed, it can only mean, that no one can strictly answer what pleasure or pain some particular man may find from the taste of some particular thing. This indeed cannot be disputed; but we may dispute, and with sufficient clearness too, concerning the things which are naturally pleasing or disagreeable to the sense....

From the reading . . .

[S]hould any man be found who declares, that to him tobacco has a taste like sugar, and that he cannot distinguish between milk and vinegar. . . [—][w]e do not call a man of this kind wrong in his notions, but absolutely mad.

This agreement of mankind is not confined to the taste solely. The principle of pleasure derived from sight is the same in all.. . . I never remember that anything beautiful, whether a man, a beast, a bird, or a plant, was ever shown, though it were to a hundred people, that they did not all immediately agree that it was beautiful, though some might have thought that it fell short of their expectation, or that other things were still finer. I believe no man thinks a goose to be more beautiful than a swan. . . But things do not spontaneously present themselves to the palate as they do to the sight; they are generally applied to it, either as food or as medicine; and, from the qualities which they possess for nutritive or medicinal purposes, they often form the palate by degrees, and by force of these associations. Thus opium is pleasing to Turks, on account of the agreeable delirium it produces. Tobacco is the delight of Dutchmen, as it diffuses a torpor and pleasing stupefaction. Fermented spirits please our common people, because they banish care, and all consideration of future or present evils. All of these would lie absolutely neglected if their properties had originally gone no further than the taste; but all these together, with tea and coffee, and some other things, have passed from the apothecary¿s shop to our tables, and were taken for health long before they were thought of for pleasure. The effect of the drug has made us use it frequently; and frequent use, combined with the agreeable effect, has made the taste itself at last agreeable. But this does not in the least perplex our reasoning; because we distinguish to the last the acquired from the natural relish. n describing the taste of an unknown fruit, you would scarcely say that it had a sweet and pleasant flavour like tobacco, opium, or garlic, although you spoke to those who were in the constant use of these drugs, and had great pleasure in them. There is in all men sufficient remembrance of the original natural causes of pleasure, to enable them to bring all things offered to their senses to that standard, and to regulate their feelings and opinions by it.. . . Thus the pleasure of all the senses, of the sight, and even of the taste, that most ambiguous of the senses, is the same in all, high and low, learned and unlearned.

[The Power of Imagination]

Besides the ideas, with their annexed pains and pleasures, which are presented by the sense; the mind of man possesses a sort of creative power of its own; either in representing at pleasure the images of things in the order and manner in which they were received by the senses, or in combining those images in a new manner, and according to a different order. This power is called imagination; and to this belongs whatever is called wit, fancy, invention, and the like. But it must be observed, that this power of the imagination is incapable of producing anything absolutely new; it can only vary the disposition of those ideas which it has received from the senses. Now the imagination is the most extensive province of pleasure and pain, as it is the region of our fears and our hopes, and of all our passions that are connected with them; and whatever is calculated to affect the imagination with these commanding ideas, by force of any original natural impression, must have the same power pretty equally over all men. For since the imagination is only the representation of the senses, it can only be pleased or displeased with the images, from the same principle on which the sense is pleased or displeased with the realities; and consequently there must be just as close an agreement in the imaginations as in the senses of men. A little attention will convince us that this must of necessity be the case. But in the imagination, besides the pain or pleasure arising from the properties of the natural object, a pleasure is perceived from the resemblance which the imitation has to the original: the imagination, I conceive, can have no pleasure but what results from one or other of these causes. And these causes operate pretty uniformly upon all men, because they operate by principles in nature, and which are not derived from any particular habits or advantages. Mr. Locke very justly and finely observes of wit, that it is chiefly conversant in tracing resemblances: he remarks, at the same time, that the business of judgment is rather in finding differences. It may perhaps appear, on this supposition, that there is no material distinction between the wit and the judgment, as they both seem to result from different operations of the same faculty of comparing. But in reality, whether they are or are not dependent on the same power of the mind, they differ so very materially in many respects, that a perfect union of wit and judgment is one of the rarest things in the world. When two distinct objects are unlike to each other, it is only what we expect; things are in their common way; and therefore they make no impression on the imagination: but when two distinct objects have a resemblance, we are struck, we attend to them, and we are pleased. The mind of man has naturally a far greater alacrity and satisfaction in trac-

ing resemblances than in searching for differences: because by making resemblances we produce new images; we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock; but in making distinctions we offer no food at all to the imagination; the task itself is more severe and irksome, and what pleasure we derive from it is something of a negative and indirect nature.... And it is upon this principle, that the most ignorant and barbarous nations have frequently excelled in similitudes, comparisons, metaphors, and allegories, who have been weak and backward in distinguishing and sorting their ideas...

From the reading ...

The mind of man has naturally a far greater alacrity and satisfaction in tracing resemblances than in searching for differences: because by making resemblances we produce new images; we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock; but in making distinctions we offer no food at all to the imagination...

Now, as the pleasure of resemblance is that which principally flatters the imagination, all men are nearly equal in this point, as far as their knowledge of the things represented or compared extends. The principle of this knowledge is very much accidental, as it depends upon experience and observation, and not on the strength or weakness of any natural faculty; and it is from this difference in knowledge, that what we commonly, though with no great exactness, call a difference in taste proceeds. A man to whom sculpture is new, sees a barber's block, or some ordinary piece of statuary, he is immediately struck and pleased, because he sees something like a human figure; and, entirely taken up with this likeness, he does not at all attend to its defects. No person, I believe, at the first time of seeing a piece of imitation ever did. Some time after, we suppose that this novice lights upon a more artificial work of the same nature; he now begins to look with contempt on what he admired at first; not that he admired it even then for its unlikeness to a man, but for that general, though inaccurate, resemblance which it bore to the human figure. What he admired at different times in these so different figures, is strictly the same; and though his knowledge is improved, his taste is not altered. Hitherto his mistake was from a want of knowledge in art; and this arose from his inexperience; but he may be still deficient from a want of knowledge in nature. For it is possible that the man in question may stop here, and that the masterpiece of a great hand may please him no more than the

middling performance of a vulgar artist: and this not for want of better or higher relish, but because all men do not observe with sufficient accuracy on the human figure to enable them to judge properly of an imitation of it. And that the critical taste does not depend upon a superior principle in men, but upon superior knowledge, may appear from several instances. The story of the ancient painter and the shoemaker is very well known. The shoemaker set the painter right with regard to some mistakes he had made in the shoe of one of his figures, and which the painter, who had not made such accurate observations on shoes, and was content with a general resemblance, had never observed. But this was no impeachment to the taste of the painter; it only showed some want of knowledge in the art of making shoes. Let us imagine, that an anatomist had come into the painter's working-room. His piece is in general well done, the figure in question in a good attitude, and the parts well adjusted to their various movements; yet the anatomist, critical in his art, may observe the swell of some muscle not quite just in the peculiar action of the figure. Here the anatomist observes what the painter had not observed; and he passes by what the shoemaker had remarked. But a want of the last critical knowledge in anatomy no more reflected on the natural good taste of the painter or of any common observer of his piece, than the want of an exact knowledge in the formation of a shoe.... On the subject of their dislike there is a difference between all these people, arising from the different kinds and degrees of their knowledge; but there is something in common to the painter, the shoemaker, the anatomist, and the Turkish emperor, the pleasure arising from a natural object, so far as each perceives it justly imitated; the satisfaction in seeing an agreeable figure; the sympathy proceeding from a striking and affecting incident. So far as taste is natural, it is nearly common to all.

In poetry, and other pieces of imagination, the same parity may be observed....

[How Differences in Tastes Arise]

So far then as taste belongs to the imagination, its principle is the same in all men; there is no difference in the manner of their being affected, nor in the causes of the affection; but in the degree there is a difference, which arises from two causes principally; either from a greater degree of natural sensibility, or from a closer and longer attention to the object.... Here is indeed the great difference between tastes, when men come to compare

the excess or diminution of things which are judged by degree and not by measure. Nor is it easy, when such a difference arises, to settle the point, if the excess or diminution be not glaring. If we differ in opinion about two quantities, we can have recourse to a common measure, which may decide the question with the utmost exactness; and this, I take it, is what gives mathematical knowledge a greater certainty than any other. But in things whose excess is not judged by greater or smaller, as smoothness and roughness, hardness and softness, darkness and light, the shades of colours, all these are very easily distinguished when the difference is any way considerable, but not when it is minute, for want of some common measures, which perhaps may never come to be discovered. In these nice cases, supposing the acuteness of the sense equal, the greater attention and habit in such things will have the advantage.… But notwithstanding this want of a common measure for settling many disputes relative to the senses, and their representative the imagination, we find that the principles are the same in all, and that there is no disagreement until we come to examine into the pre-eminence or difference of things, which brings us within the province of the judgment. So long as we are conversant with the sensible qualities of things, hardly any more than the imagination seems concerned; little more also than the imagination seems concerned when the passions are represented, because by the force of natural sympathy they are felt in all men without any recourse to reasoning, and their justness recognized in every breast. Love, grief, fear, anger, joy, all these passions have, in their turns, affected every mind; and they do not affect it in an arbitrary or casual manner, but upon certain, natural, and uniform principles. But as many of the works of imagination are not confined to the representation of sensible objects, nor to efforts upon the passions, but extend themselves to the manners, the characters, the actions, and designs of men, their relations, their virtues, and vices, they come within the province of the judgment, which is improved by attention, and by the habit of reasoning. All these make a very considerable part of what are considered as the objects of taste…

[Definition of Taste]

On the whole it appears to me, that what is called taste, in its most general acceptation, is not a simple idea, but is partly made up 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 to 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; for as the senses are the great originals of all our ideas, and consequently of all our pleasures, if they are not uncertain and arbitrary, the whole ground-work of taste is common to all, and therefore there is a sufficient foundation for a conclusive reasoning on these matters.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [I]f taste has no fixed principles, if the imagination is not affected according to some invariable and certain laws, our labour is likely to be employed to very little purpose. . .

Whilst we consider taste merely according to its nature and species, we shall find its principles entirely uniform; but the degree in which these principles prevail in the several individuals of mankind, is altogether as different as the principles themselves are similar. For sensibility and judgment, which are the qualities that compose what we commonly call a taste, vary exceedingly in various people. From a defect in the former of these qualities arises a want of taste; a weakness in the latter constitutes a wrong or a bad one. There are some men formed with feelings so blunt, with tempers so cold and phlegmatic, that they can hardly be said to be awake during the whole course of their lives. Upon such persons the most striking objects make but a faint and obscure impression. There are others so continually in the agitation of gross and merely sensual pleasures, or so occupied in the low drudgery of avarice, or so heated in the chase of honours and distinction, that their minds, which had been used continually to the storms of these violent and tempestuous passions, can hardly be put in motion by the delicate and refined play of the imagination. These men, though from a different cause, become as stupid and insensible as the former; but whenever either of these happen to be struck with any natural elegance or greatness, or with these qualities in any work of art, they are moved upon the same principle.

The cause of a wrong taste is a defect of judgment. And this may arise from a natural weakness of understanding, (in whatever the strength of that faculty may consist,) or, which is much more commonly the case, it may arise from a want of proper and well-directed exercise, which alone can make it strong and ready. Besides that ignorance, inattention, preju-

dice, rashness, levity, obstinacy, in short, all those passions, and all those vices, which pervert the judgment in other matters, prejudice it no less in this its more refined and elegant province. These causes produce different opinions upon everything which is an object of the understanding, without inducing us to suppose that there are no settled principles of reason. And indeed, on the whole, one may observe 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 excellency of a description in Virgil, than on the truth or falsehood of a theory of Aristotle.

From the reading . . .

[T]he critical taste does not depend upon a superior principle in men, but upon superior knowledge,

A rectitude of judgment in the arts, which may be called a good taste, does in a great measure depend upon sensibility; because, if the mind has no bent to the pleasures of the imagination, it will never apply itself sufficiently to works of that species to acquire a competent knowledge in them. But, though a degree of sensibility is requisite to form a good judgment, yet a good judgment does not necessarily arise from a quick sensibility of pleasure; it frequently happens that a very poor judge, merely by force of a greater complexional sensibility, is more affected by a very poor piece, than the best judge by the most perfect; for as everything new, extraordinary, grand, or passionate, is well calculated to affect such a person, and that the faults do not affect him, his pleasure is more pure and unmixed; and as it is merely a pleasure of the imagination, it is much higher than any which is derived from a rectitude of the judgment; the judgment is for the greater part employed in throwing stumbling-blocks in the way of the imagination, in dissipating the scenes of its enchantment, and in tying us down to the disagreeable yoke of our reason: for almost the only pleasure that men have in judging better than others, consists in a sort of conscious pride and superiority, which arises from thinking rightly; but then, this is an indirect pleasure, a pleasure which does not immediately result from the object which is under contemplation. In the morning of our days, when the senses are unworn and tender, when the whole man is awake in every part, and the gloss of novelty fresh upon all the objects that surround us, how lively at that time are our sensations, but how false and inaccurate the judgments we form of things? I

despair of ever receiving the same degree of pleasure from the most excellent performances of genius, which I felt at that age from pieces which my present judgment regards as trifling and contemptible.... The excellence and force of a composition must always be imperfectly estimated from its effect on the minds of any, except we know the temper and character of those minds. The most powerful effects of poetry and music have been displayed, and perhaps are still displayed, where these arts are but in a very low and imperfect state. The rude hearer is affected by the principles which operate in these arts even in their rudest condition; and he is not skillful enough to perceive the defects. But as the arts advance towards their perfection, the science of criticism advances with equal pace, and the pleasure of judges is frequently interrupted by the faults which are discovered in the most finished composition.

[Taste Is Not a Unique Faculty]

Before I leave this subject I cannot help taking notice of an opinion which many persons entertain, as if the taste were a separate faculty of the mind, and distinct from the judgment and imagination; a species of instinct, by which we are struck naturally, and at the first glance, without any previous reasoning, with the excellencies, or the defects, of a composition. So far as the imagination and the passions are concerned, I believe it true, that the reason is little consulted; but where disposition, where decorum, where congruity are concerned, in short, wherever the best taste differs from the worst, I am convinced that the understanding operates, and nothing else; and its operation is in reality far from being always sudden, or, when it is sudden, it is often far from being right. Men of the best taste, by consideration, come frequently to change these early and precipitate judgments, which the mind, from its aversion to neutrality and doubt, loves to form on the spot. It is known that the taste (whatever it is) is improved exactly as we improve our judgment, by extending our knowledge, by a steady attention to our object, and by frequent exercise. They who have not taken these methods, if their taste decides quickly, it is always uncertainly; and their quickness is owing to their presumption and rashness, and not to any sudden irradiation, that in a moment dispels all darkness from their minds. But they who have cultivated that species of knowledge which makes the object of taste, by degrees, and habitually, attain not only a soundness, but a readiness of judgment, as men do by the same methods on all other occasions. At first they are obliged to spell,

but at least they read with ease and with celerity; but this celerity of its operation is no proof that the taste is a distinct faculty.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [O]n the whole, one may observe 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 excellency of a description in Virgil, than on the truth or falsehood of a theory of Aristotle.

Of the Sublime

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could enjoy. Nay I am in great doubt, whether any man could be found, who would earn a life of the most perfect satisfaction, at the price of ending it in the torments, which justice inflicted in a few hours on the late unfortunate regicide in France. But as pain is stronger in its operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain; because there are very few pains, however exquisite, which are not preferred to death; nay, what generally makes pain itself, if I may say so, more painful, is, that it is considered as an emissary of this king of terrors. When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience.. . .

The Sublime and Beautiful Compared

On closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison there appears a remarkable contrast… They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions. In the infinite variety of natural combinations, we must expect to find the qualities of things the most remote imaginable from each other united in the same object. We must expect also to find combinations of the same kind in the works of art. But when we consider the power of an object upon our passions, we must know that when anything is intended to affect the mind by the force of some predominant property, the affection produced is like to be the more uniform and perfect, if all the other properties or qualities of the object be of the same nature, and tending to the same design, as the principal.… If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove that they are the same; does it prove that they are any way allied; does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory? Black and white may soften, may blend; but they are not therefore the same.…

Related Ideas

Edmund Burke.[3] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. Mention of Burke’s essay “On Taste” with emphasis on the argument of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful* with respect to the concept of the “sublime,” together with comparisons with other æsthetic philosophers by Giuseppe Sertoli.

Edmund Burke.[4] *The Literary Encyclopedia*. An account of Burke’s life with some attention given to his political and philosophical thought by David Williams.

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3. *Edmund Burke*. (http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/\ edmund_burke.html)
4. *Edmund Burke*. (http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=4892)

Edmund Burke.[5] *Bartleby.com Great Books Online*. The complete text of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful* as well as the unabridged essay “On Taste” as part of the *Harvard Classics*, Volume 24, Part 2.

Interior of House of Commons (Parliament House) London, Library of Congress

Topics Worth Investigating

1. David Hume, Edmund Burke, and Immanuel Kant, among other writers, deny that taste is a single, unique faculty. How does this assumption logically help avoid the conclusion that æsthetic qualities are essentially subjective?
2. Contrast the essays by David Hume and Edmund Burke on taste. Although they have many ideas in common, do both philosophers agree that standards of taste can be established by experimental methods? Do Hume and Burke agree that standards of taste less often disputed

5. *Edmund Burke*. (http://www.bartleby.com/people/Burke-Ed.html)

than standards or reason? How can this agreement be so if standards of taste are subjectively established?

3. Francis Hutcheson writes that all persons have a passive power of apprehending the beauty of uniformity and variety:

> 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 chuse 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. [6]

   What reasons does Burke adduce in his essay "On Taste" to oppose this hypostasized faculty?

4. William Fleming in his *Vocabulary of Philosophy* defines "sensibility" as follows:

> . . . a general term to denote the capacity of feeling, as distinguished from intellect and will. It includes sensations both external and internal, whether derived from contemplating outward and material objects, or relations and ideas, desires, affections, passions. It also includes the sentiments of the sublime and beautiful, the moral sentiment and the religious sentiment; and, in short, every modification of feeling of which we are susceptible.. . . [7]

   How well does this definition fit Burke's use of the term "sensibility" in his essay "On Taste"? How does Burke's characterization of "sensibility" differ from Fleming's? How does Burke relate the faculty of sensibility to imagination?

5. Immanuel Kant argues that Burke's psychological account of beauty and the sublime leads to æsthetic relativism:

> The transcendental exposition of æsthetic judgements now brought to a close may be compared with the physiological, as worked out by Burke and many acute men among us, so that we may see where a

6. Francis Hutcheson. *An Inquiry Into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. London: J. Barby, *et. al.* 1725. I: X.
7. William Fleming. *Vocabulary of Philosophy.* In *A Vocabulary of the Philosophical Sciences.* Charles P. Krauth. New York: Sheldon & Company. 1878. 463.

> merely empirical exposition of the sublime and beautiful would bring us. Burke, who deserves to be called the foremost author in this method of treatment, deduces, on these lines, "that the feeling of the sublime is grounded on the impulse towards self-preservation and on fear, *i.e.*, on a pain..." Hence if the import of the judgement of taste, where we appraise it as a judgement entitled to require the concurrence of every one, cannot be egoistic, but must necessarily, from its inner nature, be allowed a pluralistic validity, *i.e.*, on account of what taste itself is, and not on account of the examples which others give of their taste, then it must found upon some *à priori* principle (be it subjective or objective), and no amount of prying into the empirical laws of the changes that go on within the mind can succeed in establishing such a principle.[8]

Evaluate to what extent Kant's criticism prevents Burke's analysis of the beautiful and sublime from being universally applicable to human beings.

6. Burke argues that good taste does not directly depend upon knowledge of the world in his analysis of the story of the ancient painter and the shoemaker:

> The shoemaker set the painter right with regard to some mistakes he had made in the shoe of one of his figures, and which the painter, who had not made such accurate observations on shoes, and was content with a general resemblance, had never observed. But this was no impeachment to the taste of the painter; it only showed some want of knowledge in the art of making shoes.... On the subject of their dislike there is a difference ... arising from the different kinds and degrees of their knowledge; but there is something in common to the painter, the shoemaker, ... the pleasure arising from a natural object, so far as each perceives it justly imitated.... So far as taste is natural, it is nearly common to all.

In point of fact, Sir Joshua Reynolds, perhaps the foremost portrait artist of the Enlightenment, is said to have painted a hat both on the head and under the arm of his subject.[9] Would the incongruity in the picture overshadow any pleasure of the beauty of the painting?

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8. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*. 1790. Translated by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1911. Section 1. Book 2. ¶ 29.
9. The Book of Lists, 472.

Chapter 11

"Æsthetic Judgements are Necessary" by Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant (detail) Antiquity Project

About the author . . .

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) studied in Königsberg, East Prussia. Before he fully developed an interest in philosophy, he was fascinated with physics and astronomy—in fact, he anticipated William Herschel's discovery of Uranus by a few years. Kant's critical philosophy, one of the truly profound philosophies in the history of Western Civilization, was constructed to forge empiricism and rationalism into a "critical" philosophy which sought to overcome the many pressing shortcomings of each. What we call objective reality, Kant argues, is subject to whatever conforms to the structures of our perception and thinking. Virtually every

epistemological theory since Kant, directly or indirectly, can be oriented in reference to his *The Critique of Pure Reason*. In his *The Critique of Judgment*, from which our reading is excerpted, Kant argues that æsthetic judgments are prior to pleasure and are both universal and necessary. They have the appearance of being purposive even though they are not conceptually final.

From the reading . . .

The judgement of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgement . . .

About the work . . .

In his "Analytic of the Beautiful" in *The Critique of Judgment*,[1] Immanuel Kant integrates æsthetics into his critical philosophy. How are judgements about beauty or taste possible, if those judgements are said to be both subjective and necessarily universal? Kant's account of judgements of taste relies on ideas he developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. For, in sections in this reading, æsthetic judgements or judgements of taste are analyzed in accordance with the table of categories from the first *Critique*; more precisely, he argues judgements of taste are analyzed as follows: moment one—relation (subjective), moment two—quantity (universal), moment three—quality (independence from morality), and moment four—modality (necessity). Accordingly, Kant concludes in this reading (1) Æsthetic judgments are not conceptual but show the relation between a represention and a disinterested satisfaction. (2) Æsthetic judgments are singular statements but are tied to an obligation of common agreement. (3) Æsthetic objects appear to be exemplary forms without being understood as functionally purposive. (4) Individual æsthetic judgments imply a principle that other persons ought to feel a similar satisfaction. Later in the *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant goes on to show that æsthetic judgments are synthetic *à priori* since all persons have the capacity of "the free play" of the imagination to provide a nonconceptual semblace of unity of form to the understanding of the object. Thus, all persons feel the same thing intersubjectively. Kant considers æsthetic judgements as universally true.

1. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*. 1790. Translated by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1911. Section 1. Book 1.

Ideas of Interest from "Analytic of the Beautiful"

1. What two senses of sensation does Kant distinguish? How does this distinction point to the difference between delight and the agreeable? In this regard, how does he define "feeling"?
2. How does Kant define "taste" under the moment corresponding to the category of quality?
3. Why does Kant think that there can be no universal objective rule concerning tastes or, what amounts to the same thing, why does he think that there can be no objective rule as to what is beautiful? On Kant's theory, howwould such an objective rule self-contradictory?
4. Explain Kant's distinction between free or self-subsisting beauty and dependent or conditioned beauty. What kinds of disputes about beauty does Kant think this distinction settles?
5. On Kant's theory, how is the archetype of beauty, an ideal of the imagination, related to the subjective universal criterion concerning beauty? Explain why Kant believes this ideal does not apply to free or self-subsisting beauty and therefore cannot be a pure judgement of taste.
6. Distinguish between what Kant terms "the normal idea" of beauty which constitutes the indispensible condition of beauty and the complete archetype of beauty which is an ideal of the imagination.
7. According to Kant, why are judgements of taste concerning beauty only conditional, even though all persons "ought" to give approval of them?
8. What is Kant's distinction between common sense and common understanding. Why is this distinction important with respect to judgements of taste? Why is common sense a necessary condition for the communication of knowledge?

9. Explain how, according to Kant, the beautiful is related to necessary delight?

The Reading Selection from "Analytic of the Beautiful"

First Moment. Of the Judgment of Taste:[2] Moment of Quality

¶ 1. The judgment of taste is æsthetic. If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding) we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgement of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgement, and so not logical, but is æsthetic— which means that it is one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective. Every reference of representations is capable of being objective, even that of sensations (in which case it signifies the real in an empirical representation). The one exception to this is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. This denotes nothing in the object, but is a feeling which the subject has of itself and of the manner in which it is affected by the representation.. . .

¶ 2. The delight which determines the judgement of taste is independent of all interest. The delight which we connect with the representation of the real existence of an object is called interest. Such a delight, therefore, always involves a reference to the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground, or else as necessarily implicated with its determining ground. Now, where the question is whether something is beautiful, we do not want to know, whether we, or any one else, are, or even could be, concerned in the real existence of the thing, but rather what estimate we form of it on mere contemplation (intuition or reflection).. . .

All one wants to know is whether the mere representation of the object is to my liking, no matter how indifferent I may be to the real existence of

2. The definition of taste here relied upon is that it is the faculty of estimating the beautiful.

the object of this representation. It is quite plain that in order to say that the object is beautiful, and to show that I have taste, everything turns on the meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object. Every one must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste.. . .

¶ 3. Delight in the agreeable is coupled with interest. That is agreeable which the senses find pleasing in sensation. This at once affords a convenient opportunity for condemning and directing particular attention to a prevalent confusion of the double meaning of which the word sensation is capable. All delight (as is said or thought) is itself sensation (of a pleasure). Consequently everything that pleases, and for the very reason that it pleases, is agreeable—and according to its different degrees, or its relations to other agreeable sensations, is attractive, charming, delicious, enjoyable, etc. But if this is conceded, then impressions of sense, which determine inclination, or principles of reason, which determine the will, or mere contemplated forms of intuition, which determine judgement, are all on a par in everything relevant to their effect upon the feeling of pleasure . . .

From the reading . . .

Every one must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste.

When a modification of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is termed sensation, this expression is given quite a different meaning to that which it bears when I call the representation of a thing (through sense as a receptivity pertaining to the faculty of knowledge) sensation. For in the latter case the representation is referred to the object, but in the former it is referred solely to the subject and is not available for any cognition, not even for that by which the subject cognizes itself.

Now in the above definition the word "sensation" is used to denote an objective representation of sense; and, to avoid continually running the risk of misinterpretation, we shall call that which must always remain purely subjective, and is absolutely incapable of forming a representation of an object, by the familiar name of feeling. The green colour of the meadows belongs to objective sensation, as the perception of an object of

sense; but its agreeableness to subjective sensation, by which no object is represented; *i.e.*, to feeling, through which the object is regarded as an object of delight (which involves no cognition of the object).

¶ 4. Delight in the good is coupled with interest. That is good which by means of reason commends itself by its mere concept. We call that good for something which only pleases as a means; but that which pleases on its own account we call good in itself. In both cases the concept of an end is implied . . .

To deem something good, I must always know what sort of a thing the object is intended to be, *i. e.*, I must have a concept of it. That is not necessary to enable me to see beauty in a thing. Flowers, free patterns, lines aimlessly intertwining—technically termed foliage—have no signification, depend upon no definite concept, and yet please. Delight in the beautiful must depend upon the reflection on an object precursory to some (not definitely determined) concept. It is thus also differentiated from the agreeable, which rests entirely upon sensation.

In many cases, no doubt, the agreeable and the good seem convertible terms. Thus it is commonly said that all (especially lasting) gratification is of itself good; which is almost equivalent to saying that to be permanently agreeable and to be good are identical. But it is readily apparent that this is merely a vicious confusion of words, for the concepts appropriate to these expressions are far from interchangeable. The agreeable, which, as such, represents the object solely in relation to sense, must in the first instance be brought under principles of reason through the concept of an end, to be, as an object of will, called good. But that the reference to delight is wholly different where what gratifies is at the same time called good, is evident from the fact that with the good the question always is whether it is mediately or immediately good, *i. e.*, useful or good in itself; whereas with the agreeable this point can never arise, since the word always means what pleases immediately—and it is just the same with what I call beautiful.

¶ 5. Comparison of the three specifically different kinds of delight. Both the agreeable and the good involve a reference to the faculty of desire, and are thus attended, the former with a delight pathologically conditioned (by stimuli), the latter with a pure practical delight. Such delight is determined not merely by the representation of the object, but also by the represented bond of connection between the subject and the real existence of the object. It is not merely the object, but also its real existence, that pleases. On the other hand, the judgement of taste is sim-

ply contemplative, *i. e.*, it is a judgement which is indifferent as to the existence of an object, and only decides how its character stands with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. But not even is this contemplation itself directed to concepts; for the judgement of taste is not a cognitive judgement (neither a theoretical one nor a practical), and hence, also, is not grounded on concepts, nor yet intentionally directed to them.

> **From the reading ...**
>
> [The judgement of taste] is a judgement which is indifferent as to the existence of an object...

The agreeable, the beautiful, and the good thus denote three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, as a feeling in respect of which we distinguish different objects or modes of representation. Also, the corresponding expressions which indicate our satisfaction in them are different The agreeable is what *gratifies* a man; the beautiful what simply *pleases* him; the good what is *esteemed* (approved), *i.e.*, that on which he sets an objective worth.... Of all these three kinds of delight, that of taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight; for, with it, no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval....

> Definition of the Beautiful derived from the First Moment.
>
> Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest. The object of such a delight is called beautiful.

Second Moment. Of the Judgment of Taste: Moment of Quantity.

¶ 6. The beautiful is that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the Object of a universal delight. This definition of the beautiful is deducible from the foregoing definition of it as an object of delight apart from any interest. For where any one is conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest, it is inevitable that he should look on the object as one containing a ground of delight for all men. For, since the delight is not based on any inclination of the subject (or on any

other deliberate interest), but the subject feels himself completely free in respect of the liking which he accords to the object, he can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party.. . .

But this universality cannot spring from concepts. For from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure . . . The result is that the judgement of taste, with its attendant consciousness of detachment from all interest, must involve a claim to validity for all men, and must do so apart from universality attached to objects, *i.e.*, there must be coupled with it a claim to subjective universality.

¶ 7. Comparison of the beautiful with the agreeable and the good by means of the above characteristic. As regards the agreeable, every one concedes that his judgement, which he bases on a private feeling, and in which he declares that an object pleases him, is restricted merely to himself personally. Thus he does not take it amiss if, when he says that Canary-wine is agreeable, another corrects the expression and reminds him that he ought to say: "It is agreeable to me." . . . With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense).

From the reading . . .

With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense).

The beautiful stands on quite a different footing. It would, on the contrary, be ridiculous if any one who plumed himself on his taste were to think of justifying himself by saying: "This object (the building we see, the dress that person has on, the concert we hear, the poem submitted to our criticism) is beautiful for me." For if it merely pleases him, be must not call it beautiful. Many things may for him possess charm and agreeableness—no one cares about that; but when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. He judges not merely for himself, but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Thus he says the thing is beautiful; . . . he demands this agreement of them. He blames them if they judge differently, and denies them taste, which he still requires of them as something they ought to have; and to this extent it is not open to men to say: "Every one has his own taste." This would be equivalent to saying that there is no

such thing at all as taste, *i. e.*, no æsthetic judgement capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all men.... So of one who knows how to entertain his guests with pleasures (of enjoyment through all the senses) in such a way that one and all are pleased, we say that he has taste. But the universality here is only understood in a comparative sense; and the rules that apply are, like all empirical rules, general only, not universal, the latter being what the judgement of taste upon the beautiful deals or claims to deal in. ... In respect of the good, it is true that judgements also rightly assert a claim to validity for every one; but the good is only represented as an object of universal delight by means of a concept, which is the case neither with the agreeable nor the beautiful.

¶ 8. In a judgement of taste the universality of delight is only represented as subjective. This particular form of the universality of an æsthetic judgement, which is to be met in a judgement of taste, is a significant feature ... for the transcendental philosopher....

First, one must get firmly into one's mind that by the judgement of taste (upon the beautiful) the delight in an object is imputed to every one, yet without being founded on a concept (for then it would be the good)...

First of all we have here to note that a universality which does not rest upon concepts of the object (even though these are only empirical) is in no way logical, but æsthetic, *i. e.*, does not involve any objective quantity of the judgement, but only one that is subjective. For this universality I use the expression general validity, which denotes the validity of the reference of a representation, not to the cognitive faculties, but to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure for every subject....

Now a judgement that has objective universal validity has always got the subjective also, *i.e.*, if the judgement is valid for everything which is contained under a given concept, it is valid also for all who represent an object by means of this concept. But from a subjective universal validity, *i. e.*, the æsthetic, that does not rest on any concept, no conclusion can be drawn to the logical; because judgements of that kind have no bearing upon the object. But for this very reason æsthetic universality attributed to a judgement must also be of a special kind, seeing that it does not join the predicate of beauty to the concept of the object taken in its entire logical sphere, and yet does extend this predicate over the whole sphere of judging subjects.

In their logical quantity, all judgements of taste are singular judgements. For, since I must present the object immediately to my feeling of pleasure

or displeasure, and that, too, without the aid of concepts, such judgements cannot have the quantity of judgements with objective general validity. Yet by taking the singular representation of the object of the judgement of taste, and by comparison converting it into a concept according to the conditions determining that judgement, we can arrive at a logically universal judgement. For instance, by a judgement of the taste I describe the rose at which I am looking as beautiful. The judgement, on the other hand, resulting from the comparison of a number of singular representations: "Roses in general are beautiful," is no longer pronounced as a purely æsthetic judgement, but as a logical judgement founded on one that is æsthetic. Now the judgement, "The rose is agreeable" (to smell) is also, no doubt, an æsthetic and singular judgement, but then it is not one of taste but of sense. For it has this point of difference from a judgement of taste, that the latter imports an æsthetic quantity of universality, *i.e.*, of validity for everyone which is not to be met with in a judgement upon the agreeable. . . .

Rose adapted from Peggy Greb, USDA

In forming an estimate of objects merely from concepts, all representation of beauty goes by the board. There can, therefore, be no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful. Whether a dress, a house, or a flower is beautiful is a matter upon which one declines to allow one's judgement to be swayed by any reasons or principles.. . .

Here, now, we may perceive that nothing is postulated in the judgement of taste but such a universal voice in respect of delight that it is not mediated by concepts; consequently, only the possibility of an æsthetic judgement capable of being at the same time deemed valid for everyone.. . .

¶ 9. Investigation of the question of the relative priority in a judgement of taste of the feeling of pleasure and the estimating of the object. The solution of this problem is the key to the Critique of taste, and so is worthy of all attention.

Were the pleasure in a given object to be the antecedent, and were the universal communicability of this pleasure to be all that the judgement of taste is meant to allow to the representation of the object, such a sequence would be self-contradictory. For a pleasure of that kind would be nothing but the feeling of mere agreeableness to the senses, and so, from its very nature, would possess no more than private validity, seeing that it would be immediately dependent on the representation through which the object is given.

Hence it is the universal capacity for being communicated incident to the mental state in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgement of taste, must be, fundamental, with the pleasure in the object as its consequent. Nothing, however, is capable of being universally communicated but cognition and representation so far as appurtenant to cognition. For it is only as thus appurtenant that the representation is objective, and it is this alone that gives it a universal point of reference with which the power of representation of every one is obliged to harmonize.. . .

The cognitive powers brought into play by this representation are here engaged in a free play, since no definite concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition. Hence the mental state in this representation must be one of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in generali. . .

As the subjective universal communicability of the mode of representation in a judgement of taste is to subsist apart from the presupposition of any definite concept, it can be nothing else than the mental state present in the free play of imagination and understanding (so far as these are in mutual accord, as is requisite for cognition in general); for we are conscious that this subjective relation suitable for a cognition in general must be just as valid for every one, and consequently as universally communicable, as is any indeterminate cognition, which always rests upon that

relation as its subjective condition.

Now this purely subjective (æsthetic) estimating of the object, or of the representation through which it is given, is antecedent to the pleasure in it, and is the basis of this pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive faculties. Again, the above-described universality of the subjective conditions of estimating objects forms the sole foundation of this universal subjective validity of the delight which we connect with the representation of the object that we call beautiful.

That an ability to communicate one's mental state, even though it be only in respect of our cognitive faculties, is attended with a pleasure, is a fact which might easily be demonstrated from the natural propensity of mankind to social life, *i.e.*, empirically and psychologically. But what we have here in view calls for something more than this. In a judgement of taste, the pleasure felt by us is exacted from every one else as necessary, just as if, when we call something beautiful, beauty was to be regarded as a quality of the object forming part of its inherent determination according to concepts; although beauty is for itself, apart from any reference to the feeling of the subject, nothing. . . .

Definition of the Beautiful drawn from the Second Moment.

The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally.

Third Moment. Of Judgements of Taste: Moment of the Relation of the Ends brought under Review in such Judgements.

. . . For the judgement of taste is an æsthetic and not a cognitive judgement, and so does not deal with any concept of the nature or of the internal or external possibility, by this or that cause, of the object, but simply with the relative bearing of the representative powers so far as determined by a representation.

From the reading . . .

The agreeable, the beautiful, and the good thus denote three different relations of representations to the feeling pleasure and displeasure. . .

Now this relation, present when an object is characterized as beautiful, is coupled with the feeling of pleasure. This pleasure is by the judgement of taste pronounced valid for every one; hence an agreeableness attending the representation is just as incapable of containing the determining ground of the judgement as the representation of the perfection of the object or the concept of the good. We are thus left with the subjective finality in the representation of an object, exclusive of any end (objective or subjective)—consequently the bare form of finality in the representation whereby an object is given to us, so far as we are conscious of it as that which is alone capable of constituting the delight which, apart from any concept, we estimate as universally communicable, and so of forming the determining ground of the judgement of taste.

¶ 12. The judgement of taste rests upon *á priori* grounds. To determine *á priori* the connection of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure as an effect, with some representation or other (sensation or concept) as its cause, is utterly impossible; for that would be a causal relation which (with objects of experience) is always one that can only be cognized *á posteriori* and with the help of experience. . . . The consciousness of mere formal finality in the play of the cognitive faculties of the subject attending a representation whereby an object is given, is the pleasure itself, because it involves a determining ground of the subject's activity in respect of the quickening of its cognitive powers, and thus an internal causality (which is final) in respect of cognition generally, but without being limited to a definite cognition, and consequently a mere form of the subjective finality of a representation in an æsthetic judgement. This pleasure . . . involves an inherent causality, that, namely, of preserving a continuance of the state of the representation itself and the active engagement of the cognitive powers without ulterior aim. We dwell on the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself. . . .

¶ 14 Exemplification. Æsthetic, just like theoretical (logical) judgements, are divisible into empirical and pure. The first are those by which

agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those by which beauty is predicated of an object or its mode of representation. The former are judgements of sense (material æsthetic judgements), the latter (as formal) alone judgements of taste proper.

A judgement of taste, therefore, is only pure so far as its determining ground is tainted with no merely empirical delight. But such a taint is always present where charm or emotion have a share in the judgement by which something is to be described as beautiful. . . .

From the reading . . .

There can, therefore, be no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful.

In painting, sculpture, and in fact in all the formative arts, in architecture and horticulture, so far as fine arts, the design is what is essential. Here it is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases by its form, that is the fundamental prerequisite for taste. . . . All form of objects of sense (both of external and also, mediately, of internal sense) is either figure or play. In the latter case it is either play of figures (in space: mimic andance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The charm of colours, or of the agreeable tones of instruments, may be added: but the design in the former and the composition in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste. To say that the purity alike of colours and of tones, or their variety and contrast, seem to contribute to beauty, is by no means to imply that, because in themselves agreeable, they therefore yield an addition to the delight in the form and one on a par with it. The real meaning rather is that they make this form more clearly, definitely, and completely intuitable, and besides stimulate the representation by their charm, as they excite and sustain the attention directed to the object itself.

. . . Emotion—a sensation where an agreeable feeling is produced merely by means of a momentary check followed by a more powerful outpouring of the vital force—is quite foreign to beauty. Sublimity (with which the feeling of emotion is connected) requires, however, a different standard of estimation from that relied upon by taste. A pure judgement of taste has, then, for its determining ground neither charm nor emotion, in a word, no sensation as matter of the æsthetic judgement.

¶ 15. The judgement of taste is entirely independent of the concept of perfection. Objective finality can only be cognized by means of a reference of the manifold to a definite end, and hence only through a concept. This alone makes it clear that the beautiful, which is estimated on the ground of a mere formal finality, *i.e.*, a finality apart from an end, is wholly independent of the representation of the good. For the latter presupposes an objective finality, *i.e.*, the reference of the object to a definite end.. . .

Now the judgement of taste is an æsthetic judgement, one resting on subjective grounds. No concept can be its determining ground, and hence not one of a definite end. Beauty, therefore, as a formal subjective finality, involves no thought whatsoever of a perfection of the object, as a would-be formal finality which yet, for all that, is objective: . . . an æsthetic judgement is quite unique, and affords absolutely no (not even a confused) knowledge of the object. It is only through a logical judgement that we get knowledge.. . . The judgement is called æsthetic for the very reason that its determining ground cannot be a concept, but is rather the feeling (of the internal sense) of the concert in the play of the mental powers as a thing only capable of being felt.

¶ 16. A judgement of taste by which an object is described as beautiful, under the condition of a definite concept, is not pure. There are two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*), or beauty which is merely dependent (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). The first presupposes no concept of what the object should be; the second does presuppose such a concept and, with it, an answering perfection of the object. Those of the first kind are said to be (self-subsisting) beauties of this thing or that thing; the other kind of beauty, being attached to a concept (conditioned beauty), is ascribed to objects which come under the concept of a particular end.

Flowers are free beauties of nature. Hardly anyone but a botanist knows the true nature of a flower, and even he, while recognizing in the flower the reproductive organ of the plant, pays no attention to this natural end when using his taste to judge of its beauty. Hence no perfection of any kind—no internal finality, as something to which the arrangement of the manifold is related—underlies this judgement. . . . We may also rank in the same class what in music are called *fantasias* (without a theme), and, indeed, all music that is not set to words.

In the estimate of a free beauty (according to mere form) we have the pure judgement of taste.. . .

But the beauty of man (including under this head that of a man, woman, or child), the beauty of a horse, or of a building (such as a church, palace, arsenal, or summer-house), presupposes a concept of the end that defines what the thing has to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection; and is therefore merely appendant beauty. Now, just as it is a clog on the purity of the purity of the judgement of taste to have the agreeable (of sensation) joined with beauty to which properly only the form is relevant, so to combine the good with beauty (the good, namely, of the manifold to the thing itself according to its end) mars its purity.. . .

Taste, it is true, stands to gain by this combination of intellectual delight with the æsthetic. For it becomes fixed, and, while not universal . . . is self-sustaining and of subjective universal validity . . . But, strictly speaking, perfection neither gains by beauty, nor beauty by perfection. . . .

In respect of an object with a definite internal end, a judgement of taste would only be pure where the person judging either has no concept of this end, or else makes abstraction from it in his judgement. . . . This distinction enables us to settle many disputes about beauty on the part of critics; for we may show them how one side is dealing with free beauty, and the other with that which is dependent: the former passing a pure judgement of taste, the latter one that is applied intentionally.

From the reading . . .

. . . it is not open to men to say: "Every one has his own taste." This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste. . .

¶ 17. Ideal of beauty. There can be no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concepts. For every judgement from that source is æsthetic, *i.e.*, its determining ground is the feeling of the subject, and not any concept of an object. It is only throwing away labour to look for a principle of taste that affords a universal criterion of the beautiful by definite concepts; because what is sought is a thing impossible and inherently contradictory. But in the universal communicability of the sensation (of delight or aversion)—a communicability, too, that exists apart from any concept—in the accord, so far as possible, of all ages and nations as to this feeling in the representation of certain objects, we have the empirical criterion, weak indeed and

scarce sufficient to raise a presumption, of the derivation of a taste, thus confirmed by examples, from grounds deep seated and shared alike by all men, underlying their agreement in estimating the forms under which objects are given to them.

For this reason some products of taste are looked on as exemplary—Hence . . . it follows that the highest model, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea, which each person must beget in his own consciousness, and according to which he must form his estimate of everything that is an object of taste, or that is an example of critical taste, and even of universal taste itself. . . . While not having this ideal in our possession, we still strive to beget it within us. But it is bound to be merely an ideal of the imagination, seeing that it rests, not upon concepts, but upon the presentation—the faculty of presentation being the imagination. Now, how do we arrive at such an ideal of beauty? Is it *á priori* or empirically? Further, what species of the beautiful admits of an ideal?

First of all, we do well to observe that the beauty for which an ideal has to be sought cannot be a beauty that is free and at large, but must be one fixed by a concept of objective finality. Hence it cannot belong to the object of an altogether pure judgement of taste, but must attach to one that is partly intellectual. In other words, where an ideal is to have place among the grounds upon which any estimate is formed, then beneath grounds of that kind there must lie some idea of reason according to determinate concepts, by which the end underlying the internal possibility of the object is determined *á priori*. An ideal of beautiful flowers, of a beautiful suite of furniture, or of a beautiful view, is unthinkable. But, it may also be impossible to represent an ideal of a beauty dependent on definite ends, *e.g.*, a beautiful residence, a beautiful tree, a beautiful garden, etc., presumably because their ends are not sufficiently defined and fixed by their concept, with the result that their finality is nearly as free as with beauty that is quite at large. Only what has in itself the end of its real existence—only man that is able himself to determine his ends by reason, or, where he has to derive them from external perception, can still compare them with essential and universal ends, and then further pronounce æsthetically upon their accord with such ends, only he, among all objects in the world, admits, therefore, of an ideal of beauty, just as humanity in his person, as intelligence, alone admits of the ideal of perfection.

From the reading ...

Emotion ... is quite foreign to beauty.

Two factors are here involved. First, there is the æsthetic normal idea, which is an individual intuition (of the imagination). This represents the norm by which we judge of a man as a member of a particular animal species. Secondly, there is the rational idea. This deals with the ends of humanity so far as capable of sensuous representation, and converts them into a principle for estimating his outward form, through which these ends are revealed in their phenomenal effect. The normal idea must draw from experience...

... [I]f the mind is engaged upon comparisons, we may well suppose that it can in actual fact, though the process is unconscious, superimpose as it were one image upon another, and from the coincidence of a number of the same kind arrive at a mean contour which serves as a common standard for all. Say, for instance, a person has seen a thousand full-grown men: ... one gets a perception of the average size, which alike in height and breadth is equally removed from the extreme limits of the greatest and smallest statures; and this is the stature of a beautiful man. ... This normal idea is not derived from proportions taken from experience as definite rules: rather is it according to this idea that rules forming estimates first become possible. It is ... a floating image for the whole genus, which nature has set as an archetype underlying those of her products that belong to the same species, but which in no single case she seems to have completely attained. But the normal idea is far from giving the complete archetype of beauty in the genus. It only gives the form that constitutes the indispensable condition of all beauty, and, consequently, only correctness in the presentation of the genus. ...

But the ideal of the beautiful is still something different from its normal idea. For reasons already stated it is only to be sought in the human figure. Here the ideal consists in the expression of the moral, apart from which the object would not please at once universally and positively (not merely negatively in a presentation academically correct). The visible expression of moral ideas that govern men inwardly can, of course, only be drawn from experience; but their combination with all that our reason connects with the morally good in the idea of the highest finality—benevolence, purity, strength, or equanimity, etc.—may be made, as it were, visible in

bodily manifestation (as effect of what is internal), and this embodiment involves a union of pure ideas of reason and great imaginative power ... an estimate formed according to such a standard can never be purely æsthetic, and that one formed according to an ideal of beauty cannot be a simple judgement of taste.

> Definition of the Beautiful Derived from this Third Moment.
>
> Beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from the representation of an end.

Fourth Moment. Of the Judgement of Taste: Moment of the Modality of the Delight in the Object.

¶ 18. Nature of the modality in a judgement of taste. I may assert in the case of every representation that the synthesis of a pleasure with the representation (as a cognition) is at least possible. Of what I call agreeable I assert that it actually causes pleasure in me. But what we have in mind in the case of the beautiful is a necessary reference on its part to delight.... [T]his delight ... simply means that one ought absolutely (without ulterior object) to act in a certain way. Rather, being such a necessity as is thought in an æsthetic judgement, it can only be termed exemplary. In other words it is a necessity of the assent of all to a judgement regarded as exemplifying a universal rule incapable of formulation.... [E]mpirical judgements do not afford any foundation for a concept of the necessity of these judgements.

From the reading ...

But, strictly speaking, perfection neither gains by beauty, nor beauty by perfection.

¶ 19. The subjective necessity attributed to a judgement of taste is conditioned. The judgement of taste exacts agreement from every one; and a person who describes something as beautiful insists that every one ought to give the object in question his approval and follow suit in describing it as beautiful. The ought in æsthetic judgements, therefore, de-

spite an accordance with all the requisite data for passing judgement, is still only pronounced conditionally.. . .

¶ 20. The condition of the necessity advanced by a judgement of taste is the idea of a common sense. [J]udgements of taste . . . must have a subjective principle, and one which determines what pleases or displeases, by means of feeling only and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity. Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as a common sense. This differs essentially from common understanding, which is also sometimes called common sense (*sensus communis*): for the judgement of the latter is not one by feeling, but always one by concepts, though usually only in the shape of obscurely represented principles.

The judgement of taste, therefore, depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense . . . the effect arising from the free play of our powers of cognition.. . .

¶ 21. Have we reason for presupposing a common sense? Cognitions and judgements must, together with their attendant conviction, admit of being universally communicated. . . [W]e do not have to take our stand on psychological observations, but we assume a common sense as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our knowledge, which is presupposed in every logic and every principle of knowledge that is not one of scepticism.

From the reading . . .

Beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from the representation of an end.

¶ 22. The necessity of the universal assent that is thought in a judgement of taste, is a subjective necessity which, under the presupposition of a common sense, is represented as objective. In all judgements by which we describe anything as beautiful, we tolerate no one else being of a different opinion, and in taking up this position we do not rest our judgement upon concepts, but only on our feeling. Accordingly we introduce this fundamental feeling not as a private feeling, but as a public sense. Now, for this purpose, experience cannot be made the ground of this common sense, for the latter is invoked to justify judgements containing an "ought." The assertion is not that every one will fall in with our judgement, but rather that every one ought to agree with it. Here I put

forward my judgement of taste as an example of the judgement of common sense, and attribute to it on that account exemplary validity. Hence common sense is a mere ideal norm. With this as presupposition, a judgement that accords with it, as well as the delight in an object expressed in that judgement, is rightly converted into a rule for everyone. For the principle, while it is only subjective, being yet assumed as subjectively universal (a necessary idea for everyone), could, in what concerns the consensus of different judging subjects, demand universal assent like an objective principle, provided we were assured of our subsumption under it being correct.

This indeterminate norm of a common sense is, as a matter of fact, presupposed by us; as is shown by our presuming to lay down judgements of taste. But does such a common sense in fact exist as a constitutive principle of the possibility of experience, or is it formed for us as a regulative principle by a still higher principle of reason, that for higher ends first seeks to beget in us a common sense? Is taste, in other words, a natural and original faculty, or is it only the idea of one that is artificial[?] . . .

Definition of the Beautiful drawn from the Fourth Moment. The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognized as object of a necessary delight.

Related Ideas

Immanuel Kant Theory of Æsthetics and Teleology.[3] *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Douglas Burnham of Staffordshire University clearly written and skillful summary of Kant's æsthetics from *The Critique of Judgment*.

Kant: Taste and Autonomy.[4] *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Paul Guyer's entry on Kant's philosophy of æsthetics, teleology, and scientific concepts from the third *Critique*.

3. *Immanuel Kant* (http://http://www.iep.utm.edu/k/kantaest.htm#A.%20Kant's \ %20Aesthetics)
4. *Kant, Immanuel. Taste and Autonomy* (http://http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/\ DB047SECT12)

Kant's Æsthetics and Teleology.[5] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A discussion of the faculty of judgement and the relation between æsthetics and teleology by Hannah Ginsborg.

From the reading ...

The judgement of taste, therefore, depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense ... the effect arising from the free play of our powers of cognition....

Castle, Königsberg, Prussia, (near Kant's house) (detail) Library of Congress

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Clearly Kant rules out æsthetic relativism:

> ... to this extent it is not open to men to say: "Every one has his own taste." This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste ...[6]

5. *Kant's Æsthetics...* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/)
6. Kant, Sec. 1, Bk. 1, ¶ 7.

Yet, Kant freely admits in the same reference:

> With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense).

Explain the meaning of these two quotations, and explain their compatibility.

2. Compare Kant's empirical criterion of taste with David Hume's criteria of judgment of taste as described in Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste." Be sure to keep in mind Kant's distinction between the imagination and the understanding:

   > First, there is the æsthetic normal idea, which is an individual intuition (of the imagination). This represents the norm by which we judge of a man as a member of a particular animal species. Secondly, there is the rational idea. This deals with the ends of humanity so far as capable of sensuous representation, and converts them into a principle for estimating his outward form, through which these ends are revealed in their phenomenal effect. The normal idea must draw from experience...[7]

   Does either philosopher hold that the standard is objective and can resolve disagreements about what is beautiful? Is either philosopher committed to the existence of an ideal of beauty?

3. Evaluate Kant's distinctions among (1) *the agreeable*: general empirical rules of taste—not universal but commonly shared among men, (2) *the beautiful*: subjective universality: a universality which does not rest upon concepts— valid for all men because of its independent from interest, (3) *the good*: objective universal validity—valid for everything which is contained under a given concept, an objective finality conceptually definable.

4. Kant writes, "The judgement of taste, therefore, and beauty depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense ... the effect arising from the free play of our powers of cognition and imagination."[8] How does Kant use of the term "free play"? Compare with Schiller's use of the term "play instinct" or "play impulse"—the syn-

7. Kant, Sec. 1, Bk. 1, ¶ 17.
8. Kant, Sec. 1, Bk. 1, ¶ 20.

thesis of the sensuous and the formal impulse whose object is the beautiful.[9]

5. Explain Kant's definition of beauty as defined in his four moments drawn from the categories: (1) quality, (2) quantity, (3) relation, and (4) modality. How effective are his arguments for each moment?

6. Kant writes, "Every one must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste.. . . " Vernon Lee argues that Kant's theory is a misleading metaphysical æsthetics:

   > [This theory] defines æsthetic appreciation as *disinterested interest*, gratuitously identifying self-interest with the practical pursuit of advantages we have not yet got; and overlooking the fact that such appreciation implies enjoyment and is so for the very reverse of disinterested.[10]

   Kant seems to agree with Schopenhauer that the passions are silenced in the impartical contemplation of beauty. How does Kant's sense of "disinterested enjoyment" exclude an associated desire for an æsthetic object?

9. Frederich Schiller. *Letters on the Æsthetical Education of Man*. 1794. Translated by Tapio Riikonen and David Widger. In *Literary and Philosophical Essays: French, German and Italian.* New York: Collier. 1910. Letter XV.

10. Vernon Lee. *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Æsthetics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1913. 6.

Chapter 12

“Art as Living Form” by Frederich Schiller

Frederich Schiller Duyckinick, *Portrait Gallery*, 1873

About the author . . .

Frederich Schiller (1759-1805), whose father was an officer under Duke Karl Eugen, studied law and medicine at the Duke’s military academy. He would have preferred to study theology. When Schiller disappeared from his Stuttgart regiment in order to see his first play performed in a nearby city, the Duke forbade him from literature altogether. After a brief imprisionment, Schiller fled his regiment. Best known for dramatic plays, he and Goethe were at the center of the *Sturm and Drang* period of German literature. Schiller’s poem “The Ode to Joy” formed the textual basis of the finale of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*.

About the work . . .

In his *Letters on the Æsthetical Education of Man*[1] Frederich Schiller develops a neoKantian theory of art and beauty whereby individuals become fully human in a free social order. He characterizes two basic instincts in man: (1) the natural sensuous and (2) the formal or rational. Schiller terms the synthesis of these two impluses “the play instinct” whose object is the “living form” of beauty in the world. In other words, the play instinct is an imaginative understanding of the æsthetic qualities of phenomena—the beautiful. This impulse as cultivated through æsthetic education makes humanity and rational social order possible.

From the reading . . .

“[I]t is through beauty that we arrive at freedom.”

Ideas of Interest: *Æsthetical Education of Man*

1. Describe the difference between the faculties of sensibility and understanding. How are these related to the opposite impulses of sensuousness and rationality? How are they related to matter and form?
2. According to Schiller, what are the two fundamental laws of sensuous-rational nature?
3. Explain to which instinct or impulse the moral sense belongs. Why is this so?
4. What is the play instinct and how is it related to sensibility and rationality?

1. Frederich Schiller. “Letter VXI.” *Letters on the Æsthetical Education of Man*. 1794. Translated by Tapio Riikonen and David Widger. In *Literary and Philosophical Essays: French, German and Italian.* New York: Collier. 1910.

5. According to Schiller, what is a "living form"? What is the source of æsthetics or beauty?
6. According to Schiller, why is art necessary for culture and free social order? How is it that beauty alone, and not absolute good, "confers happiness on all"?

The Reading Selection from *Æsthetical Education of Man*

Letter I [Morality and The Beautiful]

I shall treat a subject which is closely connected with the better portion of our happiness and not far removed from the moral nobility of human nature.... In truth, I will not keep back from you that the assertions which follow rest chiefly upon Kantian principles ...

With regard to the ideas which predominate in the practical part of Kant's system ... this very technical shape which renders truth visible to the understanding conceals it from the feelings; for, unhappily, understanding begins by destroying the object of the inner sense before it can appropriate the object. ... That which I before said of moral experience can be applied with greater truth to the manifestation of "the beautiful."

From the reading ...

"In short, beauty ought to present itself as a necessary condition of humanity."

Letter II [Æsthetics Entails Political Freedom]

I hope that I shall succeed in convincing you that this matter of art is less foreign to the needs than to the tastes of our age; nay, that, to arrive

at a solution even in the political problem, the road of æsthetics must be pursued, because it is through beauty that we arrive at freedom. But I cannot carry out this proof without my bringing to your remembrance the principles by which the reason is guided in political legislation.. . .

Letter VII [The Faculties of Understanding and Sensibility]

It is therefore not going far enough to say that the light of the understanding only deserves respect when it reacts on the character; to a certain extent it is from the character that this light proceeds; for the road that terminates in the head must pass through the heart. Accordingly, the most pressing need of the present time is to educate the sensibility, because it is the means, not only to render efficacious in practice the improvement of ideas, but to call this improvement into existence.

This pure and rational idea of the beautiful . . . must therefore be sought for by a process of abstraction, and it ought to be deduced from the simple possibility of a nature both sensuous and rational; in short, beauty ought to present itself as a necessary condition of humanity. It is therefore essential that we should rise to the pure idea of humanity, and as experience shows us nothing but individuals. . . .

Letter XI [Sensuous-Rational Nature of Man]

If abstraction rises to as great an elevation as possible, it arrives at two primary ideas, before which it is obliged to stop and to recognize its limits. It distinguishes in man something that continues, and something that changes incessantly. That which continues it names his person; that which changes his position, his condition.

Considered in itself, and independently of all sensuous matter, his personality is nothing but the pure virtuality of a possible infinite manifestation; and so long as there is neither intuition nor feeling, it is nothing more than a form, an empty power. Considered in itself, and independently of all spontaneous activity of the mind, sensuousness can only make a ma-

terial man; without it, it is a pure form; but it cannot in any way establish a union between matter and it. . . .

Now from this source issue for man two opposite exigencies, the two fundamental laws of sensuous-rational nature. The first has for its object absolute reality; it must make a world of what is only form, manifest all that in it is only a force. The second law has for its object absolute formality; it must destroy in him all that is only world, and carry out harmony in all changes. In other terms, . . . this twofold labor brings back to the idea of humanity, which was my starting-point.

Letter XII [Sensation Is Temporal; Formal Is Eternal]

The first of these impulsions, which I shall call the sensuous instinct, issues from the physical existence of man, or from sensuous nature; and it is this instinct which tends to enclose him in the limits of time. . . This simply filled state of time is named sensation, and it is only in this state that physical existence manifests itself. In this state man is . . . a complete moment in time; or, to speak more correctly, he is not, for his personality is suppressed as long as sensation holds sway over him and carries time along with it.

. . . [T]he total manifestation of human nature is connected on a close analysis with the sensuous instinct. But though it is only this instinct that awakens and develops what exists virtually in man, it is nevertheless this very instinct which renders his perfection impossible.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> "Feeling can only say: 'That is true for this subject and at this moment,' . . . [b]ut when the moral feeling says: 'That ought to be,' it decides forever."

The second impulsion, which may be named the formal instinct, issues from the absolute existence of man, or from his rational nature, and tends to set free, and bring harmony into the diversity of its manifestations, and to maintain personality notwithstanding all the changes of state. As this personality, being an absolute and indivisible unity,. . . it embraces

the whole series of times, or what comes to the same thing, it suppresses time and change. It wishes the real to be necessary and eternal, and it wishes the eternal and the necessary to be real; in other terms, it tends to truth and justice.

If the sensuous instinct only produces accidents, the formal instinct gives laws, laws for every judgment when it is a question of knowledge, laws for every will when it is a question of action. Whether, therefore, we recognize an object or conceive an objective value to a state of the subject, whether we act in virtue of knowledge or make of the objective the determining principle of our state; in both cases we withdraw this state from the jurisdiction of time, and we attribute to it reality for all men and for all time, that is, universality and necessity. Feeling can only say: “That is true for this subject and at this moment,” and there may come another moment, another subject, which withdraws the affirmation from the actual feeling. But when once thought pronounces and says: “That is,” it decides forever and ever, and the validity of its decision is guaranteed by the personality itself, which defies all change. Inclination can only say: “That is good for your individuality and present necessity”; but the changing current of affairs will sweep them away, and what you ardently desire to-day will form the object of your aversion to-morrow. But when the moral feeling says: “That ought to be,” it decides forever. If you confess the truth because it is the truth, and if you practise justice because it is justice, you have made of a particular case the law of all possible cases, and treated one moment of your life as eternity.

Letter XIII [Human Nature and Culture]

On a first survey, nothing appears more opposed than these two impulsions; one having for its object change, the other immutability, and yet it is these two notions that exhaust the notion of humanity, and a third fundamental impulsion, holding a medium between them, is quite inconceivable. How then shall we re-establish the unity of human nature, a unity that appears completely destroyed by this primitive and radical opposition? . . .

The office of culture is to watch over [these two tendencies] and to secure to each one its proper limits; therefore culture has to give equal justice to both, and to defend not only the rational impulsion against the sensuous, but also the latter against the former. Hence she has to act a twofold part:

first, to protect sense against the attacks of freedom; secondly, to secure personality against the power of sensations. One of these ends is attained by the cultivation of the sensuous, the other by that of reason. . . .

Letter VIX [The Play Instinct]

The sensuous impulsion requires that there should be change, that time should have contents; the formal impulsion requires that time should be suppressed, that there should be no change. Consequently, the impulsion in which both of the others act in concert—allow me to call it the instinct of play, till I explain the term—the instinct of play would have as its object to suppress time in time, to conciliate the state of transition or becoming with the absolute being, change with identity. . . .

The sensuous impulsion excludes from its subject all autonomy and freedom; the formal impulsion excludes all dependence and passivity. But the exclusion of freedom is physical necessity; the exclusion of passivity is moral necessity. Thus the two impulsions subdue the mind: the former to the laws of nature, the latter to the laws of reason. It results from this that the instinct of play, which unites the double action of the two other instincts, will content the mind at once morally and physically. . . .

Letter XV [Beauty, Common Object of the Play Instinct]

I approach continually nearer to the end to which I lead you, by a path offering few attractions. Be pleased to follow me a few steps further, and a large horizon will open up to you, and a delightful prospect will reward you for the labor of the way.

From the reading . . .

The object of the play instinct, represented in a general statement, may therefore bear the name of living form; a term that serves to describe all æsthetic qualities of phenomena, and what people style, in the widest sense, beauty.

The object of the sensuous instinct, expressed in a universal conception, is named Life in the widest acceptation; a conception that expresses all material existence and all that is immediately present in the senses. The object of the formal instinct, expressed in a universal conception, is called shape or form, as well in an exact as in an inexact acceptation; a conception that embraces all formal qualities of things and all relations of the same to the thinking powers. The object of the play instinct, represented in a general statement, may therefore bear the name of living form; a term that serves to describe all æsthetic qualities of phenomena, and what people style, in the widest sense, beauty.

Carrara Quarry for Italy's Master Sculptures, Library of Congress

Beauty is neither extended to the whole field of all living things nor merely enclosed in this field. A marble block, though it is and remains lifeless, can nevertheless become a living form by the architect and sculptor; a man, though he lives and has a form, is far from being a living form on that account. For this to be the case, it is necessary that his form should be life, and that his life should be a form. As long as we only think of his form, it is lifeless, a mere abstraction; as long as we only feel his life, it is without form, a mere impression. It is only when his form lives in our

feeling, and his life in our understanding, he is the living form, and this will everywhere be the case where we judge him to be beautiful.

But the genesis of beauty is by no means declared because we know how to point out the component parts, which in their combination produce beauty. For to this end it would be necessary to comprehend that combination itself, which continues to defy our exploration, as well as all mutual operation between the finite and the infinite. The reason, on transcendental grounds, makes the following demand: There shall be a communion between the formal impulse and the material impulse—that is, there shall be a play instinct—because it is only the unity of reality with the form, of the accidental with the necessary, of the passive state with freedom, that the conception of humanity is completed. . . .

We know that man is neither exclusively matter nor exclusively spirit. Accordingly, beauty as the consummation of humanity, can neither be exclusively mere life, as has been asserted by sharp-sighted observers, who kept too close to the testimony of experience, and to which the taste of the time would gladly degrade it; Nor can beauty be merely form, as has been judged by speculative sophists, who departed too far from experience, and by philosophic artists, who were led too much by the necessity of art in explaining beauty; it is rather the common object of both impulses, that is of the play instinct.. . .

[M]an is serious only with the agreeable, with the good, and with the perfect, but he plays with beauty. . . . The actually present beauty is worthy of the really, of the actually present play-impulse; but by the ideal of beauty,which is set up by the reason, an ideal of the play-instinct is also presented, which man ought to have before his eyes in all his plays.

. . . Now the reason pronounces that the beautiful must not only be life and form, but a living form, that is, beauty, inasmuch as it dictates to man the twofold law of absolute formality and absolute reality. Reason also utters the decision that man shall only play with beauty, and he shall only play with beauty.

Letter XXVI [The Condition of Humanity]

When imagination incessantly escapes from reality, and does not abandon the simplicity of nature in its wanderings: then and there only the mind and the senses, the receptive force and the plastic force, are devel-

oped in that happy equilibrium which is the soul of the beautiful and the condition of humanity.... The reality of things is effected by things, the appearance of things is the work of man, and a soul that takes pleasure in appearance does not take pleasure in what it receives but in what it makes....

The instinct of play likes appearance, and directly it is awakened it is followed by the formal imitative instinct which treats appearance as an independent thing. Directly man has come to distinguish the appearance from the reality, the form from the body, he can separate, in fact he has already done so. Thus the faculty of the art of imitation is given with the faculty of form in general. The inclination that draws us to it reposes on another tendency I have not to notice here. The exact period when the æsthetic instinct, or that of art, develops, depends entirely on the attraction that mere appearance has for men....

Letter XXVII [Art Necessary for Free Social Order]

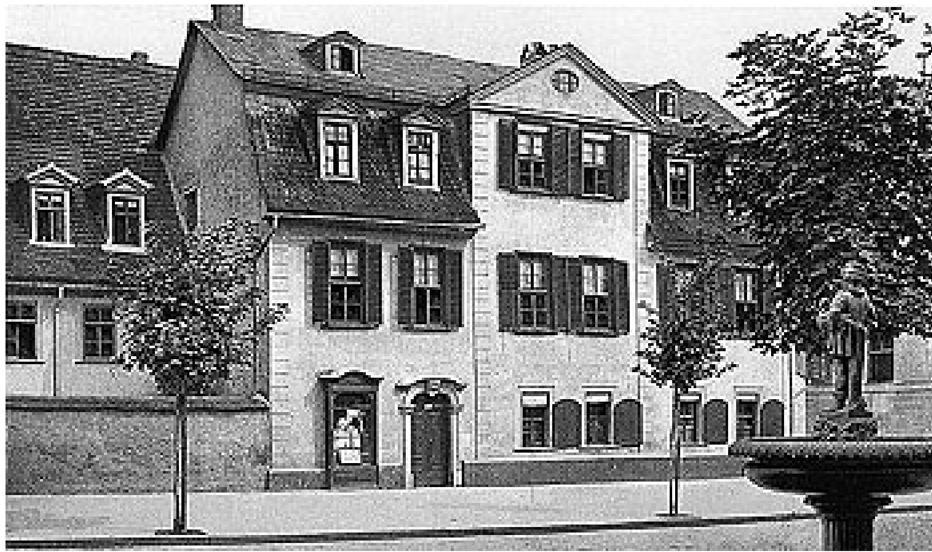
... The constraint of superabundance or physical play answers as a transition from the constraint of necessity, or of physical seriousness, to æsthetical play ...

The instinct of play, not satisfied with bringing into the sphere of the necessary an æsthetic superabundance for the future more free, is at last completely emancipated from the bonds of duty, and the beautiful becomes of itself an object of man’s exertions. He adorns himself. The free pleasure comes to take a place among his wants, and the useless soon becomes the best part of his joys. Form, which from the outside gradually approaches him, in his dwelling, his furniture, his clothing, begins at last to take possession of the man himself, to transform him, at first exteriorly, and afterwards in the interior. The disordered leaps of joy become the dance, the formless gesture is changed into an amiable and harmonious pantomime, the confused accents of feeling are developed, and begin to obey measures and adapt themselves to song. ...

In the midst of the formidable realm of forces, and of the sacred empire of laws, the æsthetic impulse of form creates by degrees a third and a joyous realm, that of play and of the appearance, where she emancipates man from fetters, in all his relations, and from all that is named constraint,

whether physical or moral.

If in the dynamic state of rights men mutually move and come into collision as forces, in the moral (ethical) state of duties, man opposes to man the majesty of the laws, and chains down his will. In this realm of the beautiful or the æsthetic state, man ought to appear to man only as a form, and an object of free play. To give freedom through freedom is the fundamental law of this realm.



Schiller's House in Weimar, Library of Congress

The dynamic state can only make society simple possibly by subduing nature through nature; the moral (ethical) state can only make it morally necessary by submitting the will of the individual to the general will.

The æsthetic state alone can make it real, because it carries out the will of all through the nature of the individual. If necessity alone forces man to enter into society, and if his reason engraves on his soul social principles, it is beauty only that can give him a social character; taste alone brings harmony into society, because it creates harmony in the individual. All other forms of perception divide the man, because they are based exclusively either in the sensuous or in the spiritual part of his being. It is only the perception of beauty that makes of him an entirety, because it demands the co-operation of his two natures. All other forms of communication divide society, because they apply exclusively either to the receptivity or to the private activity of its members, and therefore to what

distinguishes men one from the other. The æsthetic communication alone unites society because it applies to what is common to all its members. We only enjoy the pleasures of sense as individuals, without the nature of the race in us sharing in it; accordingly, we cannot generalize our individual pleasures, because we cannot generalize our individuality. We enjoy the pleasures of knowledge as a race, dropping the individual in our judgment; but we cannot generalize the pleasures of the understanding, because we cannot eliminate individuality from the judgments of others as we do from our own. Beauty alone can we enjoy both as individuals and as a race, that is, as representing a race. Good appertaining to sense can only make one person happy, because it is founded on inclination, which is always exclusive; and it can only make a man partially happy, because his real personality does not share in it. Absolute good can only render a man happy conditionally, for truth is only the reward of abnegation, and a pure heart alone has faith in a pure will. Beauty alone confers happiness on all, and under its influence every being forgets that he is limited.

From the reading . . .

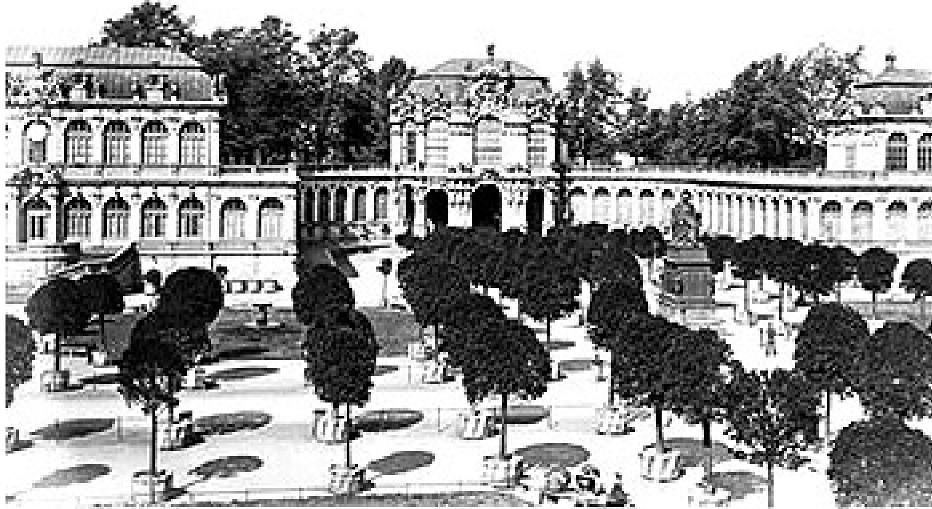
"Accordingly, beauty as the consummation of humanity, can neither be exclusively mere life . . . [n]or can beauty be merely form. . . "

Related Ideas

Schiller, Johann Christoph Friedrich von[2] *The 1911 Edition Encyclopedia*. The entry on Schiller from the oft-cited 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*

Schiller, Friedrich (1759-1805)[3] *Literary Encyclopedia*. Schiller's life and writings is discussed by Steven D. Martinson, University of Arizona.

2. *Schiller* (http://14.1911encyclopedia.org/S/SC/SCHILLER_JOHANN_/CHRISTOPH_FRIEDRICH_VON.htm)
3. *Schiller* (http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&ID=3956)



Schiller Statue, Stuttgard Palace, Library of Congress

From the reading . . .

“The object of the play instinct, represented in a general statement, may therefore bear the name of living form; a term that serves to describe all æsthetic qualities of phenomena, and what people style, in the widest sense, beauty.”

Topics Worth Investigating

1. According to Schiller, what is the relationship between beauty and freedom.
2. Schiller writes in “Letter IV”:

> Now man can be opposed to himself in a twofold manner; either as a savage, when his feelings rule over his principles; or as a barbarian, when his principles destroy his feelings. The savage despises art, and acknowledges nature as his despotic ruler; the barbarian laughs at nature, and dishonors it, but he often proceeds in a more contemptible

> way than the savage to be the slave of his senses. The cultivated man makes of nature his friend, and honors its friendship, while only bridling its caprice.

Characterize the "savage" and the "barbarian" as well as the third basic human capacity which mediates the savage and the barbarian: the play impulse in the arena of art and beauty.

3. How does Schiller's philosophy of sensibility and understanding differ from Kant's critical philosophy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? For Schiller these "opposites" are negated but synthesize the play impulse. What is the nature of this dialectic? Compare Kant's synthesis of rationalism and empiricism: "Concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind."
4. Schiller argues that "Absolute good can only render a man happy conditionally," and only beauty "confers happiness on all;"[4] whereas, Plotinus states what " is beyone the Intellectual-Principle we affirm to be the nature of Good radiating Beauty before it."[5] Plotinus believes the Good lies beyond the Principle of Beauty. Can these two views be reconciled?
5. Vernon Lee argues Schiller's theory of the beautiful entails a misleading æsthetical metaphysics:

> Now although leisure and freedom from cares are necessary both for play and for æsthetic appreciation, the latter differs essentially from the former by its contemplative nature. For although it may be possible to watch *other people* playing football or chess or bridge in a purely contemplative spirit and with the deepest admiration ... yet the concentration on the aim and the next moves consititutes on the part of the players *themselves* an eminently practical state of mind, one diametrically opposed to contemplation...[6]

To what extent is Lee's critique a fair analysis of Schiller's reflections on the connection between between æsthetic activity and the universal impulse to play?

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4. Frederich Schiller. Letter XXVII.
5. Plotinus. *The Enneads*. Trans. Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page. London: Faber and Faber. 1917-1924. First Ennead , Sixth Tractate.
6. Vernon Lee. *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Æsthetics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1913. 7.

Chapter 13

“Art Expresses the Universal” by Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling

Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling Projekt Gutenberg-DE

About the author . . .

Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), born in Baden-Würtenberg, and as a *wunderkind* studied at the University of Tübingen at the age of 15. During the course of his life he was a popular lecturer and became acquainted with most of the major philosophers in Germany at that time including Höderlin, Schiller, Fichte, and Hegel. Schelling is credited with originating *Naturphilosophie*— the doctrine that all of nature is ultimately derived from one initial force or principle. He intuited that light, heat, magnetism, and electricity were all aspects of the same original force.

Schelling's philosophy views nature in process—the Absolute is seen as composed of the opposites of nature (objectivity) and Universal Spirit (which can only be known through artistic creation). His philosophy is sometimes labeled an "æsthetic idealism," since art is, for Schelling, the objective rendering of subjectivity.

About the work . . .

Schelling rejects the imitation theory of art in his *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur*,[1] Instead, he believes art reveals a "higher truth" than what is actual. Artistic activity, for Schelling is both an unconscious and a conscious creation of a product which synthesizes Self with nature. In other words, a work of art is the objectification of mental activity and consequently reflects the unity of unconscious and conscious, the identity of the real and the idea, and, of course, the objective and the subjective. This identification of subject and object is the essence or finite manifestation, symbolically realized, of the infinite Absolute, itself. Thus, the world of art may be seen as world of symbols, and artistic symbols are neither universal nor particular but, he argues, *both* at the same time. In the same vein, Schelling held that the Absolute is "indifferently" both real and ideal.

From the reading . . .

[T]he production of ideal nature, of nature elevated above the actual, together with the expression of spiritual conceptions, is the highest aim of art.

Ideas of Interest from *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu*

1. Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling. *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur*. In J.E. Cabot. *The German Classics*. New York: German Publication Society. 1913.

der Natur

1. On what basis does Schelling reject the imitation theory of art?
2. What does Schelling mean by "the creative principle in the forms of things"?
3. Explain the reasoning leading to Schelling's conclusion that art represents what is actual in nature, but does not imitate the form of nature.
4. Characterize what Schelling means by the essence, idea, or the "indwelling sense of nature" in beautiful works of art.
5. Why does Schelling believe that the works of art are appreciated independently of time—in a kind of "eternal now"?
6. Explain what Schelling means by "character" in art.
7. Is the soul in nature an impersonal ego, according to Schelling? What does Schelling say about the soul of the artist?
8. Explain Schelling's evolution of gradation in art from mythology to sculpture and finally to painting in terms of grace and the forces of soul and nature.

The Reading Selection from *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur*

[Imitation Theory of Art is Mistaken]

We hope, therefore, in considering plastic art in relation to its true prototype and original source, nature, to be able to contribute something new to its theory—to give some additional exactness or clearness to the conceptions of it; but, above all, to set forth the coherence of the whole structure of art in the light of a higher necessity.

From the reading . . .

[W]e see that imitators of nature in this sense have imitated oftener, and even more affectionately, the ugly than the beautiful.

But has not science always recognized this relation? Has not indeed every theory of modern times taken its departure from this very position, that art should be the imitator of nature? Such has indeed been the case. But what should this broad general proposition profit the artist, when the notion of nature is of such various interpretation, and when there are almost as many differing views of it as there are various modes of life?. . .

But is, then, the disciple of nature to copy everything in nature without distinction?—and, of everything, every part? Only beautiful objects should be represented; and, even in these, only the beautiful and perfect.

Thus is the proposition further determined, but, at the same time, this asserted, that, in nature, the perfect is mingled with the imperfect, the beautiful with the unbeautiful. Now, how should he who stands in no other relation to nature than that of servile imitation, distinguish the one from the other? It is the way of imitators to appropriate the faults of their model sooner and easier than its excellences, since the former offer handles and tokens more easily grasped; and thus we see that imitators of nature in this sense have imitated oftener, and even more affectionately, the ugly than the beautiful.

If we regard in things, not their principle, but the empty abstract form, neither will they say anything to our Soul; Our own heart, our own spirit we must put to it, that they answer us.

[Creative Principle]

But what is the perfection of a thing? Nothing else than the creative life in it, its power to exist. Never, therefore, will he, who fancies that nature is altogether dead, be successful in that profound process (analogous to the chemical) whence proceeds, purified as by fire, the pure gold of beauty and truth.

Nor was there any change in the main view of the relation of art to nature, even when the unsatisfactoriness of the principle began to be more

generally felt; no change, even by the new views and new knowledge so nobly established by Winckelmann. He indeed restored to the soul its full efficiency in art, and raised it from its unworthy dependence into the realm of spiritual freedom. Powerfully moved by the beauty of form in the works of antiquity, he taught that the production of ideal nature, of nature elevated above the actual, together with the expression of spiritual conceptions, is the highest aim of art.. . .

Nature meets us everywhere, at first with reserve, and in form more or less severe. She is like that quiet and serious beauty, that excites not attention by noisy advertisement, nor attracts the vulgar gaze.

From the reading . . .

The sublimest arithmetic and geometry are innate in the stars. . .

How can we, as it were, spiritually melt this apparently rigid form, so that the pure energy of things may flow together with the force of our spirit and both become one united mold? We must transcend form, in order to gain it again as intelligible, living, and truly felt. Consider the most beautiful forms; what remains behind after you have abstracted from them the creative principle within? Nothing but mere unessential qualities, such as extension and the relations of space. Does the fact that one portion of matter exists near another, and distinct from it, contribute anything to its inner essence? Or does it not rather contribute nothing? Evidently the latter. It is not mere contiguous existence, but the manner of it, that makes form; and this can de determined only by a positive force, which is even opposed to separateness, and subordinates the manifoldness of the parts to the unity of one idea-from the force that works in the crystal to the force which, comparable to a gentle magnetic current, gives to the particles of matter in human form that position and arrangement among themselves, through which the idea, the essential unity and beauty, can become visible.

Not only, however, as active principle, but as spirit and effective science, must the essence appear to us in the form, in order that we may truly apprehend it. For all unity must be spiritual in nature and origin; and what is the aim of all investigation of nature but to find science therein? For that wherein there is no understanding cannot be the object of understanding; the unknowing cannot be known. The science by which nature works is not, however, like human science, connected with reflection upon itself;

in it, the conception is not separate from the act, nor the design from the execution. Therefore, rude matter strives, as it were, blindly, after regular shape, and unknowingly assumes pure stereometric forms, which belong, nevertheless, to the realm of ideas, and are something spiritual in the material.

The sublimest arithmetic and geometry are innate in the stars, and unconsciously displayed by them in their motions. More distinctly, but still beyond their grasp, the living cognition appears in animals; and thus we see them, though wandering about without reflection, bring about innumerable results far more excellent than themselves: the bird that, intoxicated with music, transcends itself in soullike tones; the little artistic creature, that, without practice or instruction, accomplishes light works of architecture; but all directed by an overpowering spirit, that lightens in them already with single flashes of knowledge, but as yet appears nowhere as the full sun, as in man.

This formative science in nature and art is the link that connects idea and form, body and soul. Before everything stands an eternal ideal formed in the infinite understanding; but by what means does this idea pass into actuality and embodiment? Only through the creative science that is as necessarily connected with the infinite understanding, as in the artist the principle that seizes the idea of unsensuous beauty is linked with that which sets it forth to the senses.

If that artist be called happy and praiseworthy before all to whom the gods have granted this creative spirit, then that work of art will appear excellent which shows to us, as in outline, this unadulterated energy of creation and activity of nature.

It was long ago perceived that, in art, not everything is performed with consciousness; that, with the conscious activity, an unconscious action must combine; and that it is of the perfect unity and mutual interpenetration of the two that the highest in art is born.

Works that want this seal of unconscious science are recognized by the evident absence of life self-supported and independent of the producer; as, on the contrary, where this acts, art imparts to its work, together with the utmost clearness to the understanding, that unfathomable reality wherein it resembles a work of nature.

[Art and Nature]

It has often been attempted to make clear the position of the artist in regard to nature, by saying that art, in order to be such, must first withdraw itself from nature, and return to it only in the final perfection. The true sense of this saying, it seems to us, can be no other than this—that in all things in nature, the living idea shows itself only blindly active; were it so also in the artist, he would be in nothing distinct from nature. But, should he attempt consciously to subordinate himself altogether to the actual, and render with servile fidelity the already existing, he would produce larvae, but no works of art. He must therefore withdraw himself from the product, from the creature, but only in order to raise himself to the creative energy, spiritually seizing the same. Thus he ascends into the realm of pure ideas; he forsakes the creature, to regain it with thousandfold interest, and in this sense certainly to return to nature. This spirit of nature working at the core of things, and speaking through form and shape as by symbols only, the artist must certainly follow with emulation; and only so far as he seizes this with genial imitation has he himself produced anything genuine. For works produced by aggregation, even of forms beautiful in themselves, would still be destitute of all beauty, since that, through which the work on the whole is truly beautiful, cannot be mere form. It is above form—it is essence, the universal, the look and expression of the indwelling spirit of nature.

Now it can scarcely be doubtful what is to be thought of the so-called idealizing of nature in art, so universally demanded. This demand seems to arise from a way of thinking, according to which not truth, beauty, goodness, but the contrary of all these, is the actual. Were the actual indeed opposed to truth and beauty, it would be necessary for the artist, not to elevate or idealize it, but to get rid of and destroy it, in order to create something true and beautiful. But how should it be possible for anything to be actual except the true; and what is beauty, if not full, complete being?

What higher aim, therefore, could art have, than to represent that which in nature actually *is*? Or how should it undertake to excel so-called actual nature, since it must always fall short of it?

For does art impart to its works actual, sensuous life? This statue breathes not, is stirred by no pulsation, warmed by no blood.

But both the pretended excelling and the apparent falling short show themselves as the consequences of one and the same principle, as soon

as we place the aim of art in the exhibiting of that which truly is.

Only on the surface have its works the appearance of life; in nature, life seems to reach deeper, and to be wedded entirely with matter, But does not the continual mutation of matter and the universal lot of final dissolution teach us the unessential character of this union, and that it is no intimate fusion? Art, accordingly, in the merely superficial animation of its works, but represents nothingness as nonexisting.

How comes it that, to every tolerably cultivated taste, imitations of the so-called actual, even though carried to deception, appear in the last degree untrue—Nay, produce the impression of specters; whilst a work in which the idea is predominant strikes us with the full force of truth, conveying us then only to the genuinely actual world? Whence comes it, if not from the more or less obscure feeling which tells us that the idea alone is the living principle in things, but all else unessential and vain shadow?

From the reading . . .

Art, in representing the thing at that instant [of complete beauty], removes it out of time, and sets it forth in its pure being, in the eternity of its life.

On the same ground may be explained all the opposite cases which are brought up as instances of the surpassing of nature by art. In arresting the rapid course of human years; in uniting the energy of developed manhood with the soft charm of early youth; or exhibiting a mother of grown-up sons and daughters in the full possession of vigorous beauty—what does art except to annul what is unessential, time?

If, according to the remark of a discerning critic, every growth in nature has but an instant of truly complete beauty, we may also say that it has, too, only an instant of full existence. In this instant it is what it is in all eternity; besides this, it has only a coming into and a passing out of existence. Art, in representing the thing at that instant, removes it out of time, and sets it forth in its pure being, in the eternity of its life.. . .

[The Essence of Beauty: the Universal in

the Particular]

Certainly we desire to see not merely the individual, but, more than this, its vital idea. But if the artist has seized the inward creative spirit and essence of the idea, and sets this forth, he makes the individual a world in itself, a class, an eternal prototype; and he who has grasped the essential character needs not to fear hardness and severity, for these are the conditions of life. Nature, that in her completeness appears as the utmost benignity, we see, in each particular, aiming even primarily and principally at severity, seclusion and reserve. As the whole creation is the work of the utmost externization and renunciation, so the artist must first deny himself and descend into the particular, without shunning isolation, nor the pain, the anguish of form.. . .

The outer side or basis of all beauty is beauty of form. But as form cannot exist without essence, wherever form is, there also is character, whether in visible presence or only perceptible in its effects. Characteristic beauty, therefore, is beauty in the root, from which alone beauty can arise as the fruit. Essence may, indeed, outgrow form, but even then the characteristic remains as the still efficient groundwork of the beautiful.. . .

But whether that high and independent beauty should be the only standard in art, as it is the highest, seems to depend on the degree of fullness and extent that belongs to the particular art.. . .

For, although character can show itself also in rest and equilibrium of form, it is only in action that it becomes truly alive.

By character we understand a unity of several forces, operating constantly to produce among them a certain equipoise and determinate proportion, to which, if undisturbed, a like equipoise in the symmetry of the forms corresponds. But if this vital unity is to display itself in act and operation, this can only be when the forces, excited by some cause to rebellion, forsake their equilibrium. Everyone sees that this is the case in the passions.

[Passion]

Here we are met by the well-known maxim of the theorists, which demands that passion should be moderated as far as possible, in its actual outburst, that beauty of form may not be injured. But we think this maxim should rather be reversed, and read thus—that passion should be moderated by beauty itself. For it is much to be feared that this desired modera-

tion too may be taken in a negative sense-whereas, what is really requisite is to oppose to passion a positive force. For as virtue consists, not in the absence of passions but in the mastery of the spirit over them, so beauty is preserved, not by their removal or abatement, but by the mastery of beauty over them.. . .

This essence, not to be seized, as we have already remarked, but yet perceptible to all, is what the language of the Greeks designed by the name *charis*, ours as *grace*.

Whenever, in a fully developed form, grace appears, the work is complete on the side of nature; nothing more is wanting; all demands are satisfied. Here, already, soul and body are in complete harmony; body is form, grace is soul, although not soul in itself, but the soul of form, or the soul of nature.

Art may linger, and remain stationary at this point; for already on one side at least, its whole task is finished. The pure image of beauty arrested at this point is the goddess of love.

But the beauty of the soul in itself, joined to sensuous grace, is the highest apotheosis of nature.

The spirit of nature is only in appearance opposed to the soul; essentially, it is the instrument of its revelation; it brings about indeed the antagonism that exists in all things, but only that the one essence may come forth, as the utmost benignity, and the reconciliation of all the forces.

[Soul]

All other creatures are driven by the mere force of nature, and through it maintain their individuality; in man alone, as the central point, arises the soul, without which the world would be like the natural universe without the sun.

The soul in man, therefore, is not the principle of individuality, but that whereby he raises himself above all egoism, whereby he becomes capable of self-sacrifice, of disinterested love, and (which is the highest) of the contemplation and knowledge of the essence of things, and thus of art.

In him it is no longer concerned about matter nor has it immediate concern with it, but with the spirit only as the life of things. Even while appearing in the body, it is yet free from the body, the consciousness of

which hovers in the soul in the most beauteous shapes only as a light, undisturbing dream. it is no quality, no faculty nor anything special of the sort; it knows not, but is science; it is not good, but goodness; it is not beautiful, as body even may be, but beauty itself.

In the first instance, it is true, in a work of art, the soul of the artist is seen as invention in the detail, and in the total result as the unity that hovers over the work in serene stillness. But the soul must be visible in objective representation, as the primeval energy of thought, in portraitures of human beings, altogether filled by an idea, by a noble contemplation; or as indwelling, essential goodness.

Each of these finds its distinct expression even in the completest repose, but a more living one where the soul can reveal itself in activity and antagonism; and since it is by the passions mainly that the peace of life is interrupted, it is the generally received opinion that the beauty of the soul shows itself especially in its quiet supremacy amid the storm of the passions.. . .

[Gradations in Art]

Everyone acknowledges that greatness, purity, and goodness of soul have also their sensuous expressions. But how is this conceivable, unless the principle that acts in matter be itself cognate and similar to soul?

For the representation of the soul there are again gradations in art, according as it is joined with the merely characteristic, or in visible union with the charming and graceful.

Who perceives not already, in the tragedies of Æschylus, the presence of that lofty morality which is predominant in the works of Sophocles? . . .

From the reading . . .

This beauty, which results from the perfect interpenetration of moral goodness and sensuous grace, seizes and enchants us when we meet it, with the force of a miracle.

The same is true of the plastic productions of the early and severe style, in comparison with the gentleness of the later.

If grace, besides being the transfiguration of the spirit of nature, is also the medium of connection between moral goodness and sensuous appearance, it is evident how art must tend from all points toward it as its center. This beauty, which results from the perfect interpenetration of moral goodness and sensuous grace, seizes and enchants us when we meet it, with the force of a miracle. For, whilst the spirit of nature shows itself everywhere else independent of the soul, and, indeed, in a measure opposed to it, here, it seems, as if by voluntary accord, and the inward fire of divine love, to melt into union with it; the remembrance of the fundamental unity of the essence of nature and the essence of the soul comes over the beholder with sudden clearness-the conviction that all antagonism is only apparent, that love is the bond of all things, and pure goodness the foundation and substance of the whole creation.

Here art, as it were, transcends itself, and again becomes means only. On this summit sensuous grace becomes in turn only the husk and body of a higher life; what was before a whole is treated as a part, and the highest relation of art and nature is reached in this—that it makes nature the medium of manifesting the soul which it contains.

But though in this blossoming of art, as in the blossoming of the vegetable kingdom, all the previous states are repeated, yet, on the other hand, we may see in what various directions art can proceed from this center. Especially does the difference in nature of the two forms of plastic art here show itself most strongly. For sculpture, representing its ideas by corporeal things, seems to reach its highest point in the complete equilibrium of soul and matter—if it give a preponderance to the latter it sinks below its own idea—but it seems altogether impossible for it to elevate the soul at the expense of matter, since it must thereby transcend itself. The perfect sculptor indeed, as Winckelmann remarks apropos of the *Belvedere Apollo*, will use no more material than is needful to accomplish his spiritual purpose; but also, on the other hand, he will put into the soul no more energy than is at the same time expressed in the material; for precisely upon this, fully to embody the spiritual, depends his art. Sculpture, therefore, can reach its true summit only in the representation of those natures in whose constitution it is implied that they actually embody all that is contained in their idea or soul; thus only in divine natures. So that sculpture, even if no mythology had preceded it, would of itself have come upon gods, and have invented such if it found none.

Moreover as the spirit, on this lower platform, has again the same relation to matter that we have ascribed to the soul (being the principle of activity

and motion, as matter is that of rest and inaction), the law that regulates expression and passion must be a fundamental principle of its nature.

But this law must be applicable not only to the lower passions, but also equally to those higher and godlike passions, if it is permitted so to call them, by which the soul is affected in rapture, in devotion, in adoration. Hence, since from these passions the gods alone are exempt, sculpture is inclined from this side also to the imaging of divine natures.

The nature of painting, however, seems to differ entirely from that of sculpture. For the former represents objects, not like the latter, by corporeal things, but by light and color, through a medium therefore itself incorporeal and in a measure spiritual. Painting, moreover, gives out its productions nowise as the things themselves, but expressly as pictures. From its very nature therefore it does not lay as much stress on the material as sculpture, and seems indeed for this reason, while exalting the material above the spirit, to degrade itself more than sculpture in a like case; on the other hand to be so much more justified in giving a clear preponderance to the soul.

Where it aims at the highest it will indeed ennoble the passions by character, or moderate them by grace, or manifest in them the power of the soul: but on the other hand it is precisely those higher passions, depending on the relationship of the soul with a supreme being, that are entirely suited to the nature of painting. Indeed, while sculpture maintains an exact balance between the force whereby a thing exists outwardly and acts in nature and that by virtue of which it lives inwardly and as soul, and excludes mere suffering even from matter, painting may soften in favor of the soul the characteristicness of the force and activity in matter, and transform it into resignation and endurance, making it apparent that man becomes more generally susceptible to the inspirations of the soul, and to higher influences in general.

This diametrical difference explains of itself not only the necessary predominance of sculpture in the ancient, and of painting in the modern world (since in the former the tone of mind was thoroughly plastic, whereas the latter makes even the soul the passive instrument of higher revelations); but this also is evident—that it is not enough to strive after the plastic in form and manner of representation, but that it is requisite, before all, to think and to feel plastically, that is, antiquely.

And as the deviation of sculpture into the picturesque is destructive to art, so the narrowing down of painting to the conditions and forms belonging

to sculpture is an arbitrarily imposed limitation. For while sculpture, like gravitation, acts toward one point, it is permitted to painting, as to light, to fill all space with its creative energy.

This unlimited universality of painting is demonstrated by history itself, and by the examples of the greatest masters, who, without injury to the essential character of their art, have developed to perfection each particular stage by itself, so that we can find also in the history of art the same sequence that may be pointed out in its nature—not indeed in exact order of time, but yet substantially.. . .

After the earlier violence and the vehement impulse of birth is assuaged, the spirit of nature is transfigured into soul, and grace is born. This point art reached, after Leonardo da Vinci, in Correggio, in whose works the sensuous soul is the active principle of beauty.. . .

We have seen how the work of art, springing up out of the depths of nature, begins with determinateness and limitation, unfolds its inward plenitude and infinity, is finally transfigured in grace, and at last attains to soul. But we can conceive only in detail what, in the creative act of mature art, is but one operation. No theory and no rules can give this spiritual, creative power. It is the pure gift of nature, which here, for the second time, makes a close; for, having fully actualized herself, she invests the creature with her creative energy. But as, in the grand progress of art, these different stages appeared successively, until, at the highest, all joined in one; so also, in particulars, sound culture can spring up only where it has unfolded itself regularly from the germ and root to the blossom.

The requirement that art, like everything living, should commence from the first rudiments, and, to renew its youth, constantly return to them, may seem a hard doctrine to an age that has so often been assured that it has only to take from works of art already in existence the most consummate beauty, and thus, as at a step to reach the final goal. Have we not already the excellent, the perfect? How then should we return to the rudimentary and unformed?

Had the great founders of modern art thought thus, we should never have seen their miracles. Before them also stood the creations of the ancients, round statues and works in relief, which they might have transferred immediately to their canvas. But such an appropriation of a beauty not self-won, and therefore unintelligible, would not satisfy an artistic instinct that aimed throughout at the fundamental, and from which the beautiful was again to create itself with free original energy. They were not afraid,

therefore, to appear simple, artless, dry, beside those exalted ancients; nor to cherish art for a long time in the undistinguished bud, until the period of grace had arrived.

Whence comes it that we still look upon these works of the older masters, from Giotto to the teacher of Raphæl, with a sort of reverence, indeed with a certain predilection, if not that the faithfulness of their endeavor, and the grand earnestness of their serene voluntary limitation, compel our respect and admiration.

The same relation that they held to the ancients, the present generation holds to them. Their time and ours are joined by no living transmission, no link of continuous, organic growth; we must reproduce art in the way they did, but with energy of our own, in order to be like them.

Even that Indian summer of art, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, could call forth only a few new blossoms on the old stem, but no productive germs, still less plant a new tree of art. But to set aside the works of perfected art, and to seek out its scanty and simple beginnings, as some have desired, would be a new and perhaps greater mistake; it would be no real return to the fundamental; simplicity would be affectation, and grow into hypocritical show.

But what prospect does the present time offer for an art springing from a vigorous germ, and growing up from the root? For it is in a great measure dependent on the character of its time; and who would promise the approbation of the present time to such earnest beginnings, when art, on the one hand, scarcely obtains equal consideration with other instruments of prodigal luxury, and, on the other, artists and amateurs, with entire want of ability to grasp nature, praise and demand the ideal?

Art springs only from that powerful striving of the inmost powers of the heart and the spirit, which we call inspiration. Everything that from difficult or small beginnings has grown up to great power and height, owes its growth to inspiration. Thus spring empires and states, thus arts and sciences. But it is not the power of the individual that accomplishes this, but the spirit alone, that diffuses itself over all. For art especially is dependent on the tone of the public mind, as the more delicate plants on atmosphere and weather; it needs a general enthusiasm for sublimity and beauty, like that which, in the time of the Medici, as a warm breath of spring, called forth at once and together all those great spirits.. . .

To different ages are given different inspirations. Can we expect none for this age, since the new world now forming itself, as it exists in part al-

ready outwardly, in part inwardly and in the hearts of men, can no longer be measured by any standard of previous opinion, and since everything, on the contrary, loudly demands higher standards and an entire renovation?

From the reading ...

The soul in man, therefore, is not the principle of individuality, but that whereby he raises himself above all egoism, whereby he becomes capable of self-sacrifice, of disinterested love, and (which is the highest) of the contemplation and knowledge of the essence of things, and thus of art.

Should not the sense to which nature and history have more livingly unfolded themselves, restore to art also its great arguments? The attempt to draw sparks from the ashes of the past, and fan them again into universal flame, is a vain endeavor. Only a revolution in the ideas themselves is able to raise art from its exhaustion; only new knowledge, new faith, can inspire it for the work by which it can display, in a renewed life, a splendor like the past.

An art in all respects the same as that of foregoing centuries, will never return; for nature never repeats herself. Such a Raphael will never be again, but another, who shall have reached in an equally original manner the summit of art. Only let the fundamental conditions be fulfilled, and renewed art will show, like that which preceded it, in its first works, its aim and intent. In the production of the distinctly characteristic, if it proceed from a fresh original energy, grace is already present, even though hidden, and in both the advent of the soul already determined. Works produced in this manner, even in their rudimentary imperfection, are necessary and eternal.

Related Ideas

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling.[2] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Short biography, description of major works, and resouces pro-

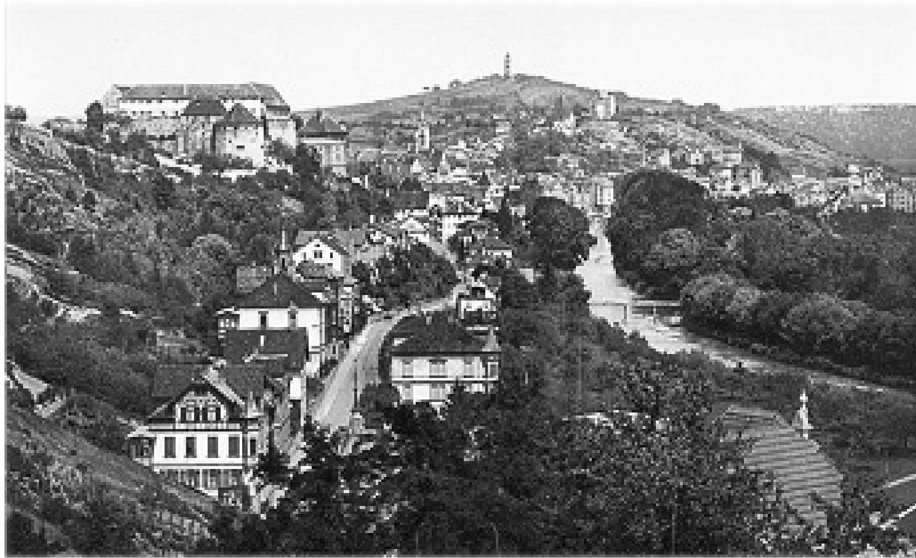
2. *Friedrich Schelling*. (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schelling/)

vided by Andrew Bowie. An overview of Schelling's philosophy art as expressed in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* is also provided.

Lecture 3: Friedrich Joseph Schelling.[3] *Centre for Philosophy & Phenomenological Studies*. Detailed lecture notes including life, works, and philosophy of Schelling in semi-outline form, with a short section on æsthetic philosophy by Eiichi Shimomissé.

From the reading . . .

[I]n art, not everything is performed with consciousness; that, with the conscious activity, an unconscious action must combine; and that it is of the perfect unity and mutual interpenetration of the two that the highest in art is born.



Tübingen, Würtenburg, Germany, (detail) Library of Congress

3. *Schelling*. (http://www.csudh.edu/phenom_studies/europ19/lect_3.html)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Schelling argues that a work of art is created both consciously and unconsciously—an impulse acts through the artist much as unconsious force acts in nature:

   > It was long ago perceived that, in art, not everything is performed with consciousness; that, with the conscious activity, an unconscious action must combine; and that it is of the perfect unity and mutual interpenetration of the two that the highest in art is born.

   Compapre Schelling's view of the unconscious with Jung's discussion expressed in his psychology of art:

   > Art receives tributaries from [the personal unconscious], but muddy ones; and their predominance, far from making a work of art a symbol, merely turns it into a symptom.… I am assuming that the work of art we propose to analyze, as well as being symbolic, has its source not in the *personal unconscious* of the poet, but in a sphere of unconscious mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of mankind.… The collective unconscious is not to be thought of as a self-subsistent entity; it is no more than a potentiality handed down to us from primordial time…

   How are these two views of the unconscious forces in art similar?

2. Contrast in some detail Schelling's view that the idealization of nature in art is not art, with Reynold's æsthetic theory of ideal representation. Schelling writes:

   > Now it can scarcely be doubtful what is to be thought of the so-called idealizing of nature in art, so universally demanded. This demand seems to arise from a way of thinking, according to which not truth, beauty, goodness, but the contrary of all these, is the actual. Were the actual indeed opposed to truth and beauty, it would be necessary for the artist, not to elevate or idealize it, but to get rid of and destroy it, in order to create something true and beautiful.

   Reynolds notes, for example, that beauty in art is a reconstruction from nature:

> [The artist's] eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescenses, and deformities of things, from their general figures, he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original.[4]

3. Clarify as precisely as possible what Schelling means by this assertion:

   > But the beauty of the soul in itself, joined to sensuous grace, is the highest apotheosis of nature.

   In other words, what is meant by Schelling's claim that beauty is the complete harmony of soul and body.

4. In this reading, Schelling notes a law to the effect that "the nature of art recapitulates art's 'phylogeny'":

   > This unlimited universality of painting is demonstrated by history itself, and by the examples of the greatest masters, who, without injury to the essential character of their art, have developed to perfection each particular stage by itself, so that we can find also in the history of art the same sequence that may be pointed out in its nature—not indeed in exact order of time, but yet substantially.

   On the one hand, to what extent can this regularity between the nature and history of art be discredited. On the other hand, to what extent does the regularity provide insight into the logic of art?

4. Joshua Reynolds. "Discourse III: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 14th, 1770, by the President." *Seven Discourses on Art*. London: Cassel. 1901.

Chapter 14

“Art is a Mode of Absolute Spirit” by G.W.F. Hegel

G.W.F. Hegel, adapted from Projekt Gutenberg-DE

About the author ...

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was born in Stuttgart and studied theology at Tübingen. At the turn of the century, he joined his friends Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schelling at the University of Jena to study Kant. Soon thereafter he completed *Phenomenology of Spirit*. When Napoleon invaded, Hegel left Jena for a time. With the publication of his logic and encyclopædia he, at length, obtained a chair in philosophy at the University of Berlin. Hegel’s philosophy is often characterized as an Absolute Idealism, yet his influence is traceable through many various philosophical paths in the succeeding centuries. His æsthetics is integral to his metaphysics—the æsthetical is one of the modes of apprehension of Absolute Spirit. For this reason, it is doubtful his æsthet-

ics can be extracted successfully and meaningfully from his philosophy of Spirit; even so, selections from his posthumously published lectures on æsthetics are presented here as evidence of their significant subsequent influence in the history of the philosophy of art. The story is told that at his death Hegel demurred to his admirers that no one understood his philosophy.[1]

About the work . . .

In his *Lectures on Æsthetics*[2] and his *The Philosophy of Fine Art*,[3] Hegel's Idealistic philosophy, perhaps, can be best begun by understanding his identification of reality with what is rational. On Hegel's view, the history of the universe is specifically traced through the stages of the developmental process by which Absolute Spirit comes to be aware of itself. Art, then, as the expression of the spirit of different epochs, develops much as history develops. Thus, it follows that, since the real is rational and the rational is real, the main stages of art are rationally established by idea and form. The three states of art Hegel discusses in our reading selection are (1) the Symbolic, where artistic forms are distorted in an effort to express artistic ideas as in Oriental and Egyptian art, (2) the Classic, where the ideal form is realized with superficial artistic ideas in Greek sculpture, and (3) the Romantic, where the artistic idea overwhelms the form as in religious art. Hegel believes art to be one of the three modes of apprehending the Absolute—although art is not not the highest mode. Beauty is seen as the sensuous appearance of the Idea of the Absolute. As art becomes less sensuous, it merges into religion or philosophy. Again, for Hegel, just as history comes to an end in the process of the Absolute coming to know itself in and through itself, art, as a moment also comes to an end.[4]

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1. Anthony L. Lincoln, *et.al.*. *Lord Eldon's Anecdote Book*. London: Stevens & Sons. 1960. 17.
2. G.W.F. Hegel. *Lectures on Æsthetics*. Translated by B. Bosanquet and W.M. Bryant. London: Kegan Paul. 1905.
3. G.W.F. Hegel. *The Philosophy of Fine Art*. Translated by F.P.B. Osmaston. London: G. Bell & Sons. 1920.
4. Curiously enough, the end of art is a view examined by the contemporary art critic Arthur Danto for other reasons. He argues if an artistic work can be any artifact (*e.g.*, Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, which are virtually indistinguishable from the appearance of everyday Brillo industrial boxes) then a proper definition of art is no longer possible. (Arthur C. Danto. "Art, Philosophy, and the Philosophy of Art". *Humanities*. Vol. 4,

Ideas of Interest from *The Philosophy of Fine Art* and *Lectures on Æsthetics*

1. How does Hegel define the philosophy of art, and why does he think art is rationally comprehensible? Why is art said to be “superior to the works of nature”?
2. How does Hegel characterize the ideal of the beautiful in art? What are the three main forms of art he identifies?
3. How does Hegel define “symbol”? What are examples of Symbolic Art?
4. How does Hegel explain the origin of art?
5. How does Hegel characterize Classic Art? What are examples of Classic Art? What does Hegel say is the true ideal of Classic Art?
6. According to Hegel, how does Romantic Art differ from Symbolic and Classic Art? What is the content of Romantic Art?
7. What does Hegel say about the question as to whether art is truth?

The Reading Selection from *The Philosophy of Fine Art* and *Lectures on Æsthetics*

The Philosophy of Fine Art—Introduction

The present inquiry has for its subject-matter *Æsthetic*. It is a subject

No. 1, 1-2.)

co-extensive with the entire *realm of the beautiful*; more specifically described, its province is that of Art, or rather, we should say, of *Fine Art*.

For a subject-matter such as this the term "Æsthetic" is no doubt not entirely appropriate, for "Æsthetic" denotes more accurately the science of the senses or emotion.... It has as such been provisionally accepted in ordinary speech, and we cannot do better than retain it. The *term*, however, which fully expresses our science is "Philosophy of Art," and, with still more precision, "Philosophy of Fine Art."

(*a*) In virtue of this expression we at once exclude the beauty of Nature from the scientific exposition of Fine Art.... [W]e are justified in maintaining categorically that the beauty of art stands *higher* than Nature. For the beauty of art is a beauty begotten, a new birth of mind; and to the extent that Spirit and its creations stand higher than Nature and its phenomena, to that extent the beauty of art is more exalted than the beauty of Nature....

But in predicating of mind and its artistic beauty a higher place in contrast to Nature, we do not denote a distinction which is merely relative. Mind, and mind alone, is pervious to truth, comprehending all in itself, so that all which is beautiful can only be veritably beautiful as partaking in this higher sphere and as begotten of the same....

Assuming, however, that we have, by way of prelude, limited our inquiry to the beauty of art, we are merely by this first step involved in fresh difficulties.

(*b*) What must first of all occur to us is the question whether Fine Art in itself is truly susceptible to a scientific treatment.... [Y]et for all that art essentially belongs to the *relaxation* and *recreation* of spiritual life, whereas its substantive interests rather make a call upon its strained energy. On such grounds an attempt to treat that which on its own account is not of a serious character with all the gravity of scientific exposition may very possibly appear to be unsuitable and pedantic. In such a case from such a point of view art appears a *superfluity* if contrasted with the essential needs and interests of life,even assuming that the *softening* of the soul which a preoccupation with the beauty of objects is capable of producing, does not actually prove injurious in its effeminate influence upon the serious quality of those *practical* interests....

[T]he free activity of the imagination is the source of the fair works of art, which in this world of the mind are even more free than Nature is herself. Not only has art at its service the entire wealth of natural form in all their

superabundant variety, but the creative imagination is able inexhaustibly to extend the realm of form by its *own* productions and modifications. In the presence of such an immeasurable depth of inspired creation and its free products, it may not unreasonably be supposed that the thought will lose the courage to apprehend such in their apparent *range*, to pronounce its verdict thereon, and to appropriate such beneath its universal formulæ.

/Science, on the other hand, everyone must admit, is formally bound to occupy itself with thinking which abstracts from the mass of particulars: and for this very reason, from one point of view, the imagination and its contingency and caprice, in other words the organ of artistic activity and enjoyment, is excluded from it.. . .

From each and all these points of view consequently, in its origin, that is to say, in its effect and in this range, fine art, so far from proving itself fitted for scientific effort, rather appears fundamentally to resist the regulative principle of thought, and to be ill-adapted for exact scientific discussion.. . .

Fine art is not art in the true sense of the term until it is also thus free, and its *highest* function is only then satisfied when it has established itself in a sphere which it shares with religion and philosophy, becoming thereby merely one mode and form through which the *Divine*, the profoundest interests of mankind, and spiritual truths of widest range, are brought home to consciousness and expressed. It is in works of art that nations have deposited the richest intuitions and ideas they possess; and not infrequently fine art supplies a key of interpretation to the wisdom and religion of peoples; in the case of many it is the only one. This is an attribute which art shares in common with religion and philosophy, the peculiar distinction in the case of art being that its presentation of the most exalted subject-matter is in sensuous form, thereby bringing them nearer to Nature and her mode of envisagement, that is closer to our sensitive and emotional life.

From the reading . . .

The idea of each epoch always finds its appropriate and adequate form, and these are what we designate as the special forms of art.

The objection that works of fine art defy the examination of scientific though, because they originate in the unregulated world of imagination and temperament, and asset their effect exclusively on the emotions and

the fancy with a complexity and variety which defies exact analysis, raises a difficulty which still carries genuine weight behind it. As a matter of fact the beauty of art does appear in a form which is expressly to be contrasted with abstract thought, a form which it is compelled to disturb in order to exercise its own activity in its own way. Such a result is simply a corollary of the thesis that reality anywhere and everywhere, whether the life of Nature or mind, is defaced and slain by its comprehension; that so far from being brought more close to us by the comprehension of thinking, it is only by this means that it is in the complete sense removed apart from us, so that in his attempt to grasp through thought as a *means* the mature of life, man rather renders nugatory this very aim. An exhaustive discussion of the subject is here impossible; we propose merely to indicate the point of view from which the removal of this difficulty or impossibility and incompatibility might be effected.. . .

For this reason the work of art, in which thought divests itself of itself, belongs to the realm of comprehending thought; and mind, by subjecting it to scientific contemplation, thereby simply satisfies its most essential nature. For inasmuch as thought is its essence and notion, it can only ultimately fund such a satisfaction after passing all the products of its activity through the alembic of rational thought, and in this way making them for the first time in very truth part of its own substance. But though art, as we shall eventually see with yet more distinctness, is far indeed from being the highest form of mind, it is only in the philosophy of art that it comes into all that it may justify claim.

We have made it clear that neither is fine art unworthy of philosophical study, nor is such a philosophical study incapable of accepting as an object of its cognition the essence of fine art.

Lectures on Æsthetics—Introduction: Development of the Ideal in the Special Forms Of Art

In the first part of this work we have had under consideration the realisation of the idea of the beautiful as constituting the ideal in art, however numerous may be the different phases under which the conception of the ideal is presented to our view, all these determinations are only related to the work of art considered in a general way.

Now, the idea of the beautiful as the *absolute idea* contains a totality of distinct elements, or of *essential moments*, which as such, must manifest themselves outwardly and become realised. Thus are produced what we may call, in general, the *Special Forms of Art*.

These must be considered as the development of those ideas which the conception of the ideal contains within it, and which art brings to light. Thus its development is not accomplished by virtue of an external activity, but by the specific force inherent in the idea itself so that the *Idea*, which develops itself in a totality of particular forms, is what the world of art presents us.

In the second place, if the forms of art find their principle in the idea which they manifest, this, on the contrary, is truly the idea only when it is realised in its appropriate forms. Thus, to each particular stage which art traverses in its development, there is immediately joined a real form. It is, then, indifferent whether we consider the progress as shown in the development of the idea, or in that of the forms which realise it, since these two terms are closely united, the one to the other, and since the perfecting of the idea as *matter* appears no less clearly than does the perfecting of *form*.

From the reading . . .

There neither is nor can there ever be anything more beautiful [than Classic art].

Hence, imperfection of the artistic form betrays itself also as imperfection of idea. If, then, at the origin of art, we encounter forms which, compared with the true ideal, are inadequate to it, this is not to be understood in the sense in which we are accustomed to say of works of art that they are defective, because they express nothing, or are incapable of attaining to the idea which they ought to express. The idea of each epoch always finds its appropriate and adequate form, and these are what we designate as the special forms of art. The imperfection or the perfection can consist only in the degree of relative truth which belongs to the idea itself; for the matter must first be true, and developed in itself before it can find a perfectly appropriate form.

We have, in this respect, *three principal forms* to consider:

1. The first is the *Symbolic Form*. Here the idea seeks its true expression in

art without finding it; because, being still abstract and indefinite, it cannot create an external manifestation which conforms to its real essence. It finds itself in the presence of the phenomena of nature and of the events of human life, as if confronted by a foreign world. Thus it exhausts itself in useless efforts to produce a complete expression of conceptions vague and ill defined; it perverts and falsifies the forms of the real world which it seizes in arbitrary relations. Instead of combining and identifying, of blending totally the form and the idea, it arrives only at a superficial and abstract agreement between them. These two terms, thus brought into connection, manifest their disproportion and heterogeneity.

2. But the idea, in virtue of its very nature, cannot remain thus in abstraction and indetermination. As the principle of free activity, it seizes itself in its reality as spirit. The spirit, then, as free subject, is determined by and for itself, and in thus determining itself it finds in its own essence its appropriate outward form. This unity, this perfect harmony between the idea and its external manifestation, constitutes the second form of art—the *Classic Form*.

Here art has attained its perfection, in so far as there is reached a perfect harmony between the idea as spiritual individuality, and the form as sensuous and corporeal reality. All hostility between the two elements has disappeared, in order to give place to a perfect harmony.

3. Nevertheless, spirit cannot rest with this form, which is not its complete realisation. To reach this perfect realisation, spirit must pass beyond the classic form, must arrive at a spirituality, which, returning upon itself, descends into the depths of its own inmost nature in the classic form, indeed, not withstanding its generality, spirit reveals itself with a Special determinate character; it does not escape from the finite. Its external form, as a form altogether visible, is limited. The matter, the idea itself, because there is perfect fusion, must present the same character. Only the finite spirit is able to unite itself with external manifestation so as to form an indissoluble unity.

When the idea of beauty seizes itself as absolute or infinite Spirit, it also at the same time discovers itself to be no longer completely realised in the forms of the external world; it is only in the internal world of consciousness that it finds, as spirit, its true unity. It breaks up then this unity which forms the basis of Classical Art; it abandons the external world in order to take refuge within itself. This is what furnishes the type of the *Romantic Form*. Sensuous representation, with its images borrowed from the external world, no longer sufficing to express free spirituality,

the form becomes foreign and indifferent to the idea. So that Romantic Art thus reproduces the separation of matter and form, but from the side opposite to that from which this separation takes place in Symbolic Art.

As a summary of the foregoing, we may say that Symbolic Art *seeks* this perfect unity of the idea with the external form; Classic Art *finds* it, for the senses and the imagination, in the representation of spiritual individuality; Romantic Art *transcends* it in its infinite spirituality, which rises above the visible world.

Part I Of the Symbolic Form of Art

I. Of the Symbol in General

The symbol, in the sense which we here give to this term, constitutes, according to its very idea, as well as from the epoch of its appearance in history, the *beginning of art*. Thus it ought rather to be considered as the precursor of art. It belongs especially to the *Orient*, and will conduct us, by a multitude of transitions, transformations, and mediations, to the true realisation of the ideal under the classic form. We must then distinguish the symbol, properly speaking, as furnishing the type of all the conceptions or representations of art at this epoch, from that species of symbol which, on its own account, nothing more than a mere unsubstantial, outward form. Where the symbol presents itself under its appropriate and independent form, it exhibits in general the character of sublimnity. The idea, being vague and indeterminate, incapable of a free and measured development, cannot find in the real world any fixed form which perfectly corresponds to it; in default of which correspondence and proportion, it transcends infinitely its external manifestation. Such is the sublime style, which is rather the immeasurable than the true sublime?

We will first explain what should here be understood by the term symbol.

1. It is a sensuous object, which must not be taken in itself such as it presents itself immediately to us, but in more extended and more general sense. There are, then, in the symbol two terms to be distinguished: first, the *meaning*, and, secondly, the *expression*. The first is a conception of the mind; the second, a sensuous phenomenon, an image which address itself to the senses.

Thus the symbol is a *sign*, but it is distinguished from the signs of language in this: that between the image and the idea which it represents, there is a relation which is natural, not arbitrary or conventional. It is thus that the lion is the symbol of courage, the circle of eternity, the triangle of the trinity.

Still, the symbol does not represent the idea perfectly, but only from a single side. The lion is not merely courageous, the fox cunning. Whence it follows that the symbol, having many meanings, is equivocal. This ambiguity ceases only when the two terms are first conceived separately and then in combination; the symbol then gives place to comparison.

Thus conceived, the symbol, with its enigmatical and mysterious character, is peculiarly applicable to a whole epoch of history—to *Oriental art* and its extraordinary creations. It characterises that order of monuments and emblems by which the peoples of the Orient have sought to express their ideas, but have been able to do so only in an equivocal and obscure fashion. Instead of beauty and regularity, these works of art a *bizarre*, grandiose, fantastic aspect.

When we find ourselves in this world of symbolic representations and images of ancient Persia, India, and Egypt, all seems strange to us. We feel that we are groping about in the midst of problems. These images do not entertain us of themselves. The spectacle neither pleases nor satisfies us in itself; we must pass beyond the sensuous form in order to penetrate its the more extended and more profound meaning. In other productions we see at the first glance that they have nothing serious; that, like the stories of children, they are a simple play of the imagination, which is pleased with accidental and particular associations. But these peoples, although in their infancy, demand a meaning and a truer and more substantial basis of ideas. This, indeed, is what we find among the Indians, the Egyptians, *etc*., although in these enigmatical figures the meaning may be often very difficult to divine. What part must it play amid this poverty and grossness of conceptions? How far, on the contrary, in the incapability of expressing by purer more beautiful forms the depth of religious ideas, is it proper to call in the fantastic and the grotesque to the aid of a representation of which the aspiration is not to remain beneath its object? This is a difficult point to decide.. . .

All mythology is then conceived as essentially symbolical. This would be to say that myths, as creations of the human spirit, however *bizarre* and grotesque they may appear, contain in themselves a meaning for the reason; general thoughts upon the divine nature—in a word, *philosophemes*.

From this point of view myths and traditions have their origin in the spirit of man, who can easily make a play of the representations of his gods, but seeks and finds in them also a higher interest, whenever he finds himself unable to set forth his ideas in a more suitable manner. Now, this is the true opinion. Thus, when reason finds again these forms in history, it realises the necessity of probing their meaning.

Without doubt, priests and poets have never known under an abstract and general form the thoughts which constitute the basis of mythological representations, and it is not by design that they have been enveloped in a symbolical veil. But it does not follow that their representations cannot be symbols and ought not to be considered as such. Those peoples, at the time when they composed their myths, lived in a state altogether poetic; they expressed their most secret and most profound sentiments, not by abstract formulae, but by the imagination.

Thus the mythological fables contain a wholly rational basis, and more or less profound religious ideas.

Nor is it less correct to say that for every true work of art there serves as basis a universal thought which, afterward presented under an abstract form, must give the meaning of the work. The critical spirit, or the understanding, hastens on to the symbol or allegory. Here it separates image from signification, and thus destroys the art-form; to which, indeed, in respect of the symbolic explanation which only brings out the universal as such, no importance attaches.

2. . . . [W]e have to inquire how far the symbol, properly speaking, extends as a *special form of art*, while still preserving its appropriate character, and thereby we shall distinguish it in particular from the two other forms, Classic and Romantic.

Now, the *symbol*, in the special sense which we attach to this term, ceases where *free subjectivity* (personality), taking the place of vague and indeterminate conceptions, constitutes the basis of representation in art. Such is the character which the *Greek gods* present us. Greek art represents them as free individuals, independent in themselves; genuine moral persons. Hence we cannot consider them from the symbolic point of view.. . .

The difficult point in our investigation is to distinguish whether what are represented as personages in mythology or art possess a real *individuality* or *personality*, or whether they contain but the empty semblance of it, and are only mere *personifications*. This is what constitutes the real problem of the limitation of Symbolic Art.

What interests us here is that we are present at the very origin of art. At the same time we shall observe the progressive advancement of the symbol, the stages by which it proceeds toward genuine art. Whatever may he the narrow line which unites religion and art, we have here to consider the symbol solely from the artistic point of view. We abandon to the history of mythology itself the religious side.

***Division*.—Many degrees are to be noted in the development of this form of art in the Orient.**

But first we must mark its *origin*. This, which is, blended with that of art in general, can be explained in the following manner:

The sentiment of art like the religious sentiment, like scientific curiosity, is born of *wonder*; the man who wonders at nothing lives in a state of imbecility and stupidity. This state ceases when his spirit, disengaging itself from matter and from¿ physical necessities, is struck by the phenomena of nature, and seeks their meaning; when he is impressed by in them grand and mysterious, a concealed power which reveals itself.

Then he experiences also the need of representing this internal sentiment of a general and universal power. Particular objects—the elements, the sea, the waves, the mountains—lose their immediate meaning and become for the spirit images of this invisible power.

It is then that art appears. It is born of the necessity of representing this idea by sensuous images, which address themselves at once to the senses and to the mind.

In religions, the idea of an absolute power is at first manifested by the worship of physical objects. The divinity is identified with nature itself; but this gross worship cannot last. Instead of seeing the absolute in real objects, man conceives it as a distinct and universal being; he seizes, though very imperfectly, the relation which unites the invisible principle to the objects of nature; he fashions an image, a, symbol destined to represent it. Art is then the interpreter of religious ideas.

Such, in its origin, is art, and with it the Symbolic Form is born.

We will attempt, by a precise division, to trace exactly the circle in which the symbol moves.

That which characterises, in general, Symbolic Art is that it vainly endeavours to find pure conception and a mode of representation which is suitable to them. It is a conflict between *matter* and *form*; both imperfect and heterogeneous. Whence the incessant strife between the two elements of art, which seek, uselessly, to place themselves in harmony. The degrees of its development present successive phases or modes of this conflict.

1. At the beginning of art this conflict does not yet exist. The point of departure, at least, is a still undivided unity, in the center of which ferments the discord between the two principles. Here, then, the creations of art, little distinguished from objects of nature, are still, scarcely symbols.

2. The termination of this epoch is the *disappearance of the symbol*, which takes place by the reflective separation of the two terms, the idea being clearly conceived; the image, on its side, being perceived as distinct from the idea. From their reconciliation (*rapprochement*) is born the reflective symbol or *comparison*, the allegory, *etc*.

The two extreme points being thus fixed, we may now see, in what follows, the intermediary points or degrees. The general division is this:

I. The true symbol is the *unconscious*, *irreflective* symbol, the forms of which appear to us in Oriental civilisation.

II. Then follows, as a mixed form, or form of transition, the *reflective symbol*, of which the basis is *comparison*, and which marks the close of this epoch.

We have, then, to follow each of these two forms in the successive stages of its development; to mark its steps in the career which it has passed through in the Orient before arriving at the Greek ideal.

Part II Of the Ideal of Classic Art

I. The Classic Ideal

1. The ideal as free creation of the imagination of the artist.—2. The new gods of Classic Art.—3. External character of the representation.

1. The ideal as free creation of the imagination of the artist

1. As the ideal of Classic Art comes to be realised only by the transformation of preceding elements, the first point to develop consists in making manifest that it is truly sprung from the creative activity of the spirit; that it has found its origin in the inmost and most personal thought of the poet and of the artist.

This seems contradicted by the fact that Greek mythology rests upon ancient traditions, and is related to the religious doctrines of the peoples of the Orient. If we admit all these foreign elements—Asiatic, Pelasgic, Dodonian, Indian, Egyptian, Orphic—how can we say that Hesiod and Homer gave to the Greek gods their names and their form? But these two things—tradition and poetic invention—may he very easily be reconciled. (Tradition furnishes the materials, but it does not bring with it the precise idea and the form which each god is to represent. This idea these great poets drew from their genius, and they also discovered the actual forms appropriate to it. Thus were they the creators of the mythology which we admire in Greek art. The Greek gods are for this reason neither poetic invention nor an artificial creation. They have their root in the spirit and the beliefs of the Greek people—in the very foundation of the national religion; these are the absolute forces and powers, whatever is most elevated in the Greek imagination, inspired in the poet by the muse herself.

With this faculty of free creation, the artist, we have already seen, takes a position altogether different from that which he had in the Orient. The Indian poets and sages have, also, for their point of departure the primitive *data*, consisting of the elements of nature—the sky, animals, the rivers or the abstract conception of Brahma; but their inspiration is the annihilation of personality. Their spirit loses itself in wishing to represent ideas so foreign to their inner nature, while the imagination, in the absence of rule and of measure, incapable of directing itself, allows itself to wander in the midst of conceptions which have neither the character of freedom nor that of beauty. It is like an architect obliged to accommodate himself to an unequal soil, upon which rise old *debris*, walls half destroyed, hillocks and rocks; forced, besides to subordinate his plans to particular ends. He can erect only irregular structures which must be wholly irrational and fantastic. Such is not the work of a free imagination, creating according to its own inspirations.

In classic Art the artists and poets are also prophets and teachers; but their inspiration is personal.

a. At first that which constitutes the essence of their gods is neither a nature foreign to spirit, nor the conception of a single god who admits of no sensuous representation and remains invisible. They borrow their ideas from the human heart, from human life. Thus man recognises himself in these creations, for what he produces outwardly is the most beautiful manifestation of himself.

b. They are on this account only the more truly *poets*. They fashion at their will the matter and the idea so as to draw from them figures free and original. All these heterogeneous or foreign elements they cast into the crucible of their imagination; but they do not form therein a *bizarre* mixture which suggests the cauldron of the magician. Everything that is confused, material, impure, gross, disordered, is consumed in the flame of the their genius. Whence springs a pure and beautiful creation wherein the materials of which it has. been formed are scarcely perceptible. In this respect their task consists in despoiling tradition of everything gross, symbolic, ugly, and deformed, and afterward bringing to light the precise idea which they wish to individualise and to represent under an appropriate form. This form is the human form, and it is not employed here as a simple personification of the acts and accidents of life; it appears as the sole reality which corresponds to the idea. True, the artist also finds his image in the real world; but he must remove whatever of accidental or inappropriate they present before they can express the spiritual element of human nature, which, seized in its essence should represent the everlasting might of the gods. Such is the free, though not arbitrary, manner in which the artist proceeds in the production of his works.

c. As the gods take an active part in human affairs, the task of the poet consists in acknowledging therein their presence and their activity, as well as in signalizing whatever is remarkable in natural events, in human deeds, and in fact in all in which the divine powers appear to be involved. Thus the poet fulfils in part the role of priest, as well as that of prophet. We moderns, with our prosaic reason, explain physical phenomena by universal laws and forces; human actions, by personal wills. The Greek poets, on the contrary, saw, above all these phenomena, their divine author. In representing human acts as divine acts, they showed the diverse aspects under which the gods reveal their power. Thus a great number of these divine manifestations are only human acts, when such or such divinity intervenes. If we open the poems of Homer, we find there scarcely any important event which may not be explained by the will or the direct influence of the gods. Such interpretations belong to the mode of seeing, to the faith born the imagination of the poet.. . .

2. The new gods of Classic Art

Still, of what nature are the creations which Classic Art produces in following such a method? What are the characteristics of the new gods of Greek art?

a. The most general idea that we should form of them is that of a concentrated individuality, which, freed from the multiplicity of accidents, actions, and particular circumstances of human life, is collected upon itself at the focus of its simple unity. Indeed, what we must first remark is their spiritual and, at the same time, immutable and substantial individuality. Far removed from the world of change and illusion, where want and misery reign, far from the agitation and trouble which attach to the pursuit of human interests, retired within themselves they rest upon their own universality as upon an everlasting foundation where they find their repose and felicity. By this alone the gods appear as imperishable powers, of which the changeless majesty rises above particular existence. Disengaged from all contact with whatever is foreign or external, they manifest themselves uniquely in their immutable and absolute independence.

Yet, above all, these are not simple abstraction—mere spiritual generalities—they are genuine *individuals*. With this claim each appears as an ideal which possesses in itself reality, life; it has, like spirit, a clearly defined nature, a *character*. Without character there can be no true individuality. In this respect as we have seen above, the spiritual gods contain, as integrant part of themselves, a definite physical power, with which is established an equally definite moral principle, which assigns to each divinity a limited circle in which his outward activity must be displayed. The attributes, the specific qualities which result therefrom, constitute the distinctive character of each divinity.

Still, in the ideal proper, this definite character must not be limited to the point of exclusive being; it must maintain itself in a just medium, and must return to universality, which is the essence Of the divine nature. Thus each god, in so far as he is at once a particular individuality and a general existence, is also, at the same time, both part and whole. He floats in a just medium between pure generality and simple particularity. This is what gives to the true ideal of classic Art its security and infinite calm, together with a freedom relieved from every obstacle.

b. But, as constituting beauty in Classic Art, the special character of the gods is not purely spiritual; it is disclosed so much the more under an external and corporeal form which addresses itself to the eyes as well as

to the spirit. This, we have seen, no longer admits the symbolic element, and should not even pretend to affect the Sublime. Classic beauty causes spiritual individuality to enter into the bosom of sensuous reality. It is born of a harmonious fusion of the outward form with the inward principle which animates. Whence, for this very reason, the physical form, as well as the spiritual principle, must appear enfranchised from all the accidents which belong to outer existence, from all dependence upon nature, from the miseries inseparable from the finite and transitory world. It must be so purified and ennobled that, between the qualities appropriate to the particular character of the god and the general forms of the human body, there shall be manifest a free accord, a perfect harmony. Every mark of weakness and of dependence has disappeared; all arbitrary particularity which could mar it is cancelled or effaced. In its unblemished purity it corresponds to the spiritual principle of which it should be the incarnation.

c. Notwithstanding their particular character the gods preserve also their universal and absolute character. Independence must be revealed, in their representation, under the appearance of calmness and of a changeless serenity. Thus we see, in the figures of the gods that nobility and that elevation which announces in them that, though clothed in a natural and sensuous form, they have nothing in common with the necessities of finite existence. Absolute existence, if it were pure, freed all particularity, would conduct to the sublime but, in the Classic ideal, spirit realises and manifests itself under a sensuous form which is its perfect image, and whatever of sublimnity it has shown to be grounded in its beauty, and as having passed wholly into itself. This is what renders necessary, for the representation of the gods, the classic expression of grandeur and beautiful sublimnity.

In their beauty they appear, then, elevated above their own corporeal existence; but there is manifest a disagreement between the happy grandeur which resides in their spirituality and their beauty, which is external and corporeal. Spirit appears to be entirely absorbed in the sensuous and yet at the same time, aside form this, to be merged (*plongé*) in itself alone; it is, as it were, the moving presence of a deathless god in the midst of mortal men.

Thus, although this contradiction does not appear as a manifest opposition, the harmonious totality conceals in its individual unity a principle of *destruction* which is found there already expressed. This is that sigh of sadness in the midst of grandeur which men full of sagacity have felt

in the presence of the images of the ancient gods, notwithstanding their perfect beauty and the charm shed around them. In their calmness and their serenity they cannot permit themselves to indulge in pleasure, in enjoyment nor in what we especially term satisfaction....

It is this character of universality in the Greek gods which people have intended to indicate by characterising them as cold. Nevertheless, these figures are cold only in relation to the vivacity of modern sentiment; in themselves they have warmth and life. The divine peace which is reflected in the corporeal form comes from the fact that they are separated from the finite; it is born of their indifference to all that is mortal and

transitory. It is an adieu without sadness and without effort, but an adieu to the earth and to this perishable world. In these divine existences the greater the degree in which seriousness and freedom are outwardly manifested, the more distinctly are we made to feel the contrast between their grandeur and their corporeal form. These happy divinities deprecate at once both their felicity and their physical existence. We read their lineaments the destiny which weighs upon their heads, and which, in the measure that its power increases (causing this contradiction between moral grandeur and sensuous reality to become more and more pronounced), draws Classic Art onto its ruin.

3. External character of the representation

If we ask what is the outer mode of manifestation suitable to Classic Art, it needs only to repeat what has already been said: In the Classic ideal, properly speaking, the spiritual individuality of the gods is represented, not in situations where they enter into relation one with another, and which might occasion strife and conflicts, but in their eternal repose, in their independence, freed as they are from all aspects of pain and suffering...in a word, in their divine calmness and peace.... Among the arts it is, therefore, *Sculpture* which more than the others represents the classic idea with that absolute independence wherein the divine nature preserves its universality united with the particular character. It is, above all, Ancient Sculpture, of a severer taste, which is strongly attached to this ideal side. Later it was allowed to be applied to the representation of situations and characters of a dramatic vitality. Poetry, which causes the gods to act, draws them into strife and conflicts. Otherwise, the calm of the plastic, when it remains in its true domain, is alone capable of expressing the contrast between the greatness of spirit and its finite exis-

tence with that seriousness of sadness to which we have already referred.

Part III Of the Romantic Form of Art

Introduction—of the Romantic in General

1. Principle of inner subjectivity—2. Of the ideas and forms which constitute the basis of Romantic Art.—3. Of the special mode of representation.

As in the preceding parts of our investigation, so now in Romantic Art, the form is determined by the inner idea of the content or substance which this art is called upon to represent. We must, therefore, in the next place, attempt to make clear the characteristic principle of the new content which, in this new epoch of the development of human thought is revealed to consciousness as the absolute essence of truth, and which appears in its appropriate form of art.

From the reading . . .

The true content of Romantic thought, then, is absolute internality. . .

At the very origin of art there existed the tendency of the imagination to struggle upward out of nature into spirituality. But, as yet, the struggle consisted in nothing more than a yearning of the spirit, and, insofar as this failed to furnish a precise content for art, art could really be of service only in providing external forms for mere natural significations, or impersonal abstractions of the substantial inner principle which constitutes the central point of the world.

In Classic Art, however, we find quite the contrary. Here spirituality, though it is now for the first time able to struggle into conscious existence through the cancellation or setting aside of mere natural significations, it is nevertheless the basis and principle of the content; it is a natural phenomenon inseparable from the corporeal and sensuous. It is an external form. This form however, does not, as in the first epoch, re-

main indefinite, unpervaded by spirit. On the contrary, the perfection of art is here reached in the very fact that the spiritual completely pervades its outer manifestation, that it idealizes the natural in this beautiful union with it, and rises to the measure of the reality of spirit in its substantial individuality. It is thus that Classic Art constituted the absolutely perfect representation of the ideal, the final completion of the realm of Beauty. There neither is nor can there ever be anything more beautiful.

But there exists something still more elevated than the simply beautiful manifestation of spirit in its immediate sensuous form, even though this form be fashioned by spirit as adequate to itself. For this very union of matter and form, which is thus accomplished in the element of the external, and which thus lifts sensuous reality to an adequate existence, nonetheless contradicts the true conception of spirit which is thus forced out of its reconciliation with the corporeal, back upon itself, and compelled to find its own true reconciliation within itself. The simple, pure totality of the ideal (as found in the Classic) dissolves and falls asunder into the double totality of self-existent subjective substance on the one side, and external manifestation on the other, in order that, through this separation, spirit may arrive at a deeper reconciliation in its own element of the inner or purely spiritual. The very essence of spirit is conformity with itself (self-identity), the oneness of its idea with the realisation of the same. It is, then, only in its own world, the spiritual or inner world of the soul, that spirit can find a reality (*Dasein*) which corresponds to spirit. It is, thus in consciousness that spirit comes to possess its other, its *existence*, as spirit, with and in itself, and so for the first time to enjoy its infinitude and its freedom.

I. Spirit thus rises to itself or attains to self-consciousness, and by this means finds within itself its own objectivity, which it was previously compelled to seek in the outer and sensuous forms of material existence. Henceforth it perceives and knows itself in this its unity with itself; and it is precisely this clear self-consciousness of spirit that constitutes the fundamental principle of Romantic Art. But the necessary consequence is that in this last stage of the development of art the beauty of the Classic ideal, which is beauty under its most perfect form and in its purest essence, can no longer be deemed a finality; for spirit now knows that its true nature is not to brought into a corporeal form. It comprehends that it belongs to its essence to abandon this external reality in order to return upon itself, and expressly posits or assumes outer reality to be an existence incapable of fully representing spirit. But if this new content proposes to render itself beautiful, still it is evident that beauty, in the sense

in which we have thus far considered it, remains for this content something inferior and subordinate, and develops into the spiritual beauty of the essentially internal—into the beauty of that spiritual subjectivity or personality which is in itself (*i.e.*, potentially) infinite.

But in order that spirit may thus realise its infinite nature it is so much the more necessary that it should rise above mere natural and finite personality in order to reach the height of the Absolute. In other terms, the human soul must bring itself into actual existence as a person (*Subjekt*) possessing self consciousness and rational will; and this it accomplishes through becoming itself pervaded with the absolutely substantial. On the other hand, the substantial, the true, must not be understood as located outside of humanity, nor must the anthropomorphism of Greek thought be swept away. Rather the human as actual subjectivity or personality must become the principle, and thus, as we have already seen, anthropomorphism for the first time attains to its ultimate fullness and perfection.

II. [Objects Conditioned by Romantic Art]

From the particular elements which are involved in this fundamental principle we have now in general to develop the circle of objects, as well as the form, whose changed aspect is conditioned by the new content of Romantic Art.

The true content of Romantic thought, then, is absolute internality, the adequate and appropriate form of which is spiritual subjectivity, or conscious personality, as comprehension of its own independence and freedom. Now that which is in itself infinite and wholly universal is absolute negativity of all that is finite and particular. It is the simple unity with self which has destroyed all mutually exclusive objects, all processes of nature, with their circle of genesis, decay, and renewal which, in short, has put an end to all limitation of spiritual existence, and dissolved all particular divinities into itself. In this pantheon all the gods are dethroned. The flame of subjectivity has consumed them. In place of plastic polytheism, art now knows but one God, one Spirit, one absolute independence, which, as absolute knowing and determining, abides in free unity with itself, and no longer falls asunder into those special characters and functions whose sole bond of unity was the constraint of a mysterious necessity. Absolute subjectivity, or personality as such, however, would escape from art and be accessible only to abstract thought, if, in order to be an actual subjectivity commensurate with its idea, it did not pass into

external existence, and again collect itself out of this reality into itself. Now, this element of actuality belongs to the Absolute, for the product of the activity of the Absolute as infinite negativity is the Absolute itself, as simple self-unity of knowing, and, therefore, as immediacy. Yet, as regards this immediate existence, which is grounded in the Absolute itself, it does not manifest itself as the one jealous God who dissolves the natural, together with finite human existence, without bringing itself into manifestation as actual divine personality, but the true Absolute reveals itself (*schliesst sich auf*), and thus presents a phase which art is able to comprehend and represent.

But the external existence (*Dasein*) of God is not the natural and sensuous, as such, but the sensuous elevated to the supersensuous, to spiritual subjectivity, to personality, which, instead of losing the certainty of itself in its outer manifestation, truly for the first time attains to the present actual certainty of itself through its own reality. God in His truth is, therefore, no mere ideal created by the imagination. Rather, He places Himself in the midst of the finitude and outer accidentality of immediate existence, and yet knows Himself in all this as the divine principle (*Subjekt*) which in itself remains infinite and creates for itself this infinitude. Since, therefore, actual subject or person is the manifestation of God, art now acquires the higher right of employing the human form, together with the modes and conditions of externality generally, for the expression of the Absolute. Nevertheless, the new problem for art can consist only in this: that in this form the inner shall not be submerged in outer corporeal existence, but shall, on the contrary, return into itself in order to bring into view the spiritual consciousness of God in the individual (*Subjekt*). The various moments or elements brought to light by the totality of this view of the world as totality of the truth itself therefore, now find their manifestation in man. And this, in the sense that neither nature as such—as the sun, the sky, the stars, *etc.*—gives the content and the form, nor does the circle of the divinities of the Greek world of beauty, nor the heroes, nor external deeds in the province of the morality of the family and of political life, attain to infinite value. Rather it is the actual, individual subject or person who acquires this value, since it is in him alone that the eternal moments or elements of absolute truth, which exist actually only as spirit, are multifariously individualised and at the same time reduced to a consistent and abiding unity.

If now we compare these characteristics of Romantic Art with the task of classic Art in its perfect fulfilment in Greek Sculpture, we see that the plastic forms of the gods do not express the movement and activity

of spirit which has gone out of its corporeality into itself, and has become pervaded by internal independent-being (*Fürsichsein*). The changeable and accidental phases of empirical individuality are indeed in those lofty images of the gods, but what is lacking in them is the actuality of self-existent personality, the essential characteristic of which is self-knowledge and independent will. Externally this defect betrays itself in the fact that in the representations of sculpture the expression of the soul simply as soul—namely, the light of the eye—is wanting. The sublimest works of sculptured art are sightless. Their subtle inner being does not beam forth from them, as a self-knowing in that spiritual concentration of which the eye gives intelligence. The ray of the spirit comes from beyond and meets nothing which gives it a response; it belongs alone to the spectator, who cannot contemplate the forms, so to speak, soul in soul, eye in eye. The god of Romantic Art, on the contrary, makes his appearance as a god who sees, who knows himself, who seizes himself in his own inner personality, and who opens the recesses of his nature to the contemplation of the conscious spirit of man. For infinite negativity, the self return of the spiritual into itself, cancels this outflow into the corporeal. Subjectivity is spiritual light which shines into itself, into its hitherto dark realm; and while natural light can shine upon an object, this spiritual light is itself its own ground and object on which it shines and which it recognises as being one and the same with itself. But since now the absolute inner or spiritual manifests itself, in its actual outer existence, under the human form, and since the human stands in relation to the entire world, there is thus inseparably joined to this manifestation of the Absolute a vast multiplicity of objects belonging not only to the spiritual and subjective world, but to the corporeal and objective, and to which the spirit bears relation as to its own.

The thus constituted actuality of absolute subjectivity can have the following forms of content and of manifestation:

1. Our first point of departure we must take from the Absolute itself, which, as actual spirit, gives itself an outer existence (*Dasein*), knows itself and is self-active. Here the human form is so represented that it is recognised at once as having the divine within itself. Man appears, not as man in mere human character, in the constraint of passion, in finite aims and achievements, nor as in the mere consciousness of God, but is the self-knowing one and universal God Himself, in whose life and suffering, birth, death, and resurrection, is now made manifest, also, for the finite consciousness, what spirit, what the eternal and infinite, is in truth. This content Romantic Art sets forth in the history of Christ, of His mother, of

His disciples, and even in the history of all those in whom the Holy Spirit is actual, in whom the entire divine nature is present. For in so far as it is God, who, though in Himself universal, still appears in human form, this reality is, nevertheless, not limited to particular immediate existence in the form of Christ, but unfolds itself in all humanity in which the Divine Spirit becomes ever present, and in this actuality remains one with itself. The spreading abroad [in humanity] of this self-contemplation, of this independent and self-sufficing existence (*In-sich-und-bei-sich-sein*) of the spirit, is the peace, the reconciliation of the spirit with itself in its objectivity. It constitutes a divine world—a kingdom of God-in which the Divine, from the center outward, possesses the reconciliation of its reality with its idea, completes itself in this reconciliation, and thus attains to independent existence.

2. But however fully this identification may seem to be grounded in the essence of the Absolute itself, still, as spiritual freedom and infinitude, it is by no means a reconciliation which is immediate and ready at hand, from the center outward, in mundane, natural, and spiritual actuality. On the contrary, it attains to completeness only as the elevation of the spirit out of the finitude of its immediate or unrealised existence to its truth, its realised existence. As a consequence of this, the spirit, in order to secure its totality and freedom, separates itself from itself—that is, establishes the distinction between itself, as, on the one hand, a being belonging in part to the realm of nature, in part to that of spirit, but limited in both; and as, on the other hand, a being which is in itself (*i.e.*, potentially) infinite. But with this separation, again, is closely joined the necessity of escaping out of the estrangement from self—in which the finite and natural, the immediacy of existence, the natural heart, is characterised as the negative, the evil, the base and of entering into the kingdom of truth and contentment by the sole means of subjugating this nugatoriness. Thus, spiritual reconciliation is to be conceived and represented only as an activity, a movement of the spirit—as a process in the course of which there arises a struggle, a conflict; and the pain, the death, the agony of nothingness, the torment of the spirit and of materiality (*Leiblichkeit*) make their appearance as essential moments or elements. For as, in the next place, God separates or distinguishes (*ausscheidet*) finite actuality from Himself, so also finite man, who begins with himself as outside the divine kingdom, assumes the task of elevating himself to God, of freeing himself from the finite, of doing away with nugatoriness, and of becoming, through this sacrifice (*Ertoedten*) of his immediate actuality, that which God, in His appearance as man, has made objective as true actuality. The infinite pain

attendant upon this Sacrifice of the individual¿s own subjectivity or personality, the suffering and death which were more or less excluded from the representations of Classic Art—or, rather, which appeared there only as natural suffering—attain to the rank of real necessity for the first time in Romantic Art.. . .

3. The third side of this absolute world of the spirit has its representative in man, in so far as he neither immediately, in himself, brings the absolute and divine, as divine, into manifestation, nor represents the process of elevation to God, and reconciliation with God, but remains within the limits of his own human circle.

III. [The Relation of the Content to the Mode of Its Representation]

We have now, finally, to consider somewhat more at length the significance of the relation of this entire content to the mode of its representation.

1. The material of Romantic Art, at least with reference to the divine, is extremely limited.. . . The entire content, therefore, is thus concentrated upon the internality of the spirit. . . upon the perception, the imagination and the soul-which strives after unity with the truth—and seeks and struggles to produce and to retain the divine in the individual (*Subjekt*). Thus, though the soul is still destined to pass through the world, it no longer pursues merely worldly aims and undertakings. Rather it has for its essential purpose and endeavour the inner struggle of man with himself, and his reconciliation with God, and brings into representation only personality and its conservation, together with appliances for the accomplishment of this end.. . . Thus the life (*Geschichte*) of the soul comes to be infinitely rich, and can adapt itself in the most manifold ways to ever changing circumstances and situations.. . . Though the Absolute is in itself completely universal, still, as it makes itself known in mankind especially, it constitutes the inner content of Romantic Art, and thus, indeed, all humanity, with its entire development, forms the immeasurable and legitimate material of that art.

2. It may be, indeed, that Romantic Art, *as art*, does not bring this content into prominence, as was done in great measure in the Symbolic, and, above all, in the Classic form of Art, with its ideal gods. As we have already seen, this art is not, *as art*, the revealed teaching (*Belehren*) which

produces the content of truth directly only in the form of art for the imagination, but the content is already at hand for itself outside the region of art in imagination and sensuous perception. Here, religion, as the universal consciousness of truth in a wholly other sphere (*Grade*), constitutes the essential point of departure for art. It lies quite outside the external modes of manifestation for the actual consciousness, and makes its appearance in sensuous reality as prosaic events belonging to the present. Since, indeed, the content of revelation to the spirit is the eternal, absolute nature of *spirit*, which separates itself from the natural as such and debases it, manifestation in the immediate thus holds such rank (*Stellung*) that this outer, so far as it subsists and has actual-being (*Dasein*), remains only an incidental world out of which the Absolute takes itself up into the spiritual and inner, and thus for the first time really arrives at the truth. At this stage the outer is looked upon as an indifferent element to which the spirit can no longer give credence, and in which it no longer has an abode. The less worthy the spirit esteems this outer actuality, by so much the less is it possible for the spirit ever to seek its satisfaction therein, or to find itself reconciled through union with the external as with itself.

3. In Romantic Art, therefore, on the side of external manifestation, the mode of actual representation in accordance with this principle does not go essentially beyond specific, ordinary actuality, and in nowise fears to take up into itself this real outer existence (*Dasein*) in its finite incompleteness and particularity. Here, again, has vanished that ideal beauty which repudiates the external view of temporality and the traces of transitoriness in order to replace its hitherto imperfect development by the blooming beauty of existence. Romantic Art no longer has for its aim this free vitality of actual existence, in its infinite calmness and submergence of the soul in the corporeal, nor even this *life*, as such, in its most precious significance, but turns its back upon this highest phase beauty. Indeed, it interweaves its inner being with the accidentality of external organisation, and allows unrestricted play room to the marked characteristics of the ugly.. . .

. . . In Classic Art, spirit controlled empirical manifestation and pervaded it completely, because it was that form itself in which spirit was to gain its perfect reality. Now, however, the inner or spiritual is indifferent respecting the mode of manifestation of immediate or sensuous world, because immediacy is unworthy of the happiness or the soul in itself. The external and phenomenal is no longer able to express internality; and since, indeed, it is no longer called upon to do this, it thus retains the task of proving that the external or sensuous is an incomplete existence, and

must refer back to the spiritual, to intellect, (*Gemüt*), and the sensibility, as to the essential element. But for this very reason Art allows externality to again appear on its own account, and in this respect permits each and every matter to enter unhindered into the representation. Even flowers, trees, and the most ordinary household furniture are admitted, and this, too, in the natural accidentality of mere present existence. This content, however, bears with it at the same time the characteristic that as mere external matter it is insignificant and low; that it only attains its true value when it is pervaded by human interest; and that it must express not merely the inner or subjective, but even *internality* or subjectivity itself, which, instead of blending or fusing itself with outer or material, appears reconciled only in and with itself. Thus driven to externality, the inner at this point becomes manifestation destitute of externality. It is, as it were, invisible, and comprehended only by itself; a tone, as such without objectivity or form; a wave upon water, a resounding through a world, which in and upon its heterogeneous phenomena can only take up and send back a reflected ray of this independent-being (*Isichseins*) of the soul.

We may now comprise in a single word this relation between content and form as it appears in the Romantic—for here it is that this relation attains to its complete characterisation. It is this: just because the ever increasing universality and restless working depth of the soul constitute the fundamental principle of the keynote thereof is *musical*, and, in connection with the particularised content of the imagination *lyrical*. For Romantic Art is, as it were, the elementary characteristic—a tone which the epic and the drama also strike, and which breathes about the works of the arts of visible representation themselves like a universal, fragrant odour of the soul; for here spirit and soul will speak to spirit and soul through all their images.

Division.—[The internal unfolding of Romantic Art]

We come now to the division necessary to be established for the further and more precisely developing investigation of this third great realm of art. The fundamental idea of the Romantic in its internal unfolding lies in the following three moments or elements:

1. The Religious as such, constitutes the first circle, of which the central point is given in the history of redemption—in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Introversion (*Umkehr*) here assumes importance as the chief characteristic. The spirit assumes an attitude of hostility toward,

and overcomes, its own immediacy and finitude, and through thus rendering itself free it attains to its infinity, and absolute independence in its own sphere.

2. Secondly, this independence passes out of the abstract divine of the spirit, and also leaves aside the elevation of finite man to God, and passes into the affairs of the secular world. Here at once it is the individual (*Subjekt*), as such, that has become affirmative for itself, and has for the substance of its consciousness, as also for the interest of its existence, the virtues of this affirmative individuality, namely, honour, love, fidelity, and valour—that is, the aims and duties which belong to Romantic Knighthood.

From the reading . . .

It thus appears that the necessity which urges consciousness on to the attainment of a complete comprehension of the truth demands higher forms that Art is able in anywise to produce.

3. The content and form of the third division may be summed up, in general, as *Formal Independence of Character*. If, indeed, personality is so far developed that spiritual independence has come to be its essential interest, then there comes, also, to be a special Content, with which personality identifies itself as with its own, and shares with it the same independence, which, however, can only be of a formal type, since it does not consist in the substantiality of its life, as is the case in the circle of religious truth, properly speaking. But, on the other hand, the form of outer circumstances and situations, and of the development of events, is indeed that of freedom, the result of which is a reckless abandonment to a life of capricious adventures. We thus find the termination of the Romantic, in general, to consist in the accidentality both of the external and of the internal, and with this termination the two elements fall asunder. With this we emerge from the sphere of art altogether. It thus appears that the necessity which urges consciousness on to the attainment of a complete comprehension of the truth demands higher forms that Art is able in anywise to produce.. . .

Related Ideas

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.[5] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The life, work, and influence of Hegel's philosophy by Paul Redding. Emphasis is placed on *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Science of Logic*, and *Philosophy of Right*.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich.[6] *The 1911 Encyclopedia*. Entry on Hegel from the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Hegel by HyperText.[7] *Marxists Internet Archive*. The largest source on the Internet for Hegel's works in English—including selections from *The Philosophy of Fine Art* and *Lectures on Æsthetics*.

Lecture 4: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.[8] *Centre for Philosophy & Phenomenological Studies*. Detailed lecture notes including life, works, and philosophy of Hegel in semi-outline form, with a short section on Hegel's religion of art by Eiichi Shimomissé.

Hegel's Three Forms of Art, adapted from (1) Mary Wagner, *Giza, Egypt*; (2) Dr. Steve Canipe, *British Museum*; (3) Pishey Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston*.

5. *G.W.F. Hegel* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/).
6. *G.W.F. Hegel* (http://42.1911encyclopedia.org/H/HE/HEGEL.htm).
7. *Hegel by HyperText* (http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/).
8. *Lecture 4*. (http://www.csudh.edu/phenom_studies/europ19/lect_4.html)

From the reading . . .

Symbolic Art seeks this perfect unity of the idea with the external form; Classic Art finds it, for the senses and the imagination, in the representation of spiritual individuality; Romantic Art transcends it in its infinite spirituality, which rises above the visible world.

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Explain what Hegel means when he writes about Classic Art, that each god "floats in a just medium between pure generality and simple particularity." How is this characteristic related to beauty in Classic Art, according to Hegel?
2. Why does Hegel believe that the content of Romantic Art consists in the history of Christ and of all those in which "the Divine Spirit becomes ever present" and not believe that the content of Romantic Art consists in the history of Buddha and of all those in which enlightenment is achieved?
3. Explain as clearly as possible the stages of the progress of art from the Symbolic through the Classic and terminating in the Romantic. What is the basis of the transcendence or progress to a higher stage in each case. For each kind of art, what are the defects and what are the successes Hegel essays?
4. Explain how, according to Hegel, nature is related to art. In what ways are the science of art and the science of nature similar for Hegel?

Chapter 15

"Art Transcends Suffering" by Arthur Schopenhauer

Arthur Schopenhauer Library of Congress

About the author . . .

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), born near Danzig, Poland, was reared in a merchant family. Upon the annexation of Danzig by Prussia in 1793, his family moved to Hamburg. While still young, Schopenhauer traveled extensively in Europe and lived for a short time in France and England. His father hoped he would take over the family business as an international merchant, but soon after the death of his father, he left the family business to prepare for the university. His mother, Johanna, opened an intellectual salon, and, as a well-known novelist, developed a friendship with Wolfgang von Goethe. Schopenhauer studied medicine and philosophy at Göttingen and then, after moving to Jena, became enthralled with Plato's and Kant's philosophy. His dissertation *The Fourfold Root of the*

Principle of Sufficient Reason laid the foundation for his *magnum opus The World as Will and Idea*: a work published at the age of thirty. He tried to lecture at the same time as Hegel lectured at the University of Berlin where he criticized both J.G. Fichte's and G.W.F. Hegel's works. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer's classes were largely ignored by the enthusiastic adherents of Hegel's philosophy. Years later, however, Schopenhauer's philosophy overshadowed Hegel's in influence. Schopenhauer left Berlin and spent most of the remainder of his life in Frankfort. His writing greatly influenced the work of persons in a variety of fields: Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, Freud and Jung, Hardy and Conrad, and Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov.

About the work . . .

In his *The World as Will and Idea*,[1] Schopenhauer argues that the reality behind the appearance of the world is an endlessly striving, irrational, and purposeless transcendent Will or energy, and we become aware of this Will directly in terms of our own volition. The fundamental basis of our world of appearance is, according to Schopenhauer, logical, causal, mathematical, and moral necessity (his fourfold "principle of sufficient reason"). The Will, as fundamental reality, manifests itself as different things according to hierarchical Platonic Forms or Ideas. Schopenhauer explains that these Ideas are recognized æsthetically. The point of life, he thinks, is to seek to overcome or deny the self, which is an instantiation of the Will, and attain compassion for all things through morality, religion, and art. When an individual's will is silenced, that individual becomes resigned, and the will to live is denied. Schopenhauer's philosophy, itself influenced by Kantian and Eastern philosophy, in turn, profoundly affected later developments in art, literature, music, and psychology.

From the reading . . .

[Artistic genius] repeats or reproduces the eternal ideas grasped through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding in all the phenomena of the world. . .

1. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*. Translated by R. B. Haldane and John Kemp. London: Trübner. 1883. Volume I. Book III.

Ideas of Interest from *The World as Will and Idea*

1. What are some of the differences between science and art Schopenhauer describes?
2. How does Schopenhauer define artistic genius? In his view, how does a genius differ from an ordinary person?
3. What is Schopenhauer's characterization of the two aspects of æsthetic contemplation?
4. According to Schopenhauer, how can we be freed from "slavery of the will" and attain pure contemplation?
5. How does Schopenhauer describe the world as idea? How the loss of will is obtained?
6. What is the distinction drawn by Schopenhauer between the sublime and the beautiful?
7. How does Schopenhauer describe the loss of the peace of æsthetic contemplation and the experience of the sublime?
8. In what sense does Schopenhauer argue that everything is beautiful? What does he think is the highest aim of art?
9. What are the two kinds of æsthetic impression Schopenhauer distinguishes?

The Reading Selection from *The World as Will and Idea*

[Two Kinds of Knowledge: Science and Art]

[S]cience proceeds according to the principle of sufficient reason in its different forms, and their theme is always the phenomenon, its laws,

connections, and the relations which result from them. But what kind of knowledge is concerned with that which is outside and independent of all relations, that which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenomena, that which is subject to no change, and therefore is known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the *ideas*, which are the direct and adequate objectivity of the thing in itself, the will? We answer, *art*, the work of genius. It repeats or reproduces the eternal ideas grasped through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding in all the phenomena of the world; and according to what the material is in which it reproduces, it is sculpture or painting, poetry or music. Its one source is the knowledge of ideas; its one aim the communication of this knowledge. While science, following the unresting and inconstant stream of the fourfold forms of reason and consequent, with each end attained sees further, and can never reach a final goal nor attain full satisfaction, any more than by running we can reach the place where the clouds touch the horizon; art, on the contrary, is everywhere at its goal.... The method of viewing things which proceeds in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason is the rational method, and it alone is valid and of use in practical life and in science. The method which looks away from the content of this principle is the method of genius, which is only valid and of use in art. The first is the method of Aristotle; the second is, on the whole, that of Plato....

[The Pure Idea of Art]

Genius then, consists, according to our explanation, in the capacity for knowing, independently of the principle of sufficient reason, not individual things, which have their existence only in their relations, but the ideas of such things, and of being oneself the correlative of the idea, and thus no longer an individual, but the pure subject of knowledge. Yet this faculty must exist in all men in a smaller and different degree; for if not, they would be just as incapable of enjoying works of art as of producing them; they would have no susceptibility for the beautiful or the sublime; indeed, these words could have no meaning for them. We must therefore assume that there exists in all men this power of knowing the ideas in things, and consequently of transcending their personality for the moment, unless indeed there are some men who are capable of no æsthetic pleasure at all. The man of genius excels ordinary men only by possessing this kind of knowledge in a far higher degree and more continuously.

Thus, while under its influence he retains the presence of mind which is necessary to enable him to repeat in a voluntary and intentional work what he has learned in this manner; and this repetition is the work of art. Through this he communicates to others the idea lie has grasped. This idea remains unchanged and the same, so that æsthetic pleasure is one and the same whether it is called forth by a work of art or directly by the contemplation of nature and life. The work of art is only a means of facilitating the knowledge in which this pleasure consists. That the idea comes to us more easily from the work of art than directly from nature and the real world, arises from the fact that the artist, who knew only the idea, no longer the actual, has reproduced in his work the pure idea, has abstracted it from the actual, omitting all disturbing accidents. The artist lets us see the world through his eyes. That he has these eyes, that he knows the inner nature of things apart from all their relations, is the gift of genius, is inborn, but that he is able to lend us this gift, to let us see with his eyes, is acquired, and is the technical side of art. . . .

[Æsthetic Contemplation]

In the æstheticall mode of contemplation we have found *two inseparable constituent parts*—the knowledge of the object, not as individual thing but as Platonic idea, that is, as the enduring form of this whole species of things; and the self-consciousness of the knowing person, not as individual, but as *pure will-sthetical subject of knowledge*. The condition under which both these constituent parts appear always united was found to be the abandonment of the method of knowing which is bound to the principle of sufficient reason, and which, on the other hand, is the only kind of knowledge that is of value for the service of the will and also for science. Moreover we shall see that the pleasure which is produced by the contemplation of the beautiful arises from these two constituent parts, sometimes more from the one, sometimes more from the other, according to what the object of the æsthetical contemplation may be.

[Respite from the Will]

All *willing* arises from want, therefore from deficiency, and therefore from suffering. The satisfaction of a wish ends it; yet for one wish that is satisfied there remain at least ten which are denied. Further, the desire

lasts long, the demands are infinite; the satisfaction is short and scantily measured out. But even the final satisfaction is itself only apparent; every satisfied wish at once makes room for a new one; both are illusions; the one is known to be so, the other not yet. No attained object of desire can give lasting satisfaction, but merely a fleeting gratification; it is like the alms thrown to the beggar, that keeps him alive today that his misery may be prolonged till the morrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with their constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we can never have lasting happiness nor peace. It is essentially all the same whether we pursue or flee, fear injury or seek enjoyment; the care for the constant demands of the will, in whatever form it may be, continually occupies and sways the consciousness; but without peace no true well-being is possible.. . .

But when some external cause or inward disposition lifts us suddenly out of the endless stream of willing, delivers knowledge from the slavery of the will, the attention is no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will, and thus observes them without personal interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively, gives itself entirely up to them so far as they are ideas, but not in so far as they are motives. Then all at once the peace which we were always seeking, but which always fled from us on the former path of the desires, comes to us of its own accord, and it is well with us.. . .

From the reading . . .

Æsthetic pleasure is one and the same whether it is called forth by a work of art or directly by the contemplation of nature and life.

But this is just the state which I described above as necessary for the knowledge of the idea, as pure contemplation, as sinking oneself in perception, losing oneself in the object, forgetting all individuality, surrendering that kind of knowledge which follows the principle of sufficient reason, and comprehends only relations; the state by means of which at once and inseparably the perceived particular thing is raised to the idea of its whole species, and the knowing individual to the pure subject of will-less knowledge, and as such they are both taken out of the stream of time and all other relations. It is then all one whether we see the sun set from the prison or from the palace.

Inward disposition, the predominance of knowing over willing, can produce this state under any circumstances. This is shown by those admirable Dutch artists who directed this purely objective perception to the most insignificant objects, and established a lasting monument of their objectivity and spiritual peace in their pictures of *still* life, which the æsthetic beholder does not look on without emotion; for they present to him the peaceful, still, frame of mind of the artist, free from will, which was needed to contemplate such insignificant things so objectively, to observe them so attentively, and to repeat this perception so intelligently; and as the picture enables the onlooker to participate in this state, his emotion is often increased by the contrast between it and the unquiet frame of mind, disturbed by vehement willing, in which he finds himself In the same spirit, landscapepainters, and particularly Ruisdael, have often painted very insignificant country scenes, which produce the same effect even more agreeably.

[Will-less Perception of Nature vs. Will-ful Perception of Relation]

All this is accomplished by the inner power of an artistic nature alone; but that purely objective disposition is facilitated and assisted from without by suitable objects, by the abundance of natural beauty which invites contemplation, and even presses itself upon us. Whenever it discloses itself suddenly to our view, it almost always succeeds in delivering us, though it may be only for a moment, from subjectivity, from the slavery of the will, and in raising us to the state of pure knowing. This is why the man who is tormented by passion, or want, or care, is so suddenly revived, cheered, and restored by a single free glance into nature: the storm of passion, the pressure of desire and fear, and all the miseries of willing arc then at once, and in a marvelous manner, calmed and appeased. For at the moment at which, freed from the will, we give ourselves up to pure will-less knowing, we pass into a world from which everything is absent that influenced our will and moved us so violently through it. This freeing of knowledge lifts us as wholly and entirely away from all that, as do sleep and dreams; happiness and unhappiness have disappeared; we are no longer individual; the individual is forgotten; we are only pure subject of knowledge; we are only that *one* eye of the world which looks out from all knowing creatures, but which can become perfectly free from the service of will in man alone. Thus all difference of individuality so entirely

disappears, that it is all the same whether the perceiving eye belongs to a mighty king or to a wretched beggar; for neither joy nor complaining can pass that boundary with us. So near us always lies a sphere in which we escape from all our misery; but who has the strength to continue long in it? As soon as any single relation to our will, to our person, even of these objects of our pure contemplation, comes again into consciousness, the magic is at an end we fall back into the knowledge which is governed by the principle of sufficient reason; we know no longer the idea, but the particular thing, the link of a chain to which we also belong, and we are again abandoned to all our woe. Most men remain almost always at this standpoint because they entirely lack objectivity, *i.e.*, genius. Therefore they have no pleasure in being alone with nature; they need company, or at least a book. For their knowledge remains subject to their will; they seek, therefore, in objects, only some relation to their will, and whenever they see anything that has no such relation, there sounds within them, like a ground bass in music, the constant inconsolable cry, "It is of no use to me"; thus in solitude the most beautiful surroundings have for them a desolate, dark, strange, and hostile appearance.

[World of Idea]

Lastly, it is this blessedness of will-less perception which casts an enchanting glamor over the past and distant, and presents them to us in so fair a light by means of self-deception. For as we think of days long gone by, days in which we lived in a distant place, it is only the objects which our fancy recalls, not the subject of will, which bore about with it then its incurable sorrows just as it bears them now; but they are forgotten, because since then they have often given place to others. Now, objective perception acts with regard to what is remembered just as it would in what is present, if we let it have influence over us, if we surrendered ourselves to it free from will. Hence it arises that, especially when we are more than ordinarily disturbed by some want, the remembrance of past and distant scenes suddenly flits across our minds like a lost paradise. The fancy recalls only what was objective, not what was individually subjective, and we imagine that the objective stood before us then just as pure and undisturbed by any relation to the will as its image stands in our fancy now; while in reality the relation of the objects to our will gave us pain then just as it does now. We can deliver ourselves from all suffering just as well through present objects as through distant ones whenever

we raise ourselves to a purely objective contemplation of them, and so are able to bring about the illusion that only the objects are present and not we ourselves. Then, as the pure subject of knowledge, freed from the miserable self, we become entirely one with these objects, and, for the moment, our wants arc as foreign to us as they are to them. The world as idea alone remains, and the world as will has disappeared.

From the reading . . .

It is essentially all the same whether we pursue or flee, fear injury or seek enjoyment; the care for the constant demands of the will, in whatever form it may be, continually occupies and sways the consciousness; but without peace no true well-being is possible.

In all these reflections it has been my object to bring out clearly the nature and the scope of the subjective element in æsthetic pleasure; the deliverance of knowledge from the service of the will, the forgetting of self as an individual, and the raising of the consciousness to the pure will-less, tuneless, subject of knowledge, independent of all relations. With this subjective side of æsthetic contemplation, there must always appear as its necessary correlative the objective side, the intuitive comprehension of the Platonic idea. But before we turn to the closer consideration of this, and to the achievements of art in relation to it, it is better that we should pause for a little at the subjective side of æsthetic pleasure, in order to complete our treatment of this by explaining the impression of the sublime which depends altogether upon it, and arises from a modification of it. After that we shall complete our investigation of æsthetic pleasure by considering its objective side.

[Æsthetic Contemplation and the Sublime]

All these reflections are intended to bring out the subjective part of æsthetic pleasure; that is to say, that pleasure so fit as it consists simply of delight in perceptive knowledge as Such, in opposition to will. And as directly connected with this, there naturally follows the explanation of that disposition or frame of mind which has been called the sense of the sublime.

Ross Market, Frankfort on Main, (detail) Library of Congress

We have already remarked above that the transition to the state of pure perception takes place most easily when the objects bend themselves to it, that is, when by their manifold and yet definite and distinct form they easily become representatives of their ideas, in which beauty, in the objective sense, consists. This quality belongs preeminently to natural beauty, which thus affords even to the most insensible at least a fleeting æsthetic satisfaction: indeed it is so remarkable how especially the vegetable world invites æsthetic observation, and, as it were, presses itself upon it, that one might say, that these advances are connected with the fact that these organisms, unlike the bodies of animals, are not themselves immediate objects of knowledge, and therefore require the assistance of a foreign intelligent individual in order to rise out of the world of blind will and enter the world of idea, and that thus they long, as it were, for this entrance, that they may attain at least indirectly what is denied them directly. But I leave this suggestion which I have hazarded, and which borders perhaps upon extravagance, entirely undecided, for only a very intimate and devoted consideration of nature can raise or justify it. As long as that which raises us from the knowledge of mere relations subject to the will, to æsthetic contemplation, and thereby exalts us to the position of the subject of knowledge free from will, is this fittingness of nature, this significance and distinctness of its forms, on account of

which the ideas individualized in them readily present themselves to us; so long is it merely beauty that affects us and the sense of the beautiful that is excited. But if these very objects whose significant forms invite us to pure contemplation, have a hostile relation to the human will in general, as it exhibits itself in its objectivity, the human body, if they are opposed to it, so that it is menaced by the irresistible predominance of their power, or sinks into insignificance before their immeasurable greatness; if, nevertheless, the beholder does not direct his attention to this eminently hostile relation to his will, but, although perceiving and recognizing it, turns consciously away from it, forcibly detaches himself from his will and its relations, and, giving himself up entirely to knowledge, quietly contemplates those very objects that are so terrible to the will, comprehends only their idea, which is foreign to all relation, so that he lingers gladly over its contemplation, and is thereby raised above himself, his person, his will, and all will: in that case he is filled with the sense of the sublime, he is in the state of spiritual exaltation, and therefore the object producing such a state is called sublime. Thus what distinguishes the sense of the sublime from that of the beautiful is this: in the case of the beautiful, pure knowledge has gained the upper hand without a struggle, for the beauty of the object, *i.e.* that property which facilitates the knowledge of its idea, has removed from consciousness without resistance, and therefore imperceptibly, the will and the knowledge of relations which is subject to it, so that what is left is the pure subject of knowledge without even a remembrance of will, On the other hand, in the case of the sublime that state of pure knowledge is only attained by a conscious and forcible breaking away from the relations of the same object to the will, which are recognized as unfavorable, by a free and conscious transcending of the will and the knowledge related to it.

This exaltation must not only be consciously won, but also consciously retained, and it is therefore accompanied by a constant remembrance of will; yet not of a single particular volition, such as fear or desire, but of human volition in general, so far as it is universally expressed in its objectivity the human body. If a single real act of will were to come into consciousness, through actual personal pressure and danger from the object, then the individual will thus actually influenced would at once gain the upper hand, the peace of contemplation would become impossible, the impression of the sublime would be lost, because it yields to the anxiety, in which the effort of the individual to right itself has sunk every other thought. A few examples will help very much to elucidate this theory of the æsthetic sublime and remove all doubt with regard to it; at the

same time they will bring out the different degrees of this sense of the sublime. It is in the main identical with that of the beautiful, with pure will-less knowing, and the knowledge, that necessarily accompanies it of ideas out of all relation determined by the principle of sufficient reason, and it is distinguished from the sense of the beautiful only by the additional quality that it rises above the known hostile relation of the object contemplated to the will in general. Thus there comes to be various degrees of the sublime, and transitions from the beautiful to the sublime, according as this additional quality is strong, bold, urgent, near, or weak, distant, and merely indicated.

The course of the discussion has made it necessary to insert at this point the treatment of the sublime, though we have only half done with the beautiful, as we have considered its subjective side only. For it was merely a special modification of this subjective side that distinguished the beautiful from the sublime. This difference was found to depend upon whether the state of pure will-less knowing, which is presupposed and demanded by all æsthetic contemplation, was reached without opposition, by the mere disappearance of the will from consciousness, because the object invited and drew us towards it; or whether it was only attained through the free, conscious transcending of the will, to which the object contemplated had an unfavorable and even hostile relation, which would destroy contemplation altogether, if we were to give ourselves up to it. This is the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. in the object they are not essentially different, for in every case the object of æsthetical contemplation is not the individual thing, but the idea in it which is striving to reveal itself; that is to say, adequate objectivity of will at a particular grade. Its necessary correlative, independent, like itself of the principle of sufficient reason, is the pure subject of knowing; just as the correlative of the particular thing is the knowing individual, both of which lie within the province of the principle of sufficient reason.

[Nature of the Beautiful]

When we say that a thing is *beautiful*, we thereby assert that it is an object of our æsthetic contemplation, and this has a double meaning; on the one hand it means that the sight of the thing makes us *objective*, that is to say, that in contemplating it we are no longer conscious of ourselves as individuals, but as pure willless subjects of knowledge; and on the other hand it means that we recognize in the object, not the particular thing,

but an idea; and this can only happen, so far as our contemplation of it is not subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason, does not follow the relation of the object to anything outside it (which is always ultimately connected with relations to our own will), but rests in the object itself For the idea and the pure subject of knowledge always appear at once in consciousness as necessary correlatives, and on their appearance all distinction of time vanishes, for they are both entirely foreign to the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms, and lie outside the relations which are imposed by it; they may be compared to the rainbow and the sun, which have no part in the constant movement and succession of the falling drops. Therefore, if, for example, I contemplate a tree æsthetically *i.e.,* with artistic eyes, and thus recognize, not it, but its idea, it becomes at once of no consequence whether it is this tree or its predecessor which flourished a thousand years ago, and whether the observer is this individual or any other that lived anywhere and at any time; the particular thing and the knowing individual are abolished with the principle of sufficient reason, and there remains nothing but the idea and the pure subject of knowing, which together constitute the adequate objectivity of will at this grade. And the idea dispenses not only with time, but also with space, for the idea proper is not this special form which appears before me but its expression, its pure significance, its inner being, which discloses itself to me and appeals to me, and which may be quite the same though the spatial relations of its form be very different.

From the reading . . .

Therefore it is that man is more beautiful than all other objects, and the revelation of his nature is the highest aim of art.

Since, on the one hand, every given thing may be observed in a purely objective manner and apart from all relations; and since, on the other hand, the will manifests itself in everything at some grade of its objectivity so that everything is the expression of an idea; it follows that everything is also *beautiful*. That even the most insignificant things admit of pure objective and will-less contemplation, and thus prove that they are beautiful, is shown by what was said above in this reference about the Dutch pictures of still life. But one thing is more beautiful than another, because it makes this pure objective contemplation easier, it lends itself to it, and, so to speak, even compels it, and then we call it very beautiful. This is the case sometimes because, as all individual thing, it expresses in

its purity the idea of its species by the very distinct, clearly defined, and significant relation of its parts, and also fully reveals that idea through the completeness of all the possible expressions of its species united in it, so that it makes the transition from the individual thing to the idea, and therefore also the condition of pure contemplation, very easy for the beholder. Sometimes this possession of special beauty in an object lies in the fact that the idea itself which appeals to us in it is a high grade of the objectivity of will, and therefore very significant and expressive. Therefore it is that man is more beautiful than all other objects, and the revelation of his nature is the highest aim of art. Human form and expression are the most important objects of plastic art, and human action the most important object of poetry. Yet each thing has its own peculiar beauty, not only every organism which expresses itself in the unity of an individual being, but also everything unorganized and formless, and even every manufactured article. For all these reveal the ideas through which the will objectifies itself at its lowest grades, they give, as it were, the deepest resounding bass notes of nature. Gravity, rigidity, fluidity, light, and so forth, are the ideas which express themselves in rocks, in buildings, in waters. Landscape gardening or architecture can do no more than assist them to unfold their qualities distinctly, fully, and variously; they can only give them the opportunity of expressing themselves purely, so that they lend themselves to æsthetic contemplation and make it easier. Inferior buildings or ill-favored localities, on the contrary, which nature has neglected or art has spoiled, perform this task in a very slight degree or not at all; yet even from them these universal, fundamental ideas of nature cannot altogether disappear. To the careful observer they present themselves here also, and even bad buildings and the like are capable of being æsthetically considered; the ideas of the most universal properties of their materials are still recognizable in them, only the artificial form which has been given them does not assist but hinders æsthetic contemplation. . . .

[Two Kinds of Æsthetic Impression]

The knowledge of the beautiful always supposes at once and inseparably the pure knowing subject and the known idea as object. Yet the source of æsthetic satisfaction will sometimes lie more in the comprehension of the known idea, sometimes more in the blessedness and spiritual peace of the pure knowing subject freed from all willing, and therefore from all

individuality, and the pain that proceeds from it. And, indeed, this predominance of one or the other constituent part of æsthetic feeling will depend upon whether the intuitively grasped idea is a higher or a lower grade of the objectivity of will. Thus in æsthetic contemplation (in the real, or through the medium of art) of the beauty of nature in the inorganic and vegetable worlds, or in works of architecture, the pleasure of pure willless knowing will predominate, because the ideas which are here apprehended are only low grades of the objectivity of will, and are therefore not manifestations of deep significance and rich content. On the other hand, if animals and man are the objects of æsthetic contemplation or representation, the pleasure will consist rather in the comprehension of these ideas, which are the most distinct revelation of will; for they exhibit the greatest multiplicity of forms, the greatest richness and deep significance of phenomena, and reveal to us most completely the nature of will, whether in its violence, its terribleness, its satisfaction or its aberration (the latter in tragic situations), or finally in its change and self-surrender, which is the peculiar theme of Christian painting; as the idea of the will enlightened by full knowledge is the object of historical painting in general, and of the drama.

Related Ideas

Arthur Schopenhauer.[2] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Introduction to Schopenhauer’s philosophy and its influences with an important section on æsthetic perception by Robert Wicks.

The Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.[3] *The Radical Academy*. Schopenhauer’s life and works are clearly and briefly summarized with special interest on the application of his philosophy to individual life.

Schopenhauer, Arthur.[4] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. Schopenhauer’s æsthetics and literary influence is discussed by Tilottama Rajan.

Schopenhauer’s Æsthetics.[5] *Wikipedia*. A short assessment of how Schopen-

2. *Arthur Schopenhauer*. (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/)
3. *The Philosophy of ...* . (http://radicalacademy.com/philschopenhauer.htm)
4. *Schopenhauer, Arthur*. (http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_\theory/arthur_schopenhauer.html)
5. *Schopenhauer’s Æsthetics*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schopenhauer’s_aesthetics)

hauer's æsthetics overcomes the pessimism of his philosophy—with an excellent summary of Schopenhauer's influence.

Schopenhauer's Metaphysics of Music.[6] *The Wagner Library*. A paper first published in *New Englander and Yale Review* Vol. 46, Issue CCXVII, 1888, by Harlow Gale tracing the similarity of music as a universal language and philosophy as general concepts.

From the reading . . .

Yet the source of æsthetic satisfaction will sometimes lie more in the comprehension of the known idea, sometimes more in the blessedness and spiritual peace of the pure knowing subject freed from all willing, and therefore from all individuality, and the pain that proceeds from it.

The Great Bridge, Danzig, West Prussia, (detail) Library of Congress

6. . . . *Music*. (http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/articles/ney48218.htm)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. In the reading, Schopenhauer writes that since everything can be objectively observed, everything is, in some sense, beautiful:

   > Since, on the one hand, every given thing may be observed in a purely objective manner and apart from all relations; and since, on the other hand, the will manifests itself in everything at some grade of its objectivity so that everything is the expression of an idea; it follows that everything is also *beautiful*. That even the most insignificant things admit of pure objective and will-less contemplation, and thus prove that they are beautiful, is shown by what was said above in this reference about the Dutch pictures of still life.. . .
   >
   > Inferior buildings or ill-favored localities, on the contrary, which nature has neglected or art has spoiled, perform this task in a very slight degree or not at all; yet even from them these universal, fundamental ideas of nature cannot altogether disappear. To the careful observer they present themselves here also, and even bad buildings and the like are capable of being aesthetically considered. . .

   Explain how Schopenhauer avoids the doctrine that all things are beautiful because of the æsthetical relativism. For example, George Santayana explains how two different persons might not agree on what is beautiful:

   > If their natures are different, the form which to one will be entrancing will be to another even invisible, because his classifications and discriminations in percepting will be different, and he may see a hideous detached fragment or a shapeless aggregate of things, in what to another is a perfect whole—so entirely are the unities of objects unities of function and use.[7]

   How would Schopenhauer account for Santayana’s example? (In particular, take note of the passage following the passage quoted above from Schopenhauer.)

2. Also, explain how Schopenhauer would respond to Anatole France’s impressionistic subjectivity:

7. George Santayana. *The Sense of Beauty*. New York: Scribners. 1896.

> There is no such thing as objective criticism any more than there is objective art, and all who flatter themselves that they put aught but themselves into their work are dupes of the most fallacious illusion. The truth is that one never gets out of oneself. That is one of our greatest miseries.[8]

Yet, Schopenhauer clearly states in this reading:

> When we say that a thing is *beautiful*, we thereby assert that it is an object of our aesthetic contemplation, and this has a double meaning; on the one hand it means that the sight of the thing makes us *objective*, that is to say, that in contemplating it we are no longer conscious of ourselves as individuals, but as pure willless subjects of knowledge; and on the other hand it means that we recognize in the object, not the particular thing, but an idea; and this can only happen, so far as our contemplation of it is not subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason, does not follow the relation of the object to anything outside it (which is always ultimately connected with relations to our own will), but rests in the object itself For the idea and the pure subject of knowledge always appear at once in consciousness as necessary correlatives, and on their appearance all distinction of time vanishes. . .

Can these apparently opposite points of view be reconciled?

3. Schopenhauer writes of "significant form" that the significance and distinctness of the forms of æsthetic contemplation as well as the ideas individualized in these forms to us exists so long as it is "*beauty* that affects us and the sense of the *beautiful* that is excited":

   > [It is]. . . these very objects whose significant forms invite [the beholder] to pure contemplation. . . , [and] the beholder . . . comprehends only their idea, which is foreign to all relation, so that he lingers gladly over its contemplation, and is thereby raised above himself . . .

   Clive Bell, the Bloomsbury critic, explains his signature concept:

   > . . . significant form is the only quality common and peculiar to all the works of visual art that move me; and I will ask those whose æsthetic experience does not tally with mine to see whether this quality is not also, in their judgment, common to all works that move them, and

8. Anatole France. *The Literary Life*. In *A Modern Book of Criticism*. Edited and translated by Ludwig Lewisohn. New York: Random House. 1919.

> whether they can discover any other quality of which the same can be said.[9]

Compare Schopenhauer's "significant form" of pure contemplation with Bell's "significant form" as the essential quality in works of art.

4. Schopenhauer clearly distinguishes between the sublime and the beautiful in the following manner:

> Thus what distinguishes the sense of the sublime from that of the beautiful is this: in the case of the beautiful, pure knowledge has gained the upper hand without a struggle, for the beauty of the object, *i.e.* that property which facilitates the knowledge of its idea, has removed from consciousness without resistance, and therefore imperceptibly, the will and the knowledge of relations which is subject to it, so that what is left is the pure subject of knowledge without even a remembrance of will, On the other hand, in the case of the sublime that state of pure knowledge is only attained by a conscious and forcible breaking away from the relations of the same object to the will, which are recognized as unfavorable, by a free and conscious transcending of the will and the knowledge related to it.

Some sixty years earlier, Edmund Burke argues for a natural contrast between the sublime and the beautiful:

> [W]hatever produces pleasure, positive and original pleasure, is fit to have beauty engrafted on it.. . . [10] Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime. . . [11] They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions.[12]

Is it possible to account for the radical disparity of Schopenhauer's and Burke's views through the discovery of differing basic presuppositions of the two philosophers?

9. Clive Bell. *Art*. London: Chatto & Windus. 1914.
10. Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. London: R. and J. Dodsley. 1757. Part IV. Section III.
11. Burke. Part I. Section VII.
12. Burke. Part III. Section XXVII.

5. To what extent is Schopenhauer’s comment accurate that the rational method of science in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason is the “method of Aristotle,” whereas the method of genius in art is the “method of Plato”?

   In particular what is the precise role of Plato’s Ideas or Forms in Schopenhauer’s theory of art?

6. In our reading selection, on the one hand, Schopenhauer defines genius in art in the following manner:

   > [W]hat kind of knowledge is concerned with that which is outside and independent of all relations, that which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenomena, that which is subject to no change, and therefore is known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the *ideas*, which are the direct and adequate objectivity of the thing in itself, the will? We answer, *art*, the work of genius. It repeats or reproduces the eternal ideas grasped through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding in all the phenomena of the world; and according to what the material is in which it reproduces, it is sculpture or painting, poetry or music. Its one source is the knowledge of ideas; its one aim the communication of this knowledge.

   On the other hand, Francis Hutcheson defines “genius” as taste:

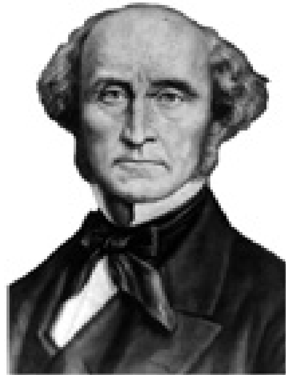
   > . . . I should rather chuse to call our Power of percieving [Ideas of Beauty and Harmony] an Internal Sense, were it only for the Convenience of distinguishing them from other Sensations of Seeing and Hearing, which men may have without Perception of Beauty and Harmony.. . . This greater Capacity of receiving such pleasant Ideas we commonly call a fine Genius or Taste. . . [13]

   What similarities do you find in Schopenhauer’s and Hutcheson’s views of artistic genius?

13. Francis Hutcheson. *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*. Part I of *An Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. London: J. Barby, *et. al.* 1725. I: X.

Chapter 16

“Art as Intrinsic Personal Feeling” by John Stuart Mill



John Stuart Mill, (adapted) Library of Congress

About the author . . .

As detailed in his widely read *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill was the subject of a remarkable and rigorous education under the direction of his father and Jeremy Bentham. His studies were exclusively academic with few opportunities for friendship and normal emotional development. In his *Autobiography*, Mill wrote, “From this neglect both in theory and in practice of the cultivation of feeling, naturally resulted, among other things, an under-valuing of poetry, and of Imagination generally, as an element of human nature.”[1] Soon after he turned 20, he suffered a profound depression from which he sought recovery through the friendship of Har-

1. John Stuart Mill. *Autobiography.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1971. Chapter IV.

riet Taylor and by immersion in Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Goethe. Mill's major subsequent influence is, however, not in æsthetics, but in logic and political philosophy: his *magnum opus* is generally considered to be the *System of Logic*. He is notable for his advocation of women's rights as part of his argued views on liberty and gender equality.

About the work . . .

In his "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties,"[2] Mill regards the poet and the artist, whether by nature or cultivation, as one who individually expresses the intuitive truth of thoughts which embody feelings. Mill's æsthetics are of interest since they stand in contrast to the dominant view of nineteenth-century æsthetics that the ideal of art is the expression of the typology of divine nature itself. Indeed, most of the writers on æsthetics in the nineteenth century were nonphilosophers who viewed art from a moral and religious point of view. For Mill, poetry is an intrinsic expression of feeling, not a means of communication as is eloquent speech. While poetry expresses feeling as an end-in-itself, fiction communicates feeling through incident and plot. In this sense, poetry is similar to other arts such as sculpture, painting, and music: their beauty is in soliloquy rather than dramatic effect. Even though the value of poetry is intrinsic, Mill believes poetry is, as well, culturally significant.

From the reading . . .

Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind.

2. John Stuart Mill. *Dissertations and Discussions.* London: Parker. 1859.

Ideas of Interest from "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties"

1. How does Mill distinguish poetry from non-poetry? What is his distinction between a novel and a poem?
2. What, according to Mill, is a good definition of poetry?
3. How does Mill contrast science and poetry? Does his contrast depend upon the different faculties of sensibility and understanding?
4. How does Mill characterize the difference between the born poet and the cultivated poet? How is this difference illustrated in his discussion of the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley?
5. What, according to Mill, is a sufficient condition for the presence of poetry? Why does he think the critic has difficulty recognizing the presence of poetry?
6. Describe Mill's discussion of the relation between poetry and philosophy. On Mill's view, why is a philosopher becoming a poet less likely than a poet becomming a philosopher?

The Reading Selection "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties"

[Part I]

[What is Poetry?]

It has often been asked, What is Poetry? . . . [T]he word "poetry" imports something quite peculiar in its nature; something which may exist in what is called prose as well as in verse; something which does not even require the instrument of words, but can speak through the other audible symbols called musical sounds, and even through the visible ones which are the language of sculpture, painting, and architecture,—all this, we believe, is

and must be felt, though perhaps indistinctly, by all upon whom poetry in any of its shapes produces any impression beyond that of tickling the ear. The distinction between poetry and what is not poetry, whether explained or not, is felt to be fundamental; and, where every one feels a difference, a difference there must be.. . .

From the reading . . .

The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul. . .

The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions. . . and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite. . . namely, not prose, but matter of fact, or science. The one addresses itself to the belief; the other, to the feelings. The one does its work by convincing or persuading; the other, by moving. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding; the other, by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities.

[Poetry Distinguished From Fiction]

This, however, leaves us very far from a definition of poetry. This distinguishes it from one thing; but we are bound to distinguish it from everything. To bring thoughts or images before the mind, for the purpose of acting upon the emotions, does not belong to poetry alone. It is equally the province (for example) of the novelist: and yet the faculty of the poet and that of the novelist are as distinct as any other two faculties; as the faculties of the novelist and of the orator, or of the poet and the metaphysician. The two characters may be united, as characters the most disparate may; but they have no natural connection.

Many of the greatest poems are in the form of fictitious narratives; and, in almost all good serious fictions, there is true poetry. But there is a radical distinction between the interest felt in a story as such, and the interest excited by poetry; for the one is derived from incident, the other from the representation of feeling. In one, the source of the emotion excited is the exhibition of a state or states of human sensibility; in the other, of a series of states of mere outward circumstances. Now, all minds are capable of being affected more or less by representations of the latter kind, and all, or almost all, by those of the former; yet the two sources of interest

correspond to two distinct and (as respects their greatest development) mutually exclusive characters of mind.

At what age is the passion for a story, for almost any kind of story, merely as a story, the most intense? In childhood. But that also is the age at which poetry, even of the simplest description, is least relished and least understood; because the feelings with which it is especially conversant are yet undeveloped, and, not having been even in the slightest degree experienced, cannot be sympathized with. In what stage of the progress of society, again, is story-telling most valued, and the story-teller in greatest request and honor? In a rude state like that of the Tartars and Arabs at this day, and of almost all nations in the earliest ages.... Passing now from childhood, and from the childhood of society, to the grown-up men and women of this most grown-up and unchild-like age, the minds and hearts of greatest depth and elevation are commonly those which take greatest delight in poetry: the shallowest and emptiest, on the contrary, are, at all events, not those least addicted to novel-reading....

From the reading ...

Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observation of themselves ...

Poetry, when it is really such, is truth; and fiction, if it is good for anything, is truth: but they are different truths. The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul truly: the truth of fiction is to give a true picture of life. The two kinds of knowledge are different, and come by different ways, come mostly to different persons. Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observation of themselves: they have found within them one, highly, delicate and sensitive specimen of human nature, on which the laws of emotion are written in large characters, such as can be read off without much study. Other knowledge of mankind, such as comes to men of the world by outward experience, is not indispensable to them as poets: but, to the novelist, such, knowledge is all in all; he bas to describe outward things, not the inward man; actions and events, not feelings; and it will not do for him to be numbered among those, who, as Madame Roland said of Brissot, know man, but not men.

From the reading . . .

[E]loquence is heard; poetry is overheard.

All this is no bar to the possibility of combining both elements, poetry and narrative or incident, in the same work, and calling it either a novel or a poem; but so may red and white combine on the same human features or on the same canvas. There is one order of composition which requires the union of poetry and incident, each in its highest kind, the dramatic.. . . The combination of the two excellences is what renders Shakespeare so generally acceptable, each sort of readers finding in him what is suitable to their faculties. To the many, he is great as a story-teller; to the few, as a poet.

[Descriptive Poetry]

In limiting poetry to the delineation of states of feeling, and denying the name where nothing is delineated but outward objects, we may be thought to have done what we promised to avoid,—to have not found, but made, a definition in opposition to the usage of language, since it is established by common consent that there is a poetry called descriptive. We deny the charge. Description is not poetry because there is descriptive poetry, no more than science is poetry because there is such a thing as a didactic poem. But an object which admits of being described, or a truth which may fill a place in a scientific treatise, may also furnish an occasion for the generation of poetry, which we thereupon choose to call descriptive or didactic. The poetry is not in the object itself, nor in the scientific truth itself, but in the state of mind in which the one and the other may be contemplated.. . . Descriptive poetry consists, no doubt, in description, but in description of things as they appear, not as they are; and it paints them, not in their bare and natural lineaments, but seen through the medium and arrayed in the colors of the imagination set in action by the feelings.. . . [I]f the human emotion be not painted with scrupulous truth, the poetry is bad poetry; *i.e.*, is not poetry at all, but a failure.

[Distinction Between Poetry and Eloquence]

Thus, far, our progress towards a clear view of the essentials of poetry has brought us very close to the last two attempts: at a definition of poetry which we happen to have seen in print, both of them by poets, and men of genius. The one is by Ebenezer Elliott… "Poetry", says he, "is impassioned truth". The other … defines poetry, "man's thoughts tinged, by his feelings". There is in either definition a near approximation to what we are in search of. Every truth which a human being can enunciate, every thought, even every outward impression, which can enter into his consciousness, may become poetry, when shown through any impassioned medium; when invested with the coloring of joy, or grief, or pity, or affection, or admiration, or reverence, or awe, or even hatred or terror; and, unless so colored, nothing, be it as interesting as it may, is poetry. But both these definitions fail to discriminate between poetry and eloquence. Eloquence, as well as poetry, is impassioned truth; eloquence, as well as poetry, is thoughts colored by the feelings. Yet common apprehension and philosophic criticism alike recognize a distinction between the two: there is much that every one would call eloquence, which no one would think of classing as poetry.…

From the reading …

[P]oetry which is printed on hot-pressed paper, and sold at a bookseller's shop, is a soliloquy in full dress and on the stage.

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling: but, if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is heard; poetry is overheard. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavoring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action.

All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy. It may be said that poetry which is printed on hot-pressed paper, and sold at a bookseller's shop, is a soliloquy in full dress and on the stage. It is so; but there is nothing absurd, in the idea of such a mode of soliloquizing. What we have said to ourselves

we may tell to others afterwards; what we have said or done in solitude we may voluntarily reproduce when we know that other eyes are upon us. But no trace of consciousness that, any eyes are upon us, must be visible in the work itself. The actor knows that there is an audience present;, but if he acts as though he knew it, he acts ill. A poet, ... when he turns round, and addresses himself to another person; when the act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end,—*viz.*, by the feelings he himself expresses, to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief or the will of another; when the expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts tinged by his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind,—then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence.

Poetry, accordingly, is the natural fruit of solitude and meditation; eloquence, of intercourse with the world. The persons who have most feeling of their own, if intellectual culture has given them a language in which to express it, have the highest faculty of poetry: those who best understand the feelings of others are the most eloquent. The persons and the nations who commonly excel in poetry are those whose character and tastes render them least dependent upon the applause or sympathy or concurrence of the world in general. Those to whom that applause, that sympathy, that concurrence, are most necessary, generally excel most in eloquence....

If the above be, as we believe, the true theory of the distinction commonly admitted between eloquence and poetry ... it will be found to hold, not merely in the language of words, but in all other language, and to intersect the whole domain of art.

[The Poetry and Oratory of Music]

Take, for example, music. We shall find in that art, so peculiarly the expression of passion, two perfectly distinct styles,—one of which may be called the poetry, the other the oratory, of music. This difference, being seized, would put an end to much musical sectarianism. There has been much contention whether the music of the modern Italian school, that of Rossini and his successors, be impassioned or not. Without doubt, the passion it expresses is not the musing, meditative tenderness or pathos or grief of Mozart or Beethoven; yet it is passion, but garrulous passion,—the passion which pours itself into other ears, and therein the better calculated for dramatic effect, having a natural adaptation for dialogue. Mozart also is great in musical oratory; but his most touching com-

positions are in the opposite style,—that of soliloquy. Who can imagine "Dove sono" heard? We imagine it overheard.

From the reading . . .

The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener.

Purely pathetic music commonly partakes of soliloquy. The soul is absorbed in its distress; and, though there may be bystanders, it is not thinking of them. When the mind is looking within, and not without, its state does not often or rapidly vary; and, hence the even, uninterrupted flow, approaching almost to monotony, which a good reader or a good singer will give to words or music of a pensive or melancholy cast. But grief, taking the form of a prayer or of a complaint, becomes oratorical: no longer low and even and subdued, it assumes a more emphatic rhythm, a more rapidly returning accent; instead of a few slow, equal notes, following one after another at regular intervals, it crowds note upon note, and often assumes a hurry and bustle like joy. Those who are familiar with some of the best of Rossini's serious compositions, such as the air "Tu che i miseri conforti", in the opera of "Tancredi", or the duct "Ebben per mia memoria", in "La Gazza Ladra", will at once understand and feel our meaning. Both are highly tragic and passionate: the passion of both is that of oratory, not poetry.. . .

[The Poetry and Oratory of Painting]

In the arts which speak to the eye, the same distinctions will be found to hold, not only between poetry and oratory, but between poetry, oratory, narrative, and simple imitation or description.

Pure description is exemplified in a mere portrait or a mere landscape, productions of art, it is true, but of the mechanical, rather than of the fine arts; being works of simple imitation, not creation. We say, a mere portrait or a mere landscape; because it is possible for a portrait or a landscape, without ceasing to be such, to be also a picture, like Turner's landscapes, and the great portraits by Titian or Vandyke.

Whatever in painting or sculpture expresses human feeling,—or character, which is only a certain state of feeling grown habitual,—may be

called, according to circumstances, the poetry or the eloquence of the painter's or the sculptor's art: the poetry, if the feeling declares itself by such signs as escape from us when we are unconscious of being seen; the oratory, if the signs are those we use for the purpose of voluntary communication.

From the reading . . .

The power of painting lies in poetry. . .

The narrative style answers to what is called historical painting, which it is the fashion among connoisseurs to treat as the climax of the pictorial art. That it is the most difficult branch of the art, we do not doubt, because, in its perfection, it includes the perfection of all the other branches; as, in like manner, an epic poem, though, in so far as it is epic (*i.e.*, narrative), it is not poetry at all, is yet esteemed the greatest effort of poetic genius, because there is no kind whatever of poetry which may not appropriately find a place in it. But an historical picture as such, that is, as the representation of an incident, must necessarily, as it seems to us, be poor and ineffective. The narrative powers of painting are extremely limited. Scarcely any picture, scarcely even any series of pictures, tells its own story without the aid of an interpreter. But it is the single figures, which, to us, are the great charm even of an historical picture. It is in these that the power of the art is really seen. In the attempt to narrate, visible and permanent signs are too far behind the fugitive audible ones, which follow so fast one after another; while the faces and figures in a narrative picture, even though they be Titian's, stand still. Who would not prefer one "Virgin and Child" of Raphael to all the pictures which Rubens, with his fat, frouzy Dutch Venuses, ever painted? . . . The power of painting lies in poetry, of which Rubens had not the slightest tincture,—not in narrative, wherein he might have excelled.

The single figures, however, in an historical picture, are rather the eloquence of painting than the poetry. They mostly (unless they are quite out of place in the picture) express the feelings of one person as modified by the presence of others. Accordingly, the minds whose bent leads them rather to eloquence than to poetry rush to historical painting. The French painters, for instance, seldom attempt, because they could make nothing of, single heads, like those glorious ones of the Italian masters with which they might feed themselves day after day in their own Louvre.

They must all be historical; and they are, almost to a man, attitudinizers. If we wished to give any young artist the most impressive warning our imagination could devise against that kind of vice in the pictorial which corresponds to rant in the histrionic art, we would advise him to walk once up and once down the gallery of the Luxembourg. Every figure in French painting or statuary seems to be showing itself off before spectators. They are not poetical, but in the worst style of corrupted eloquence.

Rubens, *Madonna in a Garland* (detail) 1616; Raphael, *Virgin and Child* (detail) 1504

[Part II]

[The Born Poet and the Cultivated Poet]

"Nascitur Poëta"[3] is a maxim of classical antiquity... [T]his aphorism, born in the infancy of psychology, will perhaps be found, now when that science is in its adolescence, to be as true as an epigram ever is...

[T]o no one of the spiritual benefactors of mankind is a higher or a more assiduous intellectual culture needful than to the poet. It is true, he possesses this advantage over others who use the "instrument of words",—that, of the truths which he utters, a larger proportion are derived from per-

3. The poet is born (not made). *Eds.*

sonal consciousness, and a smaller from philosophic investigation. But the power itself of discriminating between what really is consciousness and what is only a process of inference completed in a single instant, and the capacity of distinguishing whether that of which the mind is conscious be an eternal truth or but a dream, are among the last results of the most matured and perfect intellect. Not to mention that the poet, no more than any other person who writes, confines himself altogether to intuitive truths, nor has any means of communicating even these but by words, every one of which derives all its power of conveying a meaning from a whole host of acquired notions and facts learnt by study and experience.

From the reading . . .

What is poetry but the thoughts and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself?

Nevertheless, it seems undeniable in point of fact, and consistent with the principles of a sound metaphysics, that there are poetic natures. There is a mental and physical constitution or temperament peculiarly fitted for poetry. This temperament will not of itself make a poet, no more than the soil will the fruit; and as good fruit may be raised by culture from indifferent soils, so may good poetry from naturally unpoetical minds. But the poetry of one who is a poet by nature will be clearly and broadly distinguishable from the poetry of mere culture.. . .

One may write genuine poetry, and not be a poet; for whosoever writes out truly any human feeling, writes poetry. All persons, even the most unimaginative, in moments of strong emotion, speak poetry, and hence the drama is poetry, which else were always prose, except when a poet is one of the characters. What is poetry but the thoughts and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself? . . .

[The Poet Characterized]

Whom, then, shall we call poets? Those who are so constituted, that emotions are the links of association by which their ideas, both sensuous and spiritual, are connected together. This constitution belongs (within certain limits) to all in whom poetry is a pervading principle. In all others, poetry is something extraneous and superinduced; something out of

themselves, foreign to the habitual course of their everyday lives and characters; a world to which they may make occasional visits, but where they are sojourners, not dwellers, and which, when out of it, or even when in it, they think of, peradventure, but as a phantom-world . . . a place of *ignes fatui* and spectral illusions. Those only who have the peculiarity of association which we have mentioned, and which is a natural though not an universal consequence of intense sensibility, instead of seeming not themselves when they are uttering poetry, scarcely seem themselves when uttering any thing to which poetry is foreign. Whatever be the thing which they are contemplating, if it be capable of connecting itself with their emotions, the aspect under which it first and most naturally paints itself to them is its poetic aspect. The poet of culture sees his object in prose, and describes it in poetry: the poet of nature actually sees it in poetry.

. . . In a mind entirely uncultivated, which is also without any strong feelings, objects whether of sense or of intellect arrange themselves in the mere casual order in which they have been seen, heard, or otherwise perceived. Persons of this sort may be said to think chronologically. If they remember a fact, it is by reason of a fortuitous coincidence with some trifling incident or circumstance which took place at the very time. It they have a story to tell, or testimony to deliver in a witness-box, their narrative must follow the exact order in which the events took place: dodge them, and the thread of association is broken; they cannot go on. Their associations, to use the language of philosophers, are chiefly of the successive, not the synchronous kind; and, whether successive or synchronous, are mostly casual.

To the man of science, again, or of business, objects group themselves according to the artificial classifications which the understanding has voluntarily made for the convenience of thought or of practice. But, where any of the impressions are vivid and intense, the associations into which these enter are the ruling ones; it being a well-known law of association, that, the stronger a feeling is, the more quickly and strongly it associates itself with any other object or feeling. Where, therefore, nature has given strong feelings, and education has not created factitious tendencies stronger than the natural ones, the prevailing associations will be those which connect objects and ideas with emotions, and with each other through the intervention of emotions. Thoughts and images will be linked together according to the similarity of the feelings which cling to them. A thought will introduce a thought by first introducing a feeling which is allied with it. At the centre of each ground of thoughts or images will be

found a feeling; and the thoughts or images will be there, only because the feeling was there. The combinations which the mind puts together, the pictures which it paints, the wholes which Imagination constructs out of the materials supplied by Fancy, will be indebted to some dominant feeling, not, as in other natures, to a dominant thought, for their unity and consistency of character, for what distinguishes them from incoherences.

The difference, then, between the poetry of a poet, and the poetry of a cultivated but not naturally poetic mind, is, that in the latter, with however bright a halo of feeling the thought may be surrounded and glorified, the thought itself is always the conspicuous object; while the poetry of a poet is Feeling itself, employing Thought only as the medium of its expression. In the one, feeling waits upon thought; in the other, thought upon feeling. The one writer has a distinct aim, common to him with any other didactic author: he desires to convey the thought, and he conveys it clothed in the feelings which it excites in himself, or which he deems most appropriate to it. The other merely pours forth the overflowing of his feelings; and all the thoughts which those feelings suggest are floated promiscuously along the stream.

[Comparison of Shelley and Wordsworth]

It may assist in rendering our meaning intelligible if we illustrate it by a parallel between the two English authors of our own day who have produced the greatest quantity of true and enduring poetry,—Wordsworth and Shelley. Apter instances could not be wished for: the one might be cited as the type, the exemplar, of what the poetry of culture may accomplish; the other, as perhaps the most striking example ever known of the poetic temperament. How different, accordingly, is the poetry of these two great writers! In Wordsworth, the poetry is almost always the mere setting of a thought. The thought may be more valuable than the setting, or it may be less valuable; but there can be no question as to which was first in his mind. What he is impressed with, and what he is anxious to impress, is some proposition more or less distinctly conceived; some truth, or something which he deems such.… His poetry, therefore, may be defined to be his thoughts, coloured by, and impressing themselves by means of, emotions.…

On the other hand, Wordsworth's poetry is never bounding, never ebullient; has little even of the appearance of spontaneousness: the well is never so full that it overflows. There is an air of calm deliberateness about

all he writes, which is not characteristic of the poetic temperament. His poetry seems one thing, himself, another. He seems to be poetical because he wills to be so, not because he cannot help it.... It is for this reason, doubtless, that the genius of Wordsworth is essentially unlyrical. Lyric poetry, as it was the earliest kind, is also, if the view we are now taking of poetry be correct, more eminently and peculiarly poetry than any other: it is the poetry most natural to a really poetic temperament, and least capable of being successfully imitated by one not so endowed by nature.

From the reading ...

He is a poet, not because he has ideas of any particular kind, but because the succession of his ideas is subordinate to the course of his emotions.

Shelley Shelleyis the very reverse of all this. Where Wordsworth is strong, he is weak: where Wordsworth is weak, he is strong.... For him, voluntary mental discipline had done little: the vividness of his emotions and of his sensations had done all. He seldom follows up an idea: it starts into life, summons from the fairy-land of his inexhaustible fancy some three or four bold images, then vanishes, and straight he is off on the wings of some casual association into quite another sphere. He had scarcely yet acquired the consecutiveness of thought necessary for a long poem. His more ambitious compositions too often resemble the scattered fragments of a mirror,—colors brilliant as life, single images without end, but no picture. It is only when under the overruling influence of some one state of feeling, either actually experienced, or summoned up in the vividness of reality by a fervid imagination, that he writes as a great poet; unity of feeling being to him the harmonizing principle which a central idea is to minds of another class, and supplying the coherency and consistency which would else have been wanting. Thus it is in many of his smaller, and especially his lyrical poems. They are obviously written to exhale, perhaps to relieve, a state of feeling, or of conception of feeling, almost oppressive from its vividness. The thoughts and imagery are suggested by the feeling, and are such as it finds unsought. The state of feeling may be either of soul or of sense, or oftener (might we not say invariably?) of both; for the poetic temperament is usually, perhaps always, accompanied by exquisite senses.... [I]t pervades the entire nervous system. States of feeling, whether sensuous or spiritual, which thus possess the

whole being, are the fountains of that which we have called the poetry of poets, and which is little else than a pouring forth of the thoughts and images that pass across the mind while some permanent state of feeling is occupying it.

To the same original fineness of organization, Shelley was doubtless indebted for another of his rarest gifts,—that exuberance of imagery, which, when unrepressed, as in many of his poems it is, amounts to a fault. The susceptibility of his nervous system, which made his emotions intense, made also the impressions of his external senses deep and clear; and agreeably to the law of association, by which, as already remarked, the strongest impressions are those which associate themselves the most easily, and strongly, these vivid sensations were readily recalled to mind by all objects or thoughts which had co-existed with them, and by all feelings which in any degree resembled them. Never did a fancy so teem with sensuous imagery as Shelley’s. Wordsworth economizes an image, and detains it until he has distilled all the poetry out of it, and it will not yield a drop more: Shelley lavishes his with a profusion which is unconscious because it is inexhaustible.

[The Poetic Course of Emotion]

If, then, the maxim *Nascitur poëta* mean, either that the power of producing poetical compositions is a peculiar faculty which the poet brings into the world with him, which grows with his growth like any of his bodily powers, and is as independent of culture as his height and his complexion; or that any natural peculiarity whatever is implied in producing poetry, real poetry, and in any quantity,—such poetry too, as, to the majority of educated and intelligent readers, shall appear quite as good as, or even better than, any other,—in either sense the doctrine is false. And, nevertheless, there is poetry which could not emanate but from a mental and physical constitution, peculiar, not in the kind, but in the degree, of its susceptibility; a constitution which makes its possessor capable of greater happiness than mankind in general, and also of greater unhappiness; and because greater, so also more various. And such poetry, to all who know enough of nature to own it as being in nature, is much more poetry, is poetry in a far higher sense, than any other; since the common element of all poetry, that which constitutes poetry,—human feeling—enters far more largely into this than into the poetry of culture; not only because the natures which we have called poetical really feel more, and consequently

have more feeling to express, but because, the capacity of feeling being so great, feeling, when excited and not voluntarily resisted, seizes the helm of their thoughts, and the succession of ideas and images becomes the mere utterance of an emotion; not, as in other natures, the emotion a mere ornamental coloring of the thought.

Ordinary education and the ordinary course of life are constantly at work counteracting this quality of mind, and substituting habits more suitable to their own ends: if, instead of substituting, they were content to superadd, there would be nothing to complain of. But when will education consist, not in repressing any mental faculty or power, from the uncontrolled action of which danger is apprehended, but in training up to its proper strength the corrective and antagonist power?

From the reading . . .

[T]he truth of fiction is to give a true picture of life.

In whomsoever the quality which we have described exists, and is not stifled, that person is a poet. Doubtless he is a greater poet in proportion as the fineness of his perceptions, whether of sense or of internal consciousness, furnishes him with an ampler supply of lovely images, the vigor and richness of his intellect with a greater abundance of moving thoughts.... What constitutes the poet is not the imagery, nor the thoughts, nor even the feelings, but the law according to which they are called up. He is a poet, not because he has ideas of any particular kind, but because the succession of his ideas is subordinate to the course of his emotions....

[Poetry and Philosophy]

Our judgments of authors who lay actual claim to the title of poets follow the same principle. Whenever, after a writer's meaning is fully understood, it is still matter of reasoning and discussion whether he is a poet or not, he will be found to be wanting in the characteristic peculiarity of association so often adverted to. When, on the contrary, after reading or hearing one or two passages, we instinctively and without hesitation cry out, "This is a poet!" the probability is that the passages are strongly marked with this peculiar quality. And we may add, that, in such case, a critic, who, not having sufficient feeling to respond to the poetry, is

also without sufficient philosophy to understand it though he feel it not, will be apt to pronounce, not "This is prose," but "This is exaggeration," "This is mysticism," or "This is nonsense."

Although a philosopher cannot, by culture, make himself, in the peculiar sense in which we now use the term, a poet,—unless at least he have that peculiarity of nature which would probably have made poetry his earliest pursuit,—a poet may always, by culture, make himself a philosopher. The poetic laws of association are by no means incompatible with the more ordinary laws; are by no means such as must have their course, even though a deliberate purpose require their suspension.. . .

The investigation of nature requires no habits or qualities of mind but such as may always be required by industry and mental activity. Because, at one time, the mind may be so given up to a state of feeling that the succession of its ideas is determined by the present enjoyment or suffering which pervades it, this is no reason but that in the calm retirement of study, when under no peculiar excitement either of the outward or of the inward sense, it may form any combinations, or pursue any trains of ideas, which are most conducive to the purposes of philosophic inquiry; and may, when in that state, form deliberate convictions, from which no excitement will afterwards make it swerve. Might we not go even further than this? We shall not pause to ask whether it be not a misunderstanding of the nature of passionate feeling to imagine that it is inconsistent with calmness; whether they who so deem of it do not mistake passion, in the militant or antagonistic state, for the type of passion universally,—do not confound passion struggling towards an outward object, with passion brooding over itself. But, without entering into this deeper investigation, that capacity of strong feeling which is supposed necessarily to disturb the judgment is also the material out of which all motives are made,—the motives, consequently, which lead human beings to the pursuit of truth. The greater the individual's capability of happiness and of misery, the stronger interest has that individual in arriving at truth; and, when once that interest is felt, an impassioned nature is sure to pursue this, as to pursue any other object, with greater ardor: for energy of character is commonly the offspring of strong feeling. If, therefore, the most impassioned natures do not ripen into the most powerful intellects, it is always from defect of culture, or something wrong in the circumstances by which the being has originally or successively been surrounded. Undoubtedly, strong feelings require a strong intellect to carry them, as more sail requires more ballast; and when, from neglect or bad education, that strength is wanting, no wonder if the grandest and swiftest vessels make

the most utter wreck.

... Whether the superiority will naturally be on the side of the philosopher poet, or of the mere poet; whether the writings of the one ought, as a whole, to be truer, and their influence more beneficent, than those of the other,—is too obvious in principle to need statement: it would be absurd to doubt whether two endowments are better than one, whether truth is more certainly arrived at by two processes, verifying and correcting each other, than by one alone. Unfortunately, in practice, the matter is not quite so simple: there the question often is, Which is least prejudicial to the intellect,—uncultivation or malcultivation? For, as long as education consists chiefly of the mere inculcation of traditional opinions; many of which, from the mere fact that the human intellect has not yet reached perfection, must necessarily be false; so long as even those who are best taught am rather taught to know the thoughts of others than to think,—it is not always clear that the poet of acquired ideas has the advantage over him whose feeling has been his sole teacher. For the depth and durability of wrong as well as of right impressions is proportional to the fineness of the material; and they who have the greatest capacity of natural feeling are generally those whose artificial feelings are the strongest....

Related Ideas

John Stuart Mill.[4] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Life and works of Mill with emphasis on his empirical philosophy— including views on psychology, mathematics, ethics, and social philosophy by Fred Wilson.

John Stuart Mill.[5] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticim*. A reappraisal and analysis of Mill's poetic theory, informed by contemporary philosophies of language and earlier empirical associationist theories, by W. David Shaw.

John Stuart Mill.[6] *Bartleby.com Great Books Online*. Summary article of Mill's literary and cultural thought from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature.*

4. *John Stuart Mill*. (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill/)
5. *John Stuart Mill*. (http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/\ john_stuart_mill.html)
6. *John Stuart Mill*. (http://www.bartleby.com/224/0107.html)

From the reading . . .

[W]hen the expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts tinged by his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind,—then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence.

William Wordsworth, (adapted) Duykinck; *Percy Bythe Shelley*, (adapted) Thoemmes

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Compare John Stuart Mill’s view of the cultural and social function of art to Leo Tolstoy’s view that art is the transmission of feelings from the artist to others. In what sense can Mill’s characterization of poetry as soliloquy be conveyed culturally? Is the difference between the two theories of art merely a question of an accented point of view?
2. Mill at several points states poetry is “overheard” not “heard.” He also states, “Who can imagine ‘Dove sono’ heard? We imagine it overheard.” Explain the distinction between “heard” and “overheard.”

3. Jeremy Bentham, reminiscently of the view expressed in Book X of Plato's *Republic*, writes of the untruth of poetry:

   > Indeed, between poetry and truth there is natural opposition: false morals and fictitious nature. The poet always stands in need of something false. When he pretends to lay has foundations in truth, the ornaments of his superstructure are fictions; his business consist in stimulating our passions, and exciting our prejudices. Truth, exactitude of every kind is fatal to poetry. The poet must see everything through coloured media, and strive to make every one else do the same. It is true, there have been noble spirits, to whom poetry and philosophy have been equally indebted; but these exceptions do not counteract the mischiefs which have resulted from this magic art.[7]

   On the one hand, from a utilitartian point of view, Bentham concludes from this passage, "[T]he game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and science of music and poetry." On the other hand, Mill's æsthetics is often characterized as a kind of romanticism where poetry is the expresssion of personal emotion. Mill writes in our selection, "Poetry, when it is really such, is truth; and fiction, if it is good for anything, is truth..." How does Mill find utility and social purpose in poetry? What, according to Mill, is the cultural significance of poetry? How can this view of art be reconciled with Mill's utilitarianism?

4. Is Mill's distinction between poetry and prose a distinction of degree or of kind? In principle, would Mill allow for a kind of scientific poetry?

5. To what extent does Mill's contrast of matters of fact in science with emotive significance in poetry anticipate I.A. Richards' notion of emotive value and Charles L. Stevenson's distinction between statements of belief and statements of attitude? Stevenson writes:

   > Let us begin by noting that "disagreement" has two broad senses... The difference between the two senses of "disagreement" is essentially this: the first involves an opposition of beliefs, both of which cannot be true, and the second involves an opposition of attiutdes, both of which cannot be satisfied.[8]

7. Jeremy Bentham. *The Rationale of Reward.* In *The Works of Jeremy Bentham.* John Bowring Edition. Edinburgh: Tait. 1843. Volume II. Book III. Chapter I.
8. Charles L. Stevenson. *Facts and Values: Studies in Ethical Analysis.* New Haven: Yale University Press. 1963. 1-2.

Does Mill hold that there is a clear distinction between empirical statements and emotive statements? Is the meaning of poetry only subjective for Mill?

Chapter 17

“Music Is The Language of Emotion” by Herbert Spencer

Herbert Spencer adapted from Thoemmes

About the author . . .

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), considered by many to be the founder of sociology, was essentially self-educated. Initially, he wrote for the *The Economist* after working for the railroad and writing for journals on such topics as universal sufferage and slavery. He developed the philosophy of “Social Statics” which sought to set forth the conditions for the universal happiness of mankind. His *magnum opus* is *A System of Synthetic Philosophy*, an influential nineteenth century account of biology, sociology, and politics based on evolutionary theory.

About the work . . .

In his “On the Origin and Function of Music”,[1] Herbert Spencer argues that music derives from physiological responses which produce vocal sounds reflective of various human emotions. He believes that musical culture develops an “emotional language” of sympathy forming the basis of human happiness as well as the welfare of society. In short, music, as a language of feelings, is a means by which human emotion is communicated, and, consequently, music ranks the highest of the fine arts.

From the reading . . .

[T]he distinctive traits of song, are simply the traits of emotional speech intensified and systematised.

Ideas of Interest from “On the Origin and Function of Music”

1. Explain the principle Spencer asserts that underlies all vocal phenomena and, as a consequence, music, itself.
2. What are some of the physiological results of variations in feelings which Spencer mentions?
3. What is the relation between both loudness and pitch to the quality of emotions, according to Spencer?
4. Explain Spencer’s law relating feelings or emotion to muscular action.
5. According to Spencer, how are passionate effects achieved in music?

1. Herbert Spencer. “On the Origin and Function of Music” in *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons. 1911. 312-330.

6. On Spencer's hypothesis, in what ways are dancing, music, and poetry related?
7. How does Spencer acccount for the altruistic socializing effect of music through sympathy?

The Reading Selection from "On the Origin and Function of Music"

[The Connection Between Emotion and Music]

All music is originally vocal. All vocal sounds are produced by the agency of certain muscles. These muscles, in common with those of the body at large, are excited to contraction by pleasurable and painful feelings. And therefore it is that feelings demonstrate themselves in sounds as well as in movements. Therefore it is that Carlo barks as well as leaps when he is let out—that puss purrs as well as erects her tail—that the canary chirps as well as flutters. Therefore it is that the angry lion roars while he lashes his sides, and the dog growls while he retracts his lip. Therefore it is that the maimed animal not only struggles, but howls. And it is from this cause that in human beings bodily suffering expresses itself not only in contortions, but in shrieks and groans—that in anger, and fear, and grief, the gesticulations are accompanied by shouts and screams-that delightful sensations are followed by exclamations—and that we hear screams of joy and shouts of exultation.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [V]ariations of voice are the physiological results of variations of feeling. . .

We have here, then, a principle underlying all vocal phenomena; including those of vocal music, and by consequence those of music in general. The muscles that move the chest, larynx, and vocal chords, contracting like other muscles in proportion to the intensity of the feelings; every

different contraction of these muscles involving, as it does, a different adjustment of the vocal organs; every different adjustment of the vocal organs causing a change in the sound emitted;—it follows that variations of voice are the physiological results of variations of feeling; it follows that each inflection or modulation is the natural outcome of some passing emotion or sensation; and it follows that the explanation of all kinds of vocal expression must be sought in this general relation between mental and muscular excitements. Let us, then, see whether we cannot thus account for the chief peculiarities in the utterance of the feelings: grouping these peculiarities under the heads of *loudness, quality, or timbre, pitch, intervals*, and *rate of variation*.

[Loundess]

Between the lungs and the organs of voice there is much the same relation as between the bellows of an organ and its pipes. And as the loudness of the sound given out by an organ-pipe increases with the strength of the blast from the bellows; so, other things equal, the loudness of a vocal sound increases with the strength of the blast from the lungs. But the expulsion of air from the lungs is effected by certain muscles of the chest and abdomen. The force with which these muscles contract, is proportionate to the intensity of the feeling experienced. Hence, *à priori*, loud sounds will be the habitual results of strong feelings. That they are so we have daily proof. The pain which, if moderate, can be borne silently, causes outcries if it becomes extreme. While a slight vexation makes a child whimper, a fit of passion calls forth a howl that disturbs the neighbourhood. When the voices in an adjacent room become unusually audible, we infer anger, or surprise, or joy. Loudness of applause is significant of great approbation; and with uproarious mirth we associate the idea of high enjoyment. Commencing with the silence of apathy, we find that the utterances grow louder as the sensations or emotions, whether pleasurable or painful, grow stronger.

[Timbre]

That different *qualities* of voice accompany different mental states, and that under states of excitement the tones are more sonorous than usual, is another general fact admitting of a parallel explanation. The sounds of

common conversation have but little resonance; those of strong feeling have much more. Under rising ill temper the voice acquires a metallic ring. In accordance with her constant mood, the ordinary speech of a virago has a piercing quality quite opposite to that softness indicative of placidity. A ringing laugh marks an especially joyous temperament. Grief unburdening itself uses tones approaching in *timbre* to those of chanting: and in his most pathetic passages an eloquent speaker similarly falls into tones more vibratory than those common to him. Now any one may readily convince himself that resonant vocal sounds can be produced only by a certain muscular effort additional to that ordinarily needed. If after uttering a word in his speaking voice, the reader, without changing the pitch or the loudness, will *sing* this word, he will perceive that before he can sing it, he has to alter the adjustment of the vocal organs; to do which a certain force must be used; and by putting his fingers on that external prominence marking the top of the larynx, he will have further evidence that to produce a sonorous tone the organs must be drawn out of their usual position. Thus, then, the fact that the tones of excited feeling are more vibratory than those of common conversation is another instance of the connection between mental excitement and muscular excitement. The speaking voice, the recitative voice, and the singing voice, severally exemplify one general principle.

[Pitch]

That the *pitch* of the voice varies according to the action of the vocal muscles scarcely needs saying. All know that the middle notes, in which they converse, are made without any appreciable effort; and all know that to make either very high or very low notes requires a considerable effort. In either ascending or descending from the pitch of ordinary speech, we are conscious of an increasing muscular strain, which, at both extremes of the register, becomes positively painful. Hence it follows from our 'general principle, that while indifference or calmness will use the medium tones, the tones used during excitement will be either above or below them; and will rise higher and higher, or fall lower and lower, as the feelings grow stronger. This physiological deduction we also find to be in harmony with familiar facts. The habitual sufferer utters his complaints in a voice raised considerably above the natural key; and agonising pain vents itself in either shrieks or groans -in very high or very low notes. Beginning at his talking pitch, the cry of the disappointed urchin grows more shrill as it

grows louder. The "Oh!" of astonishment or delight, begins several notes below the middle voice, and descends still lower. Anger expresses itself in high tones, or else in "curses not loud but *deep*." Deep tones, too, are always used in uttering strong reproaches. Such an exclamation as "Beware!" if made dramatically—that is, if made with a show of feeling—must be many notes lower than ordinary. Further, we have groans of disapprobation, groans of horror, groans of remorse. And extreme joy and fear are alike accompanied by shrill outcries.

[Intervals]

Nearly allied to the subject of pitch, is that of *intervals*; and the explanation of them carries our argument a step further. While calm speech is comparatively monotonous, emotion makes use of fifths, octaves, and even wider intervals. Listen to any one narrating or repeating something in which he has no interest, and his voice will not wander more than two or three notes above or below his medium note, and that by small steps; but when he comes to some exciting event he will be heard not only to use the higher and lower notes of his register, but to go from one to the other by larger leaps. Being unable in print to imitate these traits of feeling, we feel some difficulty in fully realising them to the reader. But we may suggest a few remembrances which will perhaps call to mind a sufficiency of others. If two men living in the same place, and frequently seeing one another, meet, say at a public assembly, any phrase with which one may be heard to accost the other—as "Hallo, are you here?"—will have an ordinary intonation. But if one of them, after long absence, has unexpectedly returned, the expression of surprise with which his friend may greet him—"Hallo! how came you here? "—will be uttered in much more strongly contrasted tones. The two syllables of the word "Hallo" will be, the one much higher and the other much lower than before; and the rest of the sentence will similarly ascend and descend by longer steps.

Again, if, supposing her to be in an adjoining room, the mistress of the house calls "Mary," the two syllables of the name will be spoken in an ascending interval of a third. If Mary does not reply, the call will be repeated probably in a descending fifth; implying the slightest shade of annoyance at Mary's inattention. Should Mary still make no answer, the increasing annoyance will show itself by the use of a descending octave on the next repetition of the call. And supposing the silence to continue, the lady, if not of a very even temper, win show her irritation at Mary's

seemingly intentional negligence by finally calling her in tones still more widely contrasted-the first syllable being higher and the last lower than before.

Now, these and analogous facts, which the reader will readily accumulate, clearly conform to the law laid down. For to make large intervals requires more muscular action than to make small ones. But not only is the *extent* of vocal intervals thus explicable as due to the relation between nervous and muscular excitement, but also in some degree their *direction*, as ascending or descending. The middle notes being those which demand no appreciable effort of muscular adjustment; and the effort becoming greater as we either ascend or descend; it follows that a departure from the middle notes in either direction will mark increasing emotion; while a return towards the middle notes will mark decreasing emotion. Hence it happens that an enthusiastic person uttering such a sentence as—"It was the most splendid sight I ever saw!" will ascend to the first syllable of the word "splendid," and thence will descend: the word "splendid "marking the climax of the feeling produced by the recollection. Hence, again, it happens that, under some extreme vexation produced by another's stupidity, an irascible man, exclaiming—"What a confounded fool the fellow is!" will begin somewhat below his middle voice, and descending to the word "fool," which he will utter in one of his deepest notes, will then ascend again. And it may be remarked, that the word "fool" will not only be deeper and louder than the rest, but will also have more emphasis of articulation—another mode in which muscular excitement is shown.. . .

[Variation]

The remaining characteristic of emotional speech which wehave to notice is that of *variability of pitch*. It is scarcely possible here to convey adequate ideas of this more complex manifestation. We must be content with simply indicating some occasions on which it may be observed. On a meeting of friends, for instance—as when there arrives a party of much wished-for-visitors—the voices of all will be heard to undergo changes of pitch not only greater but much more numerous than usual. If a speaker at a public meeting is interrupted by some squabble among those he is addressing, his comparatively level tones will be in marked contrast with the rapidly changing one of the disputants.. . . In such cases we once more recognise the same law: for muscular excitement is shown not only in strength of contraction but also in the rapidity with which different mus-

cular adjustments succeed each other.

Thus we find all the leading vocal phenomena to have a physiological basis. They are so many manifestations of the general law that feeling is a stimulus to muscular action—a law conformed to throughout the whole economy, not of man only, but of every sensitive creature—a law, therefore, which lies deep in the nature of animal organisation. The expressiveness of these various modifications of voice is therefore innate. Each of us, from babyhood upwards, has been spontaneously making them, when under the various sensations and emotions by which they are produced. Having been conscious of each feeling at the same time that we heard ourselves make the consequent sound, we have acquired an established association of ideas between such sound and the feeling which caused it. When the like sound is made by another, we ascribe the like feeling to him; and by a further consequence we not only ascribe to him that feeling.. but have a certain degree of it aroused in ourselves: for to become conscious of the feeling which another is experiencing, is to have that feeling awakened in our own consciousness, which is the same thing as experiencing the feeling. Thus these various modifications of voice become not only a language through which we understand the emotions of others, but also the means of exciting our sympathy with such emotions.

[Theory of Music]

Have we not here, then, adequate data for a theory of music? These vocal peculiarities which indicate excited feeling *are those which especially distinguish song from ordinary speech*. Every one of the alterations of voice which we have found to be a physiological result of pain or pleasure, *is carried to its greatest extreme in vocal music*. For instance, we saw that, in virtue of the general relation between mental and muscular excitement, one characteristic of passionate utterance is *loudness*. Well, its comparative loudness is one of the distinctive marks of song as contrasted with the speech of daily life; and further, the *forte* passages of an air are those intended to represent the climax of its emotion. We next saw that the tones in which emotion expresses itself are, in conformity with this same law, of a more sonorous *timbre* than those of calm conversation. Here, too, song displays a still higher degree of the peculiarity; for the singing tone is the most resonant we can make. Again, it was shown that, from a like cause, mental excitement vents itself in the higher and lower notes of the register; using the middle notes but seldom. And it

scarcely needs saying that vocal music is still more distinguished by its comparative neglect of the notes in which we talk, and its habitual use of those above or below them and, moreover, that its most passionate effects are commonly produced at the two extremities of its scale, but especially the upper one.

From the reading . . .

. . . how, at the theatre, the concert, the picture gallery, we lose half our enjoyment if we have no one to enjoy with us. . .

A yet further trait of strong feeling, similarly accounted for, was the employment of larger intervals than are employed in common converse. This trait, also, every ballad and aria carries to an extent beyond that heard in the spontaneous utterances of emotion: add to which, that the direction of these intervals, which, as diverging from or converging towards the medium tones, we found to be physiologically expressive of increasing or decreasing emotion, may be observed to have in music like meanings. Once more, it was pointed out that not only extreme but also rapid variations of pitch are characteristic of mental excitement; and once more we see in the quick changes of every melody, that song carries the characteristic as far, if not farther. Thus, in respect alike of *loudness, timbre, pitch, intervals*, and *rate of variation*, song employs and exaggerates the natural language of the emotions;—it arises from a systematic combination of those vocal peculiarities which are the physiological effects of acute pleasure and pain.

[Other Vocal Qualities]

Besides these chief characteristics of song as distinguished from common speech, there are sundry minor ones similarly explicable as due to the relation between mental and muscular excitement; and before proceeding further these should be briefly noticed.. . . We have the trembling of anger, of fear, of hope, of joy; and the vocal muscles being implicated with the rest, the voice too becomes tremulous. Now, in singing, this tremulousness of voice is very effectively used by some vocalists in highly pathetic passages; sometimes, indeed, because of its effectiveness, too much used by them—as by Tamberlik, for instance.

From the reading . . .

Every one of the alterations of voice which we have found to be a physiological result of pain or pleasure, *is carried to its greatest extreme in vocal music*.

Again, there is a mode of musical execution known as the *staccato*, appropriate to energetic passages-to passages expressive of exhilaration, of resolution, of confidence. The action of the vocal muscles which produces this staccato style is analogous to the muscular action which produces the sharp, decisive, energetic movements of body indicating these states of mind; and therefore it is that the staccato style has the meaning we ascribe to it. Conversely, slurred intervals are expressive of gentler and less active feelings; and are so because they imply the smaller muscular vivacity due to a lower mental energy. The difference of effect resulting from difference of *time* in music is also attributable to the same law. Already it has been pointed out that the more frequent changes of pitch which ordinarily result from passion are imitated and developed in song; and here we have to add, that the various rates of such changes, appropriate to the different styles of music, are further traits having the same derivation. The slowest movements, *largo* and *adagio*, are used where such depressing emotions as grief, or such unexciting emotions as reverence, are to be portrayed; while the more rapid movements, *andante, allegro, presto*, represent successively increasing degrees of mental vivacity; and do this because they imply that muscular activity which flows from this mental vivacity. Even the *rhythm*, which forms a remaining distinction between song and speech, may not improbably have a kindred cause. Why the actions excited by strong feeling should tend to become rhythmical is not very obvious; but that they do so there are divers evidences. There is the swaying of the body to and fro under pain or grief, of the leg under impatience or agitation. Dancing, too, is a rhythmical action natural to elevated emotion. That under excitement speech acquires a certain rhythm, we may occasionally perceive in the highest efforts of an orator. In poetry, which is a form of speech used for the better expression of emotional ideas, we have this rhythmical tendency developed. And when we bear in mind that dancing, poetry, and music are connate—are originally constituent parts of the same thing, it becomes clear that the measured movement common to them all implies a rhythmical action of the whole system, the vocal apparatus included; and that so the rhythm of

music is a more subtle and complex result of this relation between mental and muscular excitement.

From the reading . . .

[T]his emotional language which musical culture develops and refines is only second in importance to the language of the intellect; perhaps not even second to it.

But it is time to end this analysis, which possibly we have already carried too far. It is not to be supposed that the more special peculiarities of musical expression are to be definitely explained. Though probably they may all in some way conform to the principle that has been worked out, it is obviously impracticable to trace that principle in its more ramified applications. Nor is it needful to our argument that it should be so traced. The foregoing facts sufficiently prove that what we regard as the distinctive traits of song, are simply the traits of emotional speech intensified and systematised. In respect of its general characteristics, we think it has been made clear that vocal music, and by consequence all music, is an idealisation of the natural language of passion.. . .

[Music is Emotional Language]

Probably most will think that the function here assigned to music is one of very little moment. But further reflection may lead them to a contrary conviction. In its bearings upon human happiness, we believe that this emotional language which musical culture develops and refines is only second in importance to the language of the intellect; perhaps not even second to it. For these modifications of voice produced by feelings are the means of exciting like feelings in others. Joined with gestures and expressions of face, they give life to the otherwise dead words in which the intellect utters its ideas; and so enable the hearer not only to *understand* the state of mind they accompany, but to *partake* of that state. In short, they are the chief media of *sympathy*. And if we consider how much both our general welfare and our immediate pleasures depend upon sympathy, we shall recognise the importance of whatever makes this sympathy greater. If we bear in mind that by their fellow-feeling men are led to behave justly, kindly, and considerately to each other—that the difference

between the cruelty of the barbarous and the humanity of the civilised, results from the increase of fellow-feeling; if we bear in mind that this faculty which, makes us sharers in the joys and sorrows of others, is the basis of all the higher affections—that in friendship, love, and all domestic pleasures, it is an essential element; if we bear in mind how much our direct gratifications are intensified by sympathy,—how, at the theatre, the concert, the picture gallery, we lose half our enjoyment if we have no one to enjoy with us; if, in short, we bear in mind that for all happiness beyond what the unfriended recluse can have, we are indebted to this same sympathy;—we shall see that the agencies which communicate it can scarcely be overrated in value.

The tendency of civilisation is more and more to repress the antagonistic elements of our characters and to develop the social ones—to curb our purely selfish desires and exercise our unselfish ones—to replace private gratifications by gratifications resulting from, or involving, the happiness of others. And while, by this adaptation to the social state, the sympathetic side of our nature is being unfolded, there is simultaneously growing up a language of sympathetic intercourse—a language through which we communicate to others the happiness we feel, and are made sharers in their happiness.. . .

Just as there has silently grown up a language of ideas, which, rude as it at first was, now enables us to convey with precision the most subtle and complicated thoughts; so, there is still silently growing up a language of feelings, which, notwithstanding its present imperfection, we may expect will ultimately enable men vividly and completely to impress on each other all the emotions which they experience from moment to moment.

Thus if, as we have endeavoured to show, it is the function of music to facilitate the development of this emotional language, we may regard music as an aid to the achievement of that higher happiness which it indistinctly shadows forth. Those vague feelings of unexperienced felicity which music arouses—those indefinite impressions of an unknown ideal life which it calls up, may be considered as a prophecy, to the fulfilment of which music is itself partly instrumental. The strange capacity which we have for being so affected by melody and harmony may be taken to imply both that it is within the possibilities of our nature to realise those intenser delights they dimly suggest, and that they are in some way concerned in the realisation of them. On this supposition the power and the meaning of music become comprehensible; but otherwise they are a mystery.

Related Ideas

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).[2] *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The life and philosophy of Herbert Spencer is summarized by William Sweet.

Herbert Spencer.[3] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Spencer’s utilitarianism is emphasized in this summary article by David Weinstein.

> **From the reading ...**
>
> [V]ocal music, and by consequence all music, is an idealisation of the natural language of passion.

Birth-day Ode, Royal Band, Library of Congress

2. *Herbert Spencer* (http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/spencer.htm)
3. *Herbert Spencer* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spencer/)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. What does Spencer mean by a "language of feeling"? Is that expression only to be regarded metaphorically or is it meant to be a symbolic language of the same status as "the language of the intellect"?
2. Contemporary psychological theories of emotion postulate that physiological arousal is occasioned by emotion. Survey the psychological literature as to the effects of different kinds of music on behaviorally verifiable consequences of physiological arousal of test subjects.
3. Spencer concludes that physiological responses from different feelings are genetically based:

   > [F]eeling is a stimulus to muscular action—a law conformed to throughout the whole economy, not of man only, but of every sensitive creature—a law, therefore, which lies deep in the nature of animal organisation. The expressiveness of these various modifications of voice is therefore innate.

   Yet, at the same time he argues for an associationist basis for the connection to vocal sounds:

   > Having been conscious of each feeling at the same time that we heard ourselves make the consequent sound, we have acquired an established association of ideas between such sound and the feeling which caused it.

   To what extent is Spencer's principle underling all vocal phenomena empirically learned and to what extent is it a result of instinct?

4. A number of philosophers, including Pythagoras and Boëthius, argue that music is reducible to mathematical ratios. If so, how would this reduction relate to Spencer's hypothesis that music is essentially language of the emotions?

Chapter 18

“Æsthetics as Life’s Affirmation” by Frederich Nietzsche

Frederich Nietzsche adapted from Projekt Gutenberg-DE

About the author . . .

Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) father and grandfathers were Lutheran ministers. Upon the death of his father, he moved to *Naumburg an der Saale* with his mother, grandmother, two aunts and younger sister. He entered the University of Bonn to study theology and philology but later transferred to the University of Leipzig where he chanced to read Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* and become friends with Richard Wagner. When serving in the Franco-Prussian War, he became ill and continued to suffer from various health problems the remainder of his life. His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* contains many of the

same themes as in our reading selection—especially the recognition of the amoral, instinctual, but creative Dionysian attitude of Greek culture. He argues that subsequently Western philosophy declined in the wake of the predominantly logical but trancelike Apollonian attitude.

About the work . . .

The "The Will to Power in Art," written in the 1880's, is one of the papers in his notebooks archived by his sister and published under the title *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values.*[1] In this work, many of the major themes of Nietzsche's philosophy are present: the doctrine of eternal recurrence, the will to power, and revaluation of values. In our reading, Nietzsche sees art as the justification for life through the analysis of its embodiment of desire, love, and, above all, will.

From the reading . . .

Metaphysics, religion, morality, science—all these things are but the offshoot of his will to art, to falsehood, to a flight from "truth" to a denial of "truth."

Ideas of Interest from *The Will to Power*

1. How does Nietzsche characterize the Apollonian and the Dionysian conditions of art?
2. Explain Nietzsche's description of the achievement of beauty.
3. According to Nietzsche, what are some of the ways love transposes values? What does he mean by the transfigurement or revaluation of values?

1. Frederich Nietzsche. "The Will to Power in Art." *The Will to Power*, 1896. Translated by Anthony M. Ludovici. 1910.

4. What is the effect and the essential feature of works of art according to Nietzsche? Why does Nietzsche argue that art cannot be pessimistic?
5. How does Nietzsche relate romanticism to the Dionysian and the Apollonian conditions of art?
6. In what ways does Nietzsche think Aristotle and Schopenhauer were mistaken about tragedy?
7. What is the connection Nietzsche sees between the beautiful and the "Yea-saying" attitude toward life?
8. On Nietzsche's view, what are some of the ways weak and powerless people understand art?
9. How does Nietzsche characterize facing the nature of the everyday world with affirmation rather than pessimism? What does he mean by asserting that the justification of the universe's existence is æsthetic?

The Reading Selection from *The Will to Power*

¶ 1 Apollonian, Dionysian

There are two conditions in which art manifests itself in man even as a force of nature, and disposes of him whether he consent or not: it may be as a constraint to visionary states, or it may be an orgiastic impulse. Both conditions are to be seen in normal life, but they are then somewhat weaker: in dreams and in moments of elation or intoxication.

But the same contrast exists between the dream state and the sate of intoxication: both of these states let loose all manner of artistic powers within us, but each unfetters powers of a different kind. Dreamland gives us the power of vision, of association, of poetry: intoxication gives u the power of grand attitudes, of passion, of song, and of dance.

¶ 2 [Antagonism of the Two Conditions]

The word "*Dionysian*" expresses: a constraint to unity, a soaring above personality, the commonplace, society; reality, and above the abyss of the *ephemeral*; the passionately painful sensation of superabundance, in darker, fuller, and more fluctuating conditions; an ecstatic saying of yea to the collective character of existence, as that which remains the same, and the equally mighty and blissful throughout all change; the great pantheistic sympathy with pleasure and pain, which declares even the most terrible and most questionable qualities of existence good, and sanctifies them; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, and to recurrence; the feeling of unity in regard to the necessity of creating and annihilating.

Naumburg on the Saale, Saxony, Library of Congress

The word "*Apollonian*" expresses the constraint to be absolutely isolated, to the typical "individual," to everything that simplifies, distinguishes, and makes strong, salient, definite, and typical: to freedom within the law.

The further development of art is just as necessarily bound up with the antagonism of these two natural art-forces, as the further development of mankind is bound up with the antagonism of the sexes. The plenitude of power and restraint, the highest form of self affirmation in a cool, noble, and reserved kind of beauty: the Apollonianism of the Hellenic will.. . .

Extravagance, wildness, and Asiatic tendencies lie at the root of the Greeks. Their courage consists in their struggle with their Asiatic nature: they

were not given beauty, any more than they were given logic and moral naturalness: in them these things are victories, they are willed and fought for—they constitute the *triumph* of the Greeks.

¶ 3 [Beauty]

"Beauty" is, to the artist, something which is above all order of rank, because in beauty contrasts are overcome, the highest sign of power thus manifesting itself in the conquest of opposites; and achieved without a feeling of tension: violence being no longer necessary, everything submitting and obeying so easily, and doing so with good grace; this is what delights the powerful will of the artist.

¶ 4 [Intoxication of Love]

If one should require the most astonishing proof of how far the power of transfiguring, which comes of intoxication, goes, this proof is at hand in the phenomenon of love; or what is called love in all the languages and silences of the world. Intoxication works to such a degree upon reality in this passion that in the consciousness of the lover the cause of his love is quire suppressed, and something else seems to take its place… In this respect to be man or an an animal makes no difference: and still less does spirit, goodness, or honesty. If one is astute, one is befooled astutely; if one is thick-headed, one is befooled in a thick-headed way. But love, even the love of God, saintly love, "the love that saves the soul" are at bottom all one; they are nothing but a fever which has reasons to transfigure itself— a state of intoxication which does well to lie about itself.… And, at any rate, when a man loves, he is a good liar about himself and to himself: he seems to himself transfigured, stronger, richer, more perfect; he *is* more perfect.… *Art* here acts as an organic function: we find it present in the most angelic instinct "love"; we find it as the greatest stimulus of life—thus art is sublimely utilitarian, even in the fact that it lies.… But we should be wrong to halt at its power to lie: it does more than merely imagine; it actually transposes values. and it not only transposes the *feeling*for values: the lover actually *has* a greater value; he is stronger. In animals this condition gives rise to new weapons, colors, pigments, and forms, and above all to new movements, new rhythms, new love-calls and seductions. In man it is just the same. His whole economy is richer,

mightier, and *more complete* when he is in live than when he is not. The lover becomes a spendthrift; he is rich enough for it. He now dares; he becomes an adventurer, and even a donkey in magnanimity and innocence; his belief in God and in virtue revives, because he believes in love. Moreover, such idiots of happiness acquire wings and new capacities, and even the door to art is opened to them.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [T]he effect of works of art is the excitation of the state which creates art, or æsthetic intoxication.

If we cancel the suggestion of this intestinal fever from the lyric of tones and words, what is left to poetry and music?. . . *L'art pour l'art* perhaps; the professional cant of frogs shivering outside in the cold, and dying of despair in their swamp.. . . Everything else was created by love.

¶ 5 Pessimism in Art?

The artist gradually learns to like for their own sake, those means which bring about the condition of æsthetic elation; extreme delicacy and glory of color, definite, delineation, quality of tone; distinctness where in normal conditions distinctness is absent. All distinct things, all nuances, in so far as they recall extreme degrees of power which give rise to intoxication, kindle this feeling of intoxication by association;—the effect of works of art is the excitation of the state which creates art, or æsthetic intoxication.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> There is no such thing as a pessimistic art. . . Art affirms. . .

The essential feature in art is its power of perfecting existence, its production of perfection and plenitude; art is essentially the affirmation, the blessing, and the deification of existence.. . . What does a pessimistic art signify? Is it not a *contradictio*?—Yes.—Schopenhauer is in error when he makes certain works of art serve the purpose of pessimism. tragedy does not teach "resignation". . . To represent terrible and questionable

things is, in itself, the sign of an instinct of power and magnificence in the artist; he doesn't fear them.... There is no such thing as a pessimistic art... Art affirms...

¶ 6 Romanticism and Its Opposite

In regard to all æsthetic values I now avail myself of this fundamental distinction: in every individual case I ask myself has hunger or has superabundance been creative here? At first another distinction might perhaps seem preferable—it is far more obvious for example, the distinction which decides whether a desire for stability, for eternity, for Being, or whether a desire for destruction, for change, for Becoming, has been the cause of creation. But both kinds of desire, when examined more closely, prove to be ambiguous, and really susceptible of interpretation only according to that scheme already mentioned and which I think is rightly preferred.

The desire for destruction, for change, for Becoming, may be the expression of an overflowing power pregnant with promises for the future (my term for this, as is well known, is Dionysian); it may, however, also be the hate of the ill-constituted, of the needy and of the physiologically botched, that destroys, and must destroy, because such creatures are indignant at, and annoyed by everything lasting and stable.

From the reading ...

A test of man's well-being and consciousness of power is the extent to which he can acknowledge the terrible and questionable character of things, and whether he is in need of a faith at the end.

The act of immortalizing can, on the other hand, be the outcome of gratitude and love: an art which has this origin is always an apotheosis art... But it may also, however, be the outcome of the tyrannical will of the great sufferer who would make the most personal, individual, and narrow trait about him, the actual idiosyncrasy of his pain—in fact, into a binding law and imposition, and who thus wreaks his revenge upon all things by stamping, branding, and violating them with the image of his torment. The latter case is romantic pessimism in its highest form, whether this be Schopenhauerian voluntarism or Wagnerian music.

¶7 What is Tragic?

Again and again I have pointed to the great misunderstanding of Aristotle in maintaining that the tragic emotions were the two depressing emotions—fear and pity. Had he been right, tragedy would be an art unfriendly to life: it would have been necessary to caution people against it as against something generally harmful and suspicious. Art, otherwise the great stimulus of life, the great intoxicant of life, the great will to life, here became a tool of decadence, the handmaiden of pessimism and ill-health (for to suppose, as Aristotle supposed, that by exciting these emotions we thereby purged people of them is simply an error). Something which habitually excited fear or pity, disorganizes, weakens, and discourages: and supposing Schopenhauer were right in thinking that tragedy taught resignation (that is, a meek renunciation of happiness, hope, and of the will to live), this would presuppose an art in which art itself was denied. Tragedy would then constitute a process of dissolution; the instinct of life would destroy itself in the instinct of art. Christianity, Nihilism, tragic art, physiological decadence; these things would then be linked, they would then preponderate together and assist each other onwards—downwards.... Tragedy would thus be a symptom of decline....

¶ 8 The Tragic Artist

Whether, and in regard to what, the judgment "beautiful" is established is a question of an individual's or of a people's strength. The feeling of plenitude, of overflowing strength (which gaily and courageously meets man an obstacle before which the weakling shudders)—the feeling of power utters the judgment "beautiful" concerning things and conditions which the instinct of impotence can only value as hateful and ugly. The *flair* which enables us to decide whether the objects we encounter are dangerous, problematic, or alluring, likewise determines our æsthetic Yea. ("This is beautiful" is an affirmation.)

From the reading ...

It is the heroic spirits which in tragic cruelty say Yea unto themselves: they are hard enough to feel pain as a pleasure.

From this we see that, generally speaking, a preference for questionable and terrible things is a symptom of strength; whereas the taste for pretty and charming trifles is characteristic of the weak and the delicate. The love of tragedy is typical of strong ages and characters: its *non plus ultra* is perhaps the *Divina Commedia*. It is the heroic spirits which in tragic cruelty say Yea unto themselves: they are hard enough to feel pain as a pleasure.

On the other hand, supposing weaklings desire to get pleasure from an art which was not designed for them, what interpretation must we suppose they would like to give tragedy in order to make it suit their taste? They would interpret their own feelings of value into it: for example, the "triumph of the moral order of things," or the teaching of the "uselessness of existence," or the incitement to "resignation" (or also half-medicinal and half-moral outpourings, *à la* Aristotle. Finally, the art of terrible natures, insofar as it may excite the nerves may be regarded by the weak and exhausted as a stimulus… A test of man's well-being and consciousness of power is the extent to which he can acknowledge the terrible and questionable character of things, and whether he is in need of a faith at the end.

From the reading …

[A]rtists of decadence … maintain a Nihilistic attitude to life, and take refuge in the beauty of form…

This kind of artistic pessimism is precisely the reverse of that religio-moral pessimism which suffers from the corruption of man and the enigmatic character of existence: the latter insists upon deliverance, or at least upon the hope of deliverance. Those who suffer, doubt, and distrust themselves—the sick, in other words—have in all ages required the transporting influence of visions in order to be able to exist at all (the notions "blessedness" arose in this way). A similar case would be that of the artists of decadence, who at bottom maintain a Nihilistic attitude to life, and take refuge in the beauty of form—in those select cases in which Nature is perfect, in which she is indifferently great and indifferently beautiful. (The "love of the beautiful" may thus be something very different from the ability to see or create the beautiful: it may be the expression of impotence in this respect.) The most convincing artists are those who make harmony right out of every discord, and who benefit all

things by the gift of their power and inner harmony: in every work of art they merely reveal the symbol of their inmost experiences—their creation is gratitude for their life.

The depth of the tragic artist consists in the fact that his æthetic instinct surveys the more remote results, that he does not halt shortsightedly at the thing that is nearest, that he says Yea to the whole cosmic economy, which justifies the terrible, the evil, and the questionable; which more than justifies it.

¶ 9 Art in the "Birth of Tragedy"

A.—. . . [T]here is but one world, and it is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, and without sense.. . . A world thus constituted is the true world. We are in need of lies in order to rise superior to this reality, to this truth—that is to say, in order to live— That lies should be necessary to life is part and parcel of the terrible and questionable character of existence.

Metaphysics, morality, religion, science—in this book, all these things are regarded merely as different forms of falsehood: by means of them we are led to believe in life. "Life must inspire confidence": the task which this imposes upon us is enormous. In order to solve this problem man must already be a liar in his heart, but he must above all else be an artist. And he is that. Metaphysics, religion, morality, science—all these things are but the offshoot of his will to art, to falsehood, to a flight from "truth" to a denial of "truth." This ability, this artistic capacity *par excellence* of man— thanks to which he overcomes reality with lies— is a quality which he has in common with all other forms of existence. He himself is indeed a piece of reality, of truth, of nature: how could he help being also a piece of genius in prevarication!

The fact that the character of existence is misunderstood, is the profoundest and the highest secret motive behind everything relating to virtue, science, piety, and art. To be blind to many things, to see many things falsely, to fancy many things: Oh, how clever man has been in those circumstances in which he believed he was anything but clever! Love, enthusiasm, "God"— are but subtle forms of ultimate self-deception; they are but seductions to life and to the belief in life! In those moments when man was deceived, when he had befooled himself and when he believed in life: Oh, how his spirit swelled within him! Oh, what ecstasies he had!

What power he felt! And what artistic triumphs in the feeling of power!... Man had once more become master of "matter,"—master of truth!... And whenever man rejoices it is always in the same way: he rejoices as an artist, his power is his joy, he enjoys falsehood as his power....

B.—Art and nothing else! Art is the great means of making life possible, the great seducer to life, the great stimulus of life.

Art is the alleviation of the seeker after knowledge—of him who recognizes the terrible and questionable character of existence, and who *will* recognize it—of the tragic seeker after knowledge.

Art is the alleviation of the man of action—of him who not only sees the terrible and questionable character of existence, but also lives it, will live it—of the tragic and warlike man, the hero.

Art is the alleviation of the sufferer— as the way to states in which pain is willed, is transfigured, is deified, where suffering is a form of great ecstasy.

C.—It is clear than in this book pessimism, or, better still, Nihilism, stands for "truth." But truth is not postulated as the highest measure of value, and still less and the highest power. The will to appearance, to illusion, to deception, to becoming, and to change (to objective deception) is here regarded as more profound, as more primeval, as more metaphysical than the will to truth, to reality, to appearance: the latter is merely a form of the will to illusion. Happiness is likewise conceived as more primeval than pain: and pain is considered as conditioned, as a consequence of the will to happiness (of the will to Becoming, to growth, to forming, that is, to creating; in creating, however, destruction is included). The highest state of Yea-saying to existence is conceived as one from which the greatest pain may not be excluded: the tragico-Dionysian state.

D.—In this way this book is even anti-pessimistic, namely, in the sense that it teaches something which is stronger than pessimism and which is more "divine" than truth: Art. Nobody, it would seem, would be more ready seriously to utter a radical denial of life, an actual denial of action even more than a denial of life, than the author of this book. Except that he knows—for he has experienced it, and perhaps experienced little else!—that art is of more value than truth....

"Art is the only task of life, art is the metaphysical activity of life...."

From the reading . . .

Art is the only task of life. . .

Related Ideas

The Perspectives of Nietzsche.[2] *The University of Pittsburgh*. An accessible introduction to some main concepts of Nietzsche's philosophy by Bill Curry.

Friedrich Nietzsche.[3]*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. An excellent first resource for discovering Nietzsche's life, writings, and influence.

University of Bonn, The Rhine, Library of Congress

From the reading . . .

The highest state of Yea-saying to existence is conceived as one from which the greatest pain may not be excluded: the tragico-Dionysian state.

2. *The Perspectives of Nietzsche* (http://www.pitt.edu/~wbcurry/nietzsche.html).
3. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/).

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Compare Nietzsche's description of the Dionysian and the Apollonian manner of transforming artistic values of life with Plato's distinction of the two principles of soul, the irrational and the rational in Book X of *The Republic*.
2. Explain how Nietzsche concludes that identifying æsthetic form with beauty in art is the trait of a decadent nihilism.
3. Discuss whether Nietzsche sees the Dionysian and Apollonian spirits of art as polar opposites. Or is the Dionysian irrationality just the recognition of the untruth and failure of the measured restraint and Nay-saying aspects of the Apollonian state?
4. Thoroughly discuss the role of tragic pessimism in Nietzsche's account of æsthetics. What role does beauty have in Nietzsche's theory of art?

Chapter 19

"Art is the Pleasure in Work" by William Morris

William Morris, (adapted) Carey, *William Morris*

About the author . . .

William Morris (1834-1896) was born in a small village east of London. Educated at Oxford, he formed with Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti a Medieval art group. With these Pre-Raphælite friends, Morris set up a business producing decorative art including dyeing, weaving, and stained glass. During this time also Morris constructed epic poems, prose romances, and classical translations. As English industry began to replace the beauty of the Medieval countryside, Morris became active in the socialist movement. As our reading below indicates, he thought work without pleasure was a form of slavery. The story is widely told that when in Paris, Morris spent much of his time writing in the restaurant on the first platform of the Eiffel Tower. When asked if he admired the Tower

itself, he is said to reply that he stayed there for the sole reason that was the only place in the city he couldn't see the awful thing.

About the work . . .

In a pamphlet entitled "The Aims of Art,"[1] William Morris presents an argument that art is an essential component of the life of the individual and of the fabric of society. With the industrialism inherent in the rise of capitalism (the so-called "Artificial Famine"), Morris argues that the use of machinery in the drive for commercial profits leads to class-division and a dearth of genuine art. He believes fine art and decorative art were interrelated before large-scale manufacturing, but with increasing industrialization, fine art will interest only the wealthy and the decorative arts will be subsumed by machine-production. Nonetheless, the great hope for art, Morris believes, is the revitalization of an energizing spirit to overcome weariness in daily work and to provide pleasure for the leisure of society.

From the reading . . .

[A]rt is and must be, either in its abundance or its barrenness, in its sincerity or its hollowness, the expression of the society amongst which it exists . . .

Ideas of Interest from "The Aims of Art"

1. What are the two dominant moods of mankind that Morris describes, and how do these moods relate to the creation and appreciation of art?
2. According to Morris, what two kinds of persons dislike and condemn art?

1. William Morris. "The Aims of Art." London: Office of the Commonweal. 1887.

3. What does Morris argue is the aim of "genuine" art?
4. How does Morris account for what he claims is the decline of art in the nineteenth century?
5. According to Morris, what is the secret of happiness?
6. What does Morris foresee as the future of art?

The Reading Selection from "The Aims of Art"

[The Moods of Man]

In considering the Aims of Art, that is, why men toilsomely cherish and practise Art, I find myself compelled to generalize from the only specimen of humanity of which I know anything; to wit, myself. Now, when I think of what it is that I desire, I find that I can give it no other name than happiness. I want to be happy while I live; for as for death, I find that, never having experienced it, I have no conception of what it means, and so cannot even bring my mind to bear upon it. I know what it is to live; I cannot even guess what it is to be dead. Well, then, I want to be happy, and even sometimes, say generally, to be merry; and I find it difficult to believe that that is not the universal desire: so that, whatever tends towards that end I cherish with all my best endeavour. Now, when I consider my life further, I find out, or seem to, that it is under the influence of two dominating moods, which for lack of better words I must call the mood of energy and the mood of idleness: these two moods are now one, now the other, always crying out in me to be satisfied. When the mood of energy is upon me, I must be doing something, or I become mopish and unhappy; when the mood of idleness is on me, I find it hard indeed if I cannot rest and let my mind wander over the various pictures, pleasant or terrible, which my own experience or my communing with the thoughts of other men, dead or alive, have fashioned in it; and if circumstances will not allow me to cultivate this mood of idleness, I find I must at the best pass through a period of pain till I can manage to stimulate my mood of energy to take its place and make me happy again. And if I have no means wherewith to rouse up that mood of energy to do its duty in mak-

ing me happy, and I have to toil while the idle mood is upon me, then am I unhappy indeed, and almost wish myself dead, though I do not know what that means.

Furthermore, I find that while in the mood of idleness memory amuses me, in the mood of energy hope cheers me; which hope is sometimes big and serious, and sometimes trivial, but that without it there is no happy energy. Again, I find that while I can sometimes satisfy this mood by merely exercising it in work that has no result beyond the passing hour—in play, in short—yet that it presently wearies of that and gets languid, the hope therein being too trivial, and sometimes even scarcely real; and that on the whole, to satisfy my master the mood, I must either be making something or making believe to make it.

Well, I believe that all men's lives are compounded of these two moods in various proportions, and that this explains why they have always, with more or less of toil, cherished and practised art.

Why should they have touched it else, and so added to the labour which they could not choose but do in order to live? It must have been done for their pleasure, since it has only been in very elaborate civilizations that a man could get other men to keep him alive merely to produce works of art, whereas all men that have left any signs of their existence behind them have practised art.

From the reading . . .

[G]enuine art is an unmixed blessing to the race of man.

I suppose, indeed, that nobody will be inclined to deny that the end proposed by a work of art is always to please the person whose senses are to be made conscious of it. It was done for some one who was to be made happier by it; his idle or restful mood was to be amused by it, so that the vacancy which is the besetting evil of that mood might give place to pleased contemplation, dreaming, or what you will; and by this means he would not so soon be driven into his workful or energetic mood: he would have more enjoyment, and better.

The restraining of restlessness, therefore, is clearly one of the essential aims of art, and few things could add to the pleasure of life more than this. There are, to my knowledge, gifted people now alive who have no other vice than this of restlessness, and seemingly no other curse in their

lives to make them unhappy: but that is enough; it is "the little rift within the lute." Restlessness makes them hapless men and bad citizens.

But granting, as I suppose you all will do, that this is a most important function for art to fulfil, the question next comes, at what price do we obtain it? I have admitted that the practice of art has added to the labour of mankind, though I believe in the long run it will not do so; but in adding to the labour of man has it added, so far, to his pain? There always have been people who would at once say yes to that question; so that there have been and are two sets of people who dislike and contemn art as an embarrassing folly. Besides the pious ascetics, who look upon it as a worldly entanglement which prevents men from keeping their minds fixed on the chances of their individual happiness or misery in the next world; who, in short, hate art, because they think that it adds to man's earthly happiness—besides these, there are also people who, looking on the struggle of life from the most reasonable point that they know of, contemn the arts because they think that they add to man's slavery by increasing the sum of his painful labour: if this were the case, it would still, to my mind, be a question whether it might not be worth the while to endure the extra pain of labour for the sake of the extra pleasure added to rest; assuming, for the present, equality of condition among men. But it seems to me that it is not the case that the practice of art adds to painful labour; nay more, I believe that, if it did, art would never have arisen at all, would certainly not be discernible, as it is, among peoples in whom only the germs of civilization exist. In other words, I believe that art cannot be the result of external compulsion; the labour which goes to produce it is voluntary, and partly undertaken for the sake of labour itself, partly for the sake of the hope of producing something which, when done, shall give pleasure to the user of it. Or, again, this extra labour, when it is extra, is undertaken with the aim of satisfying that mood of energy by employing it to produce something worth doing, and which, therefore, will keep before the worker a lively hope while he is working; and also by giving it work to do in which there is absolute immediate pleasure. Perhaps it is difficult to explain to the non-artistic capacity that this definite sensuous pleasure is always present in the handiwork of the deft workman when he is working successfully, and that it increases in proportion to the freedom and individuality of the work. Also you must understand that this production of art, and consequent pleasure in work, is not confined to the production of matters which are works of art only, like pictures, statues, and so forth, but has been and should be a part of all labour in some form or other: so only will the claims of the mood of energy be satisfied.

Therefore the Aim of Art is to increase the happiness of men, by giving them beauty and interest of incident to amuse their leisure, and prevent them wearying even of rest, and by giving them hope and bodily pleasure in their work; or, shortly, to make man's work happy and his rest fruitful. Consequently, genuine art is an unmixed blessing to the race of man.

But as the word "genuine" is a large qualification, I must ask leave to attempt to draw some practical conclusions from this assertion of the Aims of Art, which will, I suppose, or indeed hope, lead us into some controversy on the subject; because it is futile indeed to expect any one to speak about art, except in the most superficial way, without encountering those social problems which all serious men are thinking of; since art is and must be, either in its abundance or its barrenness, in its sincerity or its hollowness, the expression of the society amongst which it exists.

[Growth of Industry and Decline of Art]

First, then, it is clear to me that, at the present time, those who look widest at things and deepest into them are quite dissatisfied with the present state of the arts, as they are also with the present condition of society. . . . Less than forty years ago—about thirty—I first saw the city of Rouen, then still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages: no words can tell you how its mingled beauty, history, and romance took hold on me; I can only say that, looking back on my past life, I find it was the greatest pleasure I have ever had: and now it is a pleasure which no one can ever have again: it is lost to the world for ever. At that time I was an undergraduate of Oxford. Though not so astounding, so romantic, or at first sight so medieval as the Norman city, Oxford in those days still kept a great deal of its earlier loveliness: and the memory of its grey streets as they then were has been an abiding influence and pleasure in my life. . . Since then the guardians of this beauty and romance so fertile of education, though professedly engaged in "the higher education" (as the futile system of compromises which they follow is nick-named), have ignored it utterly, have made its preservation give way to the pressure of commercial exigencies, and are determined apparently to destroy it altogether.. . . [H]ere, again, the beauty and romance have been uselessly, causelessly, most foolishly thrown away.

These two cases are given simply because they have been fixed in my mind; they are but types of what is going on everywhere throughout civi-

lization: the world is everywhere growing uglier and more commonplace, in spite of the conscious and very strenuous efforts of a small group of people towards the revival of art, which are so obviously out of joint with the tendency of the age that, while the uncultivated have not even heard of them, the mass of the cultivated look upon them as a joke, and even that they are now beginning to get tired of.

Now, if it be true, as I have asserted, that genuine art is an unmixed blessing to the world, this is a serious matter; for at first sight it seems to show that there will soon be no art at all in the world…

[B]ut … I believe the springs of art in the human mind to be deathless, and also … it seems to me easy to see the causes of the present obliteration of the arts.

For we civilized people have not given them up consciously, or of our free will; we have been forced to give them up. Perhaps I can illustrate that by the detail of the application of machinery to the production of things in which artistic form of some sort is possible. Why does a reasonable man use a machine? Surely to save his labour. There are some things which a machine can do as well as a man's hand, plus a tool, can do them. He need not, for instance, grind his corn in a hand-quern; a little trickle of water, a wheel, and a few simple contrivances will do it all perfectly well, and leave him free to smoke his pipe and think, or to carve the handle of his knife. That, so far, is unmixed gain in the use of a machine—always, mind you, supposing equality of condition among men; no art is lost, leisure or time for more pleasurable work is gained. Perhaps a perfectly reasonable and free man would stop there in his dealings with machinery; but such reason and freedom are too much to expect, so let us follow our machine-inventor a step farther. He has to weave plain cloth, and finds doing so dullish on the one hand, and on the other that a power-loom will weave the cloth nearly as well as a hand-loom: so, in order to gain more leisure or time for more pleasurable work, he uses a power-loom, and foregoes the small advantage of the little extra art in the cloth. But so doing, as far as the art is concerned, he has not got a pure gain; he has made a bargain between art and labour, and got a makeshift as a consequence. I do not say that he may not be right in so doing, but that he has lost as well as gained. Now, this is as far as a man, who values art and is reasonable would go in the matter of machinery as long as he was free—that is, was not forced to work for another man's profit; so long as he was living in a society that had accepted equality of condition. Carry the machine used for art a step farther, and he becomes an unreasonable

man, if he values art and is free. To avoid misunderstanding, I must say that I am thinking of the modern machine, which is as it were alive, and to which the man is auxiliary, and not of the old machine, the improved tool, which is auxiliary to the man, and only works as long as his hand is thinking; though I will remark, that even this elementary form of machine has to be dropped when we come to the higher and more intricate forms of art. Well, as to the machine proper used for art, when it gets to the stage above dealing with a necessary production that has accidentally some beauty about it, a reasonable man with a feeling for art will only use it when he is forced to.. . .

This, I say, is how a reasonable man would act if he were free from man’s compulsion; not being free, he acts very differently. He has long passed the stage at which machines are only used for doing work repulsive to an average man, or for doing what could be as well done by a machine as a man, and he instinctively expects a machine to be invented whenever any product of industry becomes sought after. He is the slave to machinery; the new machine must be invented, and when invented he must . . . I will not say use it, but be used by it, whether he likes it or not.

But why is he the slave to machinery? Because he is the slave to the system for whose existence the invention of machinery was necessary.

From the Reading . . .

[W]e are all the slaves of machinery, yet that some men are so directly without any metaphor at all, and that these are just those on whom the great body of the arts depends—the workmen.

And now I must drop, or rather have dropped, the assumption of the equality of condition, and remind you that, though in a sense we are all the slaves of machinery, yet that some men are so directly without any metaphor at all, and that these are just those on whom the great body of the arts depends—the workmen. It is necessary for the system which keeps them in their position as an inferior class that they should either be themselves machines or be the servants to machines, in no case having any interest in the work which they turn out. To their employers they are, so far as they are workmen, a part of the machinery of the workshop or the factory; to themselves they are proletarians, human beings working to live that they may live to work: their part of craftsmen, of makers of things by their own free will, is played out. . . .

I think, we who have learned to see the connection between industrial slavery and the degradation of the arts have learned also to hope for a future for those arts; since the day will certainly come when men will shake off the yoke, and refuse to accept the mere artificial compulsion of the gambling-market to waste their lives in ceaseless and hopeless toil; and when it does come, their instincts for beauty and imagination set free along with them, will produce such art as they need; and who can say that it will not as far surpass the art of past ages as that does the poor relics of it left us by the age of commerce?

Acanthus Wallpaper, Carey, *William Morris*

A word or two on an objection which has often been made to me when I have been talking on this subject. It may be said, and is often, You regret the art of the Middle Ages (as indeed I do), but those who produced it were not free; they were serfs, or gild-craftsmen surrounded by brazen walls of trade restrictions; they had no political rights, and were exploited by their masters, the noble caste, most grievously. Well, I quite admit that the oppression and violence of the Middle Ages had its effect on the art of those days, its short-comings are traceable to them; they repressed art in certain directions, I do not doubt that . . . In short, industrial production was not the instrument used for robbing the "lower classes"; it is now the main instrument used in that honourable profession. The medieval crafts-

man was free in his work, therefore he made it as amusing to himself as he could; and it was his pleasure and not his pain that made all things beautiful that were made, and lavished treasures of human hope and thought on everything that man made, from a cathedral to a porridge-pot. Come, let us put it in the way least respectful to the medieval craftsman, most polite to the modern "hand": the poor devil of the fourteenth century, his work was of so little value that he was allowed to waste it by the hour in pleasing himself—and others; but our highly-strung mechanic, his minutes are too rich with the burden of perpetual profit for him to be allowed to waste one of them on art; the present system will not allow him—cannot allow him—to produce works of art.

[Capitalism and Disappearing Art]

So that there has arisen this strange phenomenon, that there is now a class of ladies and gentlemen, very refined indeed, though not perhaps as well informed as is generally supposed, and of this refined class there are many who do really love beauty and incident—*i.e.*, art, and would make sacrifices to get it; and these are led by artists of great manual skill and high intellect, forming altogether a large body of demand for the article. And yet the supply does not come.... I say they cannot have the art which they so much long for, though they hunt it about the world so hard, sentimentalizing the sordid lives of the miserable peasants of Italy and the starving proletarians of her towns, now that all the picturesqueness has departed from the poor devils of our own countryside, and of our own slums. Indeed, there is little of reality left them anywhere, and that little is fast fading away before the needs of the manufacturer and his ragged regiment of workers, and before the enthusiasm of the archaeological restorer of the dead past. Soon there will be nothing left except the lying dreams of history, the miserable wreckage of our museums and picture-galleries, and the carefully guarded interiors of our aesthetic drawing-rooms ...

From the reading ...

I am thinking of the modern machine ... to which the man is auxiliary, and not of the old machine ... which is auxiliary to the man ...

The art then is gone, and can no more be "restored" on its old lines than a medieval building can be. The rich and refined cannot have it though they would, and though we will believe many of them would. And why? Because those who could give it to the rich are not allowed by the rich to do so. In one word, slavery lies between us and art.

I have said as much as that the aim of art was to destroy the curse of labour by making work the pleasurable satisfaction of our impulse towards energy, and giving to that energy hope of producing something worth its exercise.

. . . The old art is no longer fertile, no longer yields us anything save elegantly poetical regrets; being barren, it has but to die, and the matter of moment now is, as to how it shall die, whether with hope or without it.

What is it, for instance, that has destroyed Rouen, the Oxford of my elegant poetic regret? . . . It has been sold, and at a cheap price indeed: muddled away by the greed and incompetence of fools who do not know what life and pleasure mean, who will neither take them themselves nor let others have them. That is why the death of that beauty wounds us so: no man of sense or feeling would dare to regret such losses if they had been paid for by new life and happiness for the people. But there is the people still as it was before, still facing for its part the monster who destroyed all that beauty, and whose name is Commercial Profit.. . .

From the reading . . .

In short, men will find out that the men of our days were wrong in first multiplying their needs, and then trying, each man of them, to evade all participation in the means and processes whereby those needs are satisfied. . .

I suppose that this is what is likely to happen: that machinery will go on developing, with the purpose of saving men labour, till the mass of the people attain real leisure enough to be able to appreciate the pleasure of life; till, in fact, they have attained such mastery over Nature that they no longer fear starvation as a penalty for not working more than enough. When they get to that point they will doubtless turn themselves and begin to find out what it is that they really want to do. They would soon find out that the less work they did (the less work unaccompanied by art, I mean), the more desirable a dwelling-place the earth would be; they would accordingly do less and less work, till the mood of energy, of which I began

by speaking, urged them on afresh: but by that time Nature, relieved by the relaxation of man's work, would be recovering her ancient beauty and teaching men the old story of art. And as the Artificial Famine, caused by men working for the profit of a master, and which we now look upon as a matter of course, would have long disappeared, they would be free to do as they chose, and they would set aside their machines in all cases where the work seemed pleasant or desirable for handiwork; till in all crafts where production of beauty was required, the most direct communication between a man's hand and his brain would be sought for. And there would be many occupations also, as the processes of agriculture, in which the voluntary exercise of energy would be thought so delightful, that people would not dream of handing over its pleasure to the jaws of a machine.

[The Rediscovery of Art]

In short, men will find out that the men of our days were wrong in first multiplying their needs, and then trying, each man of them, to evade all participation in the means and processes whereby those needs are satisfied; that this kind of division of labour is really only a new and wilful form of arrogant and slothful ignorance, far more injurious to the happiness and contentment of life than the ignorance of the processes of Nature, of what we sometimes call science, which men of the earlier days unwittingly lived in.

They will discover, or rediscover rather, that the true secret of happiness lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life, in elevating them by art instead of handing the performance of them over to unregarded drudges, and ignoring them; and that in cases where it was impossible either so to elevate them and make them interesting, or to lighten them by the use of machinery, so as to make the labour of them trifling, they should be taken as a token that the supposed advantages gained by them were not worth the trouble and had better be given up. All this to my mind would be the outcome of men throwing off the burden of Artificial Famine, supposing, as I cannot help supposing, that the impulses which have from the first glimmerings of history urged men on to the practice of Art were still at work in them.

Thus and thus only can come about the new birth of Art, and I think it will come about thus. . . .

From the reading . . .

. . . it is the aims of art that you must seek rather than the art itself. . .

So that I believe that the "Aims of Art" will be realized, though I know that they cannot be so long as we groan under the tyranny of Artificial Famine. Once again I warn you against supposing, you who may specially love art, that you will do any good by attempting to revivify art by dealing with its dead exterior. I say it is the aims of art that you must seek rather than the art itself; and in that search we may find ourselves in a world blank and bare, as the result of our caring at least this much for art, that we will not endure the shams of it.

Anyhow, I ask you to think with me that the worst which can happen to us is to endure tamely the evils that we see; that no trouble or turmoil is so bad as that; that the necessary destruction which reconstruction bears with it must be taken calmly; that everywhere—in State, in Church, in the household—we must be resolute to endure no tyranny, accept no lie, quail before no fear, although they may come before us disguised as piety, duty, or affection, as useful opportunity and good-nature, as prudence or kindness. The world's roughness, falseness, and injustice will bring about their natural consequences, and we and our lives are part of those consequences; but since we inherit also the consequences of old resistance to those curses, let us each look to it to have our fair share of that inheritance also, which, if nothing else come of it, will at least bring to us courage and hope; that is, eager life while we live, which is above all things the Aim of Art.

Related Ideas

The William Morris Society Web Site.[2] Morris Society information concerning news, archives, journals, links, and works.

The William Morris Internet Archive.[3] *Marxists Internet Archive*. Very thorough stie containing the works, biography, and photographs of William

2. *The William Morris Society Web Site*. (http://www.morrissociety.org/)
3. *The William Morris Internet Archive*. (http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/index.htm)

Morris.

From the reading . . .

In one word, slavery lies between us and art.

William Morris’ Kelmscott Manor House, (adapted) Carey, *William Morris*

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Morris characterizes one group of people who hate art as follows:

   > [T]he pious ascetics, who look upon it as a worldly entanglement which prevents men from keeping their minds fixed on the chances of their individual happiness or misery in the next world; who, in short, hate art, because they think that it adds to man’s earthly happiness.

Compare the view with Jeremy Bentham's denunciation of the "pious ascetics" from an ethical point of view:

> The principle of asceticism never was, nor ever can be, consistently pursued by any living creature. Let but one tenth part of the inhabitants of this earth pursue it consistently, and in a day's time they will have turned it into a hell. ... By the principle of asceticism I mean that principle, which, like the principle of utility, approves or disapproves of any action, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question; but in an inverse manner: approving of actions in as far as they tend to diminish his happiness; disapproving of them in as far as they tend to augment it.[4]

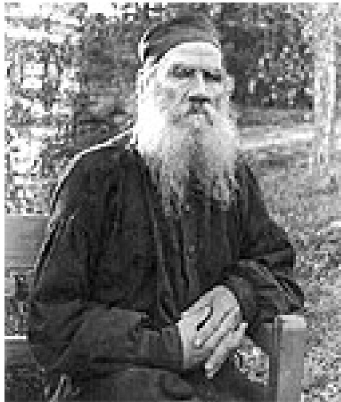
With religion and the rise of capitalism, is the proletariat devoid of artistic interest?

2. Evaluate Morris' argument that although the Medieval craftsman restricted by the guild was not free, genuine art could still be created since industrial production was not present to prevent it. Clarify the argument. Is it an instance of *petitio principii*?
3. Construct an argument opposing Morris' thesis that the rise of the industrialization of capitalism leads to the decline in genuine art. How historically accurate is Morris' argument? With the rise of capitalism and the emergence of the modern state, is not there a virtual renaissance of art forms: the Realists, Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, Symbolists, Cubists, and Surrealists?
4. Analyze what Morris means when he writes, "[I]t is the aims of art that you must seek rather than the art itself"?"

4. Jeremy Bentham. *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1907. Chapter II: ix, iii.

Chapter 20

“Art Evokes Feeling” by Leo Tolstoy



Leo Tolstoy 1828-1910, adapted from Library of Congress

About the author . . .

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910, born in Yasnaya Polyana in central Russia, had a charmed early life until the death of both parents at the age of ten. When he attended the University of Kazań he became disenchanted with the system of education and endorsed Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s philosophy expressed in *Émile, Or On Education*. At nineteen, he broke with the church and religion, and a few years later became a military officer in the Crimean War. This early experience fueled the realism of his novels. Although he often criticized the Russian government, his world-wide fame kept him safe from polical harm . At midlife, he sought a simple life based on the religious tenets of the Sermon on the Mount and put his books in the public domain. Our reading, from *What is Art?* contains his

final view of art: the social value of art is ultimately religious.

About the work . . .

In *What Is Art?*, [1] Tolstoy details the social purpose to art. Art, he believes, is a sincere emotion transferred from an artist to others and, as such, is a uniquely human activity. Tolstoy defines genuine or real art as the communication of emotion transferable to, and felt by, *all* persons; consequently, art is to judged by the universal (religious) spirit of brotherhood of an age. Great art, he thinks, unites humanity.

From the reading . . .

[I]t is upon this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of feeling and experience those feelings himself, that the basis of the activity of art is based.

Ideas of Interest from *What Is Art?*

1. How does Tolstoy contrast the purpose of speech and the purpose of art?
2. How does Tolstoy characterize the basis of the activity of art?
3. Why doesn't Tolstoy think art is simply the expression of emotion?
4. Cite some of the examples Tolstoy mentions of the harmful historical beliefs of the place of art in human culture.
5. According to Tolstoy what is it that distinguishes the feeling produced by art from all other feelings?
6. What according to Tolstoy is "the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art"?

1. Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art?* Translated by Aylmer Maude. London: The Brotherhood Publishing Company. 1898.

7. What does Tolstoy describe as three conditions of good art? What is the subject matter of good art?

The Reading Selection from *What Is Art?*

Chapter V [Art As Communication of Feeling]

In order correctly to define art, it is necessary, first of all, to cease to consider it as a means to pleasure and to consider it as one of the conditions of human life. Viewing it in this way we cannot fail to observe that art is one of the means of intercourse between man and man.

Every work of art causes the receiver to enter into a certain kind of relationship both with him who produced, or is producing, the art, and with all those who, simultaneously, previously, or subsequently, receive the same artistic impression.

Speech, transmitting the thoughts and experiences of men, serves as a means of union among them, and art acts in a similar manner. The peculiarity of this latter means of intercourse, distinguishing it from intercourse by means of words, consists in this, that whereas by words a man transmits his thoughts to another, by means of art he transmits his feelings.

The activity of art is based on the fact that a man, receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man’s expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it. To take the simplest example; one man laughs, and another who hears becomes merry; or a man weeps, and another who hears feels sorrow. A man is excited or irritated, and another man seeing him comes to a similar state of mind. By his movements or by the sounds of his voice, a man expresses courage and determination or sadness and calmness, and this state of mind passes on to others. A man suffers, expressing his sufferings by groans and spasms, and this suffering transmits itself to other people; a man expresses his feeling of admiration, devotion, fear, respect, or love to certain objects, persons, or phenomena, and others are infected by the

same feelings of admiration, devotion, fear, respect, or love to the same objects, persons, and phenomena.

And it is upon this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of feeling and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based.

If a man infects another or others directly, immediately, by his appearance or by the sounds he gives vent to at the very time he experiences the feeling; if he causes another man to yawn when he himself cannot help yawning, or to laugh or cry when he himself is obliged to laugh or cry, or to suffer when he himself is suffering—that does not amount to art.

From the reading . . .

[I]t is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings of delight, gladness, sorrow, despair, courage, or despondency and the transition from one to another of these feelings, and expresses these feelings by sounds so that the hearers are infected by them . . .

Art begins when one person, with the object of joining another or others to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications. To take the simplest example: a boy, having experienced, let us say, fear on encountering a wolf, relates that encounter; and, in order to evoke in others the feeling he has experienced, describes himself, his condition before the encounter, the surroundings, the woods, his own lightheartedness, and then the wolf's appearance, its movements, the distance between himself and the wolf, etc. All this, if only the boy, when telling the story, again experiences the feelings he had lived through and infects the hearers and compels them to feel what the narrator had experienced is art. If even the boy had not seen a wolf but had frequently been afraid of one, and if, wishing to evoke in others the fear he had felt, he invented an encounter with a wolf and recounted it so as to make his hearers share the feelings he experienced when he feared the world, that also would be art. And just in the same way it is art if a man, having experienced either the fear of suffering or the attraction of enjoyment (whether in reality or in imagination) expresses these feelings on canvas or in marble so that others are infected by them. And it is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings of delight, gladness, sorrow, despair, courage, or despondency and the transition from one to another of these feelings, and expresses these feelings by sounds so that the hearers are

infected by them and experience them as they were experienced by the composer.

The feelings with which the artist infects others may be most various—very strong or very weak, very important or very insignificant, very bad or very good: feelings of love for one's own country, self-devotion and submission to fate or to God expressed in a drama, raptures of lovers described in a novel, feelings of voluptuousness expressed in a picture, courage expressed in a triumphal march, merriment evoked by a dance, humor evoked by a funny story, the feeling of quietness transmitted by an evening landscape or by a lullaby, or the feeling of admiration evoked by a beautiful arabesque—it is all art.

If only the spectators or auditors are infected by the feelings which the author has felt, it is art.

To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art.

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them.

[Art Is Not Simply Expression]

Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious idea of beauty or God; it is not, as the æsthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure; but it is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress toward well-being of individuals and of humanity.

From the reading . . .

If people lacked this capacity to receive the thoughts conceived by the men who preceded them and to pass on to others their own thoughts, men would be like wild beasts. . .

As every man, thanks to man's capacity to express thoughts by words, every man may know all that has been done for him in the realms of thought by all humanity before his day, and can in the present, thanks to this capacity to understand the thoughts of others, become a sharer in their activity and can himself hand on to his contemporaries and descendants the thoughts he has assimilated from others, as well as those which have arisen within himself; so, thanks to man's capacity to be infected with the feelings of others by means of art, all that is being lived through by his contemporaries is accessible to him, as well as the feelings experienced by men thousands of years ago, and he has also the possibility of transmitting his own feelings to others.

If people lacked this capacity to receive the thoughts conceived by the men who preceded them and to pass on to others their own thoughts, men would be like wild beasts, or like Kaspar Houser.

And if men lacked this other capacity of being infected by art, people might be almost more savage still, and, above all, more separated from, and more hostile to, one another.

And therefore the activity of art is a most important one, as important as the activity of speech itself and as generally diffused.

We are accustomed to understand art to be only what we hear and see in theaters, concerts, and exhibitions, together with buildings, statues, poems, novels. . . . But all this is but the smallest part of the art by which we communicate with each other in life. All human life is filled with works of art of every kind—from cradlesong, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress, and utensils, up to church services, buildings, monuments, and triumphal processions. It is all artistic activity. So that by art, in the limited sense of the word, we do not mean all human activity transmitting feelings, but only that part which we for some reason select from it and to which we attach special importance.

[Some Harmful Conceptions of Art]

This special importance has always been given by all men to that part of this activity which transmits feelings flowing from their religious perception, and this small part of art they have specifically called art, attaching to it the full meaning of the word.

Sofia Tolstoy in Iasnaia Poliana, Library of Congress

That was how man of old—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—looked on art. Thus did the Hebrew prophets and the ancient Christians regard art; thus it was, and still is, understood by the Mohammedans, and thus it still is understood by religious folk among our own peasantry.

Some teachers of mankind—as Plato in his Republic and people such as the primitive Christians, the strict Mohammedans, and the Buddhists—have gone so far as to repudiate all art.

People viewing art in this way (in contradiction to the prevalent view of today which regards any art as good if only it affords pleasure) considered, and consider, that art (as contrasted with speech, which need not be listened to) is so highly dangerous in its power to infect people against their wills that mankind will lose far less by banishing all art than by

tolerating each and every art.

Evidently such people were wrong in repudiating all art, for they denied that which cannot be denied—one of the indispensable means of communication, without which mankind could not exist. But not less wrong are the people of civilized European society of our class and day in favoring any art if it but serves beauty, *i.e.*, gives people pleasure.

Formerly people feared lest among the works of art there might chance to be some causing corruption, and they prohibited art altogether. Now they only fear lest they should be deprived of any enjoyment art can afford, and patronize any art. And I think the last error is much grosser than the first and that its consequences are far more harmful.

Chapter XV [Genuine Art]

Art, in our society, has been so perverted that not only has bad art come to be considered good, but even the very perception of what art really is has been lost. In order to be able to speak about the art of our society, it is, therefore, first of all necessary to distinguish art from counterfeit art.

From the reading . . .

[T]he activity of art is . . . as important as the activity of speech . . .

There is one indubitable indication distinguishing real art from its counterfeit, namely, the infectiousness of art. And however poetical, realistic, effectful, or interesting a work may be, it is not a work of art if it does not evoke that feeling (quite distinct from all other feelings) of joy and of spiritual union with another (the author) and with others (those who are also infected by it).

It is true that this indication is an internal one, and that there are people who have forgotten what the action of real art is, who expect something else form art (in our society the great majority are in this state), and that therefore such people may mistake for this æsthetic feeling the feeling of diversion and a certain excitement which they receive from counterfeits of art. But though it is impossible to undeceive these people, just as it is

impossible to convince a man suffering from "Daltonism"[2] that green is not red, yet, for all that, this indication remains perfectly definite to those whose feeling for art is neither perverted nor atrophied, and it clearly distinguishes the feeling produced by art from all other feelings.

The chief peculiarity of this feeling is that the receiver of a true artistic impression is so united to the artist that he feels as if the work were his own and not someone else's—as if what it expresses were just what he had long been wishing to express. A real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and the artist—not that alone, but also between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freeing of our personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art.

[Conditions of Excellence in Art]

If a man is infected by the author's condition of soul, if he feels this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has effected this is art; but if there be no such infection, if there be not this union with the author and with others who are moved by the same work—then it is not art. And not only is infection a sure sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of excellence in art.

The stronger the infection, the better is the art as art, speaking now apart from its subject matter, *i.e.*, not considering the quality of the feelings it transmits.

And the degree of the infectiousness of art depends on three conditions:

1. On the greater or lesser individuality of the feeling transmitted;
2. on the greater or lesser clearness with which the feeling is transmitted;
3. on the sincerity of the artist, *i.e.*, on the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself feels the emotion he transmits.

The more individual the feeling transmitted the more strongly does it act on the receiver; the more individual the state of soul into which he is

2. A type of color blindness.

transferred, the more pleasure does the receiver obtain, and therefore the more readily and strongly does he join in it.

Clearness of expression assists infection because the receiver, who mingles in consciousness with the author, is the better satisfied the more clearly the feeling is transmitted, which, as it seems to him, he has long known and felt, and for which he has only now found expression.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [Art] is not . . . a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure.

But most of all is the degree of infectiousness of art increased by the degree of sincerity in the artist. As soon as the spectator, hearer, or reader feels that the artist is infected by his own production, and writes, sings, or plays for himself, and not merely to act on others, this mental condition of the artist infects the receiver; and contrariwise, as soon as the spectator, reader, or hearer feels that the author is not writing, singing, or playing for his own satisfaction—does not himself feel what he wishes to express—but is doing it for him, the receiver, a resistance immediately springs up, and the most individual and the newest feelings and the cleverest technique not only fail to produce any infection but actually repel.

I have mentioned three conditions of contagiousness in art, but they may be all summed up into one, the last, sincerity, *i.e.*, that the artist should be impelled by an inner need to express his feeling. That condition includes the first; for if the artist is sincere he will express the feeling as he experienced it. And as each man is different from everyone else, his feeling will be individual for everyone else; and the more individual it is—the more the artist has drawn it from the depths of his nature—the more sympathetic and sincere will it be. And this same sincerity will impel the artist to find a clear expression of the feeling which he wishes to transmit.

Therefore this third condition—sincerity—is the most important of the three. It is always complied with in peasant art, and this explains why such art always acts so powerfully; but it is a condition almost entirely absent from our upper-class art, which is continually produced by artists

actuated by personal aims of covetousness or vanity.

Such are the three conditions which divide art from its counterfeits, and which also decide the quality of every work of art apart from its subject matter.

The absence of any one of these conditions excludes a work form the category of art and relegates it to that of art's counterfeits. If the work does not transmit the artist's peculiarity of feeling and is therefore not individual, if it is unintelligibly expressed, or if it has not proceeded from the author's inner need for expression—it is not a work of art. If all these conditions are present, even in the smallest degree, then the work, even if a weak one, is yet a work of art.

The presence in various degrees of these three conditions—individuality, clearness, and sincerity—decides the merit of a work of art as art, apart from subject matter. All works of art take rank of merit according to the degree in which they fulfill the first, the second, and the third of these conditions. In one the individuality of the feeling transmitted may predominate; in another, clearness of expression; in a third, sincerity; while a fourth may have sincerity and individuality but be deficient in clearness; a fifth, individuality and clearness but less sincerity; and so forth, in all possible degrees and combinations.

Thus is art divided from that which is not art, and thus is the quality of art as art decided, independently of its subject matter, *i.e.*, apart from whether the feelings it transmits are good or bad.

But how are we to define good and bad art with reference to its subject matter?

Chapter XVI [Purpose of Art]

How in the subject-matter of art are we to decide what is good and what is bad?

Art like speech is a means of communication and therefore of progress, that is, of the movement of humanity forward towards perfection. Speech renders accessible to men of the latest generations all the knowledge discovered by the experience and reflection both of preceding generations and of the best and foremost men of their own times; art renders accessible to men of the latest generations all the feelings experi-

enced by their predecessors and also those felt by their best and foremost contemporaries. And as the evolution of knowledge proceeds by truer and more necessary knowledge dislodging and replacing what was mistaken and unnecessary, so the evolution of feeling proceeds by means of art—feelings less kind and less necessary for the well-being of mankind being replaced by others kinder and more needful for that end. That is the purpose of art. And now of the feelings which are its subject-matter, the more art fulfills that purpose, the better the art, and the less it fulfills it the worse the art.

The appraisment of feelings (that is, the recognition of one or other set of feelings as more or less good, more or less necessary for the well-being of mankind) is effected by the religious perception of the age.

In every period of history and in every human society there exists an understanding of the meaning of life, which represents the highest level to which men of that society have attained—an understanding indicating the highest good at which that society aims. This understanding is the religious perception of the given time an society.. . .

And it is by the standard of this religious perception that the feelings transmitted by art have always been appraised.

From the reading . . .

[F]eelings less kind and less necessary for the well-being of mankind being replaced by others kinder and more needful for that end—[t]hat is the purpose of art . . .

Related Ideas

The Æsthetic Theory of Leo Tolstoy's, "What Is Art?".[3] *Tolstoy and Popular Literature.* Gary R. Jahn's article reprinted from *The Journal of Æsthetics and Art Criticism.* XXXIV, 1 (Fall, 1975).

3. *The Æsthetic Theory of Leo Tolstoy's, "What Is Art?" By Gary R. Jahn* (http://www1.umn.edu/lol-russ/PopLit/aesthetic_theory_of_what_is_art.htm)

Leo Tolstoy.[4] Jared Lyman's well-executed site containing information concerning writings, pictures, and other resources.

Tolstoy Filmography.[5] *Tolstoy Studies Journal*. Films based on works by Tolstoy, including made-for-television shows are listed with databases and sources.

Tolstoy Image Gallery.[6] *University of Toronto*. Images from *Lev Tolstoy in Photographs by Contemporaries*. Moscow: Publishing House of the USSR, 1960, are edited by Julie Novak.

In Iasnaia Poliana, Library of Congress

From the reading ...

In every period of history and in every human society there exists an understanding of the meaning of life...

4. *Leo Tolstoy* (http://www.ltolstoy.com/)
5. *Tolstoy Filmography* (http://www.utoronto.ca/tolstoy/filmography/filmography.htm)
6. *Tolstoy Image Gallery* (http://www.utoronto.ca/tolstoy/gallery/index.html)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Tolstoy, in this reading, emphasizes the social aspect of art:

   > If people lacked this capacity to receive the thoughts conceived by the men who preceded them and to pass on to others their own thoughts, men would be like wild beasts. . .

   Yet this places an interpersonal value on feeling of all men. Rilke notes that there is no universality of feeling:

   > And I certainly should have know that this third person who appears in every life and literature, this ghost of a third person who never existed, has no significance and must be denied. he is one of the pretexts of nature who is always intent on diverting men’s attention from her deepest mysteries.[7]

   Isn’t art essentially subjective? Aren’t the expressions of the artist unique? Or is it possible that artistic value is the general value of the common person’s ideals as to spirituality, as Tolstoy writes?

2. What is the distinction, on Tolstoy’s view, between the art in everyday objects and the art which communicates the brotherhood of man? Tolstoy writes:

   > All human life is filled with works of art of every kind—from cradlesong, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress, and utensils, up to church services, buildings, monuments, and triumphal processions. It is all artistic activity.

   What does the art of everyday experience have in common with what Tolstoy calls genuine art?

3. Investigate Tolstoy’s distinction between "real" and "counterfeit" art. Is this a distinction that can be maintained or is it instead merely a persuasive definition? Charles L. Stevenson clarifies:

7. Rainer Maria Rilke. *The Notes of Malte Laurids Brigge*. Trans. by Walter Kaufmann in *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York: New American Library, 1975. 135-136.

> A "persuasive" definition is one which gives a new conceptual meaning to a familiar word without substantially changing its emotive meaning, and which is used with the conscious or unconscious purpose of changing, by this means, the direction of people's interests.[8]

As Stevenson points out, "It *is* imperative ... to distinguish between persuasion and rational demonstration."[9]

4. What exactly do you think Tolstoy means by the phrase, "the religious perception of the given time and society"? He states: "[I]t is by the standard of this religious perception that the feelings transmitted by art have always been appraised."[10] What is the standard of religious perception?
5. David Hume in his "On the Standard of Taste" states that æsthetic preferences vary to some degree with an individual's age, temperament, and culture according to two variations: "The one is the different humours of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country.. . . "[11]. Yet Tolstoy believes that every age has its standards of religious meaning as social value and if this emotion is not shared by all persons, there is no art:

   > If a man, without exercising effort ... experiences a mental condition which unites him with that man and with other people who also partake of that work of art, then the object evoking that condition is a work of art.[12]

   Is Tolstoy's view of art compatible with Hume's view of taste?

8. Charles L Stevenson. *Facts and Values*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963. 32.
9. Stevenson, 42.
10. Tolstoy, XVI.
11. David Hume, "On the Standard of Taste." In *Four Dissertations*. London: A. Millar. 1757.
12. Tolstoy, V.

Chapter 21
"Art is Emotion" by Walter Pater

Walter Pater adapted from Wright, *Life of Pater*

About the author . . .

Walter Pater (1839-1894) lived and taught at Oxford for most of his life where he excelled as an essayist and critic. Pater's lectures reportedly were hesistant and soft-spoken; Oscar Wilde noted that his talks were not to be heard—they were, rather, to be "overhead."[1]

Pater thought contemporary philosophical theories dwarf our thoughts and lives; he felt æsthetics and a life lived æsthetically embody the significant life. Most of his major views on æsthetics are expressed in *Marius the Epicurean* and *The Renaissance*—works often considered to be a major source for the "art for art's sake" movement in the 1890's.

1. S.N. Behrman. *Portrait of Max.* New York: Random House. 1960.

About the work . . .

In his *Renaissance*, [2] Pater expresses the view that the spiritually full life is one lived in intensely felt moments. The heart of life, he thought, is the intensity of the moment. The habit for such a focus of experience is extracting the unique beauty, or each unique virtue, moment by moment.

From the reading . . .

To define beauty . . . is the aim of the true student of æsthetics.

Ideas of Interest from *The Renaissance*

1. Why does Pater believe it is a mistake to try to define an abstract concept of beauty? What does he see as the goal of æsthetics?
2. According to Pater, what is the goal of artistic criticism? What are the primary data of the æsthetic critic?
3. Why does Pater think analysis limits æsthetic understanding? Does Pater tacitly distinguish scientific and æsthetic experience?
4. According to Pater what are the inherent dangers of experiencing life in according with philosophical and æsthetic theories? Why is this so?
5. How does Pater recommend we spend our lives? Explain how living in the sense of the immediacy of life would not lead to a dissipated life. On Pater's veiw, what gives meaning and coherence to experience?

2. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. London: Macmillan. 1873. vii-x; 233-239.

The Reading Selection from *The Renaissance*

Preface [Æsthetic Criticism]

Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove.

Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of æsthetics.

From the reading . . .

[The æsthetic critic] has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere.

"To see the object as in itself it really is," has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever, and in æsthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly. The objects with which æsthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on

me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the æsthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realise such primary data for one's self, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

The æsthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, by analysing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, La Gioconda, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola, are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the æsthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve:—*De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.*

What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always:—In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? where was the receptacle of its

refinement, its elevation, its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."

From the reading ...

What is important, then, is ... the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects.

Conclusion [The Flux of Life]

Legei pou Hêrakleitos hoti panta chorei kai ouden menei.

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye, the gradual fading of colour from

the wall—movements of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest—but the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflexion begins to play upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly re-forming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

From the reading . . .

Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end.

"*Philosophiren*", says Novalis, "*ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren.*" The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit, is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every

moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us,—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

From the reading . . .

For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biassed by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well! we are all *condamnés*, as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve-*les hommes sont tous condamnés àmort avec des sursis indééfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world," in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

From the reading ...

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.

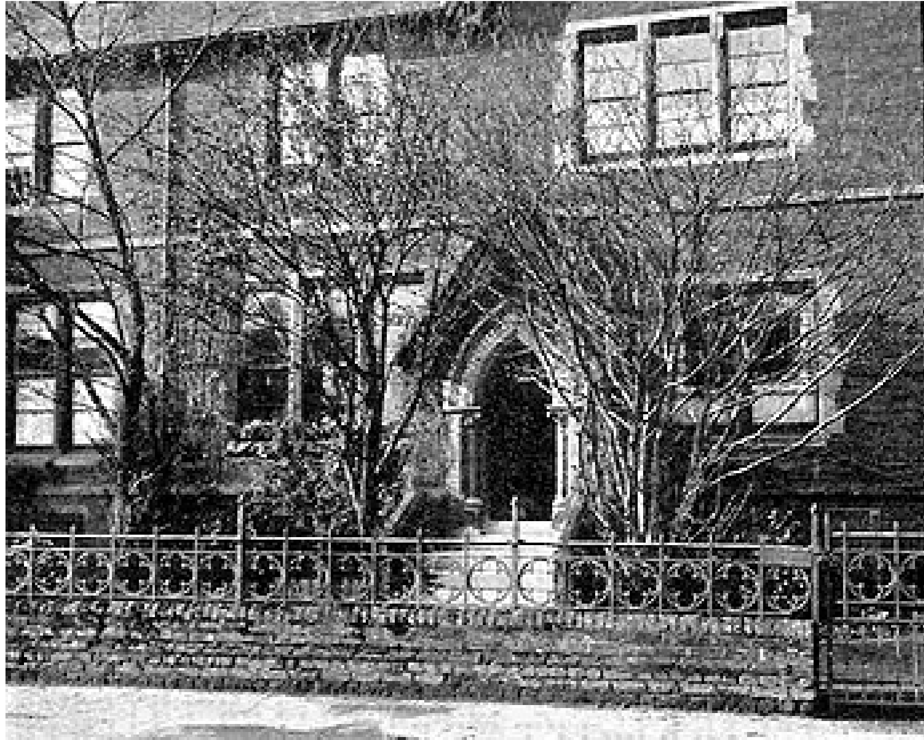
Related Ideas

Art vs. Æstheticism: the Case of Walter Pater.[3] An analysis of Water Pater's æsthetics first published by Roger Kimbel in *The New Criterion* Vol. 13, No. 9.

3. "Art vs. æstheticism". (http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/13/may95/pater.htm)

Walter Pater.[4] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism.* An insightful literary assessment of Pater's life and works by J. Hillis Miller.

walterpater.org[5] A site developed by Tony Edwards including works, quotations, images, and influence of Walter Pater.



Pater's Residence, Oxford, adapted from Wright, *Life of Pater*

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Pater writes in the "Preface" that beauty cannot be defined abstractly but is experienced and distinguished by the individual:

4. *Pater, Walter* (http://http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_\theory/walter_pater.html)
5. *walterpater.org* (http://www.walterpater.org)

> To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of æsthetics.

Even so he believes that there is some "special impression" or virtue that the competent critic uncovers in beautiful objects. Is this impression a particular quality of form and content in every work of art or is it something like Clive Bell's "significant form"?

2. Compare Pater's observation that conscious thought shatters the cohesiveness and immediacy of impressions and diminishes the scope of our interaction with the world with David Hume's analysis of the mind's interpretation of experience. First, Pater in his "Conclusion" writes:

> At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflexion begins to play upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind.

And, second, Hume explains how our perceptions, the materials of our experience, are derived from either sensation or reflection:

> Ideas may be compar'd to the extension and solidity of matter, and impressions, especially reflective ones, to colours, tastes, smells and other sensible qualities. Ideas never admit of a total union, but are endow'd with a kind of impenetrability, by which they exclude each other, and are capable of forming a compound by their conjunction, not by their mixture. On the other hand, impressions and passions are susceptible of an entire union; and like colours, may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself, and contribute only to vary that uniform impression, which arises from the whole. Some of the most curious phænomena of the human mind are deriv'd from this

> property of the passions.[6]

Which of these two analyses reflect more accurately our experience of the world?

3. In what sense does Walter Pater's emphasis on experience itself, not "the fruit of experience," anticipate Jacques Derrida's notion of deconstructive reading where the categories of understanding distort the "textual event."

4. Pater has been criticized for conceiving life as a kind of nonmoral narcissistic hedonism. (As a result of the criticism, Pater pulled the "Conclusion" from the second edition of *The Renaissance* with these words, "This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall.")[7]

   Do Pater's notions of "getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time" and "art for art's sake" entail a kind of æsthetic solipicism? Compare Pater's exposition of the æsthete to that of Søren Kierkegaard:

   > If we conceive of love æsthetically, we must acknowledge the principle that the poet's ideal of love may be higher than anything that reality presents. The poet may possess an ideality in this connection such that what the actual life yields in comparison is but a feeble reflection. Reality is for the poet merely an occasion, a point of departure, from which he goes in search of the ideality of the possible. The pathos of the poet is therefore essentially imaginative pathos. An attempt ethically to establish a poetic relationship to reality is therefore a misunderstanding, a backward step.[8]

   In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard reveals the æsthetic stage of life, in part, as a kind of self-deception where the individual purposefully replaces authentic experience with fantasy.

6. David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon. 1975. 366.
7. Pater. 233.
8. Søren Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript.* Translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1941. 347.

Chapter 22
“Art is Expression” by Benedetto Croce

Benedetto Croce Universitá di Pavia

About the author . . .

When 17 years old, Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) was buried and injured in an earthquake which killed his parents and sisters. The family fortune enabled him to spend much of his life in independent historical, critical, and philosophical study as a self-taught philosopher. He studied some law at the University of Rome for a while, but spent most of his life in Naples—a city whose cultural traditions he wove into his books on history and culture. During his time he became influential through founding the journal *La critica* and offering editorial assistance to the publishing house Laterza. His best known works form four volumes of his systematic “The Philosophy of Spirit”:[1] *Æsthetic as Science of Expression and*

1. Note the title reflects Hegel’s *magnum opus*.

General Linguistic; *Logic as the Science of Pure Concept*; *Philosophy of the Practical*; and *History: Its Theory and Practice.* In political thought, he strongly opposed Benito Mussolini’s fascism, but respect for Croce from the people of Italy kept him from serious harm. Beyond doubt, Croce was a major force in Italian philosophy during much of the twentieth century, and many historians of philosophy consider his work in æsthetics to be the most important of that century as well.

From the reading . . .

[H]e who enjoys art turns his gaze upon the point to which the artist has pointed, looks through the chink when he has opened, and reproduces that image in himself.

About the work . . .

In his *The Essence of Æsthetic*,[2] and his *Æsthetic*,[3] Croce examines the question of intuition and expression as defining what art is; specifically Croce defines æsthetics as the “science of expression.” He believes art stands on equal footing with the other major divisions of philosophy. Croce holds that knowledge can be either a particular product of intuition, as in art, or a universal product of reasoning, as in logic. Art, itself as a form of knowledge, is independent of what is existent, true, useful, or pleasurable. The intersubjectivity in æsthetic appreciation reflects a kind of cognitive awareness of an image’s ideal or “pure form” *via* intuition. Croce argues that it is feeling or emotion, as a kind of cognitive awareness or “lyrical intuition,” not described by romanticism nor by classicism, that is the basis of the unity of art through its synthesis of both form and content.

2. Benedetto Croce. *The Essence of Æsthetic*. Trans. by Douglas Ainslee. London: William Heinemann, 1921.
3. Benedetto Croce. *Æsthetic As Science of Expression and General Linguistic*. Trans. by Douglas Ainslee. London: Macmillan, 1909.

Ideas of Interest from *The Essence* and *Æsthetic*

1. How does Croce define “art”? What theories of art does Croce argue are mistaken?
2. According to Croce, how are concepts and intuitions related?
3. Clarify the “vital principle” which Croce believes makes intuition artistic. What is it that gives coherence to the images forming “a genuine work of art”?
4. How does Croce characterize spiritual activity? In what ways is spiritual activity more that the association of ideas?
5. What are the bases of the two kinds of knowledge Croce describes?
6. How does Croce distinguish the varieties of perception and sensation from intuition?
7. How does Croce distinguish between image and intuitive knowledge?
8. Explain what Croce means when he defines “intuition” as “expression.”

The Reading Selection from *The Essence* and *Æsthetic*

I. Art as Intuition

[What Is and Is Not Art]

… As to what is art—I will say at once, in the simplest manner, that art is *vision* or *intuition*. The artist produces an image or a phantasm; and he who enjoys art turns his gaze upon the point to which the artist has pointed, looks through the chink when he has opened, and reproduces

that image in himself. "Intuition," "vision," "contemplation," "imagination," "fancy," "figurations," "representations," and so on, are words continually recurring, like synonyms, when discoursing upon art, and the all lead the mind to the same conceptual sphere which indicates general agreement.

But this reply, that art is intuition, obtains its force and meaning from all that it implicitly denies and from which it distinguishes art. . . .

From the reading . . .

[T]he demonstration of the unreality of the physical world has not only been proved in an indisputable manner and is admitted by all. . .

It denies, above all, that art is a *physical fact*: for example, certain colors, or relations of colors; certain definite forms of bodies; certain definite sounds, or relations of sounds; certain phenomena of heat or of electricity— in short, whatsoever be designed as "physical.". . . But this attempt has been carried out intentionally and with method on several occasions in the history of thought: from the "canons" which the Greek theoreticians and artists fixed for the beauty of bodies, through the speculations as to the geometrical and numerical relations of figures and sounds, down to the researches of the æstheticians of the nineteenth century (Fechner, for example), and to the "communications" presented in our day by the inexpert, as philosophical, psychological, and natural science congresses, concerning the relations of physical phenomena with art. And if it be asked why art cannot be a physical fact, we must reply, in the first place, that physical facts *do not possess reality*, and that art, to which so many devote their whole lives and which fills all with a divine joy, is *supremely real*; thus it cannot be physical fact, which is something unreal. This sounds at first paradoxical . . . but . . . we may take into consideration the fact that the demonstration of the unreality of the physical world has not only been proved in an indisputable manner and is admitted by all philosophers (who are not crass materialists . . .) . . . but is professed by these same physicists in the spontaneous philosophy which they mingle with their physics, when they conceive physical phenomena as products of principles that are beyond experience, of atoms or of ether, or as the manifestation of an Unknowable: besides, the matter itself of the materialists is a super-material principle. Thus physical facts reveal themselves,

by their internal logic and by common consent, not as reality, but as a *construction of our intellect for the purposes of science*. . . .

Another negation is implied in the definition of art as intuition: if it be intuition, and intuition is equivalent to *theory* in the original sense of contemplation, art cannot be a utilitarian act; and since a utilitarian act aims always at obtaining a pleasure and therefore at keeping off a pain, art, considered in its own nature, has nothing to do with the *useful* and with *pleasure* and *pain*, as such. It will be admitted, indeed, without much difficulty, that a pleasure as a pleasure, any sort of pleasure, is not of itself artistic; the pleasure of a drink of water that slakes thirst . . . is not artistic. Finally, the difference between pleasure and art leaps to the eyes in the relations that are developed between ourselves and works of art, because the figure represented may be dear to us and represent the most delightful memories, and at the same time the picture may be ugly . . . Nevertheless, the doctrine that defines art as the pleasurable has a special denomination (hedonistic æsthetic) and a long and complicated development in the history of æsthetic doctrines: it showed itself in the Greco-Roman world, prevailed in the eighteenth century, reflowered in the second half of the nineteenth, and still enjoys much favor, being especially well received by beginners in æsthetic, who are above all stuck by the fact that art causes pleasure. . . .

From the reading . . .

What function (it is asked) can a world of pure images possess in the spirit of man, without philosophical, historical, religious, or scientific value, and without even moral or hedonistic value?

A third negation, effected by means of the theory of art as intuition, is that art is a *moral act*; that is to say, that form of practical act which, although necessarily uniting with the useful and with pleasure and pain, is not immediately utilitarian and hedonistic, and moves in a superior spiritual sphere. But the intuition, in so far as it is a theoretic act, is opposed to the practical of any sort. And in truth, art, as has been remarked from the earliest times, does not arise as an act of the will; good will, which constitutes the honest man, does not constitute the artist. And since it is not the result of an act of will, so it escapes all moral discrimination, not because a privilege of exemption is accorded to it, but simply because moral discrimination cannot be applied to art. An artistic image portrays

an act morally praiseworthy or blameworthy; but this image, as image, is neither morally praiseworthy nor blameworthy.... Further, the moralistic theory of art is ... much discredited ..., that refutation of it which should be made—and which we her make—solely for logical reasons. The end attributed to art, of direction the good and inspiring horror of evil, of correcting and ameliorating customs, is a derivation of the moralistic doctrine; and so is the demand addressed to artists to collaborate in the education of the lower classes, in the strengthening of the national or bellicose spirit of a people, in the diffusion of the ideals of a modest and laborious life; and so on. These are all things that art cannot do, any more than geometry, which however, does not lose anything of its importance on account of its inability to do this; and one does not see why art should do so, either.... And the moralistic doctrine of art ... has its true side, because, if art be beyond morality, the artist is neither this side of it nor that, but under its empire insofar as he is a man who cannot withdraw himself from the duties of man and must look upon art itself—art, which is not and never will be moral—as a mission to be exercised as a priestly office.

Again ... with the definition of art as *intuition* we deny that it has the character of *conceptual knowledge*. Conceptual knowledge, in its true form, which is the philosophical, is always realistic, aiming at establishing reality against unreality, or at lowering unreality by including it in reality as a subordinate moment of reality itself. But intuition means, precisely, indistinction of reality and unreality, the image with its value as mere image, the pure ideality of the image; and opposing the intuitive or sensible knowledge to the conceptual or intelligible, the æsthetic to the noetic, it aims at claiming the autonomy of this more simple and elementary form of knowledge, which has been compared to the dream ... of the theoretic life, in respect to which philosophy would be the waking. ... [W]e deny that the universal is rendered logically explicit and is thought in the intuition.

[Intuition Represents Feeling]

Ideality (as has also been called this character that distinguishes the intuition from the concept, art from philosophy and from history, from the affirmation of the universal and from the perception or narration of what has happened) is the intimate virtue of art; no sooner are reflection and judgment developed from that ideality, than art is dissipated and dies:

it dies in the artist, who become a critic; it dies in the contemplator, who changes from an entranced enjoyer of art to a meditative observer of life.. . .

The doctrine of art as intuition, as fancy, as form, now gives rise to an ulterior . . . problem, which is no longer one of opposition and distinction toward physics, hedonistic, ethic and logic, but the field of images itself, which sets in doubt the capacity of the image to define the character of art and is in reality occupied with the mode of separating the genuine from the spurious image, and of enriching in this way the concept of the image and of art. What function (it is asked) can a world of pure images possess in the spirit of man, without philosophical, historical, religious, or scientific value, and without even moral or hedonistic value?

From the reading . . .

What we admire in genuine works of art is the perfect fanciful form which a state of the soul assumes; and we call this life, unity, solidity of the work of art.

The intuition is truly artistic, it is truly intuition, and not a chaotic mass of images, only when it has a vital principle that animates it, making it all one with itself; but what is this principle?

[W]hat gives coherence and unity to the intuition is feeling: the intuition is really such because it represents a feeling, and can only appear from and upon that. . . . What we admire in genuine works of art is the perfect fanciful form which a state of the soul assumes; and we call this life, unity, solidity of the work of art. What displeases us in the false and imperfect form is the struggle of several different states of the soul not yet unified . . .

II. Intuition and Expression

[Two Kinds of Knowledge]

Knowledge has two forms: it is either *intuitive* knowledge or *logical* knowledge, know edge obtained through the *imagination* or knowledge

obtained through the *intellect*; knowledge of the *individual* or knowledge of the *universal*; of *individual* things or of the *relations* between them: it is in fact, productive either of *images* or of *concepts*.. . .

Doubtless it is possible to find concepts mingled with intuitions. But in many other intuitions there is no trace of such a mixture, which proves that it is not necessary.. . . But, think what one may of these instances, and admitting further the contention that the greater part of the intuitions of civilized man are impregnated with concepts, there yet remains to be observed something more important and more conclusive. Those concepts which are found mingled and fused with the intuitions are no longer concepts in so far as they are really mingled and fused, for they have lost all independence and autonomy. They have been concepts, but have now become simple elements of intuition.. . . A work of art may be full of philosophical concepts; it may contain them in greater abundance and they may there be even more profound than in a philosophical dissertation, which in its turn may be rich to overflowing with descriptions and intuitions. But notwithstanding all these concepts the total effect of the work of art is an intuition; and notwithstanding all those intuitions, the total effect of the philosophical dissertation is a concept.. . . The difference between a scientific work and a work of art, that is between an intellectual fact and an intuitive fact, lies in the difference of the total effect aimed at by their respective authors. This it is that determines and rules over the several parts of each, not these parts separated and considered abstractly in themselves.. . .

From the reading . . .

The world which as a rule we intuit is a small thing.

[Relation Between Intuition and Perception]

By intuition is frequently understood *perception*, or the knowledge of actual reality, the apprehension of something as *real*.

Certainly perception is intuition: the perceptions of the room in which I am writing, of the ink bottle and paper that are before me, of the pen I am using, of the objects that I touch and make use of as instruments of my person . . . : these are all intuitions. But the image that is now passing

through my brain of a me writing in another room, in another town, with different paper, pen and ink, is also an intuition. this means that the distinction between reality and non-reality is extraneous, secondary, to the true nature of intuition. If we imagine a human mind having intuitions for the first time, it would seem that it could have intuitions of actual reality only, that is to say, that it could have perceptions of nothing but the real. but since knowledge of reality is based upon the distinction between real images and unreal images, and since this distinction does not at the first moment exist, these intuitions would in truth not be intuitions either of the real or of the unreal, not perceptions, but pure intuitions. Where all is real, nothing is real. The child, with its difficulty of distinguishing true from false, history from fable, which are all one to childhood, can furnish us with a sort of very vague and only remotely approximate idea of this ingenuous state. Intuition is the undifferentiated unity of the perception of the real and of the simple image of the possible. In our intuitions we do not oppose ourselves as empirical beings to external reality, but we simply objectify our impressions, whatever they be.

[Intuitive Knowledge is Indifferent to Perception of Space and Time]

Those, therefore, who look upon intuition as sensation formed and arranged simply according to the categories of space and time, would seem to approximate more nearly to the truth. Space and time (they say) are the forms of intuition; to have an intuition is to place it in space and in temporal sequence. Intuitive activity would then consist in this double and concurrent function of spatiality and temporality. But for these two categories must be repeated what was said of intellectual distinctions, when found mingled with intuitions. We have intuitions without space and without time: the color of a sky, the color of a feeling, a cry of pain and an effort of will, objectified in consciousness: these are intuitions which we possess, and with their making space and time have nothing to do....

Intuition has sometimes been confused with simple sensation. But since this confusion ends by being offensive to common sense, it has more frequently been attenuated or concealed with a phraseology apparently designed at once to confuse and to distinguish them. Thus, it has been asserted that intuition is sensation, but not so much simple sensation as *association* of sensations. Here a double meaning is concealed in the word

"association." Association is understood, either as memory, mnemonic association, conscious recollection, and in that case the claim to unite in memory elements which are not intuited, distinguished, possessed in some way by the spirit and produced by consciousness, seems inconceivable: or it is understood as association of unconscious elements, in which case we remain in the world of sensation and of nature. But if with certain associationists we speak of an association which is neither memory nor flux of sensations, but a *productive* association (formative, constructive, distinguishing); then our contention is admitted and only its name is denied to it. For productive association is no longer association in the sense of the sensationalists, but *synthesis*, that is to say, spiritual activity. Synthesis may be called association; but with the concept of productivity is already posited the distinction between passivity and activity, between sensation and intuition.

From the reading . . .

Intuition is the undifferentiated unity of the perception of the real and of the simple image of the possible.

Other psychologists are disposed to distinguish from sensation something which is sensation no longer, but is not yet intellectual concept: the *representation* or *image*. What is the difference between their representation or image and our intuitive knowledge? Everything and nothing: for "representation" is a very equivocal word. If by representation be understood something cut off and standing out from the psychic basis of the sensations, then representation is intuition. If, on the other hand, it be conceived as complex sensation we are back once more in crude sensation, which does not vary in quality according to its richness or poverty, or according to whether the organism in which it appears is rudimentary or highly developed and full of traces of past sensations. Nor is the ambiguity remedied by defining representation as a psychic product of secondary degree in relation to sensation, defined as occupying the first place. What does secondary degree mean here? Does it mean a qualitative, formal difference? If so, representation is an elaboration of sensation and therefore intuition. Or does it mean greater complexity and complication, a quantitative, material difference? In that case intuition is once more confused with simple sensation.

[Intuition Is Expression]

And yet there is a sure method of distinguishing true intuition, true representation, from that which is inferior to it: the spiritual fact from the mechanical, passive, natural fact. Every true intuition or representation is also *expression*. That which does not objectify itself in expression is not intuition or representation, but sensation and mere natural fact. The spirit only intuits in making, forming, expressing. He who separates intuition from expression never succeeds in reuniting them.

From the reading . . .

To intuit is to express; and nothing else (nothing more, but nothing less) than *to express*.

Intuitive activity *possesses intuitions to the extent that it expresses them*.. . . Feelings or impressions, then, pass by means of words from the obscure region of the soul into the clarity of the contemplative spirit. It is impossible to distinguish intuition from expression in this cognitive process. The one appears with the other at the same instant, because they are not two, but one.

The principal reason which makes our view appear paradoxical as we maintain it, is the illusion or prejudice that we possess a more complete intuition of reality than we really do. One often hears people say that they have many great thoughts in their minds, but that they are not able to express them. But if they really had them, they would have coined them into just so many beautiful, sounding words, and thus have expressed them. If these thoughts seems to vanish or to become few and meager in the act of expressing them, the reason is that they did not exist or really were few and meager.. . . The world which as a rule we intuit is a small thing. It consists of little expressions, which gradually become greater and wider with the increasing spiritual concentration of certain moments.. . . We think we see a smile, but in reality we have only a vague impression of it, we do not perceive all the characteristic traits of which it is the sum, as the painter discovers them after he has worked upon them and is thus able to fix them on the canvas.. . . Now, just as one who is deluded as to the amount of his material wealth is confuted by arithmetic, which states its exact amount, so he who nourishes delusions as to the wealth of his own thoughts and images is brought back to reality, when he is obliged to cross the *Pons Asinorum* of expression. Let us say

of the former, count; to the latter, speak; or, here is a pencil, draw, express yourself.

We may thus add this to the various verbal descriptions of intuition, noted at the beginning: intuitive knowledge is expressive knowledge. Independent and autonomous in respect to intellectual function; indifferent to later empirical discriminations, to reality and to unreality, to formations and apperceptions of space and time, which are also later: intuition or representation is distinguished as *form* from that is felt and suffered, from the flux or wave of sensation, or from psychic matter; and this form, this taking possession, is expression. To intuit is to express; and nothing else (nothing more, but nothing less) than *to express*.

From the reading ...

[H]ere is a pencil, draw, express yourself.

Related Ideas

Æsthetic.[4] *Project Gutenberg*. The online text of Croce's *Æsthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* translated by Douglas Ainslie.

Benedetto Croce Archive.[5] *Marxists.org*. Hypertexts of *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx* and *What is Alive and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel*.

Croce in America: Influence, Misunderstanding, and Neglect.[6] *National Humanities Institute*. An article from *Humanitas* by David D. Roberts assessing how Croce's influence has been relatively neglected in the U.S.

4. *Æsthetics* (http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/9306)
5. *Benedetto Croce* (http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/croce/index.htm)
6. *Croce in America*. (http://www.nhinet.org/roberts.htm)

From the reading . . .

That which does not objectify itself in expression is not intuition or representation, but sensation and mere natural fact.

Il Posilippo and Waterfront, Naples, (detail) Library of Congress

Topics Worth Investigating

1. In what sense is Croce’s æsthetics properly termed an idealistic philosophy? Explain what Croce means when he asserts:

   > [W]e may take into consideration the fact that the demonstration of the unreality of the physical world has not only been proved in an indisputable manner and is admitted by all philosophers . . . but is professed by these same physicists in the spontaneous philosophy which they mingle with their physics, when they conceive physical phenomena as products of principles that are beyond experience, of atoms or of ether. . . Thus physical facts reveal themselves, by their internal logic and by common consent, not as reality, but as a *construction of our intellect for the purposes of science*. . . .

   Is it physical phenomena or is it physical principles which are beyond experience in Croce’s view?

2. Croce argues both that æsthetics is "the general science of expression" and "the general science of language." He calls attention to the "[illusion] that we possess a more complete intuition of reality than we really do":

   > One often hears people say that they have many great thoughts in their minds, but that they are not able to express them.. . . If these thoughts seem to vanish or to become few and meager in the act of expressing them, the reason is that they did not exist or really were few and meager.

   The expression of thoughts in words is undoubtedly a conceptual activity which Croce excludes from æsthetics as "the science of expression." Explain, then, the role of cognition in Croce's account of æsthetic experience.

3. Croce emphasizes in this reading that art is intuition, and that we cannot have knowledge of our artistic intuitions until they are formalized in a work of art. He writes:

   > People think that all of us ordinary men imagine and intuit countries, figures and scenes like painters, and bodies like sculptors; save that painters and sculptors know how to paint and carve such images, while we bear them unexpressed in our souls. . . . Nothing can be more false than this view.

   Even so, as Wordsworth states in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*:

   > And by the vision splendid
   > Is on his way attended;
   > At length the Man perceives it die away,
   > And fade into the light of common day.

   Isn't it arguable that some artistic works never become expressed? And others become expressed after great difficulty? Yet, in both cases, doesn't the intuition *precede* the expression and so be separate from it?

4. Jacques Maritain argues that Croce’s “Neo-Hegelian” æsthetics has the serious error of

   > . . . the failure to perceive that artistic contemplation, however *intuitive* it may be, is none the less above all *intellectual*. Æsthetics ought to be *intellectualist* and *intuitivist* at the same time.[7]

   Croce, in our reading, draws his distinction between intuitive and intellectual knowledge in this way:

   > [T]he total effect of the work of art is an intuition; and notwithstanding all those intuitions, the total effect of the philosophical dissertation is a concept.. . . The difference between a scientific work and a work of art, that is between an intellectual fact and an intuitive fact, lies in the difference of the total effect aimed at by their respective authors. This it is that determines and rules over the several parts of each, not these parts separated and considered abstractly in themselves.. . .

   To what extent do you think Maritain’s criticism of Croce’s distinction is a fair one?

7. Jacques Maritain. *Art and Scholasticism*. Translated by J.F. Scanlan. New York: Scribner’s. 1930.

Chapter 23

"Beauty as Intrinsic Pleasure" by George Santayana

George Santayana adapted from EpistemeLinks.com

About the author . . .

George Santayana (1863-1952) spent the first nine years of his life in Madrid, the next forty years in Boston, and the last forty journeying in Europe. His early schooling was at the Boston Latin School, and later he studied at Harvard College. As a student of William James and Josiah Royce, he intently studied the work of C.S. Peirce; nevertheless, Santayana's pragmatic naturalism has a European perspective and a deference to the works of Plato and Aristotle. His focus on artistic imagination sets his philosophy apart from other Classic American Philosophers.

About the work . . .

The Sense of Beauty, [1] Santayana's first book in philosophy, is a naturalistic study of æsthetics based upon his Harvard lectures—an unusual topic for a concentrated study at the time. Beauty for Santayana is a quality of experience which originates from the intrinsic emotional interest in perception and is not a derivative quality from the perceptual process. The conditions of beauty are of material (sensation), or of form (measure), or of expression (association). In sum, Santayana describes beauty as "pleasure objectified", or, perhaps as he better expresses it, beauty is "pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing." Santayana sought to explain æsthetic theory as a type of psychological inquiry of human nature from a biological point of view. Æsthetics, itself, involves a kind of critical perception, for beauty does not exist independently of our perception of the world. For Santayana, æsthetic value stands to moral value as work does to play.

From the reading . . .

Beauty is an emotional element, a pleasure of ours, which nevertheless we regard as a quality of things.

Ideas of Interest from *The Sense of Beauty*

1. Explain what Santayana means when he concludes that æsthetics is concerned with the perception of values.
2. What is the source of value in the world? What is the meaning of Spinoza's dictum which Santayana expresses as " [W]e desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it"?

1. George Santayana. *The Sense of Beauty*. New York, Scribner's. 1896.

3. How does Santayana distinguish between the subjects of science and art?
4. What two factors does Santayana draw on to explicate the difference between æsthetic and moral values? What does he mean when he writes æsthetic sensitiveness is "the æsthetic demand for the morally good, and perhaps the finest flower of human nature"?
5. What is the distinction between pleasure and the sense of beauty, according to Santayana?
6. Two what extent does Santayana believe that æsthetic pleasures are ends-in-themselves and not as a means to something else?
7. What, according to Spinoza, is the source of the mistaken belief that æsthetic judgments are universal?
8. Thoroughly explain Santayana's definition of beauty in terms of its value being positive, intrinsic, and objectified.

The Reading Selection from *The Sense of Beauty*

[Theory of Values]

It would be easy to find a definition of beauty that should give in a few words a telling paraphrase of the word. We know on excellent authority that beauty is truth, that it is the expression of the ideal, the symbol of divine perfection, and the sensible manifestation of the good. A litany of these titles of honor might easily be compiled, and repeated in praise of our divinity. Such phrases stimulate thought and give us a momentary pleasure, but they hardly bring any permanent enlightenment. A definition that should really define must be nothing less than the exposition of the origin, place, and elements of beauty as an object of human experience. We must learn from it, as far as possible, why, when, and how beauty appears, what conditions an object must fulfill to be beautiful, what elements of our nature make us sensible of beauty, and what the relation is between the constitution of the object and the excitement of our susceptibility. Nothing less will really define beauty or make us un-

derstand what æsthetic appreciation is. The definition of beauty in these sense will be ... a task that can be only very imperfectly accomplished within its limits.

The historical titles of our subject may give us a hint towards the beginning of such a definition. Many writers of the last century called the philosophy of beauty *criticism*, and the word is still retained as the title for the reasoned appreciation of works of art. We could hardly speak, however, of delight in nature as criticism. A sunset is not criticized; it is felt and enjoyed. ...

This age of science and of nomenclature has accordingly adopted a more learned word, *æsthetics*, that is, the theory of perception or of susceptibility. If *criticism* is too narrow a word, pointing exclusively to our more artificial judgments, *æsthetics* seems to be too broad and to include within its sphere all pleasures and pains, if not all perceptions whatsoever.. . .

From the reading ...

Many writers of the last century called the philosophy of beauty *criticism* ... A sunset is not criticized; it is felt and enjoyed.

If we combine, however, the etymological meaning of *criticism* with that of *æsthetics* we shall unite two essential qualities of the theory of beauty. *Criticism* implies judgment, and *æsthetics* perception. To get the common ground, that of perceptions which are critical, or judgments which are perceptions, we must widen our notions of deliberate criticism so as to include those judgments of value which are instinctive and immediate, that is, to include pleasures and pains; and at the same time we must narrow our notion of æsthetics so as to exclude all perceptions which are not appreciations, which do not find a value in their objects. We thus reach the sphere of critical or appreciative perception, which is, roughly speaking, what we mean to deal with. And retaining the word *æsthetics*, which is now current, we may therefore say that æsthetics is concerned with the perception of values. The meaning and condition of value is, then, what we must first consider.

Since the days of Descartes it has been a conception familiar to philosophers that every visible event in nature might be explained by previous visible events, and that all the motions, for instance, of the tongue in speech, or the hand in painting, might have merely physical causes. If

consciousness is thus accessory to life and not essential to it, the race of man might have existed upon the earth and acquired all the arts necessary for its subsistence without possessing a single sensation, idea, or emotion. Natural selection might have secured the survival of those automata which made useful reactions upon their environment. An instinct of self-preservation would have been developed, dangers would have been shunned with being feared, and injuries revenged without being felt.

... But apart from ourselves, and our human bias, we can see in such a mechanical world no element of value whatever. In removing consciousness, we have removed the possibility of worth.

But it is not only in the absence of all consciousness that value would be removed from the world; by a less violent abstraction from the totality of human experience, we might conceive beings of a purely intellectual cast, minds in which the transformations of nature were mirrored without any emotion. Every event would then be noted, its relations would be observed, its recurrence might even be expected; but all this would happen without a shadow of desire, or pleasure, or of regret. No event would be repulsive, no situation terrible. We might, in a word, have a world of idea without a world of will. In this case, as completely as if consciousness were absent altogether, all value and excellence would be gone. So that for the existence of good in any form it is not merely consciousness but emotional consciousness that is needed. Observation will not do, appreciation is required.

From the reading ...

[W]e desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it

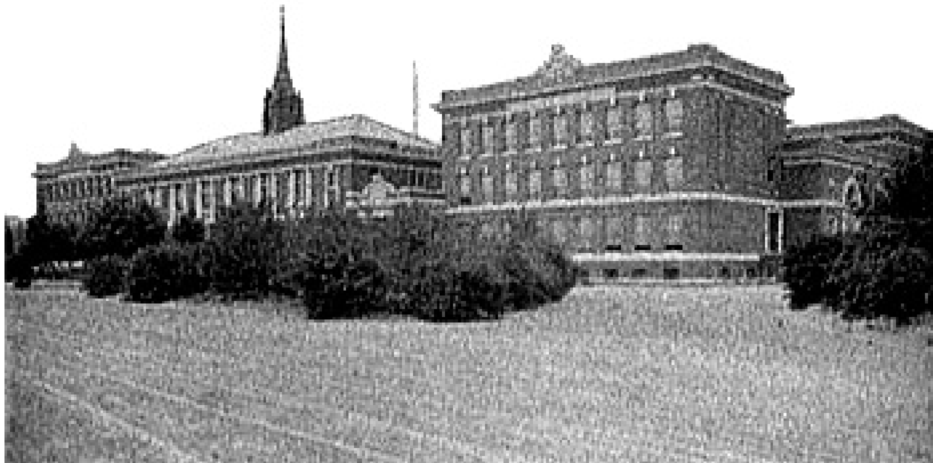
We may therefore at once assert this axiom, important for all moral philosophy and fatal to certain stubborn incoherences of thought, that there is no value apart from some appreciation of it, and no good apart from some preference of it before its absence or its opposite. In appreciation, in preference, lies the root and essence of all excellence. Or, as Spinoza clearly expresses it, we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it.

It is true that in the absense of an instinctive reaction we can still apply these epithets by an appeal to usage. We may agree that an action is bad,

or a building good, because we recognize in them a character which we have learned to designate by that adjective; but unless there is in us some trace of passionate reprobation or of sensible delight, there is no moral or æsthetic judgment. . . .

[Preference is Irrational]

Values spring from the immediate and inexplicable reaction of vital impulse, and from the irrational part of our nature. The rational part is by its essence relative; it leads us from data to conclusions, or from parts to wholes; it never furnishes the data with which it works. If any preference or precept were declared to be ultimate and primitive, it would thereby be declared to be irrational, since mediation, inference, and synthesis are the essence of rationality. . . .



Boston Latin School, Library of Congress

It is evident that beauty is a species of value, and what we have said of value in general applies to this particular kind. A first approach to a definition of beauty has therefore been made by the exclusion of all intellectual judgments, all judgments of matter or fact or of relation. To substitute judgments of fact for judgments of value is a sign of a pedantic and borrowed criticism. If we approach a work of art or nature scientifically, for the sake of its historical connections or proper classification,

we do not approach it æsthetically.. . .

Science is the response to the demand for information, and in it we ask for the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Art is the response to the demand for entertainment, for the stimulation of our senses and imagination, and truth enters into it only as it subserves these ends.. . .

[Moral and Æsthetic Values]

Æsthetic and moral judgments are accordingly to be classed together in contrast to judgments intellectual; they are both judgments of value, while intellectual judgments are judgment of fact. If the latter have any value, it is only derivative, and out whole intellectual life has its only justification in its connection with our pleasures and pains.

The relation between æsthetic and moral judgments, between the sphere of the beautiful and the good, is close, but the distinction between them is important. One factor of this distinction is that while æsthetic judgments are mainly positive, that is, perceptions of good, moral judgments are mainly and fundamentally negative, or perceptions of evil. Another factor of the distinction is that whereas, in the perception of beauty, our judgment is necessarily intrinsic and based on the character of the immediate experience, and never consciously on the idea of an eventual utility in the object, judgments about moral worth, on the contrary, are always based, when they are positive, upon the consciousness of benefits probably involved.. . .

From the reading . . .

To condemn spontaneous and delightful occupations because they are useless for self-preservation shows an uncritical prizing of life irrespective of its content. For such a system the worthiest function of the universe should be to establish perpetual motion.

The appreciation of beauty and its embodiment in the arts are activities which belong to our holiday life, when we are redeemed for the moment from the shadow of evil and the slavery to fear, and are following the bent of our nature where it chooses to lead us. The values, then with which we here deal are positive; they were negative in the sphere of morality. . . .

[Work and Play]

We have here, then, an important element of the distinction between æsthetic and moral values. It is the same that have been pointed to in the famous contrast between work and play.. . .

Play is thus essentially frivolous.. . . To condemn spontaneous and delightful occupations because they are useless for self-preservation shows an uncritical prizing of life irrespective of its content. For such a system the worthiest function of the universe should be to establish perpetual motion. Uselessness is a fatal accusation to bring against any act which is done for its presumed utility, but those which are done for their own sake are their own justification.

At the same time there is an undeniable propriety in calling all the liberal and imaginative activities of man play, because they are spontaneous, and not carried on under pressure of external necessity or danger. Their utility for self-preservation may be very indirect and accidental, but they are not worthless for that reason. On the contrary, we may measure the degree of happiness and civilization which any race has attained by the proportion of its energy which is devoted to free and generous pursuits, to the adornment of life and the culture of the imagination. For it is in the spontaneous play of his faculties that man finds himself and his happiness.. . . He is a slave when all his energy is spent in avoiding suffering and death, when all his action is imposed from without, and no breath or strength is left him for free enjoyment.

Work and play here take on a different meaning. and become equivalent to servitude and freedom. The change consists in the subjective point of view from which the distinction is now made. We no longer mean by work all that is done usefully, but only what is done unwillingly and by the spur of necessity. By play we are designating, no longer what is done fruitlessly, but whatever is done spontaneously and for its own sake, whether it have or not an ulterior utility. Play, in this sense, may be our most useful occupation.. . .

In this second and subjective sense, then *work* is the disparaging term and *play* the eulogistic one. All who feel the dignity and importance of the things of the imagination, need not hesitate to adopt the classification which designates them as play. We point out thereby, not that they have no value, but that their value is intrinsic. The useful is good because of the excellence of its consequences; but these must somewhere ease to be merely useful in their turn, or only excellent as means; somewhere we

must reach the good that is good in itself and for its own sake, else the whole process is futile, and the utility of our first object illusory. We here reach the second factor in our distinction, between æsthetic and moral values, which regards their immediacy.

If we attempt to remove from life all its evils, as the popular imagination has done at times, we shall find little but æsthetic pleasures remaining to constitute unalloyed happiness. The satisfaction of the passions and the appetites, in which we chiefly place earthly happiness, themselves take on an æsthetic tinge when . . . the truth has no further practical utility . . . The delight of it is imaginative and the value of it æsthetic.

[All Values Æsthetic]

This reduction of all values to immediate appreciations, to sensuous or vital activities, is so inevitable that it has struck even the minds most courageously rationalistic.. . .

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> Beauty, as we have seen, is a value; it cannot be conceived as an independent existence which affects our senses and which we consequently perceive.

Not only are the various satisfactions which morals are meant to secure æsthetic in the last analysis, but when the conscience is formed, and right principles acquire an immediate authority, our attitude to these principles becomes æsthetic also. Honor, truthfulness, and cleanliness are obvious examples. When the absence of these virtues causes an instinctive disgust, as it does in well-bred people, the reaction is essentially æsthetic, because it is not based on reflection and benevolence, but on constitutional sensitiveness. This æsthetic sensitiveness is, however, properly enough called moral, because it is the effect of conscientious training and is more powerful for good in society than laborious virtue, because it is much more constant and catching. It is *κολοκ´αγαθία*, the æsthetic demand for the morally good, and perhaps the finest flower of human nature.

[General Principles]

The important point is to remember that the representative or practical value of a principle is one thing, and its intrinsic or æsthetic value is another, and that the latter can be justly counted only as an item in its favor to be weighed against possible external disadvantages.. . .

We have now separated with some care intellectual and moral judgments from the sphere of our subject, and found that we are to deal only with perceptions of value, and with these only when they are positive and immediate. But even with these distinctions the most remarkable characteristic of the sense of b beauty remains. All pleasures are intrinsic and positive values, but all pleasures are not perceptions of beauty. Pleasure is indeed the essence of that perception, but there is evidently in this particular pleasure a complication which is not present in other and which is the basis of the distinction made by consciousness and language between it and the rest. It will be instructive to notice the degrees of this difference.

The bodily pleasures are those least resembling perceptions of beauty.. . .

[Physical Pleasures]

There is here, then, a very marked distinction between physical and æsthetic pleasure; the organs of the latter must be transparent, they must not intercept our attention, but carry it directly to some external object. the greater dignity and range of æsthetic pleasure is thus made very intelligible.. . .

The distinction between pleasure and the sense of beauty has sometimes been said to consist in the unselfishness of æsthetic satisfaction. In other pleasures, if is said, we gratify our senses and passions; in the contemplation of beauty we are raised above ourselves, the passions are silenced and we are happy in the recognition of a good that we do not seek to possess. The painter does not look at a spring of water with the eyes of a thirsty man, nor at a beautiful woman with those of a satyr. The difference lies, it is urged, in the impersonality of the enjoyment. [T]his distinction . . . seems satisfactory only to the least æsthetic minds.. . .

[Disinterestedness Not Essential]

In the second place, the supposed disinterestedness of æsthetic delights is not truly fundamental. Appreciation of a picture is not identical with the desire to buy it, but it is, or ought to be closely related and preliminary to that desire. . . .

The truth which the theory is trying to state seems rather to be that when we seek æsthetic pleasures we have no further pleasure in mind; that we do not mix up the satisfactions of vanity and proprietorship with the delight of contemplation. This is true, but it is true at bottom of all pursuits and enjoyments. Every real pleasure is in one sense disinterested. It is not sought with ulterior motives, and what fills the mind is no calculation, but the image of an object or event, suffused with emotion. . . .

The supposed disinterestedness of our love of beauty passes into another characteristic of it often regarded as essential—its universality. The pleasures of the senses have, it is said, no dogmatism in them; that anything gives me pleasure involves no assertion about its capacity to give pleasure to another. But when I judge a thing to be beautiful, my judgment means that the thing is beautiful in itself, or (what is the same thing more critically expressed) that it should seem so to everybody. The claim of universality is, according to this doctrine, the essence of the æsthetic; which make the perception of beauty a judgment rather than a sensation. All æsthetic precepts would be impossible, and all criticism arbitrary and subjective, unless we admit a paradoxical universality in our judgment, the philosophical implications of which we may then go on to develop. . . .

From the reading . . .

The symphony would lose nothing if half mankind has always been deaf, as nine-tenths of them actually are to the intricacies of its harmonies; but it would have lost much if no Beethoven had existed.

[Æsthetic Pleasure Not Universal]

That the claim of universality is such a natural inaccuracy will not be hard to show. There is notoriously no great agreement upon æsthetic matters; and such agreement as there is, is based upon similarity of origin, nature,

and circumstance among men, a similarity which, where it exists tends to bring about identity in all judgments and feelings. It is unmeaning to say that which is beautiful to one man *ought* to be beautiful to another. If their senses are the same, their associations and dispositions similar, then the same thing will certainly be beautiful to both. If their natures are different, the form which to one will be entrancing will be to another invisible, because his classifications and discrimination in perception will be different . . . It is absurd to say that what is invisible to a given being *ought* to seem beautiful to him. Evidently this obligation of recognizing the same qualities is conditioned by the possession of the same faculties. But no two men have exactly the same faculties, nor can things have for any two exactly the same values.

What is loosely expressed by saying that anyone ought to see this or that beauty is that he would see it if his disposition, training, or attention were what our ideal demands for him; and our ideal of what anyone should be has complex but discoverable sources. We take, for instance, a certain pleasure in having our own judgments supported by those of others; we are intolerant, if not of the existence of a nature different from our own, at least of its expression in words and judgment.. . .

The great actual unity of human taste within the range of conventional history helps the pretension, but in principle it is untenable. Nothing has less to do with the real merit of a work of imagination than the capacity of all men to appreciate it; the true test is the degree and kind of satisfaction it can have to him who appreciates it most. The symphony would lose nothing if half mankind has always been deaf, as nine-tenths of them actually are to the intricacies of its harmonies; but it would have lost much if no Beethoven had existed.. . .

[Objectification of Pleasure]

There is, however, something more in the claim to universality in æsthetic judgments than the desire to generalize our own opinions. There is the expression of a curious but well-known psychological phenomenon, *viz.* the transformation of an element of sensation into the quality of a thing. If we say that other men should see the beauties we see, it is because we think those beauties *are in the object*, like its color, proportion, or size. Our judgment appears to us merely the perception and discovery of an external existence, of the real excellence that is without. But this

notion is radically absurd and contradictory. Beauty, as we have seen, is a value; it cannot be conceived as an independent existence which affects our senses and which we consequently perceive. It exists in perception, and cannot exist otherwise. A beauty not perceived is a pleasure not felt, and an contradiction....

From the reading ...

[B]eauty is an ultimate good, something that gives satisfaction of a natural function, to some fundamental need or capacity of our minds.

Beauty is an emotional element, a pleasure of ours, which nevertheless we regard as a quality of things.... It is the survival of a tendency originally universal to make every effect of a thing upon us a constituent of its conceived nature. The scientific idea of a thing is a great abstraction from the mass of perceptions and reactions which that thing produces; the æsthetic idea is less abstract, since it retains the emotional reaction, the pleasure of the perception, as an integral part of the conceived thing.

Nor is it hard to find the ground of this survival in the sense of beauty of an objectification of feeling elsewhere distinct. Most of the pleasures which objects cause are easily distinguished and separated from the perception of the object: the object has to be applied to a particular organ, like the palate, or swallowed like wine, or used and operated upon in some way before the pleasure arises. The cohesion is therefore slight between the pleasure and the other associated elements of sense; the pleasure is separated in time from the perception, or it is localized in a different organ, and consequently is at once recognized as an effect and not as a quality of the object. But when the process of perception itself is pleasant, as it may easily be, when the intellectual operation, by which the elements of sense are associated and projected, and the concept of the form an substance of the thing produced, is naturally delightful, then we have a pleasure intimately bound up in the thing, inseparable from its character and constitution, the seat of which in us is the same as the seat of the perception. We naturally fail, under these circumstances, to separate the pleasure from the other objectified feelings. It becomes, like them, a quality of the object which we distinguish from pleasures not so incorporated in the perception of things, by giving it the nature of beauty.

[Definition of Beauty]

We have now reached our definition of beauty, which in the terms of our successive analysis and narrowing of the conception, is value positive, intrinsic, and objectified. Or, in less technical language, beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing.

This definition is intended to sum up a variety of distinctions and identifications which should perhaps be here more explicitly set down. Beauty is a value, that is, it is not a perception of a matter of fact or of a relation: it is an emotion, an affection of our volitional and appreciative nature. An object cannot be beautiful if it can give pleasure to nobody: a beauty to which all men were forever indifferent is a contradiction in terms.

In the second place this value is positive, it is the sense of the presence of something good, or (in the case of ugliness) of its absence. It is never the perception of a positive evil, it is never a negative value. That we are endowed with the sense of beauty is a pure gain which brings no evil with it.. . .

Further, this pleasure must not be in the consequence of the utility of the object or event, but in its immediate perception; in other words, beauty is an ultimate good, something that gives satisfaction of a natural function, to some fundamental need or capacity of our minds. Beauty is therefore a positive value that is intrinsic; it is a pleasure. These two circumstances sufficiently separate the sphere of æsthetics from that of ethics. Moral values are generally negative, and always remote. Morality has to do with the avoidance of evil and the pursuit of good: æsthetics only with enjoyment.

Finally, the pleasures of sense are distinguished from the perception of beauty, as sensation in general is distinguished from perception; by the objectification of the elements and their appearance as qualities rather of things than of consciousness. The passage from sensation to perception is gradual, and the path may be sometimes retraced: so it is with beauty and the pleasures of sensation.

Related Ideas

The Santayana Edition.[2] *The Institute for American Thought*. Information concerning Santayana’s life, works, and influence by faculty at Indiana and Purdue University.

Overheard in Seville.[3] *Bulletin of the Santayana Society*. Online papers on Santayana’s life and philosophy Editor: Angus Kerr-Lawson at the University of Waterloo, Ontario.

From the reading . . .

[B]eauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing.

Puerta del Sol, Heart of Madrid, Library of Congress

2. *The Santayana Edition* (http://www.iupui.edu/~santedit/)
3. *Overheard* (http://www.math.uwaterloo.ca/~kerrlaws/Santayana/Bulletin/seville.html)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Santayana argues that artistic experience is a positive pleasure of intrinsic value. Æsthetic pleasure is not an independent part of the quality of things: "A beauty not perceived is a pleasure not felt, and a contradiction." He points out that we have the tendency to attribute the psychological effects of a thing to its conceived nature. Do you think Santayana would believe that Francis Hutchenson makes a similar mistake when he argues that differing æsthetic judgments are often due to the confusion of inner and outer senses:

   > [W]e have got distinct names for the external senses, and none, or very few, for the internal, and by this are led . . . to look upon the former as some way more fixed and really and natural than the latter. The *sense* of harmony has got its name, *viz.* a *good ear*; and we are generally brought to acknowledge this *natural* power of *perception* or a *sense* some way distinct from hearing.[4]

   Does Santayana hold that beauty is experienced as the quality of a thing by inner rather than outer sense? Does "inner sense" entail a kind of reflective consciousness of the quality of a thing for Santayana?

2. Compare Santayana's distinction between work and play as the same distinction between æsthetic and moral values with Frederich Schiller's distinction between the sensuous and the formal impulse. For Schiller, the synthesis of these impulses is the play impulse (*Spieltrieb*). Just as the sensuous impulse seeks out life, and the form impulse seeks shape, the play impulse seeks beauty or life-form.[5]

3. Explain whether Santayana would agree that the "well known psychological phenomenon" upon which the claim to universality in æsthetic judgments is based, is an example of Alfred North Whitehead's "Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness."? Whitehead defines this fallacy as "neglecting the degree of abstraction involved when an

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4. Francis Hutchenson. *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*. London: J. Barby, *et. al.* 1725. Section VI. IX.

5. Frederich Schiller, *Letters on the Æsthetic Education of Man*. 1794. Translated by Tapio Riikonen and David Widger. In *Literary and Philosophical Essays: French, German and Italian.*New York: Collier. 1910. Letters XV-XVI.

actual entity is considered merely so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought."[6] In particular, would Santayana agree that "among the primary elements of nature as apprehended in our immediate experience, there is no element whatever which possess this character of"[7] beauty?

4. In our reading, Santayana argues that æsthetic pleasure need not have a disinterested character, although in a sense, all pleasure is disinterested:

   > It is not sought with ulterior motives, and what fills the mind is no calculation, but the image of an object or event, suffused with emotion.

   Nevertheless, compare Santayana's view that disinterested æsthetic judgments lack universal agreement with Kant's view that the disinterested character of æsthetics is the basis for universally shared values:

   > The result is that the judgement of taste, with its attendant consciousness of detachment from all interest, must involve a claim to validity for all men, and must do so apart from universality attached to objects, *i.e.*, there must be coupled with it a claim to subjective universality.[8]

   On what basis does Santayana disagree with Kant's analysis?

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6. Alfred North Whitehead. *Process and Reality*. New York: Harper. 1929. 11.
7. Alfred North Whitehead. *Science and the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1925. 72.
8. Immanuel Kant. *The Critique of Judgment*. Tran. by James Creed Meredith. 1790. Section 1. Book 1. ¶ 6.

Chapter 24

“Art as Significant Form” by Clive Bell

Clive Bell adapted from a sketch by Henry Lamb

About the author . . .

Clive Bell (1881-1964), Cambridge educated, was a member of the Bloomsbury Group. This literary, cultural group included Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Roger Fry, and John Maynard Keynes. His æsthetic theory was especially influential in early twenienth century art criticism.

About the work . . .

In his *Art*, [1] Bell outlines a formalist theory based on his definition of art as "significant form." True art, he believes, exhibits combinations of lines and colors which engender intellectual recognition and æsthetic experience in persons of taste. The resultant æsthetic emotion, he believes, is unique, morally transcendent, and independent of other kinds of human emotions. Æsthetic value in art, he argues, is based solely on the forms and relations which evoke the ecstasic artistic response. These forms and relations seem to be a pure, simple quality intuitively known by the "rare gift of artistic appreciation."

From the reading . . .

Why should [persons of artistic sensibility] stop to think when they are not very good at thinking?

Ideas of Interest from *Art*

1. According to Bell, what two qualities should an æsthetic theorist possess in order to write well about art. Why are there so few good art critics? Which of the qualities does Bell believe to be the most valuable?
2. What does Bell think is the starting point for theories of æsthetics? Why is this so? How does Bell characterize the central problem of æsthetics? What is it that defines the essential characteristic of artistic works?
3. Summarize the argument Bell offers against æsthetic subjectivism. Is Bell a subjectivist? How important is "intellectual rightness," the recognition of the form independent of emotional significance, for Bell?
4. How does Bell distinguish "significant form" from beauty? Why does Bell wish to avoid use of the term "beauty" when discussing art?

1. Clive Bell. *Art*. London: Chatto & Windus. 1914.

5. Why does Bell believe descriptive painting is not, in general, genuine art? What is the relation of art and morality on Bell's view? How does he maintain the distinction between "æsthetic emotion" and "the emotions of life"?

6. Characterize clearly Bell's explanation of "significant form" in art. Why does Bell think so highly of primitive art?

7. "Great art," according to Bell, is independent of time and place. Explain whether or not Bell commits himself to a kind of æsthetic absolutism based upon the objective recognition of "significant form" by the æsthetically competent?

The Reading Selection from *Art*

[Qualities of an Art Critic]

It is improbable that more nonsense has been written about æsthetics than about anything else: the literature of the subject is not large enough for that. It is certain, however, that about no subject with which I am acquainted has so little been said that is at all to the purpose. The explanation is discoverable. He who would elaborate a plausible theory of æsthetics must possess two qualities—artistic sensibility and a turn for clear thinking. Without sensibility a man can have no æsthetic experience, and, obviously, theories not based on broad and deep æsthetic experience are worthless. Only those for whom art is a constant source of passionate emotion can possess the data from which profitable theories may be deduced; but to deduce profitable theories even from accurate data involves a certain amount of brain-work, and, unfortunately, robust intellects and delicate sensibilities are not inseparable. As often as not, the hardest thinkers have had no æsthetic experience whatever. I have a friend blessed with an intellect as keen as a drill, who, though he takes an interest in æsthetics, has never during a life of almost forty years been guilty of an æsthetic emotion. So, having no faculty for distinguishing a work of art from a handsaw, he is apt to rear up a pyramid of irrefragable argument on the hypothesis that a handsaw is a work of art. This defect robs his perspicuous and subtle reasoning of much of its value; for it has ever been a maxim that faultless logic can win but little credit for conclu-

sions that are based on premises notoriously false. Every cloud, however, has its silver lining, and this insensibility, though unlucky in that it makes my friend incapable of choosing a sound basis for his argument, mercifully blinds him to the absurdity of his conclusions while leaving him in full enjoyment of his masterly dialectic. People who set out from the hypothesis that Sir Edwin Landseer was the finest painter that ever lived will feel no uneasiness about an æsthetic which proves that Giotto was the worst. So, my friend, when he arrives very logically at the conclusion that a work of art should be small or round or smooth, or that to appreciate fully a picture you should pace smartly before it or set it spinning like a top, cannot guess why I ask him whether he has lately been to Cambridge, a place he sometimes visits.

On the other hand, people who respond immediately and surely to works of art, though, in my judgment, more enviable than men of massive intellect but slight sensibility, are often quite as incapable of talking sense about æsthetics. Their heads are not always very clear. They possess the data on which any system must be based; but, generally, they want the power that draws correct inferences from true data. Having received æsthetic emotions from works of art, they are in a position to seek out the quality common to all that have moved them, but, in fact, they do nothing of the sort. I do not blame them. Why should they bother to examine their feelings when for them to feel is enough? Why should they stop to think when they are not very good at thinking? Why should they hunt for a common quality in all objects that move them in a particular way when they can linger over the many delicious and peculiar charms of each as it comes? So, if they write criticism and call it æsthetics, if they imagine that they are talking about Art when they are talking about particular works of art or even about the technique of painting, if, loving particular works they find tedious the consideration of art in general, perhaps they have chosen the better part. If they are not curious about the nature of their emotion, nor about the quality common to all objects that provoke it, they have my sympathy, and, as what they say if often charming and suggestive, my admiration too. Only let no one support that what they write and talk is æsthetics; it is criticism, or just "shop."

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these æsthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.

The starting-point for all systems of æsthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art. I do not mean, of course, that all works provoke the same emotion. On the contrary, every work produces a different emotion. But all these emotions are recognisably the same in kind; so far, at any rate, the best opinion is on my side. That there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, etc., etc., is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called the æsthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of æsthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects.

[Significant Form]

For either all works of visual art have some common quality, or when we speak of "works of art" we gibber. Everyone speaks of "art," making a mental classification by which he distinguishes the class "works of art" from all other classes. What is the justification of this classification? What is the quality common and peculiar to all members of this class? Whatever it be, no doubt it is often found in company with other qualities; but they are adventitious—it is essential. There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our æsthetic emotions? What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and

Cezanne? Only one answer seems possible—significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our æsthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these æsthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.

At this point it may be objected that I am making æsthetics a purely subjective business, since my only data are personal experiences of a particular emotion. It will be said that the objects that provoke this emotion vary with each individual, and that therefore a system of æsthetics can have no objective validity. It must be replied that any system of æsthetics which pretends to be based on some objective truth is so palpably ridiculous as not to be worth discussing. We have no other means of recognising a work of art than our feeling for it. The objects that provoke æsthetic emotion vary with each individual. Æsthetic judgments are, as the saying goes, matters of taste; and about tastes, as everyone is proud to admit, there is no disputing. A good critic may be able to make me see in a picture that had left me cold things that I had overlooked, till at last, receiving the æsthetic emotion, I recognise it as a work of art. To be continually pointing out those parts, the sum, or rather the combination, of which unite to produce significant form, is the function of criticism. But it is useless for a critic to tell me that something is a work of art; he must make me feel it for myself. This he can do only by making me see; he must get at my emotions through my eyes. Unless he can make me see something that moves me, he cannot force my emotions. I have no right to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally; and I have no right to look for the essential quality in anything that I have not felt to be a work of art. The critic can affect my æsthetic theories only by affecting my æsthetic experience. All systems of æsthetics must be based on personal experience—that is to say, they must be subjective.

From the reading ...

I have no right to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally; and I have no right to look for the essential quality in anything that I have not felt to be a work of art.

Yet, though all æsthetic theories must be based on æsthetic judgments, and ultimately all æsthetic judgments must be matters of personal taste,

it would be rash to assert that no theory of æsthetics can have general validity. For, though *A*, *B*, *C*, *D* are the works that move me, and *A*, *D*, *E*, *F* the works that move you, it may well be that *x* is the only quality believed by either of us to be common to all the works in his list. We may all agree about æsthetics, and yet differ about particular works of art. We may differ as to the presence or absence of the quality *x*. My immediate object will be to show that significant form is the only quality common and peculiar to all the works of visual art that move me; and I will ask those whose æsthetic experience does not tally with mine to see whether this quality is not also, in their judgment, common to all works that move them, and whether they can discover any other quality of which the same can be said.

Also at this point a query arises, irrelevant indeed, but hardly to be suppressed: "Why are we so profoundly moved by forms related in a particular way?" The question is extremely interesting, but irrelevant to aæsthetics. In pure æsthetics we have only to consider our emotion and its object: for the purposes of æsthetics we have no right, neither is there any necessity, to pry behind the object into the state of mind of him who made it. Later, I shall attempt to answer the question; for by so doing I may be able to develop my theory of the relation of art to life. I shall not, however, be under the delusion that I am rounding off my theory of æsthetics. For a discussion of æsthetics, it need be agreed only that forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws do move us in a particular way, and that it is the business of an artist so to combine and arrange them that they shall move us. These moving combinations and arrangements I have called, for the sake of convenience and for a reason that will appear later, "Significant Form."

A third interpretation has to be met. "Are you forgetting about colour?" someone inquires. Certainly not; my term "significant form" included combinations of lines and of colours. The distinction between form and colour is an unreal one; you cannot conceive a colourless line or a colourless space; neither can you conceive a formless relation of colours. In a black and white drawing the spaces are all white and all are bounded by black lines; in most oil paintings the spaces are multi-coloured and so are the boundaries; you cannot imagine a boundary line without any content, or a content without a boundary lines. Therefore, when I speak of significant form, I mean a combination of lines and colours (counting white and black as colours) that moves me æsthetically.

> **From the reading ...**
>
> Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist.

Some people may be surprised at my not having called this "beauty." Of course, to those who define beauty as "combinations of lines and colours that provoke æsthetic emotion," I willingly conceded the right of substituting their word for mine. But most of us, however strict we may be, are apt to apply the epithet "beautiful" to objects that do not provoke that peculiar emotion produced by works of art. Everyone, I suspect, has called a butterfly or a flower beautiful. Does anyone feel the same kind of emotion for a butterfly or a flower that he feels for a cathedral or a picture/ surely, it is not what I call an æsthetic emotion that most of us feel, generally, for natural beauty. I shall suggest, later, that some people may, occasionally, see in nature what we see in art, and feel for her an æsthetic emotion; but I am satisfied that, as a rule, most people feel a very different kind of emotion for birds and flowers and the wings of butterflies from that which they feel for pictures, pots, temples and statues. Why these beautiful things do not move us as works of art move us is another, and not an æsthetic, question. For our immediate purpose we have to discover only what quality is common to objects that do move us as works of art. In the last part of this chapter, when I try to answer the question—"Why are we so profoundly moved by some combinations of lines and colours?" I shall hope to offer an acceptable explanation of why we are less profoundly moved by others.

[Æsthetic and Nonæsthetic Beauty]

Since we call a quality that does not raise the characteristic æsthetic emotion "Beauty," it would be misleading to call by the same name the quality that does. To make "beauty" the object of the æsthetic emotion, we must give to the word an over-strict and unfamiliar definition. Everyone sometimes uses "beauty" in an unæsthetic sense; most people habitually do so. To everyone, except perhaps here and there an occasional æsthete, the commonest sense of the word is unæsthetic. Of its grosser abuse, patent in our chatter about "beautiful huntin'" and "beautiful shootin'," I need

not take account; it would be open to the precious to reply that they never do so abuse it. Besides, here there is no danger of confusion between the æsthetic and the non-æsthetic use; but when we speak of a beautiful woman there is. When an ordinary man speaks of a beautiful woman he certainly does not mean only that she moves him æsthetically; but when an artist calls a withered old hag beautiful he may sometimes mean what he means when he calls a battered torso beautiful. The ordinary man, if he be also a man of taste, will call the battered torso beautiful, but he will not call a withered hag beautiful because, in the matter of women, it is not to the æsthetic quality that the hag may possess, but to some other quality that he assigns the epithet. Indeed, most of us never dream of going for æsthetic emotions to human beings, from whom we ask something very different. This "something," when we find it in a young woman, we are apt to call "beauty." We live in a nice age. With the man-in-the-street "beautiful" is more often than not synonymous with "desirable": the word does not necessarily connote any æsthetic reaction whatever, and I am tempted to believe that in the minds of many the sexual flavour of the word is stronger than the æsthetic. I have noticed a consistency in those to whom the most beautiful thing in the world is a beautiful woman, and the next most beautiful thing a picture of one. The confusion between æsthetic and sensual beauty is not in their case so great as might be supposed. Perhaps there is none; for perhaps they have never had an æsthetic emotion to confuse with their other emotions. The art that they call "beautiful" is generally closely related to the women. A beautiful picture is a photograph of a pretty girl; beautiful music, the music that provokes emotions similar to those provoked by young ladies in musical farces; and beautiful poetry, the poetry that recalls the same emotions felt, twenty years earlier, for the rector's daughter. Clearly the word "beauty" is used to connote the objects of quite distinguishable emotions, and that is a reason for not employing a term which would land me inevitably in confusions and misunderstandings with my readers.

On the other hand, with those who judge it more exact to call these combinations and arrangements of form that provoke our æsthetic emotions, not "significant form," but "significant relations of form," and then try to make the best of two worlds, the æsthetic and the metaphysical, by calling these relations "rhythm," I have no quarrel whatever. Having made it clear that by "significant form" I mean arrangements and combinations that move us in a particular way, I willingly join hands with those who prefer to give a different name to the same thing.

[Art and Nonart]

The hypothesis that significant form is the essential quality in a work of art has at least one merit denied to many more famous and more striking—it does help to explain things. We are all familiar with pictures that interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art. To this class belongs what I call "Descriptive Painting" that is, painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information. Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations, illustrations of all sorts, belong to this class. That we all recognise the distinction is clear, for who has not said that such and such a drawing was excellent as illustration, but as a work of art worthless? Of course many descriptive pictures possess, amongst other qualities, formal significance, and are therefore works of art; but many more do not. They interest us; they may move us too in a hundred different ways, but they do not move us æsthetically. According to my hypothesis they are not works of art. They leave untouched our æsthetic emotions because it is not their forms but the ideas or information suggested or conveyed by their forms that affect us.

From the reading . . .

I have no right to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally; and I have no right to look for the essential quality in anything that I have not felt to be a work of art.

Few pictures are better known or liked that Frith's "Paddington Station"; certainly I should be the last to grudge it its popularity. Many a weary forty minutes have I whiled away disentangling its fascinating incidents and forging for each an imaginary past and an improbable future. But certain though it is that Frith's masterpiece, or engravings of it, have provided thousands with half-hours of curious and fanciful pleasure, it is not less certain that no one has experienced before it one half-second of æsthetic rapture—and this although the picture contains several pretty passages of colour, and is by no means badly painted. "Paddington Station" is not a work of art; it is an interesting and amusing document. In it line and colour are used to recount anecdotes, suggest ideas, and indicate the manners and customs of an age; they are not used to provoke æsthetic emotion. Forms and the relations of forms were for Frith not objects of

emotion, but means of suggesting emotion and conveying ideas.

[Art and Morality]

The ideas and information conveyed by “Paddington Station” are so amusing and so well presented that the picture has considerable value and is well, worth preserving. But, with the perfection of photographic processes and of the cinematograph, pictures of this sort are becoming otiose. Who doubts that one of those daily Mirror photographers in collaboration with a Daily mail reporter can tell us far more about “London day by day” than any royal Academician? For an account of manners and fashions we shall go, in future, to photographs, supported by a little bright journalism, rather than to descriptive painting. Had the imperial academicians of Nero, instead of manufacturing incredibly loathsome imitations of the antique, recorded in fresco and mosaic the manners and fashions of their day, their stuff, though artistic rubbish, would now be an historical goldmine. If only they had been Friths instead of being Alma Tademas! But photography has made impossible any such transmutation of modern rubbish. Therefore it must be confessed that pictures in the Frith tradition are grown superfluous; they merely waste the hours of able men who might be more profitably employed in works of a wider beneficence. Still, they are not unpleasant, which is more than can be said for that kind of descriptive painting of which “The Doctor” is the most flagrant example. Of course “The Doctor” is not a work of art. In it form is not used as an object of emotion, but as a means of suggesting emotions. This alone suffices to make it nugatory; it is worse than nugatory because the emotion it suggests is false. What it suggests is not pity and admiration but a sense of complacency in our own pitifulness and generosity. It is sentimental. Art is above morals, or, rather, all art is moral because, as I hope to show presently, works of art are immediate means to good. Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist. But descriptive pictures which are not works of art, and, therefore, are not necessarily means to good states of mind, are proper objects of the ethical philosopher’s attention. Not being a work of art, “The Doctor” has none of the immense ethical value possessed by all objects that provoke æsthetic ecstasy; and the state of mind to which it is a means, as illustration, appears to me undesirable.

The works of those enterprising young men, the Italian futurists, are no-

table examples of descriptive painting. Like the Royal Academicians, they use form, not to provoke æsthetic emotions, but to convey information and ideas. Indeed the published theories of the Futurists prove that their pictures ought to have nothing whatever to do with art. Their social and political theories are respectable, but I would suggest to young Italian painters that it is possible to become a Futurist in thought and action and yet remain an artist, if one has the luck to be born one. To associate art with politics is always a mistake. Futurist pictures are descriptive because they aim at presenting in line and colour the chaos of the mind at a particular moment; their forms are not intended to promote æsthetic emotion but to convey information. These forms, by the way, whatever may be the nature of the ideas they suggest, are themselves anything but revolutionary. In such futurist pictures as I have seen—perhaps I should except some by Severine—the drawing, whenever it becomes representative as it frequently does, is found to be in that soft and common convention brought into fashion by Besnard some thirty years ago, and much affected by Beaux-Art students ever since. As works of art, the Futurist pictures are negligible; but they are not to be judged as works of art. A good Futurist picture would succeed as a good piece of psychology succeeds; it would reveal, through line and colour, the complexities of an interesting state of mind. If futurist pictures seem to fail, we must seek an explanation, not in a lack of artistic qualities that they never were intended to possess, but rather in the minds the states of which they are intended to reveal.

[Primitive Art]

Most people who care much about art find that of the work that moves them most the greater part is what scholars call "Primitive." Of course there are bad primitives. For instance, I remember going, full of enthusiasm, to see one of the earliest Romanesque churches in Poitiers (Notre-Dame-la-Grande), and finding it as ill-proportioned, over-decorated, coarse, fat and heavy as any better class building by one of those highly civilised architects who flourished a thousand years earlier or eight hundred later. But such exceptions are rare. As a rule primitive art is good—and here again my hypothesis is helpful—for, as a rule, it is also free from descriptive qualities. In primitive art you will find no accurate representation; you will find only significant form. Yet no other art moves us so profoundly. Whether we consider Sumerian sculpture or pre-dynastic Egyp-

tian art, or archaic Greek, or the Wei and T’ang masterpieces, or those early Japanese works of which I had the luck to see a few superb examples (especially two wooden Bodhisattvas) at the Shepherd’s bush Exhibition in 1910, or whether, coming nearer home, we consider the primitive Byzantine art of the sixth century and its primitive developments amongst the western barbarians, or, turning far afield, we consider that mysterious and majestic art that flourished in Central and South America before the coming of the white men, in every case we observe three common characteristics—absence of representation, absence of technical swagger, sublimely impressive form. Nor is it hard to discover the connection between these three. Formal significance loses itself in preoccupation with exact representation and ostentatious cunning.

From the reading . . .

[S]ignificant form is the only quality common and peculiar to all the works of visual art . . .

Naturally, it is said that if there is little representation and less saltimbancery in primitive art, that is because the primitives were unable to catch a likeness or cut intellectual capers. The contention is beside the point. There is truth in it, no doubt, though, were I a critic whose reputation depended on a power of impressing the public with a semblance of knowledge, I should be more cautious about urging it than such people generally are. For to support that the Byzantine masters wanted skill, or could not have created an illusion had they wished to do so, seems to imply ignorance of the amazingly dexterous realism of the notoriously bad works of that age. Very often, I fear, the misrepresentation of the primitives must be attributed to what the critics call, “wilful distortion.” Be that as it may, the point is that, either from what of skill or want of will, primitives neither create illusions, nor make display of extravagant accomplishment, but concentrate their energies on the one thing needful—the creation of form. Thus have they created the finest works of art that we possess.

[Rightness of Form]

Let no one imagine that representation is bad in itself; a realistic form

may be as significant, in its place as part of the design, as an abstract. But if a representative form has value, it is as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man’s activity to a world of æsthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life. The pure mathematician rapt in his studies knows a state of mind which I take to be similar, if not identical. He feels an emotion for his speculations which arises from no perceived relation between them and the lives of men, but springs, inhuman or super-human, from the heart of an abstract science. I wonder, sometimes, whether the appreciators of art and of mathematical solutions are not even more closely allied. Before we feel an æsthetic emotion for a combination of forms, do we not perceive intellectually the rightness and necessity of the combination? If we do, it would explain the fact that passing rapidly through a room we recognise a picture to be good, although we cannot say that it has provoked much emotion. We seem to have recognised intellectually the rightness of its forms without staying to fix our attention, and collect, as it were, their emotional significance. If this were so, it would be permissible to inquire whether it was the forms themselves or our perception of their rightness and necessity that caused æsthetic emotion. But I do not think I need linger to discuss the matter here. I have been inquiring why certain combinations of forms move us; I should not have traveled by other roads had I enquired, instead, why certain combinations are perceived to be right and necessary, and why our perception of their rightness and necessity is moving. What I have to say is this: the rapt philosopher, and he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own; that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life find no place. It is a world with emotions of its own.

[Artistic Representation]

To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space. That bit of knowledge, I admit, is essential to the appreciation of many great works, since many of the more moving forms ever created are in three

dimensions. To see a cube or rhomboid as a flat pattern is to lower its significance, and a sense of three-dimensional space is essential to the full appreciation of most architectural forms. Pictures which would be insignificant if we saw them as flat patterns are profoundly moving because, in fact, we see them as related planes. If the representation of three-dimensional space is to be called "representation," then I agree that there is one kind of representation which is not irrelevant. Also, I agree that along with our feeling for line and colour we must bring with us our knowledge of space if we are to make the most of every kind of form. Nevertheless, there are magnificent designs to an appreciation of which this knowledge is not necessary: so, though it is not irrelevant to the appreciation of some works of art it is not essential to the appreciation of all. What we must say is that the representation of three-dimensional space is neither irrelevant nor essential to all art, and that every other sort of representation is irrelevant.

. . . Before a work of art people who feel little or no emotion for pure form find themselves at a loss. They are deaf men at a concert. They know that they are in the presence of something great, but they lack the power of apprehending it. They know that they ought to feel for it a tremendous emotion, but it happens that the particular kind of emotion it can raise is one that they can feel hardly or not at all. And so they read into the forms of the work those facts and ideas for which they are capable of feeling emotion, and feel for them the emotions that they can feel—the ordinary emotions of life. When confronted by a picture, instinctively they refer back its forms to the world from which they came. They treat created form as though it were imitated form, a picture as though it were a photograph. Instead of going out on the stream of art into a new world of æsthetic experience, they turn a sharp corner and come straight home to the world of human interests. For them the significance of a work of art depends on what they bring to it; no new thing is added to their lives, only the old material is stirred. A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy: to use art as a means to the emotions of life is to use a telescope of reading the news. You will notice that people who cannot feel pure æsthetic emotions remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people who can, as often as not, have no idea what the subject of a picture is. They have never noticed the representative element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about the shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colours. Often they can tell by the quality of a single line whether or not a man is a good artist. They are concerned only with lines and colours, their re-

lations and quantities and qualities; but from these they win an emotion more profound and far more sublime than any that can be given by the description of facts and ideas.. . .

Yet, though the echoes and shadows of art enrich the life of the plains, her spirit dwells on the mountains. To him who woos, but woos impurely, she returns enriched what is brought. Like the sun, she warms the good seed in good soil and causes it to bring forth good fruit. But only to the perfect lover does she give a new strange gift—a gift beyond all price. Imperfect lovers bring to art and take away the ideas and emotions of their own age and civilisation. In twelfth-century Europe a man might have been greatly moved by a Romanesque church and found nothing in a T'ang picture. To a man of a later age, Greek sculpture meant much and Mexican nothing, for only to the former could he bring a crowd of associated ideas to be the objects of familiar emotions. But the perfect lover, he who can feel the profound significance of form, is raised above the accidents of time and place. To him the problems of archæology, history, and hagiography are impertinent. If the forms of a work are significant its provenance is irrelevant. Before the grandeur of those Sumerian figures in the Louvre he is carried on the same flood of emotion to the same æsthetic ecstasy as, more than four thousand years ago, the Chaldean lover was carried. It is the mark of great art that its appeal is universal and eternal. Significant form stands charged with the power to provoke æsthetic emotion in anyone capable of feeling it. The ideas of men go buzz and die like gnats; men change their institutions and their customs as they change their coats; the intellectual triumphs of one age are the follies of another; only great art remains stable and unobscure. Great art remains stable and unobscure because the feelings that it awakens are independent of time and place, because its kingdom is not of this world. To those who have and hold a sense of the significance of form what does it matter whether the forms that move them were created in Paris the day before yesterday or in Babylon fifty centuries ago? The forms of art are inexhaustible; but all lead by the same road of æsthetic emotion to the same world of æsthetic ecstasy.

From the reading . . .

In this world [of art] the emotions of life find no place.

Related Ideas

Since Cézanne.[2] *Project Gutenberg*. Etext of Clive Bell’s *Since Cézanne* consisting of essays from *The New Republic*, *The Athenæum*, and *The New Stateman*.

Clive Bell.[3] *National Portrait Gallery*. Portraits of Clive Bell provided by the National Portrait Gallery, London.

The Railway Station, 1862, William Powell Frith

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Clive Bell writes in this chapter from *Art*:

   > Yet, though all æsthetic theories must be based on æsthetic judgments, and ultimately all æsthetic judgments must be matters of personal taste, it would be rash to assert that no theory of æsthetics can have general validity.

   Compare Clive Bell’s 1914 view on the unity of æsthetic judgements as expressed here with Ludwig Wittgenstein’s explication of language-games in his 1958 *Philosophical Investigations*:

2. *Since Cézanne* (http://http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/13395)
3. *Clive Bell*. (http://http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/person.asp?linkID=mp00359)

> [T]his the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in æsthetics or ethics.... For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all* but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.... I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances" ... And I shall say: games form a family.[4]

2. Bell points out that all art evokes a kind of æsthetic emotion:

   > The starting-point for all systems of æsthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art.

   Is he simply supporting his observation with an *ad populum* appeal or does he think æsthetic emotion is a capacity of all persons?

3. Walter Pater argues that life's significance inheres in the variety and intensity of everyday nonconceptual experience. Experiencing sensation and feeling are the meaning of the experience—not the product of the experience:

   > Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality of your moments as they pass, and simply for these moments' sake.[5]

   Explain whether or not Pater's notion of immediacy of experience is essential to the foundation of Bell's "significant form."

4. Is Bell's "significant form" a simple or complex quality? He writes about temporal combinations of line and color, "These moving combinations and arrangements I have called ... 'Significant Form.'" Bell notes that great art can be intellectually recognized prior to, and independently of, the distinctive æsthetic emotion produced by significant form. Does "significant form" have one consistent essential meaning?

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4. Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1958. ¶ 66-67 and ¶ 77.
5. Walter Pater. *The Renaissance*. London: Macmillan. 1873. 238-239.

5. Is Bell's theory of art viciously circular? If "significant form" produces " æsthetic response," a peculiarly unique emotion arising directly from "significant form," and only felt by the artistically competent, how could these relationships be proved in any other manner than a self-verifying experience?

Chapter 25

"Art as Unrepressed Wish-Fulfillment" by Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud (adapted) Library of Congress

About the author . . .

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), born in Moravia, lived in Vienna most of his life. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna and researched physiology under Ernst Brücke. Two neurologists were of special influence on Freud's early studies of nervous disorders: Jean Charcot, who had some success with hysteria using hypnosis, and Josef Breuer, who as friend and colleague, introduced the "talking cure" whereby some patients improved *via* catharsis—a transformation upon conscious realization of a repressed traumatic experience. Freud's development of psycho-

analysis first became widely known through the publication of his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* in 1916. His later work transformed the vocabulary and science of psychology and colored diverse theories in art and literature.

About the work . . .

In our excerpt from *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*,[1] Freud briefly touches on the role of the unconscious in artistic creation. He writes, "[O]ur entire psychical activity is bent upon *procuring pleasure* and *avoiding pain*, that it is automatically regulated by the PLEASURE-PRINCIPLE." Freud notes that as "the Ego learns that it must inevitably go without immediate satisfaction [and] postpone gratification ... the Ego becomes 'reasonable' [and] follows the REALITY-PRINCIPLE."[2] In this short reading selection, Freud explains how the repressed desires of the libido of an artist are sublimated into a socially recognizable artistic product which fulfills the unconscious wishes of the spectators. Art, then, for Freud, seems to be the transformation of common neuroses into a kind of socially admired, shared fantasy.

From the reading . . .

[When] a true artist ... understands to elaborate his daydreams, so that they lose that personal note ... [and] knows too how to modify them sufficiently so that their origin in prohibited sources is not easily detected, ... he opens out to others the way back to the comfort and consolation of their own unconscious sources of pleasure. . .

Ideas of Interest from *Introductory*

1. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis; A Course of Twenty-Eight Lectures Delivered at the University of Vienna*. Translated by Joan Riviere. London: George Allen and Unwin. 1922. 311-315.
2. Freud. 298-299.

Lectures

1. According to Freud, what are the roles of pleasure and wish-fulfillment in fantasy?
2. What does Freud mean by a "reservation" from the encroachments of the reality principle?
3. Explain what Freud means by "introversion." Clarify whether Freud is committed to the view that at one stage of the creative process the artist cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality.
4. Describe Freud's concept of "the true artist."

The Reading Selection from *Introductory Lectures*

[Origin of Phantasy-Making]

... Consider ... the origin and meaning of that mental activity called "phantasy-making." In general, as you know, it enjoys high esteem, although its place in mental life has not been clearly understood. I can tell you as much as this about it. You know that the Ego in man is gradually trained by the influence of external necessity to appreciate reality and to pursue the reality-principle, and that in so doing it must renounce temporarily or permanently various of the objects and aims—not only sexual—of its desire for pleasure. But renunciation of pleasure has always been very hard for man; he cannot accomplish it without some kind of compensation. Accordingly he has evolved for himself a mental activity in which all these relinquished sources of pleasure and abandoned paths of gratification are permitted to continue their existence, a form of existence in which they are free from the demands of reality and from what we call the exercise of "testing reality." Every longing is soon transformed into the idea of its fulfillment; there is no doubt that dwelling upon a wish-fulfillment in phantasy brings satisfaction, although the knowledge that it is not reality remains thereby unobscured. In phantasy, therefore, man can continue to enjoy a freedom from the grip

of the external world, one which he has long relinquished in actuality. He has contrived to be alternately a pleasure-seeking animal and a reasonable being; for the meager satisfaction that he can extract from reality leaves him starving. "There is no doing without accessory constructions," said Fontane. The creation of the mental domain of phantasy has a complete counterpart in the establishment of "reservations" and "nature-parks" in places where the inroads of agriculture, traffic, or industry threaten to change the original face of the earth rapidly into something unrecognizable. The "reservation" is to maintain the old condition of things which has been regretfully sacrificed to necessity everywhere else; there everything may grow and spread as it pleases, including what is useless and even what is harmful. The mental realm of phantasy is also such a reservation reclaimed from the encroachments of the reality-principle.

From the reading . . .

[I]t is well known how often artists in particular suffer from partial inhibition of their capacities through neurosis.

The best-known productions of phantasy have already been met by us; they are called daydreams, and are imaginary gratifications of ambitious, grandiose, erotic wishes, dilating the more extravagantly the more reality admonishes humility and patience. In them is shown unmistakably the essence of imaginary happiness, the return of gratification to a condition in which it is independent of reality's sanction. We know that these daydreams are the kernels and models of night dreams; fundamentally the night dream is nothing but a daydream distorted by the nocturnal form of mental activity and made possible by the nocturnal freedom of instinctual excitations. We are already familiar with the idea that a daydream is not necessarily conscious, that unconscious daydreams also exist; such unconscious daydreams are therefore just as much the source of night dreams as of neurotic symptoms.. . .

[Introversion and Phantasy]

The return of the Libido . . . to phantasy is an intermediate step on the way to symptom-formation which well deserves a special designation. C. G. Jung has coined for it the very appropriate name of INTROVER-

SION, but inappropriately he uses it also to describe other things. We will adhere to the position that *introversion* describes the deflection of the Libido away from the possibilities of real satisfaction and its excessive accumulation upon phantasies previously tolerated as harmless. An introverted person is not yet neurotic, but he is in an unstable condition; the next disturbance of the shifting forces will cause symptoms to develop, unless he can yet find other outlets for his pent-up Libido. The unreal character of neurotic satisfaction and the disregard of the difference between phantasy and reality are already determined by the arrest at this stage of introversion.. . .

[The Path of the Artist]

. . . I should like to direct your attention for a moment to a side of phantasy-life of very general interest. There is, in fact, a path from phantasy back again to reality, and that is—art. The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his Libido too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis. There must be many factors in combination to prevent this becoming the whole outcome of his development; it is well known how often artists in particular suffer from partial inhibition of their capacities through neurosis. Probably their constitution is endowed with a powerful capacity for sublimation and with a certain flexibility in the repressions determining the conflict. But the way back to reality is found by the artist thus: He is not the only one who has a life of phantasy; the intermediate world of phantasy is sanctioned by general human consent, and every hungry soul looks to it for comfort and consolation. But to those who are not artists the gratification that can be drawn from the springs of phantasy is very limited; their inexorable repressions prevent the enjoyment of all but the meager daydreams which can become conscious. A true artist has more at his disposal. First of all he understands how to elaborate his daydreams, so that they lose that personal note which grates upon strange ears and become enjoyable to others; he knows too how to modify them sufficiently so that their origin in prohibited sources is not easily detected. Further, he possesses the myste-

rious ability to mold his particular material until it expresses the ideas of his phantasy faithfully; and then he knows how to attach to this reflection of his phantasy-life so strong a stream of pleasure that, for a time at least, the repressions are outbalanced and dispelled by it. When he can do all this, he opens out to others the way back to the comfort and consolation of their own unconscious sources of pleasure, and so reaps their gratitude and admiration; then he has won—through his phantasy—what before he could only win in phantasy: honor, power, and the love of women.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> [The artist] is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications.

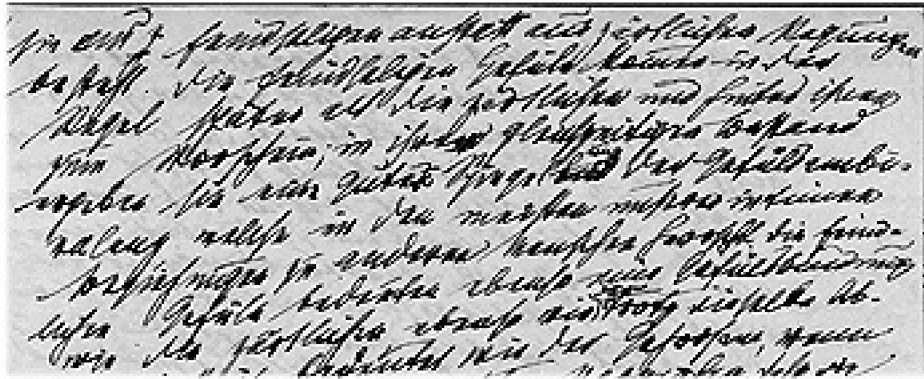
Related Ideas

Sigmund Freud.[3] *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Excellent summary of Freud's life and thought with emphasis on his theory of the unconscious and an examination of psychoanalysis as a theory by Stephen P. Thornton.

Sigmund Freud.[4] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. A thorough summary and assessment of Freud's contribution to æsthetics and literary criticism by Linda Hutcheon, with bibliography.

Sigmund Freud.[5] *Wikipedia*. Freud's life and thought with emphasis on his psychology—critique as well as links to online texts.

3. *Sigmund Freud*. (http://www.iep.utm.edu/f/freud.htm)
4. *Sigmund Freud*. (http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/\ sigmund_freud.html)
5. *Sigmund Freud*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud)



Detail from Freud’s handwritten *Introductory Lectures*, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division

Topics Worth Investigating

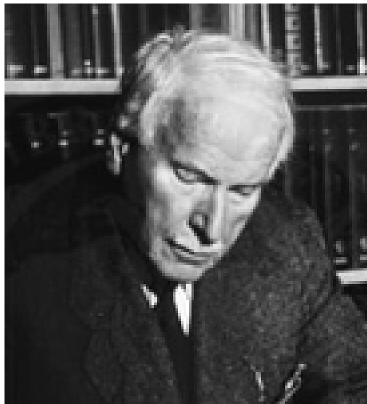
1. On the theory of artistic creation outlined in this reading, how can Freud account for the existence of talented extroverted artists?
2. Evaluate Freud’s statement that “[I]t is well known how often artists in particular suffer from partial inhibition of their capacities through neurosis.” To what extent can this *ad populum* be confirmed?
3. Explain the limitations of Freud’s description of the motivation of artists by sketching the biographies of artists whose lives pose counterexamples to his generalization:

   > [The artist] longs to attain to honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications.

   Can Freud’s theory account for the artists researched without substantial emendation?

Chapter 26

"Art as Archetypal Form" by C. G. Jung



Carl Gustav Jung, National Library of Medicine

About the author . . .

C. G. Jung (1875-1961) was reared in a clergy family; an intensive linguistic education together with long periods spent alone impressed the early years. In spite of his abiding interest in archeology, he studied medicine at the University of Basel while developing a fascination with psychiatry. After a close association with Freud, at a time when Freud was in disfavor, he soon found Freud's medical model, which presupposed sexual trauma to be the source of all neurosis, too restrictive and indelicate. Jung is, of course, is the founder of analytical psychology and is justly noted for his personality theory, including the dimensions of extroversion and introversion, the collective unconscious, including archetypes and cultural universals, and the theory of synchronicity, the

postulation of significant coincidence of events. The heart of his psychology is his description of the person's fulfillment of meaning in life through the process of individuation.

About the work . . .

In his lecture "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry",[1] in 1922 to the Society for German Language and Literature, Jung points out that psychology has no insight into the nature of art; however, psychology can yield insights into the processes of artistic creation. Jung finds the Freudian approach to the analysis of art reductive and essentially an *ad hominem* dismissal of artistic significance. He finds that artistic works are of two kinds: those revealing signs (not symbols) from the personal unconscious of the artist and those revealing the symbols or archetypes of the collective unconscious of the human race.

From the reading . . .

Art receives tributaries from [the personal unconscious], but muddy ones; and their predominance, far from making a work of art a symbol, merely turns it into a symptom.

Ideas of Interest from "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry"

1. What aspects of art, according to Jung, are amenable to study by the methods of analytical psychology?

1. C. G. Jung. "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry." In *British Journal of Medical Psychology*. Translated by C.F. and H.G. Baynes. London. 1925.

2. How does Jung characterize Freud’s reductive method of explaining artistic creation? What are Jung’s criticisms of Freud’s medical model?
3. Clearly characterize the two classes of art work Jung distinguishes. Are there regulative principles or rules for artistic creation for both classes of works?
4. Explain as clearly as possible Jung’s doctrine of the collective unconscious and its expression in collective representations, primordial images, or archetypes. From what do such archetypes draw their power?
5. According to Jung how are archetypal ideas related to allegory?
6. What does Jung believe the “secret” of great art and its effect upon us to be? According to Jung, what are the origins of the social significance of art?

The Reading Selection from “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry”

[Psychology and Art]

In spite of its difficulty, the task of discussing the relation of analytical psychology to poetry affords me a welcome opportunity to define my views on the much debated question of the relations between psychology and art in general. Although the two things cannot be compared, the close connections which undoubtedly exist between them call for investigation. These connections arise from the fact that the practice of art is a psychological activity and, as such, can be approached from a psychological angle. Considered in this light, art, like any other human activity deriving from psychic motives is a proper subject of psychology. This statement, however, involves a very definite limitation of the psychological viewpoint when we come to apply it in practice. Only that aspect of art which consists in the process of artistic creation can be a subject for psychological study, but not that which constitutes its essential na-

ture. The question of what art is in itself can never be answered by the psychologist, but must be approached from the side of æsthetics.

Art by its very nature is not science, and science by its very nature is not art; both these spheres of the mind have something in reserve that is peculiar to them and can be explained only in its own terms.. . .

Though the material he works with and its individual treatment can easily be traced back to the poet's personal relations with his parents, this does not enable us to understand his poetry. . . . If a work of art is explained in the same way as a neurosis, then either the work of art is a neurosis or a neurosis is a work of art.. . .

[Freud's Medical Model]

The school of medical psychology inaugurated by Freud has undoubtedly encouraged the literary historian to bring certain peculiarities of a work of art into relation with the intimate, personal life of the poet. But this is nothing new in principle, for it has long been known that the scientific treatment of art will reveal the personal threads that the artist, intentionally or unintentionally, has woven into his work. The Freudian approach may, however, make possible a more exhaustive demonstration of the influences that reach back into earliest childhood and play their part in artistic creation. To this extent the psychoanalysis of art differs in no essential from the subtle psychological nuances of penetrating literary analysis. The difference is at most a question of degree, though we may occasionally be surprised by indiscreet references to things which a rather more delicate touch might have passed over if only for reasons of tact. This lack of delicacy seems to be a professional peculiarity of the medical psychologist, and the temptation to draw daring conclusions easily leads to flagrant abuses.. . .

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> Art by its very nature is not science, and science by its very nature is not art. . .

This kind of analysis brings the work of art into the sphere of general human psychology, where many other things besides art have their origin. To explain art in these terms is just as great a platitude as the statement

that "every artist is a narcissist." Every man who pursues this own goal is a "narcissist"—though one wonders how permissible it is to give such wide currency to a term specifically coined for the pathology of neurosis. The statement therefore amount to nothing; it merely elicits the faint surprise of a *bon mot*.. . .

The golden gleam of artistic creation—the original object of discussion—is extinguished as soon as we apply to it the same corrosive method which we use in analyzing the fantasies of hysteria. The results are no doubt very interesting and may perhaps have the same kind of scientific value as, for instance, a post-mortem examination of the brain of Nietzsche, which might conceivably show us the particular atypical from of paralysis from which he died. But what would this have to do with *Zarathustra*? . . .

I have spoken of Freud's reductive method but have not stated in what that method consists. It is essentially a medical technique for investigating morbid psychic phenomena, and it is solely concerned with the ways and means of getting round or peering through the foreground of consciousness in order to reach the psychic background, or the unconscious. It is based on the assumption that the neurotic patient represses certain psychic contents because they are morally incompatible with his conscious values. It follows that the repressed contents must have correspondingly negative traits—infantile-sexual, obscene, or even criminal—which make the unacceptable to consciousness. Since no man is perfect, everyone must possess such a background whether he admits it or not. Hence it can always be exposed if only one uses the technique of interpretation worked out by Freud.. . .

From the reading . . .

If a work of art is explained in the same way as a neurosis, then either the work of art is a neurosis or a neurosis is a work of art.. . .

In order to do justice to a work of art, analytical psychology must rid itself entirely of medical prejudice; for a work of art is not a disease, and consequently requires a different approach from the medical one.. . . The personal orientation which the doctor needs when confronted with the question of ætiology in medicine is quite out of place in dealing with a work of art, just because a work of art is not a human being, but is something supra-personal. It is a thing and not a personality; hence it

cannot be judged by personal criteria. Indeed, the special significance of a true work of art resides in the fact that it has escaped from the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator. . . .

[Two Kinds of Art Works]

Not every work of art originates in the way I have just described. There are literary works, prose as well as poetry,that spring wholly from the author's intention to produce a particular result. He submits his material to a definite treatment with a definite aim in view; he adds to it and subtracts from it, emphasizing one effect, toning down another, laying on a touch of colour here, another there, all the time carefully considering the over-all result and paying strict attention to the laws of form and style. He exercises the keenest judgment and chooses his words with complete freedom. His material is entirely subordinated to his artistic purpose; he wants to express this and nothing else. He is wholly at one with the creative process, no matter whether he has deliberately made himself its spearhead, as it were, or whether it has made him its instrument so completely that he has lost all consciousness of this fact. In either case, the artist is so identified with his work that his intentions and his faculties are indistinguishable from the act of creation itself. . . .

From the reading . . .

This lack of delicacy [of psychoanalysis] seems to be a professional peculiarity of the medical psychologist, and the temptation to draw daring conclusions easily leads to flagrant abuses.

[T]he other class of works which flow more or less complete and perfect from the author's pen . . . come as it were fully arrayed into the world, as Pallas Athene sprang from the head of Zeus. These works positively force themselves upon the author; his hand is seized, his pen writes things that his mind contemplates with amazement. The work brings with it its own form; anything he wants to add is rejected, and what he himself would like to reject is thrust back at him. While his conscious mind stands amazed and empty before this phenomenon, he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and

which his own will could never have brought into being. Yet in spite of himself he is forced to admit that it is his own self speaking, his own inner nature revealing itself and uttering things which he would never have entrusted to his tongue. He can only obey the apparently alien impulse within him and follow where it leads, sensing that his work is greater than himself, and wields a power which is not his and which he cannot command. Here the artist is not identical with the process of creation; he is aware that his is subordinate to his work or stands outside it, as though he were a second person; or as though a person other than himself had fallen within the magic circle of an alien will.

So when we discuss the psychology of art, we must bear in mind these two entirely different modes of creation, for much that is of the greatest importance in judging a work of art depends on this distinction. It is one that had been sensed earlier by Schiller, who as we know attempted to classify it in his concepts of the *sentimental* and the *naïve*. The psychologist would call "sentimental" art *introverted* and the "naïve" kind *extroverted*. The introverted attitude is characterized by the subject's assertion of his conscious intentions and aims against the demands of the object, whereas the extroverted attitude is characterized by the subject's subordination to the demands which the object makes upon him. In my view, Schiller's plays and most of his poems give one good idea of the introverted attitude; the material is mastered by the conscious intentions of the poet. The extroverted attitude is illustrated by the second part of *Faust*: here the material is distinguished by its refractoriness averted. A still more striking example is Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, where the author himself observed how "one became two."

[The Collective Unconscious}

I am assuming that the work of art we propose to analyze, as well as being symbolic, has its source not in the *personal unconscious* of the poet, but in a sphere of unconscious mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of mankind. I have called this sphere the *collective unconscious*, to distinguish it from the personal unconscious. The latter I regard as the sum total of all those psychic processes and contents which are capable of becoming conscious and often do, but are then suppressed because of their incompatibility and kept subliminal. Art receives tributaries from this sphere too, but muddy ones; and their predominance, far from making a work of art a symbol, merely turns it into a symptom.

We can leave this kind of art without injury and without regret to the purgative methods employed by Freud.

In contrast to the personal unconscious, which is a relatively thin layer immediately below the threshold of consciousness, the collective unconscious shows no tendency to become conscious under normal conditions, nor can it be brought back to recollection by any analytical technique, since it was never repressed or forgotten. The collective unconscious is not to be thought of as a self-subsistent entity; it is no more than a potentiality handed down to us from primordial time in the specific form of mnemonic images or inherited in the anatomical structure of the brain. There are no inborn ideas, but there are inborn possibilities of ideas that set bound to even the boldest fantasy and keep our fantasy activity within certain categories: *à priori* ideas, as it were, the existence of which cannot be ascertained except from their effects. They appear only in the shaped material of art as the regulative principles that shape it; that is to say, only by inferences drawn from the finished work can we reconstruct the age-old original of the primordial image.

The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure—be it a dæmon, a human being, or a process—that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure. When we examine these images more closely, we find that they give form to countless typical experiences of our ancestors. They are, so to speak, the psychic residua of innumerable experiences of the same type. They present a picture of psychic life in the average, divided up and projected into the manifold figures are themselves products of creative fantasy and still have to be translated into conceptual language. Only the beginning of such a language exist, but once the necessary concepts are created they could give us an abstract, scientific understanding of the unconscious processes that lie at the roots of the primordial images. In each of these images there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times in our ancestral history, and on the average follow ever the same course. It is like a deeply graven riverbed in the psyche, in which the waters of life, instead of flowing along as before in a broad but shallow stream, suddenly swell into a mighty river. This happens whenever that particular set of circumstances is encountered which over long periods of time has helped to lay down the primordial image.

The moment when this mythological situation reappears is always characterized by a peculiar emotional intensity; it is as though chords in use

were struck that had never resounded before, or as though forces whose existence we never suspected were unloosed. What makes the struggle for adaptation so laborious is the fact that we have constantly to be dealing with individual and atypical situations. So it is not surprising that when an archetypal situation occurs we suddenly feel an extraordinary sense of release, as though transported, or caught up by an overwhelming power. At such moments we are no longer individuals, but the race; the voice of all mankind resounds in us. The individual man cannot use his powers to the full unless he is aided by one of those collective representations we call ideas, which releases all the hidden forces of instinct that are inaccessible to his conscious will. The most effective ideals are always fairly obvious variants of an archetype, as is evident from the fact that they lend themselves to allegory. The ideal of the "mother country," for instance, is an obvious allegory of the mother, as is the "fatherland" of the father. Its power to stir us does not derive from the allegory, but from the symbolic value of our native land. The archetype here is the *participation mystique* of primitive man with the soil on which he dwells, and which contains the spirits of his ancestors.

From the reading ...

The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure—be it a dæmon, a human being, or a process—that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed.

The impact of an archetype, whether it takes the form of immediate experience or is expressed through the spoken word, stirs us because it summons up a voice that is stronger than our own. Whoever speaks in a primordial images speaks with a thousand voices; he enthralls and overpowers, while at the same time he lifts the idea he is seeking to express out of the occasional and the transitory into the realm of the ever-enduring. He transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind, and evokes in us all those beneficent forces that ever and anon have enabled humanity to find a refuge from every peril and to outlive the longest night.

[The Creative Process of Art]

That is the secret of great art, and of its effect upon us. The creative pro-

cess, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from the deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers.. . .

[T]he artist's relative lack of adaptation turns out to his advantage; it enables him to follow his own yearning far from the beaten path, and to discover what it is that would meet the unconscious needs of his age. Thus, just as the one-sidedness of the individual's conscious attitude is corrected by reactions from the unconscious, so art represents a process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs.

Related Ideas

Aniela Jaffé, Ed. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections.* New York: Pantheon, 1963.

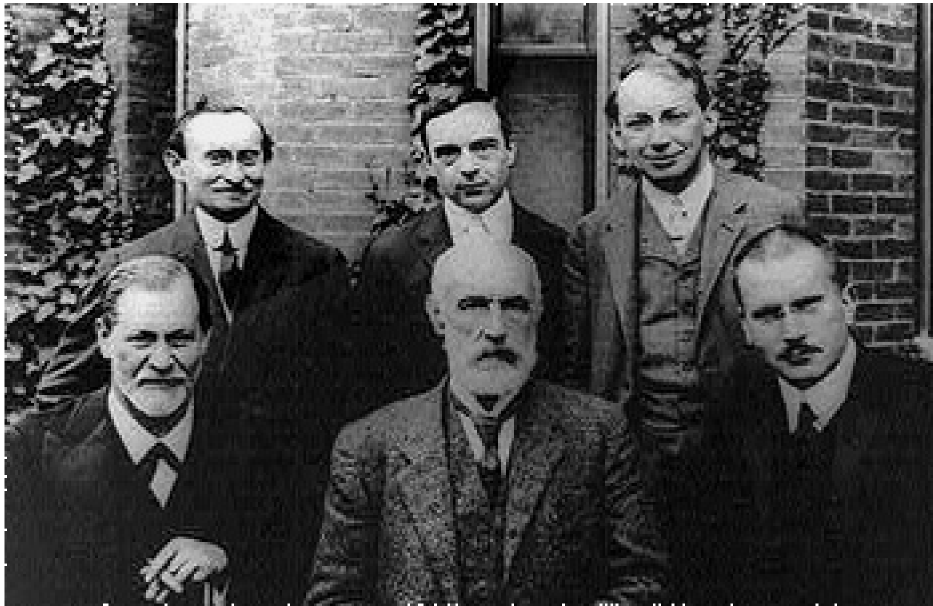
Carl Jung.[2] *Wikipedia*. Life, work, and influence of Jung with short summaries of key ideas: archetype, collective unconscious, complex, and synchronicity.

Matter of Heart. Documentary film of C.G.Jung taken from interviews and archival footage by Mark Whitney (DVD, VHS). 1985. 107 min.

2. *Carl Jung* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung)

From the reading . . .

The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work.



Front: Sigmund Freud, G. Stanley Hall, C.G. Jung; Back: A.A. Brill, Ernest Jones, Sandor Ferenczi Library of Congress

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Jung distinguishes two classes of art: (1) those created "carefully considering the over-all result and paying strict attention to the laws of form and style," and (2) those with archetypal ideas appearing "only in the shaped material of art as the regulative principles that shape it." Jung explains that the second class of artwork involves the collective unconscious. Can both of Jung's types are art be sub-

jected to Joshua Reynold's argued belief that the principles or rules of æsthetic creation are not intuitive but are based on science?[3]

2. Clarify Jung's use of "archetype" as an empirical entity. Jung writes concerning a "conceptual language" of archetypes:

> Only the beginning of such a language exist, but once the necessary concepts are created they could give us an abstract, scientific understanding of the unconscious processes that lie at the roots of the primordial images.

Speculate as to what such a language and its genetic basis would consist in light of Jung's description of it in this reading.

3. Trace out the parallels of Jung's use of the collective unconscious to explain mnemonic images or *à priori* ideas as regulative principles or allegories, with Plato's use of reminiscence to discover Ideas or Forms as mnemonically recollected knowledge. For example, Plato writes:

> ... and all the battles of the gods in Homer—these tales must not be admitted into our State, whether they are supposed to have an allegorical meaning or not. For a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts. [4]

In this regard, M.H. Abrams states that one sense of "allegory" is "The allegory of ideas, in which the literal characters represent abstract concepts ... the personification of abstract entities such as virtues, vices, states of mind, modes of life, and types of character..."[5]

4. Jung writes that the essence of art is not necessarily due to individual genius, but, instead:

3. Joshua Reynolds. "Discourse VII: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10th, 1776, by the President." *Seven Discourses on Art*. London: Cassel. 1901.
4. Plato. *The Republic*. 360 B.C. in *The Dialogues of Plato* Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975. 378d-e.
5. M.H. Abrams. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace. 1993.

> The essence of art does not consist in the fact that it is charged with personal peculiarities—in fact, the more this is the case the less the question of art enters in—but that it rises far above the personal and speaks out of the heart and mind and for the heart and mind of humanity. The personal is a limitation, yes, even a vice of art.[6]

If this were the case, try to reconcile Jung's intra-humanistic view of art with Roger Fry's view of purity of form:

> In proportion as are becomes purer, the number of people to whom it appeals get less. It cuts out all the romantic overtones of life which are the usual bait by which mean are induced to accept a work of art. It appeals only to the æsthetic sensibility, and this in most men is comparatively weak.[7]

6. C.G. Jung. *Psychological Reflections.* Edited by Jolande Jacobi. New York: Pantheon Books. 1953. 177.
7. Francis Spalding. "Art and Life." In *Vision and Design*. London: Chatto Windus. 1920. 181.

Chapter 27

"Æsthetics Is Impersonal" by Samuel Alexander

Samuel Alexander Thoemmes

About the author . . .

Samuel Alexander (1859-1938), born in Australia, attended Balliol College, Oxford, and studied psychology with Hugo Müsterberg in Germany before his interests turned to science and philosophy. He taught at the University of Manchester for most of his life. In his *magnum opus*, *Space, Time, and Deity*, he attempts to found a comprehensive speculative metaphysical system upon an empirical method. Nature, he thought, can be explained as the emergence of levels of reality, of which space-time is the lowest level. The highest level, Deity, emerges from mind. In his *Beauty and the Other Forms of Value*, Alexander explains æsthetic value as a "tertiary quality"—namely, artistic value is the result of a natural impulse for imaginative contemplation of objects in the world.

About the work . . .

In his *Space, Time, and Deity*,[1] Samuel Alexander touches on the relation of beauty as a resemblance to nature. Artistic qualities, such as beauty, he thinks, are not reducible to the mere appearance of objects but are dependent upon the imaginative conception of mind. In fact, for Alexander, beauty is not entirely mind-dependent but is the impersonal synthesis of emotional contemplation and reality.

> **From the reading . . .**
>
> The more perfect the artistry the more definitely does the work of art present in suggestion features which as a cognized object it has not.

Ideas of Interest from *Space, Time, and Deity*

1. In what sense, according to Alexander, is the beautiful illusory?
2. In what sense is an æsthetic reality a cognitive illusion for Alexander? What is the difference between æsthetic and cognitive illusion?
3. According to Alexander, how is it that beauty in nature and art is impersonal?
4. What are some examples of elements contributed by the mind in the appreciation of beauty in art?
5. According to Alexander, where does the beauty in beautiful objects lie?
6. What does Alexander think of Immanuel Kant’s æsthetics?

1. Samuel Alexander. *Space, Time, and Deity.* London: Macmillan. 1920.

7. In what manner are beautiful objects intersubjective, according to Alexander?

The Reading Selection from *Space, Time, and Deity*

[Beauty Involves Illusion]

Perhaps the simplest way to understand beauty is to contrast the beautiful object on the one hand with a percept and on the other with an illusion. As contrasted with the percept, the beautiful is illusory, but it differs from illusion in that it is not erroneous. Considered from the point of view of cognition, the beautiful object is illusory for it does not as an external reality contain the characters it possesses for the æsthetic sense. I perceive the tree in front of me to have a reverse side though I see only the front; but the tree really has a reverse side, and if I change my position the back of it is now seen and the front is supplied in idea. The marble is seen cold, to revert to the trite example, but the cold which is only present in idea really belongs to the marble, and I may in turn feel it cold and with eyes shut represent its whiteness in idea. The painted tree on the other hand looks solid but is not, and no change of my position helps me to see its other side. The *Hermes* is a marble block of a certain form and is perceived in its real qualities of solidity and hardness, but the block does not possess the repose and playfulness and dignity that I read into it æsthetically. The words of a poem are not merely descriptive of their object, but suffused with suggestions of feeling and significance which a mere scientific description would not possess. The more perfect the artistry the more definitely does the work of art present in suggestion features which as a cognized object it has not. Mr. Berenson compares the two Madonnas that stand side by side in the Academy at Florence—the one by Cimabue, the other by Giotto.[2] The Cimabue *Madonna* is flat and looks flat, though otherwise beautiful. The Giotto is flat but looks three-dimensional, and so far is the more perfectly beautiful.

2. Bernard Berenson. *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance.* New York and London, third edition. 13.

What is true of works of art is true of natural objects, with the necessary qualifications. In general the natural object is, when its beauty is appreciated, perceived incorrectly, or if it actually has the characters which we add to it, that is for æsthetic appreciation an accident, and is the source of a different and additional pleasure. Like the artist in painting a landscape, we select from or add to nature in feeling its beauty. Literal fidelity is, or at least may be, fatal to beauty, for it is the means of securing not beauty but truth and satisfies our scientific rather than our æsthetic sense. If this is true for the mere onlooker, it is still more so for the painter or poet who renders the work of nature in an alien material which has its own prescriptions. Or we read our moods into the scene; or endow animate or even inanimate objects with our feelings; see daffodils for instance outdoing in glee the waves which dance beside them, or fancy a straight slender stem as springing from the ground, or liken with it as Odysseus did the youthful grace of a girl.

From the reading . . .

Literal fidelity is, or at least may be, fatal to beauty. . .

The cases of natural beauty which most obstinately resist this interpretation are the graceful movements of animals or the beauty of human faces, a large part of which arises from their expressiveness of life and character. You may see a face as majestic as that of the Zeus of Orticoli and the man may perchance possess that character; or the horse's arching of his neck may really proceed from the self-display we read into it in finding it beautiful. But in the first place we read the feeling or the character into these forms before we learn that the creatures in question possess them; and in the next place though a natural form may thus in reality happen to possess the supplement which we add from our minds, and may so far be unlike the work of art, yet the intellectual recognition that it does conform to the æsthetic appreciation is not itself æsthetic. This is best shown by the truth that the artistic representation may be more beautiful than the original, like the suggested movements of the *Winged Victory* or of the figures in Botticelli's *Spring*. But also the knowledge that the natural object possesses the imputed characters—which is æsthetically indifferent—may even mar the æsthetical effect, for when we learn that a man is really as fine a character as he looks, our appreciation is apt to turn to moral instead of æsthetic admiration. In place of æsthetic contemplation we may have sympathy or practical respect. We may then safely

follow the guidance of the beauty of art and declare that in natural objects beauty, so far as it is appreciated æsthetically, involves illusion.

[Æsthetic Semblance]

But æsthetic semblance is not error, not illusion in the accepted sense, which is cognitive. To express the matter by way of paradox, the æsthetic semblance is vital to æsthetic truth, or it is an ingredient in a new reality which is æsthetic. Cognitive illusion is in fact the transitional stage between reality without value and reality with æsthetic value. Illusory appearance, we saw, is the appearance of reality in some of its parts to a mind which for one reason or another is perverse or twisted. It only becomes unreal in the sorting out, insofar as it is believed. As believed in, it is unreal, but it then becomes an element in a new reality which is error. The illusory thing in its illusory form, though founded in reality, has as such, in its illusory form, no reality at all, but only as possessed by the mind. But whereas the error is erroneous because it is excluded by the real thing about which it is concerned, the æsthetic semblance is not attributed to any real object outside the æsthetic experience itself. Watch for a short time a revolving drum, on the paper of which are drawn vertical lines. When the drum is stopped the paper seems to move in the opposite direction. That is an illusory appearance, and is illusion if it is taken to be reality. Contrast this with the æsthetic illusion of the figures in the picture of the Spring. It would be cognitive illusion if we thought the figures to be really moving. But they are really in motion in the æsthetic reality in which the pictured form and the æsthetically imputed motion are indissolubly one. Thus it is because a cognitive illusion is pinned down by the reality which it cognizes, and cognizes falsely, that it is unreal. Insofar as it is a reality, it has become an artificial product of the reality it cognizes and of mind, and was therefore described before as a work of art. When we pass into artistic imagination, whether its object is externalized in stone or words or remains a vision of things, we have a work of art in the proper sense. Illusion is half art, half truth. It fails of being either truth or art for the same reason; it is personal, while both truth and art are impersonal.

[Beauty in Nature and Art Is Impersonal]

Thus in the beautiful object, whether of art or nature, one part is contributed by the mind, and it is relatively a matter of indifference whether the mind in question is that of the person who creates the work of art or that of the mere spectator, who follows in the artist's traces. In the case of natural beauty, the spectator and the creator are one. The element contributed by the mind may vary from the mere addition of external properties, as in seeing the flat picture solid, for example, in the bare æsthetic effect of the drawing of a cube or a truncated pyramid, up to distinctively human characters of feeling or character, as in animating a statue with pride, or words or sounds with emotion as in a lyric or in music. Animation with life is intermediate between these extremes, for life though less than mental, and still for us something external which we contemplate, is yet on a higher level of external existence than solidity of form. It is only through what is thus added that the beautiful object has meaning or character or expressiveness.

From the reading ...

[I]n natural objects beauty, so far as it is appreciated æsthetically, involves illusion.

I add that the expressiveness need not be something characteristic of man. The expressiveness of the work of art is to be itself, to be what it represents, to have the significance appropriate to it; for the painted animal or tree to seem alive and to grow or move according to its kind; for the drawn cube to look solid; for the pillar to seem (and to be) perfectly adjusted to support the weight it bears, and to bear it with case. An ugly portico with stunted Doric columns gives the impression that the weight which the columns bear is crushing them; the tall columns of the Parthenon suggest that the roof is a light burden; the suggestion in neither case being true in fact. We may naturally enough render these impressions by investing the columns with life—springing up from the ground, and the like—but they belong really to the mechanical order. Thus the imputation of life and character enter into the expressiveness of the beautiful object, only when that object means life or character. They are but one species of expressiveness. Further in every case, no matter how much of mind or character is read into the thing by the mind for which it is beautiful, the expressiveness remains that of the thing and not that of the creating or appreciating

mind itself.[3] In choice and treatment of his subject the artist impresses himself indeed upon his work, which so far expresses or reveals him. But to feel Shakespeare in *Hamlet* is not to appreciate Hamlet æsthetically but to judge it critically. In the expressiveness which he adds to his material from his very personality the artist depersonalizes the work of art. Even in a beautiful lyric the passion ceases to be merely that of the artist. It is the paradox of beauty that its expressiveness belongs to the beautiful thing itself and yet would not be there except for the mind. Under the conditions of the material in which it is expressed, the beautiful owes some part of its meaning to the mind, and so far it owes to the mind not only its *percipi* as every perceived object does, but its *esse*. We have therefore all the greater need of caution in extending what is true of beauty to the objects of knowledge, whose *esse is not percipi*, but *esse*, independently of the mind which is compresent with them.

The beauty of the beautiful object lies in the congruence or coherence of its parts. According to the ancient doctrine it is the unity within that variety. Of these elements some are intrinsic to the beautiful thing, and some are imported from the mind and thereby belong to the thing; and it is a condition of the beauty that its external form must be such as to bear and compel that imputation. Disproportion or want of perspective, to take the simplest illustrations, may mar the beauty. Or the material may be inadequate to the effect, as when an architect builds in *terra cotta* what requires stone for stateliness. In virtue of the harmonious blending within the beautiful of the two sets of elements, some existing in reality and some supplied by the mind, the unity in variety is also expressive or

3. I am aware that in the above paragraph I am raising (and evading) several difficult questions. How far may human meaning be read into the æsthetic object consistently with beauty? Beyond a certain point the practice of personification may become sentimental. There is, in addition, the question of legitimacy of different effects in different arts. A painter could not paint the flowers dancing with glee as the poem on the daffodils does. It would be interesting to inquire whether Wordsworth always preserves the legitimate limitations of art. These questions illustrate the difficulties raised by Lipps's doctrine of *Einfühlung* or empathy (see his *Æsthetik*, from which as well as from his earlier and well-known *Raumæsthetik* I have learned much). Perhaps in the paragraph I am describing rather an ideal, in urging that the expressiveness of the object belongs to the object itself, and I should rather say that the object is beautiful in proportion as it conforms to this standard. And I quite admit that what is said of beauty in this subchapter applies more easily to the arts of sculpture and painting than to the other arts. Of music I have hardly dared to speak at all, for I do not know whether sounds and their arrangement suggest emotion as sculptured shapes suggest life and character, which I suspect to be the truth; or whether they mean emotion as words mean the things they name.

significant. The beautiful satisfies both the ancient and the modern criterion; and a new reality is generated in which mind and the nonmental have become organic to each other, not in the sense that the beautiful necessarily contains mind, though it may do so, for example, in a picture of a man, but that its expressiveness is due to the blending of elements supplied from two sources, and the external beautiful thing is beautiful only through this fitness of the externally real elements to their expressiveness. Like truth and goodness, beauty exists only as possessed by mind, but whereas in them mind and the external still sit loosely to each other, and in the one case the mind contemplates an external reality which owes to the mind its truth but not its reality, and in the other case the mind alters reality practically but the practical results do not owe their character to mind but only their goodness; in beauty external reality and mind penetrate each other, and the external thing receives its character of coherence from its connection with mind.

From the reading . . .

It is the paradox of beauty that its expressiveness belongs to the beautiful thing itself and yet would not be there except for the mind.

Thus when Kant declared that beauty was so judged because it set the understanding at work in harmony with the imagination, he spoke truly, but according to his fashion in subjective terms, and so far inadequately. Truly, because, whereas in perception of an external object the imaginative elements are but a part of the real object which is cognized, in beauty the supplementing imagination is independent of what is perceived and yet is blended with what is perceived into a new æsthetic whole. Inadequately, because the beauty or coherence between the elements supplied in sense and in imagination belongs to the æsthetic object, and the interplay of cognition and imagination describes only the condition of the mental process involved in the æsthetic appreciation and not the beauty of the æsthetic thing itself. Such an account considers beauty as a purely subjective character, whereas beauty belongs to the complex of mind and its object, or as I have so often expressed it, to the beautiful object as possessed by the mind. Since the beautiful object owes one part of its constituents to the actual participation of the mind, beauty is in this sense a tertiary "quality" of the beautiful object, thus conceived.

But the analysis of beauty implies something further. The coherence of

real external elements with other elements supplied from mind, while constituting beauty, distinguishes beauty from ugliness, and therewith distinguishes the mind which appreciates beauty from that which fails to do so or which sees beauty in ugliness, and unites together the minds which appreciate the beautiful as beautiful. Coherence in the internal constitution of beauty is also coherence among the minds which appreciate it, and exclusion of other minds. The mind for which an object is beautiful is not any mind but one which apprehends or appreciates impersonally or disinterestedly. Beauty in this way involves reference to other minds, and the reason of this or rather the explanation of its possibility is no easy matter. Beauty is not merely something which gives pleasure but which pleases in a certain way, and in a way which can be shared by other minds.

Related Ideas

The Collected Works of Samuel Alexander.[4] *Thoemmes Continuum: The History of Ideas*. Scholarly introduction to Alexander's biography and works by John G. Slater.

Samuel Alexander.[5] *Wikipedia*. Emergence in evolutionary theory and the concept of space-time are summarized.

Whitehead and Alexander.[6] *Religion-Online*. An article comparing Alexander and Whitehead with an emphasis on æsthetics by Dorothy Emmet, translated by Michael Hampe, originally published in *Die Gifford Lectures and ibre Deutung: Materialien zu Whitehead Process und Realität*. Band 2.

From the reading . . .

Cognitive illusion is in fact the transitional stage between reality without value and reality with æsthetic value.

4. *Collected Works of Alexander*. (http://195.12.26.123/idealism/alexander_intro.htm)
5. *Samuel Alexander*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Alexander)
6. *Whitehead and Alexander* (http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2834)

l. Giotto di Bondone, *Ognissanti Madonna* (detail) c. 1310; r. Cimabue, *The Madonna in Majesty* (detail) 1285-6, Galleri degli Uffizi, Florence

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Alexander explains, “ I perceive the tree in front of me to have a reverse side though I see only the front; but the tree really has a reverse side, and if I change my position the back of it is now seen and the front is supplied in idea.… The more perfect the artistry the more definitely does the work of art present in suggestion features which as a cognized object it has not.” Explain whether or not you think that on the basis of this passage Alexander would recognize Cubist art as intrinsically more beautiful than landscape painting.
2. In explaining the mind’s contribution to the æsthetic experience, Alexander writes, “[T]he æsthetic semblance is not attributed to any real object outside the æsthetic experience itself.” Explain whether or not, then, æsthetic semblance is entirely a subjective quality for Alexander.
3. Alexander writes, “It is only through what is thus added [by the mind] that the beautiful object has meaning or character or expressiveness.” In other words, beauty is a complex of “both mind and object.” Contrast this view of beauty with Schelling’s point:

> We must transcend form, in order to gain it again as intelligible, living, and truly felt. Consider the most beautiful forms: what remains behind after you have abstracted from them the creative principle within? Nothing but mere unessential qualities, such as extension and the relations of space.... Not only, however, as active principle, but as spirit and effective science, must the essence appear to us in the form, in order that we may truly apprehend it.[7]

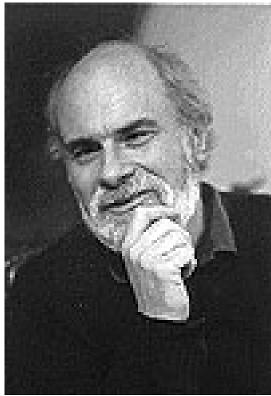
Evaluate whether Alexander's illusive aspect of beauty is accounted for as an active principle in nature by Schelling.

4. In this reading, Alexander concludes, "Thus in the beautiful object, whether of art or nature, one part is contributed by the mind, and it is relatively a matter of indifference whether the mind in question is that of the person who creates the work of art or that of the mere spectator, who follows in the artist's traces." How can he assume that the intent of the artist is the same thing as that appreciated by the spectator? For Alexander, "[T]ruth and art are impersonal." Therefore, how does he show the view *De gustibus non est disputandum* is false?

7. F.W.J. von Schelling. "Über das Verhältnis der bilden Küste zu der Natur" in J. E. Cabot. *The German Classics.* New York: German Publication Society. 1913.

Chapter 28

“Art is Representational” by Arthur C. Danto



Arthur C. Danto Columbia University

About the author . . .

Arthur C. Danto (1924-) is Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Columbia University and an influential analytic philosopher and art scholar. Early in life Danto studied at the Academie Julian in Paris; later his woodcuts were acquired in museums across the U.S. With the rise of pop art, Danto became concerned that “art was at an end” since anyone could use make almost anything and term it “art.”

About the work . . .

In his "Art, Philosophy, and the Philosophy of Art,"[1] Arthur C. Danto characterizes twentieth-century art as a challenge to the possibility of defining of art. Since Andy Warhol's recreation of Brillo boxes appear to be quite similar to the industrial Brillo boxes at supermarkets, Danto asks how can works such as these be art? Danto concludes that art has a representational aspect, but the full question of the nature of art intrinsically involves active and practical philosophical questions.

From the reading . . .

For if something is a work of art while something apparently exactly like it is not, it is extremely unlikely we could be certain we could pick the art work out even with a definition.

Ideas of Interest from "Philosophy of Art"

1. How does Danto characterize twentieth-century philosophy? How does æsthetics fit in to contemporary philosophy?
2. According to Danto, when do philosophical questions arise? Why, then, does pop art raise philosophical questions?
3. What is the Problem of Indiscernible Counterparts, and why, according to Danto, does it follow from the representational nature of art?
4. What reasons does Danto offer as to why can't we regard paintings simply as very complex perceptual objects?
5. Danto concludes that art is representational, although not all representational activities are artistic. In what sense is Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, a work constructed with commercial inks on industrial

1. Arthur C. Danto. "Art, Philosophy, and the Philosophy of Art." In *Humanities*. Vol. 4, No. 1, 1-2.

boxes, representational of the grocery-store Brillo boxes constructed in similar fashion? Would this kind of art fit Danto's characterization of art?

The Reading Selection from "Philosophy of Art"

[The Place of Art in Philosophy]

Not very many years ago, aesthetics—understood as the philosophy of art—was regarded as the dim, retarded offspring of two glamorous parents, its discipline and its subject. Philosophy in the twentieth century had become professionalized and technical, its methods formal, and its analytical aims the discovery of the most fundamental structures of thought, language, logic and science. Philosophical questions about art seemed peripheral and its answers cloudy—far too cloudy for those caught up in the reinvention of painting and music and literature to find much help in the dated, faded reflections of the æsthetician. And students with a primary interest in art who may have registered for courses in this condescendingly tolerated specialty found themselves confronting a perplexingly irrelevant literature. In 1954, the philosopher John Passmore published a paper with the accurate title "The Dreariness of Aesthetics," and it must have been just about then that the wit and painter Barnett Newman delivered one of his most quoted sayings: "Aesthetics is for art what ornithology is for the birds"—a sneer whose edge is blunted today by the fact that the vulgarism it echoes has faded from usage.

From the reading . . .

. . . art is an intellectual activity . . .

I have always had a passionate interest in art and a logical passion for philosophy, but nothing in my experience with either conflicted with the general dismal appraisal of æsthetics, and I am certain I should never have gotten involved with it had I not visited a singular exhibition at what was then the Stable Gallery on East 74th Street in New York in

1964. Andy Warhol had filled the space with piles of Brillo boxes, similar to if somewhat sturdier than those brashly stenciled cartons stacked in the storerooms of supermarkets wherever soap pads are sold. I was familiar of course with the exploitation of emblems of popular and commercial labels by the pop artists, and Warhol's portraits of Campbell's soup cans were legendary. But as someone who came to artistic age in the heroic period of Abstract Expressionism, when decisions for or against The Image were fraught with an almost religious agony, the crass and casual use of tacky images by the new artists seemed irreverent and juvenile. But the Warhol show raised a question which was intoxicating and immediately philosophical, namely why were his boxes works of art while the almost indistinguishable utilitarian cartons were merely containers for soap pads? Certainly the minor observable differences could not ground as grand a distinction as that between Art and Reality!

[Philosophical Questions]

A philosophical question arises whenever we have two objects which seem in every relevant particular to be alike, but which belong to importantly different philosophical categories. Descartes for example supposed his experience while dreaming could be indistinguishable from his experience awake, so that no internal criterion could divide delusion from knowledge. Wittgenstein noted that there is nothing to distinguish someone's raising his arm from someone's arm going up, though the distinction between even the simplest action and a mere bodily movement seems fundamental to the way we think of our freedom. Kant sought a criterion for moral action in the fact that it is done from principles rather than simply in conformity with those principles, even though outward behavior might be indistinguishable between the two. In all these cases one must seek the differences outside the juxtaposed and puzzling examples, and this is no less the case when seeking to account for the differences between works of art and mere real things which happen exactly to resemble them.

This problem could have been raised at any time, and not just with the somewhat minimal sorts of works one might suspect the Brillo Boxes to be. It was always conceivable that exact counterparts to the most prized and revered works of art could have come about in ways inconsistent with their being works at all, though no observable differences could be found. I have imagined cases in which an artist dumps a lot of paint in a

centrifuge she then spins, just “to see what happens”—and what happens is that it all splats against the wall in an array of splotches that cannot be told by the unaided eye from *The Legend of the True Cross*, by Piero della Francesca. Or an anarchist plants dynamite in the marble quarry, and the explosion results in a lot of lumps of marble which by a statistical miracle combine into a pile which looks like The Leaning Tower at Pisa. Or the forces of nature act through millennnia on a large piece of rock until something not to be told apart from the *Apollo Belvedere* results.

Nor are these imaginary possibilities restricted to painting, sculpture, and architecture. There are the famous chimpanzees who, typing at random, knocked out all the plays of Shakespeare. But Wordsworth sought to make poetry out of the most commonplace language, while Auden invented a style of reading poetry which was indistinguishable from ordinary talking—so for all anyone could tell, Moliere’s M. Jourdain could have been speaking poetry rather than prose all his life. John Cage has made the division between music and noise problematic, leaving it possible that sets of sounds from the street could be music, while other sets which we would spontaneously suppose music happen not to be, just because of the circumstances of their production. And it takes little effort to imagine a dance in which the dancers do ordinary things in the ordinary ways; a dance could consist in someone sitting reading a book. I once saw Baryshnikov break into a football player’s run on stage, and I thought it altogether wonderful. True, it may seem difficult to suppose art could have begun with these puzzling works—but it cannot be forgotten that when philosophy first noticed art it was in connection with the possibility of deception.

[Search for a Definition]

Now the “dreariness of aesthetics” was diagnosed as due to the effort of philosophers to find a definition of art, and a number of philosophical critics, much under the influence of Wittgenstein, contended that such a definition was neither possible nor necessary. It was not possible because the class of art works seemed radically open, so much so that no set of conditions could be imagined which would be necessary and sufficient for something to be a member. Luckily, there was no need for a definition, since we seem to have had no difficulty in picking out the works of art without benefit of one. And indeed something like this may very well have appeared true until the Warhol boxes came along. For if something

is a work of art while something apparently exactly like it is not, it is extremely unlikely we could be certain we could pick the art work out even with a definition. Perhaps we really have no such skill at all. Still, to the degree that there is a difference, some theory is needed to account for it, and the problem of finding such a theory becomes central and urgent. Nor is this merely a matter of abstract concern to philosophers, for it is in response to a question which arose within the world of art itself. Philosophers of the tradition, to the degree that they had thought about art at all, thought chiefly about the art of their own time: Plato, about the illusionistic sculptures of his contemporaries; Kant, about the tasteful objects of the Enlightenment; Nietzsche, about Wagnerian opera; the Wittgensteinians, about the extraordinary proliferation of styles in the twentieth century, when a whole period of art history appeared to last about six months. But the Warhol boxes, though clearly of their time, raised the most general question about art that can be raised, as though the most radical possibilities had at last been realized. It was, in fact, as though art had brought the question of its own identity to consciousness at last.

From the reading . . .

[I]t is Heidegger who proposed that it is a part of the essence of being a human that the question of what one is, is part of what one is.

However this identity is to be articulated, it is clear that it cannot be based upon anything works of art have in common with their counterparts. One prominent theorist, for example, regards paintings as very complex perceptual objects. So they are, but since objects can be imagined perfectly congruent with those which are not art works, these must have equivalent complexity at the level of perception. After all, the problem arose in the first place because no perceptual difference could be imagined finally relevant. But neither can possession of so-called "æsthetic qualities" serve, since it would be strange if a work of art were beautiful but something exactly like it though not a work of art were not. In fact it has been a major effort of the philosophy of art to de-aestheticize the concept of art. It was Marcel Duchamp, a far deeper artist than Warhol, who presented as "readymades" objects chosen for their lack of aesthetic qualities—grooming combs, hat racks, and, notoriously, pieces of lavatory plumbing. "Æsthetic delectation is the danger to be avoided," Duchamp wrote of his most controversial work, *Fountain*, of 1917. It was precisely

Duchamp's great effort to make it clear that art is an intellectual activity, a conceptual enterprise and not merely something to which the senses and the feelings come into play. And this must be true of all art, even that most bent upon gratifying the eye or ear, and not just for those works which are regarded as especially "philosophical," like Raphael's *School of Athens* or Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. Were someone to choreograph Plato's *Republic*, that would not, simply because of its exalted content, be more philosophical than Coppelia or Petrouchka. In fact these might be more philosophical, employing as they do real dancers imitating dancing dolls imitating real dancers!

[Art Is Representation]

Where are the components for a theory of art to be found? I think a first step may be made in recognizing that works of art are representations, not necessarily in the old sense of resembling their subjects, but in the more extended sense that it is always legitimate to ask what they are about. Warhol's boxes were clearly about something, had a content and a meaning, made a statement, even were metaphors of a sort. In a curious way they made some kind of statement about art, and incorporated into their identity the question of what that identity is—and it was Heidegger who proposed that it is a part of the essence of being a human that the question of what one is, is] part of what one is. But nothing remotely like this could be true of a mere soap box. Dances, too, are representational, not simply in the way in which a pair of dancers may dance the dance the characters dance in the action they imitate, but in the same wide sense in which even the most resolutely abstract art has a pictorial dimension.

From the reading . . .

. . . works of art are representations . . .

The Problem of Indiscernible Counterparts follows from the representationalistic character of works of art. Imagine a sentence written down, and then a set of marks which looks just like the written sentence, but is simply a set of marks. The first set has a whole lot of properties the second set lacks: it is in a language, has a syntax and grammar, says

something. And its causes will be quite distinct in kind from those which explain mere marks. The structure then of works of art will have to be different from the structure of objects which merely resemble them.

Now of course not all epresentational things are works of art, so the definition has only begun. I shall not take the next steps here. All I have wished to show is the way that the philosophy of art has deep questions to consider, questions of representation and reality, of structure, truth, and meaning. In considering these things, it moves from the periphery to the center of philosophy, and in so doing it curiously incorporates the two things that give rise to it. For when art attains the level of self-consciousness it has come to attain in our era, the distinction between art and philosophy becomes as problematic as the distinction between reality and art. And the degree to which the appreciation of art becomes a matter of applied philosophy can hardly be overestimated.

Brillo Boxes, Andy Warhol—Allen Memorial Art Museum

Related Ideas

PopArtists.com[2] *Wooster Projects*. Artwork by Jem Dine, Keith Haring, Roy Lichtensein, and Andy Warhol is featured.

2. *PopArtists.com* (http://www.popartists.com)

The Library Living of Philosophyers: Arthur Danto[3] *Philosophy Now*. Rick Lewis' summary of Arthur Danto's interests from *Philosophy Now*.

> **From the reading ...**
>
> But the Warhol boxes, though clearly of their time, raised the most general question about art that can be raised. . .

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Danto concludes that a necessary condition for a definition of art is that art is a representational intellectual activity. Does this condition rule out pop art as being art? Would Danto agree with Plato's observation that art is representation of the sensible world and not the reality of the forms of things?

2. Wittgenstein writes:

   > For imagine having to sketch a sharply defined picture "corrresponding" to a blurred one. In the later there is a blurred red rectangle: for it you put down a sharply defined one. Of course—several such sharply defined rectangles can be drawn to correspond to the indefinite one.—But if the colours in the original merge without a hint of any outline won't it become a hopeless task to draw a sharp picture corresponding to the blurred one? Won't you then have to say: "Here I might just as well draw a circle or heart as a rectangle, for all the colours merge. Anything— and nothing—is right."—And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in æsthetics or ethics.. . . How did we learn the meaning of this word . . . in what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see the word must have a family of meanings.[4]

   In other words, for Wittgenstein, æsthetics is like a game:

3. *Arthur Danto* (http://www.philosophynow.org/archive/articles/27lewis.htm)
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1958. ¶ 77.

> For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all* but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.... I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities that "family resemblances" ... And I shall say: games form a family.[5]

Do you agree that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for art? Is there one meaning to the concept of art? Does art have an essence?

3. Explain clearly how Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* are a crucial test of the limit of what counts as art? Can a clear distinction be drawn between art and reality? Heidegger writes with respect to Karl Jasper's *Psychologie der Weltanschauugen*:

> Here the question of "what man is" is raised and answered in terms of what he esssentially can be.[6]

In a similar manner, does art define *itself*? Does it make sense to ask whether Andy Warhol's and Marcel Duchamp's work brings art to self-consciousness? Is the question of what art is, part of what art can be?

4. In the following passage, Paul Weiss does not include photography as an authentic from of art:

> [Photographers] have little and sometimes even no appreciation of the æsthetic values of experience. And when they do have such appreciation it is rarely relevant to their purposes. One need not ... be an artist to use a camera with brilliance.[7]

What do you think would be Danto's assessement of Weiss' judgments as to the status of photography. Many artists such as Gerhard Richter and even Wallace Nutting use photography in their work. Are they genuine artists?

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5. Wittgenstein. ¶ 66-67.
6. Martin Heigegger. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967. 301n. "Hier wird das, 'was der Mensch sei', erfragt und bestimmt aus dem, was er wesenhaft sein kann ..."
7. Paul Weiss. *Nine Basic Arts.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univerity Press. 1961. 216, 218.

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Colophon

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