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THE STRUCTURE OF AESTHETICS



THE  
STRUCTURE OF  
AESTHETICS



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*F. E. Sparshott*

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## PREFACE

IN THIS BOOK I discuss the credentials, the scope and the internal structure of the part (or parts) of philosophy called "aesthetics." The book is meant for anyone, whether student, teacher or layman, who is prepared to take a serious interest in the subject. The serious interest is necessary because I am not offering solutions to problems, or doctrines to be accepted or rejected, but material for such people to consider in reaching their own conclusions. My reason for writing it was that no book of similar scope existed, and I needed one. I am sure others must have felt the same need.

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F.E.S.

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER  
FRANK BROWNLEY SPARSHOTT

*"Surely the bitterness  
of death is past"*



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## THE STRUCTURE OF AESTHETICS





## AESTHETICS: WHAT AND WHY

### *Aesthetics Defined*

AESTHETICS I shall take to be that part of philosophy which deals with problems arising mainly out of the existence of beautiful things, and men's response to their beauty; out of artistic activities, and men's responses to them; and out of the intellectual activities connected therewith. In saying this, I do not mean to imply that there are such problems, or that there is or should be a department of philosophy that deals with them. It could be that, if there are such problems, they are of no philosophical interest, or that such philosophically interesting problems as there are fail so to cohere as to form a separate branch of philosophy.

The characteristic questions of aesthetics are "What is art?" and "What is beauty?" Conformably with the above disclaimer, I do not mean, by saying this, to imply that those questions have any precise meaning, much less any correct answer. The legitimacy, even the existence, of aesthetics as I have defined it will therefore be the first of our major problems.

The term "aesthetics" is not always used in the way I have suggested. Aesthetics is often equated with either the philosophy of art or the philosophy of beauty; it has even been equated, on the grounds that philosophy deals only with second-order questions and consists of discourse about discourse, with the philosophy of criticism (Beardsley 1958, 3 ff.). There is no reason why an author should not thus restrict his own scope; but I think it imprudent or presumptuous of him to import the restriction into the definition of his subject. Others have used the term "aesthetics" of any kind of general inquiry into the arts, whether philosophical or scientific, or have suggested that aesthetics should become a science (e.g. Munro 1956, 85-150). But this is to destroy the unity of the subject, for the



sociology of art remains sociology and the psychology of art remains psychology. It seems probable, indeed, that such unity as aesthetics may have resides only in the concepts employed, notably the concepts of art and beauty themselves. If this is so, aesthetics can be unified only as a conceptual inquiry: that is, as a philosophical one.

Neither the sense I have given to the term "aesthetics" nor the expanded and restricted senses just mentioned is that allotted to it by its coiner. A. G. Baumgarten introduced the word to stand for a proposed discipline that should do for perception what logic did for discursive knowledge: "the science that should direct the inferior cognitive faculty, or the science of sensitive knowledge" (*scientia sensitiva quid cognoscendi*—Baumgarten 1735, §115). The project as thus stated sounds a little unrealistic—Baumgarten was only twenty-one at the time—but some such notion underlies most if not all attempts to produce a systematic aesthetics down to our own day. Mrs. Langer, for example, plainly has a programme very like that suggested by Baumgarten; and what Croce meant by "aesthetics" is very much what Baumgarten meant. It is perhaps out of respect for this original sense of the term that some writers (e.g. Turner 1958) would restrict its use to attempts to construct systems, rather than allowing it to any philosophical discourse that happens to be concerned with the arts or the like. And it may well be that such systems can be constructed only on suppositions that to most philosophers are unacceptable.

### *Present Purposes*

The subject-matter of this book is not that of aesthetics as just described, but aesthetic theories themselves. My book is designed not to solve any of the problems with which aesthetics deals, but to say what the problems are, how they are related to each other, what kinds of answers to them have been proposed by others, and how these answers are related. Although I have allowed myself to put forward opinions of my own and to criticize others, my chief purpose is not to promote or defend these judgements and notions but to help the reader to understand any aesthetic theory with which he may find himself confronted. It is hoped that, made aware of the scope and variety of this notoriously tangled subject and armed with a scheme for articulating it, the reader will be set free from bondage to his own preconceived half-truths; and will at the same time be enabled, when he comes across an aesthetic theory, to relate its subject-matter and approach to other possible subject-matters and approaches. The naive reader either accepts or rejects a theory of aesthetics; the sophisticated reader diagnoses its strengths and weaknesses, not blinded to either by the other. The naive philosopher dismisses aesthetics as a track-

less bog; the sophisticated philosopher knows, bog or no bog, where the paths lie. This book is meant to promote such sophistication. It is therefore meant only for those who have read, or who mean to read, some aesthetics, and for those who enjoy reading guide-books to places they do not mean ever to visit.

What I have written is, simply and literally, a guide to aesthetics—a guide to the structure and problems of the subject, not to its literature, much of which I have not read and (pardon me) I do not mean to read. My approach is systematic, not historical: though I mention names, I am not concerned much with who first said what, nor are my references and quotations always to and from the earliest or best exponents of the views they illustrate. Most of the doctrines I shall mention are fully intelligible only in their historical setting: as replies to or elaborations of current notions, and as rationalizations of or reactions against current practice. The historical settings are mostly ignored here, since to include them would have meant treating as museum pieces all doctrines except those now fashionable—a weakness common among aestheticians. But there are already histories of aesthetics. What has not hitherto existed is such a guide as I have attempted to write.

One warning should be delivered now, once for all. I shall be saying soon that no history can be impartial. Even less can such a guide as this be dispassionately neutral, nor could it be rendered so by discounting the evaluations made in it. The very arrangement of topics and relative scale of treatment must be determined by what I think important and valuable. Proponents and adherents of any aesthetic theory must think me wrong to treat it as only one among others: every theorist thinks he can explain away all rival theories in terms of his own, which could therefore form the basis of a treatment as comprehensive as mine. More specifically, my whole project, since its topic is aesthetic *theories*, cannot but show a consistent bias in favour of those opinions that admit of systematic elaboration. But all such opinions have one thing in common, in that they take art and beauty seriously: no one elaborates a theory about art if he thinks of it as a mere distraction for an idle hour. The possibility that the subject-matter of aesthetics is inherently unworthy of attention is therefore one that I can mention, but not exploit. In effect, the alternative which allows the discussion to continue must always be preferred over that which would cut it short. In general, whenever I am aware of ways of proceeding that I do not follow I shall name them. But I must leave it to your energy and tenacity of mind to discount the effects of whatever is arbitrary in my decisions, and to your imagination to detect what I have not thought of. I can only say one thing at a time, and only follow one scheme of organiza-



tion. Other ways may be equally workable. But that can only be proved by making them work.

## THE CASE AGAINST AESTHETICS

AESTHETICS IS MORE generally despised than any other branch of philosophical activity. Contempt is showered not only on the quality of what is written as aesthetics but on the project of writing aesthetics at all. Many maintain that the subject has no unity; others claim that every work of art is unique and that art therefore cannot or should not be discussed on so general a level. This last is the complaint of the ordinary cultivated man: art is direct, aesthetics is devious; art is thrilling, aesthetics is dull. Surely, it is felt, if the aesthete were capable of responding to art, he would be unable to bring himself to write about it in so prosy a way. This attitude must have appeared as early as 1712, for Shaftesbury wrote (1712, 119): "Remember here (as prefatory) to anticipate the nauseating, the puking, the delicate, tender-stomached, squeamish reader (pseudo or counter critic), *delicatus*. 'Why all this?' And 'can't one taste or relish a picture without this ado?'" Such a *delicatus* in our own day has been Mr. Hussey, who claims that his "direct relish of the picturesque" was killed by the discovery that it had a name, and that the taste had been cultivated and its principles discussed by Uvedale Price (Hussey 1927, 4). Nor is contempt for aesthetics confined to amateurs; it is shared by most philosophers and by most of those professionally concerned with the fine arts—in the English-speaking world, at least. So one must concede that they have, *prima facie*, a good chance of being right, or at least of being believed in the English-speaking world. Let us look at some of their objections.

Art critics, who have to discuss and pass judgement on individual works of art, and those often of a novel kind where taste already formed is an uncertain guide, find the formulations of the aesthete unhelpful if not misleading. For what he says about art either is so general that it could apply to anything whatever, or else constitutes an attempt (of which critics are in their turn accused by artists) to force art into a strait-jacket. In either case, his generalizations, just because they are generalizations, seem to bear only remotely on the individual works of art with which alone the critic has to do. Yet, after all, these works are the only realities with which aesthetics itself should ultimately be concerned.

Art historians, like critics, have to do with individual works. In their concern with the actual genesis of these particular things, and their historical relationships, they must often take into account factors of a kind

which the aesthetician is bound through ignorance to ignore. Yet it is these factors that in each case determined what precisely was actually done. From the writings of theorists on Gothic style, for example—Ruskin, Henry Adams, Geoffrey Scott—one might suppose that no such deliberations as those that actually accompanied the building of Milan Cathedral (Holt 1957, 108–14) could ever have taken place. Aestheticians must seem to historians of art like innocent spectators of an illusionist's performance, working out elaborate metaphysical explanations of the phenomena produced by sleight-of-hand.

Artists may claim that it is they, not critics or historians, who are the true authorities on art. They alone know what it is to produce a work of art, how much of what kind of work goes into the production. "One of the main reasons painters find it so hard to make themselves understood when they speak of their art is that their hearers listen with their minds only, not with their hands," writes a painter's father (Gilson 1957, 33). Since what the aesthetician says usually has no discernible affinity with their experience in these matters, they are likely to dismiss aesthetics as so much irrelevant rubbish. "Painters agree to a man that they do not understand what philosophers are talking about," writes Gilson (*ibid.*, 213); "at any rate, they cannot believe that what philosophers are talking about is what they themselves call painting." Yet, despite their ignorance, aestheticians do not scruple to tell painters how to paint. Roger Fry would have liked to hope that a recognition of the principles he laid down "may assist artists to avoid the pursuit of impossible or contradictory ends and enable them to concentrate on the development of their specific responses to the spectacle of nature" (Fry 1926, 57). And the authors of a history of aesthetics go so far as to upbraid aestheticians for *not* trying to influence painters: "Have they tried to build a wall against the whirlwind of modernism?" they ask (Gilbert and Kuhn 1939, 553); "esthetic thought is an element of the creative life, and the thinker shares the burden of responsibility for what happens in practice" (*ibid.*, 552). Yet what can the aesthetician and the critic, who necessarily know art only as it already exists, have to say to the artist, whose task is precisely to produce the art that does not yet exist?

The specialists' objections so far mentioned have been two: the expert's belief in the necessity of his special knowledge to any serious discussion, and the practitioner's distrust of those who theorize about his practice.<sup>1</sup>

1. See for example Teague (1940, 278): "Many very long and very dull books have been written to explain the nature of beauty, and often they have been written by men who never created a beautiful thing in their lives, not even a beautiful sentence. . . . They exist on a plane of dialectics, and never make contact with reality."



The philosophers' objections have in common with these only the mistrust of theory-building which so many philosophers nowadays share. Of course neither this mistrust nor the general contempt for aesthetics is held by all philosophers, or there would be nothing to condemn; but both are widespread.

To some extent, aesthetics is the victim of a mere change in generations among philosophers. Bergson, Dewey, Croce and Whitehead were all convinced of the importance of aesthetics, and all but Whitehead made notable contributions to the subject; they are recent enough to be unfashionable without yet being classics. Then, too, aesthetics is suspect as having been one of the main preoccupations of the romantic philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who nowadays seem merely quaint, and of their successors the existentialists, whom academic philosophers of the English-speaking world have greeted with shocked ignorance. Nor is this just an example of "guilt by association": it is the very aspects of those philosophies which make them suspect that draw them to aesthetics. For these are the philosophies which take as their starting point not the world of physics, nor the perceptible world as it appears to the perceiver, but the most inward aspects of human life and awareness as they seem in the living of them. It is natural that with this starting point they should dwell on the problems of art, since artistic activity is among the most personal, and most typically human, of all; but for philosophies with other bases such awareness and such activity are for the same reason the least tractable. Indeed, this emphasis on the inward accompanies if it does not spring from a mistrust of reason, as Professor Strauss has pointed out;<sup>2</sup> and one cannot expect philosophers who do not share this mistrust to greet it with sympathy. Between the romantics and the existentialists come the idealists, who are not so much despised as hated; and the system of aesthetics best known in England was produced by the idealists Croce and Collingwood. "All aesthetics historically is the offspring of metaphysical idealism," says one reverend philosopher. "Does it follow that it is all unsound? It does." (Turner 1958, 305.)

In representing an attack on Croce as an attack on systematic aesthetics

2. "Rousseau explicitly replaced the classical definition of man as 'animal rationale' by a new one: 'Ce n'est pas tant l'entendement qui fait parmi les animaux la distinction spécifique de l'homme que sa qualité d'agent libre.'" The presupposition of the turning away from rationalism which Hobbes inaugurated "is the belief in the impotence of reason, or to put it perhaps more plainly in other words, the emancipation of passion and imagination." "It is thus not a matter of chance, that *la volonté générale* and aesthetics were launched at approximately the same time" (Strauss 1936, 160-1). The quotation is from Rousseau 1754, *première partie*, 238-9.

as such, Father Turner is following the lead of an influential school of philosophers who maintain that it is the main, and even the sole, task of the philosopher to dispel confusions of thought arising from the misuse of language. For speculative philosophy such thinkers can have no use, unless as a source of confusions to be dispelled. For them, just as ethics has become the study of moral discourse, so aesthetics if it is to be respectable can only be the study of artistic discourse: that is, what artists and their critics say about art. But such a study is scarcely worth the effort. Whereas moral discourse is essential to the propagation, maintenance and refinement of moral behaviour, which is plainly an important matter, what critics and artists say about art is by common consent a mere by-product and parasite of the art itself. If aesthetics did not exist, then, it would not be necessary to invent it. The philosophers of whom we are now speaking tend therefore to deny that there is such a discipline as aesthetics, affirming that what passes for such should be classed as psychology or sociology (real or armchair), or as an aberrant outgrowth of history or criticism, or simply as twaddle. Of course, one does not have to accept the view of philosophy that these men take; but their judgments in the matter of aesthetics purport to depend entirely on their determination to say nothing, and approve of nothing, which does not at least make sense. I find this determination laudable.

Whatever the personal feelings of their members, departments of philosophy often feel collectively that since aesthetics reputedly exists it had better be taught. Many junior teachers of philosophy thus find themselves deputed to become aestheticians. Among these men, complaint is general: so much has been written, so little is worth reading, and it is so hard to find out what is supposed to be going on. In ethics, by contrast, it is by now pretty clear what the important problems are, what are the main possible ways of answering them, and what the chief consequences of adopting each of these ways are likely to be. There can thus be general agreement as to who has something to say, and who hasn't; who is competent, and who isn't; and, in general, what matters and why. In aesthetics, that is not true. There is no agreement as to what the problems are, and how they are related to each other; what the possible solutions are, and their respective advantages and disadvantages; and, in general, what should be studied and (more important) what may safely be left unread. This difference between the disciplines gives rise to another. In ethics, and in accepted philosophical disciplines generally, standards of criticism, and hence standards of thinking, are high: writing tends to be self-critical and responsible. But in aesthetics, it seems, anything goes. In the absence of



an accepted nucleus of problems and positions, some writers seem to feel free quite shamelessly to put down anything that may come into their heads. False analogies, hazardous generalizations, and metaphors disguised as arguments abound.

In brief, then, philosophers' scorn for aesthetics rests on a belief that the problems aestheticians discuss have too little in common to constitute a separate field of study, or are not suitable topics for philosophical inquiry; in support of which propositions they point to the evident disorder of the subject and the looseness of so much that is written about it.

### THE CASE FOR AESTHETICS

I HAVE MADE the case against aesthetics seem weightier than it is by attributing objections to all critics, all historians, and so on; whereas I should have spoken only of *some* critics etc. For other followers of all these callings have not only shown interest in our subject but practised it, openly or under another name. Moreover, the objections are relevant to us only if they object to aesthetics being done at all: that is, if they maintain either that there are no philosophical problems raised specifically by art or that although there are such problems they should never be discussed. Both these theses look rather extravagant, even if in the end they should turn out to be justified. If the objection be only that aesthetics has always been done badly, that would have no tendency to show that the subject should be given up as a bad job. It is senseless to speak of something being done badly unless it could in principle be done well. The very existence of criteria by which a performance is judged to have failed suggests that success is at least thinkable, if not practically attainable.

The general complaint of the cultivated man, that aesthetics should not be attempted because it must consist of generalizations about art, whereas works of art are unique so that one cannot generalize about them, is self-refuting: the statement that each work of art is unique is itself a generalization about art, and the explanation of the sense in which each work was unique and why its uniqueness was such as to preclude further generalizations would constitute a theory of aesthetics (cf. Meager 1958). The kindred complaint of the tender-stomached reader that aesthetics makes dull work of the thrilling business of art stems from simple confusion, and was met by Reid (1785, 721): "A philosophical analysis of the objects of taste is like applying the anatomical knife to a fine face. The design of the philosopher, as well as of the anatomist, is not to gratify taste, but to

improve knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, as DeWitt Parker observed (1920, 129-30), although one cannot be simultaneously rapt and critical, any aesthetic rapture is likely to arise from the spontaneous exercise of a trained judgement, critical standards, and knowledge painfully acquired.

Critics and historians of art despise aesthetics at their peril, for their task requires of them some general theory of art. If they refuse to acknowledge this, and hence to think out the presuppositions of what they are doing, they are likely to adopt quite uncritically (even unconsciously) an aesthetic theory of extraordinary naivety, as undeliberately as they would catch a cold, and alternately appeal to it as final arbiter and ignore it completely, as the fancy takes them. Thus the great Bernard Berenson, who complains (1950, 25) of the remoteness of aesthetics from experience, and feels it necessary to apologize (1896, 41) for "seeming to wander off into the boundless domain of aesthetics," commits himself to a peculiarly simple-minded version of the theory of empathy (e.g. 1896, 40) and uses it to justify his condemnation of styles which his sensibility leads him to dislike (1950, 58). On a lower level is Mrs. Margaret Hattersley Bulley, whose loud contempt for aesthetic theories is combined with a whole-hearted commitment to at least the terminology of R. G. Collingwood, of which she does not acknowledge and perhaps does not recognize the source, and which she embellishes with some claptrap of her own. Presumably she regards the result not as inchoate aesthetic theory but as self-evident truth (Bulley 1952, *passim*).

Critics may not need elaborated theories about art, but they must make theoretical assumptions in their work. People sometimes speak as if a critic were a man who went around saying "This is good," "This is bad," "I like this," and "I don't like that." And it is true that, etymologically, a critic's function is to give verdicts. It is also true that the book reviews and film reviews in most daily papers are meant and used to save people the trouble of deciding what to read or see. But etymology is not a safe guide to reality; nor are the daily papers. In reality, any critic nowadays held worthy of the name describes what he criticizes and says what it is that in his judgement makes one work better than another. Indeed, evaluation is

3. Cf. Frye (1957, 29): "The strong emotional repugnance felt by many critics toward any form of schematization in poetics is again the result of a failure to distinguish criticism as a body of knowledge from the direct experience of literature, where every act is unique, and classification has no place." Note that it is one thing to attribute uniqueness and unclassifiability to experiences (though even here one does not quite see what is meant and feels inclined to say that "uniqueness" need not be alleged, since classification is inappropriate rather than impossible) and quite another to attribute them to works of art.



most effective when it flows naturally out of description and analysis. So Professor Richards writes (1929, 11):

There is, it is true, a valuation side to criticism. When we have solved, completely, the communication problem, when we have got, perfectly, the experience, the mental condition relevant to the poem, we have still to judge it, still to decide upon its worth. But the later question nearly always settles itself; or rather, our own inmost nature and the nature of the world in which we live decide it for us.

In fact, the final assertion of merit or demerit may not be made or even implied, any more than after reading a book one has to decide whether one liked it or not, except in so far as the labour spent is itself a token of esteem for the work on which it is lavished.<sup>4</sup> Even if a critic were to confine himself to saying what was good or bad, these assertions would be pointless unless they were based on some principle of judgement. If the critic had no other criterion than the likes and dislikes he found himself happening to have, his use of them as criteria would show that he had a theory about art: the theory that no artistic standards were in principle capable of formulation. And this is a debatable proposition. More precisely, the practice of calling "good" without amplification whatever happened to please the critic, and still more the shoddy habit of saying "Your reviewer liked this" and leaving it at that, imply one theory if the critic ascribes the importance of his judgements to his innate superiority (cf. Hutcheson 1725), and a different theory if he ascribes it to his experience and training (cf. Reynolds 1776). For in either case the fact that he prints or otherwise circulates his opinions shows that he thinks them important, and he must presumably believe that he has some ground for thinking them so.<sup>5</sup> Even if his justification for promulgating his preferences is not that his taste or training is superior but that he is so ordinary that what he likes other ordinary people will like too, his reliance on this justification shows adherence to a theory of the nature and function of art—perhaps that of Tolstoy (1898) or that of Mr. Shaw (1956).

It might seem that a critic could avoid the necessity for theoretical presuppositions by confining himself to an estimation of the artist's success in achieving whatever end he may have set himself. But this is not

4. The extreme form of this use of the term appears in Professor Frye's definition of criticism as "the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is a part of what is variously called liberal education, culture, or the study of the humanities" (Frye 1957, 3). It's a question of who is to be master, that's all.

5. This does not, of course, apply to those who are not responsible for bringing their own judgements into prominence—not, for example, to reporters told off by their editors to "do" the Royal Academy. But I see no need to take account of those who disclaim responsibility for their own actions.

so. In attempting such estimation a critic shows what he considers to be possible ends for an artist to envisage, and this is no light matter. Then the critic is himself responsible for the decision that the work he is considering must be related to certain of these possible ends and not to others. For he is not likely to have the artist at his elbow to tell him what he was after; and if he had, the artist would probably be unable to formulate in any helpful way the ends that he was pursuing; and if the artist were able, he would probably be unwilling; and if the artist were able and willing, the critic would probably not believe him.

Can a critic then shed his theoretical load by just describing the work before him? No. One cannot describe a work of art without showing what one thinks important in it. Thus even a description presupposes a system of evaluation, and such a system when articulated and defended is an aesthetic theory. One can describe a painting as portraying three darling little kittens in an old boot; or one can describe it as forming a system of intersecting cones. Similarly, in music, one can describe a passage from a symphony in terms of feelings, like this, which is from an anonymous commentary on Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony: "A bassoon, its voice issuing from the cavernous depths of its lower register, starts us off on our journey of frustration and pain." Or one can represent it as a conflict between personified musical forces, as Vaughan Williams did in the famous programme note he wrote for the first performance of his Sixth: "When the episode is over the woodwind experiment as to how the fugue subject will sound upside down but the brass are angry and insist on playing it the right way up, so for a bit the two go on together and to the delight of everyone including the composer the two versions fit. . . ." Or one can get right down to business like this (Larsen 1956, 195, on Mozart's "Jupiter"): "The first subject and the transition are linked together as follows: the first subject ends with a striking half-close which suggests a first half-period; the transition begins (bar 24) as a second half-period, but then glides into modulating sequences, in preparation for the dominant." Whether all, or some, or none of these ways of describing are appropriate depends on what kind of a business music is.

It seems then that critical activities of all kinds presuppose theories, in the sense that they are reasonable things to do only if certain theories are true. A critic may be too busy, or lazy, or stupid, to find out what these presupposed theories are; but that is no reason for him to despise those who are prepared to take the trouble.

Historians are related to aesthetics in much the same way as critics are. In elaborating this remark I hope I shall be forgiven if I state the obvious: objectors to aesthetics often presume the untruth of the obvious. Just as



history in general must always be written in the light of some social or political philosophy, however little thought the historian may have given to it (cf. Geyl 1955), so art history is necessarily always written as if its author held some theory of the nature of art, however rudimentary that theory might be. For history cannot be the mere discovery and recording of facts: the facts must be selected and ordered, and that selection and ordering must proceed on some principles (cf. Wellek and Warren 1949, 28). At the very lowest level, the art historian must within his chosen period follow some sequence. Is this to be the chronological order of individual works? Or that of artists? Or is he to deal with artists by schools, or to take the school itself as a unit? And if the latter, should he take the schools chronologically or in some other order? Even if the choice of one of these seems to the historian a mere matter of convenience, or to be determined by the nature of the material, each possibility corresponds to a different notion of what art is, as is shown by those works (e.g. Malraux 1953) which deliberately make a selection of sequence their principal means of promoting a theory.

Aesthetic problems are more obviously raised by questions of selection and emphasis. Is one to stress what seemed important in its own day, or what seems so now? Is one to support a history of the visual arts by references to contemporary literature, or include in a history of the fine arts a survey of humbler artefacts, or not? Once more, each decision would correspond to an arguable, and argued, theory of the nature of art.

Questions of principle are more notoriously involved in the decision whether to include in a history of art mention of social and economic developments; and, if so, which, and with what emphasis. A comparison of Antal's (1948) treatment of Florentine painting after the Black Death with Meiss's (1951) reply to it, and of both with Berenson's account of the same artists (1896, §§ II and III), will show that this is not a matter of greater or less ignorance of fact, but of what is considered *a priori* to be possibly relevant. Here as elsewhere history has to do with change, change in the behaviour of human beings. As Panofsky points out (1955, 20-1), the historian's account will reflect his judgement of what kinds of motivation might lead to such changes, what reasons there might be for the human decisions they reflect.

It must describe the stylistic peculiarities . . . as that which bears witness to artistic "intentions". Now "intentions" can only be formulated in terms of alternatives. . . . Thus it appears that the terms used by the art historian interpret the stylistic peculiarities of the works as specific solutions of generic "artistic problems". . . . Upon reflection it will turn out that there is a limited number of such primary problems. . . .



Panofsky seems to imply that all historians and theorists will be forced by the facts to agree as to what these "primary problems" are; but if he really thinks that, he is an optimist.<sup>6</sup>

Different ways of answering such questions as these are implicit in different ways of writing the history of art, whether the questions are openly faced or burked.<sup>7</sup> And one is inclined to feel that questions are better faced than burked. To say this is not to suggest that art historians should do aesthetics, or devote more than a moment's thought to its problems; only that they should recognize that the problems exist and are relevant to what they themselves are doing. For none of the arguments I have used show that aesthetics has any substance. They show only that it has authentic problems. It remains quite possible that discussion of these problems should be futile, either because the answers are too easy or because there is no way of agreeing on what constitutes a good reason in aesthetics, so that one can never progress beyond expressions of conflicting opinion. That fruitful discussion is possible can only be shown by discussing fruitfully. All I claim to have shown is that the attempt is worth making.

Aesthetics is probably not necessary to the artist as it is to the critic and the historian; but at least it is innocuous. We are apt to think of the artist as being pestered by aesthetics and pleading to be left alone to get on with the job. But this is silly. The subject may not help him, but it will not bite him; if he finds a book irritating or disturbing or uninteresting, he can put it down. One has heard it said that artists have been led astray by

6. Professor Frye makes an analogous supposition about criticism. The evident coherence of and progress in the study of literature are explicable only on the assumption that there is "a coherent and comprehensive theory of literature, logically and scientifically organized, some of which the student learns as he goes on, but the main principles of which are as yet unknown to us" (Frye, 1957, 11). In both Panofsky and Frye this postulation of a grand undiscovered theory rests on the demand that the studies they profess should be recognized as objective and be accorded the status of science, the hallmark of which they take to be a coherent systematic structure.

7. Take for example Professor Brieger's history of English art in the thirteenth century. He analyses the art of the period into three phases, corresponding to changes of style; these changes he attributes to social changes in the patronage of art. He also discerns three successive modes of sensibility: aspiration, display, and a *fin-de-siècle* elaboration and melancholy. No precise account is given of why or how this succession of modes occurs, nor is it correlated with the sequence of patron-dependent styles, but it is ascribed generally to a change in the atmosphere of the period. Within this general pattern, local traditions and fashions of symbolism are recognized. Throughout, material is selected on the basis of originality, so that the history becomes one of the *development* of art, not a mere chronicle of practice; and the author passes judgement in terms of a formal aesthetic, taken as absolute, whereby some designs are praised and others condemned on the basis of their proportions and disposition of masses. (Brieger 1957, esp. 271 ff.)



reading bad aesthetics. I doubt it; I should suspect that anyone feeble enough to be thus corrupted had the seeds of his corruption in him anyway; but if it is indeed so, it would presumably be equally possible for an artist to be put on the right track by reading good aesthetics, were such written.<sup>8</sup> The alternative is to suppose that it is bad for artists to reflect at all upon what they are doing, that the true artist's mind is all in his hands and he should think only *in* his painting, not *about* it. That seems hard to believe. Innovating artists are great ones for manifestos; the renaissance painters were energetic theorists. Sir John Rothenstein indeed maintains that the reason why Steer and Orpen, to name but two, painted less well than they should is that they preferred not to think (Rothenstein 1952, 73 and 221-2). However, it is possible that the kind of intellectual work that painting involves has no connection with the discursive reasoning of art theory; indeed, it is widely believed. And I suppose it is possible that, as some people seem to be suggesting, artists are all so sick or immature that the equilibrium of their working minds can be upset by nasty theories, and they are too innocent to realize this; but to me it seems unlikely. If it is true, it is plainly the duty of aestheticians to mark their books clearly "To be kept out of the reach of artists."<sup>9</sup>

The objection that art theories are so unlike what artists say about their own work and experience that they are unworthy of consideration is untenable: art theories produced by artists, which abound (cf. Goldwater and Treves 1945), have no common qualities that distinguish them from theories of others.<sup>10</sup> Such protests of irrelevance must then not be directed

8. Professor Arnheim (1933, 14) asserts confidently that "The postulates, reasonable or otherwise, of art-theorists have always had more influence on the work of the creative artist than is generally conceded. The views taken in various ages of the functions of art have always had their immediate effect on the works of art of that period." Can one be sure that these theories were not reflections of incipient practical tendencies? Perhaps not. But it seems likely that such tendencies may be encouraged by articulate verbal formulation and hampered by lack of it.

9. There is a full discussion of whether artists ought to be exposed to aesthetics, and to what kind if to any, in Munro (1956, 302-23).

10. Professor Gilson writes (1957, 214): "What philosophers can say about art is too abstract to fit the subject . . . what they say is not art, it is philosophy." The latter statement is of course true. But it supports the former only on the supposition that one ought to say nothing about art at all, except (if I understand Gilson) about methods of production. Gilson appears to be maintaining three positions. First, that when artists discuss painting they always discuss methods of painting and never the subjects or merits of completed paintings (cf. *ibid.*, 216); painters who describe the subjects of paintings (*ibid.*, 224 n.) are presumably not painters but philosophers in false beards. Second, that if philosophers discuss other aspects of paintings it is because of their "inveterate mentalism" (*ibid.*, 34 n.), and not because there may be a legitimate interest in the thing made as opposed to the manner of its making. Third, that paintings cannot be described because in their concreteness they evade verbal abstractions (*ibid.*, 214, 224). But, as Professor Arnheim observes



in the name of the artist's experience as such against those who lack this experience, but equally against the reflections of other artists on their own experience. One might actually say that most writers on aesthetics have known too much about the arts and liked them too well: they tend to have privileged ways of describing their own intense reactions, stylistic axes to grind, canons of excellence to which they would have all art conform. Confident in their taste and knowledge, they do not take seriously the fact that others have other tastes and know other things.

The implication of the objections to aesthetics made by artists, or more usually made by sentimentalists on their behalf, is that if aesthetics is irrelevant to the artist's practical problems it cannot be worthy of attention. But of course these are not the problems it tackles. Art is a public affair: even if the artist can or even should work as for himself alone, his public has its own interests.

The objections to aesthetics raised by philosophers were mostly stated in such a way as to suggest the answers to them; but the answers had better be made explicit.

In so far as contempt for aesthetics is the product of a mere change in generations, it should be ignored. The fact that people are not doing something does not prove that they should not be doing it. Ignoring problems—and we have already seen that aesthetics at least has problems—does not solve them. If one could be certain that no one would ever raise such problems again, one could reasonably ignore them, on the plea of having better things to do. But we do not have this certainty. On the contrary, we can be sure that they will go on being discussed, since they are directly raised by continuing activities. The question is only whether they will be discussed sensibly or foolishly, and whether philosophers will be among those discussing.

Objections to aesthetics on the ground of its association with romantic and existentialist thought are less easily rebutted. These are the philosophies which are preoccupied with the nature of man and his place in the world's order. Philosophy with such preoccupations is indeed the most popular kind, the kind from which alone the general educated public claims to get stimulation, illumination and comfort; but the intellectually

(1954, vi), language is no more limited in dealing with art than in dealing with any other object of experience: it cannot duplicate what it describes, but that is not its function. "If we see and feel certain qualities in a work of art yet cannot describe or explain them, the reason for our failure is not that we use words but that our eyes and thoughts do not succeed in discovering generalities able to do the job. Language . . . is not a foreign medium, unsuitable for visible things. It fails us when and because visual analysis breaks down. But fortunately visual analysis can go far and can also call forth the potential capacity to 'see', by which we reach the unanalyzable."

scrupulous claim that the illumination is hallucinatory, the comfort narcotic, the stimulation intoxicating. Such philosophies are disreputable in scholarly circles because of their arbitrariness, their reliance on a combination of rhetorical persuasiveness and appeals to the readers' or writer's intuitions. The renunciation of such writing, as its renouncers well know, may involve that of all that has usually been thought of as philosophy. But it is not the mere sourgraping of academic nobodies. Perhaps the knowledge and sophistication of our age are such that philosophers must choose between beating the big drum and saying what their knowledge and wisdom entitle them to say. If this is so, the standards to which philosophy has always purported to adhere dictate the latter choice. The abandoning of this territory by philosophy would not be fatal to aesthetics, since its problems are not tied to such grandiose projects. But it is only in the context of such "philosophies of man" that aesthetics has seemed worth spending much time on. For one may recognize that a problem exists and still not think it worth the solving. Perhaps, though, the philosophies of man have been too hastily dismissed: it seems likely that even the purest "linguistic" philosophies of our own day either stem from or are tending towards a view of man's nature.<sup>11</sup> And whenever such philosophies come back they are certain to bring aesthetics with them.

The attack on aesthetics as defiled by overmuch pitch-touching often goes with the attack on it for eluding the methods of analytic philosophy, the subject's non-existence being inferred from the unfruitfulness of such methods when applied to it. Taken in isolation, that unfruitfulness would not seem to reflect more on aesthetics than on the methods. In any subject, to take limitations imposed by one's ways of proceeding as indicating the nature of what is under investigation is hazardous, though common. Philosophy above all must be preserved from methodological asphyxiation; for by common consent problems which elude the methods of other disciplines are left for philosophy to tackle. Philosophers can't be choosers. If they will not handle these residues, the result will be that all the elusive and interesting problems will be left to enlightened amateurs—among whom, indeed, the best philosophers have often in the past been found.

The complaint that aesthetics is dull whereas art is thrilling, and that the dullness is due to excessive generality, is not peculiarly philosophical, but it is often heard from philosophers, who tend to quote in its support authors who in fact turn out to be attacking not aesthetics as such but aesthetics badly done. Professor Passmore, in a well-known article on

11. Dr. D. P. Gauthier has argued persuasively to this effect in a lecture on "Is the Revolution in Philosophy a Philosophy of Revolution?", delivered at University College, Toronto, in 1959. Cf. also Hampshire (1959, 234).



"The Dreariness of Aesthetics" (1951), ascribes the dreariness to an "attempt to impose a spurious unity on things" and conceal their incompatibilities (44), and in particular describes the use of the term "beauty" in aesthetics as "the refuge of the metaphysician finding a home for art in his harmonious universe, attempting to subdue its ferocity, its revelations of deep-seated conflict, its uncompromising disinterestedness, by ascribing to it a 'Beauty' somehow akin to goodness" (*ibid.*, 50). But how can this be taken as an attack on aesthetics as such? The general ascription of ferocity and disinterestedness to art is itself the germ of an aesthetic theory which would require extensive development and vindication. Passmore in turn ascribes the thesis that aesthetics is always dull to Professor Wisdom (1948). But Wisdom does not say that: what he says is that some books on art and some books on ethics are dull, and others are not; and concludes (1948, 211) that "it is possible to make in ethics or aesthetics remarks which are general and still not worthless. This happens when some value is temporarily undervalued or perhaps has always been undervalued." Apparently Passmore is using, and takes Wisdom to be using, "aesthetics" as a term of abuse: writing about art that is not dreary is for that very reason not to be called "aesthetics." It almost seems that he shares the assumption that Professor Hampshire (1952) apparently makes and Mr. Kennick (1958) certainly does, that aesthetics essentially consists of attempts to provide answers in one sentence to the question "What is art?"<sup>12</sup> Now, this is certainly the way aesthetic theories are often remembered, especially by those who know them only through histories or compendia; but it is not the way they are ever written. Whether or not Passmore shares this assumption, his argument certainly seems to rest on the belief that broad generalizations are always boring, and that to point out similarities is necessarily to suppress differences. This belief is widely shared, but seems odd on reflection. If a man says that a triangle is a three-sided rectilinear plane figure one does not censure him for being dull or for attempting to gloss over the interesting differences between triangles and "to impose a spurious unity on them." If generalizations in aesthetics neglect important distinctions, they do not differ in this from other generalizations to which no one objects. One is not deterred from saying that sufferers from migraine tend to dress neatly and prefer Bach to Brahms by the fact that one is thus neglecting important differences among the afflicted, for example that some are male and some female, and

12. It is true that the particular statements which Passmore selects for ridicule do not have this character; but neither do they illustrate or support any of his general charges. The vigour of his remarks has perhaps distracted the attention of the philosophical world from the incoherence of his argument.



each is in fact an unique individual. If the charge means no more than that the likenesses are less striking than the differences, the answer must be that what seems noteworthy (and what seems dreary or boring) depends upon what one's interests at the moment happen to be, and that the ability to concentrate on differences often means only that likenesses have been taken for granted. Nor is it true, of course, that most works on aesthetics consist entirely of statements about all art. Many (e.g. Greene 1940, Langer 1953) are more notable for the distinctions they draw than for their statements of likeness.

The fact seems to be that there is in English academic circles a prejudice against aesthetics based on impermeable ignorance and naivety. So Professor Hampshire (1952) is able complacently to represent as an attack on aesthetics as such what is really an attack on Croce in the name of certain fashionable clichés about art whose truth and adequacy are taken for granted; and Father Turner, making the same equation of Croce with aesthetics, won great applause in the English weeklies for an article on "The Desolation of Aesthetics" (1958) which had the effect of reassuring the complacent that only topics made the subject of examinations at the Ancient Universities really exist.

The next philosophical objection to aesthetics, that the subject has no order, is stronger. But the impression of disorder arises largely because aesthetics, being quite rightly thought of as a marginal subject, is given only a small place (if any) in most courses of instruction, so that a knowledge of its bibliography and of the organization of its problems is not widely diffused among philosophers. No doubt more good ethics has been written than good aesthetics; but certainly as much rubbish has been written on ethics as on aesthetics. It is simply that in ethics the tripe is more widely recognized for what it is. As for the confusion of problems, the greater orderliness of the problems of ethics and other better-known philosophical disciplines may well be due to artificial simplification: classroom usage results, since all lecturers and tutors were once students, in a certain standardization of questions and answers which the subject-matter may not in fact warrant. There is less traffic in standard packages of pre-digested aesthetics.<sup>13</sup>

Aesthetics, thus unsimplified, seems to be a babel of arbitrary assertions and all-embracing disagreements. This is largely because so many different problems arise and can be approached in such various ways. Opinions that seem at first to contradict each other often turn out to be

13. The classification of theories used by Professor Rader in his justly famous textbook (1934) has passed into general use in America; but the basis of that classification is obscure, and the results of its adoption have not been happy.

concerned with different problems or even different subject-matters, so that each might be reasonable in its own sphere. People who are talking about the same thing agree with each other to about the same extent, and in much the same ways, as other philosophers. Of the disagreements that remain, some are due to mere misunderstanding of terminology. The terms "expression" and "emotion" have given much trouble of this kind (see pp. 403 ff.). Thus too when Mrs. Bulley (1952) uses "organic" as a term of abuse and Mrs. Langer (1953) as a term of praise, there is little at issue between them: Mrs. Bulley praises in other terms what Mrs. Langer calls "organic," and herself means by "organic" much what other people mean by "unrestrained." In so far as there is a real difference of opinion between the learned ladies, it is that they take different kinds and aspects of living things as typical.

Such disputes in aesthetics as cannot be resolved in these simple ways usually arise when one disputant excessively emphasizes what the other wrongly ignores. In such cases, both sides of the dispute are usually worthy of attention. No one bothers to set up a theory except to rebut a falsehood. And no falsehood is deemed worthy of such rebuttal if it is not felt to be a dangerous half-truth—dangerous because of the followers it may gain and thus prevent from seeing the other half of the truth, and half true because otherwise it could win no followers. The excessive emphasizing is a reaction to the ignoring, and generally takes the form of pretending that one fact about something is *the* fact about it. Such a pretence naturally has a perverse look. Thus Professor Frye observes (1957, 332) that "To say 'art communicates' is . . . to be content with an obvious plurality of functions: to say 'art is communication' forces us into circular wrangling around a metaphor taken as an assertion." But quite obviously there would be no point in making the milder, more acceptable statement if you were protesting against a doctrine that the artist need work for himself alone, that "eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overheard*" (Mill 1833, 71). So the appearance of perversity often disappears when one recalls the dispute in the course of which a remark was made or a tract published. The literature of art theory, like philosophical and theological literature generally, is very largely polemical. But in aesthetics the polemics are often directed not so much against other theorists as against rival practitioners of the arts and their advocates, so that it is easy for a purely theoretical discussion to neglect them. Thus, for example, Véron (1878) is widely referred to as a proponent of the thesis that art is essentially the expression of emotion. But on reading his work one finds that it is an explicit and sustained attack on the notion that artists need to depend on "des recettes académiques," and appeared in a series of books



designed to attack traditional authorities in the name of advanced ideas—and this in the context of French painting of the 1870's.

An extravagant general thesis may seem less strange when the circumstances of its origin are recalled, but that does not mean that it should never be considered out of its historical context. If one wishes to arrive at a whole truth there is much to be said for having two opposing half-truths forcibly argued. Perhaps, indeed, one should abandon oneself to each half in turn, as Professor Pepper argues (1938, 4-7): it is merely confusing to try to combine or reconcile positions which one has never fully grasped in their distinction. Professor Frye complains (1957, 19) that "there are no definite positions to be taken in chemistry or philology, and if there are any to be taken in criticism, criticism is not a field of genuine learning." But Professor Abrams rejoins (1953, 4-5) that criticism cannot in any case be scientific, since its aim is not the prediction but the ordering of experience; and, moreover, that since critical principles may affect practice a multiplicity in the former may guard against monotony in the latter. The criterion of the validity of a critical theory, he continues, "is not the scientific verifiability of its single propositions, but the scope, precision and coherence of the insights that it yields into the properties of single works of art and the adequacy with which it accounts for diverse kinds of art." Now, he goes on, there is no reason why there should not be several such theories, not necessarily mutually compatible; and any such theory may make one aware of aspects of art to which one was hitherto blind.

Ultimately, of course, mutually contradictory statements cannot both be maintained; either they must be reconciled, or one must be abandoned. Let our guide be Pascal (1670, I, §9):

When we wish to correct with advantage, and to show another that he errs, we must notice from what side he views the matter, for on that side it is usually true, and admit that truth to him, but reveal to him the side on which it is false. He is satisfied with that, for he sees that he was not mistaken, and that he only failed to see all sides. Now, no one is offended at not seeing everything; but one does not like to be mistaken, and that perhaps arises from the fact that man naturally cannot see everything, and that naturally he cannot err in the side he looks at, since the perceptions of our senses are always true.

Our task would be easier than it is if Pascal were right in supposing that people would readily admit failure to see all sides. As it is, we must be content if we can detect such failure in others. Meanwhile, those who press half-truths on each other do at least agree on what are the important problems. Thus, though there are conflicting views on the function of

"psychical distance" or "self-identification" in drama, no one denies that the problem is important, and while there are different views as to the relation between "imitation" and "design" in the visual arts, and even whether the distinction between the two can meaningfully be made, no one supposes that it doesn't matter. In fact, from much reading in aesthetics a pattern emerges, though not a simple one. My chief purpose in this book is to articulate that pattern.

Aesthetics, it is claimed, is a recent and gratuitous addition to philosophy. But philosophical interest in art and beauty is by no means new, no newer than Plato. What is true is that it was not till the eighteenth century that the subject was given a name and its problems systematically examined. A good many problems assumed new forms at that time, and are usually thought to be all the better for it. And a great many things are nowadays given names of their own and treated systematically that used not to be. In every case but that of aesthetics, this is taken to be a sign of progress. But the mere fact that so many learned and in other respects intelligent philosophers have written what they and their readers took to be aesthetics does not prove that there really is such a subject any more than it is proved spurious by the still more recent tendency to scorn it. As for the gratuitousness of aesthetics, we have seen that its problems arise inevitably once the arts are chronicled and criticized. But it is quite arguable that the chronicling and criticizing are themselves undesirable activities, sustained ultimately by the greed of dealers. And even if the problems are inevitable, that would not prove that they cohered to form a separate field for investigation or speculation. Even at the end of this book, the viability of the subject will remain imperfectly established. Meanwhile, are there any general considerations that may make the undertaking seem *a priori* worth while?

As I have remarked elsewhere (Sparshott 1958, §2.1), if we accept the traditional division of human activities into thinking, doing and making—and it seems a reasonable enough division—aesthetics seems to arise as naturally out of reflection on making as ethics out of reflection on doing. Moreover, the problems of ethics have their counterparts in aesthetics. First, to the general consideration of man's nature as agent (Aristotle's main theme in his *Nicomachean Ethics*) corresponds the general consideration of man's nature as maker or creator. Second, to the issue of the balancing of freedom with law in morals corresponds the aesthetic problem of the respective places of originality and tradition. Third, to the basic division between the ethics of duty and the ethics of goodness corresponds the tension between the claims of function and the claims of pure form. To the various modes of relating judgements of



moral goodness to other judgements of goodness, and of relating such goodness to goodness metaphysically conceived, correspond ways of relating "beauty" in art to "beauty" in nature or to a "transcendental" beauty. And in both fields there is a similar inquiry into the logical character of the judgements involved and into the meaning or use of characteristic terms. Professor Hampshire stigmatizes as "alexandrian" the supposition that there ought to be such a subject as aesthetics because a place can be found for it in an abstract scheme (1952). But we have seen that the problems of aesthetics are not, and historically they were not, called into being to fill a theoretical gap: indeed, the charge we thought we had to meet was that the problems were real enough but not systematically related. Both charges cannot be made to stick, for they are incompatible. Is it too much to hope that to have shown independently that there are problems and a place for them is to have refuted both? Hampshire also asserts, however (*ibid.*, 168-9), that ethics is necessary but aesthetics is not, because art is gratuitous but action is not. Moral principles must be formulated and defended to exclude intolerable actions, but intolerable works of art can just be ignored and no harm done. As I have said, this is undoubtedly the reason, and a perfectly valid one, for the comparative neglect of aesthetics. But it is only half true. For in fact nations and municipalities go to great trouble, and put their taxpayers to great expense, to support national theatres, art galleries, ballets, symphony orchestras and the like, in the belief that these activities are of public importance. Immediately, no doubt, the motive is often the enhancement of prestige through means that have become conventional. But what makes these activities prestigious? Whatever the answer may be, to treat the arts as gratuitous personal expressions of artistic egos is, as Tolstoy pointed out, ridiculously at odds with the nature of our artistic institutions.

If in one way aesthetics and its problems seem analogous to ethics, in another way there is an analogy between aesthetics and the philosophy of religion. Each takes its rise from an aspect of human activity which is so widespread as to be virtually universal, but for which no practical justification is obvious; and from a kind of experience in which many have thought to find the deepest significance. One might equally well be startled into reflection by the intensity of the experience or by the universality and diversity of the practice (cf. Farmer 1954, ch. 1, and Sparshott 1961).

Artistic creation is a permanent activity of the human spirit and any comprehensive philosophical system must contain a theory of art and aesthetic, integrated into the system. . . . A permanent activity of the human spirit cannot be a matter of indifference to the philosopher. (Copleston 1946, 141.)



To those who do not think that philosophy ought to be systematic this will not seem important. But it remains true that every known people practises art of some form or other, and some civilizations, such as our own and the Chinese, place a very high value upon artistic activity. This fact in itself is surprising, and should arouse the wonder in which (it is said) philosophy begins. Even if we cannot appreciate the products of alien arts, we can usually recognize them as such. In thus "recognizing" works of art as such we may be imposing our own categories on the material. But if we are, this practice is itself indisputably a matter for philosophical inquiry: how is such imposition made possible? What is the meaning of this term "art"? Even if the specific problems suggested by the (discovered or invented) "universality" of art all demand the attention of sociologists and anthropologists rather than philosophers, the legitimacy of such an imputation of universality itself presents a problem of the only kind which no one has yet denied to be peculiarly philosophical.

As to the peculiar force of aesthetic experience, whether one wishes to make philosophical capital out of that will depend on the kind of philosophy one affects. Most may be willing to abandon consideration of such matters to psychologists. In so far, however, as we are interested not merely in the causes of certain effects in us but in our reasons for regarding experiences in certain ways, we must consider our interest to be philosophical.

All in all, then, there seem *a priori* to be good but not compelling reasons for taking aesthetics seriously as a study. Objections to doing so seem in the long run mostly to reduce to the romantic reluctance to subject one's raptures or their objects to intellectual scrutiny.

## THE APPROACHES TO AESTHETICS

THE UNITY AND the prestige of ethics both derive from the compelling interest of its original problem: how can one be sure that one is living rightly? Everyone has in this problem the same kind, though not the same degree, of interest. Aesthetics has no such popular concern at its centre, and therefore has no such unity. There is rather a multitude of problems, each the object of a milder and more specialized concern, corresponding to the different aspects of art that provoke discourse and the different professional interests people bring to that discourse. It seems therefore likely that the only unity of the subject should be that of its subject-matter (and even this is doubtful, as we shall see). Aesthetics as a unified study would then be confined to disclosing its own complexity and cataloguing the possible kinds of approaches and insights. This done, aesthetics would cease to be a discipline with its own aims and methods, and would dissolve into specialisms.

A semblance of unity might be introduced into aesthetics by definition. For example, if we begin (as I did) by defining aesthetics as part of philosophy, we reduce our problems to a methodological unity. Aesthetics may, like ethics, deal with matters that are also of interest to anthropologists, sociologists and others, and depend upon these disciplines for information, but still be recognizably a separate discipline. It is partly because such a separation of powers has not been much observed in aesthetics that the subject has seemed so confusing.

Subject-matter as well as method will be unified if we confine aesthetics within philosophy. The consideration of such concepts as "art" and "beauty" and those related to them will provide the basis of a unified discussion. Such conceptual inquiries may not be the whole of philosophy,



but they have always served as its point of departure and supplied its principles of organization.

The present chapter enumerates, but for the most part does not discuss, some of the problems generated by the various approaches to aesthetics. They may be classified according to different aspects of the subject-matter and different types of inquirer.

## ASPECTS OF ART

EVERY WORK OF art is complex, and may be considered from at least six points of view.<sup>1</sup> It is, first, related to a world order to which it presumably belongs. Second, it is produced in a particular social environment, its functional relationship to which is problematic. Third, it is one among many representatives of an artistic tradition or traditions, so that it may be said to belong to a "world of art," to an artistic order as well as a world order and a social order. Fourth, it is the product of an individual or group of people; the manner of its production raises further problems. Fifth, it is enjoyed by other individuals or groups, and the nature of such enjoyment and its relation to artistic creation are debated topics. Finally there is the work of art itself. Each of these six aspects gives rise to its own set of problems, though it is easy to move from any set to any other set. There can therefore be at least six kinds of aesthetic theory which may (but need not) be mutually complementary rather than incompatible. It is certainly common for books on aesthetics to underemphasize, or even ignore, one or more aspects. Often this reflects policy rather than neglect; for example, Messrs. Wellek and Warren (1949, 61 and *passim*) reject all approaches to literature but the last as "extrinsic."

### *The World*

The most obvious questions about the connection between the arts and the world relate to their imitative aspect. Are works of art to be regarded, as many used to think, simply as representations of reality, mere replicas and rearrangements or derivative analogues of things that already exist? Or, if not, if every work of art is to be thought of as a really new thing, what ontological status is to be accorded to the reality thus introduced? Less obviously, one may feel called on to evaluate the claims often enough made that works of art may somehow reveal a reality that otherwise would remain occult. Those who accept some such claims will presumably

1. Abrams (1953, ch. 1) has an extensive discussion of the effects of such diversity in approaches in literary criticism.



go on to say why works of art should have this power, and how they may be known to have it. Those who reject them will want to explain why they should ever have seemed plausible enough to put forward.

### *Society*

Every work of art is a marketable commodity, and as such of social and economic import. But in its capacity of commodity its relationships are of interest to us only because we have to clear up the confusion that is caused by introducing them. Our concern is with the work of art as such; as such, there are three questions asked of its relations to the society from which it springs. These questions might seem to be proper to social science rather than to philosophy, but for two reasons this is not altogether so. First, the concept of art and hence of "the work of art as such" is not altogether an empirical one; second, the relations sought are not so much purely causal ones as relations of meaning, and therefore go beyond the interests of the empirical sciences.

The three questions just mentioned inquire into three possible relationships between art and society, which are not mutually exclusive but do not entail each other, so that any of them may be affirmed and the rest denied without contradiction. First, one may ask whether specific qualities or excellences of works of art are explicable in terms of the character of the society that produced them. Second, one may ask what social functions the arts do or should perform. And third, without assigning causal or functional priorities, one may ask whether it is possible for a society to have a general character of which the arts may be taken as expressive.

### *The World of Art*

Whatever the relation of a work of art may be with the society in which it appears, Messrs. Wellek and Warren are doubtless right to say (1949, 94) that every poem (for example) is related to a literary tradition far more directly than it is to the general social conditions in which it is produced. What a poet writes is, specifically, poems. To do so he must have some notion of what a poem is. He derives this notion from poems already extant, which he has read. His readers know that what he has written is a poem from their own familiarity with extant poetry. Poetry thus may well appear to be a self-perpetuating system. Poems are in part the fruit of poems; and the nature of the parent poems must have been such that the new poem could be written in the light of the notion of poetry that they generate. These considerations account for the celebrated but surprising dictum of Mr. Eliot (1919, 15):

What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered.

This, no doubt, if taken as referring to all the poetry that has been written, is nonsense. But it is not nonsense if referred to one person's, or one culture's, notion and knowledge of poetry. Such a subjective "order" of poetry (that is, poetic tradition as envisaged in its development by someone) will have a changing membership. New poems will facilitate perception of neglected qualities in old poems. In the light of a new fashion of writing, poems hitherto neglected to which poems in the new fashion show filial resemblance will be re-attributed to the "main stream" of poetry, much as a new political situation will enable historians to recognize the meaning and hence the importance of hitherto neglected incidents in past ages.

There is another sense in which it may not be nonsense to speak of an "ideal order" of poetry or of art generally. In so far as a poem is to be regarded as a system of words, which are constituted by their meanings, the poem must be considered to be a structure of meanings.<sup>2</sup> Now, a poem may mean anything to anybody. So, if we are to attribute any other reality to the poem than that of a succession of incarnations in readers' mouths and ears, we shall have to view it as the sum of the linguistic structures that can with linguistic propriety be got out of it. But what these are will depend on the resources of the language, and especially on the sum of the poetry written in the language, which will establish what is to be the "propriety" in question. That is to say, we cannot attribute any kind of objective reality to a poem except in terms of a timeless literary order which determines the sum of its meanings. The alternative, not to try to determine what kind of reality a poem may have, is probably to be preferred (cf. Hospers 1956, 299).

The notion of a self-contained literary "universe" is elaborated in vague but high-sounding terms by Professor Frye (1957, 115-28), and an analogous notion for the visual arts is implied though not asserted in M. Malraux's idea of a "museum without walls" (1953).

### *The Artist*

The terms "art" and "work of art" are not yet defined; but one may stipulate that nothing shall be called either that is not deliberately produced by

2. This is precisely the account given of the nature of music in Meyer (1956).



some person or persons called *the artist(s)*. By calling them that I mean no more than that they do deliberately produce objects that we call works of art—whether they call themselves artists, or think of their own products as “art,” is not now relevant. The term “deliberately” may seem inapposite, since the unconscious and automatic aspects of art-production are nowadays emphasized.<sup>3</sup> But the deliberateness is always there, however dissembled; one must at least decide consciously when to let the unconscious off the leash and when to re-shackle it.

Of all questions in aesthetics those relating to the producers of art and their ways of producing are the most notably mixed in character; empirical investigation shades into philosophical interpretation.

Ought one to try to relate either the general character or particular features of an artist's work to his temperament; or to incidents in his life; or to his specifically artistic experience? Perhaps what we said of “the world of art” means that such biographical data are only marginally relevant to the origins of works of art (cf. Wellek and Warren 1949, 66–7). And if they are relevant, the question remains whether questions of origins are themselves relevant to critical procedures. One must ask oneself whether one is interested in biography for its own sake, or as shedding light on the “psychology of creation,” or as affording hints about what to look for in the works themselves (*ibid.*, 63), or as providing causal explanations for what is aesthetically inexplicable (Abrams 1953, 227). The first interest is plainly irrelevant; it is a question whether the last three are all permissible to the conscientious critic, or only some or none. It has been argued (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946) that only the third of the four possibilities is legitimate; but not all would accept this. Sir Kenneth Clark writes (1956, 139): “What is it, in addition to sheer pictorial skill, that makes his [Rubens'] nudes noble and life-giving creations? The answer is partly in his character and partly in the discipline through which he mastered his profession.” Sir Kenneth may mean this simply as a causal explanation. But he may mean that our satisfaction in these works depends partly upon our interpreting them as manifestations of admirable human

3. Hutcheson (1725, I.vi, §4) wrote, “Never were any so extravagant as to affect such Figures as are made by *the casual spilling* of liquid Colours.” The works of the late Jackson Pollock might seem to give him the lie; but there was really nothing very casual about them, however little part was played by any orthodox kind of ratiocination. Then there was Wang Hsia (d. about 804 A.D.) of whom Waley writes (1923, 149): “When he was drunk he used to dip his head into a pail of ink and flop it on to the painting-silk. Marvellous mountains, lakes, and trees appeared on the silk as though by magic. Having dabbled the picture with a great mass of ink, he would sometimes kick it, rub it, and smudge it, till a sunset or rain-storm appeared, and no trace of the first spilling was left.” But this would seem to be not so much automatism as painting with an unusually large brush.



qualities. It may even be urged that our interest in great art is essentially an interest in the aspects of human potentiality that it reveals—an interest that is not to be confused with the mere use of works of art as sources of biographical information (cf. Abrams 1953, 227). Indeed, in so far as the qualities are expressed *in* the work and not merely inferred *from* it, it is irrelevant to such an interest whether Rubens may himself be supposed to have possessed such qualities or not.

It is the essence of Wimsatt's and Beardsley's argument that if any aspect of an artist's intentions or personality is expressed in his work, we can find it there without referring to the facts of the artist's life or to anything else outside the work itself; and if it is not expressed in his work it is pointless to mention it in a discussion of the work. Knowledge of the facts of the artist's life should therefore make no difference to our analysis or assessment of his work. But in practice, since the precise interpretation of works of art is no easy matter, such knowledge will give a valuable context of understanding: it will show us what to look for. The artist's name in an exhibition catalogue may enable the inexpert to relate a work to a background of other work in the light of which it is more readily intelligible. If we all had a profound knowledge of all artistic traditions, or knew only one, such information would be superfluous; but most of us are not so placed, and our perceptions need help.<sup>4</sup> The discovery that a work attributed to Vermeer is by Van Meegeren affects our judgement of it because it destroys our zeal for looking. The sad corollary is that we may be taken in by forgeries because we persuade ourselves that we see in the picture what is not really there, but what would be there if its supposed author had produced it; and that by the same token we may think we see an artist's best qualities in his worst works.

From the artist's point of view the denial of appeal to the artist's intentions has the disadvantage that it takes the interpretation of an artist's work out of his control and gives the critic irresponsible power. An artist's protests that a critic has absurdly misunderstood him will now be given no weight. Bertrand Russell (1956, 73–4) relates with polite horror that Bernard Shaw expounded Bergson's philosophy to Bergson, and when the philosopher assured him that his interpretation was wrong replied: "Oh, my dear fellow, I understand your philosophy much better than you do."

4. Webb (1760, viii) warns that "If we are guided wholly by the prejudice of names, we no longer trust to our own senses; we must acknowledge merit which we do not see, and undervalue that which we do." True, but some of us *are* blind to merit, and do well not to trust to our own senses.

I have assumed that none of my readers is so naive as to suppose that there can be such a thing as an "innocent eye" that sees what is before it unaffected by any beliefs whatever. Perhaps it was a lot to assume. If in doubt, see Gombrich (1960).

To Russell, this showed that Shaw was "unusually vain." But according to the prevailing view of the relations between critic and author, Shaw may have been right and Bergson wrong.

Those who persist in trying to relate works to the intentions and personalities of their authors may go on to seek general laws governing such relations, and thus arrive at a psychological typology of artists. This would be a purely empirical inquiry except in so far as the isolation of aesthetic characteristics to be correlated with psychological traits depended (as it often does) on an *a priori* notion of how art may be analysed. At a yet more general level one may transfer one's attention to the way in which such qualities come to appear in art, and thus arrive at the notion of a "creative process." Whether that would be an empirical inquiry or not is a debatable question. Then, from the consideration of such processes, one might go on to consider the related question of what kind of transmutation "experience" or "subject-matter" undergoes in becoming incorporated in a work of art, and what kind of novelty an "original" work represents. Arising out of these questions are the complicated ones about what kind of person an "artist" is. Santayana (1896, 63) was of the opinion that "Poets and artists . . . are apt to be loud in their lamentations, and to regard themselves as eminently and tragically unhappy. This arises from the intensity and inconstancy of their emotions, from their improvidence, and from the eccentricity of their social habits." Is this an empirical report on producers of art? If so, are the facts reported expressions of a social convention that artists should be thus, or results of social pressures, or the inevitable outcome or condition of producing works of art? Or is it perhaps that there are such people but that the traits mentioned are correlated rather with a propensity to talk about the arts than a propensity to produce? Or is Santayana merely accepting a *fin-de-siècle* stereotype of "the artist" based on popular literature? And if so, how did the stereotype arise? Alternatively, if artists are not necessarily unusual people, what aspects of everyone's experience and activity are to be thought of as "aesthetic"; and what kind of manifestation of these common aspects are "works of art"? And how is it that not everyone is an artist? How are we to explain what seems to be so, that in some societies "everyone is an artist," while in others the artist is a rare bird? Do these situations correspond to different developments and exploitations of latent human faculties, or to a difference in what is called art in the two societies? This mass of questions can hardly be dealt with in isolation from one another, but do not fall within the scope of any single specialism.

The questions thus far considered have been concerned with artists' relations to their work and to their social environment. Other questions



arise in connection with their interpretations, not of their works, but of their whole activity as artists. Artists frequently make general pronouncements about their aesthetic undertakings. Is such interpretation necessarily valid, or is it merely a by-product of their work? If it is valid, why is there so much difference between what different artists say about their art, or about art in general? But if it is a mere by-product, why is it produced? It is not put forward as mere idle chatter. Does it somehow make the artist feel better? and if so, why? The diversity of artists' interpretations of art may lead us to raise a further question: is there, over and above the varying motives that lead people to produce works of art on particular occasions, some characteristic end of artistic activity as such? If so, should the artist's characteristic drive be regarded, as some have said, as an urge to create? Or rather as an urge to create something beautiful? Or is it only bad artists who make beauty their aim (Ducasse 1929, 15-19)? Does the artist characteristically long to convey some insight, or some feeling? Or are his proper professional motives even political (Sartre 1949)? And if some one of these is the right answer, how does it come that all the other answers have been given from time to time with equal confidence? Is it perhaps that only one of these aims is likely to issue in good art, and all the others in bad art? or that all but one of them take as the end of artistic effort one of its usual but inessential effects? Or if it should turn out that there is no such characteristic end, how should it have come about that many different purposes issued in the same kind of activity—or ought we rather to differentiate different artistic activities according to their different ends? Or should all proposed ends be regarded as mere rationalizations, and artistic activities assigned as effects to unconscious drives as their causes?

Some of the positions outlined could only be maintained by one whose mental fortitude had for the time being got the better of his intelligence. But this happens to many people. It also happens that opinions thought absurd become acceptable, and that one comes to think foolish what one had thought true.

The fact that in many arts (cf. Munro 1949, 301-7) the work of art is enjoyed not as its first author left it but as it issues from the hand of a performer or interpreter does not by itself generate any distinctive approach to aesthetics. But it may lead to modifications in what is said about the artist's relation to his work. If one says that the artist's work expresses his emotion, for example, the problem arises of the relation between the composer's emotions and those of the performer. Hanslick (1854, 76) thought that in music the composer's feelings were not ex-

pressed but the performer's were.<sup>5</sup> The interpreter's intervention may also affect what one says about the nature of "the" work of art.

### *The Public*

Some theories of aesthetics have concerned themselves with the problem of taste, or of the appreciation of beauty. Since natural as well as artificial beauties may be enjoyed such theories cannot deal with the artist, unless we deem the Author of Nature to be such, nor with the work of art nor the "world of art," but only with the spectator and his social conditioning and perhaps the Nature of the World.

In their basic form the problems of taste are: why should men take delight in the mere appearances of things that are of no other use to them; and to what extent can causal explanations be given of the origin and variation of such delight and their conditions? In Kant (1790) the questions take on a more refined and philosophical form: to say that something is beautiful is to say more than that it happens to please us—but *what* more? and what must be true if judgements of beauty can ever be validly made?

Other problems about the spectator arise within the context of art. What, for one, is the relation between the artist's experience in "creating" and that of the spectator in "enjoying"? Surely there must be something in common to the experiences of all those who see the same work, and of its artist. But what could it be? For the artist's experience was essentially that of making, of which the others know nothing. Moreover, it is notorious that what one person thinks he finds in a work may be very different from what someone else thinks he finds there. Yet both may agree that it is an excellent, even a "great" work. In what, then, could its excellence or greatness possibly consist? Then one may go on to ask how one is to think of the way in which a work of art makes its effect: as spreading emotion contagiously from person to person, or as enabling the spectator to reconstruct some complex structure of thought and feeling? Or is each of these suggestions applicable to some works but not to others? Or are they both misleading metaphors? And if this last suggestion is true,

5. "In the moment of his highest creative effort, his unbridled temperament swept through him like a whirlwind, lifting his hair—which covered half his face—and his arms, his head, his body, so that a beast of prey seemed to embrace the whole of the storming orchestra" (Stanislavsky 1924, 110; cf. *ibid.*, 466, 475). Discussions of the problems of interpretation less favourable to Hanslick's view may be found in Meyer (1956, 199 ff.) and Beardsley (1958, 21–4); and Hindemith justly remarks (1952, 36–7) that the performer's feelings, when they are expressed, usually spoil his performance by interposing irrelevancies between the work of art as the artist left it and the public.



should we look for some other solution of comparable simplicity, or eschew the search for any such solution?

Perhaps the questions mooted in the last paragraph should not be raised. One may say that any attention paid to the public is either otiose or irrelevant; for all reactions to a work are irrelevant unless they are strictly controlled by the work itself. To avoid irrelevancies, therefore, one should ignore the public and confine one's attentions to the work of art itself (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1949).

### *Works of Art*

Three basic problems arise in connection with works of art. The first is, what kind of entity does the expression "work of art" stand for? Or does it stand for any? The second is, how do works of art have meaning? And the third, how should one differentiate what is a work of art from what is not, and how should one classify them? The last two problems will occupy a great deal of our time later on. Let us now look at the first one.

"Every work of art, though it may take its meaning from the relations in which it stands to artists, society and public, is itself a physical object like any other, extended in space and time. It is from this physical object that aesthetics must start." So we may be told, and it sounds hard-headed and sensible. It is indeed important to remember that a painting consists of canvas with paint on it, and that what we see depends on what has happened and been done to them—which, especially with an old painting, will be a great deal. It would be foolish to deny that such physical objects are paintings, and paintings are such physical objects. But there are other facts about works of art and about the ways in which we think about them that make it hard to identify works of art with physical objects.

Even with statues, drawings, paintings, and buildings, where the identification is easiest, when an artist paints two very similar pictures we tend to say "this picture exists in two versions" rather than "there are two pictures." For we think, not that the artist has done two similar things, nor that he has copied himself, but that he has tried twice to do the same thing, as a man might make two attempts to climb the same mountain.

Different versions of one painting or carving always differ noticeably from one another, but this is not necessarily true of engravings. The engraved wood or copper is not the work of art; it is the matrix from which works are produced. But until the plate becomes worn no impression takes precedence over the others as *the* work of art. Yet it would never occur to us to speak of Dürer's *Melancholias* rather than of his *Melancholia*. The same considerations apply to photographs (still or moving) where many prints are made from one negative.

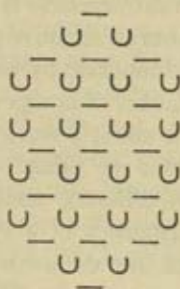
In music, the difficulties of equating any physical object with *the* work of art are multiplied. What physical object, for example, is Beethoven's Third Symphony? Not the printed score, which exists in innumerable copies of many editions. Not, either, Beethoven's autograph; for, if that were to be destroyed, no one would suppose that his symphony had ceased to exist. Stravinsky (1942, 125) seems to imply that the score *is* the work, for he writes: "Having been fixed on paper or retained in the memory, music exists already prior to its actual performance, differing in this respect from all the other arts. . . ." But since the same work may also exist "in the memory" it is plain that he is not equating it with any physical object at all. If some such object is to be found, a better candidate than the score would seem to be one, such as a phonograph record, from which a given series of sounds could be regularly produced by some invariant process. But even if we neglect the part played by engineers in selecting what sounds shall be recorded, the blending and the splicing, it remains true that what the recording reproduces is not the symphony as such but some performance of it. Indeed, it seems reasonable to say that the music exists only in its performances. But then, which performance is to be *the* "physical object"? One by Weingartner is notably unlike one by Toscanini. To say that either of them is uniquely *the* work is as absurd as invidious. The only performance we could thus single out would presumably be one (the opening one?) conducted by the composer; a bad performance, most likely. Really, it is obvious that no one performance could be thus singled out. Could *the* symphony then be identified with an archetypal "performance" in the composer's mind, of which all scores, performances, recordings, and so on, are replicas? Well, that would not be a physical object, necessarily. One may confidently postulate a series of electrochemical changes in the brain and minute movements of the larynx and so on as its physical correlate—but would that be more than the "score" for the mental performance? And even if all composers run through all their compositions "in their minds," which I know no reason to believe, they may well do so many times, and sound different to themselves on each occasion.

Let us suppose that we were prepared after all to identify some one performance with *the* work. What kind of "physical object" would this be? The term "physical object" is readily intelligible only if it is applied to a substance, such as a tree or a table—or a painted canvas. In looking for something analogous to serve as substrate for a piece of music, or for any noise, we find ourselves at a loss. There is no precisely demarcated set of physical things or happenings with which the performance can be unequivocally identified. The total content of the hall? The performers in



musically relevant motion? Some or all of the sound-waves produced? The changes in the audience's brains? No decision imposes itself. Obviously, "what kind of physical object is a symphony?" is a question better left unasked.

We fare worse still if we ask what kind of a physical object a poem is. Poems consist of words (or whatever the proper linguistic unit may be), spoken or written. It is often said that written word is to spoken as score is to music. But then what comes of the typographical elegances of Mr. E. E. Cummings? Or of Christian Morgenstern's *Fisches Nachtgesang*, which runs:



Well, perhaps we could make a ruling that what's inaudible is no part of the poem, just as some would say that aspects of the pattern of serial compositions in music that cannot be discerned by the hearing alone, unaided by sight of the score, do not count musically. But to elaborate the difficulties here we should have to repeat what we said about the symphony. Let us turn to the questions that poetry raises and music does not. In music, painting, and most non-literary arts much of a work's value derives simply from the arrangement of the perceptible components: the pattern of lines, colours, sounds. But in poetry this is scarcely true at all. The words of which poems are made are not groups of sounds *per se*, but of sounds as bearers of meaning (Wellek and Warren 1949, 146). And these meanings are, in an important sense, arbitrarily assigned to the sounds that carry them (pp. 366-7 below). Only in a very attenuated sense could the poem be equated with any series of sounds as such rather than (say) such a structure of meanings as we spoke of above (p. 29).

It seems then that we cannot always equate the work of art with a specifiable physical object. When we can do so (as with paintings) this is only because a painter happens not to have produced two versions of the

same work or (if we wish to be more precise) because of the contingent fact that it is virtually impossible to produce two perceptually indistinguishable versions of the same painting.<sup>6</sup> What are the alternatives? To say that the work of art exists "in the artist's mind" seems false, as we have seen, if it is taken to refer to actual processes of thought. If not so taken, it becomes indistinguishable from the equation of the work with its formal structure, a possibility to which I return shortly. But perhaps it would be better to say that we should not have tried to find any kind of entity to which the expression "work of art" uniquely refers, since the expression is used in a number of ways which are vague in themselves and which there is no initial reason to suppose to be compatible with each other. The answer to "What *precisely* is a work of art?" is that it is not anything precisely. Not all our substantive phrases have isolable entities to correspond to them. All one could do by way of answering the question would be to describe the processes of composition and reproduction and then say, "Well, when we talk about a work of art we are referring in a loose kind of way to that kind of thing." The complex relationships between different pulls from different states of etchings, or different recordings of different performances of a symphony, have nothing inherently puzzling about them, nor do we have any difficulty in understanding one another when we refer to "The *Eroica*." In raising our question have we not been making an unnecessary fuss? Unnecessary, perhaps, from this point of view. But it was not, after all, practical difficulties in communication that started us off. We might agree that our question *need* not arise and still be glad that it did, because otherwise we would never have started to work out these complex relationships. Philosophy may be the fruit of leisure, but so are many other attractive things.

If it is true that the expression "work of art" is used so variously that its use appears to raise insoluble problems, there are several things that can be done. One is to determine and classify the actual uses of the expression itself: whether and when it is used to refer to artefacts or operations, how far it is used to classify and how far to evaluate, and so on. Alternatively or additionally, one can define and use terms to distinguish various aspects of works of art. Thus Professor Beardsley (1958, ch. 1, §4)

6. Because the delicacy and complexity of the business of painting makes it impossible to duplicate precisely; and because the continuous chemical changes in paints as they dry make it impossible to produce a true copy of a painting that will stay true (cf. Gilson 1957, 66). Mr. P. F. Strawson (1959, 231 n.) makes the point that the *original* picture is important only because of the difficulty of reproduction. Gilson's apparent belief on metaphysical grounds that no two physical objects can be precisely alike (1957, 47) is beside the point. In so far as we are concerned with aesthetic objects, we cannot be concerned with *imperceptible* differences.



seeks to establish in all the fine arts distinctions between the artefact (composer's score, poet's MS., etc.), the *performance* of the work (publication, exhibition etc.) and its *presentation* (work as experienced by some individual), and the aesthetic object (the structure implied by criticism). More valuable, perhaps, are the distinctions drawn by Professor Gilson (1957, ch. I, §§1-2) between physical, artistic and aesthetic modes of existence. A painting is, and may be considered as, a material object, whereas a poem is not (so too Wimsatt 1954, 50), and a musical piece is only while performed—and then not simultaneously, so that as a whole it can exist only “in the mind.” It follows that many questions can be asked about painting, for example about the relation between copies and their original, that cannot be meaningfully asked about music. Paintings, poems and musical works alike have artistic existence, *qua* products of an artist's art, which is distinguished as “existence of that which has been produced by art” from aesthetic existence as “existence of that which is actually experienced as a work of art.” This last (corresponding to Beardsley's “presentation”) is fleeting and variable, but “artistic existence” is stable in that the work is what the artist has made it and has the aesthetic properties he has given it. The distinction here made between physical and aesthetic existence is a standard one. Thus Pepper writes (1945, 70-1):

Now whatever the nature of the physical work of art apart from the spectator, we know it has not the quality of the perceived picture, for the quality of the perception includes color and line movements and clouds and hills and city walls and these require the action of a spectator in the situation before they can appear. . . . Strictly speaking, the quality of the picture is only realized on the occasions when it is actually perceived. Each such experience is an aesthetic experience. . . . Normally each perception funds the previous one and adds something new not perceived before. . . . The aesthetic work of art is the cumulative succession of intermittent perceptions.

What Gilson does is to stabilize this situation by pointing out that what the spectator finds is, so far as it is relevant, largely controlled by what the artist put there to be found; without committing the “intentional fallacy” of supposing that the spectator is trying to read the artist's mind. In terms of Gilson's analysis one can reconcile various statements made about “works of art” generally. Mr. Osborne's statement (1952, 94) that “a work of art is . . . a permanent possibility” relates aesthetic to artistic and physical existence. M. Malraux's claim (1950, 31—cf. 1953, 69) that “Le génie impose aux siècles un langage sans cesse modifié, comme un écho qui leur répondrait avec leurs voix successives. L'œuvre ne maintient pas un monologue souverain, mais un invincible dialogue” runs aesthetic and artistic existence confusingly together. And Bradley's statement (1909,



4) that "A poem as it actually exists . . . is the succession of experiences . . . through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as we can" takes account of aesthetic existence only, while Wellek and Warren's counter-assertion (1949, 138) that "A poem . . . is not an individual experience or a sum of experiences, but only a potential cause of experiences. . . . The real poem must be conceived as a structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers" excludes all but a mode of existence approximating to the "artistic."<sup>7</sup>

It seems absurd to say that the work of art is "real" under only one of these modes of existence. But we may still ask, what is *the* work of art that can exist in these modes, that can exist in various versions or states, that can be affirmed or denied to exist only in its performances or its presentations? Surely, there must be some underlying unity. This question seems to me to be very like the question "What is man, as opposed to all individual men, races of mankind, paintings of men, characters in fiction, and the like?" And it seems to have as many, and no more, kinds of possible answer as there are to the classical problem of universals. There would seem, in fact, to be contexts in which it is useful to say that each work of art is a universal—if you will, a species (cf. Meager 1958, 52). This seems an odd thing to say because in many arts, notably in painting, the universal appears in only one particular thing. "Are you trying to say," someone is sure to ask, "that that piece of canvas in the Louvre isn't the *Mona Lisa*?" I am not. If only one individual belongs to the species *x*, that individual is *the x*: when only one whooping crane is left alive, it will properly be called *the* whooping crane. And with paintings generally, since they usually exist only in one version and, when they exist in many, the differences between the versions are almost invariably aesthetically important, we concentrate on their status as individuals rather than on the logical possibility that they might be duplicated. With etchings or musical compositions, where performances are usually multiple, we do not identify *the* work of art with any one performance even if only one should happen to exist or take place. Nor am I in the position

7. Wellek and Warren, however, do not relate this structure to the artist's input. The norms, they say (*ibid.*, 139), "are implicit norms which have to be extracted from every individual experience of a work of art and together make up the genuine work of art as a whole." "The work of art, then, appears as an object of knowledge *sui generis* which has a special ontological status. It is neither real (like a statue) nor mental (like the experience of light or pain) nor ideal (like a triangle). It is a system of norms of ideal concepts which are intersubjective. They must be assumed to exist in collective ideology, changing with it, accessible only through individual mental experiences, based on the sound-structure of its sentences." (*Ibid.*, 144.) This is not very clear, but seems to equate "the work of art" with the totality of its linguistically permissible interpretations (see p. 29 above).



(as I have been told that I am) of saying that the pictures in a gallery form a class of which the individual pictures are sub-classes; for the former class is that of pictures *qua* physical objects, and it is not from the point of view of its physical existence that a work can be regarded as a species. But in any case, I do not say that a work of art simply *is* a species, or a universal, but only that in some contexts it may be regarded so;<sup>8</sup> and specifically in the context of the question of the nature of the unity that may be ascribed to a work of art in view of all the possibilities of duplication and the variety of modes of existence that may be attributed to it. And we should note that similar questions to this have been raised about physical objects themselves: if some feel that a musical composition must be equated with the class of its performances, some have likewise felt that physical objects can be no more than classes of sense-data. It is not that works of art are queer and mysterious, but that the usual philosophical problems about universals, individuation and identity, which arise about ordinary and presumably unmysterious things, arise about works of art in slightly different though plainly analogous forms.

There is another set of problems about works of art. How is it that the physical properties of the object bear the meaning that they do bear?<sup>9</sup> Here, let us suppose, is a painting of a miner hewing coal: a powerful piece (some find it claustrophobic). The receding diagonal of the miner's back firmly relates the plane of the coalface to the picture-plane. But in what sense is the man "hewing"? The paint is motionless. In what sense can a painted canvas be "powerful," let alone "claustrophobic"? And how can a diagonal "recede" on a flat surface? Should we perhaps speak in such cases of "illusion" or "conscious self-deception"? If so, who is deceived? But if there is no deception, in what sense are the attributed properties "really there"? The discussion of these problems may not be very fruitful, but the questions themselves seem inevitable. The meaning of the attribution of motion or bulk to portrayed objects might seem to be scarcely a problem at all, but it has been discussed (cf. Ziff 1951 and references, and Sparshott 1952). The problem of the interpretation of two-dimensional space in three dimensions might seem to be a merely tech-

8. If "work of art" could mean *only* this, it would follow that "no one has ever seen a work of art"—a paradox often thought to follow from Croce's theory of expression. Some have thought that God ("The AUTHOR of *Nature*") created, primarily, species rather than individuals; the theory that *the* work of art is something in the author's mind seems to be a replica of the more Platonizing forms of this doctrine, which derive the unity of species from archetypes "in the mind of God."

9. Cf. Reid (1785, 735): "When we consider matter as an inert, extended, divisible and movable substance, there seems to be nothing in these qualities which we can call grand...."

nical one, but has deeper implications (cf. White 1957). And the nature of the "expressiveness" of art has been, in the present century at least, the most debated topic in aesthetics.

The last group of problems that arises in connection with the work of art as such is usually dismissed in a few pages in the early chapters of books on aesthetics, but has to be dealt with: what kinds of objects may be classified as works of art? I deal with this topic in chapter vi; Munro (1949) treats it exhaustively.

## THE ARTS

AT DIFFERENT TIMES different arts attract more attention from the general educated public, and are ranked higher among human activities. The nineteenth century saw the rise of music to such a dominating position; in our own day painting seems to have taken its place (cf. Sypher 1955, 30-1). There will be a natural tendency at such times to interpret other arts in terms appropriate to the dominant one. Similarly, individuals who put forward general theories about the nature of art or beauty will tend to be influenced by their greater familiarity with one or other of the arts, due either to their sharing the aforesaid prejudice of their age or to their individual taste and training.<sup>10</sup> One who begins by considering architecture will almost certainly stress the importance of regularity in design and allow for an intellectual element in art; one who begins with music may allow more importance to subjective feeling and spontaneity (cf. Plato, *Philebus*, 56). The romantic notion that art is primarily an expression of personal feeling is historically as well as logically an extension of a theory of poetry, especially of lyric poetry, to cover the other arts.

Does the fact that it makes a difference in aesthetics which of the arts one starts from not mean that general theories of art must all be misleading and should not be constructed? Mrs. Langer argues (1953, 24) that "The proper way to construct a general theory is by generalization of a special one." This would only be so, however, if only one of the theories thus produced proved satisfactory, or if all such theories turned out ultimately to be the same, no matter what their starting point. If satisfactory verification of such theories were possible, as it is not, of course the starting point would be of heuristic importance only; and if no more significance were attached to such an extrapolated theory than to any

10. Hirn (1900, 6) specifies the artistic preferences of some of his predecessors (Taine, Marshall, Ruskin, Vischer) and the consequent limitations on the applicability of their general remarks.



other illuminating metaphor no objection could be raised. Misgiving arises when exclusive claims to truth are made for such one-sided and unverifiable accounts.

## TYPES OF INQUIRER

APPROACHES to aesthetics may be differentiated not only by the aspect or type of art which gives rise to problems and interpretations, but by the professional or temperamental interests brought to bear on the subject. Coomaraswamy remarks (1934, 108-9) that Indian attitudes to art vary: savants stress correctness in iconography, pious men favour holy themes, connoisseurs look for the expression of *bhava* ("mood" or "emotion") and *rasa* ("savour," *je ne sais quoi*, the correlate of specifically aesthetic experience), artists study technique in drawing and the like, laymen go for bright colours and dexterity. What is true of Indians is true of Europeans and Americans too.

Such differences in interest and approach may be generalized into different theories about what art is and should be. Theories thus generated need not be mutually contradictory. Thus a greater (or even exclusive) emphasis on the formal properties of works of art, as opposed to what they portray or suggest, may correspond to a legitimate difference of interest between critic and amateur; for the former is naturally concerned with what is objective and the same for all spectators, while the latter seeks with no less right the source of his own satisfactions. Since both of these types of theory are concerned with the proper analysis and description of works of art, and with the immediate source of aesthetic delight, neither of them need stand in contradiction with the once-fashionable "play" theories, which are biologically oriented (pp. 212 ff. below) and are concerned partly with the presumed evolution of art and partly with the physiological teleology of aesthetic activity. Again, theories of all the types mentioned may differ from sociologically inspired theories without contradicting them, for they may be taken as concerned with the conditions which make art able to fulfil whatever social functions are ascribed to it. Neither Plato nor Tolstoy nor Marx supposes that artists are or should be concerned to achieve the aims which those reformers want art to fulfil. Yet again, some theories claim that art embodies some special kind of knowledge and intuition. Such a theory need not contradict any of the others mentioned, so long as each hews to its own line, for it may once more be thought of as specifying the means to the ends with which the other theories deal. Of course, while such theories need not contra-

dict one another, they often do, in that each claims exclusive jurisdiction. But there are rather fewer such contradictions than there seem at first to be: the aesthetic state of nature, apparently a donnybrook of all against all, dissolves on inspection into a number of localized conflicts in each of which there are many neutrals.

I dealt in chapter 1 with the theoretical implications of certain activities. Now I shall deal with the conscious theorizing of those engaged in those pursuits, and others. There will necessarily be some overlapping, but I shall try to minimize it by brevity. I shall mention the interests of scientists (sociologists, psychologists and psychiatrists), of those concerned with the arts as such (critics, historians, dilettantes, artists themselves), and of philosophers of various kinds. But first I may mention two oddities. One is the number crank,<sup>11</sup> the pathological measurer, whose hobby it is to establish and systematize the proportions of works of art. This is an application of that obsession with simple arithmetic and geometry that has occupied so many people since the days of Pythagoras; a harmless foible, but often taken seriously owing to a misdirected respect for the role of quantification in science. The other oddity is the visionary, a dilettante on stilts, delighted to find in the arts a field where any Truth he fancies may be discovered without the nasty hard work and risk of discovered error that obstruct the progress of others in their search for enlightenment.

### *The Scientific Approach*

The sociologist may take a professional interest in the social role and work of the artist. If his explanations of these satisfy him, he may come to think that no other kind of explanation of art is desirable or possible, and to write on this assumption and even defend it. But his professional interest is circumscribed. It does not require or encourage him to evaluate: even the judgements of value passed in the society he studies he tends to treat as causally explicable rather than potentially justifiable or logically structured.<sup>12</sup> Sociological explanations may overlook what is singular in art: may explain the trafficking in expensive paintings in terms of "conspicuous consumption," whereas this purpose might be served equally well by other folkways (e.g. the *potlatch*) and the use of paintings for this purpose

11. It is depressing to find M. Ghyka, while expounding the aesthetic virtues of the Golden Section, repeatedly referring to the dimensions of the Great Pyramid and on one occasion (1946, 173 n.) gratuitously remarking that he finds "interesting" the arguments used to prove that Bacon was Shakespeare.

12. Cf. Hauser (1951, 1.90): "For the creation of high artistic value, no simple sociological recipe can be given; the most sociology can do is to trace some elements in the work of art back to their origin, and these elements may well be the same in works of very different quality."



presupposes a prior interest in them for their own sake (cf. Hutcheson 1725, I.i, §14 and I.vii, §5). It is more enlightening to explain African sculpture or music in terms of religious or moral functions; but even so we tend to be left asking why those necessary functions should be performed in these particular ways, or why what seem to be similar activities elsewhere seem not to have these functions.

Sociologists who write on art are seldom guilty of the narrowness (or capable of the purism) of which I write.<sup>13</sup> But this is the direction in which their special interests tend to influence their writing.

Psychologists have long been interested in art; their labours are described, with references, by Professors Munro (1956, ch. 3) and Morgan (1950). They have sought from time to time to establish what people do actually find beautiful, and what types of people tend to produce and enjoy what kinds of art. They have sought to discover, usually by multiple-choice or true-false tests, how far the groups they study agree in their interpretations of particular works, and what ideas if any are consistently associated with particular kinds of form. The interpretation of works of art has also been found a useful tool in the psychology of perception, since it is at least plausible to regard works of art as objects designed especially for perception. The results of such experimental inquiries are seldom startling and their interpretation is often problematic; but few will wish to philosophize about art in ignorance of them. Many have tried, and still try, to make aesthetics into a branch of psychology. For reasons I have given, they are likely to go on failing. In fact, psychologists who venture into aesthetics (e.g. Langfeld 1920) often seem to find the fireside of contemplation more productive than the laboratory: the product may not have the status of empirical research, but in so far as it is based on such research and on experience submitted to wise reflection it should not be dismissed as quite worthless.

One of the difficulties in the interpretation of psychological material is that of determining whether the cases studied are a fair sample of the population about which information is sought. Building aesthetic theory upon psychiatric data avoids this difficulty, because it is known that the cases studied are not a fair sample. Instead, we are asked to argue from sickness to health: an argument by analogy. Such analogies may be attractive, but there are differences which should not be ignored. The "art" with which psychiatrists are usually concerned is strikingly unlike that which artists produce and the public enjoys. We are often asked to

13. Thus in Professor Mueller (1951) three men seem to contend: the educated musician and man of taste, the factual reporter, and the purveyor of sociological dogma (school of Sumner).

compare drawings by schizophrenics with the grotesques of Hieronymus Bosch. The comparison is indeed instructive, but not in the way supposed: what is at once obvious is that Bosch owes his reputation to what divides him from the sick, not what unites them. When psychiatrists do turn their attention to what is excellent, as in Freud's essay on Leonardo (1910) and Jones's on *Hamlet* (1949), the result is to show how much remains to be explained when the psychiatrist has done. Yet, even if the impulses and functions which psychiatrists discern lead indifferently to good work and to work so bad that the term "art" can scarcely apply to it, this shows only that their explanations are incomplete, not that they are mistaken.<sup>14</sup>

Although in aesthetics as elsewhere a scientist's claim that his own approach is the only valid one may lead him into an unnecessary narrowness, his contributions to the understanding of art and beauty are likely to be the most solid of all. But aesthetics suffers much from those who abuse or simulate the methods of the sciences. Two kinds of rubbish are thus produced.

The first source of rubbish is the tendency of scientists who are interested in art to suppose that what they have found to hold good within their own specialism must hold equally good everywhere. This tendency is not discreditable, for the scientist is as much entitled to his own opinion as anyone. It falls under our censure only when he or his followers claim the mysterious authority of Science ("Science has proved that . . .," "We now know that . . .") for his conjectures. Freud wrote (1910, 132):

We should be most glad to give an account of the way in which artistic activity derives from the primal instincts of the mind if it were not just here that our capacities fail us. We must be content to emphasize the fact—which it is hardly any longer possible to doubt—that what an artist creates provides at the same time an outlet for his sexual desire.

Here the will to explain has triumphed over the limitations of knowledge. What is so vaguely known is not really known at all.<sup>15</sup>

A more prolific source of worse rubbish than the optimism of the true scientist is the attempt by amateurs and epigoni to cash in on the prestige

14. Not that they are immune to error: Stites (1948) and Jones (1955, 390) show that some of Freud's conclusions rest on factual blunders. His latest editor (Freud 1910, 61–2) thinks that the errors do not affect the conclusions; but he does not mention all of them. It has been frequently pointed out that Freud relied on Merezkowski's fictional account of Leonardo's life, and that Jones's study of *Hamlet* relies on the shaky assumption that that is both the most aesthetically significant of Shakespeare's plays and the most important to Shakespeare personally.

15. It is not obvious whether Freud means that such an outlet is provided by all creations of all artists, some creations of all artists, all creations of some artists, or some creations of some artists. The last would obviously be true, but not very important. The first would be important, but there is no evidence for it.



of science, or of some fashionable scientific theory, by clothing conjectures in scientific jargon or expressing them in such a way that they seem to be inspired by what is taken to be the animating principle of the pet theory. At one time, the Darwinian theory of natural selection was widely used in this way. More recently, psychoanalysis has served. In all cases, the symptoms are the same: the use of a single sweeping principle to give plausible-sounding explanations for a class of phenomena no one of which is explained or examined in detail. Here is a sample from an egregious specimen (Wolfenstein and Leites 1950, 12):

Day-dreams provide the starting point for literary and dramatic productions. The capacity for transforming day-dreams into such productions gets specialized in poets, playwrights, novelists, script-writers. . . . These ready-made day-dreams come to occupy a larger place in the conscious experience of most individuals than their more fugitive, private, home-made day-dreams.

This is alleged to happen because in our society "Day-dreaming itself is apt to be frowned on as impractical, an unproductive use of one's energies, even a mark of failure"—as if it were only in such societies that stories were told. The clumsy term "gets specialized" is introduced because it is reminiscent of processes of biological selection, although such selection is here irrelevant. And we may ask in vain for the evidence on which these resounding generalizations are based.

Akin to these montrosities, but different from them, are the speculations produced by those who take what they believe to be a scientific theory and apply it in a quite uncontrolled way to the arts. Such speculations may be quite ludicrous, since the theories themselves and their relation to observation are not always understood by those who use them thus, but may be harmless and even valuable if their proponents are well informed and put their views forward as hypotheses capable of confirmation or refutation. Thus when Dr. Evans (1939) takes a current classification of psychological types and tries to correlate with each type a certain kind of art, the result is scientifically null because it rests simply on the author's guess about what kind of person the producer of a certain kind of work must have been; but it is harmless because there is no pretence that it is more than a guess, and even interesting as suggesting a quite possible line for investigation. And if it be objected that science should be kept pure from such conjecture, my reply would be that what we bring to our interpretation of our surroundings and our relation to them is the whole of what we know and believe. So long as we do not confuse what we have demonstrated with what we have heard or assumed or conjectured, it is foolish to pretend that we can orient ourselves by ascertained fact alone.

*The Approach from the Arts*

Of all activities, the criticism of art would seem to lead most inevitably to the formulation of aesthetic theories. In so far as it is the critic's job to evaluate particular works in terms of a generally accepted or officially approved frame of reference, or in terms of a private one that he thinks he can put across, and to communicate his valuations and their grounds, we should expect him in his excursions into aesthetics to concentrate on the requirements of such evaluation and communication. Thus he may discriminate among types of aesthetic or pseudo-aesthetic evaluation (Bell 1914), or outline a scheme for the classification (Wilenski 1927) or analysis (Wölfflin 1915) of works of art. We should expect him also to be more interested in the work of art and the public than in the artist or in society at large; and we should not expect him to be much interested in the beauties of nature or man's delight in them. For, as Santayana observes (1896, 15), whereas criticism is "the reasoned appreciation of works of art," "A sunset is not criticized, it is felt and enjoyed." For criticism must use standards; but "beauty, although often so described, is seldom so perceived."

Hanslick complained (1854, 62-3) that Hegel failed to distinguish between aesthetics and art history: the former should be confined to "what the music itself contains." But what does it contain? Perhaps only the historian can tell us what to listen for, or even how to play the music. So history and criticism blend: Croce by precept (1901) and example reduces criticism to historical explication. So the historian's approach to aesthetics produces little that is peculiarly his own except the attempt to find quasi-causal laws of regular sequences in styles (pp. 197 ff. below), an attempt which the more pure-minded and respectable historians neither make nor applaud. The historian's special knowledge, however, does fit him to discourse on the use of symbolism (Panofsky 1955 etc.) more effectively than the psychologists and their hangers-on who have had so much to say about it and to reveal the subtleties of the representation of space (White 1957) which one would be unlikely to guess at. But he does not usually explore very fully the more remote theoretical implications of what he finds. So, too, the history of taste is a study which should not be neglected by those concerned to establish or deny the relativity of aesthetic values; but most historians (e.g. Steegman 1936 and 1950) confine interpretation of their findings to *obiter dicta*. Professor Boas (1950), who does more, is a philosopher by profession.

Many of those concerned with the arts are neither critics nor historians but simply lovers of art, who accordingly bring to aesthetics neither pro-



fessional bias nor professional training but simply a wish to explain to themselves and others what has delighted them. The theories that result are likely to be arbitrary and incoherent, and may simply consist of words chosen for their associations and strung together for their euphony. But if the writer's taste is genuine and he is honest and perceptive about his own experience he will probably say good things from time to time, and wisdom and good sense are too rare for us to be squeamish about their surroundings when we find them. Indeed, some would say that nothing written on the supposed subject of aesthetics had any other merit than this, of embedding a few insights in a setting of theoretical trumpery. Daniel Webb (1760, 18) thought that the dilettante's lack of professional bias gave him a theoretical advantage: artists "seldom, like gentlemen and scholars, rise to an unprejudiced and liberal contemplation of true beauty." How true this is was shown a few decades later, when Benjamin Haydon and the other artists showed themselves unable to rise to the height from which Payne Knight and his fellow gentlemen and scholars could perceive the inferiority of the "Elgin Marbles."

The artist, however biased, is the man most deeply concerned with the arts, and he brings to aesthetics his own intimate knowledge of what he does and attempts in his art. One is therefore obliged to attend to what he says. In fact, the writings of the more articulate and reflective artists have an important place in the literature of aesthetics, and aestheticians who are not artists often cite in support of their theses what artists of their acquaintance say. But although artists must be conceded a privileged position, they do not all see the same thing from that position. If one distinguished composer says that "Music . . . reproduces for us the most intimate essence, the tempo and the energy, of our spiritual being" (Roger Sessions in Ghiselin 1952, 46), and another distinguished composer says that "Music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc." (Stravinsky 1936, 83), whom are we to believe? The composer whom we judge to be the more distinguished? or the better educated? or the more introspective? or the more honest? Or must we merge their findings in a higher synthesis? The right answer is, I think, that given by Mr. T. S. Eliot (1949, 333-4) when he writes:

No poet, when he writes his own *art poétique*, should hope to do much more than to explain, rationalize, defend or prepare the way for his own practice: that is, for writing his own kind of poetry. He may think that he is establishing laws for all poetry; but what he has to say that is worth saying has its immediate relation to the way in which he himself writes or wants to write.

The sayings of the two musicians quoted, however, are not directly related to their own practice in writing music, but serve rather to justify music's existence: an *apologia pro vita sua* masquerades as an explanation of the art's function. An artist's aesthetics is likely to be a blend of autobiography, technical polemic, and self-justification rather than a dispassionate examination of the problems discussed. It is in the light of Mr. Eliot's own explanation that we are best able to understand his earlier statement (1927, 137): "Shakespeare, too, was occupied with the struggle—which alone constitutes life for a poet—to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal."

Some artists' aesthetics is designed as a manifesto to justify or influence practice. Some, as Wellek and Warren, observe (1949, 136-7), may be a mere repetition of fashionable phrases, unrelated to their practice (see for example Bunzel 1929, 20). Some, more distressingly, seems to result from a sense of obligation to make a noise like an artist. And sometimes the personal reference of the artist's aesthetics shows itself in the use of talismanic phrases and notions which have somehow become associated in his mind with certain phases of his work but have no logical connection with it or with each other. Such phrases and notions may be borrowed, perhaps unawares, from the writings of others and fitted together into a garish patchwork. Mr. Teague, for example, writes (1940, 1) that "Every idea or principle I have expressed has been tested against actual, practical problems of design, before and after and while it was being formulated." But the greater part of the book for which these claims are made is a mish-mash of the ideas of Henry Adams, Santayana, Langfeld, Dewey and Hambidge. So, too, Mr. Stravinsky describes (1942, 7) as "the fruit of my own experience and my personal observations" what appears rather to be a collection of borrowings from M. Maritain and M. Souvchinsky and the clichés of centuries. Yet these writers claim for their borrowings and musings the authority of experience and a universal validity:

What I have tried to do is to outline with reasonable clarity the technique that must be applied to the solution of any problem of design. . . . Years of struggle with practical design problems have convinced me that these are the basic principles which must guide all constructive work. (Teague 1940, 2.)

The fact that the value and efficacy of such an explanation have been tested in my own experience convinces me—and guarantees you—that I am not offering you a mass of mere opinions, but rather am submitting to you a body of findings which, though made by me, are none the less just as valid for others as for myself. . . . These ideas . . . have served and will continue to serve as the basis for musical creation precisely because they have been de-



veloped in actual practice. And if you attribute any importance, however slight, to my creative work—which is the fruit of my conscience and my faith—then please give credit to the speculative concepts that have engendered my work and have developed along with it. (Stravinsky 1942, 7–8.)

Mr. Eliot points out (1949, 339) that a theory put forward by another as an explanation of how an artist writes or paints is not at all the same as the same theory when consciously used by the artist himself as a guide for his work. It follows that manifestos should not be used as treatises, nor analyses as recipe-books. On the one hand, an artist should neither try to use a treatise on aesthetics as a practical manual, complaining when he finds it impractical, nor try consciously to place himself under the influence of forces by which psychologists believe him to be unconsciously moved—the results of doing so might chance to be happy, but to make a policy of doing so would be foolish. On the other hand, the writer on aesthetics should listen in respectful silence to what artists say, on the ground that (as Aristotle says of the aged) experience should have supplied the deficiencies of theory, but need not feel obliged to take all they tell him at its face value. “The axiom of criticism must be, not that the poet does not know what he is talking about, but that he cannot talk about what he knows” (Frye 1957, 5).

### *The Philosophical Approach*

The approaches to aesthetics now considered have been through specialized interests, and the nature of the resulting theory has reflected the interest. But surely the philosopher, as such, is unspecialized and disinterested: he alone has a pure concern with the truth about art as such. Philosophical aesthetics would then be, in fact even if not by definition, pure aesthetics or aesthetics proper.

In fact, though, philosophy is neither unspecialized nor disinterested: different kinds of philosophers have their departmental concerns which govern the kinds of questions they ask; philosophers of different schools have their preconceived notions which govern what answers they are prepared to take; and philosophy itself has its proper method which restricts the kinds of truth with which it can be concerned.

What philosophy is I have discussed at length elsewhere (1958, ch. 1). The doctrine to which I adhere, which is widely but not universally held, is as follows. The nature of philosophy is revealed if not dictated by its method, which is that of discussion and argument, not experiment or research. Philosophers do not have at their professional disposal any peculiar resources of information; so they cannot add to factual knowledge, but can only explain what others have discovered or what all know.

Their tasks will then include the rescue of obvious truth from the cranks and hobby-horse riders who are always trying to hide it; the discovery and proclamation of what does and what does not follow from what; the working out of ways of putting what is known in such a way that we are misled by it as little as possible, and the discovery of ways in which we have previously been misled by the ways things were put; the discovery of what limitations are placed on knowledge by techniques of discovery and means of expression; the acquisition and exposition of any unobvious truths that may be inferable from common experience; and, if it should be possible, the provision of means for integrating knowledge acquired in different fields. But it is not within their professional competence to settle questions of fact.<sup>16</sup> What philosophical aesthetics is will be determined by these possibilities and restrictions.

If philosophers do not find out facts, our task when faced with conflicting philosophies could hardly be simply to discover which is true, though one may fit more facts better than another. Rather, if we can assume that all the disputants are intelligent, careful and wise, our task will be to find the precise meaning of what they are saying; then, the *point* of saying it; and, finally, what led each of them to believe (if he did) that his theory contained The Truth and thus entailed the untruth of all others. Thus we may come, as I said, to profit from all and be obsessed by none. But it is time that I admitted, what some readers will know and others will have guessed, that this very doctrine of universal tolerance is itself a partisan view—necessarily so, since (like the old “religion of all reasonable men”) it is really the rival of the dogmas it pretends to reconcile.

Within the general restriction placed on philosophy by its methods there are others imposed by one-sided approaches within philosophy itself. Those depending on adherence to different schools I shall not enumerate, beyond remarking that Thomists like Beauty, Existentialists like Freedom, Idealists used to like Genius but now like Art, Phenomenologists like the Work of Art, and Logical Positivists don't like anything with an initial capital. I shall deal instead with departmental specialisms: metaphysics, philosophy of man, epistemology, moral philosophy, and at last, if I can find it, aesthetics.

Much philosophical aesthetics is the work of metaphysicians, and forms part of their general theory of the nature of reality. What is said about

16. There seems to be a contradiction here, since the question of what philosophy is looks like a factual question. But it is not, and there is no contradiction. To a philosopher, philosophy is not something “given”; philosophy will be what he makes it. In his mouth, the question “What is philosophy?” is the deliberative one: given the means conventionally at my disposal, what can I hope to achieve with them?



art in such contexts may be determined, and must be affected, by the requirements of the system as a whole; and one's attitude to what is said likewise cannot be divorced from one's attitude to the whole. All but those who accept the system must regard its influence as distorting. Aesthetics will suffer least such distortion when the metaphysician has made the arts the beginning of his discourse; but even then what is said will be affected by the necessity of squaring what is said in one context with what is to be said in others. It would seem to follow that aesthetics as an object of attentive and unbiased study can only flourish when philosophy is loosely integrated or even fragmentary, or when systems are founded upon the problems of man's nature.<sup>17</sup> Thus aesthetics bulks large in the thought of Hegel but not in that of Aquinas, and runs riot in American academic democracy (all philosophical disciplines are created equal).

A metaphysic grounded on the problem of man and his nature is that "philosophy of man" of which I have said enough already. Like "What is philosophy?", "What is man?" is partly a deliberative question: what shall we make of ourselves?—in both senses, that of interpreting and that of transforming. The importance of aesthetics in such an inquiry is that art may be taken as the supreme manifestation of human freedom (see ch. VIII). Thus aesthetics may even become the fundamental discipline of philosophy. Philosophy, Whitehead remarks (1937, 184–5), must start from "some limited section of our experience," and

at present the most fruitful, because the most neglected, starting-point is that section of value-theory which we term aesthetics. Our enjoyment of the values of human art, or of natural beauty, our horror at the obvious vulgarities and defacements which force themselves upon us—all these modes of experience are sufficiently abstracted to be relatively obvious. And yet evidently they disclose the very meaning of things.

Perhaps so. But what is a good starting-point is determined by where you want to get to. Besides, not every philosopher wants to see "the very meaning of things" disclosed, since such a disclosure can hardly be anything other than the kind of justification in terms of what is significant to man that a theodicy attempts, and not all believe that such a justification of "things" is possible or even desirable.

The philosophical approaches thus far mentioned have been not so

17. Thus Antal (1948, 274) remarks of the Middle Ages: "As art's only *raison d'être* was to give a reflection, even though a pale one, of a religious idea, it followed that art divorced from religion could have no meaning, and moreover that a theory of art as such was out of the question; this was true of both pre-scholastic and scholastic philosophy. There could merely be theories of beauty, or more exactly, isolated statements about beauty, and all these of course had their place within a general framework and in close conjunction with theological concepts."

much specialized as all-embracing—though the urge to embrace everything is itself a specialized desire. More limited in its ambitions is epistemology, a true specialism, in which aesthetics began. Baumgarten's editors paraphrase his doctrine by saying (Baumgarten 1735, 4): "Aesthetics is to be the science which will investigate perception for the purpose of describing the kind of perfection which is proper to it. It will have its counterpart in the science of logic which will perform the same office for thought." And this is almost the same as Prall's idea that "Aesthetics . . . should inform us through abstraction and analysis as to how the external world as immediate presentation is constituted" (Prall 1936, 31). But epistemology has interests in art beyond the analysis of perception and the perceptible. I said that one of philosophy's possible tasks is to explore the limits of techniques of discovery and expression. Some philosophers have thought to find in art means of expression and communication that supply some of the deficiencies of prose statements. Others have then made it their business to examine these claims in a sceptical way. Others again have gone so far as to ascribe to the artist access to sources of information that are denied to others, whether as a seer of visions or as a possessor of sharpened insight. These last notions are nowadays frowned on in academic philosophy, ostensibly as primitive and unscientific but more probably as undemocratic and upsetting. Certainly we often do attribute some kind of exceptional insight or understanding to artists, especially to novelists, and not much thought seems to have been given lately to just what we mean by such attribution.

Epistemological approaches to aesthetics may be made from two sides. Some take interest in "aesthetic experience," the relation between an "aesthetic object" and its perceiver. Here the phrase "aesthetic object," and even the phrase "art object," serve as disguises for the *work* of art, implying that it is something that just happens to be there, not something wrought.<sup>18</sup> The alternative approach is to examine the artist's own cognition as communicated by or expressed in his work. This procedure is doubtless illegitimate in one who has determined to confine himself to examining the implications of criticism; but such self-confinement is entirely voluntary. If the legitimacy of both approaches is granted, there are obviously good reasons for wishing to combine them, and this is most easily done by assuming that the same kind of cognition is involved in the creation of art as in its appreciation, an assumption which accordingly is

18. Of course not all aesthetic objects are works of art. But Professor Beardsley, who is mainly concerned with works of art, finds excellent reasons for calling them "aesthetic objects" (1958, 59). A reason he does not give is that to talk about "works of art" is to lay oneself open to the "intentional fallacy." Much safer to keep the art and the artist out of sight and out of mind.



often made. But it cannot be made without neglecting certain rather obvious differences, and the results of this oversight may be painful.

Neither the philosopher of history nor the philosopher of religion would seem *a priori* to have any special interest in aesthetics. But in fact both these specialisms tend to be combined with aesthetics, because of certain apparent analogies in the subject matter. Religious experience and aesthetic experience are thought to be akin, and religious and artistic institutions tend to mingle. And aesthetics and the philosophy of history both deal with man's actions on his surroundings, and have for their data acts and artefacts whose interest lies more in their singularity than in the laws they exemplify.

Like the two disciplines just mentioned, ethics may be combined with aesthetics because of a certain obvious analogy in the subject-matter. The old equation of beauty with perfection, a commonplace from Plato to Thomas Reid, meant that questions of ethics and of aesthetics tended to merge. The distinction between the concepts of beauty and perfection is the necessary presupposition of aesthetics as an autonomous study. It is now pretty generally made; but though the concepts may be distinct, the two qualities themselves may in fact often go together.

Moralists and ethicists of different stamps will have different interests in the problems of aesthetics. Practical moralists and reformers will be interested in art's potentialities as a propaganda tool, and possibly in the contribution they think art may make to what they think is a good life. The codifier and elicitor of fundamental principles from existing morality will be concerned with art in so far as its values may need to be incorporated in his over-all scheme. The analyst of ethical concepts may look for helpful analogies and contrasts in the terminology of criticism. And the student of moral reasoning may turn to the nature of the arguments used in criticizing the arts. Of these four interests, it will be noted, the first two are direct, the last two indirect only.

But with all these special interests, is there *no one* to take interest in art and beauty purely in and for themselves, moved only by a disinterested spirit of inquiry? Such would be the pure aesthete. All right, so he is interested in art. But what is it about art that interests him? Since he is not to be a specialist, we must answer: nothing in particular. And when we ask with what special competence he approaches the subject, we must again answer (to preserve his equipoise): none in particular. The true aesthete would then appear to be a person with no particular qualifications talking about nothing in particular—although, thus qualified, he will probably (like the House of Lords) do it very well.

An argument rather like the elimination just conducted has, I think,

really influenced many people. But it is not very trustworthy, for it rests on the supposition that no general problems are posed by the very existence of activities of the kinds we lump together as artistic. And this, as I said (p. 25), is false. Even those who falsely suppose it, however, will often concede that aesthetics has a task. What the conceded task is seems to be determined by an analogy with the analytical-critical task of the philosophy of science, the philosophical discipline with which aesthetics has least apparent affinity. The philosophy of science is concerned with the nature and limits of the knowledge gained by scientific investigation, and as a part (possibly the chief part) of this concern discusses the language used by scientists to formulate their results. So some philosophers have taken the chief task of aesthetics to be the discussion of the language in which critics (who investigate art) formulate their results. But the analogy is false. For the presumed end of science is to produce an objective account of matters that are independent of man's will, and the aspect of the philosophy of science from which the analogy is drawn has for its chief topic whether and how far and how scientific discourse achieves such objectivity. Since the scientist investigates freely what he is not free to control, his investigation is the only free activity whose validity and procedure the philosopher can criticize. But what the art critic talks about is no less a product of human volition than are his own remarks. A philosopher who concentrates on the critic's performance and ignores the artist's is treating the work of art as though it were something "given" in nature. If, as some think, the arts are forms of "symbolic behaviour" serving human purposes analogous to those of speech, the analogue which the philosophy of science really suggests for aesthetics is a philosophy concerned with the nature and limitations of the symbolic functions of the arts. Back to Baumgarten!

The analogy for aesthetics thus offered need not be accepted. Some will deny that the arts have special functions of this kind. Others may concede the functions but deny the task on the ground that philosophy can be nothing but the logic of various kinds of language, whereas to speak of art as being or having a language or languages is a mere metaphor—indeed, the alleged point of having artistic symbolism was that it is *non-linguistic*. That is so; but the proposed restriction on philosophy's scope is incomprehensible except as an extrapolation from the procedures of the philosophy of science, and cannot be justified. An understanding of language is no more widespread than an understanding of art or of religion, less so if anything: the hope of some philosophers to find in language something of which no special knowledge is required is, as the linguists constantly complain, hopeless. "We all know how to talk," but that does not enable



us to talk correctly about talking. The philosopher's justification for speaking of art is no better and no worse than his justification for speaking of language. The final objection to the analogy from the philosophy of science is just that there is no special reason to accept it. Aesthetics may be less than the analogy suggests; it may equally be more. All the lines of inquiry suggested, in so far as they just happen to be suggested by various specialisms and do not logically depend on them, will equally belong to aesthetics: there was no need to look for a neutral core. So to try to say just what aesthetics covers would be either to recapitulate the whole of what has preceded or to anticipate the whole of what follows.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SUBJECT

AESTHETICS IS variously conceived as the philosophy or science of beauty (as by Santayana 1896), as the philosophy or science of art (as by Parker 1920), and as the philosophy of criticism (as by Beardsley 1958). The difference may seem unlikely to be important, being simply that between the perception and production of works of art, the common subject: none of the three approaches could in the end neglect the valid problems of the others. But art and beauty do not coincide; for aesthetic production may take no thought of perception, and one may appreciate in perception what has not been produced. And it is dangerous, however tempting, to assume that the overlap is so great that only minor omissions will come of approaching from one side only. As Mr. Carritt remarks (1914, II.II, §4), the oddities of Plato's treatment of art as merely imitative in his *Republic* are the result of his divorcing the problems of art from those of beauty.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, to approach art from the side of beauty alone will entail missing most of its human significance.

None the less, the problems of art and the problems of beauty overlap deeply. In what follows I begin with beauty, but confine myself to conceptual inquiries and to problems that would not arise from a discussion of art. Then I discuss the extent of the overlap. I turn thence to the concept of art, and from that to more general problems connected with art. Problems common to the topics of art and of beauty are discussed here, since there are more problems of art that cannot be raised in connection with beauty than there are problems of beauty that are not also problems of art. A more unified treatment is thus possible than if the common prob-

19. He makes amends in his *Symposium* (especially 206B-E) where artistic and other creation is ascribed to the yearning to "give birth in beauty," and beauty itself described as the proper object of love.

lems had been raised in connection with beauty. My discussion would have been clearer if each question had been raised in both contexts whenever both were relevant; but the repetition would have been unbearable.

Problems of art other than those of the meaning and validity of the concept itself fall into two main groups, that correspond to our original pair of production and perception: those concerned with the function of art, and those connected with its analysis and appreciation. Into the second of these groups fall all those which would appear in a philosophy of criticism.

Besides the major discussions of the key concepts of art and beauty themselves, other conceptual elucidations are interspersed among problems that seem more substantive. My book would look tidier if I had segregated all these conceptual matters in a sort of *dictionnaire philosophique* at the beginning, but that would not have worked. Conceptual problems usually start by looking like substantive ones, so that the distinction between questions of meaning and questions of fact must be the result of an inquiry, not its presupposition.



“BEAUTY” :  
THE TERM AND ITS  
RELATIONS

THE DICHOTOMY between aesthetics as philosophy of art and as philosophy of beauty does not supersede and must not obscure the alternative division of the subject into a variety of loosely connected problems. For the term “beauty” itself has at least five different meanings in aesthetics that are quite clearly distinguishable from one another; and these different meanings are tied to the context of different particular problems. In the context of a metaphysical consideration of the world’s order, beauty is equated with its orderliness. In the epistemological context derived from Baumgarten, beauty is thought of as adequacy to the mind in perception. From the anthropological point of view it may seem to be nothing more than sensual attractiveness. To the legislators of taste it tends to become one aesthetic quality variously differentiated among a number. Those reflecting more generally upon criticism may use it to mean “aesthetic excellence”: that is, as an almost empty term, standing for a problem rather than for its solution. Confusion naturally arises when students attempt to give a single consistent interpretation to a term thus variously used.

None of the senses of the term “beauty” thus enumerated corresponds at all closely to its conversational use, which is indeterminate and restricted, being applied chiefly to women and weather. There seems to be no point in discussing the niceties of the vernacular usage; in aesthetics, the meaning of the term is largely determined by the history of the controversies in the areas enumerated, in which “beautiful,” *schön*, *beau*, *pulchrum* and *kalon* are treated as interchangeable. But the very fact that the developed terminology of taste has no apparent backing in popular usage is itself significant: it suggests, at least, that in our society

interest in the arts is the prerogative of a minority, that its values are as esoteric and artificial as its vocabulary. In tracing the lines of extant conceptual discussions, therefore, I am capitulating to a cultural bias.

The English aesthetic vocabulary is indeed singular. *Beau*, *schön* and *kalon* are all most naturally rendered in most contexts by "fine"; yet aesthetic theory has consistently ignored "fine" in favour of "beautiful," a word that comes less readily to the tongue and remains in some measure exotic. Does this split in usage express the English feeling that aesthetics is an outlandish field of study, and art itself something best left to foreigners? Or has the conceptual estrangement itself caused or strengthened the feeling? In either case, English is exceptional among languages in that its word for beauty is not one of the briefest, commonest, and most versatile.

Since the use of the term "beauty" is so various, the question "What is beauty", which I began by calling one of the two basic questions of aesthetics, requires some interpretation. To give a unitary answer to it would suggest that all senses given to the word except one are somehow improper, or (more probably) that only one of the senses is relevant in aesthetics as that subject ought to be pursued. The question is, says Collingwood (1938, 7) not what we *do* mean by the term but what we are *trying* to mean by it. Some such judgement may be justified, but since my purpose is to be inclusive I shall not here attempt to give a single answer to the question but rather to elucidate a number of possible senses of the term "beauty," without committing myself to any one of them.

It has been assumed in the preceding paragraphs that those who ask "What is beauty?" are inquiring into the meaning of the word "beauty" and its equivalents. It may be objected that this is not so: that they are asking about the nature of Beauty itself, or the concept of beauty, not about words at all, and the unity of a concept or Platonic Form cannot be impaired by the ambiguities of a word. That may be so. But if the term with which we tag the concept or Form is ambiguous it will still be open to question which of the concepts or Forms tagged by it is the one we want to know about. In fact, inquiries alleged to be about concepts or Forms are always conducted exactly as if they were about words; nor has anyone ever suggested any other way of conducting them.

Let us suppose that the term "beauty" is not ambiguous, or that we do not think it is, or that we know it is but are interested in only one of its senses. If we now ask "What is beauty?" there are still various things we might be wanting to know. First, and with least sophistication, we might be asking what object or objects have the term "beauty" applied to them; for if we knew this we should know, after a fashion, what beauty was.



Secondly, we might be agreeing with Carritt, who writes of aesthetics (1914, I, §2): "The object of his [man's] investigation in this field plainly must be to understand what beauty is; to discover what the common quality or relation to ourselves may be in all those things which we call beautiful." The trouble with this is that as Collingwood observes (1938, 40) there is no reason to suppose that there is any such common quality or relation, and good reason to suppose that there is none beyond the very fact that we do call them beautiful. So this question becomes: in virtue of what is the term applied to all these things? of shared characteristics, a common relationship to those who perceive them, or what? And if there should turn out to be no simple answer to this question one may ask whether the various possible grounds of a judgement of beauty thus revealed can be reduced to any kind of order. A common form of solution has been to offer a list of alternative qualities in virtue of whose presence beauty is imputed to things, and either to leave it open why the same term is applied to all<sup>1</sup> or to find the unifying factor in the feelings of the perceiver<sup>2</sup>—a device which usually leaves us wondering why the feelings should be supposed the same when the objects arousing them differ so widely. These considerations may lead us to stop asking what beauty is and revert to the question of how the term "beauty" is used—for its characteristic use might not be as a descriptive label, but rather as a term of approbation in certain contexts (cf. Hare 1952) or as part of some social ritual (cf. Macdonald 1950). The questions how the term is used, what qualities if any are imputed by it, and what it is applied to, are obviously not independent: all may be asked in connection. But I will concentrate on the second. I shall deal with the third question by implication only, by

1. Cf. Shenstone (1777, II.269): "Everything seems to derive its pretensions to beauty, on account of its colour, smoothness, variety, uniformity, partial resemblance to something else, proportion, or suitability to the end proposed, some connexion of ideas, or a mixture of all these." Reid (1785, 737) makes the obvious comment on such eclecticism: "The kinds of beauty seem to be as various as the objects to which it is ascribed. But why should things so different be called by the same name? This cannot be without a reason. If there be nothing common in the things themselves, they must have some common relation to us, or to something else, which leads us to give them the same name." This is true enough, if one grants that the word "beauty" functions as a name, that to call a thing beautiful is to describe it. But the question is whether this ought to be granted.

2. Thus Addison observes (1712, no. 412) that there is a beauty that we, like other animals, find only in members of our own species; and another, less violent, that "consists either in the gaiety and variety of colours, in the symmetry and proportion of parts, in the arrangement and disposition of parts, or in a just mixture and concurrence of all together." This beauty, he says, is "apt to raise in us a secret delight, and a kind of fondness for the places or objects in which we discover it." But what *kind* of delight? We are offered no other mark to recognize it by than its alleged causes.

appealing now and then to your sense of what is or is not called beautiful, in order to make a distinction between terms. I shall assume without argument that no Platonic Form exists that might serve as unique referent for the term, since I know of no way in which postulation of such a referent could actually affect the argument. The other question of how the term is used scarcely arises in its ordinary form, since the conversational uses about which such questions are most helpfully asked seem as I said not to be relevant in aesthetics. Aestheticians have generally made it plain that *they* were using "beauty" to designate a quality (as that term is explained in Sparshott 1958, ch. 5). They might be mistaken in supposing that their account of the supposed quality was self-consistent, or that anything had the quality or could have it; but it is hard to see how they could be in error in thinking that it was a quality they were after.

It remains for me to pin down the diverse senses of the term "beauty" that figure in these more formal kinds of aesthetic discourse. Such an undertaking may be censured on the ground that "meanings" cannot be thus isolated for attention: the use of terms can only be illuminated indirectly by bringing out the nature of the "language games" of which they form an integral part. "Ein Ausdruck hat nur in Strome des Lebens Bedeutung," it is only in the onflow of life that expressions have meaning, said Wittgenstein (Malcolm 1958, 93). What this remark really entails for philosophy, however, is not that one philosophical approach to language is better than another, but that one cannot philosophize about language at all: one may philosophize about anything else, but one's philosophizing will then have meaning only as part of one's own life-stream. However, it is obvious enough that statements about what words mean do have a certain utility and may be true: not all dictionaries are wholly misleading. And since formal aesthetic discourse has been carried on largely by men who were self-conscious about their language and thought that the words they used did and should have constant meanings, we shall not be misled here as we might be if we applied the same method to more informal discourse. In the end we shall discover that the separate senses of the term are after all relatable to each other in intelligible ways; and that the mutual relations of these senses may help to show how the problems in connection with which they are used, and the opinions that are held about those problems, are themselves interrelated. Those who have felt that the subject of aesthetics ought to be unified, and that its unity ought to be based on the univocity of the terms "beauty" and "art," may not have been quite wrong; but the unity they seek is to be found rather in the overlapping and interlocking of debates. We might indeed say of the term "beauty" as it figures in aesthetics that it is a "philosopher's



dummy" (Sparshott 1958, 79-80), which we discuss not for its own interest but precisely because it offers an entry into so many problems.

The articulation of the ensuing discussion follows the outline I gave at the beginning of the chapter. But it might have been possible, following the general analogy between ethical and aesthetic problems of which I spoke earlier, to have followed instead the scheme I used for "goodness" (Sparshott 1958). We should then have taken as norm the "classical" sense here described, and distinguished other senses from it as special cases: a "special aesthetic sense" corresponding to the "special ethical sense" of "goodness," and other senses "hardened" from the norm either by generalization or by identifying beauty with certain of its usual grounds. We should have recognized in addition two abnormal or improper senses of the term: its subjective use as a mere expression of feeling, and an "eminent" sense in which it is held truly attributable only to God. This pattern would have included some senses which I do not in fact here consider, because I do not think they are important in aesthetics; and it would have excluded a feature of "beauty's" use for which "goodness" has no exact parallel, that significant differences in meaning arise from variations in the range over which it is applied.

## THE CLASSICAL CONCEPT

The word Beauty is a general term of approbation, of the most vague and extensive meaning, applied indiscriminately to almost everything that is pleasing, either to the sense, the imagination, or the understanding; whatever the nature of it be, whether a material substance, a moral excellence, or an intellectual theorem.

THUS Richard Payne Knight (1805, Introduction, §6), who acknowledges that some have tried to use the term in a more restricted sense but insists that "the ultimate criterion must be common use." Some of the vagueness and extensiveness of which he complains may be removed by the qualification that the beautiful is that which arouses admiration irrespective of considerations of utility: in the famous and impeccable formula of Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theol.*, Ia IIae, 27.1 ad 3), *Pulchrum dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet*—let the beautiful be defined as that the very apprehension of which pleases. This is the root or standard meaning of "beauty" and its equivalents in European languages, as it has figured in philosophical discussions since Plato's time. So unanimous, weighty and lucid a tradition can hardly be set aside by considerations of conversa-

tional fashion.<sup>3</sup> The more specific senses of the term may be treated as making explicit various implications of this one such as the implied emphasis on disinterestedness, or as derivable from reflection on its different aspects: on the differences between apprehension (perception) and discursive thought, for example, or between perception and sensation. For the use of the term "apprehension," even of "perception" itself, implies the involvement of the intellect or at least the attention of an intelligent being. Many would accordingly say that the term "beauty" should not be applied to the data of the "lower" senses which are less involved in the processes of human communication.

It is not only things perceptible by the senses that are called beautiful. Plato in the *Symposium*, for example, attributes to legal systems and other intellectual constructs a beauty strictly comparable to that of sensible things. But obviously such a wide use of the term takes us beyond the bounds of what is usually considered in aesthetics. Three possibilities are then open: one may restrict the applicability of the term; one may extend the coverage of aesthetics; or one may deny that the beautiful and the subject-matter of aesthetics are co-extensive. All three expedients have been tried at one time or another, and will be mentioned in their places.

### *Beauty and Perfection*

What is it that delights perception? Perhaps, if perception is rightly ordered and directed, only that which is perfect. But what is it for perception to be rightly ordered and directed? An answer can only be given in terms of some metaphysical or theological doctrine about cosmic order. It is therefore in connection with such doctrines that the relation between beauty and perfection is generally discussed.

Goodness and beauty are sometimes identified. Why not, after all? Beauty, no doubt, is a good thing, and goodness as such is beautiful. The Greek equivalents of these terms are closer than the English: a good man is always called *agathos* (good), never *kalos* (beautiful), although if he is a gentleman he will be called *kalos-and-agathos*, but his deeds are called *kala*, seldom if ever *agatha*. In the *Definitions* included in the Platonic corpus one whole entry reads *kalon: to agathon*—"Beauty: the good." The two words, in fact, seem to refer to two aspects of excellence: whatever is excellent is both good, or serviceable, and beautiful, or admirable.

Perhaps a purified perception would find nothing but goodness beautiful. We cannot tell: the required purity is not attainable. Some have

3. Hobbes remarked (1651, 24) that English has no word for *pulchrum* but divided its functions between such words as "Fayre, Beautiful, Handsome, Gallant, Honourable, Comely, Amiable."



wished to save appearances by distinguishing apparent from true beauty, what happens to please from what ought to please. Most of those who wish to make such a distinction affirm that apparent beauty is not beauty at all, and that judgements of beauty that cannot be related to judgements of goodness are simply erroneous. Few, however, would wish to go so far as to treat "beauty" and "perfection" as synonyms. Thomas Aquinas observes (*Summa Theol.*, I.5.4 ad 1) that beauty and perfection are objectively the same, in that they are founded upon the same thing, that is, form; but they are defined differently. Although what is beautiful in our "root" sense is usually perfect when considered from some point of view, its perfection is not the same as its beauty, but rather its objective ground. So Reid writes (1785, 716-17):

There is no real excellence which has not its beauty to a discerning eye, when placed in a proper point of view; and it is as difficult to enumerate the ingredients of beauty as the ingredients of real excellence. . . . Our internal taste ought to be accounted most just and perfect, when we are pleased with things that are most excellent in their kinds.

Beauty may then be equated with manifest perfection. But there is no logical reason why what is thus manifestly perfect should necessarily be delightful to perception, as philosophers have pointed out (e.g. Hutcheson 1725, I.viii.2). Why then does the connection hold, if it does hold? Presumably some causal explanation must be sought. Thus Mr. Teague (1940, 11) says that the beauty of artefacts

is our eye's recognition of the fact that within their own class and metier these things are just about the best that can be made. . . . It was the guarantee of serviceability, and the assurance of power in a world where power in the face of nature is essential to life.

Mr. Teague is not arguing that we pronounce beautiful what we believe to be good, an untenable position,<sup>4</sup> but that to be attracted by perfection has survival value so that such a taste is favoured by natural selection. Well, perhaps taste is genetically determined. And no doubt those who find beauty in the best potential parents will have most offspring, but it is hard to see why in any other context the lure of perfection should confer any such advantage. One is inclined to sympathize with Hutcheson, who is reduced to ascribing man's alleged tendency to find perfection delightful to the "*sagacious Bounty* which we suppose in the Deity" (1725, I.viii.2, §5). But M. Maritain does not give up so easily (1923, 142):

4. Cf. Reynolds (1759, II.135): "A fitness to the end proposed, is said to be another cause of beauty; but supposing we were proper judges of what form is the most proper in an animal to constitute strength or swiftness, we always determine concerning its beauty, before we exert our understanding to judge of its fitness."

If certain mathematical constructions are beautiful once their type is definitely fixed, and every part strictly conceived in accordance with its use in the whole, the reason is that the law of utility here covers and embodies a more profound law, the law of mathematical harmony, and more generally of logic.

But this is more mysterious than ever. There seems no reason to suppose that the mathematical relations between the parts of a well-functioning artefact should be any more inherently satisfying to the mind than any other set of such relations, or that if they were this satisfactoriness should necessarily yield satisfaction to the eye. And what M. Maritain means by "logic" in this context I have no idea—he is at pains to explain (*ibid.*, 41) that he does not mean "the pseudo-logic of clear ideas" but "the working logic of every day, eternally mysterious and disturbing, the logic of the structure of the living thing, and the intimate geometry of nature," if that helps.

Even within the context of a metaphysic which provides a concept of objective perfection, then, the equation of that perfection with beauty runs into difficulties. But the basis of a workable relation between them can be found in the very "classical" tradition we are looking at. For perfection, according to Augustine (*De Natura Boni*, iii-iv), three things are required: measure, form and order. A thing must be complete, properly arranged and in the right place. Similarly Aquinas writes (*Summa Theol.*, I.39.8): "Three things are required for beauty. The first is completeness or perfection; for anything that is stunted is by that very fact ugly. Also, due proportion or harmony. And, again, radiance; so that things which have a bright colour are said to be beautiful." Goodness and beauty thus share completeness and measure, but not order and radiance. So the difference between them, on this way of thinking, would be that a thing cannot be good if it is in the wrong place, though that would not stop it being beautiful; whereas to be beautiful a thing must have an attractive appearance, but lack of such an appearance would not stop it being good. And this no doubt is the distinction we began with, for a thing in the right place will be serviceable and a radiant thing admirable.

We cannot make the notion of beauty as manifest perfection the basic notion of aesthetics (as Professor Anderson (1956) seems to do on Plato's behalf), however important we may think it, for it does not delimit a field for aesthetics at all: its field is that of metaphysics. But a field for aesthetics may be defined within it or in terms of it. For example, the equation of beauty with a special kind of completeness or perfection has figured largely in aesthetics, notably in the work of Croce: perfection must always in any case be judged by some standard, and becomes the



subject of aesthetics by being related to the delight that human minds find in it, becoming perfection-for-perception. Croce carries this emphasis on the mind to the point where aesthetic beauty becomes simply the perfection or completeness of a mental construct. But one need not go so far.

According to Gilson (1957, 184) aesthetic beauty is that of "an object whose structure makes it a perfect object of apprehension," that is, of one that is perfect *qua* perceptible, but since it depends upon structure it is an objective and permanent property of the object (*ibid.*, 180). According to the scholastic tradition, indeed, each thing is good in so far as it is real, since existence is a perfection, and will be beautiful in the same fashion and to the same degree (cf. Maritain 1923, 24). So aesthetic beauty will be simply manifest aesthetic excellence, which will be correlative to a thing's reality *qua* aesthetic object or object-for-perception.

### *Beauty and Function*

The notion that aesthetic beauty depends upon a perfection that is not itself defined in aesthetic terms is popular under the name of "functionalism," especially among architects and industrial designers who use it as a weapon against the vulgar idea that beauty depends upon ornamentation. The weapon seems at first a trifle blunt. A thing's function, one would suppose, is what it is for, and this may well include appearances: if part of a thing's function is to look well, to say that beauty follows function is tautologous. "When the pragmatist asks whether 'it works,'" says Whitehead (1937, 185), "he is asking whether it issues in aesthetic satisfaction." Some professed functionalists, likewise, have realized that the "function" of a building may be complex:

*Functionalism was not considered a rationalistic process merely. It embraced the psychological problems as well. The idea was that our design should function both physically and psychologically. We realised that emotional needs are just as imperative as any utilitarian ones and demand to be satisfied. (Gropius 1956, 97-8.)*

Functionalism seems on this showing to be nugatory; but practically it is not, since it protests against the widespread practice of doing things for no reason at all other than that they have always been done that way—it is a simple plea for teleological architecture.

The term "functionalism," however, is more often used for the doctrine that the form of an artefact should be determined entirely by considerations of structural strength and practical convenience. This doctrine may take three forms. First, it may be held that efficiency *causes* beauty, a notion on which we have already turned a doubtful eye. Second, it may be

held that efficiency *grounds* beauty, that a thing known to be efficient ought for that reason to be judged beautiful—a doctrine I pronounced untenable as a general rule, although judgements of beauty may on occasion be so based by those with the appropriate knowledge (cf. p. 132 below). These first two variants of the doctrine may be confused with one another, as they are by Hogarth (1753, 13):

Fitness of the parts to the design for which every individual thing is formed, either by art or nature, is first to be consider'd, as it is of the greatest consequence to the beauty of the whole. . . . When a vessel sails well, the sailors always call her a beauty; the two ideas have such a connexion!

The third and most interesting form of the doctrine is that design ought to *express* function, that a thing ought to look as if it could do what it does. "By beauty I mean the promise of function," wrote Horatio Greenough (1852, 187). "The glory of beauty is the faith of future action." And Hobbes had defined *pulchrum* as "that which by some apparent signes promiseth good" (1657, 24). Well, one can see in a way that it would be a kind of dishonesty to make a factory look like a church (cf. pp. 231–2), but it is harder to see how one would go about making a factory look like a factory; and if it is structure that is to be expressed, there seems as Scott remarks (1914, 90 ff.) to be no obvious reason why structural soundness and constructive integrity in fact should be a source of constructive vividness in appearance. If the demand is simply that the supporting members of a building should be left visible, one is at a loss to see what the aesthetic value of this should be; unless, again, all that is meant is that it is dishonest to make a building look as if it is supported by stone vaulting if in fact it rests on steel girders. So "functionalism" melts into an almost religious feeling that one should be faithful to the nature of the materials one works with, making bricks look as brickish as possible in the name of honesty. In all its forms, in fact, functionalism makes sense only as a protest against mindless traditionalism and faking: as a positive programme, and as a theory about beauty, it makes no sense. Indeed, as Panofsky points out (1955, 13), what is done in the name of "functionalism" is often itself a form of faking, as in the "streamlining" of electric irons;<sup>5</sup> and Sedlmayr complains (1957, 56–7) that in architec-

5. "The Purist-Functional *style mécanique* was more than ever in evidence this year [1927]: . . . the audience in the foyer at the Théâtre Pigalle moved through a forest of glittering steel and copper tubing as within the bonnet of a Rolls-Royce car," writes Mr. Wilenski (1940, II.214–15) with approval. Mr. Wilenski may be using "functionalism" to mean the use in art of forms developed in relation to *some* (not necessarily relevant) practical purpose (cf. *ibid.*, 127), but this use of the term is not common and the practice hard to defend. I have never, by the way, seen inside the bonnet of a Rolls-Royce car, but I suspect that Mr. Wilenski is moved more by the glamour of a great name than by observations in a garage.



ture "functionalism" has simply meant the application to other types of buildings of the forms that were invented to fulfil the requirements of factory building.

*Beauty and the Senses*

The metaphysical sense of "beauty" as manifest perfection is, as I have suggested, not much use in aesthetics. Indeed, as Father Geiger remarks (1958, 29), aesthetics is really only possible as an independent study because one can no longer take seriously the "philosophy of being" in terms of which the metaphysical sense was formulated. The difference between aesthetic beauty and metaphysical beauty is not, however, a modern discovery. Xenophon already makes the point clearly in the paradox of Socrates' nose (*Symposium* V. 4-5): my snout-like upturned nose, says Socrates, is held by all to be ugly; yet the flared nostrils are uniquely fitted for smelling with, which is what noses are for, so it must be a *good* nose, hence a *beautiful* nose. No doubt; but its being a beautiful nose did not make it a beautiful sight. The beauty with which aesthetics is chiefly concerned is that which gives delight to the senses; the beauties of intelligible objects—of mathematics, of a life well lived, beauty of moral character and the like—tend to be eliminated from the study of aesthetics and from the concept of art. Since the objects of the lower senses tend likewise to be excluded from aesthetics, the root sense of the term "beauty" for aesthetics becomes that defined by Plato in the *Greater Hippias* (299C): "The beautiful is that which gives pleasure through the sight or hearing" (cf. Aquinas as quoted on p. 330 n. below). As a matter of fact, despite the wide range of the term of which Knight complained, its original application and that of its equivalents in some other languages seems to have been to visible things only, and its extension to the other senses and beyond to have been regarded as a novelty and an abuse. Thus John Hoskyns (1599, 125) gave as an example of catachresis "the abuse of a word drawne from thinges farr different, as A voice Beautifull to his ears"; Véron (1878, 132) complains that "L'expression de beau . . . a l'inconvénient de se rapporter trop exclusivement au sens de la vue"; and according to Tolstoy (1924, 138), "In Russian, by the word *krasota* (beauty) we mean only that which pleases the sight. And though latterly people have begun to speak of 'an ugly deed' or of 'beautiful music,' it is not good Russian." But the restriction of beauty to the visible, however widespread, has no importance for aesthetics except to the extent that the existence of this narrower usage may have led people unawares to think of beauty in terms of sight rather than of hearing.

The equation of the beautiful with that which gives pleasure through

sight or hearing, important as it is for aesthetics, is open to at least three objections. The first is that the exclusions based on it are arbitrary, there being no solid reason why aesthetics should ignore mathematics etc. The second is that it is unworkable, since everything of which we can have knowledge is apprehended *through* the senses, whatever processes of abstraction may then be needed, but only the crudest forms of pleasure, if any, can be described as *merely* sensual. The third objection is that the term "pleasure" is misleading, since the pleasant and the beautiful are not the same. I shall deal with the first of these objections when discussing art (p. 145 and note). The second is met by various reformulations which stress that aesthetic beauty has to do with the perceptible as such; we come across these in various contexts later. And the third demands a distinction between the broad senses of "beauty" we have been discussing and certain narrow senses which I shall now discriminate.

### THE SCALE OF PLEASING

WEBB (1760, 131-4) DISTINGUISHES a broad sense of "beauty" from narrower senses. After naming (like Shenstone) various grounds of beauty he explains that

The reason why we differ so much in our judgements on beauty, is, that in the use of the word, we annex to it, some more, some fewer of the aforementioned ideas. . . . But, exclusive of the particular acceptations, we use the word in a sense still more vague and general; for, as it is the nature of beauty to excite in the beholders certain pleasing sensations, we apply indiscriminately the same title, to everything which produces a like effect.

Reid, however, with greater fidelity to tradition but perhaps less to the facts of usage, takes the broader sense as primary (1785, 721):

Beauty is often taken in so extensive a sense as to comprehend all the objects of taste; yet all the authors I have met with, who have given a division of the objects of taste, make beauty one species.

I take the reason of this to be, that we have specific names for some of the qualities that please the taste, but not for all; and therefore all those fall under the general name of beauty, for which there is no specific name in the division.

There is some difference as to which species of beauty in its wider sense is to be thus singled out. Reid's notion that the term is a kind of rag-bag to hold whatever is left over is perhaps not justified; but it is certainly true that the meaning of "beauty" in a narrow sense is always fixed by contrasting it with one or more named qualities whose character is already



determined. Either by the conflation of such contrasts or by simple enumeration a list or constellation of general aesthetic terms may be built up. Thus Addison (1712, no. 412) lists greatness, novelty and beauty as sources of those "pleasures of the imagination" that may be derived from the "actual view and survey of outward objects." In Akenside (1744, Book I, lines 144-6) these reappear as

Three sister-graces, whom the painter's hand,  
The poet's tongue confesses; the sublime  
The wonderful, the fair;

and (though the second sister is eliminated from the posthumous second edition of 1772) in this form they achieve widespread recognition (cf. Monk 1935, ch. 3 and ch. 4). The trio seem already to be ranged in order of decreasing seriousness, a tendency which reaches its final form in Bradley (1909, 40) who introduces the "descending series": sublime, grand, beautiful, graceful, pretty. Such a list may be taken as a scale of ways of pleasing, from serious to light. But it may also be taken, as I said, as a conflation of contrasting pairs of terms. As such it would not necessarily form a scale or series at all. Yet its appearance of covering a complete range is its only claim to comprehensiveness as a list of aesthetic categories. If qualitative differences as well as quantitative ones are to be recognized, other terms will doubtless have to be admitted: perhaps the obscene, for example, is a basic aesthetic category. And even if we confine our attention to ways of pleasing, there may still be qualities that do not fall on to the scale but either contribute to aesthetic pleasure in quite other ways or are defined by lateral contrast, so to speak, to qualities on the scale. Thus "novelty" on Addison's list obviously forms no part of any series.

The dubious nature of Bradley's "descending series"—I called it quantitative, but what does it quantify?—and the impossibility of taking it seriously otherwise than as a series leaves the way open for more thorough and subtle attempts to organize basic critical terms. There have been few such. Coleridge has a subtle and magnificent scheme (1836, II.309) which differentiates the shapely, the beautiful, the formal, the grand, the majestic, the picturesque and the sublime in terms of varying relations between parts and whole and their effects—that is to say, although Coleridge does not say it (or if he did Allsop was not listening), as different modes of a beauty widely conceived as unity in multiplicity (cf. pp. 84 ff. below). A modern scheme would presumably be conjoined with a system of the arts and a theory of genres. So far as I know, no such scheme exists. Meanwhile, currency has been given to a trio made up of

the extreme and centre terms of Bradley's quintet: the sublime, the beautiful, the pretty. The sublime and the beautiful come from Burke (1757), who established them as the key terms in criticism for a long time; "pretty" is added because in fact few people wanted to mean by "beautiful" what Burke wanted them to mean, which was what most people meant by "pretty." Beauty then becomes contrasted with prettiness as the serious versus the trivial, and with sublimity as the agreeable versus the terrible. Even if we begin by taking the three as terms on a scale rather than as derived from the conflation of two unrelated contrasts, each extreme pushes beauty towards the opposite extreme, and it becomes doubtful in the end whether the double contrast leaves us with one complex sense of "beauty" or two.

### *The Beautiful and the Pretty*

Many years ago, the writer, in company with an accidental party of travellers, was gazing on a cataract of great height, breadth, and impetuosity, the summit of which appeared to blend with the sky and clouds, while the lower part was hidden by rocks and trees; and on his observing, that it was, in the strictest sense of the word, a sublime object, a lady present assented with warmth to the remark, adding—"Yes! and it is not only sublime, but beautiful and absolutely pretty" (Coleridge 1814, 224-5).

Compare Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* with a kitten playing with a ball of wool. Both are beautiful in the classical sense: the mere sight of them is pleasing, people look at both of them for no other reason than that they want to do so. Yet it is quite intelligible to say that the kitten is pretty but not beautiful, the painting beautiful but not pretty. Of course, not everyone *would* say that: some people use terms quite indiscriminately, like the lady in Coleridge's story; some never apply the word "pretty" to anything other than nubile females because it would make them feel effeminate to do so (at the place and time of writing, "cute" is the word used for kittens); others confine the word "beautiful" to one or more of its other senses. But the contrast between painting and kitten remains intelligible. What is this difference that is felt?

Perhaps the *Mona Lisa* is beautiful in itself, but the kitten just happens to give pleasure: the attractiveness of the one is objective, of the other subjective? I do not know how this distinction could be maintained. Why should prettiness not be as objective as any other quality? And how could one defend the objectivity of the painting's beauty against its detractors or against dogmatic relativists? Yet this is usually the first way of making the distinction that occurs to one, and we shall have to find, in the end, some way of accounting for it.



One might attempt to distinguish beauty from prettiness by saying that the former is agreeable in itself (*ipsa apprehensio placet*), whereas the latter pleases through its associations. Thus, a composition by Mondrian is beautiful, but a picture of a thatched cottage (as on a chocolate box) or some other relic of ye olden tyme is merely pretty, because it pleases only by reminding us of things which it is pleasant to think about or to imagine ourselves possessing (like that nubile female). But this won't do. As for possession, any man of financial acumen would rather own a Mondrian than a cottage; and as for reminding, the cottage itself may be prettier than its picture. Indeed, what I began by contrasting with the *Mona Lisa* was not a picture of a kitten, but a kitten—it is significant that it doesn't matter whether we refer here to a real cottage or kitten or a pictured one, but we cannot substitute Leonardo's model for his painting. As for associations, besides, Professor Boas (1950) has amply shown how much of the *Mona Lisa*'s attraction has in fact lain in the manifold associations that have clung to it. Nor can one deny that the landscape in the background of that picture must make whatever effect it makes through association with remembered and imagined scenery, and not as an arabesque in blues, whereas I for one do not know what associations the playing kitten might have. In this instance at least the associations seem to cling to the "beautiful" object and not to the "pretty" one; but no one wants to say this.

Ethologists are helpful about our kitten. Just as baby gulls, it is argued, instinctively cower when shown a silhouette like that of a bird dangerous to them, so humans instinctively feel tender towards any creature whose profile is like that of a human baby; and it can easily be shown that puppies and kittens have such profiles (Tinbergen 1951, 209). Generalizing from this obviously special case, one would say that the warm feelings aroused by the sight or thought of pretty things, in virtue of which we call them pretty, are connected with the ordinary range of feelings that generally issue in action, whereas the reaction to a beautiful thing is something special. Thus, the thatched cottage would be pretty because its appearance evoked wistful dreams of a grandmotherly way of life, but the Taj Mahal is beautiful because its appearance evokes an admiration which has no connection with everyday needs or desires; and a pretty girl is one whom it would be pleasant to imagine as a sexual partner, or whose appearance is of a kind conventionally thought to be conducive to such imaginings, whereas to think of a beautiful woman in such a way is to be distracted from the thought of her beauty, which as such evokes contemplation only. This distinction would square on the one hand with what Mr. Osborne says of beauty (1952, 126 ff.), that "We do not look at pictures for emo-

tional stimulation but for the sake of seeing them" and that "The value we assign to beauty derives from its power to awaken and exercise our dormant capacities of awareness"—that, in fact, the beautiful is that which is as if made for the purpose of being looked at or listened to; and on the other hand with the fact, which we noted, that kittens may be pretty in the same way as their pictures.

If the distinction has now been correctly drawn, or nearly so, what ought to be opposed to beauty is not prettiness alone but all those qualities which arouse pleased contemplation of a somewhat practical character. "Pretty" after all is applied only to more or less feminine and pettable things; men are called pretty only in derision. The male counterpart of "pretty" is "handsome," which is also applied to things whose appearance stirs the imagination—but by suggestions of vigour rather than of pettability. Knight (1805, II.ii, §107) remarks that the counterpart of the phrase "pretty little . . ." is "large handsome. . . ." And beside this pair we should place all our large vocabulary of terms of appraisal in which the aesthetic is only one element, such as "dainty"; "sublime" itself, as we shall see, may be placed in the same group.

Our attempt to distinguish the beautiful from the pretty has now in fact yielded a distinction between purely aesthetic judgements and partly aesthetic judgements. The term "beauty" may or may not be reserved for the former. It may indeed be argued that judgements of prettiness purport to be as purely aesthetic, as purely confined to the appearance of their objects, as judgements of beauty; whereas judgements of beauty, if we refer to their real rather than their ostensible ground, are based on the everyday emotions of those who pass them no less than judgements of prettiness (cf. Parker 1926). The distinction we have found may be valuable, but seems not to be the one we are looking for.

Café music tends to be merely pretty and trivial, and thus to be contrasted with serious music, to which alone beauty is ascribed. And the beauty of the *Mona Lisa* might have been contrasted with the prettiness, not of a sentimentally attractive beast, but of a gaily patterned chintz. The "pretty" pattern or music may well be more free from associations and more remote from everyday concerns than the beautiful. The point of the distinction here seems to be that what is pretty does not demand serious attention, but what is beautiful does: hence the beautiful is distinguished from the "merely" pretty. This applies equally well to the kitten, which does not have to be scrutinized so intently as the picture does. Perhaps we can combine this distinction with the former one by saying that the beautiful differs from the pretty in its relative freedom from association with everyday sentiment and in the intensity of the



scrutiny it requires before it gives up what it has to offer. Both these aspects of beauty are included in the remarks I quoted from Mr. Osborne. The pretty, on the other hand, pleases without taxing the attention, whether because (like the kitten and the cottage) it arouses what Professor Richards calls "stock responses" (1924, 202-4), reactions so prepared by instinct or habit that the merest suggestion starts them off, or because (like the chintz pattern) it is inherently trivial.

Three things should be borne in mind about the distinction thus set up. The first is that there was no sound reason, initially, to select the term "pretty" for discussion; there was only a not very respectable tradition. The second is that there is no reason to think that the verbal contrast of "beauty" and "prettiness" is always used to make the same distinction, even by careful writers. The English terminology of taste is vague and muddled, possibly because of the philistinism and chuckle-headedness of most of its users. And the third is that even if there were a precise and recognizable and even important difference between beauty and prettiness one should not take for granted that it could be accurately described: it might after all be ultimate and inexplicable and indescribable, like the difference in taste between artichokes and asparagus. I have pursued the discussion to this length not because I thought there was a correct answer to be found but because the describable differences I have mentioned, no matter what they are said to be differences between, have been described and emphasized by others, and I wanted to describe them too.

### *The Beautiful and the Graceful*

A. C. Bradley, we saw, puts grace between beauty and prettiness on his scale. The scale may not be defensible; but "grace" is a word formerly much discussed by aestheticians. Fortunately, it is always defined in much the same way, but the slight differences between different accounts are perhaps instructive.

Félibien (1666, I.31) makes the distinction between the beauty and grace of a person straightforwardly: "La beauté naît de la proportion et de la simetrie qui se rencontre entre les parties corporelles et materielles. Et la grace s'engendre de l'uniformité des movemens interieurs causez par les affections et les sentimens de l'ame." Reid (1785, 763) moralizes it: "Grace, as far as it is visible, consists of those motions, either of the whole body, or of a part or feature, which express the most perfect propriety of conduct and sentiment in an amiable character." He does this because he wants to show that a sound taste is founded on real excellence. Schopenhauer describes the same quality in terms of his own metaphysic. Grace, he says (1818, §45),

is the adequate representation of will through its temporal manifestation, that is to say, the perfectly accurate and fitting expression of each act of will, through the movement and position which objectify it. . . . Grace consists . . . in every motion being performed, and every position assumed in the easiest, most appropriate and convenient way, and therefore being the pure, adequate expression of its intention, or of the act of will, without any superfluity, which exhibits itself as aimless, meaningless bustle, or as wooden stiffness.

The metaphysical intent, we note, does not prevent Schopenhauer from saying plainly and vividly what motions are graceful and what are not. And finally Herbert Spencer (1852, 381) gives the thing a faintly scientific air, while acknowledging that other things than humans and their motions are now called graceful. A graceful motion, he tells us, is one "that is effected with economy of force; grace, as applied to postures, describes postures which may be maintained with this economy; and grace, as applied to inanimate objects, describes such as exhibit certain analogies to these attitudes and forms." Gracefulness in movement, then, is analogous to elegance in mathematical demonstration; and delight springs mainly from the evidence of ease. Mr. Bradley's placing of the quality now seems justified, for grace must be "easy on the eye" as sterner beauties need not, though to be graceful is rather more than to be merely pretty. Grace would indeed seem to be one of the foremost of those qualities of later Greek art which are sometimes equated with beauty (see p. 86 below). To equate it with beauty considered as the "proper perfection of works of art" would seem to be a gross and unlikely error. Yet Hogarth seems to commit it when he writes (1753, ix) that "Albert Durer, who drew mathematically, never so much as deviated into grace,"<sup>6</sup> which he must sometimes have done in copying the life, if he had not been fettered with his own impracticable rules of proportion"—as if Dürer could have nothing else to offer! And traces of the same error may be detected in Winckelmann (1763, VIII.ii.5-8) and even in Berenson (1954, *passim*).

### *The Beautiful and the Sublime*

The sublime might never have been a key concept of aesthetics had the treatise *On the Sublime* ascribed to Longinus not chanced to be one of the few critical writings to survive from the prestigious days of Classical Antiquity. But there it is; and after Burke the contrast between the sublime and the beautiful was long held to be of fundamental importance. This contrast may appear as one between greater and smaller. Thus Professor Frye (1957, 66) relates terror to the sublime and pity to beauty.

6. Cf. Hogarth (1753, 39): "That sort of proportion'd, winding line, which will hereafter be call'd the precise, serpentine line, or *line of grace*, is represented by a fine wire, properly twisted round the elegant and varied figure of a cone."



which "has the same relation to the diminutive that the sublime has to bigness, and is closely related to the sense of the intricate and exquisite." This is a de-sexed version of Burke's original contrast, which has despite its fame found few others to adopt it.<sup>7</sup> According to Burke (1757, I, §7), "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger . . . is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling." For "at certain distances and with certain modifications" danger and pain are "delightful, as we everyday experience" (*loc. cit.*), "delight" being equated (§4) with the "sensation which accompanies removal of pain and danger." Sublimity is associated with terror, which is produced by whatever is great, powerful, obscure, and astonishing. Beauty, on the other hand, is associated with smallness, smoothness, graceful curves, delicacy, pastel shades; and for the ear only the softest music can produce "that sinking, that melting, that languor, which is the characteristic effect of beauty as it regards every sense" (*ibid.*, II, §25). As I remarked, beauty here by being contrasted with the sublime has been pushed over into the territory of prettiness. If we are to retain the contrast between these terms in aesthetics we must reformulate it, and in fact it has usually appeared in terms such as those used by Professor Michelis (1955, 15): "The sublime is dynamic; the beautiful static. Beauty delights us; sublimity amazes us." This follows Kant's distinction between the beautiful, which seems formally adapted to the human mind, and the sublime, which seems to exceed the mind's measure; and in terms of it we could reconstitute our "scale of pleasing" by saying that the pretty was that which pleased but was inadequate to the mind, the beautiful pleased the mind in its adequacy, and the sublime pleased by extending the mind beyond its normal bounds of experience. This would correspond rather closely to Hegel's hierarchy of symbolic, classical and romantic art, in which respectively *Geist* partly informs, fully informs, and overflows matter. Neat though it is, however, the simple scale fails to do justice to an element in the contrast between the beautiful and the sublime: that beauty seems more closely dependent on appearance than the other. Even if we do not agree with Santayana when he says (1896, 240 and 243) that "What we objectify in the sublime is . . . the glorious joy of self-assertion in the face of the uncontrollable world," and that "The sense of the sublime is essentially mystical: it is the transcending of distinct perception in favour of a feeling of unity and volume," we may agree that things

7. Cf. Knight (1805, III.i, §59): "Except my friend before mentioned [Uvedale Price], I have never met with any man of learning, by whom the philosophy of the *Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* was not as much despised and ridiculed, as the brilliancy and animation of its style were applauded, and admired."

are called sublime in virtue of the feelings they arouse, feelings which we are not even tempted to suppose to be related to the object in more than a very loose way. If that is so, an aesthetic of the sublime will turn out quite different from an aesthetic of the beautiful. However, this added distinction that complicates the simple scale is not incompatible with it, and in fact may even be an aspect of it: perhaps it is a token of beauty's adequacy to the mind that it neither demands nor encourages the mind to go beyond it as sublimity and prettiness do.

### *Sublimity*

Can aesthetics do without the concept of sublimity? Mr. Carritt (1914, ch. ix) concludes after a survey of the many different examples and theories of sublimity that have been put forward that the concept is too vague to be of any use. But his conclusion is not justified, for it is reached by stressing contradictions in formulation and ignoring fundamental agreements. There is agreement that the sublime in art or nature is that of which the spectacle moves the mind to awe and exaltation, and that such awe and exaltation may be produced by whatever evinces great size, or great power, or great spiritual force, or great moral strength. So Thomas Burnet wrote (1684, Bk. I, ch. xi, ¶2):

The greatest Objects of Nature are, methinks, the most pleasing to behold; and next to the great Concave of the Heavens, and those boundless Regions where the Stars inhabit, there is nothing that I look upon with more Pleasure than the wide Sea and the Mountains of the Earth. There is something august and stately in the Air of these things, that inspires the Mind with great Thoughts and Passions; we do naturally, upon such Occasions, think of God and his Greatness; And whatsoever hath but the Shadow and Appearance of INFINITE, as all Things have that are too big for our Comprehension, they fill and over-bear the Mind with their Excess, and cast it into a pleasing kind of Stupor and Admiration.

Some of Carritt's misgivings are caused by his following Burke in taking terror rather than awe as being the subjective counterpart of sublimity, and hence equating the sublime with the hostile rather than with the superior. This was already censured in Burke by Reid (1785, 736):

Might he not be led to this by the similarity between dread and admiration? Both are grave and solemn passions; both make a strong impression upon the mind; and both are very infectious. But they differ specifically, in this respect, that admiration supposes some uncommon excellence in its object, which dread does not.

The most one could concede to Burke would be that what is terrible may produce awe, as Dennis claimed (1704, 359 and 361):



The Sublime . . . is never without Enthusiastick Passion:<sup>8</sup> For the Sublime is nothing else but a great Thought, or great Thoughts moving the Soul from its ordinary Situation by the Enthusiasm which naturally attends them. . . . Ideas producing Terror, contribute extremely to the Sublime. . . . The Ideas which produce Terror, are necessarily accompany'd with Admiration, because every thing that is terrible, is great to him to whom it is terrible; and with Surprise, without which Terror cannot subsist; and with Astonishment, because every thing which is very terrible, is wonderful and astonishing: and as Terror is perhaps the violentest of all the Passions, it consequently makes an Impression which we cannot resist, and which is hardly to be defaced: and no Passion is attended with greater Joy than Enthusiastick Terror, which proceeds from our reflecting that we are out of Danger at the very time that we see it before us.

Dennis, we note, suggests as I have done that the sublime is characterized primarily by an effect produced in the beholder, rather than by a quality imputed to the object. Reid likewise remarks (1785, 730; cf. *ibid.*, 735) that

What we call sublime in description, or in speech of any kind, is a proper expression of the admiration and enthusiasm which the subject produces in the mind of the speaker. . . . The true sublime cannot be produced solely by art in the composition; it must take its rise from grandeur in the subject, and a corresponding emotion raised in the mind of the speaker.

The vagueness and ambiguity of the concept of sublimity would not seem to be greater than those of any other concept, and certainly not such as to render the term useless. But one might still question its right to a special status in aesthetics. Perhaps its introduction and dominance were due to a series of historical accidents, and its retention to the tyranny of habit. For example, it takes up a lot of room in this book simply because it has taken up more room in others.<sup>9</sup>

There are certainly critical circles in which sublimity is not nowadays mentioned. They are those in which such criticism as that of Professor I. A. Richards (1929) prevails: criticism which, justifiably and indeed laudably, insists upon being articulate and coherent and relevant to its subject, and which therefore values poetry for the qualities which make such criticism possible—complexity, discussibility above all, and freedom

8. "Enthusiastick Passion, or Enthusiasm, is a Passion which is moved by the Ideas in Contemplation, or the Meditation of things that belong not to common Life . . . , and producing the same Passions that the Objects of those Ideas would raise in us, if they were set before us in the same light that those Ideas give us of them" (*ibid.*, 338-9).

9. Professor Guido Calogero (1958, 94) looks in vain for "elimination of pseudo-problems (that is, of problems which are thought to be relevant and to require a solution, merely because, in our language, we still employ certain expressions that gave birth to them in the past)."

from extravagance. But the sublime is precisely that which eludes such treatment. The attitude of the criticism mentioned is Horace's *nil admirari*, the determination not to be shaken by anything, to find nothing great. It is the attitude of Lytton Strachey to Victorians and mountains;<sup>10</sup> its name is *irony*. Irony cannot admit the sublime, since its presupposition is (as Hegel argues, 1835/1886, 122 ff.) that there is nothing greater than the critic's individual mind. To find anything sublime is, to this way of thinking, simply to abandon one's intellectual self-control, to stop analysing and give oneself up to a self-indulgent *Schwärmerei*; and to recognize the sublime as a category in aesthetics is to encourage this weakness.

Ironists, unperturbed by Hegel's contempt, flourish; but outside their sphere of influence sublimity still carries on. Professor Michelis, for example, argues that it is only in terms of this concept that Byzantine art can be understood (1955, 8 and *passim*). The ironist takes a recognition of the sublime to be a sign of intellectual softness; but his refusal to recognize it may be a mark of emotional debility. No doubt one cannot be simultaneously awed and analytic, but one may be both in succession. Discreditable or not, people do find things sublime, whether or not they use that word to express their finding; and, to them, the sublimity they find is the most important aspect of their most outstanding encounters with the arts (cf. Sparshott 1961). Just that is the justification of giving the sublime a special place in aesthetics. And, though one may be delightfully stunned, to be stunned is not the same as to be delighted.

Why should some things produce awed admiration? The sublimity of natural things (mountains, skies, tumultuous seas) or of saintly lives or heroic deeds is readily accounted for. At least, the ground of their sublimity is clear enough, even if the phenomenological description and psychological explanation of their effect remain undeveloped. But among works of art it is unclear why one should appear sublime and another not. Almost any work, no doubt, *may* produce the characteristic effect of the sublime, so that the puzzling question would be why *any* should; but some works seem to do so oftener than others, and their quality does not seem to depend upon a display of power or size. John Martin's huge canvasses are not usually thought to be sublime, though they make every effort to be so; but Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection*, which is only about five feet high, is often thought so, and its quality is not entirely lost even in a small monochrome reproduction. It has indeed a subject to which the attributed sublimity might be traced—"Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God"—but so have some of the Martins. None the less, the

10. He said of the mountains of Skye: "I thought them simply absurd" (Harrod 1951, 106).



awe in which we located the distinctive reaction to the sublime is close to the effect ascribed by Rudolf Otto (1917) to "the holy"; and perhaps advances in the psychology of religion stand the best chance of carrying the study of sublimity beyond the "indulgence in poetic fiction" which Kant censured (1790, §22).

If the sublime can be defined only as that which produces in the spectator a feeling of being measured against an intimation of overwhelming superiority without being crushed or cowed by it, the concept will be useless in criticism. Like that of beauty in its wider senses, the concept will extend beyond the domain of aesthetics unless that domain is itself expanded, and its overflow will be more serious than that of beauty because sublimity has not, like beauty, an *a priori* claim to be considered the basic concept of aesthetics. This tendency of the "consumer" concepts to extend beyond the bounds of aesthetics suggests that the discipline is better approached from the other side, through the concept of art, or through the fusion of making and impassioned perception.

"Great" is an honorific term obviously comparable with "sublime." But greatness is yet more obviously not a specifically aesthetic concept. To call a work of art great is not to allude explicitly to its appearance, or even to the effect it produces on the imagination through its appearance; it is to allege that it makes a difference to people (cf. Sparshott 1958, §6.162, on "importance"). To call a work great is not, I think, merely to distinguish it as pre-eminent among works of art, but to attribute to it a certain status in human affairs generally. However, Mr. T. S. Eliot reasonably remarks (1935, 388) that "The 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards." Just as greatness as applied to men is not a moral concept, so greatness as applied to paintings is not an aesthetic one; but there is this difference, that a great man need not be a good man, but a great painting is always a good painting. This difference arises because a man may be rendered important in human affairs by other than moral qualities, but a painting can only matter directly or indirectly because of its aesthetic qualities.

Analogous to the distinction between great works and others is that between major and minor poetry. Major poets are distinguished by their ability to handle large themes on a large scale rather than by their superior skill. The distinction is neither one of aesthetic excellence nor a mere distinction of genres, but is again based upon a difference in the human importance of the work.

*The Beautiful and the Pleasant*

Placing beauty on a scale of pleasing between sublimity and prettiness yielded, we found, a concept of beauty as the object of a satisfaction that was direct and not through association, disinterested rather than connected with everyday concerns, related relatively closely to the perceptible qualities of the object (and hence, we may now add, presumably less affected by variations in individual taste), and satisfaction in the literal sense that its object was adequate to the demands made of it, neither falling short nor exceeding. This notion of the beautiful as the perfected object of perception and hence a source of pleasure in perception squares with Aristotle's account of pleasure in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (X.4) as the subjective counterpart of the unimpeded activity of a perfectly healthy organ in relation to an object perfectly adapted to it. A further specification of what beauty is will then follow from attempts to answer the question: what constitutes adaptation to perception? Meanwhile, whatever the conditions of beauty may be, the sense of the term itself may be given in Ducasse's phrase (1929, 240) "as if made for the purpose of being looked at."

The sense of the term thus isolated by Ducasse is perhaps that most often used by the more philosophically-minded aestheticians. It approximates the results of Kant's contrasts between beauty and perfection and between beauty and pleasantness (1790, Bk. I). For Kant, to judge something beautiful is to take no account of any advantage that may come to oneself or to others; to claim that the thing is the object of a universal satisfaction (whereas what is agreeable to me I readily concede may be disagreeable to you); and to make this claim *apart from concepts* (whereas one judges something perfect only in relation to a concept of the kind of thing it is). The satisfactoriness claimed is unrelated to any subjective or objective end or purpose—"Beauty is the form of *finality* in an object, so far as perceived in it *apart from the representation of an end*" (§17); and finally, "The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognized as object of a *necessary* delight" (§22). Such, according to Kant, is the pure judgement of taste: it may be that the claims are never justified, but we make them.

The formulae Kant uses strike a difficult but necessary balance. To attribute beauty to something is more than to evince liking for it, or even to say that one likes it; it is to say that there is something amiss with those who do not like it.<sup>11</sup> But that does not entitle us to say with Reid (1785, 719 ff.) that beauty can be defined without reference to any real or

11. Cf. Rothschild and Clay (1952, 198): "No objective person can deny that the egg-shell producing glands of a trematode worm are aesthetically satisfying."



ideal observer. The urge to take this step comes from two motives: first, the personal need that people feel for stable standards, arising from the involvement of their egos with the standards they espouse, and second the feeling that the study of aesthetics presupposes the objectivity of beauty (cf. Osborne 1952, 2). Kant's formulae recognize that these needs find expression in the implications of the judgements that people make, without presupposing that the implications are justified.

No everyday distinction of vocabulary corresponds to the Kantian distinction between the true judgement of taste and the expression of personal satisfaction. Those people who thought the kitten playing with the ball of wool was pretty would certainly think that it *really was* pretty and agreeable to look at, and that something was amiss with anyone who did not find it so.<sup>12</sup> The distinction must be made not between qualities but between kinds of judgement: between judgements purporting to be about oneself, and those purporting to be about an object, and between both these and mere evincings of feeling which are not judgements at all. It might be argued, of course, that to claim that what pleases me must please all is sheer unwarranted egotism; but Santayana has forcibly argued the same of ascriptions of beauty (1896, 41 ff.): one claims universality, he says, for one's ascriptions of beauty only when one is unsure of the basis of one's judgements in one's own taste—a remark plainly aimed at Kant, whose own taste was notoriously undeveloped. To this it could be replied that some claims to universality are reasonable and others are not: if all minds are in certain essential respects similar, what is adequate to one should be adequate to all, whereas what happens to please me with my individual personality need not please you at all. But this is not good enough as it stands; for our personalities are shaped by experiences and by congenital equipment which are no less alike than the structures of our minds. To maintain the distinction one has to ascribe to minds in their essential unity a share in constituting the reality they cognize; one could then ascribe to what is adequate to the mind a *universality* beyond the mere *generality* of what is empirically found to be the same. Not all will want to follow Kant so far; so perhaps we had better confine ourselves to the distinction between all judgements of taste, with their implied universality, and mere reports on subjective reactions.

If to call something beautiful is not just to say that one is pleased by it, that does not mean that those were wrong who said that the beautiful was that which is such as to please in certain ways; even Kant may be interpreted as saying that. One may say with Santayana that beauty is

12. Cf. Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099a13): "To lovers of what is noble, those things are pleasant which are *by nature* pleasant."

pleasure "objectified," pleasure taken in an object and hence attributed to an alleged property of the object. Unfortunately, the terms "please" and "pleasant" which I have used so freely are ambiguous (cf. Ryle 1954, ch. IV). To say that something pleases or gives pleasure is often no more than to say that people like it, or that they choose or desire it for its own sake and not as a means to anything further (unless you choose to go through the empty motions of hypostatizing the "pleasure" involved in it as something separate from it to which it is a means). But it may also mean that the thing provides some special kind of experience: either sensual gratification, or an isolable sense of satisfaction. To say that beauty gives pleasure is therefore not very helpful, and may be misleading unless it is made plain which of these three is meant (cf. pp. 202-4 below).

### *Unity and Variety*

If beauty is to be a source of disinterested satisfaction, in accordance with the doctrines we have been considering, one ought to be able to say something very general about the properties that will enable it to be such a source. The most famous specification of the objective ground of beauty is in fact a schematic statement of the requirements. To afford satisfaction to the senses, the beautiful thing must have a certain richness and complexity. For the satisfaction to be disinterested, the thing must be cut off from its context; that is, unified. Thus "The Beautiful, contemplated in its essentials, . . . is that in which the *many*, still seen as many, becomes one" (Coleridge 1814, 232). Or, to dress it up a little more, "The degree of beauty manifested by any work of art will be a resultant of two factors: (a) the richness, complexity or subtlety of the configurational organization; and (b) the completeness or compactness of the organization for experience" (Osborne 1952, 126). Bosanquet speaks (1892, 30) of this "principle that beauty consists in the imaginative or sensuous expression of unity in variety" as the "one true aesthetic principle recognized by Hellenic antiquity in general"; the trouble with it is that it is so exceedingly familiar, as well as being so exceedingly vague, that one finds it impossible to imagine its ever being taken seriously. But we have just seen how it is related to other alleged principles equally general, and we may add that its two terms relate to the bifurcation of intellectual activities into analysis and synthesis, distinguishing and combining.

Unity in variety will presumably depend on the mutual adaptation of a thing's parts, the preservation of perceptually or imaginatively satisfactory relations between them; and indeed the principle stated in these terms has itself a long history (cf. Hauser 1951, II. 89). So Thomas



Aquinas is able to say (*Summa Theol.*, I.5.4 ad 1): "Beauty consists in due proportion, for the sense delights in things duly proportioned, as in things akin to itself; for sense also is a kind of reason (*ratio*) and so is every cognitive faculty." For the pair of unity and variety thus conceived correspond closely to the *integritas* and *ordo* which together with *claritas* make up the three requirements of beauty in its metaphysical sense of manifest perfection (p. 66 above).

This demand for order as the ground of beauty leads to the demand that nothing in a work of art shall be superfluous and nothing lacking (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b10), a demand which may be equally regarded as an obvious statement of the requirements of perfect artistry and as an assertion of the basic principle of criticism: "The presumption that nothing in art happens without a reason and that any given cause should be sufficient and necessary for what takes place is a fundamental condition for the experience of art," writes Mr. Meyer (1956, 75), for if one acts on any other presumption one will be inattentive to the unobvious relationships upon which artistic success depends. But the platitudinous obviousness of the principle may be deceptive; for it is satisfied only by classical kinds of art, and is violated by the more extravagant aesthetic gestures, by improvisations and exploitations of chance effects, astonishing by fine excesses, which have their place in the aesthetic manifestations favoured in our own day.

Different authors in different contexts will emphasize unity or variety at the expense of the other. Thus Coleridge in his discussion of *Othello* (1836a, 262) writes that unity of action is "not properly a rule, but in itself the great end not only of the drama, but of the epic poem, the lyric ode, of all poetry, down to the candle-flame cone of an epigram—nay of poesy in general, as the proper generic term inclusive of all the fine arts as its species." While Reynolds on the other side can drop such remarks as "Variety and intricacy is a beauty and excellence in every other of the arts which address the imagination: and why not in Architecture?" (Reynolds 1786, II. 77). Or again, the same tag in its entirety can be given a cosmic implication, as it is by Whitehead, for whom "Beauty is the mutual adaptation of the several factors in an occasion of experience," such "actual occasions" being "the only completely real things in the Universe," and "The teleology of the Universe is directed to the production of Beauty" (Whitehead 1933, 290, 293-4, 305). And of course the reconciliation of the unity and variety of the universe was the original problem of the presocratic philosophers, at least as Plato and Aristotle interpreted them, and of Plato himself (cf. *Philebus*, 14C ff.).

Corresponding to the two notes of unity-in-variety are the two aspects

of appreciation: the single emotional response, and the critical analysis (cf. Pepper 1938, 22 ff.); and perhaps in the end to distinguish these two notes is no more than to recognize that these two ways of responding are both always possible and always appropriate. Yet the obvious (even excessive) acceptability of this formula, with its reflection of the division of mental activities into analysis and synthesis, does suggest that the human propensity to look for beauty depends on the mind's pure passion for order, the human way of seeking to relate things to one another, carried beyond the region of practical utility and indulged for its own sake. And this, after all, is very much what Kant said.

We should note here, in passing, that an alternative account may be given of the objective ground of beauty in the restricted sense that we are now considering. Mr. Osborne (1952, 13) suggests that the beauty which is customarily contrasted with prettiness, sublimity and the like is roughly equivalent to "the qualities of late Greek art," including the qualities of regularity, placidity and balance. This usage reflects the Winckelmannian sensibility, for which precisely the works of late Greek art were the paradigms of beauty, and for which by the usual process of "hardening" (Sparshott 1958, §6.33) the preferred objective bases of beauty become identified with the meaning of the term "beauty" itself. So far as I know, no one who nowadays uses the term "beauty" uses it in this sense; but there are people who say that the term should never be used because this is the sense it has, so that to use the term is to endorse Hellenistic values. Personally, I think such people are just being silly.

### *Novelty*

Addison (1712, no. 412) set novelty beside greatness and beauty (in its narrower sense) as a source of pleasures of the imagination. Novelty obviously cannot be placed on a scale of pleasing beside the other two. But it is not so remote from the other terms as it seems. In fact, a sense of novelty may be regarded as a necessary condition of aesthetic pleasure; or alternatively as a necessary consequence of the recognition of beauty. In order to perceive a thing's beauty it is necessary to concentrate on those aspects of it, those sensuous qualities of and relations between its parts, which constitute its beauty; and in order to do this one must *break one's habits* of seeing things in terms of their possible utility and of the classes to which they belong. As Pepper points out (1938, 55), "Novelty, if not naively present, is the tearing off of habit." What this tearing-off yields is that quality of *radiance* which was the one aspect of beauty-as-manifest-perfection that the formula of unity-in-variety left out. This radiance is frequently ascribed to the vision of children, to whom things



really are new, as by Traherne (1908, I, §25): "Some things are little on the outside, and rough and common, but I remember the time when the dust of the streets were as precious as Gold to my infant eyes, and now they are more precious to the eye of reason." But how can radiance be restored to adult vision, which has seen everything before? Presumably the best way would be through some set of spiritual exercises that would restore a simulacrum of innocence to the weary eye, or by practising the crafts of painting or composition that demand the required kind of attention. Nothing can be done for the completely casual viewer who is determined to remain casual, but certain crude devices have been used to shock him into perception: the Dadaists and others have confronted him with collocations of incongruous objects, providing for his perceptions novelty in its crudest form; abstract-expressionists allow chance to determine some aspects of their paintings, on the Aristotelian principle that there can be no real novelty in orderly processes;<sup>13</sup> Mr. John Cage similarly substitutes for music series of sounds whose unpredictable combinations are supposed to prevent the hearer from trying to construct patterns or follow tunes and force him simply to listen to the sounds themselves. This is probably all that can be done for the philistine, and it does not work, for he will either turn away or just get annoyed. But such violent tactics should not be necessary for the educated spectator, who is prepared to attend to the work and can therefore respond to compositional devices which are designed to produce just such restoration and exercise for the perceptive faculty (cf. Wellek and Warren 1949, 231-3).

Peacock (1816, 24) produced what he evidently thought to be a telling argument against making "novelty" an aesthetic quality:

"Allow me," said Mr. Gall. "I distinguish the picturesque and the beautiful, and I add to them, in the laying out of grounds, a third and distinct character, which I call *unexpectedness*."

"Pray, sir," said Mr. Milestone, "by what name do you distinguish this character, when a person walks round the grounds for the second time?"

Mr. Gall bit his lips. . . .

But he had no need to bite them, for as Miss Haezrahi observed (1957, 189) "The aesthetic surprise is not identical with the actual surprise and it remains constant and unaffected (long after the latter has worn off) if it

13. This quality of improvisation and randomness enters into literature comparatively seldom; but the compilers of the "authorized" version of the Bible produced it now and then by their habit, when confronted by a passage which they did not understand, of just putting down what they took to be the English equivalents of the Hebrew words and hoping that the result would by some miracle make some kind of sense. Often, the result is dreary rubbish, but sometimes it produces a winner like "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" (Job 39, 19).

is well planned and well executed in terms of aesthetically contrasting qualities." In other words, "surprise" and "novelty" as applied to aesthetic objects are terms for certain kinds of combinations and arrangements of qualities which may indeed produce surprise when first encountered but whose merit does not depend upon this. The term "surprise" is retained because the aesthetic effect does have a recognizable affinity with surprise. We have here in fact a special case of the phenomenon misleadingly called "willing suspension of disbelief" whereby one submits one's susceptibilities to the composer's design, holding in abeyance or refusing to attend to one's knowledge of the outcome. It is willingness to make this submission that enables one to enjoy the same work many times (cf. Meyer 1956, 74).

The term "novelty" thus turns out to designate the simple capacity of a work to provide renewed satisfaction, to resist becoming hackneyed on repetition. Mr. Shaw (1956, 198-210) has indeed suggested that the value of a work of art can be simply assessed by this, which he calls its "boredom quotient" (cf. p. 129 below). It would seem to follow that, from this point of view, a succession of poor works each experienced once or twice is likely to be as good as a single excellent work experienced many times—except that the components of an inferior work are likely to be so stereotyped, and slung together so unimaginatively, that it will appear stale on its first appearance. The condition of excellence in a work would then presumably be its complexity: the multiplicity of its parts, and the number of different kinds of relations between them, so that on returning to it we may find ever new levels of meaning (Wellek and Warren 1949, 232). Unity in variety, in fact. But this should not be interpreted in too simple-minded a way. Professor Mueller (1951) analysed the repertoires of the leading American orchestras in terms of precisely this "boredom quotient": difficult composers are slowly assimilated into the repertoire and stay a long time, easier ones slip rapidly into the repertoire and rapidly out again. He had earlier (Mueller and Hevner 1942) predicted on this basis that Mozart would soon vanish from the concert hall, and Richard Strauss would gain. In 1951 he acknowledges that Mozart shows no signs of vanishing, and Strauss is making little headway; he does not mention his earlier prediction, but obviously does not think that its falsification tells against his thesis, and I am not sure that it does. However, until some satisfactory criterion of complexity is produced the hypothesis can be made self-confirming: Mozart's survival shows his profundity.

Notwithstanding all that we have said, the idea of novelty itself is attractive. Many people will read a novel just because it is known to be the latest thing, and will approach the stodgiest and shoddiest new



treatise with an avidity that they do not give to even the sprightliest and most elegant classic. I suppose we just have to accept this as inevitable in a technologically oriented civilization.

Professor Blatz (1944, 82 ff.) would have it that the need for change (for novelty, if you will) is one of the six basic impulses by which men are driven. Perhaps one might look to the sense of wonder in men to explain the need for novelty in art. It is by wonder, Plato tells us (*Theaetetus*, 155D), that men are driven to philosophize; perhaps if, instead of trying to lose wonder in philosophy, men seek to sharpen it when blunted and to celebrate what arouses it, it is rather to art that they are driven. Whatever is terrible arouses wonder: thus we have tragedy and kindred arts. Whatever is out of the ordinary, not by excess (as the terrible) but by oddness of kind, arouses wonder: so we have the grotesque and the comical. But, as I have just said, wonder comes also from whatever seems fresh and new, as all artists nowadays esteemed make all things seem. Whatever manifests the Divine in things arouses wonder; and the romantics thought it their task to reveal the world thus. It is when we think of the sphere of art as the wonderful that we think of the artist as god of his heterocosm, revealing a new world in which he is himself revealed (cf. pp. 398 ff.).

## A TECHNICAL SENSE OF "BEAUTY"

IN ADDITION TO the senses now enumerated, "beauty" has long been used to mean (in Osborne's phrase, 1952, 12) "the proper excellence of a work of art." It is important to keep this quite distinct from the other senses. It cannot be assumed *a priori* that every excellent work of art pleases, in any except the nugatory sense that people willingly attend to it for its own sake. It may be that some excellent works of art arouse no agreeable feelings, but shock or horrify the beholder. This possibility becomes evident if we regard aesthetics as concerned with perception and the perceptible rather than with taste, so that its values are taken to be cognitive rather than affective; and the tension between these two points of view is a major persistent theme of aesthetics, so that it is unwise to adopt a vocabulary that prejudices the choice between them. There is indeed a third possibility: that the excellence of a work of art should lie neither in its worth for cognition nor in its affective qualities, but in its relation to its producer. The excellence would then, however, reside in the act rather than in the artefact, and the term "beauty" would not be applied even in the most extended sense. "Beautiful" in the sense under consideration, then,

means "good *qua* work of art," without further commitment as to what that goodness comprises. The advantage to aesthetics of having such a term at its disposal is obvious; and "good" or "excellent" would not do because a work of art may possess other excellences than that proper to works of art.

The use of the term "beauty" in this technical sense has caused much scandal among those innocent souls who suppose, when they hear it thus used, that it has one of the other senses I have enumerated. The mere occurrence of the word "beauty" in the title of a book is enough for them to condemn it unread. Professor Michelis points out (1955, 8-9) that if "beautiful" is used both in this sense and in the Winckelmannian sense the result is to belittle other aesthetic qualities, since the two usages inevitably become confused and it comes to be taken for granted that art can have no other excellence than the Hellenistic. Such confusions do indeed abound. Nietzsche appears to be confusing this technical sense with that co-ordinated with sublimity when he writes (1872, §19):

What a spectacle! Our aestheticians nowadays, with the net of a "beauty" all their own, hitting and snatching at the genius of music—which dances before them with an elusive life, whose movements can no more be judged by the standard of an eternal beauty than they can by that of the sublime!

Reynolds is certainly confusing beauty as the excellence of art with beauty as manifest perfection when he writes (1770, I.335) that "The idea of beauty in each species of beings is an invariable one" and "As the idea of beauty is of necessity but one, so there can be but one great mode of painting" (*ibid.*, 342). And Ducasse (1929, 15-16) is assuming that the term has the sense we derived from Plato's *Hippias* when he remarks that "Art is not an activity aiming at the creation of beauty," since many works of art are deliberately ugly, and artists doubtful of success ask not "Is it beautiful?" but "Is it what I meant?"

The fact that the use of the term "beauty" gives rise to such confusions does show that it is imprudent to use it in aesthetics without explicit qualifications, the necessity of making which annuls the advantages of having a single term to use. Having distinguished its several senses, then, I shall not use any of them except in contexts where the meaning is clear or the ambiguity unimportant.



## ART AND NATURE

THE RENAISSANCE, thinks Mr. Osborne (1952, 168), was "responsible, by its conjunction of the ideas of art and beauty, for an awakening to a new level of awareness." Since the term "beauty" cannot be *confined* to art, this "awakening" means that either all the excellences of art must be discovered in nature or all the aesthetic excellences of nature must be looked for in art. Now, it is plain enough that beauty in its primary sense of *quod visum placet* may be found in art and nature alike. But it is by no means clear that beauty as "the proper excellence of works of art" is something that can also be found in nature. Indeed, if it is a *proper* and *peculiar* excellence, it of course cannot. Our question then becomes: does the "new level of awareness" mean that aesthetics must cease to be a philosophy of beauty or aesthetic appreciation in general, and become strictly a philosophy of art; or must we abandon the notion that works of art as such have their own peculiar kind of excellence? Or can Mr. Osborne have misdescribed the situation?

Many (e.g. Langfeld 1920, 268) have argued that the beauty which a work of art presents is only a refinement on that of natural objects; and the older aestheticians, from Plato to Kant, take their illustrations of beauty indifferently from natural things and artefacts. But one is then faced with Hegel's question (1835/1886, 80) why people go to the trouble of producing something which nature already supplies. One may answer by distinguishing the love of beauty from the need to create or to express oneself (cf. Parker 1926, 17 ff.). Or one may say with Plato (*Symposium*) that the love of beauty itself gives rise to the urge to create, imitation being the sincerest flattery. But these expedients, though accounting for the activity of producing artefacts, fail to assign any specific value to the artefacts once produced; they therefore leave the problem of the function of the institutions of art half unsolved, and the unsolved half is precisely

that which now concerns us. It is accordingly still advisable to look for some distinguishing characteristics in the works themselves.

### *Isolation*

The work of art, it is often urged, is isolated for our attention in a way that natural objects are not. The work of art is isolated from its surroundings by a frame, or a proscenium arch, or a pedestal—a fact whose importance is urged in detail and with vehemence by Langfeld (1920, ch. iv). But there are no frames in nature. When we contemplate a landscape, we ourselves have to impose an imaginary frame to isolate the part whose beauty we admire. In fact, the boundaries of the admired scene tend to be vague. Our eyes shift from point to point, and the changing centre of our attention gives us a focal point or series of such points round which the scenery is organized, rather than a boundary—necessarily so, since our vision is clear only at the centre of its field, which has no sharp edge.

Landscapes, however, are not the only sources of natural beauty. Individual objects in nature may be clearly delimited from their surroundings; and the normal processes of human perception, as of animal perception in general, isolate objects for attention (cf. Gibson 1950, ch. 3). Nor are frames necessary for works of art. A picture need not be delimited from its background by anything other than its own edges. Moreover, in a Chinese scroll painting or in a frieze the eye has to impose its own boundaries for the time being, just as it does in gazing at a landscape. Such a work, if successful, has to be construed as an overlapping series of satisfactorily balanced compositions, and the better the work the smoother the transition will be from one balance to another. As for pedestals, one recalls that Rodin wished his *Burghers of Calais* to have no noticeable pedestal, but to be placed among the passers-by on the pavement of the market-place (Rilke 1946, 51–2). His scheme was rejected; but if it had been accepted the unity and isolation of the group would have depended on the eye's selection alone. Nor will everyone accept Langfeld's claim that music always sounds better if the performers are isolated upon a stage, or that it is always a mistake in the theatre to remove the proscenium arch or to bring performers in from the back of the auditorium. In the Japanese *kabuki* theatre, for instance, neither is the action confined to a remote stage nor is everything that happens on the stage part of the play: the "frame" is provided by the trained attention of the playgoers (Ernst 1956, 72–9). The part played by the audience's attention in constituting the play was already recognized by Aristotle, when he said (*Poetics*, 1454b7) that improbabilities are tolerable when they occur "out-



side the drama"; for the context shows that this means not "offstage" but outside the range of events brought to the playgoers' notice. The demand, in short, for a physical frame stems more from custom than from necessity, and supposes that the isolation of the work of art can be achieved only by mechanical means, and not by the combined effect of the internal coherence of the work and the attention of the spectator.

Is it true, then, that the internal coherence of the work of art is what differentiates it from natural objects, by making it isolable by the attention? If so, the act of framing would be simply a device to suggest that what is framed is supposed to have this kind of coherence. When someone frames a piece of driftwood or a butterfly's wing, the implication of their action is to claim that the visible unity of the object is such that it repays such isolation, that it can be treated without absurdity as a work of art. Exceptional natural objects, then, may have the quality usual in works of art—but exceptional in what respect? In their beauty, surely; so the whole argument collapses. Nor can we shore it up by saying that in framing found objects one is applying to natural objects a mode of vision that could only have been learned from studying works of art. For whenever we look intently at anything, we see it in isolation against an ignored background.

### *Imitation and Creation*

A more obvious difference between works of art and natural objects than the one we have been considering is simply that in understanding and enjoying the former we cannot usually help being aware that what we see is a deliberate product, and one made to be looked at. Often, of course, the work will represent or imitate, in some mode, some original, and when it does its relationship to its supposed original cannot be left out of account; but even when it does not, the traces of purpose are there and must be reckoned with. "I shall never be brought to consider the beauties of a Poet in the same light that I do the colour in a Tulip" (Webb 1762, 36). As Mr. Eveling points out (1959, 216) one cannot treat works of art as non-interpretable objects: unless they are to be dismissed as *merely* charming, questions of meaning must arise in connection with them as they cannot in connection with any natural object. With natural beauties there cannot even be any question of the artist's interpretation of reality, or imposition of form on matter, or expression of his intuitions, or rendering of his experience.

The distinction we have just drawn may be challenged by those who regard nature as the work of an artist-God whose personality finds expression in his works as a human artist's does in his.

The invisible Creator, the Fountain of all perfection, hath stamped upon all his works signatures of his divine wisdom, power and benignity, which are visible to all men. The works of men in science, in the arts of taste, and in the mechanical arts, bear the signatures of those qualities of mind which were employed in their production. (Reid 1785, 751.)

The argument seems precarious, since atheists need not be blind to natural beauty; but those who rely on it might well say that a person who did not know that works of art were deliberate productions of men would not necessarily be blind to their beauty, either; he would simply lack a certain dimension of appreciation, which is likewise lacking in the atheist's enjoyment of nature.

The analogy between human and divine art may also be attacked on the ground urged by Sartre (1949, 37), that the analogy can only be with the useful, not the fine arts: divine providence cannot be thought to be purely aesthetic in its aims, and natural beauty must be regarded as a by-product of the divine activity. This is especially obvious in the case of landscape, where what is beautiful is a perceptible arrangement of disparate objects as seen from a particular place, not an organism whose beauty manifests its internal structure. The man of faith, however, will reply to this that it is just one more sign of the divine omnipotence that it can afford so many opportunities for the perception of beauty as mere by-products of its other ends.

It is also possible to argue that, as the work of art represents the artist's notion of something, so nature reproduces the archetypal forms in the mind of God.<sup>1</sup> This argument, though, may be used to prove the inferiority of natural things as readily as to explain their beauty. It would indeed entail that they are beautiful only as inferior replicas of their types, and thus can scarcely be said to afford an analogy for the beauties of art

1. For the archetypal forms, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.54 and II.24; for the analogy with art, see Bellori 1672, 3-4: "Nature always intends a consummate beauty in her productions, yet through the inequality of the matter, the forms are altered; and in particular, human beauty suffers alteration for the worse, as we see to our mortification, in the deformities and disproportions which are in us. For which reason the artful painter and the sculptor, imitating the Divine Maker, form to themselves, as well as they are able, a model of the superior beauties; and reflecting on them, endeavour to correct and amend the common nature, and to represent it as it was at first created, without fault, either in colour or in lineament. . . .

"Painters and sculptors, choosing the most elegant and natural beauties, perfectionate the idea, and advance their art even above nature itself in her individual productions; which is the utmost mastery of human performance." The origin of these theories is Plato's *Timaeus*, where, however, the divine Craftsman works from a model external to himself, and where the divine activity is represented with the aid of the analogy of human activity rather than the supposed nature of divine action being taken as the model for the explanation of human acts.



unless the artist himself is regarded as struggling to impress on his material an idea which he perfectly conceives. This view of art has been held (see Webb 1760, 4-5, for a very explicit version), but it is unlikely to find favour nowadays; and the whole analogy is doubtless nothing more than a quaint fiction.

Even if we accept the view that the beauties of nature are properly to be regarded as God's handiwork, we may still reintroduce the distinction, as Hegel does, by saying that

The beauty of art is the beauty that is born—born again, that is—of the mind; and by as much as the mind and its products are higher than nature and its appearances, by so much the beauty of art is higher than the beauty of nature. (Hegel 1835/1886, 3.)

It is a work of art only in as far as, being the offspring of mind, it continues to belong to the realm of mind. . . . This gives the work of art a higher rank than anything produced by nature, which has not sustained this passage through the mind. (*Ibid.*, 55.)

It is absurd, Hegel continues, to suppose that the works of man should be contrasted with the works of God as inferior to them, "For not only is there a divinity in man, but in him it is operative under a form that is appropriate to the essence of God, in a mode quite other and higher than in nature" (*ibid.*, 56). The view of divine activity here taken, however, is not compatible with the notions about "the human condition" and especially the nature of human freedom that most theists hold. We are left with the conclusion that little clarification is to be achieved by introducing a divine artificer to approximate natural to artificial beauties. Even if natural beauties may be referred to God, they cannot form, as works of art do, part of the structure of communication and common life among men (cf. Hampshire 1959, 245).

If we wish to maintain that the beauties of art differ from those of nature because of the element of human intervention involved, we may find it hard to tell where the line between them should be drawn. What about a variegated tulip? Gardeners produce these flowers by breeding systematically for the qualities they desire; but they can do no more than select and combine the strains they find—nothing new can arise from their efforts, the processes of mutation are beyond their control. Does the flower then represent natural or artificial beauty? For after all, it may be said, the painter can only select and combine the colours with which Messrs. Winsor and Newton or Grumbacher supply him, and is ultimately dependent for the "creation" of form on what nature supplies to his vision; and the poet can only select and combine the words of a language

which in its casual growth partakes more of the natural than of the artificial. Again, is the beauty of a Japanese flower arrangement or stone-garden natural or artificial? For the artist here seeks not to create a new form but to bring out the meaning which the forms he discovers already possess. It is perhaps significant that Hutcheson, who takes his examples of beauty indifferently from nature and art, should refer so often to the beauty of gardens. Is a landscape-garden really art, or modified nature? Mr. Aldous Huxley has indeed argued in a celebrated essay (1929) that the "love of nature" of the romantic poets is really a love of landscape-gardens; for the scenery which they extolled was not that of an untamed nature but bore the marks of centuries of human care. Well, it is true that the English landscape has been thoroughly shaped by agriculture and engineering (Hoskins 1955), though the aesthetic intent in that shaping was often limited to keeping things tidy. It may also be true that, as Mr. Huxley thinks, men who have to wrench a living from an untamed environment do not find it beautiful. The Ontario pioneers certainly seem to have been left with a hatred of trees. Yet Canadian painters, fortified by years of genteel living, have found great beauty in the unvisited tracts north of Lake Superior, dreadfully messy though the forests may be.

### *Completeness and Expressiveness*

I have spoken of the untidiness of natural landscapes. It may be argued that to find such landscapes beautiful we have to edit them: just as we select an area from our total visual field by imagining a frame, so we suppress details that detract from the composition. It is an important difference between the beauties of art and those of nature that the deficiencies of nature have to be supplied in this way. Indeed, the very notion of beauty in landscape derives from the beauty of art; it is connected with the habit of scrutinizing scenery for the "picturesque," that which can be made the material for a picture (cf. Hussey 1927). It takes a sketcher's eye to find beauty in nature. This is a plausible view. What one sees certainly depends on one's education and experience. It is a common thing to find for some time after studying the work of a painter that everything one sees has the look of his paintings. The artists, writes Parker (1920, 361), by first exhibiting life as beautiful in art, have shown us that it may be beautiful as mirrored in the observing mind. . . . The poets and the painters created the beauty of the mountains, of windmills and canals, of frozen wastes and monotonous prairies, of peasants and factories and railway stations and slums.

One is inclined to object to this that the painter who "creates" the beauty of the mountains must himself have thought he found beauty in the



mountains, or he would not have painted them; but the answer to that may be that landscapes were first painted for their human interest, or as necessary settings for action, or as bearers of "something far more deeply interfused," before they could themselves become charged with enough aesthetic significance to be thought paintable for their looks alone (cf. Clark 1949). Flower arrangements, said Payne Knight (1805, I.v, §9),

form, perhaps, the most perfect spectacle of mere sensual beauty that is any where to be found. . . . The magnificent compositions of landscape are, indeed, spectacles of a higher class; and afford pleasures of a more exalted kind: but only a small part of those pleasures are merely sensual; the venerable ruin, the retired cottage, the spreading oak, the beetling rock, and limpid streams having charms for the imagination, as well as for the sense; and often bringing into the mind pleasing trains of ideas besides those, which their impressions upon the organs of sense immediately excite.

We might well concede that the beauties of landscape depend upon association and editing. But nature has beauties other than those of the inherently formless landscape. The most striking beauties are those of individual things: of flowers, trees, birds,<sup>2</sup> shells; of crystals; even, according to some, of the human body. Is it true that these also are always imperfect? Greene (1940, 8) concedes that whereas the beauties of landscape may be *projected into* nature other beauties may be *found in* nature, but argues that even these are never perfect as a work of art may be perfect. For one thing, there is no isolating frame to delimit the composition; for another, "is nature ever perfectly beautiful in the sense that every element of a given whole is organically related to every other element and to the whole in an aesthetically satisfying manner?" As to frames, we have seen that no physical frame is necessary, and that the isolating act of attention may be directed upon natural as well as artificial objects; anyway, a bird on a branch is no less sharply separated from its surroundings than a statue on a pedestal, or a tree than a church. The question about natural perfection is harder to answer. Parker (1926, 50-1) and Clark (1956, 6) observe that no artist's model is so perfect that she can be copied without improvements. But I must say that some butterflies at least seem to me to leave nothing to be desired simply as things to see; and when a painter paints a tree he seems in some cases to be not so much improving on it as producing something different.

Professor Greene then asks, "Is nature in the raw ever expressive as art is expressive?" The answer here must be No. But this is not the same

2. "The peculiar *Beauty of Fowls* can scarce be omitted, which arises from the great Variety of Feathers, a curious Sort of Machines . . ." (Hutcheson 1725, I.ii, §11).

question as we had before. Expressiveness is not perfection of the kind of beauty that natural objects may have, but surely something else: to be expressive is to have meaning of a certain kind. And this returns us to the fact that works of art require an artist, and must be regarded to some extent as forms of human communication. Perhaps only works of art can be expressive, whatever precisely that may turn out to mean; but this need not lead us to deny to natural objects an inexpressive perfection of beauty, as well as an infinitely suggestive and elaborated complexity of form to which no art could ever approximate.

### *Style*

Even if we regard natural things as divine artefacts and see in them manifestations of a bountiful providence, we do not see or seek in them the kind of systematic variation on an original that we find in Cézanne's treatment of landscape or El Greco's of the human figure. Nor can the heavens, however loudly they may declare the glory of God, constitute a world wholly organized for experience, a "totally expressive" world, such as we find in the paintings of Fra Angelico or the writings of Cervantes or Rabelais. In art, but not in natural beauty, all is subdued to one consistent mode of vision. Nature, we feel like saying, has no *style*; and it is in style that many have located what is most characteristic of art (cf. Malraux 1953, 272). We may think of style as a *system* of creating, modifying, selecting, arranging, and interpreting forms. Nature, we may then say, presents us not with style but with the untreated forms that may serve as part of its raw material. To the theist, if style is a manifestation of personality, as many think (e.g. Véron 1878, 167), God as artificer can have no style (we may note here the contrast, in my last quotation from Reid, between the reflection in natural objects of the benignity of God and that in artefacts of the particular excellences of their makers). Since character must be defined by selection, differential emphasis, and exclusion, God whose perfection is supposed to be all-inclusive must be characterless, and natural things will have a characterless beauty except in so far as we as observers subject them to a selective interpretation. It is at this point and for this reason that the analogy between a divine and a human artificer finally breaks down.

If we leave God out of it and concentrate on appearances, the affirmation that Nature has no style seems more questionable. Do landscapes have no style? There are recognizable and distinctive types of climax vegetations, for example, which recur in all their complexity. And in general the geology and ecology of a region impart to each prospect within it a common likeness, which in settled areas is enhanced by the charac-



ter of the local architecture and methods of farming. Many of these styles of landscape, moreover, have become celebrated in literature—for example, the Lake District and South Downs in England; and in consequence a traditional way of seeing them has grown up, so that in the act of seeing the landscape (which as I said only exists as seen, since it is as seen from a particular point that it is held to constitute a thing of beauty) one adds the note of interpretation to the qualities of selection and arrangement which style of landscape already shares with style in art. Again, we may ask, does not such a term as “mammal” designate a *style* of living thing? And do the processes of evolution not form a counterpart to the successions of styles which for M. Malraux constitute the history of art?

Such talk arouses protests. One can speak of style in nature by metaphor only: we have built up a mere superficial analogy to conceal a fundamental difference. A style is a way of doing things; but what we have in nature is just the way things happen. The arts are means of expression, and style in art plays the part in expression that is played in communication by language. It is the means of imposing intelligible order, whereas “style” in nature is a configuration whose “intelligibility” is nothing but familiarity, and neither imposing nor imposed.

#### *Attention and Interpretation*

Any inquiry into the difference between natural and artificial beauties is likely to be led astray by the very use of the term “beauty.” If we seek for the difference in the qualities of the objects differentiated, what we find can be little more than accidental: nothing prevents an artefact from being mistakable for a natural object, and natural objects might happen to resemble artefacts. It just so happens that no craftsmanship is fine and patient enough to produce work with the qualities of some natural objects, and that natural objects never have the expressiveness of some artefacts. Surely the difference we seek is rather to be found in our attitude toward and interpretation of the objects, which will depend as I have said upon our presumption that artefacts are the result of purposeful action. In so far as we differentiate between natural and artistic beauties, we do so by regarding the latter as supposedly meaningful, or at least supposedly worthy of attention, whereas natural beauties are simply enjoyed. Of course we may be mistaken, trying to read design into the product of chance or thinking to be casual what is really purposive. But as soon as we discover such a mistake our attitude towards the object changes.

We do not scrutinize a sunset, but rather relax in the enjoyment of its colour and peace—we bask in it, as we say. When contemplating scenery we do not bend our intellectual energies upon it, but gaze, as we again

say, "entranced." Leaning over a gate and looking at the view is a well-known way of being *lazy*. But when we look at a painting we examine it closely: our aim is not so much to enjoy it as to grasp it. "Painting is not a pleasure, but a language of its own" says Malraux (1953, 537). Similarly, one listens to surf or bird-song without full attention; but to listen to half an hour of polyphonic music is, to me at least, exhausting. It is *possible* to use music as a background to other activities or to "do" an art gallery by walking past the pictures, but these are practices which few would defend. Hutcheson and the rest who lump together the beauties of art and nature lived at a time when music was, by custom, negligently heard; or so it is said. On the other hand, an artist will scrutinize the landscape he means to draw; but he will do so, not in order to find just what is in it, but to see just what he can make of it.

Once more we have prejudiced the argument by comparing art to landscape, whose beauties are the least formed of those we find in nature. Other natural beauties, it may be said, do require and reward scrutiny. One can indeed glance idly at a bank of flowers, and take pleasure thus; but one can also examine a flower petal by petal, under a glass, and only thus does the real beauty of the flower become known. Similarly, while doubtless no one really listens to surf beating, it is both possible and rewarding to attend closely to a thrush's song, and no one who has not done so knows how truly beautiful it is. The trouble is that bird-song is laid on free by the management and so, like the Emperor's Nightingale, is not appreciated at its true worth. All this we may concede, but it shows only that an intense scrutiny is possible in both cases; it remains true that the object of the scrutiny is different. The examination of the natural object, in so far as it is not directed to discovering how it works, reveals little but unnoticed aspects of its sensuous attraction: the unfailing delight thus obtained is like that of the child playing "I spy"—what ever will Nature dream up next? Our delighted amazement at the endless diversity of forms and colour-arrangements discernible in nature is an important fact for aesthetics, but it is not the same as our interest in a work of art. Our scrutiny of the latter is directed to the discovery of ever new significant formal and syntactic relations among the sensible elements already familiar: its structure for perception or imagination. In the end we always come back to this, that the ground of our concentration is the knowledge that the artist meant his work to be scrutinized in just this way; or rather, since he need not have formulated this end or any other, that to call a thing a work of art or to launch an artefact into the world of performance—to publish a poem, exhibit a picture, stage a drama—is to accept as criterion of success in one's work the provision of such a discernible



structure. What differentiates works of art from natural objects is that they belong to the *institution* of art. So it is that it is less than completely absurd to exhibit as a work of art a "found object": the act of exhibiting constitutes a demand for the type of scrutiny that effectively differentiates what is art from what is not. And this, ultimately, is the lesson of the Dada movement: that any gesture, however trivial or silly, made in a suitable context within the institution of art, is swallowed up in the machinery and emerges alongside everything else in museums and histories. The decision to bestow a certain kind of attention on an object, a decision called for by the claim of exhibition, must precede the discovery that such attention is rewarded; and it is just possible that, to some extent at least, such attention generates its own reward.

## ART: THE CONCEPT AND ITS VALIDITY

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES ART from what is not art? The term "art" surely designates a kind of activity. But I just said that art was differentiated by being regarded as a fit *object* for a certain kind of behaviour. I have in fact used the term freely, as if its meaning were so generally known as to require no explanation. Yet it now appears that I do not always mean the same thing by it. Perhaps it has no precise meaning. Father Turner writes (1958, 281): "What is art, that there should be a pure essence of it, of whatever kind? There is no such thing as art. Art is nothing but a general word of quite modern coinage, to designate the activities of epic poets and lyric poets . . ." and a long list follows. Well, of course, art is not a *thing* if "thing" means "individual substance." And doubtless it does not have a pure essence, though I do not quite know what a pure essence is or what one has to do to get one. Father Turner *seems* to mean by "there is no such thing as art" that to use the term is always misleading or at least never helpful, that the general word is useless because "the longer and harder we look, the more diverse do these activities come to appear to be . . ." (*ibid.*, 282). But he cannot mean quite that, since on the same page he commits himself to a general statement about art ("all art is gratuitous"), and shows no hesitation in listing activities covered by the term. In fact, of course, we all do share a vague notion of the nature of the institution to which we are referring when we talk (as we so often do) about "art," and it is just silly to pretend that we do not. Moreover, in so far as it is a social institution that we are alluding to, its existence and hence the objective reference of the term are established simply by social agreement: the fact that within our civilization certain objects are referred to as works of art, certain activities as art, and certain people as artists, and that certain attitudes and behaviour patterns become accepted



as standard in connection with these, is all that is necessary to constitute a social reality.

Doubts about the viability of the concept may still arise. If, as Father Turner says, more than a social reality is claimed for art, the claim would be contestable. Moreover, one could object that under the heading of "art" are lumped together activities that are in themselves so disparate that nothing useful can be said about them in their supposed unity.

Before we examine the doubts just mentioned, we should mention the ambiguities of the term "art" itself. These ambiguities are not very puzzling and of no great theoretical interest, although here as elsewhere one is continually meeting people who try to settle factual questions by asserting that the term has only one of its meanings. Munro (1949, 7) lists three ambiguities. First, the word "art" may be used either descriptively, as when Customs authorities exempt an object from duty as a "work of art," or as a term of praise ("Did you see the ashtray Lambert carved out of soap? It's a regular work of art!"). Second, it may be applied to various kinds of activities on various principles: to any intelligent productive activity; to skilled work in certain prescribed media; or to activities directed to producing "aesthetic pleasure," and so on. Finally the term may be applied to productive skill, or to the activity in which the skill is employed, or to the product of the skill. Having enumerated these ambiguities, we can safely ignore them, since there will not usually be any doubt as to which we mean except on those occasions when our meaning is so mixed that these distinctions cannot be applied. Oddly enough, too, any problems caused by these ambiguities arise subsequently to the problem of the viability of the concept; for they all have to do with different ways of saying things about the institution of art, supposing it to be worth while saying anything about it at all. Whether that supposition is justified is what we have first to determine.

Granted that we know the range of social facts in connection with which the term "art" is used, there are still two different quests which the words "What is art?" might cover. We might be looking for a form of words to describe or characterize a set of facts about which themselves we were perfectly clear. This, however, is unlikely to be our present condition, since the distinction between art and what is not art is not a purely empirical one. It is drawn in different ways and different places for different reasons, and these differences are (as we shall see) not merely semantic. Alternatively, and more probably, we may be seeking some formula to delimit a subject-matter corresponding to an ill-defined interest. Knowing roughly what kinds of things we want to include and

what to exclude, we want some form of words which will not get us into too much trouble with borderline cases.

### *The Unity of the Arts*

The problem of the viability of the concept of art is that of the rationality of the distinctions between art and what is not art, and the challenge usually comes in the form which Father Turner gives it, of saying that the grouping together of certain activities as "arts" or "the arts" rests on nothing more reputable than historical accident. Thus Professor Kristeller (1951) maintains that the grouping together of "the fine arts" is not only a peculiarity of "Western" civilization, but dates from the establishment of museums and academies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The idea of the fine arts is, according to this notion, essentially an administrative one, corresponding rather to a similarity in the positions of the arts in educational curricula or their relations with government patronage than to any community of practical or theoretical problems.

The historical origin and cultural distribution of the concept of art are irrelevant to its validity. If problems raised by one art are raised by another also, and if it is ever enlightening to use one art to illustrate another, or if the same terms are used in criticism of the various arts, then the concept of art will have a certain unity. And so it will if the distinction between art and non-art is made in the same way in the different arts. To establish the viability of the concept, all we need to establish is that general statements about art can sometimes be made and understood. And this condition certainly seems to be fulfilled. In the previous chapter I have discussed certain statements about art in general, and the discussion seemed to make sense, however tedious it may have been. (I assume that anything makes sense if people generally feel that they understand it and habitually discuss its pros and cons without such discussion breaking down in mutual bafflement. Some philosophers restrict meaningfulness to what people cannot be trained to believe that they do not understand, as by the introduction of the criterion of "verifiability"; but it has never been shown that anything could survive this treatment.) To uphold the viability of the concept of art it is certainly not necessary to maintain the absurd proposition that the arts are never better considered separately, or even that they are not usually better so considered. The Abbé Du Bos, for example, as Professor Hagstrum tells us (1958, 152), stressed the differences between the arts on the ground that "poetry cannot logically be bidden to resemble an art from which it is virtually indistinguishable." So Grillparzer was beside the point when he remarked (1826, 255-6; quoted by Hanslick 1854, 8):



Probably no worse service has ever been rendered to the arts than when German writers included them all in the collective name of art. Many points they undoubtedly have in common, yet they diverge widely not only in the means they employ, but also in their fundamental principles.

For this does not even show that their very differences are not such that to state them would shed light on the arts distinguished—which indeed Grillparzer proceeds to do. Certainly to make statements about the arts in general is to gloss over important differences; but, as Wimsatt justly observes (1954, 221), by the same token general statements about poetry gloss over important differences between poems. Surely these people cannot mean that no generalization should ever be made. But one does not then see why one should stop short at any particular level of generality.

The three more particular conditions I mentioned seem also to be fulfilled. "All the humane arts," said Cicero (*Pro Archia* I.2), "share a sort of common bond, and are held together by a sort of mutual kinship"; and more recently Henry James proclaimed (1884, 5) that

The analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honor of one is the honor of another.

Well, no doubt Cicero was just pleading a cause and James just beating his gums; neither of them probably meant very much. But it is certainly true that the use of one art to illustrate another has been common since antiquity. Aristotle repeatedly compares styles of character-drawing in drama with styles of figure-painting; Plato classes painting with drama as arts of representation, and painting (and sculpture) with architecture as arts in which beauty may be manifested. It is doubtless true, however, that it was not until the Renaissance that it was systematically maintained that the kinds of activity now called the fine arts were more akin to each other than any one of them was to any other form of activity (but see Plato's *Epinomis*, 975C-D, quoted below, p. 211). It is then that we find the persistent citations of the Horatian phrase *ut pictura poesis*, "painting is like poetry," both arts being regarded as different ways of achieving the same end (cf. Baumgarten 1735, §39): citations that by their very disregard of the original meaning of Horace's phrase in its context show the appeal that the analogy had come to have (cf. Hauser 1951, II.62).<sup>1</sup> Changes in

1. Kuo Hsi's remark in *The Great Message of Forests and Streams* (11th century A.D.) that "As a man of former times said, 'a poem is a picture without form, a picture a poem in form'" (Sirén 1936, 49) is presumably independent of Horace, whether misunderstood or not.

the interpretation of an art's function are often marked by a change in such analogies: thus in the romantic period the imitative art of painting is replaced by the non-imitative art of music as that to which poetry is generally compared (Abrams 1953, 50), and Mr. Wilenski (1940, I.133-57) relies on the analogy with architecture to indicate the essential nature of the changes introduced into French painting by Seurat and others in the 1880's.<sup>2</sup> The conflation of such analogies and their implied contrasts leads to attempts to construct "systems of the arts" defining the relations between all of them; and these attempts have been, if seldom convincing, frequently illuminating (cf. Munro 1949, ch. 5).

The persistent use of one of the fine arts as a source of analogies for another may be less due to any real community among them than to the very supposition of their affinity which I have been using it to establish. It is less easy thus to explain away the fact that, although the different arts have their technical vocabularies peculiar to themselves, there is also a more generalized vocabulary which is used of any art. Rhythm, form, beauty or ugliness, success or failure, masterpiece or pot-boiler, original or derivative, creative, conventional, civilized, graceful, ambitious—some of these terms extend beyond the sphere of what we should wish to call art, but together they delimit it fairly well. We cannot build much on this, since it may well be possible to mark off any range of human experience or activity, however arbitrarily chosen, by a select vocabulary thus ranging over it; but it is at least suggestive. In addition to such general terms there are those indicating modes of sensibility, such as "baroque"; but the use of such terms itself raises too many problems to help in the solution of this one (see chapter VII).

The use of such a "general" vocabulary in criticism or description of the arts is often decried as destructive of sound criticism because of its imprecision: "Such wanton and facile transference of the very few precise descriptive terms which the science of aesthetics owns can only convert the inarticulate into garrulous obscurity" (Osborne 1952, 121). But I cannot see that this is a serious objection even to the occasional use of terms that are properly appropriate to one art in describing another, since

2. The extreme form of this use of one art to illustrate another would be the taking of one art as paradigm for all, to which I alluded before (p. 42). Cf. Lin (1938, 275): "So fundamental is the place of calligraphy in Chinese art as a study of form and rhythm in the abstract that we may say it has provided the Chinese people with a basic aesthetics, and it is through calligraphy that the Chinese have learned their basic notions of line and form. It is therefore impossible to talk about Chinese art without understanding Chinese calligraphy and its artistic inspiration. There is, for instance, not one type of Chinese architecture, whether it be the *pailou*, the pavilion or the temple, whose sense of harmony and form is not directly derived from certain types of Chinese calligraphy."



if the term can really only be applied literally to the one its use of the other must be recognizably metaphorical; and certainly it has no bearing on the legitimacy of using terms that are not thus specific in their original reference.

Between the purely general terms and the specific ones whose use is plainly metaphorical will be the "analogous" terms: to a certain quality in one art will correspond a quality in another art, whose presence may be established by different criteria but which nevertheless plainly occupies the same relative position among the qualities of the two arts and which may be covered by a common definition. It may often be doubtful whether a term is thus analogous or metaphorical, where it is doubtful whether there is one context in which its use is more proper. Thus many writers object to the use of the term "rhythm" to refer to spatial relationships, on the ground that in its origins the term refers to temporal relationships only, and its use elsewhere is simply muddling. But the Greek word *rhythmos* seems to have been used for any pattern, spatial, temporal or conceptual, and Plato in his *Republic* (400-2) specifies rhythm, harmony and grace (*eurhythmia*, to *euharmonia*, *euschemosyne*) as elements in the beauty alike of music, of the visual arts, and of ways of living. And it is obvious that emphases may be repeated at regular or systematically varied intervals in visible as well as in audible sequences, and that the same mathematical ratios may be embodied in such repetitions for both senses, though it is equally plain that audible intervals, sequences, emphases and repetitions will differ significantly from visible ones. So when we find Professor Sypher (1955, 11) saying that

Rhythm is one of the techniques of a style in either music, architecture, painting, poetry, or sculpture; a pattern of recurrence that is, by analogy, similar in a minuet, a rococo panel, a painting by Watteau, Pope's verse in *The Rape of The Lock*, and a sculpture by Falconet,

we shall not wish to give or withhold assent without much qualification.

One may object to the use of terms from one art to criticize another, and to the mutual illustration of the arts, on the ground that though possible it is undesirable. Thus Professor Gilson argues (1957, 44) that if painters use the term "rhythm" in connection with their work this is "a sure sign that this art itself is trying to overstep its natural limits." But one may equally well say, as Professor Hagstrum does (1958, xxi), that "the medium's extremity is the poet's opportunity." It is hard to see how an art could have a nature to violate, and equally hard to see how if it did one could establish what its nature was otherwise than by seeing what was in fact done. When Gilson says (*loc. cit.*) that "The Wagnerian theme im-

parts to music an amount of simultaneous presence that it is not in its nature to have" one can only reply that the fact that it is imparted is the only conceivably relevant evidence that it is in music's "nature" to have it.

The arguments thus far employed are inconclusive: the practices mentioned are not sufficient to establish the worth of the concept of art, and are themselves of doubtful utility and propriety. But they may serve to remind us that the thesis that "there is no such thing as art" is, initially, an extravagant one, in view of the general tendency of people to proceed as if there were. However, the real justification of the use of the concept of "art" and of attempts to construct general theories of art would be the existence of general problems occurring in connection with each of the arts and with nothing else. There does seem to be such a problem, that of the function of the arts, since they are all activities which are apparently useless or—since an ugly pot holds as much water as a graceful one—which are classified as artistic in virtue of aspects whose utility is not evident. The unity of the arts would then lie in the fact that they occupy the same place in human affairs. And that, if true, would be enough. When Reynolds wishes to establish the unity of the arts, it is to this unity of function that he appeals, together with the use of one art to illustrate another and the propensity of practitioners of one art to learn from practitioners of another:

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 shew 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. (Reynolds 1776, I.426.)

But of course the supposed facts that Reynolds adduces are precisely what need most support: the alleged necessities of criticism may be just fads,<sup>3</sup> the borrowings of artists may be detrimental, and the "general end" is so general that many things other than the arts achieve it.

3. Webb (1760, 10) similarly connects the practice of illustrating one art by another with "the near affinity that is observed between the polite arts, they being indeed all but different means of addressing the same passions." Reynolds may be quoting Webb, but it is more likely that both are uttering the clichés of the age. Cf. Marino, quoted below, p. 206.



*Art and the Arts*

I have been proceeding as if the distinction between what is art and what is not were one between certain special kinds of activity called "the arts" and all others, and as if the problem of the unity of art were one of the "common bond" between the arts. But that is misleading. Not all writings, not all applications of paint, are art. The distinction usually made between what is art and what is not is less one between classes of professional activity than between certain grades of activity within such classes. One might therefore seek to show the unity of art not by showing that the arts have much in common but by showing that within each of the arts the distinction between what is art and what is not art is made in the same or similar ways, however different the arts themselves may be—although, of course, the fact that such a distinction could appropriately be made within each of them might well be sufficient to establish a significant bond among them.

To say that one painted artefact is a work of art and another is not is both more invidious and more debatable than to say that sculpture is an art and bricklaying is not. Consequently one who accepts that "the arts" form a group of activities having important aspects in common may still object to the distinction between what is and what is not art within any such kind of activity. The ground of the objection would be that, despite the various pretentious arguments used to justify it, the distinction always turns out in the last resort to hinge on mere personal taste, that "art" is an empty honorific arbitrarily or snobbishly bestowed; or that the criteria actually used to distinguish between what is and what is not art are trivial and extraneous, such as the medium employed (anything written for a string quartet is art, nothing written for a dance band is) or popular acceptance. If these objections can be sustained, the relation between the honorific "art" and the classificatory "the arts" will be that "art" is a term reserved mainly for the praise of certain kinds of success in the arts. If the objections are rejected, the relation will be that the kinds of activity called "the arts" are those which have been found peculiarly appropriate, either by nature or by tradition, for the execution of works of art.

*Defining Art*

Granted that there is general agreement as to what the institution of art contains, I said that if we wanted to make of this institution more than a social accident of our own civilization we should have to find some unifying principle for the phenomena. Attempts have been made to find such a principle in each of the aspects of art mentioned above (p. 27): in its

relation to a producer or to a consumer, in its social or metaphysical setting, and in its own qualities.

The most obvious place to look for a unifying principle, since art is a form of human activity, is in the activity itself. Accordingly attempts have been made to identify art by either the psychological processes involved in its production or the kind of skill employed. The former defines art as the result of a "creative process"; the latter restores to the term "art" the original meaning of the Latin *ars* and the Greek *techne*, "*recta ratio factibilium*," the correctness of the reason in relation to things to be made. Neither of these attempts is successful. The "creative process," in so far as it can be described objectively and without reference to the status of its product as a work of art, turns out to be indistinguishable from the processes involved in original work in mathematics or the sciences, and to be the same in successful as in abortive creation (Calogero 1958, 93). Moreover, since in most cases no one knows what psychological events may have taken place in the production of a given work, either one simply postulates that a process of the required kind must have gone on, since one holds on quite other grounds that what resulted was a work of art, or else the term "creative process" becomes quite empty, standing for whatever psychological antecedents a work of art may have had. In neither case can one use the supposed characteristic process to differentiate what is art from what is not. I return to this subject later (pp. 227-9 and 418-22). The concept of art as *techne* runs into similar difficulties. In so far as "art" in this sense has its Aristotelian meaning of that body of special knowledge and skill that a productive agent brings to his work, it obviously cannot serve to distinguish "works of art" from other works. Indeed, the use of the concept commonly implies the rejection of all such distinctions as that between "art" and "craft." "I say art embraces all making and that therefore all things made are works of art," writes Eric Gill. "Art is skill, that is the first meaning of the word" (Gill 1934, 2-3). It is possible, certainly, to differentiate one such craft from another, and it may well be possible to describe the kinds of skill specially appropriate to the production of what are termed works of art. But once again the differentiation would be made in the first instance on the basis of a recognized difference between products.

If attempts to differentiate epistemologically or psychologically between the antecedents of different kinds of artefact all seem to be projections of differences already found between the artefacts themselves, it is more sensible to look for the defining characteristics of art in the artefacts. So one may say with Bell (1914) that all works of art and only works of art have "significant form." But "significant form," like "unity in variety"



and other suggested qualities, turns out not to be objectively recognizable: the unity must be a *felt* unity, the significant form is that which arouses an aesthetic *emotion*, and so on. So we seem to be driven on again from the artefact to its effect on the perceiver. This may seem both surprising and deplorable; but doubtless it must be so if we are determined to use "art" partly as an evaluative term, for it is hard to conceive of a way of evaluating art otherwise than in relation to the thoughts and feelings of its public. And it is only as partly evaluative that "art" has ever seemed an interesting concept: even "the arts" are only worth distinguishing from other kinds of activity on the supposition that they have a common function or a common dignity.

Is there perhaps an "aesthetic experience," a characteristic response evoked by masterpieces, or by strong moments, in all the arts equally? Some have thought so, and it seems, after our failure with the artist and his artefact, to offer our last hope of finding a defining characteristic for art. If there is such an experience, certainly the unity of art is established. But is there really? In the first place, do we not *try* to feel the same way about all the arts, just because we have been told that they are all "art"? People are very suggestible: such an illusion of similarity in feeling might well be produced, consciously or unconsciously, in anyone who expects to feel it. In the second place, does it even seem to be true? Do we not rather feel different kinds of excitement about poetry, drama, painting, dancing? We could go further, and say that the feeling aroused by every individual work is significantly different from that produced by any other: there is no characteristic "aesthetic experience," nor even a characteristic "musical experience"; there are just the experiences of perceiving, and being impressed by, particular objects. True, these experiences are all exciting. But what of that? So is a ride on a swing, or one's first cigarette or love-affair. The real difficulty with this whole line of argument is that there is no way of telling whether a given particular feeling is "the same as" or "different from" another particular feeling. "Well, it feels much the same." Yes, but the context was different; doesn't this mean that the feeling was different too? Were you ever really in doubt as to whether you were watching a movie or listening to a cantata? These again are themes which I develop later (pp. 264-6).

Even if we accept that there is a characteristic aesthetic experience or emotion, and propose to call "art" whatever arouses it, we still have difficulties. In whom is it to be aroused? In everyone? In the best judges? In most people? In ourselves? Rather than try to answer such questions it might be better to follow Kant (and the implications of our own conclusions in chapter IV) in taking as primary not art nor a special kind of

experience but a kind of judgement or (with later authors, e.g. Langfeld 1920) a kind of attitude: works of art would then be artefacts to which aesthetic judgements or the aesthetic attitude were especially appropriate, and artistic activity would be that of producing such artefacts. The effect of adopting this solution is to ground the institution loosely referred to as "art" in a constant form of conscious behaviour, which would be a firm and appropriate foundation. But its adoption entails that neither "art" nor any of its derivatives and cognates can be a basic term in aesthetics.

The solution just offered grounds the unity of art in a common function of works of art, the provision of opportunities for an activity. Alternatives would be to assign some other characteristic function to works of art, or to find a function for the institution of art in all its aspects: we shall encounter several attempts to do this in later chapters.

### *Affinities of Arts*

One might try to establish the unity of the arts without raising large and awkward questions of function and value by pointing to their practical affinities. In song music and poetry combine to produce a joint effect, and in opera a single aesthetic effect is produced by the mutual support of song, mime, narrative and the arts of the scene-designer. Surely, it is argued, the fusion that takes place in the most successful works of this kind indicates a certain original affinity among the arts. So Mr. Hussey writes of the age of William Gilpin and Uvedale Price that "At moments the relation of all the arts to one another, through the pictorial appreciation of nature, was so close that poetry, painting, gardening, architecture and the art of travel may be said to have fused into the single 'art of landscape'" (Hussey 1927, 4). And Mr. Chiang (1935, 32 ff.) reminds us that the effect of a Chinese picture depends on the mutual support of the painting, the poem inscribed on it, and the calligraphy of the poem. To all this it may be objected that such mixed arts are monstrous and ought not to succeed; but to this objection the obvious reply is that of Reynolds (1786, II.68) who writes of opera that

It is conformable to experience, and therefore agreeable to reason as connected with and referred to experience, that we should . . . be delighted with this union of music, poetry and graceful action, joined to every circumstance of pomp and magnificence calculated to strike the senses of the spectator. Shall reason stand in the way, and tell us that we ought not to like what we know we do like?

Well, perhaps reason might, if it had any arguments. But there are none. The relevant criterion, as Reynolds is saying, is that of experience. And it does not appear that people who dislike opera have in other respects



better taste than those who like it. Nor can it be said that such a complex blending of experience is unnatural: it is not by a conscious and unnatural effort that in our everyday lives we combine the data of the different senses in a single experience and relate them to a single world.

Similar to the argument from the possibility of the arts combining in a common effect would be that from the alleged possibility of forming good taste in general. Does it not seem to be quite generally true that a man whose taste in literature is fine will also have good taste in painting and music, even if he has not made much special study of them? But this argument is tenuous. The answer to the question might be No. Even if it is Yes, the combination might be attributed to extraneous factors: for example, anyone with a taste for literature will meet lots of arty types from whom he will pick up the o.k. names in the other arts, the existence of these "arty types" in the first place being due merely to the administrative and social unity of the institution of art, and the species perpetuating itself by indoctrination. Furthermore, the man of good literary taste will presumably be a cultured man, that is a man whose interests are wide and whose education has been thorough and general; his good taste in the other arts will be no more directly connected with his literary taste than will his knowledgeableness about politics, vintages, law and race-horses. As against such scepticism, however, we have the assurance of Professor Eysenck (1957, 320) that tests of adolescents show that the rudiments of good taste in one of the visual arts are proportionate to the rudiments of good taste in all the others.

### *The Status of the Concept*

The grounds we have found for asserting the unity of art and hence the utility of the concept have been barely adequate. If the arts have a common function, or if they all raise similar theoretical problems, the unity thus established may still not correspond perfectly to the distinctions conventionally made between what is an art and what is not. From the point of view of creativity, for example, mathematics is akin to the arts, and many theorists count it as one of them; but conventionally, and for reasons that are obvious and telling, it is excluded. And the differences between literary and non-literary arts, and between the fine and the useful arts, may seem as fundamental as any that separate them all from all other activities. On the other hand, the attempt to delimit the sphere of art by discriminating "art" from "not-art" within the arts ended by making the aesthetic judgement or attitude the key term. But this means that aesthetics becomes the philosophy of criticism rather than the philosophy of art; and the material

on which the judgement and criticism are exercised or towards which the attitude is adopted need not be pre-selected at all.

The question "What is art?" then fares little better than "What is beauty?" did as one of the two basic questions of aesthetics. But the questions have not fared alike, for the problem of what art is cannot be reduced to that of what "art" means as that of what beauty was could be to what "beauty" meant. This is because in art we are faced with something more concrete, the ensemble of practices, the institution that the term loosely indicates. To ask for the meaning of the term is to ask for a phrase or brief description indicating the range it covers and the properties it connotes; to ask what the institution is, is to go on from there to ask what place the activities thus defined play in human affairs or in the scheme of things. The former question may be briefly answered, if at all; the answer to the latter may be of any length, for we cannot set *a priori* any limits to the number and extent of the human and cosmic interests that the institution may serve.

To establish the unity of art adequately for the purposes of aesthetics it is not after all necessary to provide a workable definition for the term "art." It is enough to accept the institution in all its vagueness and to discourse meaningfully about it at any required length. The flat assertions that "There is no such thing as art" will then fall by their own weight. One can ignore them, as psychologists and sociologists can ignore the similar assertions that each person is a unique individual created by God, and besides people have racial and national characteristics that differentiate them so that no general statements about human beings can hold. This procedure will only be effective, though, if the discourse really is meaningful and really is about art as a whole—as whatever sort of whole it is taken to be. Much that is said about "art" is really applicable to one art or group of the arts only. Meanwhile, for my own purpose, which is to discuss aesthetics as it is supposed to be, I must often proceed on the supposition that art has as much unity as it is supposed to have.

## RELATIVITY

AWARENESS OF cultural diversity has made many people reluctant on principle to accept any statement about human activities that claims universal validity. Such people will extend their suspicions to any statements made about "art" in general terms. Their suspicions have a double basis: first, in the matter of art, there is doubt about the inter-cultural validity of the concept itself, which seems to refer to an institution peculiar to our



own civilization; and second, in the matter of beauty, there is doubt about the possibility of appreciating alien arts. The second of these doubts will be dealt with in another context (pp. 271-84); the former is partly met by what I have just been saying, and will now be answered more fully.

All known peoples make patterns on the surfaces of things (including their own bodies); make things representing but not simulating natural objects; tell stories; and sing. Granted that we have no reason to suppose *a priori* that the social functions and individual motivations of these practices are everywhere the same, except that it is more economical to suppose one function than many, the diversity of cultures raises no problems of principle that are not already raised by the diversity of practice, motive and function within our own civilization. The justification for our lumping together all, or a large number, of these activities under the general name of "art" remains the purely pragmatic one that these are things which we sometimes wish to discuss in the same context and with the help of the same concepts.

The fact that cultures other than ours have no concept answering to ours of "art" is neither here nor there, so long as it is we and not they who are discussing their institutions. There is no reason to suppose that all peoples will be equally self-conscious and analytical in their approach to their own institutions; and the whole course of the discussion in this book will show that the unifying concept of art is needed, if at all, only in the context of highly abstract discussions. It may turn out, however, that the concept has greater applicability to our own institutions than to those of societies in which (for example) building should be purely utilitarian, song strictly religious or magical in function, and the carving of designs on canoe paddles the sole focus of all aesthetic endeavour; although even here we might find it convenient to say that paddle-carving was the only art that these people practised, thus applying negatively to another culture, for purposes of comparison, a concept developed with reference to our own institutions and habits of thought.

The fact that the concept of art may be meaningfully applied even where from some points of view it would seem not to fit suggests that objections to making universal statements about art may often rest on a mistake about what such a statement presupposes and implies. In fact there are several different kinds of such statements, each of which may be used in a different kind of context and requires different justification, though superficially they may appear identical.

The distinctions between types of statements which I am about to make are rather subtle in nature. They are not based upon grammatical form (or upon "logical form," if anyone still thinks there is such a thing):

all but one of the types may take the form "Art is. . . ." The distinctions are between the ways in which the statements are supported, the part they play in the deployment of an argument, and in general their relation to the other beliefs of those who make them. To regard the distinctions as made between types of statements one must include in what people say what they mean by what they say, so that people who use the same form of words may be regarded as saying quite different things. From this point of view, a twelve-year-old boy who said "All men are liars" would not be taken as making the same kind of statement as an octogenarian Supreme Court judge who said the same thing. In the former's mouth, it could only be a rhetorical flourish or the expression of a mood; on the latter's lips, it could only be a report on experience or a conscious parody of such a report.

### *Generalizations*

The most obvious, but by no means the most usual, basis of statements about "what art is" would be a collection and comparison of individual works of art. The statements would then have the status of generalizations based on experience. Books about primitive art tend to purport to be of this nature, although they are usually written (unless they are mere anthologies or catalogues) to support some thesis which the examples are selected to illustrate. There can be no logical objection to such generalizations if they are supported by the data, and they might seem to afford a firm basis for any theorizing one might afterwards feel tempted to indulge in.

It is true that before pontificating about Art one had better find out what art has in fact been. But it is not true that one can thus acquire a perfectly safe and theoretically neutral foundation, for two familiar reasons. First, since it is obviously not possible to examine and consider every one of all men's innumerable artefacts, one must begin by selecting examples. These will be either representative specimens, or good specimens, or random specimens. To choose representative specimens, one must first know what has to be represented: that is, one must know what the significant modes of likeness and unlikeness in art are: that is, one must first have decided what art is. To select good specimens one must have the same knowledge and have made the same decisions; and also one must have made value judgements within each of the categories one marks out, thus further refining one's notion of what art is by deciding what constitutes excellence in art. By making a random selection one would avoid these premature and tendentious decisions, but this is not a genuine possibility. To make a random selection one must start with a



complete population from which to select, and this is impossible both on the practical grounds I mentioned and on the theoretical grounds I shall mention shortly. One must also have a basis of selection designed not to coincide with the significant classifications of the material with which one is concerned, and it seems highly unlikely that there would be any way of doing that in this instance.

The other difficulty in framing a theoretically neutral generalization is that the boundaries of art are no more "given" prior to investigation than are the internal classifications. Books on primitive art, for instance, quite commonly exclude buildings from consideration, presumably on the supposition that their form is determined by pure utility, but include the most negligently hacked idols, presumably either on the ground that whatever has religious significance must have artistic significance and vice versa (a dogma widely held) or on the ground that these things are statues, and statues are sculpture, and everyone knows that sculpture is an art whereas building is only an art if you hire an architect. But the judgement that houses are for living in, and that is a utilitarian function, whereas idols are for praying to or for protection from spirits, and those are not utilitarian functions, is obviously tendentious; and it might well be the case that the idols in question were worked up no more than was necessary for them to fulfil whatever their ritual or protective function might be.

In practice, generalizations about the art of our own place and time are based on a principle of discrimination quite other than those applied to other places and times: it would be most unusual, in considering contemporary art, to take account of everyday decorated artefacts or of paintings by other than painters of established reputation or those belonging to fashionable movements. This means that existing partial generalizations on local arts cannot be put together to form a grand generalization about Art as such. But as soon as one considers how one could go about framing such a generalization independently of existing collections, one realizes that it could only be on the basis of some existing notion of what "art" meant, and hence of what a thing would have to be to qualify for that title. You can't collect specimens unless you know what they are to be specimens of. However, though a classifying concept cannot be derived from the material it is used to classify, it may be accepted, rejected or modified as more or less handily applicable to the material. Material and concept modify each other: starting with a vague notion of what one wishes to include, one frames a formula to cover that; the formula suggests that certain hitherto neglected material (which it seems to cover) should be included in the classification; then perhaps a consideration of the new collection of material suggests a revision of the formula; and so

on. In all such cases, where the nature of the material does not even seem to dictate where lines should be drawn, one's general statements may have the double function of delimiting a field and generalizing about what the field delimited is found to contain.

### *Hypothetical Universals*

If generalizations about art are at best only half empirical and half prescriptive, one may wish to clarify the logical status of what one says by making the prescriptive aspect explicit and making the empirical aspect logically accidental. One can do this by putting whatever it is that one wishes to say about art into the form of a definition or analysis of the term "art," and then rejecting any proposed counter-example as being, by definition, not art. This procedure is acceptable so long as one does not forget what one is doing and suppose that one's exclusion is based upon something more than the *hypothesis* of the acceptability of the proposed definition. Nor is such framing of definitions a manoeuvre of merely verbal significance: when one talks about art one is talking about real things and real activities, however they may be selected and classified, and though it may not be true that only one definition will fit "the facts"—for there may not be agreement about which facts are *the* facts—it will certainly be true that only some definitions will have enough facts to fit for them to be worth using.

Though hypothetical definitions of art may be arrived at by any means, they will normally be based at least to some extent on experience, since the works of art to which they refer are objects of experience. But their empirical basis may be broad or narrow. They may take into account only a few selected art forms (e.g. "the fine arts") or the arts of a restricted place and time (e.g. renaissance Italy), everything else being rejected as inferior art, minor art, or not art at all. Such restriction is common in polemical writing, and may be salutary, but it is not philosophical: the philosopher has no right to attach importance to the narrowness of his own tastes, or to argue himself into believing that this narrowness has a respectable metaphysical basis. We have seen that the discrimination between what is and what is not art is not an axiologically neutral classification but is in part a value judgement, and may if taken seriously have important practical consequences. Narrowly based definitions of art are therefore invidious.

Since what are generally taken to be art forms and styles of art both show great variety, any general definition of art, or set of statements about the nature of art, must if it is not to be invidiously exclusive be highly abstract and applicable to the most various materials. If there is a single criterion



or set of criteria that discriminates what is from what is not art it will be one capable of the most various interpretation in different contexts. It is for this reason that one often meets in aesthetic phrases such as "significant form" and "unity in diversity," whose extreme abstractness Professor Passmore blames for what he calls the dreariness of the subject. But they are uttered not for their intrinsic beauty or rhetorical effectiveness but because they can be used to unify the varying discussions of diverse matters. When one turns from the unity of the slogan to the diversity of the application the effect of dreariness dwindles if it does not vanish.

Ascriptions of goodness or perfection to particular works of art may have absolute validity on the same conditions as the more general statements we have been discussing. To call anything a good so-and-so is to say that it is good *as* a so-and-so (Sparshott 1958, 151-2), without necessarily committing oneself to an approval of so-and-sos. To say that "The Parthenon is the perfect Doric temple" is to acknowledge its conformity to standards which are not thereby endorsed but are accepted hypothetically for the purposes of the judgement: if one accepts the precise and well-known criteria of success in Doric design one will recognize that the Parthenon fulfils them perfectly. Such judgements may be called "concealed hypotheticals." They take a somewhat more complex form when in place of such descriptive terms as "Doric" we have the evaluative term "art" itself, in so far as one is less likely to be indifferent to success or failure in being artistic than to success or failure in being Doric. Statements like "*Camino Real* was a great stage success but an artistic failure" or "Your sonata is artistically successful, but I don't know how it would sound" presuppose definitions of art which imply norms by which success may be judged; but such statements do not assert, and may on occasion not even imply, that these are the only relevant canons by which the object might be judged to have succeeded or failed.

Cultural relativism, the doctrine that all judgements of value are made with reference to the received standards of some society and that among these sets of standards no order of merit can be meaningfully asserted, does not, as some suppose, condemn us to silence when faced with artefacts of an alien culture. On the contrary, it permits and even enjoins us to judge them by means of such concealed hypotheticals as I have described, using as the hypothetical standard of judgement either the values current in our own culture or (if we have sophistication enough) those of the culture to which the artefact belongs.

Whatever one may think of relativism, cultural or other, one has to admit that many judgements on works of art are made in terms of concealed hypotheticals: in terms, especially, of ideas of the proper use of

genres, ideas which are unlikely to be deliberately articulated and which may never have been even consciously entertained, much less subscribed to. And the connection between the values by which one judges excellence or success and one's personal likings is not always very close. The degree of their dissociation may be an index of civilization.

### *Spurious Universals*

Some general statements about what art is are neither put forward as prescriptive definitions nor based upon an examination of the data but are rather gathered out of the air, and represent what "everyone" just happens to be thinking. It is indeed a very common way of arriving at a notion of what art is or does to assume the validity of the definitions, concepts and criteria of art current in one's own place and day and apply them without qualification to whatever is done anywhere, not as hypothetically applicable standards but as absolute and categorically valid. A statement representing such a procedure is obviously defective in two ways. First, it is based neither, as a good generalization should be, upon a careful collection and collation of phenomena, nor, as a good philosophical theory must be, on a carefully articulated framework of conceptual analyses, logical necessities and metaphysical needs, but at best on whatever evidence lies to hand and at worst on hearsay, prejudice, catchwords and the detritus of fashionable criticism. Second, it is put forward not as an hypothesis or a workable notion but as an established fact, which in the nature of the case it can hardly be. If we want a name for such a statement, we may call it an ethnocentric universal. We may also term it a spurious universal, in that it has no right to the claim of universal validity that it embodies.

The ethnocentric universal errs in extrapolating from a limited range of experience. But other allegedly general statements may lack even this limited basis. In all ages, doubtless, there are slogans about the nature and practice of art which everyone in a certain cultural environment endorses, but which are neither based on experience nor in any way relevant to current practice. It might be possible, I suppose, to have enough sophistication and intellectual integrity to discriminate infallibly between these assertions and those which have some connection with experience and practice; but with most of us our thoughts form too much of a self-contained system for this to be possible. Even the degree of awareness necessary to realize that there is a difficulty is pretty rare, even among philosophers.

Such wildly spurious universals are not clearly marked off from the more reputable ones I have already discussed. Rather, there are statements



and beliefs with all degrees of relatedness to experience, from the completest possible fidelity to the highest possible irrelevance. Just where these extremes of possibility are located is a problem: any report on experience must surely involve some degree of interpretation, and even the wildest phantasy must at some point latch on to the known world.

### *Prescriptive Universals*

A definition of art may be used to persuade artists to produce, and others to value, work of the kind which the utterer of the definition values, and for the reasons for which he values it. Such a definition does not purport to represent experience, but seeks to alter it, and is put forward not as hypothesis but as dogma. Mr. Bell's celebrated work (1914) is among the most straightforward (or blatant) operations of this kind. Such persuasive definitions (Stevenson 1938) are unobjectionable so long as they are recognized for what they are, namely attempts to capture a prestigious designation for some preferred candidate. But they are rather seldom so recognized, and if they are they tend to lose their effectiveness.

Some statements about art that are made with full awareness that much of what is generally called art is something quite different do not suggest that the term has been wrongly used or seek to restrict its scope, but are to be taken rather as assertions of what art ought to be and what artists ought to be doing. They differ from persuasive definitions in being idealistic or optimistic rather than polemical. Such manoeuvres are common in our post-Darwinian age, when large parts of what is currently done may be dismissed as "primitive" or undeveloped, and reality is sought in the emergent future: to find what art *really* is, we must look to what it could and should become. This attitude finds its justification, if anywhere, in the analogy of the individual's development, for one certainly seeks the "nature" of the individual organism in its condition at maturity, not in its infancy or senility. Whether the analogy between the individual organism and such doubtful entities as "art" is sufficient is another matter. Such idealistic statements have a universality of a sort, despite their consciously restricted scope, since they introduce time into logic in the Hegelian manner: when things are as they are now trying to become, what we now say will be true of everything that is then the case, and everything that shall have happened before then may be dismissed as inadequately real.

## ART: GRADES AND KINDS

### THE GRADING OF ART

WE HAVE SEEN how far and on what grounds a unity of art may be asserted. We must now turn to the principles of its diversification. This is an easier assignment, since those who would deny that there are important differences between artistic activities are few, and can do so only on the basis of a theory strong enough to resist obvious facts. As to what the most significant of these distinctions are, however, there is little agreement. Two principles of diversification may be used, which correspond to the two ways of distinguishing what is art from what is not: by description, and by evaluation. One may establish hierarchies and gradings among the activities, or one may divide them according to the type of activity or the medium employed or the like. In either case what serves as a principle for differentiation among artistic phenomena serves also to distinguish what is art from what is not, so that the division of subject between this chapter and the last is not sharp. In the next chapter, however, we shall examine a different kind of distinction altogether, which does not have this dual function.

The various ways of grading art, with which I begin, do not combine to form a single hierarchy; there are a number of independent contrasts, which may be useful and illuminating even if the value judgements incorporated in them are rejected.

#### *Art and Poesy*

"Art," we have seen, may be used as equivalent to Latin *ars* and Greek *technē*, which strictly stand for any body of knowledge directed to the production of a specific kind of change in a specific subject-matter: thus



medicine, cookery and boot-making are arts, and so is any kind of skill that can be codified and is not a matter of knacks (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a27 ff.). In a somewhat weaker sense "art" is used without the Greek implication of codifiability, being extended to any aspect of the play of knowledge and intelligence on the making of things that can be made in right or wrong ways. But this use of the word still commits one to postulating definite standards of rightness and wrongness, whether these standards be absolutely valid or merely current within a community or even spontaneously adopted by an individual for his own guidance: the intelligence involved is taken to be critical and decisive.

In discussions of aesthetics, and among cultivated folk generally, the term "art" is not usually given this traditional sense. It is confined to the production of certain kinds of objects, known as "works of art," or to the observation in the production of any object of certain specific considerations—"aesthetic" considerations—which are variously defined but are roughly equivalent to a care for appearances and an attempt to achieve beauty (in some of the senses mentioned above). More specifically, art is thought to be characterized by expressiveness or the exercise of creative imagination, the ability to envisage things in new ways.<sup>1</sup> Just how such expressiveness or creative imagination is to be interpreted is a matter of dispute, as later chapters will show, but it is quite generally agreed that some such notion is necessary to the definition of art as produced by artists and discussed by critics and aestheticians. And of art in this sense craftsmanship or technique is not a sufficient condition, according to some not even a necessary condition. Indeed, the existence of a codified body of knowledge and skill, the essence of the Greek *techné* and of such an art as medicine, is occasionally thought to be incompatible with the flourishing of the art with which aesthetics deals.

This wide difference, amounting at certain points to direct contrast, between the traditional and the aesthetic sense of "art," makes it very inexpedient to use the same word for both. Accordingly Coleridge, and others after him, have tried to establish the word "poetry"—or, better, "poesy," which has the advantage of not already meaning poetry—to replace "art" as the generic term covering aesthetic phenomena. Thus John Stuart Mill writes (1833, 63-4):

The word "poetry" imports something quite peculiar in its nature, something which . . . can speak through the other audible symbols called musical sounds,

1. The commonest sense of the term is one narrower yet: a person who is said to be studying art at an Art School will probably be learning to draw and paint, and perhaps sculpt a bit—producing the kind of thing kept in an Art Gallery. But this sense never turns up in discussions of aesthetics, even among amateurs: it is taken for granted that the broader usage is appropriate to theoretical discussions.

and even through the visible ones which are the language of sculpture, painting, and architecture. . . . 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.

And he defines poets (*ibid.*, 80), as "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."

Poetry, that is, in the wide sense in which it is equivalent to what we usually term "art," is differentiated by the mode of organization of the artefacts, and hence by the propensity of the artificer to organize in this way and the characteristic effect of things so organized on those who apprehend them. The terms in which the characterization of "poetry" is couched are studiously neutral but in effect it is strongly though covertly evaluative, since it may be (indeed, inevitably is) taken to imply the possession of a refined sensibility by poets and of a high degree of order by their products.

Unfortunately, the attempt to substitute a contrast between "art" and "poetry" or "poesy" for one between two senses of "art" did not succeed. I shall therefore follow usage and speak of "art," trusting to the reader's wit to tell him when I am using the term in a sense other than that usual in aesthetics. The usage does perhaps have the advantage of reminding us that poesy without art is as ineffectual as art without poesy is prosaic.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Fine Arts*

The rarefied use of the term "art" just considered certainly originates in the concept of the "Fine Arts" (*Beaux Arts*, *Schöne Kunst*), usually taken to comprise painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry (cf. Kristeller 1951). This constellation is still the basis of many classifications and administrative decisions (see Munro 1949, 209 ff.). For example, the Canada Council Act of 1957 defines "the arts" as "architecture, the arts of the theatre, literature, music, painting, sculpture, the graphic arts,

2. Maritain makes (1953, 3) what seems to be a rather different distinction between "art" and "poetry." "Art and poetry cannot do without one another. . . . By Art I mean the creative and producing, work-making activity of the human mind. By Poetry I mean . . . that intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self which is a kind of divination. . . . Poetry, in this sense, is the secret life of each and all of the arts. . . ." But this distinction would not do for the starting point of a discussion; it presupposes the existence of poetry as he has defined it, which involves the ascription of inner beings to things including (if I understand his last sentence) artefacts. See pp. 392-400 for the theory implied.



and other similar creative and interpretative activities," a list in which the original five, with only the most grotesque omissions remedied, still serve as paradigms. And, willy-nilly, one finds that in most discussions of aesthetics it is examples from these arts that come most readily to mind unless one takes special pains to suppress them.

This automatic preference for "the fine arts" seems likely to mislead. Only the most superficial classifications, one would think, can depend on such facts as that a thing consists of oil paint on millboard. The differences which concern aesthetics may well be between uses of the same medium: between a snapshot and a portrait by Julia Ward Cameron, between a grade B western and *Alexander Nevsky* or between either of these and a Disney nature film. But the original grouping of the "Fine Arts" is only partly due to mere historical accident, and *a fortiori* present concentration on them is only partly due to mere prejudice and habit. The basis of grouping and preference alike is rather that certain media are more suitable than others for the working out of elaborate conceptions and accordingly are more frequently chosen for ambitious effort; naturally, then, the public pays more attention to works in these media in the expectation that such attention is more likely to be there repaid, and the artist using them works as one who expects his work to receive such scrutiny. Just as musicians nowadays seldom write symphonies (or call their compositions symphonies) unless they mean to do something pretty big, this being partly because the form itself invites ambition but partly also because the very title of "symphony" constitutes a claim that what is offered will repay close attention, a man will be likely to take more pains over a statue than over a ceramic tile, not only because of the greater freedom of expression possible but because it is known that people look harder at statues than at tiles and expect more of them. However, the list of five Fine Arts and other similar short lists are not really defensible as such, even when the distinctions which they partially embody are important ones.

### *Art Proper*

There is nothing to be said for the shivering virgin theory of art, according to which art is a fragile evocation of pure beauty surrounded by rough disciplines such as theology and morals, and in constant danger of being polluted by them.

Thus writes a critic (Frye 1947, 418). But an actor and producer of plays, who claims to be describing his own experience, writes that "The very least utilitarian purpose or tendency, brought into the realm of pure art, kills art instantly" (Stanislavsky 1924, 380). So perhaps if we refrain from

caricature we shall find that there is something to be said for the call for purity in art. Some artists, especially those working in film or theatre where they are constantly impelled or advised to do things they dislike doing in order to please a section of the public which they despise, do indeed show a rather surprising esteem for the aesthetics of R. G. Collingwood (1938), who distinguishes "art proper" from "art falsely so called." His meaning is best seen from the activities grouped under the latter heading. These are rhetoric, which methodically sets out to affect its public in predetermined ways, such as moving them to tears or enthusiasm; propaganda, which seeks by any means to convince people of the truth of some given doctrine; history, which seems to record some fact or situation or appearance whose form is taken as already entirely known; and magic, art's worst enemy, which uses the expressiveness of true art for social or religious ends. What differentiates art proper is its autonomy, and the autonomy of its creator: that the form of the work is not dictated by anything outside itself.

I cannot describe "art proper" more precisely without committing us prematurely to Collingwood's epistemology. My sketch as it stands makes the difference seem to lie in the artist's motives or intentions. We have seen that such differences cannot be established. None the less, the current conception of the artist (of Cézanne or James Joyce) is that of a man of integrity who refuses to make concessions to popular neglect or critical abuse and whose work is determined solely by his notion of what has to be done. It is felt, too, that the effects of such integrity are discernible in his work, as also are the signs of abandoning such integrity in order to "give the public what it wants." There is a certain amount of cant in all this (the conformist public rejoicing vicariously in the artist's nonconformity), but the notion of the artist's autonomy and the authority of his inspiration seems to be well established in our civilization and is found also among Chinese painters (Chiang 1935) and Pueblo potters (Bunzel 1929). Moreover, the objections to considering the artist's intentions are raised by critics, who must take the completed artefact as their datum: to Collingwood, as of course to the artists who approve of him, it is on the activity and not the product that attention centres. But in fact we can make the required distinction without even appearing to refer to the purity of the artist's intentions, and say that the work of art proper is that whose value lies in itself alone and not in any use that may be made of it.

The sense of "art" singled out by Collingwood's phrase "art proper" is a familiar one, even if it cannot be defined except in terms that beg all the questions, and it is in fact with "art proper" that writers on aesthetics, unlike sociologists and anthropologists and most art historians, are chiefly



concerned. Consequently most of my later chapters will amount to a definition in use of "art" in this sense. It is by considering the various solutions proposed to problems about art that one discovers what, if anything, the questions are about.

To distinguish "art proper" from "art falsely so called" is not to endorse the "shivering virgin" theory of art. Human action and motivation is a complicated mess. The distinctions and classifications here made are not meant to correspond to clear-cut differences in the phenomena: to indicate opposed tendencies is not to preclude mixtures and compromises. Professor Frye writes (1947, 24):

The product of the imaginative life is most clearly seen in the work of art, which is a unified mental vision of experience. For the work of art is produced by the entire imagination. The dull mind is always thinking in terms of general antitheses, and it is instructive to see how foolish these antitheses look when they are applied to art. We cannot say that painting a picture is either an intellectual or an emotional action: it is obviously both at once. We cannot say that it is either a reflective act or an active process: it is obviously both at once. We cannot say that it is "mental" or "bodily": no distinction between brainwork and handwork is relevant to it. We cannot say that the picture is a product of internal choice or external compulsion, for what the painter wants to do is what he has to do. Art is based on sense experience, yet it is an imaginative ordering of sense experience. . . .

Frye is here drawing attention, as I am, to the impropriety of using antitheses as barriers. What he does not draw attention to is that it is only by citing these antitheses that he is able to give meaning to his statement that the work of art is a "unified vision" produced by the "entire imagination"—he needs the antitheses in order to state what is unified, what is included in the entirety.

"Art proper" excludes much of what is called indifferently "popular art" (pp. 137-40 below) and "entertainment." Much work within the general scope of the media of the fine arts derives from no inner necessity but seeks to provide an easy pleasure, to flatter or manipulate. Some dance music and café music is a sort of audible wallpaper, trivial melodies, obvious harmonies and monotonous rhythms suitable as a background for eating or other physical exertion but repellent if close attention is paid. Writers of short stories for magazines are said deliberately to write to formulae that have proved to sell well, and the stories themselves, with their embarrassingly gross flattery of the reader, suggest that this is so. "Novels" are manufactured by publishers out of semi-literate manuscripts to fit the presumed tastes of the "reading public" (Wagner 1960). Movie-makers have been known to submit versions of their plots to public opinion agencies to be tested for possible audience reaction. Memorable

and striking characters are deliberately kept out of soap operas because characters vaguely drawn cannot give offence, and it is better to avoid displeasing than to satisfy. Such practices are incompatible with what most people nowadays would dignify with the name of "art." They were already condemned by Plato as "flattery" (*Gorgias*, 463E ff.).

The products classified as entertainment are designed to hold, without challenging, the attention. But to what end? Mr. Harap (1949, 101) points out that all the agencies disseminating popular music and movies are virtual monopolies, and maintains that they are deliberately manipulating these forms "toward a content that deflects the masses from a realistic understanding of their problems," but this is sheer romance: the purveyors' motives seem rather to be financial. The problem is rather why people want such products. Negatively, one supposes, because they do not want to pay attention; but why do people prefer reading trash to not reading, or turn on the radio or TV no matter what may be playing? Perhaps solitude is an unnatural condition, and the lonely person's radio is a substitute for human presence, the family TV a way of sharing experience without the risks of exacerbation that family conversation runs. I really do not know. But the market exists, and I cannot agree with Mr. Harap that the purveyors have either the wit or the power to create such a market.

The contrast between art and entertainment may suggest that art cannot entertain, in the sense that what delights cannot be art: art is necessarily grim and must be taken grimly. Some people act as if this were so, but seriousness is not solemnity, and one can maintain that art is serious in the sense that it merits attention and study without suggesting that it is or should be a bore; and we have seen that the term "entertainment" connotes pandering rather than frivolity. Nor does the possibility of distinguishing serious art from trivial entertainment entitle one to condemn entertainment for not being art, as many do. Since art demands attention, it is idle to wish that people would forsake entertainment for art: they probably don't have the energy to spare. Of course this lack of energy may be attributed to capitalism:

All this bad art could not be simply replaced by good. . . . The absurd stories of average films are propaganda . . . for bourgeois anti-revolutionary ideology. . . . A class of beings like the proletariat, that is worn out with material troubles, demands relaxation after work, innocent amusement, an imaginary realization of its dreams. Artistic enjoyment is not mere receptiveness, but something that demands exertion, much concentration, and a clear head. (Arnheim 1933, 291.)



But presumably the novel feature of capitalist society is not the existence of tired people, but the mere growth of a large public for which the mass production of luxury commodities is possible. Nor should entertainment be objected to as keeping people from art. On the contrary, it is their best stimulant: as soon as they pay close attention to their entertainment they will be driven to something more complex from sheer boredom (cf. Langfeld, quoted below, p. 282 n.). Art education is thus automatic, and promoted rather than hindered by the prevalence of entertainment.

It has been vehemently argued (Shaw 1956, *passim*) that the difference between art and entertainment is one of degree of complexity only, and hence of the rate at which boredom sets in. This seems a tenable position, since (as we said) purity of intention cannot be used as a criterion and the "complexity" mentioned may well be indistinguishable from the self-containedness of which I have spoken. Only introverts have rich inner lives. If this position be adopted, it follows that if entertainment were scarce it would give the satisfaction that art does (see above on "novelty," pp. 86-9). It follows, too, that the over-sophisticated person who knows nothing but the best will in time come to be bored with even that, and turn for relief to something different, as Mr. Clive Bell turned from the over-familiar Italian painters to Cézanne and the Byzantines (Bell 1914, 187 ff.), mistaking his ennui for progress. But if there is a continuum from the most blatant entertainment to the most refined art rather than a real difference in kind, even though there is enough concentration of output at the extreme ends of the scale for the distinction to retain its utility, the distinction will become one between two kinds of art and not between art and something else.

The distinction between art and entertainment in terms of demandingness and complexity is reminiscent of that made in similar terms between the beautiful and the pretty (pp. 72-5). But the sense of "beauty" thus isolated was distinguished from that of "the proper excellence of a work of art." We should not now assume that these two senses are the same without reflecting that the assumption lays us open to Michelis's accusation, that Western criticism has refused to consider any other category for artistic excellence than a narrowly conceived beauty. What has presented itself as purism may turn out to have been a parochial narrowness.

*Art and Craft.* The notion of art proper involved a contrast between art and craftsmanship. The contrast is made with the worthy intention of denying that rules of procedure can be laid down which artists must follow and by which their products can infallibly be judged; but it is too often taken to imply that no work of art can be well or ill made, that a talented amateur without previous training can produce masterpieces of

art, and that it is not worth while to look carefully at a work to see just what has gone into it.<sup>3</sup> Sloppiness in amateur practice and carelessness in appreciation are thus encouraged.

Collingwood (1938, 15) distinguishes art from craft as follows: craft envisages preconceived ends, distinct from the means thereto, which are discarded when the end is achieved, whereas art has no end distinguishable from the artist's action; in craft planning and execution are distinct, but art may be unpremeditated; the distinctions between matter and form, raw material and artefact, are clear in craft but not in art; crafts may be arranged in a hierarchy as their ends subserve each other; the draftsman's technical skill, unlike the artist's, lies in knowledge of "the means necessary to realize a given end," but the artist has no such given end. This is the fullest and best known statement of the distinction. Not all would accept all of it, but fewer would accept the opposite contention of John Dennis (1704, 335):

Poetry is either an Art, or Whimsy and Fanaticism. If it is an Art, it follows that it must propose an End to it self, and afterwards lay down proper Means for the attaining that End: For this is undeniable, that there are proper Means for the attaining of every End, and those proper Means in Poetry we call the Rules.

One would object to Dennis that an activity may be rational, even rationally controlled, without the agent having performed an Aristotelian deliberation (cf. Ryle 1949, 27 ff.); and if it were conceded (against Collingwood) that poetry had an "end" it would not follow that the end would be so precisely delimited that set rules could be laid down for achieving it: an "end" in the sense of a general kind of effect to be produced is not at all the same as an "end" in the sense of a specific situation to be brought about. However, there are those even today who equate the classical and modern senses of "art" and accept the consequence that the artist achieves definite ends by set means. Thus Stravinsky writes (1942, 24-5): "Art in the true sense is a way of fashioning works according to certain methods acquired either by apprenticeship or by inventiveness. And methods are the straight and predetermined channels that insure the rightness of an operation."

Stravinsky may here be consciously adopting a classical pose, and one is inclined to doubt that such rightness in music as can be assured by

3. Cf. Reynolds (1776, I.411): "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 judgement 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."



methods is music's highest value. But certainly, even if it be denied that any art has a single specific end to achieve, there must be many subordinate and partial ends to be methodically achieved. It is misleading to denounce these methods that can be taught and acquired as "art-school tricks" (Wilenski 1940, *passim*): even artists of whom it is loosely said that every work represents a problem and an achievement entirely new actually acquire their own ways of doing things, and I know of no artist of whom anyone would even think of saying that his very first work was his best.

Art without practised craftsmanship, then, is rare, though some people need less training than others; but craftsmanship without art is not. Many people (for example, the late Eric Gill) speak as if the craftsman's skill in handling his materials somehow ensured aesthetic excellence, but traditions of decorum do not always go with traditions of dexterity and efficiency. No doubt, though, they are more often found together than apart; nor is it surprising that they should be, since the careful craftsman is paying close attention to what he is doing and is therefore at least likely to notice what his work looks like. Ugly artefacts, one suspects, are often simply the product of negligence, the manufacturer not taking time out to consider his work's appearance. What seems to be the opposite has been observed: that ugliness often comes from gratuitous attempts at beauty, as in the ornamentation of early machine-made metalware. But such uglinesses are often if not always the result of attempts to solve problems of design in remotion from the actual processes of making. Mr. Klingender indeed suggests that craftsmanship without beauty is never found except where design and execution are thus separated (Klingender 1947, 39-41), and one recalls that one of the objectives of the Bauhaus was to do away with this separation (cf. Gropius 1956, 23 ff.).

Sir Herbert Read (1955, 51) seeks to explain why the craftsman's skill should issue in beauty: "Taste . . . depends entirely on the effective teaching of various skills. *A people of taste, or a period of taste is always one in which there exists a system of education or upbringing based on the acquisition of integrated physical skills.*" Such skills, he claims, "always involve, as the price of efficiency, the cultivation of harmony and grace." Physical skill, then, demands graceful movement, and this issues in beauty of the artefact, and a taste for beauty and grace wherever found. But by what magical contagion this is brought about, it is hard to see; unless it be thought that he who has learnt to prize grace in one context must prize it in all. One would like to think that that was true, but I do not know that it is.

The striking phenomenon is less the presence of good taste in individual

craftsmen than the tendency of *traditions* of craftsmanship and pleasing design to go together. Perhaps a tendency to appreciate good design is found in most men (Eysenck 1957) but may easily be overlaid by other considerations and by individual quirks, so that one would expect to find good design in any object on which the attention of many generations has been concentrated (as in most traditional tools: saws, scythes, axes), but ugliness in things which are the product of one man's effort? Good taste, present as a common factor in the judgement of most men, would then be combined in each individual with oddities which, being peculiar to the individual, will in the long run cancel each other out.

### *Pure and Applied Art*

One can distinguish between the "pure" arts whose works are to be judged as aesthetic objects only and the "applied" arts whose products are otherwise serviceable, as a violin by Amadi, which (I am told) is a beautiful object, is also good for fiddling on. "Pure" arts may be ranked higher, purity being obviously a virtue, or may be condemned as unhealthy cut off from the life of the times (Teague 1940, 116), but a less controversial difference lies in the problems raised for artist and critic alike. Josiah Wedgwood's teapots are designed to look well, but also they had to be designed to pour well; and the critic can criticize the handling of the spout, but is not entitled to deplore the presence of a spout with the characteristics necessary for free and dripless pouring. In the work of "pure" art where none but considerations of appearance enter neither critic nor artist is so restricted.

The restrictions which his task lays on the potter or industrial designer must sometimes so narrow his scope that in a particular medium only minor aesthetic achievements are possible. But to compensate for this there may be an added source of delight from the successful integration of functional elements, even if only one who knows the technical problems overcome can appreciate the elegance of the solution. Such an appreciative judgement would differ alike from those passed on works of pure art and from those passed by the inexpert on industrial arts, even those made from a "functional" point of view. The aesthetic satisfaction involved is like that found in mathematical proofs or philosophical systems: an intellectual satisfaction.

Characteristic of such judgements is the use of the term "elegance," a term of praise nowadays almost confined to aesthetically gratifying solutions of problems. Because such judgements are made with reference to a set problem Mr. Harré suggests (1958) that they should be described as "quasi-aesthetic," with the unstated implication that true



aesthetic appraisals are confined to "art proper" as Collingwood defines it. The distinction between the two types of judgement, whether or not we accept this tendentious description of it, does not coincide precisely with Kant's between the aesthetic judgement and the judgement of perfection, for the latter might be a merely intellectual assent or approval, whereas the judgement we are here concerned with has rather the character of an aesthetic judgement based on, but not identical with, such approval.

On reflection it appears that the "pure" arts work under restrictions little less narrow and no less compelling than those on the "applied" arts. The dramatist has to produce something actable and stageable, and is under strong pressure (since an unacted drama is an abortion, and an unacted dramatist a pauper) to produce something of one of the acceptable lengths.<sup>4</sup> He may neglect these requirements, just as the potters of San Ildefonso neglect to make their pots watertight (Bunzel 1929, 7), but perhaps this is less the superiority of genius to a narrowing convention than a failure of discipline. Likewise the portrait painter must produce a likeness, and if he is commissioned must produce an acceptable likeness; and even the tacheist is producing something that will hang on a real or possible wall. But we must not go too far. It may be cant to pretend that the artist is a self-generated and autonomous prodigy when in fact he is producing artefacts of a traditionally acceptable kind, but there is still a big difference between the dramatist's requirement of performability and the chair-maker's of sittability. The dramatist can claim to be composing a closet-drama or to starve in pride while he writes for an ideal theatre (as Hardy's *Dynasts* was found after his death to be suitable for radio), but the chair-maker cannot claim to be chair-making for ideal rumps: if his chairs can't be sat in, he cannot claim to have been succeeding in anything but the "pure" art of sculpture.

Kant (1790, §16) allows great importance to what may look like the distinction between pure and applied art. The section has the rubric "*A judgement of taste by which an object is described as beautiful under the condition of a concept is not pure,*" and reads in part:

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.

Kant gives as examples of "free" beauties flowers (since even the botanist who knows that the flower is the plant's reproductive organ "pays no attention to this natural end when using his taste to judge of its beauty"), "absolute" music and non-representational art in general.

4. Cf. G. B. Shaw's remarks, quoted by Henderson (1956, ch. 56).

But the beauty of man, . . . 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. . . .

Much might be added to a building that would immediately please the eye, were it not intended for a church.

But the distinction Kant wishes to make, despite his own words, is not at all one between kinds of object but entirely one between two kinds of judgement each of which may with propriety be applied to any kind of object. For, as he goes on to say, even "in respect of an object with a definite internal end" a judgement of taste may be pure "where the person judging either has no concept of this end, or else makes abstraction from it in his judgement." Thus two people may judge the same object in different but equally correct ways, "the one according to what he had present to his senses, the other according to what was present to his thoughts."

Three kinds of judgement on the work of representational pure art may be made: judgement of the pattern; judgement of the work as one representing such-and-such; and judgement of the fidelity to the such-and-such represented. With the work of applied art, also, three judgements are possible: of the work as pure design; of the work as design, bearing in mind that the design is limited by functional needs; and of the work as a good design for a such-and-such. If there is a difference here between pure and applied arts, it is that the third kind of judgement, though possible, is inappropriate to pure art: in so far as it is appropriate, the work is being considered as an object of utility, as information or a memento. In the case of non-representational pure art, however, and of natural beauties whose function is not known or not thought of, there is according to Kant but the one kind of judgement, the judgement of form, of pure beauty. But though the third type of judgement may here seem to be inapplicable, the second type is not. The judgement of the flower's beauty is not "free from concepts": the flower is perceived and judged as a flower, and the non-representational work is judged as representative of this or that more or less familiar genre. Comparisons may not be consciously made and criteria need not be deliberately applied, but our classifications of accepted methods and of conventionally recognized types of beautiful object affect the psychological attitude in which the judgement of beauty is made, not because we have standards of perfection which we unthinkingly apply but because we have vague habits of expectation which prepare us to perceive formal beauties of certain recognizable styles.

As well as being theoretically somewhat elusive, the distinction between pure and applied or useful arts may be practically harmful. For it



may be taken to imply that these are different activities and ought to be performed by different persons and regarded in different ways. Many have regarded the split between the pure and applied arts, which has undoubtedly occurred, as a disaster. Thus William Morris (1882, 2) claims that

When they are so parted, it is ill for the Arts altogether: the lesser ones become trivial, mechanical, unintelligent, incapable of resisting the changes pressed upon them by fashion or dishonesty; while the greater . . . are sure to lose their dignity of popular arts, and become nothing but dull adjuncts to unmeaning pomp, or ingenious toys for a few rich and idle men.

Morris here presents as the foreseeable effect of a known cause what was really an observed phenomenon of which he was inferring the cause, so that his words derive unmerited weight from the apparent confirmation of his bogus prediction. But what he says may be true, for all that.

## TRADITIONS

CERTAIN DIFFERENCES between kinds of artistic tradition, or between kinds of relationship between tradition and individual, are embodied in such familiar distinctions as those between the original and the academic, the esoteric and the popular, the primitive and the sophisticated. These distinctions may be made in value-free terms and hence do not logically entail value judgements, but in fact they are usually made for the purpose of grading rather than of neutral classification.

### *Original and Academic*

All artists work within a tradition, in that their work is always intelligibly related to that of some predecessors and contemporaries. Even the wildest innovations, thought of in their time as entirely new departures, appear in history's hindsight as the extremely rapid development of tendencies already discernible. In spite of this, one can distinguish between original artists, who enlarge the possibilities accepted for their medium, and those artists who accept existing methods and traditions and simply keep up the standard of performance in an already defined mode. These latter, the academics, need not be denied the name of artist even by those who define the artist as one who expresses a personal vision: a man may be perfectly sincere in making current modes of perception and expression his own, just as every adolescent who undergoes a religious "conversion" imagines himself to be sole discoverer of what has in fact been often felt, and is quite unaware that the phrases in which he expresses his "dis-

coveries" are not his own coinage but the clichés and cant common to all those converted to his sect.

Aestheticians, and to some extent even art historians, tend to concentrate their attention on the originals and neglect the academics: historians because the appearance of an original work or artist is for them the commonest type of historically important event, aestheticians because it is fashionable to dwell on the singularity of works of art rather than on those aspects that unite them with works of craftsmanship.

The use of the term "academic" as the opposite of "original" may be misleading, since it alludes (obviously) to the existence and methods of academies of art set up to maintain standards of workmanship and canons of taste, whereas the distinction I am making applies equally within popular and primitive art where no such consciously regulative force operates. "Academic" becomes a term of abuse when it is used with more specific reference to the supposed evils of the practice of academies: excessive reliance on fixed formulae, verbalism in teaching, the substitution of taste and accuracy for goodness and truth. Its true opposite is not "original" but "genuine," since the essence of the charge is that the academician trots out the stale tricks he learned at school instead of concentrating on the specific requirements of the task in hand. But since all artists (as I have said) bring knowledge to their tasks, and are none the worse for having a repertoire of forms and dodges, however unfashionable it may be to admit (even to oneself) that one has it, and since it is no sign of superiority in an artist to be unable or unwilling to learn from others, what is objected to can only be that such knowledge is applied mechanically, as a substitute for thought.

To call an artist academic may then mean that he works within a tradition, or that the tradition in which he works is one represented at certain institutions, or that he is slick and lazy in his work, and the work with which he is contrasted may be original, or unconventional, or genuine. Many people seem to think that these three contrasts all come to the same thing, but they do not.

### *Metropolitan and Provincial*

Some artistic traditions are autonomous, owing little or nothing to any tradition other than the one out of which they have evolved. These we may call metropolitan traditions. Others, which I call provincial, are parasitic on these, depending on them for vocabulary and for technical and formal discoveries (cf. Hauser 1951, I.48). Thus most folk art is provincial, depending for the materials it manipulates upon some metropolitan tradition, even though with those borrowed materials it may forge a style of its



own.<sup>5</sup> It is indeed this relation of dependence that chiefly distinguishes folk art from primitive art.

### *Esoteric and Popular*

In our civilization a split has appeared between art which appeals only to a minority and art which pleases "the masses." Presumably the same split is found in all civilizations, in all social organizations large and complex enough to afford a leisure class with the time and will to cultivate its taste. Thus Coomaraswamy (1934, 205) says that Indian authorities agree that in works of visual art critics and craftsmen attach most importance to the drawing, but the great public cares for colours (cf. pp. 323-5 below). The reference here is to different aspects of one work appealing to different levels of sophistication, but obviously these different aspects may be stressed in different works and different traditions. In our own civilization the divergence of traditions gives rise to problems which may not be found elsewhere, since our democratic ideas have denied the validity of the very notion of "the masses" without, unfortunately abolishing the reality. The very existence of an art unintelligible to and disliked by most of the population is accordingly often regarded as a standing rebuke to our civilization. The blame is usually laid on the esoteric artist and his clientèle: they are accused of preciosity, he of evading his public responsibilities. Were not Shakespeare and Sophocles popular artists? Then why not Schoenberg? These complaints are partly justified, since cliquishness and eccentricity go together and are followed by freakishness and insincerity,<sup>6</sup> but if blame is called for most of it belongs elsewhere. Rapid technological development and the accompanying destruction of familiar living patterns and institutions in general have led to the absence of *any* widespread training relevant to the appreciation of any kind of art, even among the leisured. The bad-bookish education to which most of us are subjected, far from being a training in skill and sensibility, might have been designed expressly to blunt perception and discrimination. How can an artist be expected to cater to such a public, which has been schooled to be unable to appreciate any art what-

5. Cf. Hanslick (1854, 106): the folk singer "fancies . . . that he sings as nature prompts him, but to enable nature so to prompt him the seed of centuries had to grow and ripen."

6. Cf. Clurman (1945, 281): "The Group Theater was a failure because, as no individual can exist alone, no *group can exist alone*. For a group to live a healthy life and mature to a full consummation of its potentiality, it must be sustained by other groups. . . . When this fails to happen, regardless of its spirit or capacities, it will wither just as an organ that is not nourished by the blood's circulation through the body." However, nothing in Mr. Clurman's narrative supports this judgement.

ever? The surprising thing is that matters are not very much worse than they are: taste must be a stubborn growth.<sup>7</sup>

Strikingly original works of art seem usually to provoke hostility in those unaccustomed to adopting attitudes of careful appreciation. This reaction has become familiar in recent times because the disintegration of the public and the acceleration of change (as obvious in most other activities as in art) have made art that at least seems strikingly original very common. Psychologists have shown experimentally that anyone whose sensory apparatus is prevented from receiving signals from the environment soon panics: in general, any situation where the search for meaning is baffled is experienced as threatening. Thus new-looking works of art are received not with uncomprehending indifference but with the hatred I have mentioned, or with defensive laughter. Older works arouse no such hostility, not entirely because they are better understood but because they are familiar and thus cause no alarm.<sup>8</sup>

If it were really true that most people were prevented by their education from appreciating *any* art, as I suggested, it would follow that there would be no such thing as popular art: what went by that name would be something entirely different (as is sometimes suggested by calling it "entertainment"). But this would seem to entail the absurd conclusion that the needs which minority art fulfils either do not exist or go unsatisfied in the majority. In fact the premise is not literally true. Mass education may hinder taste for what become minority arts by associating them with joyless school-days, or by an excessive attention to certain features of style and expression which thereby are accorded the status of ends rather than means and are not those currently employed in serious work, or simply by diverting attention from them—at least one of these charges must be true, since the arts must be either treated or neglected—but what is done in the classroom does not usually touch the region of popular art otherwise than by discouraging habits of perceptual attention.

The distinction between esoteric and popular arts almost coincides in our civilization with that between art and entertainment, but need not do

7. Dr. Hauser (1951, IV.251) attributes the split to the fact that "Only a young art can be popular, for as soon as it grows older it is necessary, in order to understand it, to be acquainted with the earlier stages in its development." This would be true for a historian's understanding, as it would be for a historian's understanding of a language, but I do not see why such acquaintance is necessary for enjoyment and use either of art or of language, given a tradition of familiarity.

8. Cf. Mueller and Hyner (1942, 107): "It takes about as long for advanced musical form to trickle down to the masses as it does automobiles, bathtubs and other utilitarian devices. . . . The growth of popularity is . . . a prelude to oblivion." The appearance of a piece on the programmes of "pop" concerts, they assert, shows that it is about to disappear from the "standard" repertoire.



so; the former distinction, unlike the latter, does not impute insincerity and the will to manipulate. It has indeed often been said that even in our own time and place the most successful practitioners of popular art (such as Mr. Norman Rockwell) are sincere artists, not highbrows "writing down" to a public they despise. Esoteric arts are subtle and complex; they are esoteric because these qualities make them impossible to appreciate fully, and sometimes hard to enjoy at all, without long training. Conversely, these qualities make the satisfaction they yield not only rich but long-lasting. Popular arts, on the other hand, are simple and obvious; one enjoys them readily, but tires of them rather soon.<sup>9</sup> This high fatigue rate may seem to be characteristic of entertainment as opposed to art (p. 129 above) because it is essential to the entertainment industries. The *Saturday Evening Post* can appear weekly just because no one could bear to read any issue more than once or twice.<sup>10</sup>

The relation between popular and esoteric arts has much in common with that between provincial and metropolitan. From the range of available practice, certain elements are taken over for mass consumption. What distinguishes melody, harmony and both sentiment and phrasing of the lyrics in a "pop" song from those of an "art song" is primarily the narrower range of the former. But that is not the whole story. Advertising posters are not merely simpler than easel paintings: they are different. Their clichés are not all derived from esoteric arts, though many are. The orchestration of dance tunes, though narrow in range, is characteristic; the "Disney" faces and other familiar images on billboards owe nothing to any minority culture, nor does the gay use of visual puns by the better poster artists. The "commercial art" of advertising, with its fusion of text, image and emblem has its own problems, techniques, and achievements (Gerstner and Kutter 1959). The true differentia is rather that the effect is made quickly and without any demand on the attention. But this obviousness has its positive side. Though popular art needs and repays little atten-

9. Cf. Mueller and Hevner (1952, 100): "Each composition has a theoretical optimum number of repetitions at which the greatest enjoyment is elicited. . . ." This may be true for the individual; it is less plausible when applied to the musical public as a whole: "Half of the span of Brahms, for example, is an investment in endurance on the part of the audience in order that aesthetic pleasure may be reaped at the peak, which will gradually dissipate during the descending half of his musical life cycle." (Mueller 1951, 391). But why should the children's teeth be set on edge because their fathers have eaten sour grapes?

10. The statement in the text is incomplete, since novelty is valued for its own sake (pp. 86-9 ff. above). Otherwise, apart from storage difficulties and the facts that copies would wear out through being read in the bath, etc., and that most people just haven't thought of it, one could keep five years' issues and go through them again and again instead of renewing one's subscription; for memory is mercifully brief.

tion, it compels the little it does need. This arrestingness of design, or "catchiness" of tune, is often lacking in esoteric art: it may even be consciously avoided. It is often said that the greatest works of art are those which appeal at many levels. This may mean that they have a simple and attractive design rewarding to the most casual attention, and sufficient subtlety and depth to repay the most careful scrutiny. Only such a work, certainly, could transcend the split between the esoteric and the popular.

The distinction between esoteric and popular has not appeared to be a simple one, but to be compounded of contrasts between the unfamiliar and the familiar, the hard and the easy, the subtle and the simple, the reticent and the blatant, as well as between two different styles (or styles of style) of which the one is only partly dependent upon the other. Perhaps these contrasts may be thus related: given a collapse of homogeneous tradition, what is acceptable to the trained becomes unacceptable to the untrained; since the untrained must have an art of their own, this will be relatively simple in structure, and will therefore demand little attention; since it is an art for the inattentive, it will need to be blatant and ear- or eye-catching, and for this among other reasons will develop characteristic techniques not used in the esoteric arts. But because esoteric and popular arts are practised side by side in the same society, because the same person at different times will want something demanding different degrees of attention, and because the practitioners of popular arts are necessarily more sophisticated than their public, the boundary between the esoteric and the popular is neither socially nor aesthetically sharp.

### *Primitive and Sophisticated*

The term "primitive art" is not very useful. It is generally used to cover all the arts of "primitive" peoples (cf. Adam 1940); but as Linton points out (1958) those arts have nothing in common that differentiates them from the arts of civilized peoples. Yet generalizations about "primitive art" are made, on the basis of what the generalizer feels to be most typical.

The term "primitive" as applied to peoples, though variously defined, is used mainly to designate those who are not literate or in whose life literacy plays no considerable organizing role, and who are therefore not in the habit of systematically criticizing and reorganizing their own institutions. Primitive art, as the art appropriate to such a community, would then be an art produced but not reflected on or criticized, and representing an autonomous and not (like folk art) a parasitic tradition. The generalization is often made that "primitive art" is produced by every member, or every male or every female member, of a society, and not by a special kind of man called "artist"; but this is presumably a special case of the



absence of any division of labour,<sup>11</sup> which is not a necessary attribute, though it is a common one, of a "primitive" society as defined. In any case this generalization can only be accepted on the supposition that not all arts of primitive societies are primitive arts: the tribal sculpture of West Africa, for example, is produced by specialists with recognizable individual styles and is criticized and collected (Fagg 1951; Wingert 1950, 7). It is also sometimes said that the arts of primitive people are always religious in significance, but this is untrue. In fact, in so far as generalizations about "primitive art" purport to hold for the arts of all primitive peoples, they are usually untenable, proceeding hopefully on the assumption that what is true in one place will be true everywhere; in so far as they define a sense for "primitive art" unrelated to its social background, the term "primitive" seems doubtfully appropriate—presumably it is just felt that this is the kind of art that primitive societies ought to be producing. In either case, the statements seem to be designed to support some *a priori* theory about the nature of primitive society, or about the nature of art, or about what civilized artists ought to be doing. They are based on the old romantic idea of the anonymous humble medieval craftsman knocking up a cathedral in the intervals of whitewashing pigsties, rather than on a study of what goes on.

### Conclusion

Such distinctions as I have been sketching here are useful to elaborate and bear in mind, whether or not they are needed for discussion. They help one to judge more quickly and effectively the scope of generalizations about art, by reminding one that the phenomena of art are not only various but significantly various. If we follow most writers on aesthetics in being chiefly concerned with original metropolitan art, because it is in connection with this that the most discussed problems of aesthetics emerge most clearly, we must not allow ourselves to suppose that this is the only, or even the commonest, kind of art. That mistake could even lead us into imagining that aesthetic experience was the privilege of a minority, or that artistic traditions are unnecessary and unusual.

## THE ARTS

THE MOST OBVIOUS way of classifying art without committing oneself to value judgements is to enumerate and classify the arts—all the different

11. Presumably, but not necessarily: it might be meant that, while not all make the same artefacts, all make some kind of artefact or other, and all these artefacts are "works of art" in that care is bestowed on their proportions and decoration.

trades, media and so on, in which aesthetic effects are deliberately produced. The problems of both enumeration and classification have been exhaustively dealt with from every possible point of view by Professor Munro (1949): it would be pointless to repeat his work. What follows is therefore selective and sketchy.

### *Enumeration*

The inadequate and seemingly adventitious list of the five "fine arts" may be expanded into something like adequacy. "Painting" may be replaced by some term covering all two-dimensional visual arts: not only painting, drawing and engraving, but mosaic, tapestry, embroidery and lace-making, and still photography. All three-dimensional visual arts whose objects are typically seen from the outside, including industrial design and ceramics, will join sculpture in a second group. The third group will comprise the three-dimensional visual arts whose objects provide environments within which the percipient moves: architecture will here be joined by gardening, landscaping and town-planning. The term "music" already seems to cover all the arts of pure sound, but if there are any others they will go with it into this fourth pigeon-hole. The fifth and last slot will hold all the arts of symbolic sound, that is, literature, an extension of the term "poetry" already often made without fuss. This classification would be intelligible and significant, and its use would not preclude combination and subdivision: thus (to use the old terms) a Greek pot would combine "sculpture" and "painting," and page lay-out for newspapers would combine "painting" and "poetry." But the classification is incomplete. We should at least need to add "dance," using that term to cover all the arts of gesture: dancing of all kinds and miming, the latter being combined with "poetry" to produce "drama,"<sup>12</sup> the stylized movements of such rituals as the Mass or the Tea-Ceremony, and even perhaps the more eloquent bits of football games and bull-fights. We should thus, I think, have covered most of the arts that appeal to sight or hearing, though the art of flower arrangement might fit uneasily into the category of "sculpture."

12. Mr. Peacock (1957, 166) adds "impersonation" to speech and gesture as ingredients of drama, and rightly stresses that the art of drama arises not out of a mechanical combination of the three but from a "characteristic intertexture" of them. "Acting and speech, or action and dialogue, [form] . . . not simply . . . a harmonizing of different media, or adjustment of two separate things to each other, but . . . a complex imagery of art based on a complex imagery of nature. For speech and correlated gesture form a natural intertexture of imagery; their association is not fortuitous but essential and organic." "Plays are not simply dialogue or conversation with actions or tense events added or interspersed. . . . They seize upon situations of conflict and dilemma as they are focussed, or may be, in the form of speech-plus-gesture." (*Ibid.*, 167, 169.) An analogous argument would hold of each of the arts shown as complex by my sixfold classification.



It remains true, though, that most people when they speak of "art" refer implicitly to a few kinds of activity, the five "fine arts" with a few accretions, without even wondering whether such restriction could be justified.

Munro (1949, 140-2) lists a hundred arts in alphabetical order. These are all activities whose products may have aesthetic value. A glance at his list confirms what he avows, that it is arbitrary and might be extended indefinitely: it is impossible to enumerate all possible or even all actual productive techniques, and the products of almost any technique may have aesthetic value. One cannot, therefore, enumerate "the arts"; and this is the justification for choosing a few arts in which the part played by aesthetic considerations is obvious and pretending that all other arts are either combinations of or approximations to or special cases of these.

The endless possibilities of enumeration are increased by the possibility of producing subdivisions within each of the arts by criteria similar to those used to differentiate between the arts themselves. It seems a matter of convention whether a distinction is called one between two arts or between two varieties of one art. Thus among dances one may distinguish between those which are built up out of standard units ("steps" in ballroom dancing, "positions" in classical ballet, *mudrās* in *kathakali*, etc.) and those which are not; in both of these kinds, those which have narrative significance and those which do not; among those built up from standard units, those in which the order is free and those in which it is controlled; and within these last, degrees and manners of control. One can divide into solo and group dances, and among the latter into unison dances, symmetrical and asymmetrical. Someone with enough knowledge and imagination might perhaps produce a comprehensive set of such disjunctions in terms of which a complete classification of possible dance styles could be made, but I do not know how one could tell whether such a classification was complete.

### *Exclusion*

The fine arts and their near relations are generally conceded to fall within the scope of aesthetics, but others have a doubtful status. Dress-designing and coiffure, for instance, are seldom mentioned by aestheticians, and some would be unwilling to call them arts. The omission may be due to snobbery and the mere habit of neglect. But the arts of fashion are so commercial in inspiration, and novelty has accordingly so large a place among their values, that the reasons for differentiating entertainment from art may be thought to apply *a fortiori* to these exploitations of vanity and folly. They are likely to be allowed a place among the arts (if only the "minor" arts) of a society in which their motivation is purer.

More interesting is the neglect in aesthetics of arts appealing to senses other than sight and hearing: cookery, for example, and scent-blending. The end of these skills is to produce something beautiful, that pleases simply by being perceived, and surely the inventor of a good sauce must be a notable creative artist. Yet some people indignantly exclude such arts from consideration: "A man is rather to be congratulated upon his preference for common food," says Mr. Carritt (1914, ch. 1, §8). Reasons are seldom given; they may be ethical rather than aesthetic. The "pleasures of touching and tasting" have never had a good press, and mistrust of bodily gratification is strengthened by a common failure to distinguish the epicure from the glutton. The exclusion of such arts from careful consideration inhibits the development of a vocabulary for their discussion and criticism, which in turn reinforces the supposition that they are inherently beneath discussion. It is often said that preferences in scents or flavours are purely personal:

A man at one time of his life prefers sweets and at another savouries with no more to be said about it, but in advancing from Moore to Shelley he, in a sense, understands the change; he knows in what way he is better than he was, and yet can replace himself at the old point of view and find in it certain elements of "truth" (Carritt, *loc. cit.*).

But preferences in wines and cigars are intersubjective: palates can be educated and ruined, and both processes can readily be detected. Nor is it clear how increased facility of discrimination among tobaccos is inherently less intelligible than a similar advance in poetic sensibility: if a man "understands the change" from Moore to Shelley it may be because his education has included a vocabulary for discussing such changes and suggested the right things to say with it, whereas the education of his palate involved less verbalization.

However, the distinction between the "higher" senses (sight and hearing) and the "lower" senses (touch and the chemical senses) is not merely a snobbish one. It is by sight and hearing that we chiefly gain knowledge (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, Ia IIae, 27.1 ad 3, quoted below, p. 330 n.), and these are the only senses we use to transmit knowledge and ideas. The arts of sight and hearing can therefore be bound up with our intellectual and spiritual life as the arts of the other senses cannot: the latter can only be beautiful, the former can be significant. This does not make the arts of the lower senses negligible: beauty is important, and they contribute greatly to the quality of life; but their importance is of a different kind from that of the arts of sight and hearing. Only the latter can have epistemological significance. And we recall that aesthetics began as an epistemological discipline.



The epistemological priority of the higher senses is no accident. Sight and hearing discriminate, and can perceive formal relationships and structures, whereas the chemical senses necessarily blend and blur (cf. Prall 1936, 18). Touch discriminates, though less well, and is used for this purpose by the blind; but its possibilities are not exploited by those with sight and hearing, presumably because it requires proximity. Since artistic form, which of course depends on structure, is paramount in aesthetic experience and enjoyment, the privileged place of the higher senses must be retained.<sup>13</sup>

If some candidates are begrudged the title of art because they lack the possibility of structure, others are denied it because they have no sensuous surface. Mathematical theorems may yield an intense delight, but mathematics is often excluded from the arts because its forms are in no way sensible.<sup>14</sup> Legal systems also may have beauty of structure (cf. Plato,

13. Professor Arnheim (1954, 332) objects that though the spectator of a dance "receives a strictly visual work of art," the dancer "creates mainly in the medium of the kinaesthetic sensations in his muscles, tendons and joints. This fact should be noted, if only because some aestheticians have maintained that only the higher senses of vision and hearing yield artistic media." But in what sense does the dancer create in this medium, any more than the fiddler and the painter and all other artists whose work involves bodily skill? In no case does the kinaesthetic sensation afford a criterion of success apart from the visible or audible effect produced. Or does Arnheim think that a dancer could reasonably claim to have danced well, no matter how ungainly he may have looked, because "it felt right" while he was doing it?

14. Professor Frye writes (1957, 364): "It is difficult to see how aesthetic theory can get much further without recognizing the creative element in mathematics. The arts might be more clearly understood if they were thought of as forming a circle, stretching from music through literature, painting and sculpture to architecture, with mathematics, the missing art, occupying the vacant place between architecture and music." We are not told what help it will be to arrange the arts in this circle (perhaps so that the critic can stand in the middle, cracking his whip?); nor how it is determined that there is a "vacant place" between architecture and music; nor why the traditional list of five fine arts is thought to be otherwise acceptable. If the sole reason for including mathematics is that it has a "creative element," all other activities involving original thought will qualify for inclusion too. It is nice to be told with such authority how aesthetic theory may advance, but in fact the creative element in mathematics is recognized by all, and still it is not treated as an art. Why is this? First, it has no place in the institution of art; socially, mathematicians are thinkers and not artists, they expect to be salaried rather than paid by results, and so on. Nor, though it is a cliché to say that mathematics is "an art, not a science," is it easy to treat it as an art from a critical point of view. The continuity of problems we found among the arts scarcely extends to mathematics, and the importance of validity in mathematics introduces a jarring note. Perhaps we should say that, just as mathematics is not a science but enters into science, so it is not an art but enters into all art. It is not a kind of ordered material, but the principle of all possible order, dealing with relations in abstraction from the field in which they may hold.

*Symposium*, 210), but are not considered to be art forms. It seems reasonable thus to deny the name of art to forms of activity which have structure without sensuous appeal or sensuous appeal without structure; but such exclusion does not justify denial or neglect of the respects in which they resemble the arts which we do recognize.

As a final example of a rejected art we may take the art of living. A man's life can obviously be looked upon as a whole having a certain shape; and he may strive consciously to give his own life a satisfactory order, and judge the lives of others by the kind of order they have. Some such notion underlies the "Greek view of life" (cf. Anderson 1956). The difficulty of reckoning seriously with an art of living, as opposed to chatting idly about it, is that it seems impossibly difficult to find a way of determining rationally what are to count as elements of structure and how they are to be related. Any decision reached would either be so arbitrary as to amount to an irresponsible fiction or rest on conventional estimates that one would hesitate to take so seriously.<sup>15</sup> All the same, there seems to be nothing absurd or irrational in deciding to give one's life some kind of pattern or other, nor need such a project be impracticable. Only, since many equally valid kinds of order could presumably be found, one might not be justified in the absence of a social consensus in speaking of *the* art of living; there might be many such "arts," some perhaps instantiated only once. The rejection by aesthetics of the notion of an art of living would therefore seem to be justified, if only on the practical ground that it could not profitably be discussed or criticized. However, in certain circumstance social agreement might be reached; and we have seen that it is not only here, but everywhere, that firm criteria for isolating an art are lacking. The practical ground of exclusion is really that too much importance is attached to moral criticism of life in our society for there to be any room left for aesthetic criticism.

All the exclusions I have mentioned are controversial: necessarily so, since as we have seen there are no agreed criteria by which one may determine what is and what is not properly termed an art. But in the absence of

15. Cf. Gordon (1927, xxxii): "Probably in no other literature [than the Icelandic sagas] is conduct so carefully examined and appraised; and the basis of evaluation is not moral, but aesthetic. In no other literature is there such a sense of the beauty of human conduct; indeed, the authors of Icelandic prose, with the exception of Snorri, do not seem to have cared for beauty in anything else than conduct and character. The heroes and heroines themselves had the aesthetic view of conduct. . . . Signý refuses on purely aesthetic grounds to continue living. . . ." Such connoisseurship, however, is not enough to constitute an *art* of living, but more akin to an appreciation of cigars. There is no continuous structure, but at most a succession of fine moments. This is what Professor Hampshire condemns (1959, 221) as a "mad aestheticism."



such criteria the institutional test may be allowed to be decisive. Such an art as music, for example, has its complex system of techniques, professional associations, channels of communication and social expectations. Mathematics has its own institutional basis, but it is as I have remarked not of the kind associated with the arts. And the art of living has no institutional basis at all, which is the ultimate ground of its rejection. When this is said, however, one must add, first, that the institutional differentiae may be quite adventitious—there is no obvious reason why mathematics should not at least in some respects be treated institutionally as an art, and why an art of living should not come to be recognized; and, second, that it is open to anyone to reject the institutional distinctions, set up intelligible criteria for what is or is not an art, and revise inclusions and exclusions accordingly. It is only that such an autonomous proceeding, however valuable, is excluded by the limited project of this book.

### *Elimination*

Even if all the exclusions just mentioned are made, the arts will be none the less innumerable, so all aestheticians must leave many out of account. Is there a workable, rational principle for such omission, or must one go by haphazard or convention? Presumably those could be omitted which raise technical problems but no new issues of principle. For example, still photography has its own technique, but it can be argued that it raises no new questions for aesthetics that are not already raised by painting. Again, tapestry-making is an art with its own possibilities and restrictions, but if an aesthete takes all his examples from painting it is unlikely that he will be led to say anything that could not be applied *mutatis mutandis* to tapestry-making—the significant point being that any reasonably intelligent person could see at once what the *mutanda* would be. On the other hand, what goes for painting may not go at all for poetry; or, if what is true of one is indeed true (*mutatis mutandis*) of the other, it is likely to take a good deal of thought to decide what the *mutanda* are and how they should be mutated.

I do not think one can lay down in advance rules for safe omissions. One can only trust to luck and common sense. One might suggest the principle that where the basic types of structure are the same in a group of arts it should suffice to consider one of them. But this rule does not give safety. The types of structure employed in engraving are the same as those of drawing, but the multiplicability of engravings gives rise to fundamental problems. And in the examples we have already used, tapestry-making does not admit of the simultaneous progress and mutual influence of plan and execution that painting does, while the anecdotal function of the

"candid camera" and the discrepancy between the photograph's implied claim to report and its actual powers of selection and construction raise problems foreign to painting. And some uses that have been made of the principle are disquieting, as when Batteux writes (1746, *Partie 3*, *Sec. 2*):

Le principe de l'imitation de la belle Nature, sur-tout après en avoir fait l'application à la Poésie, s'applique presque de lui-même à la Peinture. Ces deux Arts ont entre eux une si grande conformité, qu'il ne s'agit, pour les avoir traités tous deux à la fois, que de changer les noms, et de mettre peinture, dessein, coloris à la place de poésie, de fable, de versification.

But if this principle fails us, there is another less respectable one that is helpful: one is fairly safe in leaving out what is customarily left out, a fact which has led many aestheticians to omit discussion of the film, which is surely an art or group of arts quite unlike others and of great importance.

### *Classification*

We cannot list "the arts"; but perhaps we could classify all possible *kinds* of art according to some intelligible system. The obvious classification would be in terms of what must in any case be the differentiae of arts, namely, material used, relations imposed, and end pursued. But to classify thus superficially would not be illuminating, and would not convince as a true reflection of reality. The required system should both be evidently exhaustive and answer to distinctions that are felt to be aesthetically significant. Many such "systems of the arts" have been composed (see Munro 1949, 157-209 for details). Often, they presuppose rather than support an aesthetic. Hegel, for instance, classifies the five fine arts according to their appropriateness to one of the three stages of art, symbolic, classical and romantic, which "represent the relations of the Idea to its embodiment in the sphere of art. They consist in the aspiration after, and the attainment and transcendence of the Ideal as the true Idea of beauty" (Hegel 1835/1886, 156). This is a package deal: one cannot have the classification without the dialectic.

Mrs. Langer, like Hegel, classifies the arts in terms of her own view of the nature of art in general, and unless the latter is accepted the former cannot be. The view of art is that implied in the following quotation (1953, 82):

"Living form" is the most indubitable product of all good art. . . . Such form is "living" [in the sense that] it *expresses* life—feeling, growth, movement, emotion, and everything that characterizes vital existence. The expression, moreover, is not symbolization in the usual sense of conventional or assigned meaning, but a presentation of a highly articulated form wherein the beholder



recognizes, without conscious comparison and judgement but rather by direct recognition, the forms of human feeling: emotions, moods, even sensations in their characteristic passage.

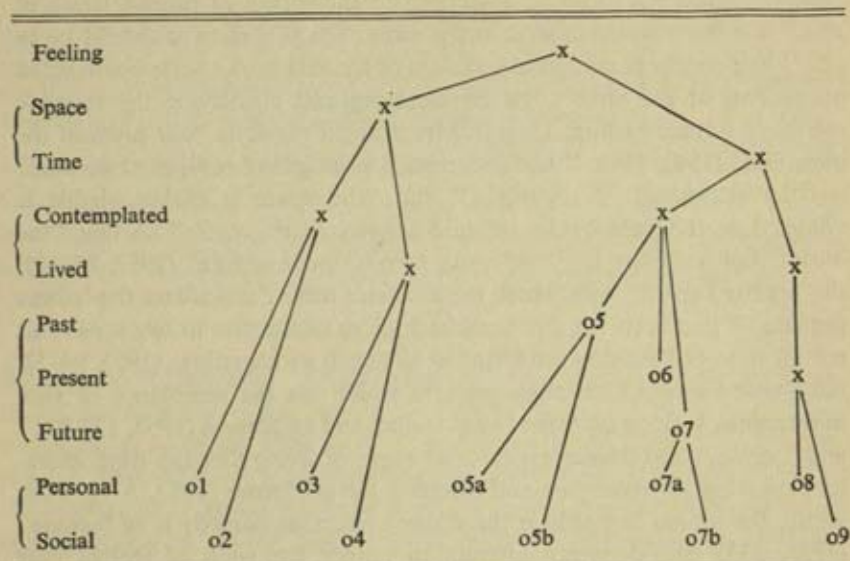
The arts are accordingly classified as "symbolic forms" according to their "primary illusions," that is, according to the aspect of human living of which the form is articulated in the work. On this basis it should be in principle possible to construct a system of the arts as Aristotle constructed his system of the virtues, by enumerating and classifying the possible modes of human feeling. Thus to Mrs. Langer music is "our myth of the inner life" (1942, 199); "the fundamental principle of sculptural volume" is "the semblance of organism," and "the space it makes visible is vitalized as it would be by organic activity at its centre" so that "the business of sculpture is . . . to make tactual space visible" (1953, 88-90); the "created space" with which the architect deals "articulates the 'ethnic domain,'" that is (if I understand her), gives expression to our sense that not all ways of behaving are fitting in all social surroundings (1953, 94-5); the dance expresses, through gestures which are the semblance of vital movements, various aspects of vital feeling and awareness (1953, 174 ff.);<sup>16</sup> and literature and drama express our sense of living through time, literature creating a virtual past and drama a virtual future (1953, 307), while within the drama "tragedy is the image of fate, as comedy is of fortune" (1953, 333). She does not attempt to reduce the ways of feeling thus enumerated into a system; but they seem to be classifiable roughly into ways of experiencing a spatial environment and ways of experiencing the passage of time, and each of these to be divisible into individual and social modes of experience, and into what is contemplated and what is lived in, as in Table I.

Probably the only sensible way to proceed is to start with a definite theory and classify in terms of it, as Hegel and Mrs. Langer do. But there are two main principles of division which seem to impose themselves in advance of any theory. The first is in terms of the work's mode of extension, between arts of space and arts of time. Although this division has been generally recognized, its validity has sometimes been denied on the ground that (for instance) an orchestra and its audience must have some location, and a picture cannot be taken in at one glance but must be

16. The modes of feeling whose semblance the dance articulates are not very clearly indicated. Mrs. Langer writes rather as if the dance were differentiated from music only in its "basic abstraction," gesture. But there is some suggestion that while the forms of music are strictly those of the inner life of feeling, the forms of dance are rather those of emotional awareness. Cf. Duncan (1927, 4): "I was only endeavouring to express my first knowledge of the underlying tragedy in all seemingly joyous manifestation."

TABLE I

A TENTATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF MODES OF FEELING  
AS BASIS FOR A "SYSTEM OF THE ARTS"  
DERIVED FROM LANGER 1953



- KEY 1: Arabesque and abstract design??  
 2: Representational painting and drawing  
 3: Sculpture  
 4: Architecture  
 5: Literature  
   5a: Lyric  
   5b: Novel, epic, etc.  
 6: Film  
 7: Drama  
   7a: Tragedy  
   7b: Comedy  
 8: Music  
 9: Dance

scanned. But this objection is trivial, for the point of the distinction is that the form of a symphony depends upon its sounds being heard in a set sequence and in set temporal relations, whereas a painting, even if the scanning of it is a conscious process, may be scanned in any order (cf. Arnheim 1954, 306-8, and White 1957, 177). It used to be assumed that the eye in scanning followed the outlines of the forms (see for example Birkhoff 1933, 6), but on investigation this is found to be untrue (Gibson 1950, 155-6). Conversely, a picture's spatial relations cannot be altered, even by turning it upside down, without changing the picture; but a



symphony is the same whether the cellos are on the conductor's left or on his right.

The implications of the distinction between space and time arts have been explored by many, as by Pepper who writes (1938, 45):

A temporal work of art is developed, so to speak, inductively from the qualities of the details to the quality of the whole. A spatial work of art is developed deductively from a sense of the general character of its totality to confirmations of this throughout all the details.

But the most thorough exploitation of the contrast is that of Lessing (1766), who indeed goes so irrationally far (in reaction against people like Batteux) as to deduce from the fact that painting cannot embody movement that it ought not to represent or suggest it.<sup>17</sup> However, as Professor Arnheim points out (1954, 335-45), to represent motion is not just to copy things in motion: like all representation in painting, the representation of movement depends on techniques and forms possible only in the visual arts, and in such representation the space arts are not trespassing beyond their bounds (if they have bounds) on to the preserves of their rivals, but developing their own characteristic resources.<sup>18</sup> Despite the speciousness of these exaggerations, attempts to find common ground in the forms employed by the various arts do have to grapple with this as one of their least amenable data: that, while time is essentially one-dimensional and one-directional, sounds simultaneously heard can be held distinct; whereas, while space is three-dimensional and multi-directional, and intersecting forms can be held distinct, colours coinciding in space cannot be held distinct but blend. A fashionable school of thought maintains that the "replacement" of space and time by a four-dimensional space-time has changed all that (cf. Giedion 1941); but this is just sentimentality and confusion. The contexts in which the four-dimensional continuum is spoken of are not perceptual. And the phenomena of modern art alluded to as corresponding to this "replacement" are merely the recognition by architects of the spectator's mobility, and the like.

The other fundamental distinction which threatens the unity of art is

17. The same argument may be applied to representation of objects, or of the third dimension. Pictures cannot *be* solid or *be* the things they represent, so should not represent them. Lessing does not take this further step, but Professor Gilson does (1957, 242-3).

18. This allocation of separate responsibilities to the different arts is carried to its final absurdity by Professor Sypher (1955, 43-4), who complains that Gothic architecture evades architecture's problem "by penetrating space instead of defining and encompassing it," so that the renaissance painters had to tackle the "problem of organizing three-dimensional space" though this was not really painting's problem. Hence vanishing-point perspective.

that between the literary arts and the rest. For literature operates with words, which are symbols that already have a set meaning, and thus involves the intellectual life and discursive reason in a way in which the other arts do not. One can soften the effect of this fact by reflecting that the discursive reason is not engaged autonomously or in earnest ("Poetry is not genuine discourse at all, but is the creating of an illusory 'experience,' or a piece of virtual history, by means of discursive language"—Langer 1953, 252); but the fact remains, and entails that the principles of formal organization in the literary arts must be very different from those of the other arts.

A conflation of the space/time distinction with the literary/non-literary one yields, since literary arts are time arts, a threefold classification close to that of Coleridge (1814, 220):

All the fine arts are different species of poetry. The same spirit speaks to the mind through different senses by manifestations of itself appropriate to each. They admit therefore of a natural division into poetry of language (poetry in the emphatic sense, because less subject to the accidents and limitations of time and space); poetry of the ear, or music; and poetry of the eye, which is again subdivided into plastic poetry, or statuary, and graphic poetry, or painting.<sup>19</sup>

The existence of such fundamental dichotomies may make one hesitate to attribute any over-all unity to art or the arts, but the fact that the dichotomies are in practice overcome may restore our nerve. As I have said, the fact that satisfactory aesthetic unity is achieved in theoretically complex forms that bridge these gaps strongly suggests some kind of unity in the arts through function or effect. Mr. Peacock (1957, 1) may be right when he says that in order to account for the fact that in such an art as drama, where many arts combine to produce "a single unified effect," one needs "either a single aesthetic principle for all the arts, or at least a principle that accounts for their effective association in composite forms." And what could be more of a natural unity than a song, which surely precedes both wordless music and tuneless verse (cf. Hanslick 1854, 31)? What mode of expression more natural and spontaneous than dancing, and what less natural than the *tableau vivant* which, if dancing be a compound, should be one of its elements?

19. This threefold division reappears, apparently independently, in Herskovits (1948) who devotes separate chapters to "graphic and plastic arts," "folklore" and "drama and music." If one believes that all art originally had a religious significance, this corresponds to a division into arts of magic, arts of myth and arts of ritual (cf. p. 285 below).



## ART: MODES AND GENRES

ANY LIST OF arts, however arranged, will cut across other classifications of artistic activities. Among these will be the value-laden discriminations of traditions already examined, and the classification by modes of feeling and sensibility to which I now turn, both of which are applicable to all the arts. The new classification resembles that already used in differentiating such terms as "beautiful" and "graceful"; but those, being modes of form or the perception of form, were applicable to natural objects as well as to artefacts, whereas those we are now to consider, being in effect modes of expression, can for the most part apply to art only.

At the lowest level we have the words for the modalities of feeling, such as "gay," "melancholy," "decisive," "tender," "sprightly." Such words are habitually applied to works in all arts. They are not here discussed individually, because there is no way of selecting from among the great range and variety of such terms. The vocabulary thus used will presumably be as wide as the range of recognized ways of feeling, and will vary with place and time in accordance with changes of culture, sharpenings and bluntings of sensibility, and fashions of feeling and discrimination. The general problems raised by the use of such terminology are discussed later (pp. 321-2). Meanwhile there are other kinds of terms that do lend themselves to discussion, being more specifically concerned with manners of artistic expression. The first set of these are such as "tragic," "pathetic," "satiric." They are essentially kinds of attitude towards events used as material. Next there are the words for syndromes: "baroque," "biedermeyer" and the like. These stand for pervasive qualities of style thought to characterize all the arts of a certain epoch, embracing choice of and attitude towards content as well as treatment of form. Finally there are such terms as the notorious pair "classical" and "romantic." These are variously used and defined—as names of syndromes, as connoting

simply restraint and its lack, or as characterizing approaches to form. In this last sense I shall discuss them, along with other terms similarly used.

## ATTITUDES

NOT ALL ATTITUDES are equally appropriate to all events; and not all symbols are equally appropriate to these attitudes. Hence, as Professor Frye (1957) shows in elaborate detail, the attitudes denoted by such terms as "tragic" tend to generate corresponding narrative forms and typical sets of symbols, all bound together by a mutual appropriateness within the framework of a given civilization. In genres the constellations thus formed are associated with a form of presentation which is appropriate to their character but can also be used for different kinds of material. Hence in critical literature there is a tendency to confuse the tragic *attitude* with the typical form of tragic *event*, and both of these with the *genre* of tragedy as a kind of play.

It should be possible to enumerate the significant attitudes. (Frye offers such an enumeration, 1957, 33 ff.). Thus obviously one can regard things and persons as superior, inferior or equal to oneself (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448a5 ff.); and one can feel towards happenings positively (gladness and celebration), negatively (sadness and indignation), or indifferently. The attitudes that have received names and been discussed in aesthetics will be those among the ones revealed as possible by such a classification that have been accepted by artists as affording opportunities for artistic handling, whether through objective suitability or through conventional acceptance. In what follows I shall neither follow Frye nor work out a system of my own, but confine myself to common terms and common problems.

### *Tragic, Pathetic, Horrific*

Plato remarks the paradox that the spectator of a tragedy should delight in the portrayed distress of men (*Philebus*, 48A). This must, he thinks, be a mixed pleasure: aesthetic pleasure with personal distress, or the distasteful pleasure of *Schadenfreude*. The excellence and prestige of Aristotle's *Poetics* have contributed to make this a central problem of aesthetic concern, which it remains. But three questions have become confused in it: why do we enjoy the spectacle of distress? what is the characteristic effect of the "tragic"? and what are the essentials of serious drama? I shall try to hold these distinct, relegating the last to my discussion of genres, but the prevalence of confusion makes it hard to do so.

Three modes of sensibility can be distinguished in this area: the



horrific, in which the fact of disaster attracts interest; the tragic, in which the destruction of something or someone good or powerful compels attention; and the pathetic, in which it is the destruction of something weak that holds us. A common practice is to offer an explanation of the horrific as an explanation of the other two; as such it may be partially correct but must be incomplete.

The initial problem of why we should take delight in the spectacle of suffering arises in connection with real situations as much as with art, and the answer to it might be strictly psychological or sociological. It is not therefore a problem in which aesthetics as such has a proprietary interest. But some answers to it suggest that the need it fills is best met by the tragic, and is only fully satisfied by aesthetic presentations. So I shall mention a few answers that have been given, without more ado.

The first answer is that of Lucretius, who in a famous passage of his *Nature of Things* (II, 1-6) ascribes the pleasure of watching a ship buffeted by heavy winds and seas to the delight of perceiving from what evils one is oneself free, the mariners' distress not being in itself a source of enjoyment. This would also be the pleasure of waking from a nightmare. Lucretius is speaking of real events, not works of art, though Addison (1712, no. 418) offers a paraphrase of the passage to explain why "we should take delight in being terrified or dejected by a description, when we find so much uneasiness in the fear or grief which we receive from any other occasion."<sup>1</sup> But it is as well to remember, when discussing *Oedipus*, that people do crowd to see executions. It is foolish to pretend that the attraction of blood on the stage can be quite unconnected with that of blood on the scaffold (cf. Burke 1757, I, §§13-15).

That such pleasures of contrast exist I do not doubt. But one does not see why art should be required to provide them, when life does so abundantly. And the pleasure yielded should be one of relief and comfort, which is not quite what most people get either from tragedies or from executions. Perhaps Lucretius was wrong about people: perhaps they do just like to see others suffer. The pleasure taken in tragedy would then be a refinement, a transference to the sphere of the imagination, of this natural cruelty. That is what Nietzsche thinks. "Virtually everything," he adds, "that we call 'higher culture' depends on the spiritualization (*Vergeistigung*) and deepening of cruelty" (1885, §229).

1. The application to tragedy is actually pre-Lucretian, even pre-Epicurean: it was of tragedy that the comic poet Timocles wrote in the fourth century B.C. that "One who perceives the misfortunes that have overtaken others grieves less for his own disasters" (*Dionysiazusae* fr. 6 Kock). One has only to suppose the spectator to be temporarily free from misfortune for this commonplace to yield the Lucretian sentiment.

Spectators of a tragic play often feel as if they were enlightened, even if they cannot say what they have learned (cf. pp. 260–1 below). Perhaps this is due to the dramatic form rather than the spectacle of suffering; but, since comedies do not yield the feeling, perhaps not. Professor Ducasse attributes “the tragic pleasure” to this feeling of enlightenment. A tragedy, he writes (1929, 252),

must be such as to place before us a typical sample of human life, in such of its aspects as alone constitute problems, namely, the aspects which are painful and inevitable. When the tragedy . . . is such as thus to give us truly sound and valuable vicarious experience, it makes a not inconsiderable contribution to the wisdom which is our most useful equipment in dealing with, or warding off, tragic events. This gain in wisdom is felt in a quite direct and immediate way, and is pleasant. This pleasure is I believe the essential ingredient of the tragic pleasure.

It seems reasonable: we recognize “instinctively” that we must somehow come to terms with evil, and are glad of the chance to do so vicariously. We are preparing for life by playing at it, as children prepare for motherhood by playing with dolls (see p. 214 below). But we can go further. In Kafka’s story of *The Penal Colony* (1919) the victims upon whose backs the machine carves the record of their guilt are filled, according to the machine’s curator, with an unearthly joy when they finally come to realize what is written in their flesh, the truth of what is written, and the justice of their punishment. So Freud on Oedipus: delight follows on our recognition, not of our own misfortunes, but of our own guilt. The human predicament with which we must come to terms is not that of patients only, but of agents; and the wisdom that we feel that we acquire is not the ability to endure what we must undergo but to put up with what we do and are.

Professor Fergusson adopts from Professor Burke (1941) the notion of a tragic rhythm in which there are three moments: action, suffering, and understanding. “It is this tragic rhythm of action which is the substance or spiritual content of the play [*Oedipus Tyrannus*], and the clue to its extraordinarily comprehensive form” (Fergusson 1949, 31). “When reasoned purpose is gone” the chorus moves “through an ordered succession of modes of suffering, to a new perception of the immediate situation” (*ibid.*, 44). If this is so, the spectacle of suffering yields “enlightenment” only if embodied in a certain dramatic structure; its further discussion is therefore postponed.

Whether or not men are enlightened by navigating the more turbid reaches of the human condition, it is not strange that they should relish an art which emphasizes them. These things are our concern, and cannot fail



to enthrall us. "I like it because it is bitter, and because it is my heart," says the man eating his own heart in Stephen Crane's poem (1895). This fascination, not plain cruelty, brings those crowds to executions. And Plato (*Philebus*, 48A) associates the pleasure of tragedy with that found by so many in a good funeral. Such a pleasure, however, though doubtless natural, is not a very exalted one. It is this fact, no doubt, that leads Miss Arendt to remark (1951, 245) that the depth attributed to the literature of suffering is a pseudo-depth, the natural feeling of concern that we have for such matters being wrongly ascribed to the power of the author's art.

Aristotle in his *Poetics* is not concerned explicitly to justify tragedy or explain its effect, since what he is writing is a practical handbook in which the objectives of the poet's craft are assumed. He takes it for granted that it is the function of tragedy to arouse in the audience feelings of pity and fear, and thus give a laxative pleasure by ridding the system of these poisonous emotions. Since purgation presupposes constipation, we may take Aristotle as implying that the emotions of pity and fear find insufficient outlet in a civilized existence, so that people need to be provided every now and then with something harmless which they can be sorry for and terrified at; at which they will feel relief, and after which they will feel calmer. This exegesis attributes to Aristotle a theory of the passions which he nowhere avows, though he was not prone to refrain from expressing his opinions; but I do not see what other interpretation is possible.

The concept of "fear control" is still with us, and no doubt such an art might serve this function. More generally, it may be true that all art serves in one way or another to relieve personal or social stresses. But our attitudes to pictured calamities are not exactly the same as those to real calamities, and it is not clear why the two should interact in this way. We can hardly hope, or fear, that the effect looked for by John Dennis (1698, ch. 3) will be achieved:

And, indeed, if People who have a long Time frequented Plays, are so hard to be mov'd to Compassion, that a Poet is oblig'd so to contrive his Incidents and his Characters, that the last shall be most deplorable, and the first most proper to move Compassion; may it not be very well suppos'd, that such a one will not be over obnoxious to feel too much Compassion upon the View of Calamities, which happen every Day in the World, when they, and the Persons to whom they happen, may not so much as once in an Age, have all the Qualifications that are requir'd extremely to touch him?

It is said, however, that adrenalin injections make people feel fear within themselves without actually being afraid (Arnheim 1958, 86). So perhaps

the subjective difference in the feelings does not preclude the effect looked for.

The Stoics were fond of pointing out that evil and ugliness were necessary and integral parts of the divine pattern of the universe. To Hegel (1835, IV.301) tragedy affords a vision of the reality in which opposites are reconciled and suffering therefore eliminated. Nietzsche seizes on this notion and connects it with the misgivings I have expressed as to the reality of the tragic "pity and terror": a real pity would be incompatible with an aesthetic reaction. If the tragic effect, and the appeal of the spectacle of suffering in art, are to be explained, we must look to what differentiates them from the analogous reactions to real events, not to what unites them:

The very first requirement for the explanation of tragic myth is that its characteristic pleasure must be sought in the purely aesthetic sphere, without encroaching on the domain of pity, fear or the morally sublime. How can the ugly and the inharmonious, the substance of tragic myth, excite aesthetic pleasure? . . . only as an aesthetic phenomenon may existence and the world appear justified: and in this sense it is precisely the function of tragic myth to convince us that even the ugly and inharmonious is an artistic game which the will plays with itself in the eternal fullness of its joy. (Nietzsche 1872/1909, §24.)

The reconciliation here is not between conflicting elements, as with Hegel, but between the conflict itself and the possibility of its contemplation. The reconciliation is a possibility for experience only, and does not as with Hegel portend the reality of a reconciled universe. Nietzsche here shows himself the disciple of Schopenhauer: despite his later assertion (1908) that *The Birth of Tragedy* was essentially a Hegelian work, with only a few formulae from Schopenhauer thrown in, the work is almost pure Schopenhauer with the Will called Dionysus and Idea called Apollo.

Whatever the true state of the Cosmos may be, it seems reasonable to hold that the artistic subduing of what one would have thought ugly material is in itself a source of delight, whether by showing the mind's mastery over it or (as here) by making us feel that even these things have their place in the universe, being either (as the Stoics thought) parts of the universal pattern and necessary conditions of the existence of the good, or (as Nietzsche says) casual products of a lovable cosmic exuberance.

With the notion that the spectacle of suffering gives joy simply by the fact of its becoming an aesthetic object we approach already the notion that to endure a horrific spectacle manifests the observer's strength; and thereby we come close to the tragic mode, in which strength in the face of destruction itself forms the theme.



*The Horrible*

Within the range of horrific spectacle, the merely horrible stands at an opposite pole from the tragic. Many people love to see, dwell on and depict what horrifies them, a passion for which the recent popularity of "horror comics" is the best contemporary evidence (cf. Wertham 1954). Perhaps the spectacle of suffering pleases *because* it horrifies. The objectification that art gives may relieve a personal nightmare.

Parker (1926, 107 ff.) distinguishes three kinds of "painful art," differing fundamentally in their motives. In "mystical, religious and tragic art" what would otherwise be terrifying or revolting is represented for the sake of the positive value of the system of which it forms a part: men paint Crucifixions because they believe in redemption and resurrection. What is thus portrayed is not horrible at all if rightly understood. At the opposite extreme, one may seek "the satisfaction in the imagination of the primitive and often repressed elements of human nature."<sup>2</sup> In these circumstances the horrible is portrayed because, to "the more civilized parts" of one's own nature and in the public mind, it *is* horrible, although it is fascinating, and must find indirect expression. "The aesthetic way" of treating evil, he had earlier said (1920, 362), is "to rebuild it in the imagination." What Aristotle says of pity and terror may also be said of the horrible and obscene. The condemned desires are ineradicable. If art gives them expression, this is not in order to eliminate them, as Aristotle suggests, but to domesticate them: the end is not so much self-improvement as self-acceptance. It may be an index of civilization that it should allow such urges a symbolic expression in art rather than a direct expression in action.<sup>3</sup>

Between the obsessive and the mystical Parker places a third kind of portrayals of the horrible, those whose motive is simply fidelity to fact.<sup>4</sup> And with these he classes what others might take for a fourth kind, the satiric portrayal of evil which is neither gloated over nor glossed over, as a means of inculcating the standards by which it is recognized and condemned as evil.

What is evil, then, may appear in art as a means to good; as a foil to

2. Cf. Sears (1940, 262-3): A group of young men were exposed to repeated and severe frustrations; after some hours one of the "subjects" drew, and passed round to general applause, pictures of mutilated bodies which he said represented psychologists.

3. I owe these thoughts to Professor James Reaney, who is well known in Canada as a poet of these darker aspects of man's nature.

4. Aristotle thought this the typical explanation of our pleasure in the portrayal of what is in itself offensive: it is the delight of recognition, the simple pleasure of the mind in its own powers of representation (*Poetics*, 1448b10-12).

good; as good in itself; or simply as indifferent material for an activity which is itself good.

### *The Tragic*

The suffering and death of the helpless is not tragic, but pathetic. The tragic pleasure is that taken in the artistic representation of the destruction of the strong or noble. That there is such a pleasure is certain, for people take trouble and expense to see tragedies. But is there a recognizable mode of sensibility, capable of being manifested in the arts other than drama, which can appropriately be termed "the tragic"? It seems doubtful. The "tragic effect" is isolated and named because tragedy has been a form isolated and discussed since Aristotle. As the characteristic effect of tragedy, the tragic effect is the exaltation produced by the spectacle of the endurance of, and hence triumph over, death or other great adversity by a human being who is (in this context and for this time at least) noble. Parker (1920, 105) suggests that the adversity must be encountered in the quest of some goal and involve a moral struggle, but this is not necessary. Hauser (1951, IV.213) thinks there must be a conflict between "irreconcilable moral principles" within the protagonist, but this is not necessary either. These are just common ways in which nobility and disaster can be brought together.

It seems unlikely that the tragic effect could be produced by anything other than a narrative of events of the appropriate kind. Plays, films and novels can be tragic, but paintings and statues could be so only in virtue of the narratives they call to mind—only, that is, when regarded as illustrations rather than as self-contained works of art; and buildings cannot be tragic at all.<sup>5</sup> The tragic would seem therefore to be a mode of sensibility appropriate to a rather narrow range of events and art forms and determined by the precise structure of events, rather than a possible attitude towards a wide range of material expressible in any medium.

The tragic effect is often associated with sublimity conceived as a product of the mind's sense of power in overcoming some great and threatening force. The "undismayed beholder" of a tempest, writes Schopenhauer (1818, §39),

perceives himself, on the one hand, as an individual, as the frail phenomenon of will, which the slightest touch of these forces can utterly destroy, helpless against powerful nature, dependent, the victim of chance, a vanishing nothing in the presence of stupendous might; and, on the other hand, as the eternal,

5. Buildings may be described as "tragic," or as anything else, by way of metaphor: one of our local bards has lately done so (see *Tamarack Review*, no. 6 (1958), 30-1). Nothing, of course, can be inferred from such conceits; but it is worth noting that in this poem the building in question was interpreted as a narrative, reading from the ground up.



peaceful, knowing subject, the condition of the object, and, therefore, the supporter of this whole world; the terrific strife of nature only his idea; the subject itself free and apart from all desires and necessities, in the quiet comprehension of the Ideas.

Thus, it is somewhat more crudely thought, a tragic hero's head is bloody but unbowed, and we share vicariously in his spiritual triumph, in the demonstration of his (and therefore our) superiority to the force that overwhelms him. We may reach this notion by considering the passage from Lucretius already referred to (p. 155) in speaking of the pleasures of safety. What gives pleasure is not, as in some accounts of the sublime, the spectacle of a hostile force ranged over against the spectator without actually threatening his destruction, but rather a hostile force directed against someone else, and forming a possible object of contemplation not because it is foiled or checked but because it is aimed elsewhere. Although the quiet satisfaction that Lucretius finds in the contemplation of others' troubles is not the exaltation of the tragic (but then, the Epicurean Lucretius could have had no use for exaltation), consciousness of one's own security is doubtless essential to the "psychical distance," the appropriate degree of detachment, which is necessary to the appreciation of tragedy as of any art (cf. pp. 218 ff. below). The Lucretian explanation fails not only because it describes a more quiet reaction than that to the tragic, but by its neglect of the difference between the tragic and the pathetic: it is not the mere spectacle of the operation of a mighty and hostile (but in this instance harmless) force that gives the tragic pleasure, but at least some dynamic relation between that force and the object on which it is expended.

In tragic pleasure, then, we seem fortified by beholding or contemplating, and vicariously sharing, the endurance of what in life may have to be endured. The vision of strength, even though that strength may in the end be brought to nothing, makes us feel strong.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy power which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent; . . .

I said that this tragic effect depends on the form of an event, and can be produced only through some allusion to such form. It would surely be produced no less certainly, though perhaps with less intensity or purity, by a narrative of actual happenings. Any tale of heroism and endurance,

if it is decently told, or even if its incidents are recalled in memory without narration, will have this same quality: for the "distance" for contemplation may be produced by the perspective of memory no less than by the proscenium arch.

The term "tragic" is however used more widely than I have allowed—perhaps I should say, more loosely. A musical work may be described as "tragic" if it seems to embody the feelings of menace, inevitability and endurance. Even so, the tragic seems to be confined to the arts of time, since the shape of events appears essential to it. Even in the loosest colloquial sense, in which we speak of so-and-so's death as "tragic" and mean no more than that it was unexpected and he was doing quite well before he died, the term is relational and refers to the death as a certain kind of conclusion to or interruption of a pattern of life. If the term "tragic" can be applied at all to paintings regarded otherwise than as illustrations, it is to those which can be interpreted as symbolic of destinies: to Daumier's *Don Quixote*, for example, where the dead mule in the foreground is inevitably taken as presaging the fate of the lonely mounted figure in the background who rides towards it through a desert landscape. Yet some paintings seem more fittingly termed "tragic" than others supposedly of the same subject, so that the tragic effect must depend partly on the "mode of sensibility" and not purely on the narrative stated or implied. Not all paintings of the Crucifixion have the same effect. And whatever bears the marks of endurance may represent its own history and destiny, and thus be "tragic," without suggesting any particular course of events.

#### *Pathos and Melancholy*

Not every portrayed disaster, I said, is tragic. The spectacle of the death or misery of the feeble, as of children, is merely pathetic. The word "merely" is often thus used in this connection because pathos is commonly thought of as an illegitimate and somewhat disgraceful substitute for tragedy, and for this reason is usually mentioned only to be dismissed. Yet pathos abounds in art as in life, so both concept and phenomenon should be examined. Even if the effects it produces are necessarily inferior to those of tragedy one should explain why this is so, and not allow a facile disdain to take the place of argument.

Most agree that Aristotle was not wholly absurd in describing the tragic as arousing pity and terror, and all but the most casual and indiscriminating agree that the effect, however produced, is one of exaltation. Pathos has the opposite effect. Not that it is genuinely depressing: if it were, it would be death at the box-office and would cease to be used.



Rather, it makes one feel not braced but enfeebled,<sup>6</sup> offering the luxury of pity without fear. It gratifies those who "like a good cry." There are two objections to it. One is that such enjoyment is debased and degrading. This objection may come from inferring from the feeling that pathos arouses that it really does weaken the character, hard as it may be to see how that is possible; or it may be based on the feeling that such pleasures, however great at the time, are necessarily followed by a temporary lowering of the spirits, an effect which may be thought incompatible with artistic excellence; or it may simply be that "having a good cry" is itself incompatible with current notions of manly behaviour (as Plato's strictures on Homeric heroes suggests, *Republic*, 387E). The second objection is that pathos is a rhetorical device, that the author seeks deliberately to impose the luxury of vicarious grief. The effect is too cheap and easily worked up, whereas the tragic requires more sincerity and artistic handling. As for sincerity, however, if that is relevant, it is notorious that writers who rely on pathos are themselves usually susceptible to it, and may be deeply moved by their own pathetic passages, as Dickens was.

The suggestion that pathos is easier and less "artistic" than the tragic may be correct. The point often made in these terms is that the pathetic is less "distanced": that tragedy is offered for contemplation, but pathos assaults our raw feelings. But if this is so, one does not immediately see why it should be so. A more telling point is made by Professor Frye (1957, 38-9):

Pathos is increased by the inarticulateness of the victim. The death of an animal is usually pathetic, and so is the catastrophe of defective intelligence. . . . Pathos is a queer ghoulish emotion, and some failure of expression, real or simulated, seems to be peculiar to it. . . . The root idea of pathos is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong.

In drama, then, certainly, the pathetic must be artistically inferior to the tragic, since the dramatist is articulate only through his characters. What lies behind the complaint that pathos exploits our emotions is perhaps that, objectively, we ourselves are more likely to be pathetic than tragic, though our morality calls on us to act as tragic heroes rather than embrace the pathos of our condition. Parker writes (1920, 108): "Just as most of human life involves tragedy in so far as it develops a strength to meet the dangers which threaten it, so likewise it involves pathos, in so far as it seldom resists at every point, but gives way, blighted without hope." The

6. Plato ascribes this effect to tragedy. Aristotle's *Poetics*, in so far as it is a rejoinder to Plato, proceeds by distinguishing the true tragic effect from this pathetic effect.

tragic then is a vicarious challenge, the pathetic a vicarious temptation.

Since pathos exploits for aesthetic purposes such emotions as pity, sympathy and sadness, the pathetic death is not treated like the tragic death as the conclusion of a life, but as its curtailment. The death is not viewed in its relation to an actual past but in relation to the putative future of which it deprives its victim. The phrases of pathos are "no more . . .," "never again . . .," "for the last time. . . ." The protracted farewells of the tubercular heroine of opera are the ripest (squashest) fruit of pathos. This explains the reference to "mere" pathos, the belief that it is necessarily inartistic and lacks "distance." Since whatever disaster is in question is regarded as an interruption rather than as a completion, its aesthetic effect must be less than that of its counterpart in tragedy, which is an element in an almost ritual pattern. Pathos may form part of an artistic design, but the pathetic event itself cannot have the structural significance of the tragic event: it must lack the effect of inevitability.

Its relative lack of structure makes pathos depend less on the time relation than tragedy does, so that it is more amenable to treatment by the visual arts. Like tragedy, it can figure in painting as the illustration of a pathetic narrative already known or inferred. But it can also be achieved directly by portraying a visible good and a person excluded therefrom. Such paintings have been common and popular, although their dependence on anecdotal interest to the exclusion of more painterly resources spoils them for contemporary taste. On the other hand, its dependence on a certain kind of event combines with its lack of structure to make it impossible to construct musical works to which the term "pathetic" is peculiarly appropriate,<sup>7</sup> otherwise than by simulating whimpering or other distressful noises.

"Pathetic," like "tragic," is a word used loosely in conversation—unless, since pathos has a less distinguished record in aesthetics than tragedy, one prefers to say that the concept of pathos as just outlined is unduly restricted. Conversationally, the pathetic is anything that arouses sympathy or an amused simulacrum of pity: "Oh, *look* at the little darling! Isn't it pathetic?" If it had aroused the pity without the amusement it would have been called tragic. On this level one is certainly reacting to the event itself and not to the formal structure of its embodiment, as one may tell from the practice of newspapers in filling their columns with narratives of "tragic" and "pathetic" events that are either bare assertions of the facts or embroidered with descriptions of the

7. Colloquially, a musical composition or building may be called "pathetic" in reference to the artist's failure to measure up to his task—his exclusion, in Frye's terms, from the community of artists to which he is trying to belong.



locale (to add verisimilitude) and of the appearances and sorrowful utterances of those involved (to jerk tears). The difference between a tragedy and a newspaper account of a "tragic" event is much greater than that between a pathetic passage in a novel and a pathetic piece in a newspaper: tragedy always depends more on form than pathos ever does.

From pathos as just described must be distinguished the melancholy or merely sad. Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears" for example, though directed upon the "days that are no more" is really nothing but the exploration of a mood for its own sake. Unlike the pathetic and tragic, which are attitudes that may or may not be taken up toward certain specific kinds of events, the "pensive mood" is inward-looking; it fastens upon certain kinds of subject matter to deepen and sustain itself, but is not really dependent upon or even concerned with them. For this reason it can be expressed in music, as pathos and tragedy cannot. One way of doing this is to simulate the cadences and rhythms of the human voice in grief.<sup>8</sup> But for the same reason it is doubtful whether a painting can be simply sad, otherwise than by portraying the materials upon which the mood traditionally fastens.

### *Comedy, Wit, Humour*

The simplest and in some ways the most convincing method of building up an account of the comic and its related modes would be simply to invert what was said of the tragic and its related modes. Thus, where tragedy deals with the failures of dignified but rather slow-witted persons in impossibly difficult situations, and is thus a solemn affair, comedy deals with the successes of undignified but quick-witted persons in apparently insoluble predicaments, and is thus a cheerful affair. In tragedy there is actual defeat but moral victory, in comedy actual victory at the expense (usually) of morality. As melodrama presents in a crude and violent form the material of tragedy but not the form, so farce presents the incidents of comedy without the structure. Corresponding to pathos, the defeat of the feeble, we have triumph, the victory of the strong; and as pathos is condemned as degrading, triumph is condemned as coarsening.<sup>9</sup> As pathos

8. The sounds of "wailing and lamentation" themselves take on culturally elaborated forms, such as keening; but no doubt they have a pre-cultural basis, being continuous with the infant's howl, which is presumably international.

9. An exception seems to be made in favour of the kind of hymn that goes: "The Lord is a Man of War, ta-ra-boom." The victories of an omnipotent Being over any other forces whatever would be infinitely more certain than one by the Soviet Union over (say) Monaco, and one would think it yet more tasteless to celebrate them; but hymnology lags behind theology, and the battle of God versus The Rest is imagined in terms suitable to that of David versus Goliath. So we celebrate, incongruously, a plucky fight by an Almighty Underdog.

has less structure than tragedy because it implies not the completion of a presented pattern but only the curtailing of a necessarily problematical future, so triumph is less structured than comedy because instead of a presentation of agility in the solution of definite problems it gives only a sense that unstated difficulties have been overcome. As the tragic must be defined in relation to the art of tragedy and the pathetic in relation to pathetic happenings, so the comic must be defined by comedy and triumph by victory. Lastly, to the general tone of sadness or melancholy, the pensive mood, answers a general tone of cheerfulness or exuberance, the allegro mood. Corresponding to tears, the response to what touches most nearly in melancholy, there is laughter at the highest point of good cheer.

The suspiciously neat symmetry of this account is flawed by the problem of wit and humour. It may be true that we are saddest when we weep; it is not true that we are most cheerful when we laugh. As tears are more often aroused by sudden disappointment or pain than by sadness, laughter comes more often from wit or humour than from euphoria, which indeed will scarcely suffice without them. This raises difficulties because comedy (and farce *a fortiori*) is usually expected to be funny, to evoke laughter by "comic" situations and witty lines which need have no integral relation to the plot, whereas tears are the appropriate response to pathos which is out of place in tragedy. Aesthetics has in fact devoted much attention to wit and humour, but little to cheerfulness and comedy, presumably because cheerfulness is held to be intrinsically unproblematic.

Jokes, funny situations and witty sayings, it is usually agreed, depend less on a sense of well-being than on a sense of incongruity or surprise. An anecdote that is continuously funny is one in which the events are either grotesquely varied from what usually happens, or typical of some known agent whose character is itself in some respect a parody of ordinary human nature. A story that is funny only in its conclusion is one where the concluding event is grotesquely inappropriate to what has gone before, but has a sort of parody of appropriateness. A witty remark is one that is likewise appropriately inappropriate, and a funny happening is of the same kind. The effect of incongruity depends largely on surprise, since whatever is familiar is acceptable to the mind. It is therefore common for a person to find a given thing funny once only, unless setting and narrative are designed to build up an appropriate expectation (cf. p. 87 above). In this way and to this extent humour depends, like the tragic, upon structure. Few things, indeed, are so funny in themselves that they can be enjoyed without a contrived setting; which is why so few of the entries in "joke



books" evoke laughter, whereas even jokes inherently lame can "set the table in a roar" if suitably prepared.<sup>10</sup>

The question why we enjoy such sudden incongruities, and why when enjoyed they provoke the physical commotion of laughter, is perhaps one for psychologists to answer. But several accounts have been given by literary men and attained wide currency. The most celebrated is Hobbes's ascription (1651, 27) of the effect to a "sudden glory" in a momentary triumph or in the perception of a momentary superiority to the discomfited. Hegel (1835, II.354) similarly associates humour with the triumph of "a wholly personal point of view" over "all that is objectively solid in reality." Bergson (1900, I, §4) produces what is really a refined and specialized version of the same doctrine in his thesis that what chiefly arouses laughter in human affairs is the intrusion of mechanical causation, or its appearance, into vital processes, as when a grave man steps on orange peel and falls victim to a gravity not his own. These views all recognize that laughter is aroused by what threatens indirectly the laugher's ego—all good jokes are on serious subjects. Plato remarked (*Philebus*, 48C-E) that what is ridiculous is a person's overestimation of himself, and that this is funny only when the overestimation cannot find expression in effective action and thus injure us. In direct line with these speculations is Freud's contention (1905) that wit is a licensed, because covert, release of repressed urges from the structure of values consciously maintained. Even if one believes Freud, however, it remains obscure why the overt reaction should take the form it does. It is all very well to say that "Laughter is the abreaction of the pleasurable sensation when the effort to repress becomes suddenly unnecessary. . . . One laughs off the saved energy which was used for repression" (Alexander 1948, 39). But the quantitative approach to psychic energy is not very convincing; and if energy is indeed released one does not see why it should not find some other, less specialized, outlet.

However, as Miss Swabey says (1958, 819), it is pointless to ask what makes people laugh: anything may make someone laugh; the question for aesthetics should be, what is worth laughing at? And she follows Hegel in attributing true humour to the detection of "bits of nonsense in a world that somehow makes sense," of "incongruities in a more comprehensive congruity," from which it follows that the humorist must have metaphysical knowledge, must be able to perceive the ordered structure that

10. Kant claims for the feeble jokes he quotes (1790, §54) only that a skilful raconteur could get a laugh with them, thus showing himself more of a man of the world than his critics, who apparently expect an after-dinner story to be funny on paper.

makes incongruities incongruous (*ibid.*, 822). The further inference, that humour should not undermine moral values, is analogous to Plato's strictures on tragedy in that it assumes that what it criticizes has no special part to play in the economy of values. As the reply to Plato was that tragedy afforded a special occasion on which normal pressures might be relieved, so to Miss Swabey and Hegel one might say that the rebelliousness of civilized men against the restrained and unnatural life that their civilization demands has a valuable expression in saturnalian feasts when hostility finds its veiled outlet in ritualized derision.

Just as one can be cheerful about anything by "looking on the bright side," one can be funny about any event, whether one ought to or not, by attending to those aspects of it that are least relevant either to its actual progress or to its progress as conventionally considered (e.g. Tolstoy's account of a performance of an opera, 1898, 254 ff.). Humour and cheerfulness, accordingly, may characterize the whole of a literary work. Wit too may be a quality of the over-all attitude, although as the word is nowadays used "wit" tends to be reserved for the exposure of genuine incongruities, or of those which the author and his public take to be genuine, in human institutions. Wit thus approximates to satire in its moral intention and demands a more energetic play of intellect (which was the term's original sense) than humour proper, in which there is rather a disinterested delight in an appearance of incongruity for its own sake.

Musical and pictorial works can be cheerful in tone just as they can be sad. The position of wit and humour in these arts is more complicated. We may distinguish drawings whose humour lies in their depiction of a situation inherently incongruous from those which suggest some more subtle incongruity, as those caricatures which show the beast in man or the human in animals. With anything more complex than a pictorial joke of the *Punch* kind, however, we find as Huizinga says (1927, 303) that "We do not laugh in looking at Breughel, although we admire in him the same force of droll fancy which makes us laugh in reading Rabelais." If this is true, it is presumably because incongruity, being a conceptual rather than a perceptual affair, can be more readily and copiously handled through words than through images. A witty drawing differs from a humorous one in revealing as ridiculous what is commonly taken seriously; and a satirical one goes beyond mockery, attacking rather than ridiculing the manners it portrays, as do Hogarth's famous series.<sup>11</sup>

In music, humour is possible but not common. Musical jokes often con-

11. From the pages of *Punch*, Giovanetti's drawings of a humanized hamster are humorous; Pont's interpretations of English life were witty; and Mr. Mansbridge's *The Pursuit of Happiness* (September 28, 1955) was satirical.



sist in providing incongruous settings for texts: the humour of Sullivan's settings of Gilbert is mostly of this kind. Otherwise, they often take the form of deliberately producing sounds usually made by accident, as Miss Anna Russell does, or of producing by musical means or at least in musical contexts sounds with non-musical associations (bassoon jokes). Humour in "pure" music rarely gets beyond this level of horseplay, and it is hard to see how it could. Movements marked *scherzo* or *scherzando* usually belie their title and are simply gay, sprightly or, if they are meant to be funny, grotesque. Wit, like humour, abounds where the musical form can embody a comment on what it accompanies, as in opera or ballet or song, but in "pure" music can scarcely exist except as self-mockery or parody. As for musical satire, if such a thing exists I have not heard of it and cannot imagine what it would be.

An account of humour in terms of incongruity, as sketched here, is inadequate: degree of funniness is not discernibly related to degree of incongruity. But the problem of what makes one joke funnier than another, or why some people split their sides at what leaves others cold, is one to which I know of no plausible answer. The many who have attempted solutions have succeeded only in convincing an unsympathetic world of their own inability to recognize a good joke when they saw one. Many tracks enter that cave, but none come out. I prefer not to enter.

### *Irony and Satire*

The comic must be limited to bringing to nothing what is in itself null, a false and self-contradictory phenomenon; for instance, a whim, a perversity, or particular caprice, set over against a mighty passion; or even a *supposed* reliable principle or rigid maxim may be shown to be null. But it is quite another thing when what is in reality moral and true, and substantial content as such, exhibits itself as null in an individual and by his means. (Hegel 1835/1886, 129.)

To this "other thing" Hegel gives the name of *irony*, which he thus condemns. I have said something on the question of whether one should ever laugh at what one really takes seriously, or whether one can readily laugh at anything else. But irony, "the dry mock," has none of the releasing exuberance of laughter. The ironic attitude is that which finds nothing great, adopting a standpoint appropriate to a non-moral superman: the attitude, perhaps, of Huxley's earlier novels. The attitude can readily become tiresome, and must indeed suffer Hegel's condemnation unless it be true that indeed there exists nothing that deserves respect. Morally speaking, it must be transcended by what Charles Williams called "defeated irony," the discovery that when everything has been belittled everything

becomes once more dear. But the fact that irony will not do in life does not mean that there is no place for irony in art. On the contrary: only where all things are held equally cheap, where the author presents all his material with equal detachment, can a true *composition* be made, an order to which all parts equally contribute. If the author takes sides he appears as a propagandist and no longer as an artist (cf. Frye 1957, 40). To say thus that irony must appear in an artist's attitude to his material as a condition of success is not to say that irony should be made a quality of the completed composition, though the inference seems sometimes to have been made. But what Hegel condemns in irony should perhaps be given another name, that of *sarcasm*. Sarcasm, the sneering mockery at all pretension, is doubtless incompatible with art of any kind; for it is characteristic of the sarcastic man that he is interested in scoring a personal point rather than making anything for contemplation or enjoyment.

I have been treating irony as the opposite of the tragic or the sublime. *Nil admirari* is the essence of irony, *admirari* is the heart of the sublime in all its manifestations. But irony may equally well be contrasted with romance, as a picture of life in which everything is made out less perfect than we like to think it contrasted with "That green remote Cockaigne where whisky rivers run. . . ." Viewed in this context, irony must be slightly reinterpreted, as that kind of realism to which the epithet "sordid" is sometimes applied. This is not a different thing, but another aspect of the same: both interpretations associate irony with a downward look and its opposite with an upward gaze. What they differ in is whether the implied superiority or inferiority is one of power or magnitude or one of some form of perfection or attractiveness. Between the two, in either case, would be the level glance.

Irony, like satire, is for the most part a literary modality. It may be introduced into painting and music by such semi-literary devices as quotation, as when in a Hogarth engraving the pictures on the wall make a wry commentary on the scene portrayed, or when Schumann introduces the *Marseillaise* into *Die beiden Grenadiere*. A painting or drawing may be ironical in virtue of the anecdote it implies, as by portraying men intent upon some enterprise in face of the calamity that will destroy it ("dramatic irony"). Whether irony can ever justly be attributed to the quality of a musical or pictorial composition as a whole may be doubted, as it is by Hauser (1951, II.47-8). But a form of irony may be said to be the dominating mood of Toulouse-Lautrec's work, and of much of that of Breughel the Elder and of Hiroshige—a detached survey of humanity in all its casual weakness, with no hint either of sympathy or of condemnation. It is perhaps necessarily, like wit, a quality of comment on



human affairs; pure music, which can make such comment only indirectly if at all, can thus never be ironical.

Satire differs from irony and wit in condemning what it portrays in the name of some clearly implied but usually unstated system of values. It is the point on which irony and wit, and even sarcasm, converge. The ironist's dead-pan is always in danger of cracking and making him into a satirist, and wit requires only co-ordination and serious intent to become satire. And if the sarcastic man manages to identify his personal spites with a recognizable cause we allow him the name of satirist: spite itself is neither necessary for a satirist (Horace lacks it) nor incompatible with his success (Pope has it). Parker (1920, 125) would say that the title of satirist does not bear with it the title of artist: "Because of its failure in sympathy, satirical comedy is incomplete as art. It provides insight and pleasure in the object, but no union with it. It does not attain to beauty, which is free and reconciling." But perhaps the appropriate symbolic vengeance of satire affords its own kind of reconciliation.

It will be noticed that most of the modalities here discussed, including satire, are pre-eminently literary, and that their status in their non-literary forms may be doubtful. This is not because I have literary prejudices, or because the language of literary criticism is exceptionally well organized: it is because all attitudes to subject-matter can be most explicitly embodied in words. It is therefore in literature that they can be most unmistakably identified. It would not be possible to compile alternative sets of attitudes that could be most easily defined in terms of the other arts.

## GENRES

THE MODALITIES just considered were not only literary in their clearest manifestations, but for the most part abstracted from literary genres. The abstraction is illegitimate unless the notion of a literary genre is itself defensible. But is it? Is the grouping of certain literary works as "tragedies" merely a critic's convenience, to save him the trouble of dealing with each work on its own terms? "Rules are not the source of poetry," wrote Giordano Bruno (1585, Part I, Dial. I), "but poetry is the source of rules, and there are as many rules as there are real poets." The "rules" for writing Homeric epics do not teach how to write poetry, but how to write like Homer: they are fundamentally descriptions of past practice, not prescriptions. This seems very reasonable, and when Dryden takes the opposite view (1685, 271)—"The first inventors of any art or science, provided they have brought it to perfection, are, in reason, to

give laws to it; and, according to their model, all after-undertakers are to build"—one is likely to feel that the artist is being absurdly cramped. Granted that any departure from perfection in a kind must be wrong, the question remains whether kinds can here be satisfactorily distinguished and their perfection definitively established. Dryden seems to think that because Homer or someone has written a successful poem of a kind that can be designated by some simple formula but that also has other definable characteristics, any later poet who writes anything to which the same formula can be applied should "in reason" also incorporate in his work the same other characteristics. So judgements of the form "This is classifiable as an epic, so ought to have the characteristics we look for in epics" come to be substituted for judgements on whether the work succeeds in its own intentions and whether the intentions are worth while. The critical function is thus resigned to the dictionary-maker. If there are sixty different ways of writing tribal lays, fifty-nine of them must be wrong. The usual way of condemning such criticism is forcefully expressed by Prall (1936, 170):

To judge works of art in the light of our own preconceptions would in effect be judging artists in accordance with the degree to which as original structural workers they failed and became derivative technical experts in the putting together of our accepted store of aesthetic materials and patterns.

"What are called critical standards," he says, "are very largely the structural patterns of works of art that have become familiar to critics"; a critic who judges in terms of them is giving "an account of what has happened to him when he was faced with the play and put his mind on something else." "Unique individuality . . . constitutes the essential character and hence value in works of art"; and therefore all general definitions of forms and genres must be worthless (*ibid.*, 185-7).

However, as Wellek and Warren point out (1949, 7), a work of art cannot be unique in the sense that it shares no aesthetically relevant characteristics with any other, or it could not be understood, could not even be recognized as a work of art. Prall indeed concedes that knowledge of a genre may be as essential to understanding as it may be harmful. One must agree with Dryden that accepted forms and accepted ranges of effect appropriate to those forms do grow up and become accepted by artists and public alike, even to the point where the term "ritual" may seem appropriate to them; that departure from such conventions is a sign of incompetence or insensitivity more often than of original genius; that someone who sets out to write a sonnet means what he writes to be interpreted in definite relation to sonnets as already written. What is debatable



is whether we should go further with Dryden and seek a natural appropriateness in genres, affirming that satisfactory and durable forms represent a constellation of properties that have a special mutual fittingness. Only this last affirmation would license us to construct a *theory* of genres as a basis for criticism, rather than a *natural history* of genres as a guide to the interpretation of works explicitly written within them.

Professor Frye's demand that aesthetics become "a comparative grammar of the arts" presupposes that the differentiation of the arts and the differentiation of genres within the arts alike depend on more than taxonomical accident. His own work has done much to justify a new (or revised) classification of genres for literature. But a revised classification, however natural, cannot be identical with that used at present by critics and authors; so that in so far as genres partake, as suggested, of the nature of a ritual, Frye is dealing with what genres should be and not what they are. But perhaps authors really only pay lip-service to genres, after all,<sup>12</sup> and their use by critics makes for bad criticism, so that a rational system of genres would make for reform in criticism and might be helpful to authors as clarifying their tasks.

According to Frye (1957, 246) the most fundamental differentiation of literary modes is by the "radical of presentation" (that is: whether the work is to be staged, or recited, or what), further distinctions being by complexes of imagery, modality and plot form, which (as I have said) tend to be associated with "radicals of presentation" appropriate to them. A theory of genres should, however, go with a system of arts: the enumeration and classification of arts, we have seen, remains problematic, and the difference between an art and a genre is undefined. On the other side, genres are not clearly differentiated from the "fixed forms" (Wellek and Warren 1949, 221) such as the sonnet, whose formal identity does not like that of a genre carry with it an associated complex of imagery, etc. Frye's pioneering essay in genetic theory is therefore insecure.

The notion of a genre is familiar in literature, less so in the other arts. Perhaps this is due to the same factors that we saw made such modalities of feeling as irony easiest to identify and define in literary terms. It is certainly true, however, that there are in the other arts phenomena corresponding to literary genres. In painting we differentiate landscapes, portraits, history paintings, even if there is no convention as to how these

12. Collingwood's well-known claim (1938, 116) that the true artist does not know at the outset of his work whether he will produce a tragedy or a comedy, though hard to believe, therefore comes close to an important truth: "writing a tragedy" is unlikely to be a reasonable statement of his intentions or foreshadowings, though as soon as he knows that he will write something he is likely to know whether it will tend toward the tragic or the comic.

distinctions are to be related to other possible distinctions between types of paintings. In architecture the church and the apartment block seem to have the generic character: churches resemble and differ from each other in much the same ways as tragedies resemble and differ from each other; the chief difference between the two cases is that the doubt whether a building is a church at all is unlike the doubt whether a play is a tragedy at all, but this holds only so far as the criteria determining whether a building is a church are non-architectural. At the sub-generic level there are such narrower specifications as the Doric temple or the Gothic cathedral, which perhaps correspond to such sub-genres as Aristotelian tragedy rather than to such fixed forms as the sonnet, for one can say that Beauvais is the culminating Gothic cathedral as one can say that *Oedipus Tyrannus* is the culminating Aristotelian tragedy, but no one sonnet can be named as expressing the unique perfection of sonnet form.

The problem of framing a satisfactory classification of arts, genres and forms, like every taxonomical problem, is that of finding a single principle or logically connected group of principles which can be uniformly, systematically, usefully and illuminatingly applied to the material to be classified. But the arts present special problems to the taxonomist. The natural historian can ignore popular classifications. But perhaps the aesthetician cannot. In so far as the arts are constituted entirely by human actions, they are what men decide they are and their relations are what they are thought to be. But if the aesthetician makes it his task to codify existing classifications he may find them incomplete and arbitrary, overlapping, inconsistent and discontinuous. In painting, for example, "conversation pieces" cannot be sharply distinguished from landscapes with figures, Dutch genre paintings, and group portraits generally; but in the eighteenth century they were recognized as a distinct kind of painting, as a definite way in which an artist might exercise his skill (Edwards 1954). A hierarchical classification is possible in natural history because evolutionary processes involve progressive differentiation: re-combination is rare and incomplete. It is therefore possible in principle to classify completely and systematically by tracing descent through structure. This is not true of art, where cross-influences are unrestricted, where no original unifying stem can be postulated, and where there are no genetic determinants to ensure to species a continuity and relative fixity.

Professor Wimsatt (1954, 50-3), doubtless moved by such facts as those just cited, condemns the whole notion of taxonomy in the arts as based on the confusion of works of art with organisms, whereas they are acts. But this goes too far. Works of art are not structureless, and their structures must like all structures be mutually comparable, and there is no



reason why such comparison should not be fruitful. Acts no less than organisms can be mutually compared and classified. All that we are entitled to say is that, since in art there are no discrete true-breeding species, no taxonomy of art can be held definitive unless it is accepted as normative by artists and critics. It follows that a classification of arts, genres and forms on *a priori* principles, by possible means of presentation, types of medium and the like, though certainly possible, would be entirely pointless if it were not practically applicable. And certainly such a classification could not yield the accepted divisions, which as I have said correspond to narrowly restricted and specialized forms which have been developed into means of expression. It is absurd to suggest that one could deduce sonata form *a priori*.<sup>13</sup> If it be said that a rational scheme *ought* to be substituted in artistic and critical practice for the existing haphazard ones, one can only say that it is yet more absurd to suggest that one could deduce something *better* than sonata form *a priori*. And yet there is a level at which such theoretical differentiation might avoid some confusion of purpose. Functionalists in architecture, for example, doctrinaires in search of a doctrine, could use an intelligible theory.

The treatment of currently accepted generic distinctions in their arbitrary profusion and the exposition of a new set of distinctions in its arbitrary arrogance are alike beyond the scope of this survey. I only add some remarks on tragedy and comedy, for the sole reasons that they are stock subjects of discussion and that the confusions attending the discussion of tragedy serve to illustrate the difficulties of all generic theory.

### *Aristotelian Tragedy*

Aristotle saw in tragedy a means of achieving a particular effect, the purging of pity and fear, but also assumed that all serious drama aimed at this effect. So he equated tragedy with serious drama, and ever since his time the problem of the nature of the tragic effect has been confused with that of the essentials of serious drama, and both with Aristotle's technical problem of how to effect catharsis. In practice the problem has usually taken a confused or bastard form. One starts with tragedy as described by Aristotle and then assumes that the whole of this description ought to apply to any play similar in its general effect or in some aspect of its general form to the plays of which Aristotle was writing. Of course, it

13. Mr. Meyer (1956, 57-8) remarks that such concepts as that of sonata form are formed by abstraction from hearing many works (whose initial resemblances are presumably due to influences of particular works on other particular works). Each new work will therefore tend to alter the concept of the form. Such concepts thus remain flexible. This holds true even for the concepts of such minimal forms as the plagal cadence.

does not; so the problem is then to find a modification or "correction" of the description that will cover all such plays. This procedure, like other analogous devices such as kicking a car that won't start, sometimes has beneficial results.

Aristotle's problem in the *Poetics* is: given catharsis as the end, what structure must a play have to produce it? He can ask this question and lay down rules for creative artists, as many of us think critics should never do, because if there is a set effect to be produced within a given medium and context (provided in this case by the conditions of exhibition at a particular ceremony) there must be right and wrong ways of setting about achieving the end and fulfilling the social requirements. Aristotle recognizes that plays cannot be written by prescription, that there is a point where rules fail and individual genius is necessary. He locates this point, however, not in the organization and structure of the play but in the poetic imagery, which depends on the unteachable gift of seeing unexpected resemblances between dissimilar things.

To achieve the given end, to produce pity and terror, the poet must show disaster striking someone with whom the audience can identify themselves in imagination: that is, the central character must be on the normal human level, neither so preternaturally good as to seem inhuman nor so depraved as to forfeit sympathy. The character of the hero must also be typical, generalized to the point where he is regarded not as an unique individual but as "a man" in a certain situation, "as it might be you or me." Instead of pitying an individual we are to feel pitifulness for the human lot. By this generalization the effect of "psychical distance" is maintained, and emotion remains contemplative.

"Terror" will not be aroused if it is felt that the dramatist is inflicting arbitrary distress upon his characters. The action must therefore seem at the time to develop inevitably out of their natural actions in the situations in which they have placed themselves. This does not require the exclusion of coincidence: unless the consequences of the characters' actions were plausibly unforeseen by them, we should feel no "pity." There is then a double requirement: terror requires inevitability, pity demands surprise. The interaction of these two yields the "dramatic irony" in which the audience foresee consequences of the stage action which the agents do not.

What must be done to secure inevitability? Opinions have varied. Some have held that the mainspring of the action must be a "tragic flaw," a moral weakness in the hero, which destroys him. This is true to the extent that a man's fortune must not be unrelated to his actions nor these to his nature, but no further. Pentheus in the *Bacchae* is no doubt destroyed by his own infatuation, but to say that Creon and Antigone in the *Antigone*



are destroyed by their own intransigence is a bit perverse.<sup>14</sup> Others have said that the characters in a Greek tragedy are helpless in the grip of "Fate." There is something in this, too; but the Curse of the House of Atreus is more spoken of than dramatically present, and the oracle that foretold Laius' death does not appear as a dynamic force in the *Oedipus*. The gods' foreknowledge has never been felt by their admirers to do away with free will. Yet other interpreters have blamed both these theories for seeking a single cause or ground of the "inevitability" of the action, when the sole requirement is that the effect shall be somehow produced: we are to feel simply that "this is the way things happen." But this is excessively abstract: the context in which the demand for inevitability arises requires the connection of the events with the individuals to whom they happen. More than one of Euripides' plays ends with the lines:

Many are the forms of spiritual things,  
And the gods decide many things unexpectedly:  
What was looked for was not brought to completion,  
And the god found a way for what was not looked for.  
This affair turned out like that.

Precisely *not* the way things happen, but the way *this* thing had to happen. The event is made intelligible; but to explain an event is not to show that it is typical (Dray 1957, 122 ff.). Mrs. Langer argues (1953, 333) that the impression of inevitability is to be imputed not to the causal connections of the events portrayed but to the general shape of the tragic action as a whole: "The 'tragic rhythm of action' . . . is the rhythm of man's life at its highest powers in the limits of his unique, death-bound career. Tragedy is the image of Fate, as comedy is of Fortune." And again: "Fate is not what the play is about; it is only what the movement of the action is like" (*ibid.*, 360). And certainly Professor Kitto has shown (1956) how little actual logic there is in the plots of Greek tragedies when considered as history and not as engines for producing dramatic effects. So perhaps one would do better not to specify further, but to say only that to achieve the ends which Aristotle specifies for tragedy an impression of natural development must somehow be produced.

### *The Essentials of Serious Drama*

Aristotle's analysis is so far from specifying the only possible type of serious play that it ill suits some even of the few Greek tragedies that

14. The theory of the "dramatic flaw" is sometimes ascribed to Aristotle himself. But his word *hamartia*, though in the Greek of the New Testament where *hamartōlē* means "prostitute" it may mean "sin," is more likely to mean "error of judgement" in the language of his own place, time and class: it is the regular classical word for a mistake.

survive. Some tragedies certainly depict "heroes" of great spiritual force who are in various ways broken or oppressed by the powers of evil, yet still retain some aspect of their original grandeur. But not all serious dramas do, not even those commonly called tragedies. Who is the hero of the *Bacchae*? Is Antigone or Cleon the hero of the *Antigone*? Answers can be worked out for these questions, but one does feel that they are better not asked, that they distract us from the plays as they are.

The important thing is to realize that we need not enter into Aristotle's discussion at all, unless we accept his statement of the end that determines tragic form. And since Aristotle's psychological speculations are quite unsupported by evidence there is no reason whatever to suppose that all serious drama must have the end he lays down for it. Nothing could be sillier than to ignore Aristotle's statement of aim and retain the rest of his discussion. To continue to equate serious drama with tragedy could only be to demand, quite arbitrarily, that no serious play should deal seriously with any other theme than the destruction of the strong. However, if it were possible to state the essentials of serious drama, and of tragedy conceived as a variety thereof, it could only be on the basis of some such analysis of possible and desirable effects as his work presupposes. Failing that, two modes of procedure are possible, though their results would be less definite: an inquiry into the range of effects and types of serious action possible on the stage, and an enumeration of genres of drama actually recognized. But the possibility of the first, and the theoretical significance of the second, would be questionable.

Taking the first of these ways, we might suppose that the action of every drama (like every work of art) must form a unity, and that this requirement combined with that of seriousness entails that an impression of inevitability must be conveyed, and that this impression in turn must produce pity and fear. Thus we would reach Aristotle's position by reversing his reasoning. But we should be wrong: a plot that centres on a moral problem may have seriousness and unity without inevitability, so that there will be at least two kinds of serious play, tragedies and problem plays. Taking the other way, we may note that Mr. Peacock enumerates four types of drama (1957, 192):

Tragedy is a ritual of piety; comedy a ritual of reason and moderation; romance a ritual of optimism; and allegory a ritual of faith. And we speak of ritual because every dramatic spectacle commands an assent from the audience-community which by its presence and participation re-affirms the profound human and social impulses that find expression in the form.

Three of the four types would qualify as "serious" ("Drama must be one of two things: either comic or intensely moving"—*ibid.*, 189). But is this



an enumeration of all the genres actually accepted or possible, or is it confined to those genres which can plausibly be called the ritual expressions of important kinds of feeling? And if the latter is true, are we to suppose that these are the only kinds of feelings capable of generating such ritual? These questions may well be capable of reasoned answers, but I do not know what the answers are. In fact, what I presented as two alternative ways of constructing an account of serious drama in default of a satisfactory *a priori* theory of essential requirements would be insufficient unless combined; one would need to show that the actual kinds of play corresponded to the theoretically possible kinds of stage action on some intelligible scheme of classification.

I offered no explanation when I introduced the notion of "serious drama" as the genus of which tragedy, from which I conventionally began, is one species. The notion itself seemed unproblematic because whatever seriousness is it is something that tragedy obviously has. But the comments quoted from Mr. Peacock may give us pause. I have tacitly been taking "serious" as a rough equivalent to "solemn," as though following the traditional symbolism of the grinning and frowning masks, so that whatever replaced tragedy would still have to wear the tragic mask. But two other notions of seriousness are possible. "Serious" affairs may be regarded as those of practical moment, in which case "romantic" plays, "rituals of optimism," will not be serious, and we will be forced back on to the previously suggested alternative of tragedies and moral plays, the latter being subdivided (since faith and morals are not, as Mr. Peacock implies, inseparable) into allegories and moral problem plays. Or seriousness may be defined in terms of treatment, of taking affairs seriously, in which case we may end with a classification in which comedy and tragedy are both serious, farce and melodrama are not. The existence of such divergent possibilities suggests that the category of "serious drama" is useless, representing nothing more than a lazy wish to stick as close to the old notion of tragedy as we could, and that a satisfactory theory of dramatic genres would rest on a double classification: a complex classification of subjects (possibly by character types and plot forms) and a classification of modes of treatment. Professor Frye (1957, 282 ff.) presents a more complex classification of genres that takes into account the elements of spectacle and music that Aristotle mentions and is probably as good as any could be; I shall not do violence to its subtlety by attempting a summary.

I have been proceeding on the supposition that the Aristotelian way, of analysing the possible characteristic satisfactions that serious drama may

afford, is closed to us by the ambiguity of the requirement of seriousness and the impossibility of enumerating ends. But we may now ask what this unlikely project would involve. There would presumably be three kinds of requirement to be satisfied. First, there would be those made of every work of art: "distance" and unity, the latter including Aristotle's requirement of *to eusynopton*, the possibility of being envisaged as a whole so that all structural relationships can be appreciated. Then the requirement of seriousness, which we could unify by specifying that the work should deal in a serious (not frivolous) way with serious concerns of life. Then there would be the demands of dramatic form, that is, the possibility of a work's being effectively conveyed by impersonation with speech and gesture, assisted if necessary by music and stage effects. The coincidence of these three basic requirements might already yield one or many types of satisfaction characteristic of serious drama. More likely a wide range of positive satisfactions would remain to be discovered empirically, part of which range would presumably correspond to the "tragic effect" and part perhaps to the "religious" satisfaction of which Professor Kitto speaks (1956)—that is, the pleasure of imagining grim happenings as brought about by forces of good and evil working themselves out in intelligible, though not necessarily agreeable, ways.

It is possible, however, that the requirement of seriousness is already specific enough. Professor Ducasse (quoted above, p. 156) is really working out the implications of this requirement when he purports to define the pleasure of tragedy. Superficially, what he says appears absurd: on seeing *Oedipus*, it seems, we are delighted because we have now at last discovered how to put up with it, should we ever find out that we have widowed and married our mothers. But what he is really saying is that a serious drama must deal with serious problems; and this means that either the characters in a play must face tough moral problems or their sufferings must pose tough problems of theodicy. These correspond to the two "parts" of the "range of satisfactions" just mentioned, though the latter category will include pathetic plays (such as *Death of a Salesman*) as well as tragedies. Simplification can probably go no further: Professor Kitto, who imputes to *all* serious plays a "religious" significance, is puzzled by the *Philoctetes*, where the serious problem happens to be unmistakably a moral one (for Neoptolemus) rather than one of theodicy. Again, Ducasse's stress on the apparently enlightening nature of tragedy is well placed: perhaps after witnessing a tragedy we do for some reason and in some way *feel* better fitted to endure whatever in the human lot is a matter for endurance. Serious dramas, and tragedies among them, explore the human predica-



ment in its extreme forms, and it is in such "boundary situations," as the existentialists have taught us, that we become most truly aware of what is human in human life. Ducasse's statement that such knowledge is pleasant to acquire sounds more plausible if more solemnly put, as by saying that we take a sober joy in the bare fact of our ability to contemplate such things. Or the pleasure of knowledge here may be just that of seeing clearly and sharply depicted our obscure intimations of the difficulty and injustice of life. According to Aristotle it is a relief to be rid of one's pent up pity and fear; it is certainly a relief, when one has been long disgruntled, to have a clear-cut grievance. We then *feel* that the drama represents "the way things are," even though in fact it represents the way things seldom are, thank goodness.

### Comedy

It is customary to treat comedy and tragedy antithetically, but to devote less space to comedy. This seems at first to be another mere Aristotelian survival: it happens that the Greeks, for social and religious reasons, took only these two kinds of play seriously, and it happens that Aristotle never got round to doing for comedy what he had done for tragedy.<sup>15</sup> But in fact we have seen that there are two sound reasons for the comparative neglect of comedy. First, the pleasure taken in the horrific events of tragedy constitutes a problem to which there is no analogue in comedy. And second, comedy is less structurally determinate than tragedy, which suggests that "comedy" stands not so much for a necessary form (such as tragedy can be made out to be) as for anything cheerful that happens on a stage. It may well be, then, that the only way to arrive at a notion of something precise for "comedy" to stand for is to follow tradition and define comedy as the opposite of whatever tragedy may have been found to be. So Professor Frye (1957, 35) observes that in tragedy the hero is isolated from society, in comedy he is incorporated into it; and the fourth-century grammarian Evanthius constructs an elaborate antithesis (*De Fabula* IV.2):

In comedy the characters are middle-class, the dangers do not seriously threaten, and the action ends happily; but in tragedy everything is the opposite, mighty are the characters, great the terrors, atrocious the outcome.

15. There is a medieval compilation called *Tractatus Coislinianus*, which some believe to preserve in epitome an Aristotelian treatise on comedy (cf. Cooper 1922). But it is more likely that the author knew of no Aristotelian treatment of the subject and was trying to make good the deficiency, for it consists of relevant materials culled from Aristotle's extant works on other subjects, and this unmodified self-repetition is quite alien to Aristotle's method. Every subject, he held, has to be tackled in the light of the principles proper to it.

In comedy the beginning is turbulent, the ending is peaceful, in tragedy things happen the other way round. Again, in tragedy life is represented as hateful, in comedy as desirable. . . .<sup>16</sup>

"The pure sense of life," says Mrs. Langer (1953, 327), "is the underlying feeling of comedy . . . a brainy opportunism in face of an essentially dreadful universe." "Tragedy is the image of Fate, as comedy is of Fortune" (*ibid.*, 333). Comedy deals with the continuing life of the race or of society, and thus logically ends with a marriage, opening an indefinite future: they lived happily ever after. But tragedy deals with the bounded life of the individual, and its logical end is a death beyond which we do not look. If this is true, since Fortune is contrasted with Fate precisely by its unpredictability, it follows that comedy will tend to be episodic and its form indefinite, whereas the action of tragedy will form a concentrated unity to which any structurally irrelevant episodes will function as mere foils. Hence it is that comedy is not wrecked by irrelevant witticisms as tragedy is by attempts to "pile on the agony."

## APPROACHES

FROM THE VARIATIONS in attitudes to events which we have examined we may distinguish those in artists' approaches to their task. The former may be looked at as ways of selecting and handling subject-matter, these as ways of choosing and treating forms; but it is somewhat misleading to do so since the differences in approach themselves appear to reflect differences in personality and hence in attitudes to life.

There is no accepted list of typical or possible approaches, and no accepted principle of division by which such a list might be compiled. Of those here treated, Worringer's distinction has achieved great celebrity and can hardly be ignored, though it may be rejected; those of Messrs. Wilenski and Newton are included because they seem plausible and possibly useful, reflect widely held views and are intelligibly related to each other.

### *Abstraction and Empathy*

Early in Wilhelm Worringer's career he detected in visual art the effects of two impulses: the will to imitate, and the will to formalize. "The urge to abstraction stands at the beginning of every art" but in some societies it "slowly recedes, making way for the urge to empathy" (Worringer 1908,

16. I owe this reference to Mr. Coghill (1950), who also quotes other early theories of comedy.



14). These two impulses represent opposite attitudes to nature: empathy, "feeling oneself into" natural and artificial forms, stems from "the happy pantheistic relation of confidence"; abstraction, the creation of a world of order that is not nature's order, is "the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world." Thus primitive man's art is one of abstraction; only in civilizations which have managed to establish a secure environment is an art of empathy possible.

When Worringer wrote, the doctrine that all art depends on empathy was popular. In its popular form, however, it is a doctrine more readily applicable to the art of Bouguereau than to that of Braque. The fact that the revival of geometrical art coincided with the increasing alarmingness of the most publicized aspects of the European social scene in the early twentieth century combined with the exact conformity between Worringer's distinction and vulgar Imperialist notions about the cringing cowardice of superstitious savages to secure for his theory an acclaim which was probably not warranted by the amount or quality of observation and reflection embodied in it. Worringer himself acknowledges this when he quaintly writes in retrospect (*ibid.*, vii): "I was the medium of the necessities of the period. The compass of my instinct had pointed in a direction inexorably preordained by the dictate of the spirit of the age."

Worringer's correlation of the polar impulses he speaks of with opposed attitudes to the environment is attractive, rather than convincing. But the discrimination in the visual arts of the impulses to "imitation" and "design" in MacCallum's phrase (1953), the balance between which is struck in different ways in different styles,<sup>17</sup> seems necessary.

#### *Architectural, Romantic, Descriptive*

Mr. R. H. Wilenski distinguishes three kinds of visual art: architectural, which is derived from the artist's perception of form; romantic, which is derived from his perception of some particular fragment of his surroundings; and descriptive, which is derived from his perception of some general truth, whether moral or other. Every original work of art is "a secret communication by the artist to himself of an enlargement of his own experience" (1927, 9). Thus, though his classification resembles Worringer's, "architectural" art representing "abstraction" and "romantic" and "descriptive" dividing the task of "empathy," it makes the difference

17. Worringer himself considered the two impulses to be "gradations of a common need," the need for "self-alienation" (*ibid.*, 23). This would then be the basic need which art exists to fulfil: the need, I suppose, to find or create outside oneself something analogous to the mind's own order, and thereby to know oneself as object rather than as subject. Do all men (or all artists) have this need? Is art the best way of fulfilling it? If so, the thesis is tenable.

one between modes of clarification rather than between modes of adjustment. Because of this, Wilenski is able to arrange his three types in a pecking order, depending on the degree of clarification and hence of order produced, rather than regarding them with Worringer as equally appropriate reactions to different social situations. Confronted with a work of architectural art, "We recognize that the artist has made clear to us something that . . . we desired to perceive clearly but were not able to perceive without his aid" (*ibid.*, 166); but "The original romantic artist sets out to achieve contact, not with any universal order, but with fragments; and by such contact he strives to achieve an enlargement, not of his formal, but of his emotional experience" (*ibid.*, 174). To Wilenski, it seems to follow that "the activity of the original romantic artist is from first to last empirical—and so a kind of activity that is always ranked lower than the deliberate search for universal laws" (*loc. cit.*). But this is a mistake. We are offered no sense in which any set of "universal laws," that is, consistent and coherent ways of interpreting space relations, that any artist might achieve, could claim any objectively grounded superiority over any other set. This being so, we are offered no ground other than a false analogy with the theoretical constructions of the sciences for preferring architectural to romantic art on principle. Such argumentation will strengthen rather than shake the convictions of those who hold the popular view that, just because art cannot vie with the sciences in constructing such systems, it does better to concentrate on what it alone can do, that is, convey the felt presence of particular fragments of experience.

Wilenski does well to distinguish, as Worringer does not, the use of an artistic medium merely to record a moral attitude or a historical truth alike from the construction of forms and from the fondling of individual appearances. But in taking the need to make plain to oneself some part of one's experience, rather than the need to orient oneself in the world, as the fundamental impulse of art, he is not really contradicting his predecessor. If we recognize that both these needs exist, we can regard the satisfaction of one as a means to the satisfaction of the other; for surely self-clarification is a means of self-alienation.

#### *Classical, Romantic, Realistic*

Mr. Eric Newton, defining style as "the outward manifestation of the artist's temperament," says that there are three main kinds of style: classical, romantic and realistic:

The Classic temperament tries to discover the unifying law which underlies the multiplicity of life, the normal behind the infinite variations from normality, the general behind the particular; . . . the Romantic temperament



emphasises the abnormal, the evocative, the strange or the improbable; and . . . the Realist is content with life as it is, accepting it gladly without wanting to idealise it or to emotionalise it. (Newton 1957, 467-8.)

His classification is obviously very like Wilenski's, alike in their regard for classicism (or architectural art) as a norm of style and in their treatment of realism (descriptive art) as something exceptional and less worthy of discussion than the other two. But there are significant differences. Newton takes classicism to be a matter of idealization of the object rather than a preoccupation with problems of form,<sup>18</sup> and romanticism to be devoted to bringing out the individual character of things and people rather than to be indulging an emotional response to their mere appearance.<sup>19</sup> And the concentration on what is fragmentary in one's experience he takes to be common to all styles rather than peculiar to romanticism (*ibid.*, 468):

The whole inexhaustible world of men, trees and shapes is at his disposal, but out of it he only manages to isolate the fragment he can make his own. In doing so he confesses his limitations. Yet, fragment though it is, he makes it precious by isolating it. Style, then, makes precious what it isolates. . . .

Even the most "architectural" artists have a limited range of forms and subjects which their style has assimilated. With due allowance for Newton's rambling and rhetorical manner, then, we can say that he interprets the three temperaments he distinguishes as expressing themselves in art through three different ways of handling the forms of the fragments of their experience which their work isolates: by generalizing, by dramatizing, or by recording. This may be regarded as simply a more natural and less tendentious, and therefore more useful, way of making the same distinctions that Wilenski makes. But if we regard it thus we can no longer think of Worringer's dichotomy as an incomplete version of the same classification; for there can be classical empathists, like Ingres, and romantic abstractionists, like de Kooning.

Newton recognizes that, although style reflects temperament, different periods and traditions have their own characteristic styles: "Whereas each artist has his own habit of mind, every period has its own habit of eye" (*ibid.*, 509). Artists tend to conform to the prevailing style of their time; but the temperaments of some make this easy, those of others make

18. "The Classic artist always seems to say: 'This is the world as it would be if I could redesign it'" (Newton 1957, 662).

19. He adds (*ibid.*, 593) that "In art three qualities seem to me at the heart of it [romanticism]: first, mystery . . . ; secondly, heightened personal emotion . . . ; thirdly, a refusal to conform to law. . . ." It seems odd that a type of temperament so common as to be one of the three main ones should be manifested in such complex ways. But just this kind of oddness seems to be characteristic of living things in their structure and behaviour.

it hard for them. This would be a particular case of the general relation of culture to individual described by Ruth Benedict (1934, 235) in very similar terms. Thus according to Newton (1957, 510-11) Poussin's *Bacchanalian Dance* is an attempt by a naturally classical artist to produce a romantic picture in a romantic age; and Picasso in his cubist period was a natural romantic forcing himself to produce the kind of classical picture that Mondrian painted naturally then and all his life thereafter. But the notion of period style brings us to our next topic—

## SYNDROMES

BY CALLING A work of art "original" one seems to imply that it is a unique creation, in the sense that it is the solution of a specific artistic problem. Be that as it may, one can often give a quite definite description in general terms of the style of music or of painting prevailing at a given place and time. Such characterization would be in terms of a number of interrelated features. But one may go further yet, and offer a still more general but definite description supposed to apply to the music of the age *and* its painting *and* the dear knows what besides. It is to such a constellation of ascribed characteristics that I apply the term *syndrome*. In connection with these syndromes a number of problems arise. First, is it true that the characteristics of one art or genre at a given place and time can always—or usually—or ever be intelligibly related with those of another art or genre at the same place and time? Should we expect to find a definable relationship, or even an indefinable but perceptible one, between (say) the drama of fifth-century Athens and the ceramics of the same period? and would it be that the same terms were used in the analysis of each art, its structure or effects; or something more subtle? The second question is: are these syndromes, if identifiable, unique to their period, or can they be repeated so that we find (for example) a kind of art that can intelligibly be called "baroque" recurring at many different times and places? If syndromes are normally or often recurrent, our third problem arises: can the causes or conditions of a given syndrome be discovered? And fourth: if syndromes recur, do they recur in any regular sequence?

Certain syndromes, or alleged syndromes, have received names: baroque, archaic, rococo, biedermeier, gothic. The use of this terminology itself generates some of our difficulties; for such a word as "baroque" is used indifferently to designate whatever happens to have been done at a particular time, or as a general term of abuse for what had been done at that time when it had gone out of fashion (the original sense of the word),



or as a descriptive term applicable to whatever shares the qualities regarded by certain critics as characteristic of that age's art, or specifically to describe or denigrate a style in one art. It is the refusal to admit that the word has all four senses, and the insistence on regarding only one of them as legitimate, that has filled the journals with acrimonious correspondence for decades. But underlying these terminological squabbles are the genuine problems outlined above, which are facets of the very real problem of how the history of art should be written.

### *The Fact*

We commonly think of certain historical periods as having a recognizable, and within limits describable, character of their own. Our own vague notions of "merrie England" and the Greeks' vague notions of a golden age are examples of this kind of thinking. More specifically, "Elizabethan England," "Rome under the Antonines," "The Naughty Nineties" are phrases which conjure up vivid pictures that are widely accepted. Upon reflection we may decide that these images are misleading, being based on a small selection of data conventionally accepted as characteristic and ignoring the great mass of discoverable and undiscoverable fact that might give a quite different picture of the age—or, more probably, no picture at all. But these misgivings seldom prevail to destroy the common image.

It is equally common to think of all the arts of a cultural epoch as possessing a common character—indeed, it is only because we believe they possess it that we are able to form the idea of a "cultural epoch" at all. This common character we think of as at least roughly characterizable, but usually as resting on a unity of approach that can be more readily sensed than shown by analysis. Thus Mr. Harvey (1950, 59) quotes and expands Sir Thomas Graham Jackson's description of "Gothic" as "'the expression of a certain temper, sentiment, and spirit which inspired the whole method of doing things in the Middle Ages, in sculpture and painting as well as architecture.' To this we might add: 'and in music, poetry and the minor arts as well.'" In this vein Adams (1905) correlated the development of French medieval architecture with changes in the other arts and in the social climate: Professor Praz (1956) illustrated the development of the Victorian novel from the painting styles of the time, regarding both as manifestations of a type of aesthetic sensibility known as "biedermeier"; and Professor Webster (1939, 1949, 1956) keeps interrelating changes of style in the literature and plastic arts of ancient Greece. So Professor Giedion (1941, 463), stressing method rather than sensibility, looks hopefully to the day when we too can be a cultural epoch:

In the community of method which now prevails in so many departments of human activity we may read a presage of far-reaching developments. . . . That there is a remarkable analogy between recent departures in philosophy, physics, literature, art, and music is a fact which has frequently been commented on. . . . The greater the degree of identity in respect to what is fundamental to each of the creative spheres, and the closer the extent of their approximation to one another in terms of achievement, the sooner will the requisites for a new phase of culture be forthcoming.

Those attempts at synopsis which confine themselves to the major arts arouse fewer misgivings than do those which comprehend all artefacts and "the spirit of the age" as well. The data for the former have been pre-selected: we have to do here with the conscious productions of sophisticated and closely knit groups, and do not have to reckon with the presumed unfashionableness of anonymous and inarticulate masses untouched by cultural trends. Many people, too, feel that it is somehow *a priori* likely that all the arts of an age will be homogeneous, presumably for the same reasons that lead them to ascribe unity to art as a whole (cf. ch. v). Perhaps most important of all, it is precisely from what survives of the art of an age that we derive whatever notion we have of the age's character, and even the notion that the age *had* a character.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, since many have tried to describe the character of the arts of various ages as a whole and have at least appeared to succeed in making out a case, and since there are some grounds for supposing *a priori* that a significant degree of unity should at least sometimes exist, we may dump the *onus probandi* on those who doubt that such accounts are possible, that syndromes exist. But this is not to deny that their doubt may, after all, be sustained, for what lies against them is only plausibility, and prejudice, and a great deal of very ambiguous evidence.

### Correlations

To what extent are syndromes repeatable? Let us borrow an analogy from Professor Dray's discussion of law and repetition in history (1957, 44 ff.). We can call the French Revolution "a revolution" because it shares the characteristics of other revolutions: there is a recognizable likeness of initial conditions and of sequences of events; but when we have described these common features we are far from having fully described or explained the French Revolution. In fact, the historian will be chiefly interested in what differentiates this revolution from all others, in what makes it an unique event occupying an unique place in world history.

20. It is therefore not surprising that according to Professor Sorokin (1950, 10), who cites and discusses many examples, it was among the historians of art that current beliefs in the recurrence of phases of cultural development began.



Any description of any event that is cast in purely general terms, that makes no reference to any named individual or to any definite spatio-temporal location, can be applied in principle to any number of events. Thus with baroque, for example: one can define the style of baroque painting, as Wölfflin does (1915, 14 ff.), in terms of purely general characteristics of style; the definition might conceivably apply to the painting of any number of periods, and if the definition were accepted the appellation could not be logically withheld. But a complete account of the seventeenth-century painting about which Wölfflin is writing would need to take into account many other phenomena, such as the peculiar spiritual requirements of the Counter-Reformation movement, which tie the painting irrevocably into its historical situation. Even if one found that painting answering to the definition was invariably the concomitant of religious movements of a certain type, there would still be some point in one's account of a period style at which one ceased to deal with factors which formed part of the potentially recurring syndrome and turned to those unique to the particular occurrence. This being so, things would be easier if the term "baroque" were used only to designate either the style or the period, and some other term ("seicento" or what not) to designate the other. As things are, we are faced with monstrosities like the following, which is the entry under "baroque" in Funk and Wagnall (1944) and which one must concede is perfectly correct:

(1) Irregularly shaped; fantastic in style; grotesque; specif., denoting a style of architecture and decoration common in the first half of the eighteenth century; rococo. (2) *mus* Designating a type of composition marked by extreme and fantastic harmonies.

For it is true that the sense denoting the style was originally a specification of the sense "grotesque";<sup>21</sup> and it is true that the terms "baroque" and "rococo" have not always been (and still are not) so carefully distinguished from each other as they are by contemporary historians; and dictionaries deal with what has been written, not with what it is now academically correct to write.

If syndromes are identifiable, then, they are in principle repeatable. But such repetition might be rare and coincidental. If a style having certain characteristics acquires a name, it might just happen that those characteristics should come together at another place and time; if the characteristics are few and common, it is likely to happen quite often. Or a syndrome-hunter might describe and name just those combinations of

21. "This process of a transformation of a word of ridicule into one of a historically descriptive kind can be compared with the similar process the word 'Gothic' underwent" (Neumeyer 1946).

qualities that he finds have recurred. In order for the recurrence of a syndrome to be of interest it would need to be complex enough for its recurrence to be unlikely. And it would help if its qualities could be plausibly made out to be held together by some inner necessity, to be mutually appropriate, or to reflect in an intelligible way some recurrent temperamental or social configuration.

### *Doubts*

Professor Panofsky (1951, 1) introduces a complicated analogy between Gothic Architecture and Scholastic Philosophy by defending the syndrome-hunter in the following cunningly balanced statement:

The historian cannot help dividing his material into "periods," nicely defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* as "distinguishable parts of history." To be distinguishable, each of these portions has to have a certain unity; and if the historian wishes to verify this unity instead of merely presupposing it, he must needs try to discover intrinsic analogies between such overtly disparate phenomena as the arts, literature, philosophy, social and political currents, religious movements, etc. This effort, laudable and even indispensable in itself, has led to a pursuit of "parallels" the hazards of which are only too obvious. . . . Few men can resist the temptation of either ignoring or slightly deflecting such lines as refuse to run parallel, and even a genuine parallelism does not make us really happy if we cannot imagine how it came about.

Why can we not leave it at that, with syndromes a risky necessity of historical method? Well, first, the historian does not have to traffic in "periods" thus conceived. He may, and often does, choose for his terminal points events of merely conventional or dramatic significance (deaths of kings, ends or outbreaks of wars, ends of centuries). Moreover, if he works in terms of significant periods they may well be significant only in relation to events of a particular character: political movements if he is writing political history, art movements if art history. He need not even raise the question whether the periods into which his material divides would correspond to those found by historians working on a different kind of material. To think in terms of periods determined neither arbitrarily nor by reference to a specific kind of event is already to have committed oneself to the hunt for syndromes. Second, Panofsky already begs the question by assuming that the arts at least constitute a recognizable unity. He assumes that the obvious way of looking at history is as a skein of separate strands braided together, the strands all changing colour at the same point in the braid. But why should this way of looking at things be more plausible *a priori* than the atomistic way, for which history is a mass of actions more or less closely connected with one another so that A's painting may be as remote



from B's painting as it is from C's peace treaty or D's pneumonia? or than the holistic way, for which all isolations of event or category are more or less arbitrary assertions of the human will to categorize a seamless reality, so that what needs explaining is not the affinity between painting and politics but the process of discrimination whereby they are considered to be fundamentally different activities? Why should history be visualized as a plait rather than as a river or as a mosaic? The answer is partly that art, because of its dependence on traditions and teaching among relatively isolated groups of individuals, has a history more plaited than most, but mainly that the presuppositions of Panofsky's exordium are demanded by the argument of his book. The necessity of the hunt for syndromes remains unproved.

The qualms that trouble those confronted by discourse on the nature of baroque or gothic art are of three kinds. First, one may doubt that the art of the age in question had any such determinate character. This doubt in its most fundamental form is raised by Wellek and Warren (1949, 256), who claim that particular works of art form a common culture not by being instances of shared characters, but by being parts of a totality; the resulting unity is nothing but the sum of those parts to which we choose to attend. However, their claim is false, for its truth would entail that no unfamiliar work could ever be recognized as belonging to a particular style or period. The "parts" whose affinity may be doubted are not so much works as styles and arts. Such doubts may be overcome by introducing syndrome terminology through prescriptive definitions: by using such words as "baroque" explicitly and exclusively to denote works of art having certain specified characteristics. But this would be an illusory victory; for we actually have a syndrome terminology only because the arts of certain ages do seem to be generally characterizable, or at least to have a certain *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*,<sup>22</sup> so that the validity of the classification cannot be entirely divorced from its historical appropriateness. This doubt is, therefore, serious if substantiated. The question at issue is whether writers on syndromes have used for their generalizations a fair sample of the material with which they purport to deal. Defectiveness of the sample might result either from the accident that only works of a specific character happen to have survived (as the eighteenth-century critics were misled about the nature of Greek art by the abundance of Roman copies of Greek sculptures whose paint had worn off, and by the

22. It is no doubt because their language affords such words as *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* that the most assiduous syndrome-hunters have been German. If words coalesce, concepts can hardly help coalescing, and why should phenomena not coalesce likewise?

almost complete disappearance of Greek painting and music), or from a conscious or unconscious bias in the historian himself. Hauser (1951, II.179) remarks that one ought not to speak of the art of a period, because in any period there will be as many styles of art as there are productive social groups (and some of these styles may not be preserved), and Wellek and Warren (1949, 118) that different kinds of art have different kinds of public. These people reaffirm at the level of class what they deny at the level of society and nation; and indeed unless syndromes can be found at some social level, the "social history" of art cannot be written at all. But the doubt about bias, once raised, cannot be altogether dispelled: we all know how our perceptions and investigations are coloured by our expectations. Any generalization, of course, must ignore individual differences which from some points of view are all-important: heirs are indifferent to the life-expectancy of the legator's age-group; they want to know when the old boy will personally pass on.

One can note the recurrent only by *abstracting* certain qualities from the given historical complexities. One must have special informing interests of his own. Hence, in the study of historical movements, one must violate the tenor of any culture as the members of that culture knew it. (Burke 1935, 142.)

As I have said, this risk may not seem so great when one is dealing with the major arts, since one is then studying an interest-group whose interest one shares. But we have seen in our own times how misleading such generalizations may be. All of a sudden the periodical press in Britain and the United States began to represent "Angry Young Men" and "The Beat Generation" as representative of the youth in their respective lands. But the people of whom they spoke were very few, even after the press had made theirs the fashionable attitudes to adopt. Like the "Bright Young Things" of an earlier generation, their doings were good copy and gave the more gullible among the older readers something to deplore.<sup>23</sup> And yet, to dismiss the whole thing as a journalistic stunt is to oversimplify. For, why were their doings good copy? Surely because people sensed that their reactions, however atypical, were in some way appropriate to the age in which they lived;<sup>24</sup> the constellations of traits by which

23. Cf. Milhaud (1956): "Then the group of Les Six was formed completely by chance. After the first world war a critic wrote an article called 'The Five Russians and the Six French.' As a matter of fact he took our six names absolutely haphazard: we could as well have been seven or eight or four, but no, he chose six; and that was how the birth of Les Six came about."

24. Dr. Sedlmayr (1957, 3-4) heroically defends the use of exceptional and odd phenomena as characteristic of the age in which they appear: they represent the radically new ideas, free from traditional survivals. He calls this the "Method of Critical Forms." No wonder the age to which this method is applied is "diagnosed" as "sick."



periods come to be represented in the popular imagination have an aesthetic basis, and are mutually related by a felt fittingness rather than by statistically determinable correlations.<sup>25</sup> The concept of the baroque, likewise, offers us a device for imaginatively reconstructing a way of feeling; and, as such, it has a value for us independent of its historical validity, as it enables us to make our kind of sense out of some works of art, which is better than no sense at all. But perhaps we do not need this admittedly dubious justification. For we in fact owe our concept of the baroque not to journalistic caprice but to the informed scholarship and taste of such men as Wölfflin.

The second source of misgiving is this. Even if we grant that our ideas of baroque painting and architecture possess not only internal coherence but historical validity, is not our extension of the term to music and even poetry merely confusing? What is there baroque about the baroque organ, except that it happens to be the kind of organ used when baroque art flourished? An examination of Professor Sypher's book (1955) will show what far-fetched analogies the syndrome-hunter may be forced to use to establish his parallels between different arts. Such facile and spectacular exploitations of metaphor Dr. Hauser would call *idola aequivocationis* (1951, I.21). This difficulty could however be settled in its more serious form, one way or the other. If the term "baroque" is to be applied usefully to more than one art, it is necessary first to summarize the characteristics of each art, and then either to show some meaningful analogy between the accounts thus given or else, should that prove impossible, to show that whenever the designated characteristics appear in one of the arts, the other arts do in fact tend to have the characteristics designated for them, whether or not any reason can be found why this should be so.

If the requirements just mentioned cannot be met, there is another expedient which is sometimes tried: having originally applied the term to (say) the typical architecture of a given period, we may define its characteristics in very general terms and then apply the same term to styles in other arts to which the same description, or one couched in analogous terms, may be applied, regardless of whether or not there is any tendency for "baroque" styles to appear simultaneously in different arts. What constitutes a description in "analogous terms" is of course a big problem. But the use of terms appropriate to one of the senses in describing what is perceived through another sense is widespread (cf. Ullmann 1951, 266-

25. It is noteworthy that Professor Sorokin, exponent of this way of thinking on the most grandiose scale yet known, stresses relations that seem meaningful rather than those statistically established, despite the vast documentation and statistical apparatus he uses.

88), and it seems that such transferences even in alien languages are immediately comprehensible (Ullmann *loc. cit.* and S. Asch in Werner 1955, 30-4). Such a statement as "Baroque . . . implies composition in mass with a thorough exploitation of plastic values, a dynamic sense of movement, and a bold, scenic use of light and shade" (Edwards 1945), which is primarily designed to apply to architecture and apt enough to painting, is made without reference to music and cannot be applied to it literally; but, even if it does not clearly designate a style of music, it is obviously less unsuitable to some musical styles than to others (cf. Gombrich 1960, 370 ff.).

The third kind of qualm aroused by syndrome talk is methodological, and arises out of the other two. Professor Hagstrum (1958, xiv-xv) complains that the study of parallels between the arts represents "cultural mysticism, not sober investigation" unless confined to actual borrowings of iconography and the like. What this means is that statements about syndromes represent interpretations rather than facts, and cannot be established in the same way as facts. But civilized discussion cannot be restricted to the enumeration of facts, and perhaps a little civilization might sometimes be allowed to ooze into our scholarship once we safely have our doctorates.

### *Causes*

What kinds of explanation of a syndrome should we seek? Or should we leave them unexplained? Coomaraswamy (1934, 150) thought that psychological causes should be sought for stylistic changes, "For thought precedes stylistic expression in the work, and to seek for the causes of changes in the changes themselves would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of history"; but explanation has to stop somewhere, and perhaps a slow modification of style calls for less explanation than does a psychological change occurring simultaneously in many individuals. If syndromes are regarded not as possible types of what may be manifested on many occasions but as unique historical configurations, no separable cause is needed: it will be enough to describe the facts in such a way as to make them seem mutually coherent, just as the actions of someone we know well may be typical of him without our being able to state in what this typicalness consists.<sup>26</sup> But in the absence of causal explanation we might doubt that we had properly identified the syndrome. Conversely, if a syndrome recurs often we shall not require any causal explanation to strengthen our faith in its genuineness, but we shall feel the need for some explanation of why the varying phenomena should always recur together. So an explana-

26. This answers to Sorokin's concept of "integration" (Maquet 1951, 116).



tion is needed either way. The most likely form for it to take would be a combination of social and psychological factors, whereby the recurrent aspect of a syndrome would be the expression of a type of temperament which exists at all times but is fostered and encouraged to express itself in art only in certain social conditions. These "social conditions" might in turn be of a simply describable kind, though each occurrence of them would have its own special character answering to the unique aspects of the related recurrence of the syndrome; or it might be impossible to identify them further than as conditions favourable to the relevant kind of temperament.

A second kind of explanation would be directly in terms of social pressures, without reference to the temperaments of individuals. Thus Dr. Hauser (1951, I.15-16) conjectures that the transition from the naturalistic palaeolithic art to the more abstract neolithic is caused by the change from hunting to agriculture: the hunter must observe, but the peasant must calculate; the peasant dominates and manipulates nature but the hunter must wait upon it.

Another kind of attempt at explanation traces the syndrome (regarded as unique) to some one basic form of sensibility or thought. Thus Professor Panofsky (1951) traces the development of gothic style to the predominating influence of scholastic theology and philosophy, whose idiosyncratic way of conducting an argument pervaded the intellectual ambience in which the gothic architects moved and whose content found expression by direct means in the mimetic arts. Being an art historian, he treats scholasticism itself as a datum not in need of explanation. His argument, persuasive as it is, cannot fully convince because he ignores the possibility that the causative factors he identifies in the form of theological discourse might themselves have been one response to pressures bearing no less directly on architecture.

Using concepts more generalized than Panofsky's, one can trace syndromes to different ways of interpreting the world, and explain their differences as reflecting all the important varieties of tenable world-views. Thus Nohl (1908) applied to painting the threefold classification of *Weltanschauungen* worked out by Dilthey (1898) in relation to philosophical systems and later applied by him to literature: objective idealism (monism, pantheism), for which body and soul, man and nature, are one; subjective idealism, for which the spirit is supreme and independent of nature; and naturalism, for which the material world is all. Nohl finds it possible to describe the styles of painting appropriate to these positions in some detail, and to identify the painters and periods in which they are found. Such an explanation, even if accepted, needs to be supplemented

by an account of why one way of thought should be dominant at one particular time; but such accounts may be readily provided. Professor Northrop remarks (in his preface to Maquet 1951, xiv) that the thesis that "a specific culture obtains its definition and its unity from an underlying set of premises" and that these premises are always philosophical in character, has been upheld independently by "a large number of investigators who have approached the subject from quite different starting points." He gives as examples his own work (Northrop 1946), Kluckhohn's investigations of the Navajo, and of course the labours of Professor Sorokin of whom he is speaking. Sorokin's world-views are three: for "ideational" systems ultimate reality is above and beyond this world, supra-sensory and supra-rational, and this world is illusory; for "sensate" systems there is nothing real but what we can perceive with our senses; and for "idealistic" systems reality "is partly perceptible and rational, partly supra-sensory and supra-rational" (Maquet 1951, 119). Sorokin's trio, it will be noted, is very like Dilthey's, which is very like the trios applied to style by Newton and Wilenski. Whether all these trios are independent acknowledgements of an ineluctable reality, or who has learned from whom, I do not know; but I imagine that all of them are in the end inspired by Hegel's discernment of three phases in the progress of art: Symbolic, where spirit imperfectly dominates matter; Classical, where spirit and matter are perfectly fused; and Romantic, where spirit transcends matter.<sup>27</sup>

Explanations in terms of a philosophical attitude or world-view are in some ways close to the final type of "explanation," the type that is most tempting and has done most to discredit the notion of a syndrome: the appeal to a *Zeitgeist*, of which the arts are supposed to be symptomatic. This differs from the kinds of explanation already mentioned in being vaguer and less verifiable: it is perhaps less an explanation than a veiled way of saying that no explanation is possible. I discuss it in another context (pp. 268-71 below).

Whatever form of explanation is adopted will have to combine an analysis of ultimate causes (the points, wherever they may be, where we cease to pursue causal inquiries because our mental habits no longer make us curious) with an account of how and why the causes analysed

27. Sorokin's terminology for what are essentially Hegel's three stages is close to that used by Lindsay (1847, I.1-3): Sense, Intellect, and Spirit. "Each of these three elements, Sense, Intellect and Spirit, has had its distinct development at three distinct intervals, and in the personality of the three great branches of the human family." These three elements of human personality are alleged to have been set at variance with one another by the Fall (cf. Dennis 1701, quoted below, p. 236). Behind all these tripartitions looms that of Plato (*Republic*, 435B ff.).



should have operated in just the way they did in each of the arts within which the syndrome is supposed to be discernible.

### *Sequences*

Those who think of syndromes as recurring often think of them as recurring in an invariable order. The prototype sequence is that of Greek sculpture, identified by Winckelmann (1763), from the archaic to the post-classical. Sometimes these developments are thought of as self-contained. Thus Neumeier (1946), following Wölfflin, describes baroque as an

organic outgrowth of the preceding Renaissance style. We call this development "organic" because it evolves features which can be likened to the "Baroque" elements in Hellenistic and late Roman arts and which indicate that there exists a universal and natural tendency in the maturing of classical art styles to widen the scope of their expressive means and to enhance their language, until by mere evolution they have grown into a style in many ways opposed and contrary to their original concepts.

The appearance of "maturing" or "aging" comes about naturally, as Professor Frye remarks (1957, 343), because "artists tend to imitate their predecessors in a slightly more sophisticated way." But this process is internal to one art, so leaves us wondering why analogous technical pressures should operate at the same speed in the other arts, as they must do if the sequence of syndromes is to be maintained. It is therefore reasonable, as well as fashionable and attractive to the speculative mind, to locate the "maturing" outside the arts themselves and link the development of styles to the growth and decay of nations in the manner made popular by Spengler (1926). Thus Professor Michelis (1955, 236) opines that the art of each period of history goes through three stages: "extension," that is, tendency to the massive and grandiose, at the time of its "birth"; "intensity" in its maturity; and "emphasis," or striving after effect, in its "senility." Professor Sorokin (1950, 295) assures us that this is one thing on which practically all investigators are agreed: that each cultural epoch goes through three successive stages, which some call Growth, Maturity and Decline, and others name otherwise. Since cultural epochs, if there are such, must obviously start and then continue till they end, this unanimity is not very impressive. Moreover, as Hauser remarks, though the processes of development can be so described as to seem inevitable, any other such process might equally well have been so described. Neither the precise kind of change, nor the rate of change, can be predicted (Hauser 1951, II.90, II.174-9). None of this, however, implies that analogous phases in developments cannot be identified, that the identification is uninteresting, or that the processes of development are unintelligible.

## HAS ART A FUNCTION?

MY DISCUSSION OF syndromes, especially in its last stages, raised a special form of a much more general question: how is art related to other human activities? One may ask either how they influence art, or how art affects them. To the historian of art the former is the more interesting question; but the latter is of more importance to aesthetics, since to answer it is to say what makes art important to men, and hence to describe art's essential nature in so far as it makes sense to say that it has one. This chapter and the next two, then, deal with opinions about the part art has to play in human life: more briefly, about the function of art. This being one of the most general, as well as one of the most obvious, topics that can be raised about art, it is not surprising that many "theories of art" and hence many books on aesthetics are devoted to it. Theories of art that do not deal with it are generally devoted to the problem that occupies the remaining chapters: how should works of art be analysed or evaluated? But as Tolstoy remarks (1898, 167), the answer to this question must logically depend on the view taken of art's function. This does not mean that it is improper to consider the logically subsequent question first, for a theory of art's function might be framed to account for the methods of analysis and evaluation actually employed. But I shall follow the logical order here, although I shall treat the questions independently.

Has art a function? If so, what? One who considers what answers to these questions are possible might come up with a logically exhaustive articulation of the field, as follows. First, either art as such has a specific function, or it has none—for it is conceivable that various artistic activities at various times and places should have various functions that could not be intelligibly related to each other, although as we have seen if that were so the status of the concept of art would be doubtful, and that of aesthetics as philosophy of art even more so. If art as such does have a definite function, that function might be related either to individuals or



to groups. If it is related to individuals, it might be related either to the artist alone, or to the individual members of his public alone, or to both. If it is related to groups we have a somewhat different distinction, but still one in the extension of the function: the groups concerned might be conceived narrowly, as the society of the artist, or broadly, as the whole of mankind. Whichever of these four possibilities is chosen, the nature of the function might be merely the expression or reflection of some non-aesthetic reality, or some kind of amelioration: healing, adjusting, or reforming. The precise significance of the expression or amelioration will depend on whether the individuals or groups involved are regarded as normal or abnormal; for it is possible to regard art as a symptom of individual or social malaise, the ubiquity of art being taken merely as a sign of man's fallen condition.

Few of the possibilities outlined are mutually exclusive. Even the dichotomy of function or no function is not absolute, for some opinions may be construed as holding that art's function is to have no function. And of course it may well be thought that art functions in society just because it works through individuals; or that it fulfils needs (the same, or different) of artist and public alike; or that it might some day come to play the same part for all mankind as it has hitherto played for particular societies; or that it heals by expressing, or reforms by representing; or that, since there is a little sickness in all men, it does for the sane what it more strikingly does for the sick.

Scarcely one of the possibilities named has not been either asserted or presupposed by some notable aesthetician. If I take my usual tolerant line and say that each may contain part of the truth, I face the objection that if art can do so many things, if indeed nothing that can meaningfully be said of art's function is wholly false, it must be that the concept of "art" is vacuous, the word standing for so many different things that it had better not be used in serious discussion. To this I make my standard reply that it is pointless to try to stop the word being used, since people are going to use it anyway; that I have given reasons for using it that do not depend on unity of function; and that the variety of plausibly attributed functions only makes it more desirable to explore the relations between them and to distinguish between the various activities, and aspects of activities, to which the various functions have been attributed. Or, if the functions all belong to the same activities, art might turn out to be a panacea. . . . As an alternative or supplement to this rather shaky line of defence, it should be said that the "logically exhaustive" list of possibilities given was not in fact based upon *a priori* considerations of what was abstractly possible, but was made up by completing the list of opinions actually held and

their opposites. Since no one bothers to argue at any length for an opinion whose opposite could not also be reasonably maintained (for that would be to tilt at a windmill), this method is bound to produce the illusion that every logically possible shade of opinion is upheld; whereas in fact there are an infinite number of possible opinions on the matter which no one has ever troubled to affirm or deny. The only legitimate conclusion from what I have said is the platitudinous one, that every plausible position has at some time been believed, and every arguable one argued. So once again I find myself neither adjudicating a simple dispute nor revealing a shameful chaos, but contributing in my dull way to the unravelling of a tangled matter.

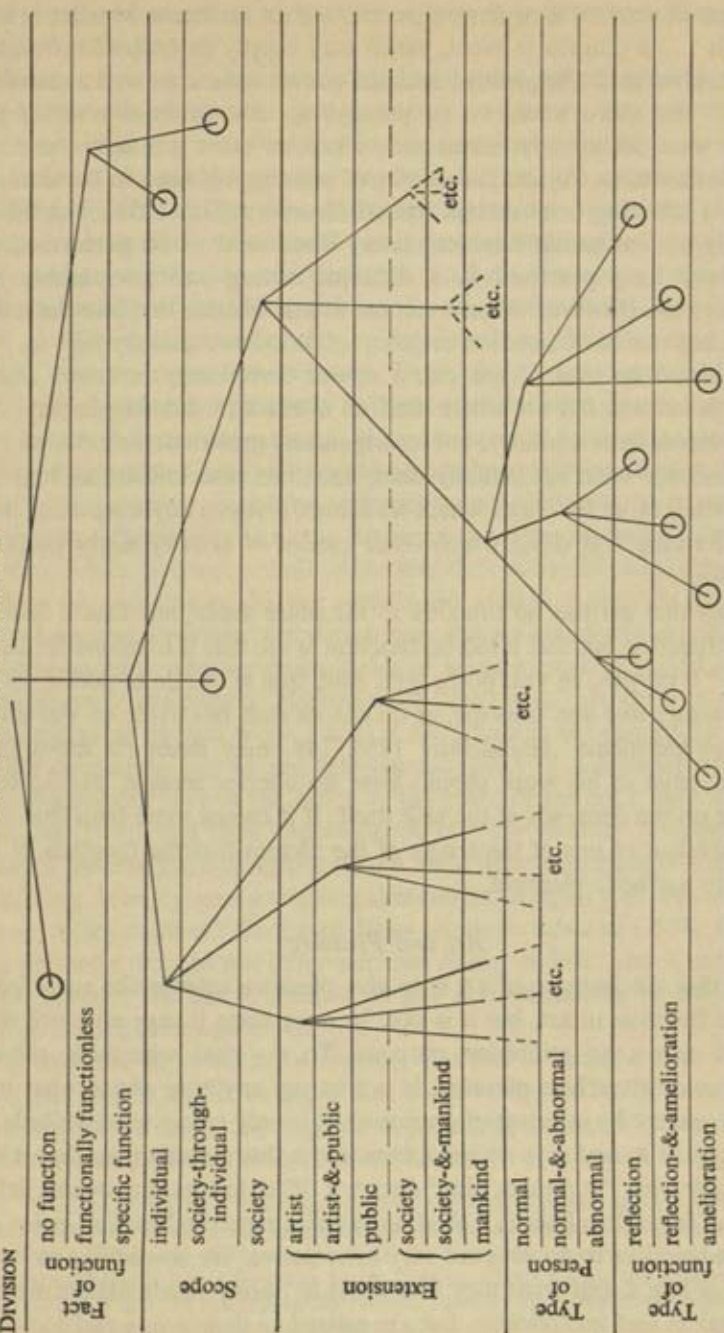
The discussion of opinions that follows is inspired by the articulation now set forth (see Table II), but does not follow it exactly, adapting itself rather to the bumpy surface of the terrain.

## ART AS FUNCTIONLESS

ART CANNOT BE functionless in the sense that no artistic activity contributes in any way to any human interest or end, or there would be no such activities. It could only be functionless in the sense that it is inexplicably pursued as an "end in itself," or that it performs indifferently a number of functions, none of them in any way characteristic. This last possibility should not be confused with the mere possession of many functions, for it is *a priori* likely that one basic institution should perform many functions and satisfy many impulses, just as a car may provide simultaneously a means of transportation, a status symbol, an outlet for suppressed aggressions, a setting for the sexual experimentation of adolescents, a source of revenue for the government, and a means of livelihood for garage hands. In the case of cars we do not find such multiplicity of function at all puzzling, since it is easy to see how the various functions are related to each other. Moreover, some of their functions are parasitic: cars do not exist to provide taxation, but are taxed because they already exist, and revenue could equally well be raised from other sources. The basic function of the car is to get people from place to place, and it is this need, with the social refinements thereof, that brought the car into being, made it a popular institution, and saved it from extinction. Between the basic function and the parasitic one comes the inessential: cars are singularly well adapted to the erotic adventures of the young but did not come into being for that purpose, and this aspect of their utility would probably not suffice by itself to save them from extinction. So is it with the multiple



TABLE II  
POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF ART



Since at the level of "type of person" and "type of function" all the possibilities at the "extension" level subdivide in the same way, I have in the interests of clarity completed the diagram for one of the possibilities only. There are fifty-eight possibilities in all: most theorists grab a handful.

functions of art. "A symphony concert," writes Professor Mueller (1951, 286), "is . . . a pluralistic event, which may supply an outlet for fashion, prestige, civic pride, heightened national consciousness, as well as musical delight." But there would be no prestige or civic pride involved if the activity were not already extant and valued on other grounds; these are parasitic functions. Again, the activity of painting is found to be soothing for those suffering from certain mental disorders (Dax 1953); but this is probably an inessential function, lately discovered to be performed by an activity long practised in a different setting and presumably for other reasons. However, when we come to ask whether art, like the automobile, has one basic function or group of functions, analogy fails us. We know this to be true of the car, a device consciously invented whose history is known; but art is not itself an artefact in this simple way: its developments have a history, but its origins and growth do not. All we can do is discover what art actually does, and then discriminate as best we can between those functions which we cannot imagine anything other than art performing and those which other modes of activity might perform just as well.

To say that art has no function in the other sense, not that it has no specific function but that it has no function at all, that it is valued for itself alone—"Il croyait, en vrai poète qu'il était, que le but de la poésie est de même nature que son principe, et qu'elle ne doit pas avoir en vue autre chose qu'elle-même" (Baudelaire 1856, 14)—may mean no more than that the artist in his work should have no ulterior motive, should concentrate on the demands of the task itself. If it means more than this, it is the equivalent of one of the senses of the dictum that the function of art is to give aesthetic pleasure.

### *Art and Pleasure*

Saying that the purpose of art is to give pleasure sounds like ascribing a positive function to art, but it is not. In most cases it says no more than that art serves no utilitarian purpose. To say that something pleases someone, or gives him pleasure, is not to say anything about what it is or does, except by accident of grammar: it is only to say what attitude he takes toward it, and says no more even about this attitude than that it is a favourable one. "It pleases him" does not differ in meaning in any definable way from "He likes it." Now, to say that men produce and enjoy art because they like to do so is not very informative. We should like to know why they like it and what they like about it. Surely men's likings are not meaningless and inexplicable, but are related to their needs and natures?



And if we are inquiring into art's function, is it not about these needs that we wish to know?<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps, however, what is meant by saying that art's function is to provide pleasure is not just that people pursue it without ulterior motive, but that they come to it with the conscious and exclusive intention of enjoying themselves, of having a good time. Such notions are commonest in an inarticulate form among those with little knowledge of or interest in the arts, who reduce art to terms of entertainment and neglect to ask themselves why people seek entertainment. To hold them may be a sign of philistinism, or of inverted snobbery in the sophisticated. But it might just as well be a sign of honesty, of freedom from the usual cant. So we should take the suggestion seriously. Three objections suggest themselves. First, people do set out painfully to improve their tastes. But that might be due to a wish for social prestige, or an investment designed to pay off in future enjoyment. Certainly, people earnestly improving their tastes feel that they are doing something seriously worth while, but they may well be deluding themselves as to the nature of the value of the end they have set themselves. Second, not all artists find their activities enjoyable: some seldom do, some never do, nor is their aim always to provide enjoyment for others or a livelihood for themselves. But we could still say that their creative agonies, whether unavoidable or unconsciously assumed in order to conform to the cultural stereotype of "the artist," are irrelevant to the aesthetic value of their work, which is still found in the enjoyment it gives to the consumer, just as the gastronomic value of a restaurant meal is not affected one way or the other by the pains of the cook sweating over his pans. Third, and most important, we may ask whether "enjoyment" is really a meaningful end, rather than a mere hypostatization of the fact of our liking. Is *enjoyment* something that can be thought of in isolation from the activities enjoyed? Professor Baier seems to think so (1958, 108-14), but Aristotle thought not (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.3-5); and if not we are back saying "We like it because we like it," which may be the best we can do but is a pretty poor best.

To say that enjoyment is something that can be thought of in isolation as a meaningful end is to imply that it can be derived indifferently from any experience or activity capable of providing it. It also implies that, in Mill's famous phrase (1838, 414), "Quantity of pleasure being equal,

1. The need for asking this question of recreational activities alleged to be sought "for their own sakes" was first pointed out by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1176b8 ff.): they are thought of as ends in themselves because they achieve no specific useful end, but in fact they derive their significance from their setting among activities that are not recreation. By restoring zest to the jaded, they assume a very definite place in the goal-directed structure of human life.

pushpin is as good as poetry."<sup>2</sup> This implies that the one can be weighed against, and hence in some situation substituted for, the other. But though one might be sometimes undecided as to which one wanted to do, this would not be because one was uncertain which would offer more of the same thing, but because one could not decide which of the two quite different things one most wanted to do. A desire to read poetry cannot be satisfied by playing pushpin, so that the theoretical equivalence of the "pleasure" that might be derived from the two is irrelevant to any conceivable decision.

Could there not, though, be a specific *kind* of enjoyment, "aesthetic pleasure," that art yields, such that nothing but art could provide it, but that is still chosen because it is pleasure and not because it is aesthetic? It would then be true to say that art's function is to give pleasure or yield enjoyment, although it did so in a specific way. Thus Mr. Meyer (1956) suggests that music produces pleasurable feelings by means of a kind of psychological massage, by activating, inhibiting and resolving tendencies. But this suggestion puts us right back on our logical treadmill: if any other pleasure could be substituted for this, art has no specific function; if no other pleasure would do instead, our theory of art's function would not be the assertion of pleasantness but the explanation of the nature and causes of the pleasure. And such explanation would take the form of one of the alternative theories considered in these three chapters.

Some pleasures are relished as such; we concentrate on our feelings, on ourselves and not on the objects arousing the pleasure. But such pleasures are those connected with the "lower" senses, or with the least discriminated objects of the "higher" senses.

The ideas with which aesthetic pleasure are associated are not the ideas of their bodily causes. The pleasures we call physical, and regard as low, on the contrary, are those which call our attention to some part of our own body, and which make no object so conspicuous to us as the organ in which they arise. (Santayana 1896, 36.)

But it is only in so far as pleasure is thus detachable from the external object and associated with the body that it is in the least plausible to regard it as in itself a possible goal of activity, and even in these cases it remains true that pleasures are not interchangeable. Because physical pain constitutes a recognizable set of feelings with its own distinctive psychological and physiological correlates, we tend to assume that physi-

2. Mill says that Jeremy Bentham says this "somewhere in his works," but the nearest equivalent in what survives of Bentham's tumultuous production is: "Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either." (Bentham 1825, 253.)



cal pleasure must do so also. The assumption is unjustified; and if it were justified art, being confined to the more complex objects of the "higher" senses, would still not be among the activities of which it would make sense to say that they exist in order to provide feelings of pleasure.

In conclusion, I can only say that nothing seems to survive of the doctrine that art's function is the provision of pleasure but two assertions. The first is that art is sought for its own sake, is enjoyed and not used. This is true. To the public at least, artistic activities are engaged in for the sufficient, and often the sole, reason that they are enjoyable. The second is that art does not contribute directly to human survival and well-being, but functions simply by delighting. This proposition differs from the first because an institution may well have a use other than those consciously envisaged by its users, as a Friday fast may strengthen a fishing industry and thus provide crews for a strong navy. This second proposition may or may not be true. The presumption of its truth yields the group of doctrines that I next consider.

### THE UTILITY OF USELESSNESS

LOGICALLY, ART MUST have either some function or none. But an important group of aesthetic theories has taken as its central idea the notion that the utility of art lies in the very fact that, in another sense, it has no utility. These are the theories most conveniently but misleadingly summed up in the sentence "Art is play." Their basic insight is that art is indeed useless in the sense that it contributes nothing either to man's survival on this planet or to his moral progress and intellectual elevation; and they assert that for this reason it has the distinctive value of a type of recreation. Like the notion of recreation itself, the thesis of the autonomy of artistic excellence is adumbrated in Aristotle's *Ethics* (1106b10), and the basic idea of the disinterestedness of the love of beauty is to be found in Hutcheson (1725, I.i, §14): "However we may *pursue* beautiful Objects from Self-love, with a View to obtain the Pleasures of Beauty . . . 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*." But it is with Schiller's (1801) use of Kant's distinctions between the judgement of beauty and the judgement of perfection and between free and attached beauty that these ideas acquire their final shape and decisive importance. Aesthetic judgements, which attribute to things a "purposiveness without purpose," interest Kant as affording a badly needed link between the operations of the understanding and those of the pure

reason. Schiller affirms that these ideas represent "the time-honoured utterances of common reason" (1801, no. 1) and releases them from the specific context of Kant's metaphysical requirements. What Kant had said of beauty, he applies to art.

Man, he says, is the victim of a twofold constraint. Through sensibility and feeling he is at the mercy of appetite; through reason he is constrained to heed the moral law. Only in the world of art does he find freedom; for the formal demands of reason are here exercised on mere appearances, on a matter that does not resist them and in a manner which has no moral import,<sup>3</sup> and at the same time the normally intractable and demanding external world is manipulated at will. The demands of reason are made the sport of feeling, the demands of feeling the sport of reason: "Sensuousness and reason are active *at the same time*, but just because of this they are mutually destroying their determining power" (*ibid.*, no. 20).

The notion that art, and especially poetry, occupied a middle ground between the factual and the philosophical had been current ever since Aristotle described poetry as "more philosophical" than history. Thus Sidney (1595, 13 ff.) defends poetry as a moral teacher on the ground that philosophy is too abstract to be understood, let alone applied, whereas history is too much tied to "the particular truth of things" for consequences to be drawn from it. "Now doth the peerlesse Poet performe both," making the philosopher's ideas graphic and pointing the moral of the historian's narrative. And the notion that art provides a fusion of sense and intellect appears almost as a by-product of rhetoric in Marino (1622, 305; quoted by Hagstrum 1958, 94), who says of painting and poetry:

The latter is silent in the former; and the former speaks in the latter, from whence it happens that, occasionally exchanging with one another the quality proper to each, poetry is said to paint and painting to describe. Both are dedicated to the same end, that is, to nourish pleasingly the human spirit and with the highest pleasure to console it. Nor is there any other difference between them than this, that one imitates with colours, the other with words; that one imitates chiefly the external, that is the features of the body, the other the internal, that is, the affections of the soul. One causes us almost to understand with the senses, the other to feel with the intellect.

And, finally, the notion of art as a liberating power is expressed by Bacon (1605, 88), who writes that poetry "was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason

3. Beauty "discovers no individual truth, helps us to perform no individual duty, and is, in a word, equally incapable of establishing the character and clearing the mind" (*ibid.*, no. 21).



doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things." So what Schiller has done is to subsume under a single formula a variety of already popular notions. The inference he draws from the mutual destruction of determining powers is that art is a form of play. But

Surely the Beautiful is degraded by being turned into a mere play? . . . But why call it a *mere* game, when we consider that in every condition of humanity it is precisely play, and play alone, that makes man complete and develops at once his twofold nature? (Schiller 1801, no. 15.)

Man "is only wholly Man when he is playing" (*loc. cit.*).<sup>4</sup> The value here attached to art is that it makes man indeterminate, and hence determinable: it is the ground of his free will, which for Schiller as for Sartre is the centre of humanity.

It is then no mere poetic licence, but also philosophical truth, to call Beauty our second creator. . . . She only makes humanity possible for us, and for the rest leaves it to our own free will to what extent we wish to make it actual. (*Ibid.*, no. 21.)

The group of ideas which I have outlined, culled from various sources, adapted and arranged on Kantian lines by Schiller, form the foundation and core of an intricate structure of theory whose ramifications in the aesthetics of the next 150 years defy all but the most laborious analysis, and whose influence has been such that even today it is often mistaken for self-evident truth rather than theory gradually developed. The leading themes are: moral freedom versus moral responsibility; contemplation versus appetite; excess energy versus toil and fatigue; and appearance versus reality. It is to this tangle of ideas that the name "the play theory of art" is generally applied; but it is less a theory than a mass of material from which theories of rather different kinds may be constructed.<sup>5</sup>

### *Art and Play*

The connection between art and play is not always made through the nexus of ideas found in Schiller, but is as old as aesthetics itself and is alleged (Lee 1911, 5) to have dominated the field as late as 1910. Basically,

4. Marx is following Schiller when he writes (1844, 16): "The formation of the five senses is the work of the entire history of the world up to now. Senses limited by crudely practical needs have only a narrow meaning. . . . To the starving man the human form of food does not exist, only its abstract essence as food. . . . Hence the objectification of human existence, both in a theoretical and practical way, means making man's *senses human* as well as creating human *senses* corresponding to the vast richness of human and natural life."

5. Some people seem to use the expression "the play theory of art" to mean simply the statement that art is a form of play, however that may be interpreted. But to give the title of theory to a single highly ambiguous sentence is going rather far.

it lies in the recognition that art, like play (or like other forms of play) serves no biological or economic end (cf. Spencer 1870, §533). Art is said to be play because it is not *in this sense* work. And since to equate art with play is essentially to say no more than this, which is obviously true, it may seem strange that it should ever have been found either important or objectionable. But to make such an assertion in a context where a statement of theoretical significance is expected is, in appearance at least, to claim that the alleged fact about art is the most important thing, or one of the most important things, about it. And it inevitably implies that the resemblances between art and "other forms of play" outweigh the differences. "Art is, among other things, 'play' in the sense indicated" would be a harmless statement of fact; "Art is nothing but play, and has all the characteristics commonly ascribed to play" is highly controversial. The *importance* of this strong form of the equation of art and play lies, as our glance at Schiller may suggest, in leading one to reformulate the question about art's function and ask what part *play* has in general to perform in human life, and to explore analogies between art and other forms of play. Analogies may not be proofs, but they have great heuristic value. On the other hand, the *objectionableness* of the equation is obvious. Despite Schiller's expostulations, "play" will remain in the popular mind the kind of word typically qualified as "mere": play is trivial, it is what kids do. How would Michelangelo have felt if someone had interrupted him at his labours on the Sistine ceiling to tell him that Karl Groos had discovered, by observing the behaviour of apes, that art is nothing but play?

The objectionableness and part of the attractiveness of the equation of art with play may alike be represented as following from the identification of some of five related pairs of opposites, which we can set out in a double column:

1. work	play
2. important	trivial
3. biologically necessary	unnecessary
4. compulsory	free
5. unpleasant	pleasant
6. means	end

Any one of these terms may be equated with any other in its own column, and hence contrasted with any one in the other column.

A conflation of the second and fifth pairs is characteristic of a neurotic or compulsive type of morality: art, being pleasant, is trivial and condemned as such.

Conflation of the first and third pairs is characteristic of the "tradesman" morality by which art is condemned because it makes no money;



for it is a mark of such morality to see no difference between amassing wealth and averting starvation, as in the fable of the ant and the grasshopper. Miss Arendt (1958, 111) associates this conflation with the replacement of the concept of man as *homo faber*, engaged in building himself an abiding world, by that of man as *animal laborans*, engaged in producing goods for consumption.

Conflation of the first and fifth pairs may be the result of plain observation, especially in the early days of the industrial revolution, and as such figures largely in the thought of Kant and Schiller.<sup>6</sup> In general, it is characteristic of urban as opposed to rural life.<sup>7</sup> The association of the first and sixth pairs follows, and for both Kant and Schiller provides one of the most important aspects of art as a form of play.

Kant's injunction to treat humanity always as an end and never only as a means has always had a political meaning: it is associated with revolution and the cry for liberty. So the fourth and sixth of our pairs are strongly linked. The association of the first and sixth pairs, so characteristic of an industrial economy, is accordingly barely distinguishable in tone from that of the first and fourth, which as I have said forms the core of Schiller's theory. "Work" is not what we choose to do, but what our employers make us do; and they are in a position to make us do things because we have to eat and cannot in an urban economy get food without hiring out our labour. But Schiller alleviates the crassly mercantile tone of this equation by associating the third and fourth pairs; by introducing, in various guises, the Platonic notion of the body's tyranny.

There is another set of equations, no less obvious than those on which Schiller relies, which works in the opposite direction and accounts for the amused incredulity with which the equation of art and play is usually met by arty folk unaccustomed to consecutive thought. First of these is the equation of the second and third pairs. This equation combines illegitimate inference with a confusion of fact with value. To say that an activity is necessary to the survival of the individual or the race is to make a simple factual statement; but to say that it is important is to pronounce on its

6. Cf. Knox (1936, 75): "Kant and Schiller reflect the social order in which humanity is cut in two—the idle rich and the working poor. They cut life in two—into work and play: 'Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst.'" Kant and Schiller do not say, as Knox implies, that workers and players are different people; but such reticence fails to baffle the shrewd investigator.

7. Cf. Williams (1956, 32): "This concept" (of "a day that is divided rigidly into a period of work and a period of leisure"), "which is highly developed under urban industrial conditions, contrasts very markedly with the traditional attitude of regarding work and leisure as overlapping. The farmer and village craftsman do not think in terms of 'overtime,' 'time and a half' and 'shifts,' and neither do they look upon work as a necessary evil to be endured for so many hours each day."

place in a scheme of human values. We may indeed affirm as an incontrovertible truth that whatever is biologically necessary is important. But from this we are entitled to conclude only that whatever is trivial must be biologically unnecessary, not that whatever is biologically unnecessary must be trivial.

The equation of the first and second pairs, finally, is that on which the objection to regarding art as play turns. Thus Heidegger writes (1936, 295-6):

Writing poetry appears in the modest guise of *play*. Unfettered, it invents its world of images and remains immersed in the world of the imagined. This play thus avoids the seriousness of decisions, which always in one way or another create guilt. Hence writing poetry is completely harmless. And at the same time it is ineffectual; since it remains mere saying and speaking. It has nothing about it of action, which grasps hold directly of the real and alters it.

Poetry appears to be play because it takes no part in the everyday business of living; and if it is play, it must be trivial. It was, fundamentally, to avoid the implication of triviality that Ducasse protested against the equation of art and play. Play, he wrote (1929, 99), pursues an "end" which is set up simply as something to pursue; but art, being "endotelic," has a real end which it must attain, even though the end does not lie outside or beyond the activity of pursuing it.<sup>8</sup> The protest is understandable. But no one *while he is playing* thinks of his playing as trivial; whether his game be chess or golf or sandpie-making, he is wholly engrossed in it. It is only to the spectator that play seems trivial, because he does not lose consciousness of the intrinsic worthlessness of the end. In so far as this contempt springs from reflection on the biological and commercial inutility of games, those who feel it will doubtless extend it to art also. But its chief strength comes from disregarding the sports of the mature and

8. This holds only of ends in the sense of particular situations to be brought about, not of ends in the broader sense of kinds of good to be achieved. Of these, one may say equally of art what Thomas Aquinas says of play (*Summa Theol.*, Ia IIae, I.6 ad 1): "Playful actions are not directed to any extrinsic goal, but are ordered only to the good of the player himself, in that they afford pleasure or rest." In general, the equation of art and play, taken as a theory of the nature and origin of artistic activity or even of the motives for its pursuit, has no bearing as such on the social utility of art. One may maintain, as Plato (*Laws* II, 670E) and Marx (cf. p. 287 below) do, that the artist's work has a function of which the artist need not be aware, and which must be safeguarded by political control. Thus Lange (1897, 272) holds that the function of art is "The preservation and improvement of the species through the strengthening, deepening and complication of those feelings which man needs in the struggle for existence but cannot always develop in the oneness of his life," for example by keeping warlike qualities alive in time of peace.



thinking only of childhood play, and then indulging an adult's contempt for childhood pursuits which are no longer of importance to him, and in this form it combines confused thought with defective sympathy.

It says much either for the force of the basic analogy or equation between art and play or for the strength of the human tendency to repeat fashionable phrases regardless of their meaning that it should continue to be taken for granted that the two were connected when the theory of the nature of play that gave rise to the belief had been discarded. Let us look at some of its metamorphoses.

The first equation of art with play was derogatory. The many remarks and discussions scattered through Plato's writings both about what he calls *technai* and about what we should call art form the earliest body of aesthetic theory in the Western philosophical tradition, whether or not they can be put together into a systematic whole; and among them we find a description of art as a form of imitative play (*Sophist*, 233 ff.). Art is equated with *paidia*, child's play, a trivial amusement.<sup>9</sup> The implications are spelled out in the allegedly Platonic *Epinomis* (975C-D), in a passage also of interest as grouping together under the name of "imitative play" a set of activities corresponding fairly closely to our own grouping of "the fine arts":

Now since, as we see, our necessities are provided by art, but by arts none of which can make a man wise, all that is left over is play, imitative play for the most part, but of no serious worth. For imitation is effected by a great variety of instruments, and likewise of attitudes, and those none too dignified, of the body itself in declamation and the different forms of music and all the off-shoots of the art of drawing, with the numerous variegated patterns they produce in fluid or solid media, but none of these branches of imitation makes the practitioner in the least wise, no matter how earnestly he labours. (Trans. A. E. Taylor.)

Not that Plato has anything against such pastimes, among which he appears to count his own dialogues (*Phaedrus*, 276E), so long as they are not taken seriously; his condemnation is reserved for the poets and orators, whose words have a compelling power that makes men take them more seriously than their knowledge and sense of responsibility would warrant (*Republic*, 605 ff.; *Phaedrus*, 268 etc.; *Gorgias*, 459 etc.).

The application of the term "play" to art without any contemptuous

9. Max Wundt (1935, 27-8) thinks that Plato applies the term *paidia* without derogatory intent to serious activities, meaning only that they have no practical goal. This seems to be true of two of the examples he cites (*Timaeus*, 59D; *Laws*, 803C), but apparently not of the passage I cite from the *Sophist* and certainly not of that quoted from the *Epinomis*. The fact is of interest as showing already the equivocal nature of the concept of *play*.

implications at all is first notable in Kant. He connects the first of our pairs of terms with the fourth, fifth and sixth, not with the second, associating play with agreeable, unconstrained, autotelic activity rather than with triviality.

Art is further distinguished from *handicraft*. The first is called *free*, the other may be called *industrial art*. We look on the former as something which could only prove final (be a success) as play, i.e. an occupation which is agreeable on its own account; but on the second as labour, i.e. a business, which on its own account is disagreeable (drudgery), and is only attractive by means of what it results in (e.g. the pay), and which is consequently capable of becoming a compulsory imposition. (Kant 1790, §43.)

We have seen how Schiller develops Kant's views on art; what we have not seen is what Schiller thinks play itself is. Essentially, it is the release of excess energy:

The animal *works* when a deprivation is the mainspring of its activity, and it *plays* when the fullness of its strength is this mainspring, when superabundant life is its own stimulus to activity. . . . From the sanction of need, or *physical seriousness*, she [Nature] makes her way through the sanction of superfluity, or physical play, to *aesthetic play*. . . . (Schiller 1801, no. 27.)

This purely sentimental appeal to "nature" as manifested in the brute creation, so typical of the romantic movement, was taken up eagerly when the Darwinian revolution in thought gave such appeals an air of scientific respectability. But now, of course, they took a genetic form. Thus Professor Sachs writes (1937, 55) that "The dance of the animals, especially that of the anthropoid apes, proves that the dance of men is in its beginnings a pleasurable motor reaction, a game forcing excess energy into a rhythmic pattern." This statement is notable not only for its optimistic notion of what constitutes proof, on which Mrs. Langer remarks (1953, 179), but still more for its use of the extraordinary phrase "is in its beginnings." The author, or his translator, could not say "*was* in its beginnings," which is all that the animal evidence could support, because he wants to say something about the dance as it now is;<sup>10</sup> but equally he could not say "is fundamentally," which his argument requires, because it is so obvious that his evidence has no bearing on this at all. So we have instead the expression "is in its beginnings," which avoids the defects of

10. These objections do not apply to his later statement (*ibid.*, 208): "The origins of human dancing . . . are not revealed to us either in ethnology or prehistory. We must rather infer then from the dance of the apes: the gay, lively circle dance about some tall, firmly fixed object must have come down to man from his animal ancestors." This, if accepted, would entail only that no explanation of the motivation of such dances could be accepted as complete unless it included some motive that was at least thinkable in an ape. That doesn't exclude much.



both but unfortunately means nothing. Even if its relevance be admitted, Schiller's appeal to the animal kingdom was to have fatal consequences, for it left aesthetic theory at the mercy of subsequent investigations into what actually motivates the "behaviour" of the beasts.

Meanwhile, the notion that play is to be regarded as the using up of excess energy was taken up and given a scientific-looking formulation by Herbert Spencer (1870, §50):

Nerve-centres disintegrated by action, are perpetually re-integrating themselves, and again becoming fit for action. . . . In proportion as any part of a nerve-centre has been for a long time unused . . . it must be brought to a state of more than ordinary instability—a state of excessive readiness to decompose and discharge.

And it has survived to the present day among the embalmed fragments of nineteenth-century speculation which Freud's authority has kept fresh in the minds of psycho-analysts (e.g. Alexander 1948, 43 and 111).<sup>11</sup>

Play, for Schiller, also involves an element of *pretending*; in art, this takes the form of a preoccupation with appearance (*Schein*) and a neglect of realities:

It is understood that I am here speaking only of aesthetic appearance, which is usually distinguished from actuality and truth, not of logical appearance, which is confused with them—of something which we love because it is show and not because we take it to be something better. Only this first is play, as the other is mere deception. (Schiller 1801, no. 26.)

Plato was the first of many who have reproached the arts for the element of pretence and illusion in them. But as Schiller remarked and many others after him, there is no real deception or illusion: one is not tricked, but at the most enjoys a conscious self-deception (or, in Coleridge's more familiar phrase, a "willing suspension of disbelief"), which consists essentially in withholding the attention from whatever is not aesthetically significant.<sup>12</sup> This affords an analogy with the make-believe of children;

11. Certainly there are neurogenically caused movements (cf. Tinbergen 1951, 153), but the causation is too specific to be appropriately called "excess energy," and the movements so caused are not always, if ever, those which we think of as "play."

12. Professor Wimsatt (1954, 30) affects to confuse such willing suspension with hallucination. This may seem merely a perverse critical manoeuvre, but compare Stanislavsky (1924, 466): "Creativeness begins from that moment when in the soul and imagination of the actor there appears the magical, creative *if*. While only actual reality exists, only practical truth which a man naturally cannot but believe, creativeness has not yet begun. Then the creative *if* appears, that is, the imagined truth which the actor can believe as sincerely and with greater enthusiasm than he believes practical truth, just as the child believes in the existence of its doll and of all life in it and around it. . . . On the stage truth is that in which the actor sincerely

but by the same token, since adult recreations mostly lack this character—a game of cribbage is not a make-believe anything, but simply a game of cribbage—and since children's games are not recreation, the recreational aspect of art from which Schiller takes his start is pushed into the background.

The tendencies indicated in Schiller and in my discussion of him are fulfilled in two German theorists of the late nineteenth century, Konrad Lange and Karl Groos, who quote and review each other to such an extent that they may almost be regarded as a single thinker who sometimes contradicts himself rather than two minds who think alike. They do not think of questioning the equation of art and play, but try to found it on a reinterpretation of the activities of play themselves. It seems not to have occurred to them that such a reinterpretation should call the equation itself into question.

Karl Groos (1896, 1–64) begins by exploding the “excess energy” view of play, especially its Spencerian form in which play activities are treated as a frivolous continuation of previous, serious activities. Children, he points out, are grave at their play, and if excited will continue to play when they have no “excess energy” but are tired out. Their games are more likely to be imitations of adult activities than continuations of serious activities of their own—indeed, what serious activities have they to continue, other than their play itself? Nor is there a specific play instinct: the play of children (playing house and so on) and of young animals (sham fights and the like) functions as a rehearsal, and thus is a manifestation “without serious occasion” (which is what makes it play) of an instinct which will later have serious exercise (Groos 1899, 377 ff.). Now, if this is what play is, it affords no analogy with art. But instead of rejecting the analogy between art and play out of hand Groos and Lange find in art a survival of forms of animal play which have taken on new functions and are pursued from new motives (Groos 1896, 326 ff.).

What, then, is art's function? According to Groos (1899, 345), “artistic production fulfils an important function in giving universal pleasure,” which is not very helpful. But Lange (1897, 273), reviewing Groos's earlier book, was more specific: “Art is the capacity possessed by men of furnishing themselves and others with pleasure based on conscious self-deception which, by widening and deepening the human perceptions and emotions

believes . . . even a palpable lie must become a truth in the theatre so that it may become art. For this it is necessary for the actor to develop to the highest degree his imagination, and a childlike naiveté and trustfulness, an artistic sensitivity to truth and to the truthful in his soul and body. . . . The feeling of truth . . . can be both developed and practised.”



which it exercises, tends to preserve and improve the species." This function of widening and deepening perception and emotion is not one which other forms of play can perform, but is specific to art. (The biological rider, that the species is thus preserved and improved, seems superfluous, a bow to fashionable evolutionism.) The connection with play now lies not in a common function but in the manner in which pleasure is given, by conscious self-deception (*bewusste Selbsttäuschung*), which Lange defines (1897, 255) as a "gefühlsmässige Erzeugung eines nicht vorhandenen Etwas auf Grund eines sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Realen." For all play is characterized by such illusion (*ibid.*, 245-8). At this point we get the appeal to the animal kingdom as later made by Dr. Sachs (Lange 1895, 89; quoted by Groos 1896, 300): "Dogs that are violently excited at the opening of an umbrella or at the sight of an empty mouse-trap must experience emotions similar to those of the child at play with his doll or a man at a theatre or admiring a work of plastic art." Well, if they must, they must. What is not argued, but assumed, is that the child feels the same as the man at the theatre, and both as the man looking at the picture. To establish that the consciousness of illusion plays an important part in all such emotions, Lange continues,

would be to gain a very important argument for the significance of conscious illusion in the enjoyment of art; for it is clear that a developmental force that was operative before the evolution of man has a greater claim to be considered the central cause of the gratification that art gives than any number of forces that are not common to the lower animals, however large their part in such gratification may be.

I really do not know why that was supposed to be clear, unless it reflected the vulgar notion of a cause as an event that precedes its effect in time, so that the cause of art in general could only be something that took place before there was any art, hence presumably before there were any human beings. The whole theory seems to owe more to will than to intelligence, as though the theorizer were determined to find an analogy between art and play, and determined to find the physiological springs of play somewhere in the brute creation, however slender the evidence and implausible the interpretation.

Lange seems to have gone back on Schiller by maintaining that the make-believe of art is a real illusion, though one consciously induced and maintained by alternately submitting to it and reflecting on it, an "oscillation (*Hinundherschwanken*) of consciousness between appearance and reality" (Lange 1897, 257). But a real illusion it can hardly be, as I have said, and even "make-believe" seems too strong a word. It is noteworthy that those who allege a "suspension of disbelief" usually have the theatre

in mind,<sup>13</sup> where it is at least plausible to suggest that the actors are making believe to be real people, and the spectators making believe to be taken in. So Lange, we note, starts with the man at the theatre: if the man "admiring a work of plastic art" had been mentioned without this introduction, Lange would have had little chance of being believed. To what illusion is the admirer of a sculpture by Brancusi (or, for that matter, of a painting by Rubens) supposed to be submitting? Even in the drama, as many critics have remarked, there is no reason to suppose that anyone feels or acts as if what was going on onstage was "real life": unsophisticated audiences may boo a stage villain, but real villains are seldom booed even by the sophisticated.<sup>14</sup> Even if one concedes the analogy with children's play, some radically different and more subtle interpretation of the "representative" aspect of the arts seems to be needed, such as Mrs. Langer provides with her concept of the "virtual" (1953, *passim*). Professor Ernst, confining himself to the drama where as I said the danger of confusion is greatest, introduces the notion of "theatre reality," which is not at all the same as resemblance to real life but more like "convincingness";<sup>15</sup> it "arises when the vocabulary of a given theatre form, whether representational, presentational, or combining elements of both,<sup>16</sup> is accepted by the audience as theatrically believable and aesthetically valid" (Ernst 1956, 20). As for the doctrine of "oscillation of consciousness," in so far as it involves alternation between complete self-awareness and a complete illusion, it seems quite absurd. No doubt we are at times more conscious of our presence in the stalls watching Mrs. Siddons, and at times more inclined to think of ourselves as witnessing the distress of Belvidera at Venice, but our feelings at both poles are different from what they would be were the other pole not present. Otherwise, there would be no tension between

13. Coleridge's phrase, though originally used of poetry in general (1817, II.6), is most often used of the drama; and Mr. J. B. Priestley (1957) appears to be claiming to have invented the theory of conscious self-deception to explain dramatic effect.

14. Cf. Knight (1805, 263): "At the very moment, that our tears are flowing for the sorrows of Belvidera or Callista, we know that we are in a theatre in London, and not either at Venice or Genoa; and that the person, with whose expressions of grief and tenderness we sympathize, is not the wife of Jaffier or Altamont, but of Mr. Siddons. If there was any deception, so that we did, for a moment, suppose the incidents, which excite those expressions, to be real, our feelings would be of a very different, and much less pleasant kind."

15. Cf. Aristotle's distinction (*Poetics*, 1460a25) between the possible (resembling real life) and the probable (*pithanon*, "convincing"); and see pp. 377 ff. below.

16. A "representational" form is one where the actors purport to ignore the presence of their audience and act out their parts naturalistically; a "presentational" form is one in which the actors address themselves, *qua* actors, to the audience. Lange ignores the possibility of a presentational drama, as in his early work he ignores the possibility of non-figurative painting; his theory gains plausibility from the prevailing extreme naturalism of the popular painting and drama of his day.



the poles, and it is the tension that gives the experience its characteristic tone. We are, after all, watching Mrs. Siddons as Belvidera. Nor does our experience of time have the character of a succession of discrete moments, but of a continuum within which processes and tensions may be experienced. Interpreted thus, Lange's odd doctrine begins to seem reasonable.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, both the doctrine and the objections to it seem to rest on a confusion between hallucination and false belief. A hallucination, a seeming perception of what is not there to be perceived, may be instantaneous, but is not here relevant. An optical illusion may be instantaneous, in which perceptual clues mislead one as to the dimensions or structure of a perceived figure; but that is not in point here either. What we have to deal with is a belief about the ontological status of a portrayed object, and such a belief cannot be instantaneous. In so far as beliefs are occurrent rather than dispositions to act in certain ways, they require time in which to identify themselves. An oscillation of attention between the aesthetic presentation and the physical means of producing it would not, then, even if it took place, involve an alternation of belief and disbelief, but presumably an alternation between phases of a process to which neither term was strictly applicable.

The function assigned to art by the version of the "play" theory under discussion would not operate in such a way as to provide *motivation* either for art or for other ways of playing. "The feature common to all play is that instinct is manifested without serious occasion. Now, when the animal knows that there is no serious occasion, and yet goes on playing, we have conscious self-deception" (Groos 1896, 301). But why should such activity be enjoyed, when it is known to be useless? Groos has two answers, the first adapted from Schiller: "Reality oppresses us with a sense of helplessness, while in the world of illusion we feel free and independent" (*ibid.*, 316). The other answer is more complex. When the nature of play is realized, so that it can no longer be taken seriously, seriousness reappears in a modified form, in the desire to impress the hearers or spectators, and is at bottom our familiar pleasure in power, delight in being able to extend the sphere of our activity, a motive which should never be underestimated. Even the artist does not create for the mere pleasure of it; he too feels the force of this motive, though a higher external aim to him is the hope of influencing other minds by means of his creations, which, through the power of suggestion, give him a spiritual supremacy over his fellow-creatures. (*Ibid.*, 295.)

17. Gombrich remarks (1960, 280-1) that Lange's notion of a *Pendelbewegung* becomes important if construed as a tension between representational and presentational aspects of art—third dimension and picture-plane, Ibsen and Brecht—which may be differently stressed in different times. Lange divined that the representation he wrote of was yielding in his day to presentation.

This later, superadded motive almost removes art from the sphere of play altogether. In his later work Groos half acknowledges this removal. Art, he observes (1899, 392), with an "element of moral elevation and profound insight into life" transcends play; but it does not exclude it, because "our enjoyment remains aesthetic only so long as these effects are developed and set forth in connection with playful sympathy." The appeal to play remains as a vestigial organ in a theory that no longer has any use for it.

With their strong bias towards evolutionary explanations, their heavy reliance on the concept of pleasure, their confident psychologizing, and their unhesitating assumption of the connection between art and play and the dependence of both on illusion, Lange and Groos have seemed worthy of extended comment as examples of how an aesthetic theory may be built up from the debris of traditions and the catchwords and stock responses of fashionable science. Lange (1897, 243) hailed Groos's first book as inaugurating a new epoch in aesthetics; to our hindsight it may seem the final dissolution of an old tradition. But the basic positions of the play theory are still discernible, though unacknowledged, submerged beneath the smooth surface of modern sophistication (e.g. Hampshire 1959).

### *Psychical Distance*

One of the most durable aspects of Schiller's aesthetic is the notion, its basic notion perhaps, that there is a characteristic *aesthetic attitude* of detachment from everyday interests, and that this attitude gives art its importance and function in human life. Thus Langfeld, whose book takes its name from this alleged attitude, writes (1920, 104):

The very nature of the aesthetic attitude, which induces a pleasure entirely free from self-interest in the narrow sense, makes it an adjustment of the organism which is extremely commendable from the standpoint of ethics. For the time one is free from the struggle which is made necessary by social conditions and is able to obtain a broader and more generous view of the relation of things.<sup>18</sup>

This claim that a "pure disinterested satisfaction" (the phrase is Kant's) is manifested in "judgements of taste" is often found in connection with the "play theory"—both Lange and Groos, for example, draw attention to the importance of frame or pediment in removing the work of art from

18. Langfeld, a psychologist by calling, uses the phrase "adjustment of the organism" to establish his scientific standing. The facts alleged are not really established by any scientific procedure, of course: they are familiar to us from Schiller. The use of the term "pleasure" was also a sign, from about 1880 to about 1920, that the writer was being "scientific."



the context of everyday affairs,<sup>19</sup> and Langfeld (1920, 86-7) follows them here as elsewhere<sup>20</sup>—but is also found detached from it. In fact, the notion in some form or other comes so close to being accepted by all aestheticians nowadays that those who dissent from it do so with an air of protest and self-righteousness.

One of the most striking uses of the notion of aesthetic detachment outside the main succession of play theorists is Schopenhauer's (1818, §36):

Art, the work of genius . . . 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 the Ideas; its one aim the communication of this knowledge. . . . We may . . . accurately define it as *the way of viewing things independently of the principle of sufficient reason*. . . . While to the ordinary man his faculty of knowledge is a lamp to lighten his path, to the man of genius it is the sun which reveals the world.

Man's perceptual and intellectual powers in their ordinary employment are in servitude to his will, to the satisfaction of his desires and hates which are born in suffering: it is only in art that man is able to enjoy a disinterested contemplation, because the objects of his contemplation have their being in a sphere where his desire and hatred cannot reach them. The satisfaction of desire is "Like alms thrown to a beggar, that keeps him alive today that his misery may be prolonged till the morrow." But in art "We keep the sabbath of the perpetual servitude of willing; the wheel of Ixion stands still" (*ibid.*, §38). Here is Schiller's central idea given a metaphysical rather than an epistemological twist: art's justification is found not in the nature of man, but in the nature of the world.

Two facets of the view of art we are considering often appear independently of any metaphysical commitment and of each other. One of them looks on the emancipation from desire simply as a prerequisite of aesthetic experience, as when Roger Fry (1920, 47) writes: "Biologically speaking, art is a blasphemy. We were given our eyes to see things, not to look at them." The other sees in aesthetic experience a means to emancipation from desire, as when Mr. T. S. Eliot writes (1950, 85-6): "It is

19. Henry Moore has said (Ghiselin 1952, 76): "If practical considerations allowed me, cost of material, of transport, &c., I should like to work on large carvings more often than I do. The average in-between size does not dis-connect an idea enough from prosaic everyday life. The very small or the very big takes on an added size emotion." On frames see also ch. IV.

20. He also speaks of "the feeling of unreality which is present in aesthetic experience" and asserts that "there is present in appreciation a feeling of make-believe" (*ibid.*, 65, 67).

ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation. . . ." But in this last quotation we have already made the transition from the theory that art's function is to have none to theories imputing to art a specific function; that of a means to personal adjustment or a source of insight.

The classical description of the aesthetic attitude of contemplativeness is that of Edward Bullough. For Lange's supposed oscillation between self-deception and realistic awareness is substituted a balance between personal involvement and lack of interest.

Distance . . . is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends. Thereby the "contemplation" of the object becomes alone possible. But it does not mean that the relation between the self and the object is broken to the extent of becoming "impersonal." . . .

Distance does not imply an impersonal, purely intellectually interested relation. . . . On the contrary, it describes a personal relation, often highly emotionally coloured, but of a *peculiar character*. Its peculiarity lies in that the personal character of the relation has been, so to speak, filtered. . . . The events and characters of the drama . . . appeal to us like persons and incidents of normal experience, except that that side of their appeal, which would usually affect us in a directly personal manner, is held in abeyance. (Bullough 1912, §2.)<sup>21</sup>

Bullough asserts that it is not the fact of the unreality of theatre events that makes this "distance" possible, but rather the "distance" of our attitude that makes us regard the events as fictional. And there is something at least in what he says, for we may certainly read a true narrative for its aesthetic qualities.

### *Celebration*

If art is neither functional nor functionless nor functionally functionless, there would certainly seem to be nothing left over for it to be. But it is possible that the arts should play some part in the economy of human activities for which the term "function" was inappropriate or inexact. If so, my choice of terms would lead me to overlook that part. I was in fact wrong to suppose that if art was a form of "play," of fundamentally free

21. Once again, Mr. J. B. Priestley (1957, 919) has discovered this principle independently, a belated Wallace to a published Darwin: "When we see a fine production of a good play . . . we seem to be raised above the common level of our traffic with our fellow creatures, removed from our usual involvement with them, so that we look and listen as benevolent demi-gods might do, attached through sympathy to the human race and yet at the same time detached from it, not being involved in its actions."



activity, it would have to be thought of as either aiding man thereby or else condemned to futile frivolity. For the arts may be, and often are, thought of as modes of celebration, and celebration need not be considered either futile or frivolous.

It might have been more logical to classify praise and celebration as forms of self-expression, which is what they are; but since praise is nothing if not outgoing the emphasis on "self" seems inappropriate, and those who think thus of art do seem in fact to have more in common with those who regard it as a form of play.

Man is (as well as political, rational, tool-making and symbol-using) a reflective animal: he is able not merely to respond to stimuli but to think of himself as doing so, to reflect on the fact of his stimulation. Such reflection may bring forth a sense of wonder—wonder at being alive in a stimulating world. This wonder may be worn down by habit; or it may be perpetually assuaged and renewed by being taking up into understanding, in philosophical synthesis and scientific inquiry; or it may simply find issue in rejoicing and praising, in celebration of the world. Man, one may then say, is after all a hymn-singing animal, and performs in his artistic activities his simple duty of gratitude to God. So indeed Epictetus suggests (*Discourses* Lxvi, 15–21). Many poets have thought of their poetry thus. But perhaps they deceive themselves if they imagine that their efforts are meant to gratify God or the world. Perhaps the arts in so far as they are celebratory are after all "play," products merely of an overflowing exuberance. One could regard a large part of human activity as "play" in this sense, all rituals and ceremonies and sciences, activities seriously and solemnly taken but none the less fundamentally playful expressions of wonder and joy. The activities that we classify as the fine arts would then be those whose celebratory nature was least diluted or least concealed. And yet it does not seem right to force the alternative, that art to be celebration must be either perceptible to what is celebrated or else a self-sufficient overflow. For one may feel that the world is such as to demand praise, that it would be *wrong* to keep silent though God were dead and the world deaf. It may be psychologically impossible, though it is not logically so, to regard the arts as modes of celebration without thinking of the world as (not merely the product of Divine activity and the field of a Divine Providence, but) itself made holy by the presence of God. So Epictetus thought it. But it would suffice to envisage the world as itself the ground of its own godhead, resplendent in mindless numinosity.

## ART AND THE INDIVIDUAL

AESTHETIC ACTIVITIES are not in any obvious way necessary to the survival of individuals or of the human species. They involve a detachment of perception from appetite, and a consideration of moral problems in detachment from guilt and responsibility. These propositions are pretty generally accepted. But they still leave several possibilities open. One is that art should be no more than the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But it is also possible that art should contribute something more definite to human well-being. One possibility is that it should help to adapt men to the world they live in, by enabling them to understand it better or by reconciling them to it. Another is that it should bring respite from mental distress by relieving unpleasant or dangerous emotions, or by affording a harmless outlet for necessarily repressed desires. Another is that it should invigorate and encourage men for their necessary tasks; or, more generally, "tone up the system" of its producers and consumers in some more specific way than merely providing recreation.

What classification of the possibilities should be taken as fundamental? One dichotomy would be between "incoming" theories that take artistic activities to affect the way we perceive, think about and feel about the world, and "outgoing" theories which take them to affect the way we act in and upon the world. The division I actually adopt provides a less rational basis for discussion than this one: it is that between theories of the individual and social theories, and corresponds to the most marked differences in approaches actually taken. For the contrast between society and the individual, however suspect theoretically, is one that means a lot to many people and provides the driving force behind many celebrated theories. It would be absurd to say that we have to choose between finding art's function in what it does to or for individuals and in what it does to or for societies. There are no facts about societies that are not facts about individuals, and vice versa: whatever affects the one must affect the other.



But it is not at all absurd to say that two different types of approach are found, those that frame their explanations in terms of individuals and those that frame them in terms of society. Such explanations differ in familiar and readily intelligible ways.

The first subdivision of approaches from the side of the individual is between reflection and amelioration. The classification of theories as "incoming" and "outgoing" is dimly reflected in this division, but reappears more distinctly within the theories of amelioration, as that between epistemological theories and those with a medical, biological or psychiatric tendency. Within this last group we can apply our last distinction between theories regarding the individual as normal, with art contributing to his adjustment, and those regarding him as abnormal and in need of healing, which art is alleged to provide. The same distinction is found among the epistemological theories, and theories of reflection: creation and appreciation may be thought of as found in everyone or as showing some mental imbalance or unusual power.

I have mentioned that the obvious way to classify arts is according to the material employed and the type of change effected in it. Similarly, the above classification of theories of art's effect on the individual, which classifies types of change, is alternative to one which classifies what is changed. Art may be thought of as affecting mind, body or feeling, as mental, physiological, or emotional in its function, though in practice the second of these is always subordinated to the third. This division may be discerned pervading our account, but remains unstressed for three reasons: the first is that it duplicates the division actually used too closely to be used to supplement it, the second is that the distinction between the mental and the emotional, always a tricky one and never fully intelligible, can scarcely be sustained at all in relation to art (cf. ch. XVI), and the third is that I did not think of it in time.

## SELF-EXPRESSION

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction the tranquillity disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on. (Wordsworth 1800.)

THESE CELEBRATED DICTA appear to enshrine the widely held opinion that it is the function of artistic activities simply to express the personality of

the artist, and of works of art to be images or replicas of their creators.<sup>1</sup> Art, wrote Véron, is "a direct and spontaneous manifestation of human personality" (1878, 467);<sup>2</sup> and Plato (*Symposium*, 209A-E) speaks of poets as seeking vicarious immortality through their poems, as parents find it in their children.<sup>3</sup> This attitude to art is not easily worked up into a full-blown aesthetic theory, for it invites the question: Why should such self-expression be valued? And it is in the various answers to this question that some of the real answers to the problem of art's function are to be found. The simplest of such answers would seem to be Goethe's (1812, I.240):

And thus began that tendency from which I could not deviate my whole life through; namely, the tendency to turn into an image, into a poem, everything that delighted or troubled me, or otherwise occupied me, and to come to some certain understanding with myself upon it, that I might both rectify my conceptions of external things, and set myself inwardly at rest about them. The faculty of doing this was necessary to no one more than to me, for my natural disposition whirled me constantly from one extreme to the other. All that has since been published by me consists of fragments of a great confession, and this little book is an attempt which I have ventured on to render it complete.<sup>4</sup>

1. They *appear* to do so; but all they actually do is to describe how poems get written, not explain what they are written *for*.

2. His name is usually connected with the doctrine that art is the "expression of emotion" (Rader 1934, 83); but after writing that art may be defined as "la manifestation d'une émotion se traduisant au dehors . . ." he adds, "Ce qui fait l'art, c'est moins l'émotion communiqué que l'intervention de la personnalité humaine dans cette émotion même" (Véron 1878, 109 and 408).

3. Cf. Ossorio (1958, 40): ". . . among our group many were trying to put on canvas the very essence of human experiencing. That is what we mean when we say 'to get into the painting.' There is nothing detached or eccentric about our work. It is a total commitment, and once expressed on canvas, it represents the most vivid and dramatic expression of the human image possible—ourselves." Painting then becomes like a tourist's graffito, a name scrawled on a wall. But that after all is a significant human act: witness the proud phrase "Kilroy was here" as emblem of the human spirit in victory over chaos. Art has often been explained in terms of conspicuous consumption: perhaps we should regard it rather as a means of conspicuous expression, a means to display (in artist and purchaser alike), like peacocks' feathers.

The "vicarious immortality" theme is taken up by Miss Arendt (1958, 147) and related to the public: "It is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that a premonition of immortality . . . has become tangibly present."

4. Ni Tsan, a fourteenth-century landscape artist, said: "What I call painting is no more than a careless extravaganza of the brush, not aiming at resemblance, but only at the diversion of the painter. Recently, on the occasion of one of my rambles to the capital, people came to me begging for paintings. I found that they all wanted them to be like something in particular, seen at a particular season. Then they went away angry. But this is like scolding a eunuch for not growing a beard." (Waley 1923, 243.)



But it is not clear here whether the poet is coming to terms with himself for the sake of enlightenment, or whether he confesses because confession is good for his soul; once again, the fact of self-expression does not entail a function. The simple belief that art is for expressing artists, however, is common in apophthegms and manifestos, where awkward questions are left unraised, and seems to underlie much familiar practice. One of the justifying principles of "action painting" is that (as the name implies) the value of painting lies not in the completed canvas but in the activity of painting itself, which may be variously regarded as a release of aggressions or as a spiritual exercise (after the supposed pattern of Zen Buddhism). But a more widespread application of the principle is the practice of those teachers of "art" to children who no longer think it appropriate to impart techniques of draftsmanship or representation, but simply to let the child do as he pleases with the materials at his disposal.

Cassirer (1944, 141) protests that this view of art is simply a variant on one which even its proponents denounce as unsatisfactory: "In this case art would remain reproductive; but, instead of being a reproduction of things, of physical objects, it would become a reproduction of our inner life, of our affections and emotions." Art is thus trivialized; for all man's serious activities are purposeful, or at least keyed in some way into the planning and patterning of his life, but art on this theory is a mere by-product. Mere lack of restraint is not creation. Similarly Arnheim writes (1954, 168) of the application of these ideas to teaching:

Unquestionably the modern methods have given an outlet to aspects of the child's mind that were crippled by the traditional procedure of copying models with a sharpened pencil. But there is equal danger in preventing the child from using pictorial work for clarifying his observation of reality and for learning to concentrate and create order. Shapeless emotion is not the desirable end product of education, and therefore cannot be used as its mean either.

Instead of enlarging the child's abilities and comprehensions, such methods confine him within the pre-existing limits of his yet unformed capacities. Ultimately, the dispute here is between two contrasted views of human life. One sees it as a movement towards a never-attained goal, in which there is always more to be learned and a wider mastery to be acquired.<sup>5</sup> The other sees life as survival, and learning as the by-product of experience casually acquired, so that the child is not regarded as an incomplete adult whose activities should be guided by its prospective

5. It is from this standpoint that Mr. Ayrton (1957, 197-219) denounces romanticism and especially abstract expressionism as mindless, trivialized by being cut off from the world of intellectual order. "I find the idea that the artist is expressing himself rather irritating," he has since said (1960). "Oneself is the major nuisance of one's life."

maturity, but as a being in its own right, at a stage in its history which just happens to be earlier than that known as adulthood.<sup>6</sup> As far as education goes, there is so much merit in both views that we must compromise: surely neither present nor future need be sacrificed to the other, and in the best modern practice neither is. One would like to think that the same was true of adults, and we found in Lange a systematic attempt to build a theory of art to this pattern. One of the charms of the theory of natural selection was that it seemed to prove that whatever was most enjoyable for the individual must also be most advantageous for the species (cf. Spencer 1879, §72), thus restoring Aristotelian moral optimism without the teleology which brought it into disrepute.

It is often taken for granted nowadays that art essentially expresses the artist. But this agreement may reflect temporary cultural conditions rather than an obvious truth about art; as Dr. Evans remarks (1948, ix), medieval art can hardly be interpreted thus. What in one age seems necessary freedom may to another seem irresponsibility. The most obvious objection to the notion is not that it makes art arbitrary, however, but that it leaves the spectator out of account. There is an answer to this:

Intuition is the effect of artistic appreciation no less than of artistic creation. If the artist's expression of his feelings and ideas results in intuition, our appreciation of his work must have the same value, for appreciation is expression transferred from the artist to the spectator. By means of the colors, lines, words, tones that he makes, the artist determines in us a process of expression similar to his. . . . Hence all aesthetic appreciation is self-expression. (Parker 1920, 40.)

But then it is no longer in any obvious sense the *self* that is being expressed, but some kind of impersonal intuition that is being achieved.

If we believed that the function of art was indeed self-expression, works of art would be evaluated by two standards, both applicable by the artist alone. One would be that the expression was successful, that the artist had done what he had it in him to do; the second would be sincerity, that he really had it in him to do what he did.

6. Alschuler and Hattwick (1947, I.165) reply to a lady who had objected that at least a child might be shown that he could paint less messily with a less drippy brush: "It is not art forms that we are after but art experiencing. . . . She is discussing the expression of *ideas* and not the vague generalized expressions of children whose feelings are unbounded by ideational content. . . . A highly sensitive child quite absorbed by his emotional problems may feel the need to paint drippy pictures. Any suggestion about using his brush and paint to better advantage would be likely to frustrate his efforts and to diminish the value that the painting experience might otherwise have." In fact, we have to do with therapy for invalids, not with instruction for the sane; it would be monstrous to apply such methods to healthy children.



*The Creative Process*

Much has been written lately about "the creative process" or "the poetic process." These phrases presuppose that the *nature* of art is to be self-expression, whatever its function may be; for a *process* is not an activity. To speak of "the creative process" implies that the production of art is involuntary and unconscious—something that happens in one, not something one does.<sup>7</sup>

Such terms as "the creative process," "creative activity," "the aesthetic response," "aesthetic experience" are in fact question-begging, as has often been observed. For their use assumes that those who produce or appreciate art all undergo processes that are essentially the same. But do they? Professor Whalley (1953, 16) writes that "When the creative process occurs it is subject, one supposes, to as slight individual variation as the physical processes of digestion and gestation." This is quite true; for the use of the phrase "*the* creative process" indicates that we have identified one specific kind of process, and apply the phrase only to processes of this kind. What we do not know is whether the process thus designated is necessary to the production of a work of art. Alternatively, if we say that this last fact is guaranteed by definition ("creative process" being then defined as "*any* process issuing in the production of a work of art"), we can no longer be sure that what Whalley says is true. If we try to have it both ways and define "creative process" as "the characteristic process which alone issues in the production of a work of art," we have no reason to suppose that anything corresponding to this definition exists. Verbal reports by artists upon their experience and methods of creation and composition in fact differ widely; the fact that at one particular place and time such reports may resemble each other may be explained by the fact that artists are no less suggestible than other people. Moreover, even if it were to be found to be true that some describable process did always occur in the production of works of art, the discovery would be of mar-

7. The origin and development of this view is traced by Abrams (1953, 156 ff.). An analogous view may be taken of appreciation. For example, Dr. Alexander writes (1948, 185): "It is unnecessary to argue at length that the appeal of art is based on unconscious psychological processes . . . the question is what unconscious psychological processes the aesthetic response consists of." He is right if he means that this will be generally accepted; less certainly so if he means that it is evidently true. In fact, it is hard to tell what this dictum commits us to. If it means that we are not conscious of our aesthetic responses, which is what it seems to say, it is obviously untrue; if it means no more than that aesthetic appreciation is not a form of argument, it is equally obviously true. If it means that the explanation must be looked for somewhere in the speculations of Freud, of which the word "unconscious" is the trade mark, it is highly debatable. But the real difficulty is caused by the slide from "is based on" to "consists of"; we cannot tell what relation between processes and response is being alleged.

ginal interest to aesthetics; for the concept of a work of art is not a psychological concept, and it would remain possible that a work of art should appear without the process. What possible reason, then, can we have for postulating such a process? I suspect that Mr. Alvarez is right when he suggests (1958, 156) that

Bothering too much about the making of a poem is a substitute for bothering about poetry itself. One of the remarkable things about recent years is the steady decline in the interest in poetry and the steady rise in the interest in poets. It is as though the standards of the gutter press—what they call the “human interest angle”—were taking over even in the arts.

The current view of the creative process is of a sort of crystallization of experience stored in the memory, which emerges into consciousness as a ready-made poem or painting.<sup>8</sup> The process is attributed to poets more commonly than to other artists, and the most popular ingredients are literary allusions and the alleged archetypes of “analytical psychology.” The vogue is partly due to the striking and convincing unravelling by Dr. Lowes (1927) of the sources of two poems by Coleridge (perhaps not in every way a representative poet), and partly to the endless opportunities for striking and agreeable research such unravelling offers to the ever-growing numbers of Graduate Students of English Literature. The critics never had it so good. If practitioners of other arts have attracted less of this kind of attention this may partly be because the alleged processes are specific to poetry rather than common to all the arts; it may also be partly because the criticism and history of the other arts have fewer Graduate Students to accommodate.<sup>9</sup>

The notion that art is produced by a “creative process” rather than by consciously controlled fabrication seems to have the authority of Rilke (1934, 27–8):

8. Cf. Whalley (1953, 84): “The function of the latent but energetic imagination is to constellate perceptual images as well as to retain them; when they emerge into the light to take their place in a work of art they are already complex, carrying with them a context of feeling and thought which is not their original perceptual context.” Professor Whalley does not indicate what sort of evidence he would adduce in favour of this assertion.

9. The notion of the “creative process” is used as a weapon in the current campaign by critics to take over literature. If there is a poetic process, the poet becomes nothing more than the place where the poem happens, and the critic’s is the only intelligence involved, just as the purport of the attack on the “intentional fallacy” is that poems are written by critics and not by poets (cf. p. 31). Professor Whalley says (1953, 223) that poems are made not by poets but *through* them, that “the author’s name merely indicates a point at which time and poetic process intersect.” No one says that criticism is written *through* critics rather than *by* them. . . . Fortunately, so far as I have heard, no one other than a professional critic or Professor of English Literature has yet acknowledged the sovereignty of criticism over literature.



*Everything* is gestation and then bringing forth. To let each impression and each germ of a feeling come to completion quite in itself, in the dark, in the inexpressible, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own understanding, and await with deep humility and patience the birth-hour of a new clarity: that alone is living the artist's life—in understanding as in work.

But it is noteworthy that there is here no attempt to describe or specify the process, otherwise than by the metaphor of gestation. Aside from the religious intensity of the artist's attitude and prose style, it is not clear what more he is saying than Mr. Kobayashi (1958):

I have fun with paint. I don't plan ahead. I'll put on some red and I'll put on some black, and people, who always think painters are profound, will say, "Ah! It's oriental! It's symbolic!" I don't dig that. I just put on as much paint as I can afford, and when I run out, I'm through. I'm beginning to wonder, with so many people seeing symbols in my work, maybe I'm sick inside, but I don't dig that.

Surely this cannot be altogether typical. Architects at least cannot proceed thus, nor can composers. Stravinsky, for example, writes (1942, 54):

The idea of work to be done is for me so closely bound up with the idea of the arranging of materials and of the pleasure that the actual doing of the work affords us that, should the impossible happen and my work suddenly be given to me in a perfectly completed form, I should be embarrassed and nonplussed by it, as by a hoax.

And even Rilke makes amends elsewhere (see p. 412 below).

### *Aesthetic Duty*

Rilke's high religious tone suggested that for some reason it would be a violation of the artist's duty to rush or force a work, instead of waiting in "humility" for it to emerge. But why is this? An artist may feel that it is his duty to create, to achieve his own "salvation," just as any one may feel compelled to complete whatever task he is personally involved in and committed to. But what is the relation between such feelings of compulsion and actual duty or obligation? Surely all we have here is a psychological pressure. In morality we commonly differentiate between a person's feeling that he has to do something and his actual duty to do it: is there any reason for not making this distinction in the context of artistic endeavour? Well, in morality there are objective laws; or if we do not think there are objective laws we do not think there are objective duties either (cf. Sparshott 1958, ch. 8). But in art we commonly think there are no objective laws, so there is no objective duty to contrast with the sense of compulsion. However, one could argue that the rejection of objective moral laws and the adoption of an "inward" morality according to which all actions and

decisions are unique represents an aestheticism in morals, an application to morality of the currently conventional view of art, so cannot be used as independent evidence for the reasonableness of the view of aesthetic duty here taken.<sup>10</sup> But in any case, are we really prepared to hold that an artistic conscience can never be mistaken: that whatever an artist does in obedience to his daemon is always necessarily right? One might say, though, that it is because of the practical importance of moral issues that we are not prepared to make such concessions in morality; in art, where no one but the artist need suffer from his following of his inner promptings, there is no need to postulate any "objective" criteria of duty, and the standards by which connoisseurs and the public assess works may guide their own judgements but are not binding upon the artist.

The notion of aesthetic duty is not bound to the notion of a creative process, or of art as expressive: other views of the nature of art yield other duties. In place of fidelity to one's urges one may put, as interpretation of the same phenomena, fidelity to the demands of the work itself:

Ainsi j'étais déjà arrivé à cette conclusion que nous ne sommes nullement libres devant l'œuvre d'art, que nous ne la faisons pas à notre gré, mais que, préexistant à nous, nous devons, à la fois parce qu'elle est nécessaire et cachée, et comme nous ferions pour une loi de la nature, le découvrir (Proust 1927, 27-8).

Some people talk as if this could be taken literally, as if the artist's modeling, selection, and arrangement had somehow all been done before he did them, so that all he really has to do is "cut along the dotted lines." It is singularly hard to maintain this of such a work as Proust's, which consists of a reconstruction of his own experience and could scarcely therefore "pre-exist" him; but it is certainly true that artistic creation often *feels like* the uncovering of a pattern to which our fidelity is demanded. Perhaps it is not to his forthcoming work but to his own artistic intuitions that an artist should be faithful, this requirement of fidelity becoming, when the work is completed, a duty of the artist as spectator not to pass as right what he knows to be wrong. Works so passed, says Mr. Wilenski, "must remain fakes and failures till the crack of doom; for they are aspects of hubbug, not aspects of truth" (1927, 161).

The aesthetic duty implied by Mr. Wilenski is that of honesty. The introduction of such terms as honesty or dishonesty, sincerity or insincerity seems to bring a moral dimension into criticism. But it need not do so.

10. Sartre (1946, 305-6), for example, uses painting as analogue of action in a duty-free ethic. Neither agent nor artist conforms to rules, but neither acts arbitrarily: each is free, but free to act *in a certain situation*, on the basis of circumstances accepted and projects formed, not in a vacuum.



Croce claims (1901, 88) that demands for sincerity in art confuse the "moral duty not to deceive one's neighbour," which is aesthetically irrelevant, with "fulness and truth of expression." But actually there are at least four things that an accusation of insincerity may mean: that a man is dishonest and insincere as an artist, because he acts against his conviction to give the public what it wants or for some other motive; that there is a discrepancy between the demands of the task and his performance of it, that difficulties have been shirked; that the thing does not look like what it is (note that this does not imply deception, since such objects are usually produced in situations where things are not expected to bear their functions on their faces); or that the work is unconvincing, presents an appearance of not being seriously meant. The first two of these charge dereliction of aesthetic duty, the latter two impute failure of aesthetic power or misguidedness of aim. So far as the moral implications go, the charge of insincerity may imply personal moral failure in the man, or it may impute insincerity to the work, meaning that it lacks one of the aesthetic qualities called "sincerity" as sketched above. The latter type of charge need not reflect on the moral qualities of the artist at all: the failings may be unconscious or even regarded by him as successes. But there is a third type of charge: insincerity or dishonesty in the work may itself be thought of as (necessarily or in some cases) reflecting on the moral calibre of the artist. So various are the senses of "dishonest" and "insincere" in smart circles.

One can only use personal sincerity as criterion of aesthetic duty if one believes that true art is self-expression. But if one believes that objective types or ideal realities exist, the artist's duty will be to these: as in morality, he will conceive himself obliged to discover what is right, not merely to do what he happens to be passionately convinced is right. Thus Coomaraswamy, remarking that the oriental conscience operates in the field of aesthetics as well as ethics, writes (1934, 5):

The maker of an icon, having by various means proper to the practice of Yoga eliminated the distracting influences of fugitive emotions and creature images, self-willing and self-thinking, proceeds to visualize the form of the *devatā*, angel or aspect of God, described in a given canonical prescription. . . . The mind "pro-duces" or "draws" this form to itself, as though from a great distance. Ultimately, that is, from Heaven, where the types of art exist in formal operation; immediately, from "the immanent space in the heart," the common focus . . . of seer and seen, at which place the only possible experience of reality takes place.

This is an axe-grinder's rendering of a *littérateurs'* interpretation of the visual arts, but in a less striking form the doctrine is common enough.

Half way between the subjective duty to one's own intuitions or per-

sonality and the objective duty to an eternal reality comes the relative duty to the job in hand, the duty to let one's work be determined by the objective situation confronting one rather than by fancy and predilection. It is primarily in architecture that this "duty" is recognized, and takes two forms which its advocates are usually unable to distinguish from each other: fidelity to social function and fidelity to structure and materials, either or both of which, it is suggested, should determine the design. According to Professor Giedion (1941, 290), H. P. Berlage complained that the prevailing architecture of around 1890 was "Scheinarchitektur, d.h. Imitation, d.h. Lüge," which with its equation of the three entirely different concepts of appearance, imitation, and deception must stand as one of the most crashing confusions in aesthetic literature. It is this confusion that explains Van de Velde's dictum (quoted *ibid.*, 291-2) on the same subject: "Toutes les formes étaient cachées. À cette époque la révolte contre les mensonges des formes et le passé était une révolte morale." Professor Giedion himself seems unable or unwilling to distinguish between various interpretations of aesthetic duty, relating "sincerity" and "purity" simultaneously to the display of structure and to a vaguer expressiveness. It is hard indeed to reconcile the general statements that "The moral force behind the development of architecture in recent decades has had one supreme concern: to reestablish a union between life and architecture" (*ibid.*, 565), or that "the desire grew up to reconcile methods of feeling with methods of thinking" (*ibid.*, 25) with his specific praise of Berlage's Amsterdam Stock Exchange (*ibid.*, 311):

What is the source of the great influence exerted by the building? The secret lies in the unshakeable consistency with which Berlage strives for sincerity and purity in its architecture. The granite steps of the staircase are only coarsely chiselled out; they are still rough today. The brick arches of the ceiling in the committee rooms are shown entirely without disguise. The iron girders of the framework are emphasized with paint. . . . No other building accords so well with . . . the demand for morality.

Obviously, a sincerity that one can strive for is no ordinary sincerity.

### *Genius or Everyman*

Expressing oneself sounds like the kind of thing that anyone could do; and many thinkers have in fact maintained, from various points of view, that everyone is an artist of some kind and in some degree. "Every utterance and every gesture that each one of us makes is a work of art," wrote Collingwood (1938, 285), and in the late eighteenth century it was a commonplace that language began as self-expression and that poetry was the



most elementary form of language (cf. Abrams 1953, 82 ff.).<sup>11</sup> But if those who hold that all art is self-expression still maintain that works of art are worth preserving as well as producing—that some paintings should be kept in art galleries and not immediately painted out for the canvas to be used again, that some poems should be with great labour printed and anthologized rather than being forgotten after the immediate delight of the poet and his friends—they must find some excuse for negating the catholicity of their original doctrine. One excuse is that although all self-expression is art, what is commonly called art and treasured as such is the product of some special kind of self-expression, such as that just described under the head of “the creative process.” But to say this is really to take away the point of saying that all self-expression is art, and accordingly the more popular solution to the difficulty is simply to say that some selves are more worth expressing than others: “A good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master-spirit, imbalm’d and treasur’d up on purpose to a life beyond life” (Milton 1644, 298). The first question we ask a new author, says Tolstoy (1894, 64), is “Well, what sort of a man are you? Wherein are you different from all the people I know, and what can you tell me that is new, about how we must look at this life of ours?” The delight we take in works of art is then equivalent to that we take in the company of brilliant or entertaining or otherwise admirable men (so Pepper, 1945, 136–7n.; cf. Ruskin 1853, ch. iv, §6).

Miss Arendt (1958, 188–9) describes the idea of genius as an attempt to find in fabrication the values proper to action and speech.<sup>12</sup> If it is taken seriously, it must involve the demand that artists receive moral training, which according to Coomaraswamy (1934, 49) is the classical Indian doctrine.<sup>13</sup> In any case it diverts attention from the work of art to the

11. Cf. Shaftesbury (1712, 116): “The *natural* best, till well and truly formed . . . , and the original first rude taste corrected by rule, and reduced to a yet more simple and natural measure. Otherwise an innocent child’s eye (of good parts and not spoilt already by pictures of the common sort) always found the best, as I have found experimentally. . . . Ergo. Better mere nature than half-way, illaborate, artful, merely critical judgement.”

12. This trend would be reversed by the notion of an “art of living,” which would treat action as an artefact.

13. Cf. Sirén (1936, 106–7): Ink-painting, which cannot be corrected, was associated with Zen Buddhism because it must be a direct expression of the painter: “This required the most careful and assiduous training, psychological as well as technical, because the brush-strokes became reflections from the mind transmitted by the skill of the hand. . . . The suddenness of the execution would certainly not have been possible if the masters had not passed through a long and assiduous training. It was like the sudden enlightenment, the *k’ai wu* or *satori*, which comes on the spur of the moment, when the mind has been cleansed of all beclouding thoughts and attuned to the silent music that accompanies every manifestation of life.”

supposed qualities of the artist, and favours shoddiness in execution: whatever goes beyond what is necessary to prove the artist skilful or virtuous must be regarded as futile elaboration, so that incomplete drawings and jottings come to be regarded as typical works of art (Hauser 1951, II.72).

If the other alternative is taken, and the artist is singled out not by his superior ability or character but by the peculiar nature of his unconscious processes, two possibilities are open, and both are commonly espoused, together or separately: the artist is regarded as either a seer or *shaman*, "the Bard who present, past and future sees,"<sup>14</sup> or as an uniquely suffering individual who oyster-like transmutes his irritations into precious pearls.

In support and elaboration of the thesis that every man is an artist some say that specialization of artistic production is a product of "our society," and the alleged fact that it is not found among primitive peoples (p. 140 above) shows that "our" practice is unnatural. I do not know why such a fuss is made about this. In a society where there is division of labour, artists naturally are specialists; and where an occupation is hereditary, some people are notably better at it than others. "Every man is an artist" is as true as "every man is a carpenter": practically everyone can knock up a shelf, if he is shown how, but some people show more aptitude than others. Most people if apprenticed to a cabinet-maker could in time become tolerably proficient at the trade, but not everyone becomes a Sheraton. And even if it is true that every Dahomean is his own sculptor,<sup>15</sup> it is far from true that every Dahomean is a good sculptor; and it is no less true that in "our society" in the nineteenth century every young lady was expected to paint in water colours. But the names of Bonington and Turner are remembered for all that.

### *Self-Knowledge*

Why should the self be expressed? One answer often given is that by expressing oneself one comes to know oneself, that only through self-expression is self-knowledge possible: "The spirit does not obtain intuitions, otherwise than by making, forming, expressing" (Croce 1901, 13).

14. "It is the function of the artist with his capacity for loving things, and not of the scientist in his bloodless and impartial detachment, to see things 'as they really are'" (Whalley 1953, 42).

15. Dahomean wood figures "are sometimes carved by professional sculptors, but they are often made by the person who needs them, whether he is a skilled wood carver or not, since this avoids the risk of having a professional sculptor, either deliberately or by accident in the carving process, interfere with the function the figure is to perform. For this reason, Dahomean wood sculptures vary considerably in quality." (Wingert 1950, 29.)



This explanation is characteristic of Hegel and his successors among idealists and marxists. Thus Hegel writes (1835/1886, 58):

The universal and absolute need out of which art, on its formal side, arises has its source in the fact that man is a *thinking* consciousness, i.e. that he draws out of himself, and makes explicit *for himself*, that which he is, and, generally, whatever is.

Such achievement of self-knowledge may be attributed to the individual, as primarily by Collingwood (1938); or loosely to mankind in general, as by Caudwell (1937, 294):

In making external reality glow with our expression, art tells us about ourselves. No man can look directly at himself, but art makes of the Universe a mirror, in which we catch glimpses of ourselves, not as we are, but as we are in active potentiality of becoming in relation to reality through society.

In Hegel himself (1835/1886, 175), ultimately, what finds expression and attains self-knowledge is not the individual artist, but the Absolute:

What the particular arts realise in individual works of art, are according to their abstract conception simply the universal types which constitute the self-unfolding Idea of beauty. It is as the external realization of this Idea that the wide Pantheon of art is being erected, whose architect and builder is the spirit of beauty as it awakens to self-knowledge, and to complete which the history of the world will need its evolution of ages

—but Hegel's ideas are too complex and closely knit to be accommodated in any framework but his own, so I refrain from considering them.

Hegel and Croce think that self-knowledge comes in the very act of expression, but not all would agree with them: Ducasse (1929, 51), for example, maintains that illumination comes only when what has been produced is subsequently contemplated. The difference between the two viewpoints is not a straightforward empirical one, but involves different theories of mind, for the one of which consciousness works itself out autonomously, so that there is no barrier to self-knowledge, while for the other it grapples with a material world and with unconscious forces, both of which are fundamentally alien to it.

The notion that art is a means to self-knowledge affords a transition from the view of art's function as *reflection* to the view that it is some kind of *amelioration*. Of the views that, whether or not they hold that art is self-expression, concentrate less on the expressiveness than on the benefits art may confer, some are medical in tone and others more generally biological; and others again are epistemological, which is to say that they are frankly speculative or merely literary. All are liable to the accusation of Collingwood (1938, 30) that "Like good inductive scientists, they have

kept their eye on the facts, but (a disaster against which inductive methods afford no protection), the wrong facts. Their theory of art is based on a study of art falsely so called." But my view of what the right facts are is broader than his, and I am not much less interested in art "falsely so called" than in "art proper." And in some cases it may even be that the opposite accusation would stick faster, that doctrines are propounded for their own sake rather than for the sake of the facts, that they are the product of will rather than of intelligence, like those of Lange and Groos and perhaps like that of Collingwood himself.

## ART AND ADJUSTMENT

As the Misery of Man proceeds from the Discord, and those Civil Jars that are maintain'd within him, it follows, that nothing can make him Happy, but what can remove that Discord, and restore the Harmony of the Human Faculties. So that that must be the best and the noblest Art, which makes the best Provision at the same Time for the Satisfaction of all the Faculties, the Reason, the Passions, the Senses. But none of them provides in such a sovereign Manner as Poetry, for the Satisfaction of the whole Man together. (Dennis 1701, 263.)<sup>16</sup>

TWO CENTURIES later, Langfeld (1920, 5) was saying the same thing in almost the same terms, though an appearance of scientific warrant was given by the ring of his phrase "factors of a perfect adjustment." Some writers have thought to specify the physiological processes contributing to the desired adjustment, as when Burke (1757, IV, §§9, 19) showed how the correlates of sublimity exercised the "finer organs" of the body, and proclaimed that "Beauty acts by relaxing the solids of the whole system"; but most have controlled their fancies more firmly.

Dennis thinks of art as necessitated by the Fall. The contemporary counterpart of man's fallen state is neurosis, so that true successors of Dennis are those who think of art as healing the sick, whether or not they believe that we are all slightly under the weather. Others, however, think that most people are in their right minds and that even so art helps them to "adjust" to their surroundings, being helpful but not strictly necessary. John Dewey, whose work exemplifies this approach, suitably begins by denouncing and undermining the distinction between "art" and "life": the aesthetic must be derived from the unaesthetic. The segregation of art in our minds reflects the physical segregation of works of art in galleries

16. Cf. *Yüeh Chi* (III, §25): "The sphere in which music acts is the interior of man, and that of ceremonies is his exterior. The result of music is a perfect harmony, and that of ceremonies a perfect observance (of propriety)."



and museums, which are nothing but showcases set up to promote national glory and indeed date from the rise of nationalist movements;<sup>17</sup> aesthetic theories based on a contrast between art and life are therefore adventitious (Dewey 1934, 1-10). To understand art we must understand the aesthetic aspects of all living. Life consists of the loss and regain by the organism of its equilibrium with its environment: maintenance and restoration of order make for life, increase of disorder makes for death. "Here in germ are balance and harmony attained through rhythm" (*ibid.*, 14). In the maintenance of order in human life we can indeed distinguish an intellectual and an aesthetic factor, but this distinction is one of emphasis only, not one of the presence or absence of thought: the intellectual is emphasized in moments of tension, the aesthetic rather in moments of balance (1934, 15).<sup>18</sup> The distinction between fine and useful arts is therefore likewise wrongly drawn, for it is the "degree of completeness of living in the experience of making and of perceiving that makes the difference between what is fine or aesthetic in art and what is not," and "useful" means or should mean "contributing directly and liberally to an expanding and enriched life" (*ibid.*, 30).<sup>19</sup> It is a liberal, wise and humane statement, and draws the sting of his supposedly sordid pragmatism, but one must admit that it leaves the distinction commonly made between fine and useful arts untouched.<sup>20</sup>

17. Works of art must surely have been prized as valuable objects already, or a museum filled with them could not have served to enhance prestige (see p. 202 above and cf. Sedlmayr 1957, 28). But the rise of museums doubtless exaggerated the attitude.

18. This reduction of apparent differences in kind to differences of emphasis and degree is a pervasive Hegelian feature of Dewey's thought. Like the ingredients of a Christmas pudding, art and life, intellectual and aesthetic, theory and practice, fine and useful arts, nature and art, art and science blend into one another in the medium of his heavy, rich prose. Cf. also Dewey (1934, 229): "Such words as poetic, architectural, dramatic, sculptural, pictorial, literary . . . designate *tendencies* that belong in some degree to every art because they qualify any complete experience, while, however, a particular medium is best adapted to make that strain emphatic."

19. Cf. Morris (1882, 31): "Nothing can be a work of art which is not useful; that is to say, which does not minister to the body when well under the command of the mind, or which does not amuse, sooth, or elevate the mind in a healthy state."

20. Similarly, his suggestion (1929, 358) that the distinction between practice and theory should be discarded in favour of that "between those modes of practice that are not intelligent, not inherently and immediately enjoyable, and those which are full of enjoyed meanings" is puzzling: the latter distinction is valid and important, but it neither sheds doubt on the validity of that between theory and practice nor fulfils its functions. When, on the other hand, he writes (1934, 214): "Art is a quality of doing and of what is done. . . . Since it adheres to the manner and content of doing, it is adjectival in nature. . . . If art is an intrinsic quality of activity, we cannot divide and subdivide it. We can only follow the differentiation

Since Dewey cannot really deny (nor does he wish to) that works of art exist and are lastingly valued, he has somewhere to reinstate the distinction between art and life which he has impugned. The fact that he wishes to do so is clearer than how he means to do it, but part of his solution is to reinstate the traditional notion of art as preoccupied with surface or *Schein*, and involving order:

An experience is peculiarly and dominantly aesthetic, yielding the enjoyment characteristic of aesthetic perception, when the factors that determine anything which can be called *an* experience are lifted high above the threshold of perception and are made manifest for their own sake (1934, 57).

An experience has pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship (*ibid.*, 44).

More generally, he associates art with "the characteristic human need . . . for possession and appreciation of the meanings of things," a need "ignored and unsatisfied in the traditional notion of the useful" (1929, 362): "Science states meanings, art expresses them" (1934, 84). But art seems here to take on a specific function of its own, different from that of the "aesthetic" element in all experience. And finally he claims that art is "more moral than the moralities," perpetually reaffirming new possibilities of life and breaking the hold of dead habit (see p. 300 below).

It is in Dewey's work that we find the connection of art with a satisfactory adjustment in life affirmed in its most general, and therefore most acceptable, form. The price of this generality is the substitution of rhetoric for argument and for such evidence about the conditions of human survival as a theory of this kind might be expected to provide.

It may be held that art provides not only an immediate adjustment but a lasting improvement. Thus Read (1955, 31) optimistically adopts the doctrine of Plato (*Republic*, 401):

The Platonic doctrine . . . finds in the practice of art those regulative principles in virtue of which the integration of the personality can be achieved. Art is a *natural* discipline. Its rules are the proportions and rhythms inherent in our universe; and the instinctive observation of these rules, which comes about in the creative industry of the arts, brings the individual without effort into sympathetic harmony with his environment. That is what we mean by the integration of the personality—the acquiring of those elements of grace and skill which make the individual apt in self-expression, honest in communication, and sympathetic in the reciprocal relationships upon which society is based. Art, we might say, can make us completely human.

of the activity into different modes as it impinges on different materials and employs different media," it is impossible to see why this activity of "following" should not be called "dividing and subdividing." All these recommendations, in fact, seem to be rhetorical in force, calculated to mould feeling rather than change thinking.



And Langfeld maintains (1920, 167) that "The mind becomes more highly organized and action becomes more completely systematized the more fully our appreciation of beauty is developed."

Slightly more precise than these writers in its claims about what art does for people, but little more scrupulous in providing evidence for its assertions, is the curious work, at once meagre and pretentious, of I. A. Richards and his collaborators (Ogden, Richards and Wood 1925). These writers hold, like Schiller, that in aesthetic experience opposing forces cancel out and leave the individual free; but, unlike him, they have in mind a balance not of two forces but of a multitude of impulses, faculties, modes of awareness—hence the epithet "synaesthetic" which they apply to this experience.

As we realise beauty we become more fully ourselves the more our impulses are engaged. If, as is sometimes alleged, we are the whole complex of our impulses, this fact would explain itself. Our interest is not canalised in one direction rather than another. It becomes ready instead to take any direction we choose. (*Op. cit.*, 78.)

It is fortunate that the fact explains itself, for I do not know what else would explain it: "I am being more fully myself" is less a fact to be explained than an utterance to be expounded. "In equilibrium," they say, "there is no tendency to action . . ." (*ibid.*, 76); "A complete systematisation must take the form of such an adjustment as will preserve free play to every impulse, with entire avoidance of frustration. In any equilibrium of this kind, however momentary, we are experiencing beauty" (*ibid.*, 75); and "Balance as we have said tends to bring the whole of the personality into play" (*ibid.*, 77n.). Such talk of "the whole of the personality" is common enough in speaking of religious or aesthetic experience, so somebody must mean something by it, but I cannot imagine what. Is a man's personality really something that can be manifested as a totality, or is "personality" just a term standing for certain characteristic modes of behaviour, the manifestation of any one of which necessarily precludes the manifestation of any other? I have the same doubts about adjustments which preserve free play to "every impulse." Just which impulses are included in "every"? If only those are meant which happen to be present on some one occasion, I do not see why their free play might not issue in action rather than equilibrium whenever one was wholehearted about doing something. But if it means "every impulse which could conceivably ever be manifested," this again seems to be a spurious totality. For how does one identify an impulse, if not in terms of the activity to which it impels? But I cannot give free play to an impulse to play the piano and at the same time to an impulse to climb a tree. Yet one and the same man

may have both these impulses at different times. Presumably the authors mean something quite other than either of these, but what it is they do not say and I cannot guess.

Again unlike Schiller, the proponents of synaesthesia seem to value the experience entirely for its own sake and not for the possibilities of successful readjustment which it offers:

The reason why equilibrium is a justification for the preference of one experience before another, is the fact that it brings into play all our faculties.<sup>21</sup> In virtue of what we have called the synaesthetic character of the experience, we are enabled . . . to appreciate relationships in a way which would not be possible under normal circumstances. Through no other experience can the full richness and complexity of our environment be realised. The ultimate value of equilibrium is that it is better to be fully than partially alive. (*Ibid.*, 91.)

The notion that one is more fully alive at some times than at others, that one is most fully alive when one is most fully and variously active, and that this condition is better fulfilled in contemplation than in anything more commonly thought of as action, is the core of Aristotle's ethic, where it is joined to the ideal of an expression of all faculties without frustration. Aristotle, however, thinks of this as a successive expression throughout a lifetime, which makes a little more sense but not much.

The account of psychological processes on which this theory rests is "admittedly speculative" (*ibid.*, 77n.). Like the equally imaginative diagram of psychological processes in *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (Richards 1924, 116), which is designed to look as much as possible like a picture of the nervous system, it derives what credibility it has from the inherent attractiveness of the system of literary judgements which purports to derive from it.

The general tendency of this theory of synaesthesia would seem to place it among the "play theories," if the rather fine distinctions I am drawing can be maintained. But I mention it here because, like Dewey and unlike Schiller, its inventors do not regard aesthetic experience as an interruption of or withdrawal from everyday experience, but as an enhancement of it.

### *Empathy*

Empathy is . . . nothing other than . . . the *inward side* of imitation (Lipps 1903, I.120).

Aesthetic enjoyment is enjoyment of a sensible object, but in so far as the enjoying ego is objectified therein. It is objectified self-enjoyment in this specific sense. (*Ibid.*, II.103.)

21. Another spurious totality.



We feel that aesthetic value does not belong to the sensible object, but comes from something human, from a life lying behind it, or a living out of oneself. . . . The foundation of the aesthetic value of a sensible given is always something "lying within" it, something inward. And this inward something is always myself. (*Ibid.*, 157-9.)

The theory implied by these remarks, which is the theory of empathy,<sup>22</sup> has two parts: first, that works of art and other things to which beauty is attributed cause us when we perceive them to feel certain stresses, strains, movements and the like, which have a liberating or "life-enhancing" effect; second, that we attribute these motions and so on to the beautiful object.

The theory may appear in a physiological or a psychological guise. The physiological variant tends to attribute the effect of works of art to the unfelt but measurable muscular contractions caused in us by imagined movements, as in Langfeld (1920, 109):<sup>23</sup>

All of our perceptions are dependent upon the motor attitudes that are assumed towards the object. The eye measures the extent of a line by moving over it, or there is an incipient revival within us of the muscular sensations of some other part of the body. . . . When we notice the smooth curves of a marble torso, we can probably, if we observe carefully, get a fleeting image of our hands moving in imagination around the figure.<sup>24</sup>

and so on, with throat tensions for singing, and the like. But sometimes the physiological variety of the theory refers to movements on a larger scale, as with Miss Lee (1913, 64):

The rising of the mountain is an idea started by the awareness of our own lifting or raising of our eyes, head or neck, and it is an idea containing the awareness of that lifting or raising. But . . . that present and particular lifting

22. The word was coined to render the German *Einfühlung* by Titchener, who defines it (1910, 417) as "the name given to the process of humanising objects."

23. Note that we have encountered Langfeld in three contexts, as a play theorist, a general adjustment merchant, and now as an empathist. Such eclecticism is usual; or perhaps I should say that what I deal with is not theories but theory-components that may be built into many theories. But accounts of art in terms of play and empathy have strong affinities, particularly through their scientific aspirations and especially the concept of an "inward imitation" (*innere Nachahmung*) which is part of the empathizing process and also serves to establish for Groos (1899) a link between art and play.

24. "Probably" is good. Much virtue in "probably." Berenson said (1896, 40) that a painter's "first business . . . is to rouse the tactile sense, for I must have the illusion of being able to touch a figure, I must have the illusion of varying muscular sensations inside my palm and fingers corresponding to the various projections of this figure, before I shall take it for granted as real, and let it affect me lastingly." This is a quaint doctrine indeed, but Berenson's many students and fans keep it circulating; and, having adopted it as a youth when it was the latest thing, he was enabled by loquacious longevity to promulgate it a generation after everyone outside his circle had abandoned it.

is merely the nucleus to which gravitates our remembrance of all similar acts of raising, or rising which we have ever accomplished or seen accomplished.

...

Some of these physiological data are fictitious, and the rest are irrelevant. It is not true that, as Langfeld suggests, the movements of the eye conform to the outlines of what it scans (Lipps 1903, I.259 had already denied it, and the experiments of Buswell (1935) prove him right; cf. p. 150 above). The unconscious muscular movements referred to do occur, but their relevance to perception is not established (Jacobson 1932): Langfeld does not even suggest that such inchoate movements of the hands have actually been discerned in people noticing the smoothness of statues. Mr. Meyer (1956, 81-2) points out that since the response in question is to a pattern, the motor activity must in any case be held to depend on the mental activity: "Everything which occurs as a motor response can be accounted for in terms of mental activity and, since the converse of this is not true, music is best examined in terms of mental behavior." As for macroscopic movements, the original form of Miss Lee's version, that "The greater or lesser agreeableness of artistic experience is . . . due to the dependence of one of the most constant and important intellectual activities, the perception of form, on two of the most important of our bodily functions, respiration and equilibrium" (1897, 225), rested solely on the far from typical feelings of a Miss C. Anstruther-Thomson. Once again, the will to find a physiological explanation<sup>25</sup> has outrun the ability of the intelligence to provide one.

The theory of empathy need not take this physiological turn. Lipps, as in the quotations given, confines himself to psychological terms with a mystical flavour: "The beauty of spatial forms is this my 'ideal freedom' with which I live myself out in them" (Lipps 1903, I.247). But the easiest way to provide a plausible account is to combine physiological and psychological modes of explanation (which after all are not really on the same level, so cannot be involved in contradiction), appealing to a supposed muscular contraction when no feeling can plausibly be alleged, and appealing to feelings when physiology fails. In this combined version the theory finds eloquent though highly general expression in Berenson (1950, 58-9):

Ultimates in art criticism, if they exist, must be sought for in the life-enhancement that results from identifying oneself with the object enjoyed or

25. Lee (1911, 13) says that the question for aesthetics is "What facts of consciousness in the first place, what physiological processes in the second, *appear to underlie or to accompany the satisfaction in certain forms as being beautiful, and the dissatisfaction in certain other forms as being ugly?*" (my italics).



putting oneself in its place. . . . In order to be life-enhancing an object must appeal to the whole of one's being, to one's senses, nerves, muscles, viscera, and to one's feeling for direction, for support and weight, for balance, for stresses and counter-stresses, and for the minimum of space required for one's indispensable bodily anatomy. . . . Natural objects . . . cannot be life-enhancing. To be life-enhancing, visible things . . . must be presented in a way to make us feel that we are perceiving them more quickly, grasping them more deeply than we do ordinarily. The instantaneous result is an illusion of unwonted and unexpected ease of functioning, and its inseparable accompaniment the sense of heightened vitality, all of which we credit to the object so presented to us.

Most of its exponents claim that the theory of empathy is "scientific": Lee (1911, 2) refers to "the new science of aesthetics," Lipps claims that aesthetics is essentially a psychological discipline<sup>26</sup> and Langfeld plainly agrees, and Listowel's history (1933) is written to show that this and no other theory of aesthetics is scientifically respectable. It flourished in the heyday of "scientific" aesthetics, which was also the heyday of aesthetics itself, between about 1870 and about 1930; its eclipse is probably due to insistence by later psychologists on more precise quantification and verification, and to its replacement by the more titillating doctrines of Freud as the favourite theory of lay scientolaters. But its central ideas existed as pure speculations before scientific status was claimed for them;<sup>27</sup> and the claim itself has not been upheld.

The theory of empathy, if true (and it has been discarded rather than refuted or replaced), sheds much light on the mechanism of aesthetic perception and appreciation, but none at all on our systems of preferences, and only through such hazardous conjectures as those cited from Berenson on our notions of art's function. The assertion that the spectator or listener goes through an "inward imitation" of the perceived object, kinaesthetically or emotionally, merely transposes our problems to a different sphere: we still have the problem of *why* some such vestigial or imaginary movements should be valuable and others not. The problem might have turned out to be easier to answer in these terms; but in fact all we have is the inference from the judgement that some forms are pleasing and others not to the supposition that the former give rise to agreeable movements, the latter to disagreeable ones. There are cases in

26. Aesthetics is the science of beauty; since the "beautiful" is whatever arouses a specific kind of feeling in me, aesthetics must be a branch of the science that deals with feelings, i.e. psychology (Lipps 1903, I.1).

27. The origins of the idea are ascribed to Herder (1800); it is certainly quite fully developed in Lotze (1856, Bk. V, ch. 2): "We extend equally to lifeless things these feelings which lend them meaning. And by such feelings we transform the inert masses of a building into so many limbs of a living body, a body experiencing inner strains which we transport back into ourselves."

which the inference is plausible enough, as in the suggestion that top-heavy-looking buildings displease us because they make us feel as if we ourselves might fall,<sup>28</sup> but these are comparatively few. As for the second basic proposition of the theory, that we attribute our own feelings to what we perceive, it explains our way of speaking of gaping chasms, soaring spires and the like, but not why we should find some soaring spires delightful and others not.

My assertion that the theory of empathy cannot explain aesthetic preferences runs counter to Berenson's use of it to support his liking for portrayals of graceful human figures, and his condemnation of abstract art: "How can you identify yourself or put yourself in place of a cube?" (1950, 58). This, however, is no necessary consequence of the theory. Vernon Lee (1911, 112) asks us to distinguish between two kinds of "inward imitation": the acting-out of a represented action, and the more subtle imitation of form and line. She thinks that these occur in inverse relation to each other, the former occurring most when one is tired or listless, but in any case the theory in its general and more interesting form is concerned with the latter of these two modes of imitation, and Berenson is plainly speaking of the former only. Perhaps we could say that the occurrence of the "dramatic" form of imitation seems obvious, but is of little theoretical interest, whereas the occurrence of the "formal" kind is very doubtful but would have interesting theoretical consequences. So the theory derives its plausibility from its uninteresting side, and its interest from its implausible side.

The experience of empathizing is valued by Lipps, we saw, for the sense of freedom it brings. For Langfeld and Lee it tunes up the system. For Berenson, too (1950, 129), though empathy is postulated as means, life-enhancement is the thing:

By "life-enhancement" I mean the ideated identification of ourselves with a person, the ideated participation in an action, the ideated plunging into a state of being, or state of mind, that makes one feel more hopefully, more zestfully alive; living more intense, more radiant a life not only physically but morally and spiritually as well; reaching out to the topmost peak of our capacities, contented with no satisfaction lower than the highest.

28. E.g. Scott (1914, 212): "There is instability—or the appearance of it; but it is in the building. There is discomfort, but it is in ourselves. . . . We have looked at the building and identified ourselves with its apparent state. *We have transcribed ourselves into terms of architecture.* . . . But the states in architecture with which we thus identify ourselves need not be actual. The actual pressures of a spire are downward; yet no one speaks of a 'sinking' spire. . . . *We transcribe architecture into terms of ourselves.*" Cf. Hogarth (1753, 14): "Twisted columns are undoubtedly ornamental; but as they convey an idea of weakness, they always displease, when they are improperly made use of as supports to any thing that is bulky, or appears heavy."



Reluctant as we more lethargic souls may be to admit that art can really have such effects on those better endowed, others have made similar claims without reference to empathy. Reynolds (1772, I.372) claims that Michelangelo affected him as Homer affected one M. Bouchardon, "His whole frame appeared to himself to be enlarged, and all nature which surrounded him, diminished to atoms"; and Professor Frye (1957, 94):

Art seems to produce a kind of buoyancy which, though often called pleasure, as it is for instance by Wordsworth, is something more inclusive than pleasure. "Exuberance is beauty," said Blake. That seems to me a practically definitive solution, not only of the minor question of what beauty is, but of the far more important problem of what the conceptions of catharsis and ecstasis really mean.

Three birds, and such large and floppy ones, with a single lapidary phrase!

### *Healing*

Nietzsche (1872/1909, §19) speaks of "The highest and, indeed, the only task of art,—to release the eye from its gaze into the horrors of night and to deliver the 'patient' by the healing balm of appearance from the spasms of the agitations of the will." He is adopting Schopenhauer's metaphysical version of Schiller; but his language, as so often, points the way to a typically modern development, the notion that art not merely improves the individual's inner harmony and helps him adjust to his environment, but affords a refuge from, or prophylactic against, actual sickness.

Psychiatrists (cf. Dax 1953) have found activities with artistic affiliations useful in three ways. First, drawings made by patients and their interpretations of drawings made by others (thematic apperception tests) and of more or less non-representational designs (the "ink-blot" of the Rorschach tests) aid diagnosis by revealing patients' obsessions. This suggests, though of course it does not prove, that the production and appreciation of art are always manifestations of personal obsessions. Second, it is found to be soothing for some patients to embody in drawings, or to act out, experiences or ideas which haunt them. This again suggests, but does not prove, that it is always or often the function of art to provide a harmless release from distressing emotions<sup>29</sup>—an idea that goes back to Aristotle's notion of the cathartic effect of tragedy. It may indeed be suggested that the obscene is as basic a category for aesthetics as beauty itself: that art has the double function of both satisfying an appetite for

29. Cf. Hegel (1835/1886, 92 f.): By representing passions, art makes them available to reflection and thus softens them. "Hence it may frequently be the case with the artist that when attacked by grief he softens and weakens the intensity of his own feelings in its effect on his own mind by representing it in art."

order which everyday life does not satisfy, and allowing an outlet for obscene urges whose suppression everyday life demands. It is agreed that the representation of a beautiful thing does not guarantee beauty in art; perhaps it should be recognized that the representation of an obscene thing does not entail obscenity in art. Third, psychiatrists have found that the activities of painting and modelling are themselves soothing to their patients in a general way and may even (though this is not easy to establish) contribute to their cure. This suggests that art is quite generally good for mental health, perhaps in some such way as the empathists suppose; but such occupational therapy can be achieved by any absorbing and not riotous physical activity, and is not specific to art.

The best-known systematic attempt to explain art in terms of mental illness is Freud's. To him, the function of art was to relieve neurotic tendencies in the artist himself and in his audience.<sup>30</sup> The theory seems not to have been reached by examining art but by extrapolating Freud's theory of wit and assuming that art was a form of day-dreaming, so that it could be explained on the analogy of the celebrated theory of the significance of dreams (Freud 1900). The analogy with wit provides the explanation of artistic form, that with dreaming the explanation of art's symbolic content.<sup>31</sup> According to this theory, the artist finds in his art an expression for his frustrated desires. Because the expression has an infantile form, it is condoned; and because the content of the expression is mere fantasy it is socially permitted, and may indeed be approved and so lead in the end to the genuine fulfilment of the artist's desires (Freud 1917, 314-15). Dr. Alexander (1948, 188) presents the doctrine thus: "All wit makes use of regression to diverge from the reality principle to more comfortable if less adequate ways of thinking governed by the pleasure principle." Note the extraordinary antithesis: pleasure and reality. "Real

30. Cf. Baudouin (1929, 204-5), quoted by Dalbiez (1941, I.381): "In its therapeutic capacity analysis undertakes, among other things, to provoke beneficial discharges where repression has accumulated a pathogenic excess of emotion. In its aesthetic capacity, it observes that art provokes similar discharges in its own fashion. This common ground enables us to conjecture that in certain instances art may play the part of a true therapeutic agent in nervous disorders, a fact which is borne out by experience." Stekel (1923, 78-9) goes further: "Not every neurotic is an artist. But every artist is a neurotic. . . . In every one's breast there slumbers a bit of neurosis. That slumbering piece of neurosis is what constitutes the foundation of all creative ability." So art once more appears as an exaggerated or specialized form of something that is present in germ in every man.

31. Cf. Alexander (1948, 185): "It seems probable that the artistic effect depends upon certain dynamic relationships, on the analogy of Freud's explanation of wit and the comic on such a basis. . . . The value of Freud's theory of wit is that it applies *mutatis mutandis* to beauty" (italics mine, except in the last instance). By mutating enough *mutanda* you can make anything apply to anything.



and unreal" make a new pair to add to the confused opposites (work and play, unpleasant and pleasant, etc.) mentioned in my discussion of "play theories." I do not know by what route this monstrous Schopenhauerian metaphysic crept into Freud's system. The fact that some patients unconsciously seek in fantasy a refuge from an intolerable social reality is one thing; the suggestion that all reality is intolerable and all pleasure-seeking an escape from it is quite another. Alexander continues:

The same economic and dynamic principles can be applied to explain the related phenomena of artistic appeal. Sachs and Rank have pointed out that in literature rhyme provides an infantile pleasure and rhythm an elementary organic pleasure.

If "infantile" here means "characteristic of children *as opposed to* adults" the statement seems to be untrue, since the use of rhyme in literature is not confined to children; if it means "characteristic of children *as well as* adults" its theoretical significance is slight. And while some kinds of rhythm may provide "elementary organic pleasure" it takes a heroic theorist to say that *all* do. Alexander goes on:

The content of a poem or story can be presented in a manner devoid of any artistic appeal. . . . The content of literature, as of wit, expresses repressed or thwarted desires. The artistic effect is created by the form, which permits covert indulgence of emotions which would be conflictful if brought into the open.

The confidence that form and content are so clearly distinct in a work of art that they can have different psychical effects is not shared by most critics. The implication of the statement, by the way, is that even on the conscious level the content (fantasy) matters more than the form. Thus Freud (1925, 64-5) wrote of the artist that "His creations, works of art, were the imaginary satisfaction of unconscious wishes, just as dreams are. . . . Besides this, they made use of the perceptual pleasure of formal beauty as what I have called an 'incentive bonus'"; but in a letter written in 1914 (Jones 1957, 441) he wrote, "Meaning is but little to these men; all they care for is line, shape, agreement of contours. They are given up to the Lustprinzip." The artist cannot win: for if he had cared for meaning that meaning would have been condemned as fantasy, no less dominated by the pleasure-principle. But let Alexander continue:

Everyone has the feeling that another's complaint at desertion by a love is ordinarily an imposition and arouses contempt rather than compassion. Complaint about unreturned love in verse obviates this and the listener can vicariously relieve his own sorrow. The pleasure in the form is solely responsible for this. Without it the content of most love poetry would appear weak and sentimental.

Well, I suppose these things take different people in different ways, but I have never found that the onset of unrequited love increases my taste for love poetry.

Professor Abrams points out (1953, 147) that Keble had already observed that art provided a "veiled revelation" of this kind, and finds the whole line of thought strongly theological. It is certainly true that Keble shared Freud's view that artistic expression relieved unbearable mental pressures. After speaking of passionate outcries he writes (1832, I.20):

There lingers . . . even in the most abandoned a higher and better instinct, which counsels silence as to many things; and, if they are willing to obey the instinct, they will rather die than declare openly what is in their mind. . . .

What must they do? they are ashamed and reluctant to speak out, yet, if silent, they can scarcely keep their mental balance; some are even said to have become insane.

And again he asks (*ibid.*, 90): "What remedy is to be found for troubles which have clearly grown up with the character, silent and unnoticed, interpenetrating a man's whole life?"

Freud's notion that the artist is "one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous" (1917, 314), a visit to whose studio is a fate worse than death, was not derived from his professional studies: he was already using it to justify his jealousy of the musician Max Mayer and the painter Fritz Wahler in letters written to his fiancée in his neurological days (Jones 1953, ch. vii). It is a common stereotype, and there are supporting examples (Victor Hugo, *hélas*); but there are lechers in every trade, and success in the arts does not differ from success in any other walk of life in affording opportunities for pursuits thought disreputable in aspiring professional men. No one has thought of deducing anything about the inner implications of the scrap-dealer's trade (anal-retentive?) from the incidents of the film *Born Yesterday*.

The Freudian theory really confines itself to accounting for certain very general features, such as common symbols, of the content of some kinds of works of art. It does not attempt to account for the formal elements in art (other than pounding rhythms in verse) apart from the loose general statement that they are infantile and all-important. It is, in fact, precisely an attempt to state in general terms what the function of art is, even though as Freud admits (1925, 65) it cannot say how that function is fulfilled. The facts mentioned in these explanations do not have, and are not usually alleged to have, any connection with ratings of artistic excellence. Yet if the facts alleged are the ultimate ground of our love of art, it is odd that the works which fit the theory best should not always be



those which are most highly prized. Thus Caudwell complains (1937, 297) that the psychoanalysts' view of the artist as neurotic makes them look for "just those symbols that are peculiarly private, *i.e.* neurotic," which compels them to confine their attention to poor work or inessential features of good work.

The objections so far levelled at the Freudian theory have been comparatively trivial; they would not prevent the theory from being essentially true and important. Far more telling is that raised by Wellek and Warren (1949, 71), that the theory "fails to recognize that creation is itself a mode of work in the outer world; that, while the daydreamer is content to dream of writing his dreams, one who is actually writing is engaged in an act of externalization and of adjustment to society." "The poet dreams being awake," wrote Lamb (1833, 270). "He is not possessed by his subject but he has dominion over it."<sup>32</sup>

Two consequences should follow from the truth of the Freudian theory: types of art should vary significantly from culture to culture according to the predominating stresses, and hence types of neurosis, imposed by the culture; and the most neurotic cultures should produce the most art and value it most highly, while cultures relatively free from neurosis should be more nearly devoid of art. If there is any evidence to support either of these propositions, it has escaped my notice. The vulnerability of the Freudian theory of dreams (Eysenck 1953, 231-2) is yet more of a threat than this apparent failure of verification: if different theories of the meaning of dream symbolism can be applied with equal success, no one system of interpretation can be made basic to a theory of art. Yet one cannot dismiss the theory as a curiosity, largely irrelevant to what it purports to explain and at best doubtfully supported; for whatever the professional psychologists (some of whose strictures seem to be the fruit of jealous resentment) may think of it, it has deeply affected the outlook on art among the intelligentsia. It is due to Freud's influence, thinks Professor Trilling (1950, 39), that "we read the work of literature with a lively sense of its latent and ambiguous meanings, as if it were, as indeed it is,<sup>33</sup> a being no less alive and contradictory than the man who created it." Even those who explicitly reject piecemeal all that Freud and his followers have said about art can scarcely help thinking about art, as about all human life, in terms derived from his work.

32. The suggestion that art is a kind of day-dreaming is often made in isolation from any psychological theory, but is then unintelligible. Why do people day-dream? Why do artists bother to externalize their day-dreams?

33. Indeed it is not. If you cut it, it does not bleed.

## ART AND INSIGHT

IT SEEMS A LITTLE far-fetched to suggest that the primary function of artistic activities is to acquire or disseminate knowledge. Surely people look at pictures because they like looking at them, however this liking is to be explained, whereas learning, though profitable, is seldom enjoyable. And surely people paint pictures for the joy of making something, whatever the ultimate psychological ground of that joy may be, rather than as a means to knowledge; and, if occasionally they wish to teach by painting, this would seem to be as secondary a function of their activity as the equally common but admittedly irrelevant desire to make money. All the theories so far discussed have agreed that art brings some kind of enjoyment or relief from discomfort. But whatever may be the case with the uninstructed (or unperverted), theorists and artists often ascribe cognitive functions to art. Plato notoriously assumes that painting and poetry are meant to inform by imitating, and Aristotle identifies the delight in imitations (such as painting) with that of recognition. These thinkers have influenced subsequent thought too profoundly for us to dismiss them as eccentric because people nowadays think otherwise. Moreover, we have seen that aesthetics began as an epistemological discipline, and that the term "aesthetics" had epistemological meaning (pp. 5 and 54 above); and also that the activities taken seriously as arts were those appealing to the senses most used in getting and dispensing knowledge. So we should not be surprised to find that most people who take art seriously still think of it cognitively.

This problem of art's cognitive function invites my distinction between literary and other arts (or, if you prefer, between literature and art): the ascription of a teaching function to poetry is presupposed by our habit of quoting scraps of verse in support of our opinions, and is indeed often explicit, while in many societies the poet is a *shaman* whose poetry is reserved for the communication of visions, but no such social use is made of the other arts. To obliterate this distinction, one must either make out all art to be didactic or else say that the mentioned uses of poetry are abuses, that writers of novels and poems do not affirm what they write, that a poem contains not real discourse which may be true or false but "virtual discourse," propositions which are not asserted or even entertained in the sense that they are taken seriously as potential statements of possible fact, but contemplated in some quite different and more detached



way. Regardless of its applicability to this particular problem, the latter solution is probably at least half true.<sup>34</sup>

We do not need to take seriously the first and most obvious suggestion of a cognitive function for art, that the arts should convey agreeably a moral or other lesson which might equally well have been conveyed without such adornment. This "sugared pill" notion, though it can claim the authority of Plato and such latter-day Platonists as Abbot Suger<sup>35</sup> and Sir Philip Sidney (1595), is too remote from our own ways of thinking. It is obvious that poetry can do this, though as Dr. Hauser points out (1951, IV.94) its doing is often so offensive that it has given rise to the doctrine of "art for art's sake" by reaction; what is hard to maintain is that poetry or any other art does or should always do it. Perhaps the view finds its support in a too simple epistemology, which supposes that enlightenment can only proceed by simple instruction. But in any case the views which will occupy us regard art not as combining instruction with delight but as in some way embodying a special mode of knowledge or perception which cannot be otherwise acquired or transmitted. This might be a special method of direction to a non-aesthetic truth, or might direct to a special kind of truth.

Etymology, history and plausibility combine to ensure that the characteristic perception and thought ascribed to art should be non-discursive, since a picture is not constructed like an argument. So Professor Hampshire (1959, 219) remarks that the artist "tries out" or "rehearses" what he is to do rather than thinking about it in conceptual or comparative terms. This does not by itself indicate a positive cognitive function for art, but functions may be suggested on this basis. Mill's analogous doctrine (1833, 89-90), for example, that

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,

becomes in André Breton's (1924, 24) imaginary dictionary-definition of "surrealism" the basis for extravagant claims:

34. Professor Weitz (1950, ch. 8) patiently dispels the notion that art cannot embody truth-claims. The most obvious classification of epistemological theories, that by types of object allegedly known, is followed out in my later chapters more systematically than in the present, more general account.

35. Suger (*De Administratione Sua*, §XXXIII) says that to explain the allegorical meaning of the decorations in his Abbey Church of St. Denis, "Versus etiam idipsum loquentes, ut enucleatius intelligantur, apposuimus." In §XXVII he implies the more sophisticated and typically Platonic view that the contemplation of earthly beauty may lead directly to the contemplation of heavenly beauty.

**SURRÉALISME**, n.m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercée par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.

ENCYCL. *Philos.* Le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d'associations négligées jusqu'à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée. Il tend à ruiner définitivement tous les autres mécanismes psychiques et à se substituer à eux dans la résolution des principaux problèmes de la vie.<sup>36</sup>

The solemn silliness of this pronouncement has become so much the preferred manner for statements about contemporary art that we no longer even expect them to make sense—which shows, I suppose, that Breton had a point.

Besides manifesting and inculcating new or special ways of connecting ideas, art may be thought to educate simply by the exercise it gives: to purify vision and hearing, to increase sensitivity of perception, to maintain and inculcate standards of accuracy in the use of language, and more generally to train and refine feeling. But perhaps the commonest inference from the non-discursive nature of aesthetic cognition is that art affords some kind of direct acquaintance with some kind of reality: in a word, "intuition." This position can be reached easily enough from ones we have already visited. If we take the Schillerian (and Platonic, and perhaps obvious) notion that art has to do with appearances and not realities, we can put this less negatively and say that other forms of cognitive activity are concerned with unapparent realities to the neglect of appearances, which after all are just as real as anything else—and indeed according to a widespread philosophical opinion more certainly real than anything else, since in a sense one cannot be sure about anything except that things appear to be as they appear to be.<sup>37</sup> Or again, one can say that science deals with the intelligible relations between things and not with what things themselves "feel like." So far so good: science deals with things as they are for the intellect, art deals with them as they are for feeling. But the final step in making art's necessity its chief virtue has yet to be taken.

36. Cf. *ibid.*, 12: "Nous vivons encore sous le règne de la logique. . . . Mais les procédés logiques, de nos jours, ne s'appliquent plus qu'à la résolution de problèmes d'intérêt secondaire."

37. The intellectual counterpart of this unproblematic acceptance of the pure datum is given by Croce (1906, 122): "Hegel . . . could not discover that first ingenuous theoretic form, which is the lyric or the music of spirit, in which there is nothing philosophically contradictory, because the philosophic problem has not yet emerged. This first form is its condition. It is the region of the intuition, of pure fancy, of language, in its essential character, as painting, music, or song: in a word, it is the region of art."



Any account of anything must take into consideration certain aspects of it to the neglect of others. Which aspects of it are dealt with,<sup>38</sup> and which are left out, will depend on the context and purposes of the account. The "final step" I spoke of is to ignore or play down the fact that this selectivity is a necessary feature of all discourse, and to point out that scientific studies of things, since they neglect some aspects of the things they deal with, are "abstract"; one then says that art alone reveals what things are *really* like, in contrast with the vicious abstractions of science. (Note that this expression "really like" itself suggests, and can only be justified by, the coincidence of appearance and reality.)

Shorn of extravagances, the thesis before us is that art is concerned disinterestedly with the whole appearance of the individual things it deals with, whereas normal perception and activity deal with things as members of classes, selectively and for a purpose. So we have a double contrast: disinterestedness against utility, and individual against class. "The function of art is to convey, not generalities, but uniqueness," writes Professor Whalley (1953, 3); and again, more grandly if rather cryptically, "Poetry by a minute singularity shows the abstract universal in its universal character; philosophy or science shows it only in its general character" (*ibid.*, 134). From this position, the next step is to say that art's function is to deal with individuals not so much for their own sake as for the sake of the dealing itself:

Intuition is opposed, on the one hand, to crude unreflecting experience that never observes itself as a whole or attains to clearness and self-possession; and, on the other hand, to science, which gives the elements and relations of an experience, the classes to which it belongs, but loses its uniqueness and its values. Science elaborates concepts of things, gives us knowledge about things; art presents us with the experience of things purified for contemplation. Scientific truth is the fidelity of a description to the external objects of experience; artistic truth is sympathetic vision—the organization into clearness of experience itself. (Parker 1920, 39.)

This leaves it open whether the clearness that results from the organization corresponds to an objective order or not. Thus when Professor Frye (1957, 319) claims that the *Iliad* brought an "objective and disinterested element . . . into the poet's vision of human life," so that poetry acquired once and for all "an authority based . . . on the vision of nature as an impersonal order" the question is left open whether the order would in

38. The very use of the term "which" here is misleading, since it suggests that the totality of a thing's aspects constitutes a denumerable set, from which an account selects. It is more nearly true that the "aspects" of a thing acquire their status by figuring in some account of it, or in some conventionally recognized type of account.

any sense be "there" without the vision. For this reason some have said that truth in art is "truth to" rather than "truth about" reality—a faithful correspondence with some general impression, a moral fidelity, rather than any literal descriptive truth.<sup>39</sup>

Parker's contrast between intuition and intellect is the common coin of idealist aesthetics, though it is not always made in just the same way. Croce, from whom Parker apparently gets it, puts it thus (1906, 124):

Art is, precisely, subject without predicate; that is quite other than the nothingness and void of the thing-in-itself and of the thing without properties. It is intuition without intellectual relations; it is the emotion, which a poem communicates, through which there opens a view of reality, which we cannot render in intellectual terms and which we possess only in singing or re-singing, that is, only in creating it.

And Bergson (1903, 21) says that "Philosophers . . . agree in distinguishing two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing. The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we enter into it. . . . [The latter] neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol." Philosophers, of course, agree to no such thing: Croce's "view of reality" sounds much less alarming than Bergson's "entering into an object." Yet both statements are metaphorical, and it is not immediately obvious what accepting either is going to commit one to. The move from necessary indirection of statement to arbitrary rhetoric is easier to take than to detect.

We do not, of course, have to wait for Parker to find the epistemological contrast between "art" and "science." It already appears in much the same form in Nietzsche (1872/1909, §14), who says that Socrates must have asked himself: "'Perhaps what is not intelligible to me is not therefore unintelligible? Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is shut out? Perhaps art is even a necessary correlative of, and supplement to, science?'" Nietzsche has here taken the significant step from the position of Coleridge (1814, 220), who contrasts art with science as having a different cognitive significance but does not give the relationship quite its final form:

All the fine arts are different species of poetry. The same spirit speaks to the mind through different senses by manifestations of itself appropriate to

39. Cf. Hospers (1946, ch. vi). Hospers' general problem of the meaning of "meaning" and "truth" as applied to the arts is not discussed in my book, which treats it rather as a number of problems occurring in different contexts. If you want a unified treatment, there is always Hospers. For truth in art as convincingness, see p. 377 below.



each. . . . The common essence of all consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty; herein contradistinguishing poetry from science, the immediate object and primary purpose of which is truth and possible utility.

To Nietzsche and the modern romantics art provides a needed supplement to, and in some ways an improvement on, scientific knowledge; to Kant and Schiller, art played an important part in mental life but had no cognitive content.<sup>40</sup> Coleridge's position lies between the two, and is closer to that of Hegel, for whom art represents a way of knowing indeed, but one on a lower level than that of philosophy and religion and in a sense superseded by them.

Hegel, despite his epistemological disparagement of art, provided the hint for art's final aggrandizement when he made it a way of knowing the world as a whole. The last aggrandizement is the assertion that art provides Total Awareness, or a knowledge of Total Reality—people who disparage scientific knowledge are very fond of this word "Total." The meaning of these portentous dicta is usually left quite vague, for the very good reason that if any definite meaning were assigned to them it would readily be seen that either the claims made were preposterous or the alleged totality did not actually comprise very much. Thus when Professor Whalley writes (1953, 47) that "Reality is only grasped in contemplation, in an attitude of passivity, a total awareness which permits of total response" the attempt to impress is as obvious, and as successful, as that of the child who claims "My Dad is fifty billion times stronger than your Dad."<sup>41</sup> It has become fashionable to associate this kind of thing with the view of art supposed to be contained in the "prophetic" books of

40. This seems also to have been the position of Wordsworth (1800). Professor Abrams (1953, 100-3) finds in Wordsworth's *Preface* seven ideas brought together which become and remain the core of romantic critical theory: (1) poetry is an overflow of feeling; (2) it is opposed to science (expressive not descriptive) rather than to history (ideal not actual, universal not particular) or to prose generally; (3) poetry arises from primitive cries rendered rhythmic by organic causes; (4) the means of poetry are figures of speech and rhythm, whereby words naturally embody and convey the poet's feelings; (5) poetic language must not be contrived and artful; (6) poets are distinguished from other men by their innate intense sensibility and passionateness; (7) poetry's chief function is to "foster and subtilize the sensibility, emotions and susceptibilities of the reader." My personal impression, based on inadequate knowledge, is that in his version of the contrast between art and science as in his conversion of the world-soul into "something far more deeply interfused" Wordsworth's achievement was to divest Coleridge's ideas of their specific intellectual content and so make them available to the merely literary mind.

41. Whalley does explain what he means by "reality": it is "the intersection in time of the timeless, of value, and of the person" (*ibid.*, xviii). So there.

William Blake,<sup>42</sup> whose writings (like those of some of his present-day patrons) combine a deep sense of the importance of his own thinking with an apparent lack of awareness that there can be any other criterion of the merit of opinions than the strength of conviction of their holders.

Miss Sewell writes (1951, 131):

Coleridge . . . says that images may have the function of "reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant." This fits well here, for Rimbaud, by the closely packed images of *Illuminations*, achieves that very thing, making the reader's mind discard its usual organization of words and images in small separate units, so that a new and far greater unity can be produced, a unity where everything in the cosmos runs into everything else in one enormous oneness, and in place of succession and similarity there only remain simultaneity in space-time, and identification.

But as Plato complains (*Philebus*, 16C ff.) such soupy unity is no more interesting than an infinite multiplicity. Surely the artist is not just a myopic who has taken his glasses off. What is interesting is what lies between unity and infinity, that is structure. To destroy a thing's isolation without losing its identity is to introduce relation, and some have held that this is the poet's task. The perception of similarity in the dissimilar, says Mr. C. Day Lewis (1947, 35),

would not cause pleasure unless the human mind desired to find order in the external world, and unless the world had an order to satisfy that desire, and unless poetry could penetrate to this order and could image it for us piece by piece. The poetic image is the human mind claiming kinship with everything that lives or has lived, and making good its claim.

Kinship is not identity.

So Mr. Day Lewis claims that the vision of order is objectively grounded. But how is this claim to be verified? Well, an order once indicated can be perceived even by those who lacked the wit to find it for themselves. Unlike the "hypotheses" of which logical theory speaks, which can be refuted but never conclusively proved, the presence of order can

42. Professor Frye (1947, 418) interprets Blake as thinking: "The work of art suggests something beyond itself most obviously when it is most complete in itself: its integrity is an image or form of the universal integration which is the body of a divine Man." He says nothing to explain the meaning of this rather odd statement, and thus puts himself in a very strong position: if he dislikes what his readers infer from it, they are crudely literal-minded or given to subjective fantasy; if he likes what they infer, well, that is what he was saying. Such statements can only be interpreted as Augustine would interpret the Book of Genesis: they are to be taken as meaning everything they could possibly mean that would be true, and nothing that would be false. What happens when such grandiose effusions are treated as sacred texts by someone without Professor Frye's erudition, irony and brilliance may be seen in the solemn silliness of Mr. Adams' *Blake and Yeats* (1955).



be shown but not disproved. One may then say that it is the function of art to make the *world* intelligible, meaning by the "world" the cosmos, the universe conceived as an orderly place. By providing simple completely ordered systems in terms of his style the artist helps to render visible the obscure and complex order of the world.

Claims made for art may go beyond the vision of a mundane order: it may be said that art gives some kind of initiation to a higher level of reality, whether or not this is otherwise accessible. It may be said, for example, that there exists an "eternal world" of spiritual reality, a "kingdom of heaven" in which some people participate more than others, and in which great artists are especially deeply immersed or have an especially high standing. This is presumably meant figuratively: if such a hierarchy exists one does not see how its membership and ranking are discovered. But what literal truth corresponds to it? Reluctant as we may feel to take such talk seriously, so many people find it necessary to speak thus that we are bound to ask the question. Part of what they refer to may be the belief, which we have encountered already, that artists look at things in a different way from other people; their senses are less dulled by habit, so that like children they live in a world for which fatigue is unimportant. Their experience may then be called "eternal" because perpetually new. (Artists as people of course know fatigue, but what they convey in their art, as artists, has this quality of freshness and hence of timelessness.<sup>43</sup> But artists' perceptions may also be thought of as not merely undulled but spiritually keener: what they see and convey is *holy*, or at least full of significance: "We are blest in everything we look upon, Everything we look upon is blest."

But what do we mean when we thus impute holiness, spiritual superiority, significance? Perhaps the meaning is not further explicable; it is just that the artist and his work strike us as something rare and fine. Or perhaps it is meant that the artist sees connections between things which are really there but to which others are blind till he points them out. Or perhaps that he relates things that are previously unrelated, in ways that others find significant. Such significant relations might be thought of as corresponding to permanent structures of the human mind ("archetypes"); or as symbols of common patterns of experience, in the manner suggested by Mrs. Langer; or it might be that they just are found striking and moving in ways not further explicable. Finally, the superiority attributed to the artist's vision might be that he sees through appearances to some under-

43. The "timeless" quality of aesthetic experience is ascribed by Professor Hampshire (1959, 119) to its dissociation from mundane purposes, our experience of duration being essentially related to our nature as acting and planning beings.

lying spiritual reality. This last suggestion is most popular, especially in the form of the belief that the world is the scene of operation of hidden forces, or better still of one Hidden Force, the Absolute, Spirit, Life Force, Creative Force, *Élan vital*, or what not: the pantheism of all reasonable men. Apart from the obvious objection that there is no such reality to be penetrated to (to which the equally obvious answer is that there is *so*), one might complain that if this is the one reality manifested in all things, all things must manifest it and it remains obscure what the artist does: for in so far as he penetrates to a supersensuous realm he cannot of course represent it in his works except in so far as the sensuous world already does. But those who adopt this style of thinking generally believe that some things and relations somehow reveal better or are more densely impregnated with the underlying or throughblowing reality than others, and these the seer is able to perceive and convey or suggest. Such ideas have always been and are still widely held, although they seem to be quite discontinuous with the most prestigious and successful of current intellectual disciplines. Perhaps there are such occult truths, apprehensible after long training, of which art gives and artists have an inkling; or perhaps a belief in them reflects rather an uplifted feeling, caused possibly (since the feeling is common among adolescents) by some glandular turmoil.

The high claims made for art as revelatory which we have just mentioned are still not the highest possible, since they remain compatible with making art an inferior way of getting to know what may be better and more directly known. It remained for Schelling to transform this into the highest claim of all: "Art is an eternal revelation, the only revelation that exists" (1800, 618). This is because in art, the work of genius, the mind finds itself creating something both (originally) hidden in itself and (ultimately) external to itself, something both self-produced and strange. Thus through art and a consideration of it, and in no other way, one can see how the "objective" world may be related to the mind as a work is to its maker, that the finite self may also be infinite and the ground of all that seems different from it. Art therefore is "the one true and eternal instrument and document of philosophy" (*das einzige wahre und ewige Organon zugleich und Document der Philosophie*, *ibid.*, 627; cf. Fackenheim 1954). But Schelling lies in the history of philosophy crushed between the upper millstone of Hegel and the nether millstone of Kant.

Those who ascribe a cognitive function to art without going so far as to say that it gives a special understanding of the world usually say that the artist has a special insight into and capacity for conveying the complex configurational qualities or *Gestalten* of things which languages because



of their necessary generality cannot effectively handle, or else that it gives not understanding but a feeling of understanding.

The *Gestalten* said to be revealed by art are variously identified. On one view they may be of anything whatever, the function of art being simply to isolate them for our perception, not to instruct us in any way. The vividness of impression thus produced is sometimes alleged by romantically inclined Bergsonian neo-Thomists to be that *claritas* which Aquinas said was one of the three requisites of beauty (p. 66 above): this is interpreted as "radiance of form."<sup>44</sup> In the same vein Professor H. D. Lewis (1951, 241) follows Shelley (p. 301 n. below) in attributing artistic activity to a sense of reality as being "wholly other" than the mind: "Its purpose is to make us see things as we have never seen them before, see the familiar for the first time. . . ." He is suggesting, not that we learn from art anything that we would not otherwise know, but that we are made vividly aware of what we would otherwise perceive only dimly. Perhaps one might say with equal reason that it affects our feelings about things rather than our knowledge of them, or that it adds an emotional depth to our awareness: our terminology for discussing such aspects of our life is not so precise as to prescribe one way of putting it rather than the others, so that unless we have a definite metaphysical or epistemological theory to organize our remarks we tend to fall back on similes or on such locutions as "well, you know what I mean."

Another kind of *Gestalt* that the artist, especially the literary artist, is supposed to depict, is that of an individual personality or a social situation. Thus Marx thought that the artist could forestall the social scientist in detecting social trends, and could thus serve the cause of revolution (cf. pp. 286 ff. below); and Freud thought that a dramatist such as Shakespeare had a profound insight into the dynamics of behaviour that psychologists could not emulate. Indeed, Professor Lloyd Warner (Warner and Lunt 1941) uses invented anecdotes rather than factual analysis as a means of portraying typical characters and problems in a sociological study, doing badly what a novelist (say, Mr. Marquand) would do well and thereby as it were confessing that sociology needs the supplement of art. It is obvious, anyway, that depiction may tell more than description, or soldiers would not carry photographs of their families in their wallets to show to their comrades; and since we usually learn about people by "getting to know them," that is by living with them, and learn best about social situations by living through them, it would not be surprising if the

44. James Joyce (1916, 242) calls it "the clear radiance of the aesthetic image." His fanciful version of Thomist aesthetics seems to have been meant seriously, despite appearances: cf. Ellman 1959, 124-5, 149-50.

most convincing and readily intelligible way of saying what people and situations are like were to produce, as novelists do, a simulation of such acquaintance rather than any kind of analysis.

Such "getting to know the ropes," or to know someone, is the best-known kind of non-discursive knowledge, such as art is said to embody;<sup>45</sup> and it may be the best analogy for the knowledge that art is supposed to provide in general, apart from the special cases just considered. But if we ask what is thus known in art, no answer is obvious. We are therefore tempted to say that we have not really been enlightened, but only feel as if we had. The alleged insight into a "total" reality, for example, is nothing but a *sense of having acquired* understanding of a "reality" that is general or "total" only in the sense that since one has not actually learned anything one's learning was not restricted to anything in particular. The position may be illustrated by remarks of Mr. Krutch and Mr. Skelton, the former of whom points the analogy with personal acquaintance and suggests that the character of one's feeling is rather that of one who has felt puzzled but feels puzzled no longer than of someone who has acquired information, while Mr. Skelton illuminates the nature of the generality implied by the feeling:

In the midst of a great comic spectacle, a great tragic novel, or a great elegiac poem we have the sense of having discovered the key to existence. . . .<sup>46</sup> Life seems to have assumed a recognizable and consistent character and we experience something like the relief which we feel in the presence of a stranger when we have got a certain insight into his character. (Krutch 1932, 45.)

The pattern is the pattern of life itself; poetry is patterned life, and is often created by means of a subconscious recognition of a microcosmal form, a series of words dynamically related to one another, that reflect in their structure the poet's and the reader's sense of knowing, in one experience, something basic to the nature of all experience. We feel, having read a love poem, not so much that we know more about love, but that we have had a clear perception of life, seen through the window of love. (Skelton 1956, 27.)

But one must make it quite clear, as these authors do not, that a sense of having understood something is not a kind of understanding, and that to feel enlightened is not to have knowledge. It may be that, as John Dewey suggests (1934, 290), what is special about knowledge acquired through art is not its content but its context, that what presents itself as a feeling of extraordinary cognition is really cognition embedded in extraordinary feeling:

45. For a description of such knowledge and its application to art, cf. Mayo 1952.

46. Possibly Mr. Krutch means this to be true by definition: a work is "great" if and only if it gives its public this sense; and if nothing gives you this sense, that proves you insensible to greatness in art.



In both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worth while as an experience. . . . Tangled scenes of life are made more intelligible in esthetic experience . . . by representing their meaning as the matter of a clarified, coherent and intensified or "impassioned" experience. . . . Cognitive theories of the esthetic . . . isolate one strand in the total experience,<sup>47</sup> a strand, moreover, that is what it is because of the entire pattern to which it contributes and in which it is absorbed.

This goes with Dewey's general denial of the distinctions between theory and practice, between thought and feeling, to which I have referred already (p. 237 n.). If we ask ourselves just how "tangled scenes of life" can be made more intelligible, I think we have to conclude that Dewey does not himself distinguish between increased understanding and a "sense of increased understanding." One might object further that if a cognitive "strand in the total experience . . . is what it is because of the entire pattern" it cannot have any real cognitive value, such as other learning experiences do have in their own right. But this may be, as Dewey would say it is, an old-fashioned prejudice due to mis-education. The only kind of understanding that can be isolated from its emotional context and sharply distinguished from a feeling of understanding is one that can be exhaustively embodied in discursive prose; and our understanding of "tangled scenes," of people, and of works of art is surely never of this kind. "If it were possible to delight without instruction, there would be no qualitative difference between painting the Sistine ceiling and cutting out paper dolls," Professor Frye (1947, 418) interprets Blake as saying: "if it were possible to instruct without delighting, art would be merely the kindergarten class of philosophy and science."

Another way of attributing cognitive significance to the feeling of understanding is apparently tried by Professor Maritain (1953, 120). Unfortunately, his remarks are characteristically cryptic. He draws attention to "the essential, necessary part played by that emotion which *causes to express*, emotion as formative, emotion as intentional vehicle of reality known through inclination and as proper medium of poetic intuition," and remarks that emotion is "thus raised to the level of the intellect and, as it were, takes the place of the concept in becoming for the intellect a determining means or intellectual vehicle through which reality is grasped." The vagueness of the concept of emotion is such that in contexts like this, where it has a lot of intellectual work to do, communication fails altogether. In so far as he means more than Mill's postulate of a type of poetic thought that proceeds by felt rather than thought connections of ideas,

47. Here is that word "total" used intelligibly for once.

Maritain seems to be hinting at an articulation of emotional forms corresponding to the conceptual articulation of thought. If so, he does not work the notion out; but other philosophers have tried to do so, notably Mrs. Langer (pp. 422 ff. below).

What keeps aesthetics alive, in so far as there is life in it yet, is chiefly the difficulty of either getting rid of the notion that art has some cognitive task (or that some works in some of the arts perform some special cognitive functions), or stating intelligibly what that task could be. The difficulty is such that many philosophers would like to see aesthetics done away with, in the mood of a man who feels like throwing a jigsaw puzzle out of the window when he finds it too hard for him—perhaps complaining at the same time that the pieces cannot possibly all belong to the same puzzle, or shouting "What a lousy crossword!"

### *Metaphor*

One of poetry's resources is to liken a thing to another thing, or to speak of it *as* another thing. All speech does this: for to call a tree a tree is to speak of it *as* a tree, and not as an alder, and to liken it to other trees (cf. pp. 361 ff. below). But in simile and metaphor a thing is assigned to classes, allotted characters and likened to things other than those implied by the systems of classification built into the language. Some have regarded both simile and metaphor as ways of indicating unobvious likenesses, differentiated only by the form of words; others have differentiated them in linguistic terms.<sup>48</sup> But others again have separated them on epistemological grounds, and have attached great importance to the possibility of speaking of one thing *as* another thing, and being understood. For, they feel, one could only be so understood if in a sense the thing *was* the other thing, so that the practice of poetry implies a literary universe in which (since there is no *a priori* limit on what metaphors can be made) everything potentially is everything else (Frye 1957, 124). If to be "related wholly and perfectly" to a thing is to be identical with it (and I do not know what else it could be: the criteria of wholeness and perfection in relations are not very well known), Miss Sewell is saying something of the same kind when she writes (1951, 104):

48. Cf. Beardsley (1958, 134 ff.): a metaphor is an indirectly self-contradictory or else an obviously false attribution in which "the modifier has connotations that could be attributed to the subject." He adds that "the connotations of words are never fully known, or knowable, beforehand. . . . The metaphor does not create the connotations, but it brings them to life" (*ibid.*, 143). His discussion of these points brings out the facts about language that may underlie the grand-sounding but unintelligible claims made by Professor Frye and Miss Sewell.



An everythingness . . . will have to be a universe containing as many things as possible, and since, as we have seen, the actual number of things will inevitably be limited, each thing must connect with as many other things as possible. It will be a universe in which everything is related to everything else in every possible way, and everything in this universe must be included as significant and relevant, i.e. related into the whole. Ideally it would make one perfect system in which everything was related wholly and perfectly to every other thing.

But one can only speak thus if one ignores what it is to be related to something: "every possible way" does not designate a meaningful totality for relations. Not all relations are mutually compatible. Nor is it clear how a thing can become more related to another thing unless one of them changes into something else. Similarly, a universe in which everything potentially *is* everything else is either one in which anything can change into anything or one in which nothing can be distinguished from anything else. Professor Wimsatt (1954, 126) justly observes that there would be no point in speaking of one thing *as* another if it were not clearly understood by the audience that the two things were really distinct. Nor is the coupling of metaphor at all like the revelation of the identity of two beings previously thought distinct, as when one discovers from one's programme that two parts have been taken by one actor. For in that case two things that appear different are discovered to *be*, in a simple and familiar sense, the same; in the other case, two things are discovered to be alike or compatible in some respects, although they are not in that sense identical. But one still might, of course, say that a world in which metaphors can be effective must be one that has a certain interconnectedness (at least of possible meanings): it is not one in which experiences occur as irremediably isolated from one another.

Aristotle remarks (*Poetics*, 1457b16) that metaphor involves analogy: the underlying structure of thought is that *A* is to *B* as *C* is to *D*. One speaks of Christ as the Good Shepherd because Christ is to Christians as shepherds are to sheep. There is, then, indeed an identity, but it is an identity of relation and not of substance, and therefore has none of the extraordinary-sounding consequences just considered, though again its occurrence will depend on the world being a cosmos or interpretable as such.

Finally, though, metaphor may be thought of not as a way of revealing hidden truth but simply as a way of supplementing the other resources of language. We are all capable of discriminating modes of experience which no literal statement, however elaborate, captures, and metaphor may be thought to have as one of its functions the capturing of these. Aquinas maintains that the use of metaphor is a sign of the failure of reason when

confronted with a matter too high for it (as in theology) or too low (as in poetry) (*Super Sententiis Petri Lombardi Comm.*, proleg. q.1 a.5); but it might equally be regarded as a success of language.

### *The Aesthetic Experience*

The notion that art's function is to provide some special mode of knowledge or intuition is commonly associated with the idea of a distinctive "aesthetic experience." I have myself left the way open for this idea by writing with sympathy of attempts to characterize the *feelings* of illumination sometimes derived from works of art. Those who have introduced the phrase "the aesthetic experience"<sup>49</sup> have done so in the belief that the basic data for aesthetics are not works of art but experiences of a distinctive kind, associated typically but not necessarily with the perception of works of art of all kinds.<sup>50</sup> In examining the concept of art (p. 111) we came across reasons for taking aesthetic *judgements* or *attitudes* as basic: it is much the same reasons that have led people to do the same, mistakenly, for aesthetic *experiences*.

I have already pointed out how treacherous such a notion is: that the supposed aesthetic experience seems identifiable only by its relation to what is acceptable as a work of art. The basic objection is, that we have here a spurious unity, an arbitrary grouping together of works of art. "To deny that an experience is aesthetic," writes Mr. Carritt (1949, 19), "though careful introspection testifies to its aesthetic nature, would be to tamper with the data on which alone the theory could be founded." But how could introspection testify to such a thing? Experiences do not come with labels attached for the eye of the mind to read; in fact, they can be

49. The expression "aesthetic experience" is peculiar to aesthetic theory. A recent writer has got into print with the remark that "the search for essences in aesthetics" arises from "the failure to appreciate the complex but not mysterious logic of such words and phrases as . . . 'the aesthetic experience,' and so on" (Kennick 1958, 334)—as though the expression had been current before the "search for essences" began. This is the kind of thing that happens when the clichés of a fashionable philosophy are applied mechanically without any understanding of their proper use.

50. Cf. Bell (1914, 6): "The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art." What kind of necessity does this "must" imply? A law promulgated by Bell? A law of nature? Or a principle of logic? The last possibility seems to be envisaged by Professor Hampshire when he writes (1959, 244): "Experience of art is by definition an experience in which practical interests . . . are for a time suspended in an unpractical enjoyment of the arrangement of something perceived. Any strong aesthetic experience is necessarily an interruption of normal habits of recognition. . . . Aesthetic experience is a necessary part of any enjoyment of a work of art; but it is not the whole of it." But we are not told what definition this is by.



classified and identified only by stimulus and context. So we do not here have an alternative way of recognizing aesthetic experiences to that of their connection with aesthetic objects. But since what is and what is not regarded as a work of art is so largely a matter of tradition and convention, and what would in one context be called a work of art would not be called so in another, it is absurd to say that the proper perception of a work of art is, or is accompanied by, a special kind of experience. Thus Mrs. Langer suggests (1942, 222) that the "aesthetic emotion" is just a sense of elation or the "satisfaction of discovering truth," which receive the name "aesthetic emotion" when they happen to be occasioned by works of art. So if it be said that there must be an aesthetic experience because aesthetics could not proceed without it, we may reply, "So much the worse for aesthetics. Why should we invent spurious entities to support superfluous disciplines?"

The term "experience" is here as elsewhere ambiguous. An experience in everyday terms is usually just something that happens to one; the collective "experience" means, approximately, practice in performing some kind of task. The term is used in philosophy to mean the inward or subjective aspect of things that happen to one. Since an aesthetic experience is not just being shown a picture, and the collective sense is not in point, presumably it is something special that goes on inside us when we are confronted by a work of art. But even so, it is not clear how much of what goes on it includes. "Emotion" seems to be often used as a synonym, but "emotion" is a vague word too. If we interpret the term so widely as to include all or most of what goes on inside a person, the question arises how any two experiences of two different people can be sufficiently alike for the term to be useful, since the life-histories of which the experiences form part will be so different. But if some narrower segment of experience is meant, a peculiar *frisson* or something, the theoretical ease of identifying it only makes it the more obvious that no such feeling occurs in all. Moreover, if the aesthetic experience be reduced to a shiver at the perception of beauty, its significance seems to vanish. How can it possibly matter whether my spine tingles or not?

Presumably the "aesthetic experience" is not always the same; what is meant must be rather that different works give rise to different experiences, all of which have enough over-all resemblance to warrant the application of the term "aesthetic" to them all. But then presumably the experiences of different people confronted by the same work will themselves be very similar, despite the differences in personal context just mentioned. This seems reasonable enough: we are all confronted by the same object, which determines our perceptions. But since one cannot very well make

the foundation of aesthetics a kind of experience common to the spectators of a work of art but denied to its creator, the artist too is usually thought to have the "aesthetic experience" in the preconception of his work. And since the artist was there first this in turn makes it almost necessary for those who speak of aesthetic experiences to maintain that the spectator's experience reproduces that of the artist. But how can it, since after all the artist produced the work and the spectator did not, and probably could not? Is it enough to say, with Collingwood (1938, 118), that the only difference is that the artist must discover what his public need only reproduce? And does not every artist know how hard it is to view his work "objectively" as a spectator might? Yet there must be something common, or the poet would not know he had written a poem until his readers told him. A good part of aesthetics consists in attempts to relate intelligibly the acts of creation and appreciation. Thus Professor Richards writes (1924, 226-7) that "the only workable way of defining a poem" is as

a class of experiences which do not differ in any character more than a certain amount, varying for each character, from a standard experience. We may take as this standard experience the relevant experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition.

Since the "amounts" cannot be measured and the "standard" is not accessible, this is going to be hard to apply—"workable" is not the word that would have leaped to my lips—but one does see what is meant.

In any form, the notion of an aesthetic experience or class of experiences seems to be open to the same objections as that of the "creative process" already discussed (pp. 227 ff.), to which it is strictly analogous and with which it is commonly associated. But the bare notion is too vague to be either attacked or defended: the foregoing discussion has really been a vain search for a subject to be about. Langfeld says (1920, 37) that "An experience is either aesthetic or non-aesthetic. There is no third possibility." But there is: perhaps the distinction cannot be intelligibly made.



## ART AND SOCIETY

THEORIES WHICH ascribe to art a social function fall into almost the same classes as those which approach it from the side of the individual. The basic distinction is still that between reflection and amelioration, and it is still true that the conception of art as pure reflection is often put forward argumentatively but cannot be developed in detail as a theory of function, since it raises the problem of why such reflection should occur and be valued. The simplest development is still from pure self-expression to self-knowledge. In fact, the notion of art as a source of self-knowledge makes more sense in this social context, since it is easier to believe that every society has a structure of which its members are initially unaware but need to be made aware than that an individual needs his own art-work to make him better known to himself. When we come to theories of amelioration, however, our old classification needs adjustment. The notion that art is a means to insight may take an individual form or a pantheistic form, but scarcely a social form that can be distinguished from the afore-said self-knowledge through self-expression. The other two of the original trio, healing and adjustment, are still applicable: adjustment becomes, in social terms, the maintenance of social harmony; healing is most likely to be the promotion of reform.<sup>1</sup> When we ask *how* art could promote reform, though, we find that the only reasonable alternative to a crudely propagandist view that no one wants to hold assigns to art the task of merely exposing evils and suggesting possibilities. But this is to say that

1. An alternative version may be produced by conflating Aristotle's "catharsis" with Plato's expulsion of dramatists from his ideal state: art, we may say, has the job of channelling off emotions whose direct expression is socially undesirable, and which are generated in improperly constituted societies; but a properly organized society would avoid arousing such tensions, so that art would have no place in it. This is another of those ideas which are more likely to be thrown up in conversation than to be systematically expounded.

art aids reform by deepening self-knowledge, which sends us back from amelioration to reflection. With these modifications, our former scheme suits the material quite well, though of course some of the material in the old pigeon-holes will have an unfamiliar look.

When I said just now that no one wants to hold a crudely propagandist view, all I meant was that no one seriously thinks that art is in fact always or typically used for the conscious propagation of socially prized opinions. It is true that art forms are often used in this way (cf. Lehmann-Haupt 1954). And it is also true that many people feel that art *ought* to be so used. This introduces a new distinction, which it was not worth while to make in connection with "individual" theories: since those who write about society are commonly animated by reforming zeal, we must distinguish those who deal with what art does from those who concern themselves with what it ought to do. For the phrase "the function of art" has this ambiguity. However, since the proposals of would-be reformers usually have little theoretical interest, we shall still not need to make much use of this distinction.

## REFLECTION

IT IS OBVIOUS that all art reflects the society in which it is produced, in the sense that the artist shares the beliefs and attitudes of his fellows and exploits a repertoire of themes and forms that he finds current (cf. Herskovits 1948, 418 ff., and Finkelstein 1947, 9 ff.). But equally obviously this kind of reflection cannot be the *function* of art. It is the anthropologist who is interested in this aspect of the artist's work, from which he can infer much about social structure, history and values. The artist's public presumably takes it all for granted, being interested rather in the peculiar use the artist makes of these materials. It is, however, sometimes said that it is the function of a culture's arts as a whole to provide a sensible and emotional counterpart for the configuration of their culture: that is, to symbolize it. And this brings us round again to the notion of syndromes. If one takes really seriously the proposition that the arts of a society, taken as a whole, reflect the whole of that society, it would seem to follow that one can infer from the nature of an art form the nature of the society that produced it, and vice versa. This in turn means that a classification of art forms may reflect a classification of societies or cultures. The apparent occurrence of syndromes leads almost inevitably to this conclusion. For the alternatives, as we saw, are to ascribe psychological causes to what is *prima facie* a social phenomenon; or arbitrarily to ascribe



causal or paradigmatic efficacy to one type of phenomenon among others; or to give up the search for explanations altogether, an alternative that is sometimes espoused as "scientific" but succeeds in being merely philistine.

Wölfflin, who did as much as anyone to make syndrome-hunting a popular sport, favoured appeals to the *Zeitgeist* as explanation (or in lieu of explanation) (1915, 9 and 11). But it was left for later authors to make art history avowedly a diagnostic discipline: "Art may be used as an instrument for probing to the underlying realities of any particular epoch," writes Sedlmayr (1957, 3).

Wellek and Warren (1949, 108) have unearthed a remark by Dr. Eppelsheimer (1933, 497) to the effect that *Geistesgeschichte* aims to "reconstruct the spirit of a time from the different objectifications of an age—from its religion down to its costumes. We look for the totality behind the objects and explain all facts by this spirit of the time." But what kind of explanation is this? It is only because the "objectifications" have a certain character that we infer the presence of a *Zeitgeist*, which being undetectable apart from them cannot be used to explain them. It cannot even be a postulated cause, since it cannot be thought of as existing in isolation from its manifestations or effects; and, *a fortiori*, its presence cannot be verified, nor can any statement about its nature be verified, otherwise than by observing the manifestations which it is supposed to explain. It is, after all, it seems, nothing but a literary trick to speak of the totality *behind* the objects rather than *in* them. For this reason many people despise all talk of "the spirit of the time."

The problem of the *Zeitgeist* is, however, analogous to that of human personality. If one thinks of it as a ghost in the social machine, one may well be reluctant to admit its existence; but such considerations would never hinder one from speaking of an individual's personality. We all cheerfully ascribe personalities to our friends, and regard some of their actions as typical of them and others as being somewhat out of character, "not like" them. This practice could never be fully justified if challenged. Such impressions are based on selected and interpreted data, and the biographical excursions of Lytton Strachey showed how vulnerable they are. Yet these misgivings remain theoretical: as a matter of experience, personalities can be recognized. The analogy with epochs is exact. We feel that they have characters of which some phenomena are more typical than others: the fact that it can be shown that other selections and interpretations would yield different impressions cannot move us. Our experience is of a single personal life, and of a single social life. We are conscious of no such discontinuities as would justify the claim that the personalities of our selves and our societies cannot be characterized. If they cannot be

briefly described, this is only the more reason for supposing that in works of art their flavour may be caught, since a work of art is obviously related in multiple ways to the other phenomena of its time.

Less flamboyant than the kind of speculation just glanced at are the attempts to trace particular kinds of artistic expression to particular characteristics of societies. Thus to Berenson (1950, 76) "It appears . . . as if form was the expression of a society where vitality and energy were severely controlled by mind, and as if colour was indulged in by communities where brain was subordinated to muscle," and Ernst (1956, 21) thinks it "generally true that in the past the closely integrated, stable society swept by doubt and confusion, and lacking a commonly shared social faith, has created a representational theatre." These statements are presented as if they were empirical generalizations, but probably, like all real examples of that mythical type of proposition (including this one), are based on a divination of a supposed natural necessity.

So strong is the urge to find cultural congruity in the arts that its apparent lack is disturbing. Professor Fergusson complains (1949, 77) that "In spite of the intellectual and artistic triumphs of the modern writers, we cannot say what relation they have to the modern world. What relation is possible to a society with no actual focus of understanding, responsible power, common values?" But actually at least five other interpretations of this failure to find a *Zeitgeist* are possible. One is that Fergusson hasn't really looked, but has made up his mind in advance that nothing can be done about these terrible times when some people actually *aren't Catholics*, if you can imagine it. Another is that it is the age's character to be various. Another is that the investigator lacks a method to discern the typical from the adventitious and the mere survival. A fourth is that of course we cannot characterize our own age, any more than we can assess our own characters, because we *are* them. The fifth is that we know too much to commit against our own age the simplification we apply to others. Hauser writes (1951, I.25) that "The surviving works of art of the prehistoric age are of quite outstanding importance for the sociology of art . . . because they allow us to see relationships between social patterns and art forms more clearly than the art of later ages." Indeed they do, for about prehistoric times we naturally know almost nothing, so are free to infer whatever seems most probable.

However sympathetic we may be to the notion that certain kinds of resemblance and difference between art forms reflect social differences, we must stop somewhere: to say that every such relation is diagnostic is sheer dogmatism. "One would like," says Miss Bunzel (1938, 575), "to



see some social or religious implications in the fact that Zuni pottery contains representative forms, while Acoma and Santo Domingo pottery do not. But it seems impossible that even the most confirmed functionalist could make a case for it." One would indeed; and the will to discovery, and the readiness to anticipate discovery by premature generalization, are so strong that such supposed correspondences should be examined rather closely.

### *Relativism Again*

If every art is, and functions exclusively as, the expression of its parent community, it follows that it cannot mean anything at all to anyone from a different culture.<sup>2</sup> The same conclusion follows from the supposition that values in art are entirely arbitrary, and valuation governed entirely by habit and tradition: anyone differently habituated must then be entirely indifferent to them. These two positions, which altogether deny the possibility of any cross-cultural appreciation of art, are closely related but not identical: each implies that values are definitely and exclusively determined by a culture, but they differ as to how this comes about. Do the facts support either position? I cannot hope to do more than clarify the situation a little, but here are three safe assertions to start with: first, many connoisseurs of the arts of their own culture are indifferent to alien arts; second, many people claim to find many works of alien art immediately attractive; and third, tastes may in some circumstances be acquired.

Taste and expression obviously do differ with place and time, and it would be rash to say (as many do) that the taste of one place and time is best of all. But it would be premature to erect on this basis an extreme relativism according to which taste is rigidly and exclusively culture-bound in the sense suggested, even though it may turn out in the end to be true. The mere existence of differences does not prove agreement impossible, nor does the prevalence of ignorance mean that knowledge is

2. The belief that tastes and art forms are strictly determined by society seems to have been strong about 1900, when it seems to have been thought that the art produced by a primitive society must be homogeneous and "anonymous"—no doubt because all works in an unfamiliar art style tend to look alike. More recent and better informed students tend to say things like Miss Bunzel (1929, 1): "Even among primitive peoples art is recognized as primarily an individual function. . . . The limits of acceptable expression, though always clearly definable, are constantly shifting. They may be gradually stretched to include within the lists of the approved expressions that yesterday were outlandish. Or some gifted individual may override the established boundaries, remapping completely the field of esthetic activity. This shifting of familiar and recognized landmarks is as characteristic of the artistic development of primitive peoples as of our own."

inaccessible. "Whole nations by the force of prejudice are brought to believe the grossest absurdities; and why should it be thought that the taste is less capable of being perverted than the judgement?" (Reid 1785, 718). It is obvious that in any society most people will know only the art of their own culture, if that. The taste for any art has to be acquired: this applies to the local product no less than to the exotic.<sup>3</sup> To acquire a taste for exotic arts one needs both opportunity for acquaintance and a receptive attitude, neither of which is common. Most primitive societies, one gathers, are convinced that they have nothing to learn from anyone else, and the attitude is not unknown among civilizations.<sup>4</sup> So we may take it for granted that in fact taste will generally be culture-bound. What we want to know is rather whether the members of a society or sub-culture which is both self-critical and interested in other ways of life, as the intelligentsia of our Western civilization has long been, can acquire a genuine appreciation of alien arts.

What are the possibilities? Aesthetic values might be determinate expressions of their culture; they might be fortuitous products of tradition and training; they might be universal in the sense that they are determined by biological or other factors not dependent on social environment; or, most probably, they depend on all or some of these factors. In so far as they are universal in the sense indicated, they will tend to appear in all men (or in all with suitable genetic equipment) and all societies, except in so far as they are overlaid or obliterated by what is socially determined. In so far as they are fortuitous, they can presumably be learned by aliens as readily as by natives. It is only in so far as they express culture that they might seem to be impenetrable from the outside; even so, they would more probably be appreciable by the same kind of sympathy as enables an anthropologist to understand the culture from which they spring. And this sympathy does not seem, as I have said, to differ essentially from that which enables one individual to understand another. It follows that we should expect exotic arts to be capable of appreciation by the same kind of application and gifts that are needed to appreciate domestic arts and to understand other people.

The dogmatic denial that cross-cultural appreciation is possible is, at

3. Dr. Eysenck observes (1957, 311-12) that the need for acquiring tastes does not prove them conventional, since a man blind from birth takes, when his sight is restored, several months to recognize even the simplest shapes; yet no one would call such recognition the learning of a convention.

4. "Example may make us conclude without Examination, that our Countrymen have obtain'd the perfection of *Beauty* in their *Works*, or that there is less *Beauty* in the *Orders of Architecture or Painting*, us'd in other *Nations*, and so content ourselves with very imperfect *Forms*" (Hutcheson 1725, I.vii, §5).



least in the form in which I usually meet it, odd in three ways. First, it is odd that the notion that there are objective and universal standards, a notion common when exotic traditions were little known and less liked, should have become unfashionable just when exotic arts have become comparatively well known and appreciated and have deeply influenced our own arts. The fact that such influences should be so readily assimilated supports M. Malraux's claim (1953, IV, §iv) that our appreciation of primitive art forms rests not on a mere eclecticism or exoticism but on a recognition of common factors. The second odd thing is that this opinion should be attributed to the teachings of anthropology, when anthropologists for the most part do not profess it and certainly do not act on it, enthusing over and collecting works of art from cultures with which they are quite unfamiliar. The third and oddest of the odd things is that this opinion is combined with, and adduced in support of, a subjectivism according to which all individual tastes are equally good and there is no arguing about them. The two positions are not logically compatible. Cultural relativism in both its forms presupposes that education is so effective that all who have been exposed to the same educational environment must have the same tastes. But the "every man for himself" subjectivism thought to be supported by this relativism presupposes that education of taste is impossible or ineffectual.

Cultural relativism may come to seem plausible to those who confine their attention to small, isolated, culturally homogeneous societies which do not regard their own institutions as subject to change. But it is hard to apply the notion to the complexities of taste in our own civilization. What are the "cultures" to which these variations are relative? Wagnerians and Mozartians, so far as anyone knows, have nothing in common except their love for the music of Wagner and Mozart respectively. "Le fait nouveau," wrote Malraux (1950, 125), "c'est que les artistes ne parlent plus ni à tous, ni à une classe, mais à une collectivité exclusivement définie par l'acceptation de leurs valeurs." So in a way it is trivially true that one cannot appreciate the art of another culture, because to appreciate it is to enrol in the culture whose art it is; and it only in this trivial sense that it is strictly true. If it were true that arts were valued for their expressiveness of a way of life shared by their admirers, it ought to be true that everyone liked best the art produced in his own milieu. But are your favourite artists those whose environment is closest to your own?

There is always something in an exotic work that we do not understand, certainly. But this is not a phenomenon peculiar to alien arts. It is quite generally true that in any person, or culture, or work of art something always remains not understood. Even to the artist there is always the

possibility of discovering something more in, and about, his own work. "Complete" understanding is indeed a mirage: one may understand nothing, or little, or much, and one person may demonstrably understand more than another, but a claim to understand *everything* about something can never be made good, because it is only by coming to understand something that one can discover that there was anything to be understood. So our understanding of an exotic art form will certainly be "incomplete." What would be interesting would be not this but if our lack of understanding were demonstrably great in comparison with that of its prime consumers, and the nature of the lack precisely describable. There are three ways in which it is commonly said that an alien's understanding of an art must be thus sadly defective: that he views it as an *objet d'art* in ignorance of its original function (or, if he knows the function, he knows it just as a fact about it, rather than being fundamentally affected in the way he views it); that he cannot know (or again, if he knows cannot respond deeply to) the system of symbolism used; and that he is insensitive at least to the subtler of the relevant formal distinctions. Let us examine these claims and their implications.

The aesthete sees a work of religious art quite differently from the man who originally made it for a religious end: his aestheticism may be compared to that of a Roman watching the colours change on a dying mullet. As M. Malraux observes (1950, 16), if we could really recapture the feelings of an Egyptian towards the idol he carved, we could not leave it in a museum. But aesthetic value is neither incompatible with iconic value nor a substitute for it: we are quite used to distinguishing these two kinds of value in one object. If a primitive society produced no works of art that were not also objects of utility or veneration, that would not show that its members could not distinguish between aesthetic and religious or utilitarian values.<sup>5</sup> There is a strict parallel in this respect between the public associations of an icon and the private associations of an heirloom. One may hang on one's walls, because of their personal associations, pictures which one does not hold to be at all beautiful; similarly, a religious object may be in the highest degree numinous without being beautiful and without being thought by anyone to be beautiful. The Milk Grotto

5. Cf. Herskovits (1948, ch. 23 *passim*, especially 411-13); and see further pp. 294 ff. below. Henry Moore remarks (1951, 96) that "A man must have something more than an intellectual interest in art before he can produce a work of art. . . . I do not think in fact that any real or deeply moving art can be purely for art's sake." Critics as diverse as Ducasse (1929), Collingwood (1938) and Maritain (1951) have remarked on the disastrous effects on art of trying to produce "something beautiful" (identified by Maritain as the essence of academicism, "the proper perversion of fine art"), or something that will please.



at Bethlehem is a holier place than Chartres Cathedral, but no one is tempted thereby to suppose it to be more beautiful. It is yet more instructive to compare with one another paintings of identical iconography, for example the paintings of Our Lady of Humility reproduced by Professor Meiss (1951, plates 128-54): for devotional purposes they are all alike, but they are of all degrees of merit not only in skill of execution but in aesthetic conception. The same is true of the Dahomean wood sculptures of which Professor Wingert speaks (p. 234 n. above). Religious susceptibility need not bring aesthetic blindness. Again, the reason why African masks made for the export trade are so strikingly inferior to those made for use is surely not that their religious or other function constituted a mysterious virtue that has gone out of them, but that the artists are operating in a context other than that in which their sensibility and training can guide them; for precisely the same disaster overtakes the official effusions of poets laureate who are not by nature or training courtiers, and the works in which artists normally inner-directed try to "give the public what it wants." Among primitive arts the same degeneration is observable among Eskimo carvings, which never had a utilitarian or religious function, now that they are consciously made for a market. The limitations and difficulties of a pure aestheticism are thus quite irrelevant to the specific problem of cross-cultural appreciation, and are made to seem relevant only by the common device of noticing abroad what one ignores at home.

The second and more obvious obstacle to the enjoyment of an exotic art is that one cannot be familiar with the symbolism used: what the uninstructed take to be ornament may be a stylized representation. It is possible that a work should be appreciated for its formal properties by someone thus ignorant of its meaning, just as one may admire as a painting the portrait of a stranger, but this would be a very restricted appreciation. If one does not know the symbolism or the genre, one does not really know what task the artist has set himself nor, consequently, how he has performed it. This fact, however, tells not against the possibility of appreciation but against the possibility of appreciating all that one sees during a brisk trot round an ethnological museum. It would admittedly be rash to claim that someone reared on engravings after Landseer and the equestrian monuments in the London streets should be any less baffled by his first Haida beaver than by his first Henry Moore.<sup>6</sup> But

6. Actually, Northwest Coast designs are more popular than the works of Mr. Moore. Perhaps this is because people do not expect to find likeness or meaning in the "primitive" design, so can relax and enjoy it (as Confucius recommends), whereas they approach Moore's work with the expectation and tacit demand that it conform to the standards of the noble young men on 1914-1918 War Memorials.

there is nothing to prevent such symbolisms from being learned. There are two stages in this learning: first, learning what the symbolism is (learning that this shape represents the back of the head); and, second, learning to see in accordance with the symbolism (learning to see the shape *as* the back of the head). One can then go too far, of course, and ignore the symbol for what it symbolizes (seeing "the back of the head" and not this shape)—a common failing in aesthetic perception.

I said that formal properties might be appreciated while symbolism remained uninterpreted. It is certainly not true, though, that formal properties can always (perhaps ever) be perceived without training. This is most obvious in the highly formalized art of music. People used only to diatonic or modal music with simple rhythms just cannot tell what is going on when they first hear subtly rhythmic, perhaps polyrhythmic, music on unfamiliar scale-systems. Less obviously but equally certainly, at least the finer points of formal arrangement in the visual arts escape the untrained eye. Sensual discriminations are skills that must be learned. Once again, however, the diatonic ear must acclimatize itself to serial music no less than to exotic styles.

I have been arguing for an unexciting form of relativism according to which cross-cultural appreciation is hindered only by lack of opportunity to get to know exotic traditions. But such opportunity and hence such appreciation cannot in the nature of things ever be usual. There is a danger that fads for *japonnaiserie* and the like may be mistaken for true understanding. Whatever is exotic has the adventitious charm of "novelty." I have pointed out (p. 138) that what is thus novel pleases only if it presents no challenge to the understanding; and exotic arts may be readily accepted on these terms when they can be associated with a national stereotype or patronized as "primitive" and beneath understanding.

In estimating the chances of appreciating alien arts, then, we have to reckon both with the attraction of novelty that leads to exoticism<sup>7</sup> and with the mistrust of novelty that baulks enjoyment. We have to remember that there are at least four common attitudes toward alien arts: the conscientiously enlightened connoisseur aims to understand all and to forgive all, and is ready to spend time and labour on acquiring knowledge and taste; the sophisticated fribble finds alien art forms "quaint" or "jolly" (or whatever the current term may become), but does not bother to learn

7. Mrs. Bulley (1952, I.57 ff.) lists some preferences among Western artefacts expressed by Chinese students. Some of their judgements plainly represent such exoticism: a preference for the "streamlining" and "modernism" which symbolize the industrial skill and wealth which give our institutions such glamour as they have in foreign eyes.



to discriminate among them; the superstition-ridden, anxious and therefore malicious peasant looks on everything unfamiliar as an affront or a threat when, as seldom happens, he becomes aware of it; and the schooled but uneducated bourgeois condemns all styles for differing from what he was told to like at school and has kept away from ever since. Wherever one style dominates, the condition of all will be like that of the peasant. Only civilizations with a lively conflict of styles and conventions are likely to be receptive to new styles from outside.

*Abiding Values and Fluctuating Taste*

I dealt before with the relativism of the understanding that shuns generalization about art, and now with the cultural relativism that holds alien values impenetrable. It remains to treat of the relativity of values themselves. Is it true that the diversity of values is unmitigated, or in learning an alien style are we merely coming to know a new expression of familiar values? Since artistic activities occur in all known societies, we should certainly expect that they would serve everywhere the same needs, and that in virtue of their common function and our common humanity the principles of valuation of one society should be intelligible to others.

Those who stress the formal aspects of art commonly assert or suggest that there is a "language" of forms that is universal (cf. ch. XII). Others, however, draw different conclusions from the association of art with language (cf. Cassirer 1944): language fulfils a universal human need, and anyone who knows any language can learn any other in time, but languages serve their common purpose—or rather, their particular variations on their common purpose—in ways so diverse that to know one language may be more hindrance than help in learning another. Or one might combine both views and claim that art has a constant component, in that good design is everywhere the same, and a wildly varying component, in that systems of symbolism and conventions of representation may vary without limit.

Alongside the analogy with language Reid (1785, 713) sets the analogy implicit in the use of the word "taste" itself—an analogy which he attributes, somewhat optimistically, to "men, in all ages, and in all or most polished languages." "Like the taste of the palate," he writes, "it relishes some things, is disgusted with others; with regard to many, is indifferent or dubious; and is considerably influenced by habit, by associations, and by opinion." The analogy is indeed suggestive. Though no people's diet is determined solely by what is nutritious and available, and though within areas sharing the same menu individuals may have fads, the standards of what a good diet should be are objective and are gradually being dis-

covered. But the analogy fails at a key point. An individual whose diet departs too far from the norm will die, or fall sick, or grow up stunted; but the unvarying base of aesthetic standards, if there is one, is not so strikingly attested. Despite Plato, no disaster seems to overtake the man or nation that hath no music in his soul.

Faced with this seeming lack of sanction for aesthetic standards, yet unable to deny that exotic works may give immediate delight, Professor Herskovits explains that what it thus appreciated is the artist's virtuosity. This sounds as if it meant that sheer dexterity was admired; and that is all right in one way, because there is nothing odd about cross-cultural appreciation of sheer skill as such, but in another way it will not do at all, because it implies that there is never any difference between such appreciation and one's admiration for the Chinese ivory-carvers who carve one box inside another, which is a ridiculous suggestion. However, Herskovits' words (1948, 405) shows that he actually means virtuosity of a kind that could be recognized as such only if there are universally valid, or at least universally shared, criteria of good composition:

The supreme mastery of technique of the outstanding artist of any culture permits him to mold the formal elements recognized by the conventions of the art of his society as he wills; to experiment, to "play" with his technique as a virtuoso in the manner we have already discussed. Without this command of technique, this virtuosity in the use of the materials at the artist's command, there could be no great art in any idiom. Much of the appeal of art arises out of this fact. What attracts the person who sees specimens of an art unfamiliar to him is the skill with which they have been executed—the juxtaposition of color values, the manipulation of elements of form that comes from the long acquaintance of the creator of a given piece with the materials he employs.

Now, we could not tell that a particular juxtaposition or manipulation showed virtuosity unless we already possessed the relevant criteria of formal and colouristic excellence. And since the art is *ex hypothesi* unfamiliar these criteria cannot be culturally determined. Professor Herskovits is trying, it seems, to utter the shibboleth of relativism without denying that the unfamiliar may attract.<sup>8</sup> But it cannot be done.

Professor Eysenck claims (1957, 315 ff.) that experiments designed to

8. For this shibboleth, cf. also: "Virtuosity in one medium or one art-style does not by any means imply command of another. This is particularly true where the new medium is strange to the artist, and derives from the conventions of a different culture" (*loc. cit.*, my italics). The last phrase is wholly irrelevant: the chief illustration of the remark is the incompetence of certain medical doctors in handling paper and pencil, a medium which certainly derives from the conventions of their own culture. The irrelevant phrase is present solely because this is a textbook of cultural anthropology.



rule out non-aesthetic and culturally determined grounds of preference have shown much *de facto* agreement in preferences for individual colours, for colour-combinations and for achromatic compositions; that those who approximate to the norm in one of these also come near it in the others; and that those with normal preferences tend to succeed in art schools, no matter what style they may adopt. He adds (*ibid.*, 323) that average taste coincides with expert taste if such irrelevant factors as familiarity, associational appeal and sex are ruled out. If the experiments stand up—a big “if” as always—they would seem to be decisive for our problem. But the appearance may be deceptive: some would say that a taste universally shared would not necessarily be universally *valid*. Thus Ducasse (1929, 288–90) argues that if beauty is defined in terms of capacity to give pleasure it is necessarily relative to the individual observer, since only individuals have pleasant feelings. No test, therefore, he argues, can show more than that “Beauty is found in the object . . . by such as do find it there.” And if beauty is defined otherwise, the tests are irrelevant. However, all we were looking for was a constant component in taste; and perhaps, since bad taste seems not to be lethal, we might be content to accept that in art what is valued is the same as what is valuable. Miss Arendt (1958, 144–5) says that this is indeed so, but only because the term “value” irrevocably means value in exchange, not intrinsic merit or worth, so that a pervasive relativity is “inherent in the very concept of value itself.” And all our “value words” tend to carry the same implication. There is something in what she says, though it is certainly not true (as we have seen) that “beautiful” is used thus, or we should not distinguish as we do between what is thought beautiful and what is really beautiful. And yet, despite this distinction between value and merit, even if we do not agree with Hutcheson and so many others that the occurrence of even such uniformity of taste as can be observed would be inexplicable were it not evoked by some real appropriateness or excellence in the object, it would require great intellectual fortitude to accept Ducasse’s contention that either unanimity or ordered variation in taste can be *irrelevant* to problems of aesthetic excellence.

If there is found to be such a fundamental regularity in taste, however often and deeply buried, the discovery should serve to remove the distrust in taste as arbiter which has encouraged “functionalist” approaches to design (cf. Scott 1914, 33). For what the designer needs is presumably assurance not that his design conforms to some *a priori* canon but that what is acceptable to him and his contemporaries should remain acceptable.

Given a natural norm of taste, it would remain to determine whether

departures from the norm are genetically determined, or whether they correspond to a lesser interest in and attention to purely aesthetic factors;<sup>9</sup> and, in either case, what other psychological characteristics are correlated with "good" and "bad" taste. Preferences in quality thus assessed and preferences in style vary independently, as one would expect; but Eysenck claims (1957, 323) that even the latter are not determined simply by custom: "Introverts tend to prefer the older, extraverts the more modern works." This shows, of course, not that there is a natural affinity between style and temperament, but that an attitude to conventionality in general is a deep-seated character trait. Correlations between psychological type and pattern of preference should not, however, be altogether beyond experimental control, which might even be extended to some of the conjectural correlations of "syndromes" with social systems.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from personal whimsies, several factors enter into changes and agreements in taste. First, as Herskovits says, there is sheer competence. Whatever one's stylistic preferences may be there is no getting round the fact that at any time in any style some people do better work than others.<sup>11</sup> Second, there is familiarity: any new style takes a while to make itself understood. Third, there is novelty: "best sellers" are almost always new books but almost never revolutionary ones. Whatever is written in and for our own social set has a compelling interest for us, whatever our aesthetic appraisal of it—we do not take up our Gibbon until we have put down our *Globe and Mail*. So, fourth, there are social associations and significances. These last three factors for a time obscure the first; but when their first effect is spent they never regain their power.<sup>12</sup> Subsequent

9. Dr. Eysenck (1957, 320) says there is a very slight positive correlation between "good taste" thus determined and "intelligence" determined by the usual tests.

10. Here, for instance, is a dictum of an eminent historian of fashion: "What women wear is decided by the whole mental climate of the time. We find in times of social stability, expanding economy, 'good money,' and male domination that women wear elaborate hampering clothes with rich materials and much decoration. . . . On the other hand, in 'post-crisis' periods of social change, 'bad money,' that is inflation, and female emancipation, women wear flimsy and skimpy garments, very straight in line and pale in colour. They cut off their hair and wear their waists in the wrong place." (Laver 1958, 1003.) Here we have an assortment of social pressures related to an assortment of personal responses; it should be possible, if anyone thought it worth while, to isolate and test the correlations involved.

11. Dr. Evans (1939, 110) observes that if taste reflects temperament schools cannot train taste simply by presenting examples for admiration, but will still be able to teach recognition of bad work.

12. Cf. Shaftesbury (1712, 124): "For this is worthy observation that though we scarce see a man whose fancy agrees with another in the many hands and paintings, yet in general when the cabal is over, for this must be excepted (as in Poussin's case in France and Domenichino's in Naples), the public always judges right, and the pieces esteemed or disesteemed after a time and a course of some years are always exactly esteemed according to their proportion of worth by these rules and studies.



fluctuations in a work's fortunes must therefore be due to other factors. These include, fifth, the association of certain types of style with certain types of personality and the tendency of different types to achieve dominance at different times and places; and, sixth, the recurrence of types of social and other problems which may make an artist's problems and manner of expression once more comprehensible. Such are the grounds of change. It is less clear that there are other grounds of permanence than competence. One might wish, for example, to make "greatness" a seventh factor, however that quality might be analysed: the "great" work would be one whose effect was peculiarly commanding, and less liable to variations in taste than more mundane excellences. It is certainly common to allege that certain works, such as the Parthenon or the *Divine Comedy*, have a status that cannot be called into question as others are. Plutarch (*Pericles* XIII.3) wrote of the Parthenon that it looked venerable as soon as it was built, and still looked new now that it was old, and it is this apparently timeless quality that we attribute to works when we call them "classics." John Dewey wrote (1934, 109):

The Parthenon, or whatever, is universal because it can continuously inspire new personal realizations in experience. . . . Any other idea makes the boasted "universality" of the work of art a synonym for monotonous identity. . . . The enduring art-product may have been, and probably was, called forth by something occasional, something having its own date and place. But *what* was evoked is a substance so formed that it can enter into the experiences of others and enable them to have more intense and more fully rounded out experiences of their own.

All works of art can presumably do this for some people; great works can do it to an extraordinary degree for very many people of varying types in varying situations. "Greatness" cannot be included as a factor to be reckoned with, however, unless and until we can say more precisely what it is and how it works. As things stand, the sceptic may ascribe the alleged pre-eminence of certain works to convention and cant. If this objection could be rebutted, we should still have to decide whether there was one factor involved or two: "greatness" or tendency to have a powerful effect

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So that the gentleman who follows his caprice may undo himself. But he who either fixes his taste, or buys according to the universal judgement and public taste and confession of painters in the work of the deceased, will never be abused or come off a sufferer when he parts with his effects." Professor Wimsatt (1954, 81n.) remarks that relativists conceal this by discussing only great and near-great works. Beethoven yesterday, Bach today, no doubt, and perhaps Scarlatti tomorrow: "but where on the sea is the returning sail" of Ditters von Dittersdorff? Not to mention the nameless hundreds in all ages whom a decent oblivion has overtaken.

on critics and "classicalness" or relative independence of social determinants; for the works which please many tastes are not necessarily those which overwhelm some tastes. Moreover, "classicalness" certainly and "greatness" probably are not so much factors to be reckoned with as names for the whole problem of permanence in taste looked at from different sides.

People have tried to define the requirements of permanence in aesthetic appeal. Current attempts naturally reflect current critical practice: not a conduciveness to rapture but an aptitude for exegesis is now favoured. Reasons can be given for this. Thus Wellek and Warren (1949, 232-3) point out that if a work continues to be admired for generations it can only be because it contains structures diverse enough to provide something to satisfy each generation in turn, and that the renewed satisfaction we derive from returning to such a work depends on our discovering in it ever new kinds of meaning.<sup>13</sup> And Wimsatt (1954, 83) declares that the class of poems in which such complexity can be found coincides with "those poems which have by some body of critics, some age of educated readers, been called great." (The effect of this, it will be seen, is to equate the "great" with the "classical.")

If lasting excellence is a function of complexity, education of taste should be possible, because ability to discern structures with facility can surely be acquired and trained, if anything can.<sup>14</sup> "The eye," said Daniel Webb (1760, 12), "acquires, like the ear, an habitual delicacy." But taste may be modified in other directions and by other means than such innocuous development. Education, says Tolstoy (1898, 224), is nothing

13. Note here the assumptions that what pleases me *cannot possibly* be what pleased my grandfather: that, since some of the things we like are different, if we ever like the same things it must be for different reasons; and, in the account of an individual's renewed delight, the reduction of all values to novelty, that is, to consumer values, as though in contemplating a work we used it up.

14. "Experience may be depended upon to shift the balance ever toward the complex, though this movement may be almost imperceptible in the aesthetically obtuse. Education in art points out the various factors that should be united and the nature of their harmony, and thus hastens an otherwise spontaneous but slower change" (Langfeld 1920, 181). Professor Gilson thinks (1957, 231-2) that "Since aesthetic experience cannot be taught, whatever is teachable is only indirectly related to aesthetic experience"; and that learning cannot be necessary to enjoyment, or archaeologists would have the finest taste, and no one could appreciate works about which nothing was known. This assumes, wrongly, that one can learn nothing about a work except by way of historical information, that structures cannot be detected or indicated; and the quoted statement is obviously a *non sequitur*, though the meaning of the phrase "aesthetic experience cannot be taught" is so vague that one cannot tell whether there might not be a truth lurking somewhere in the background.



but habituation, and "people may habituate themselves to anything, even to the very worst things." So Reynolds (1776, I.412 f.) argues that all taste is taste for *truth*, whether this be found in agreement of ideas (as in geometrical proof), agreement of representation with thing represented (as in portraiture), or agreement between (that is, mutual correspondence of) parts, as in music. Such "truth" is everywhere the same:

But beside real, there is also apparent truth, or opinion, or prejudice . . . which may be called truth upon sufferance, or truth by courtesy . . . [and] 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.

But this "truth by courtesy" may include what is by the standards of truth objectionable, as well as what is indifferent. So when Gilson argues (1957, 180 ff.) that beauty is objectively in a work of art because an artist has put it there—his work makes the object what it is, wherefore if it is so made that its nature is to give pleasure it will remain so—we must remember that according to the same doctrine beauty and being are co-extensive: all perceptible things will in some circumstances give perceptual pleasure. The question is, how often and for whom will these circumstances be fulfilled?

The notion we have been considering is that of a work of art as an aesthetic object that is in a sense unchanging (or changing only as a physical object through gradual decay) but different aspects of which are accessible to different generations of the public. So Malraux can use the image of a dialogue between work and public, the work answering each age with its own voice (1953, 68; cf. Wellek and Warren 1949, 238).<sup>15</sup>

There is a common belief, reasonable in itself but usually left in the unhappy realm of vague suggestion and surmise, that if a work has permanent value this can only be because it answers to some permanent reality. Perhaps it is folly to speak of a work as having "permanent" value.<sup>16</sup> If it is not folly, the answering "permanent reality" may be some unvarying aspect of the human mind, or the human condition. But many people are not satisfied with so inward a basis for permanence, and

15. It follows from this, as M. Malraux observes, that each new work that changes the aesthetic practices and expectations of its age changes the apparent nature of all earlier works. Thus we may come to think of art or literature as an organic whole in which the nature of each accepted work depends on that of each of the others (cf. pp. 28-9 above).

16. As a barber once said to me when I asked him if his hair-tonic permanently cured falling hair: "Ask yourself, sir—is *anything* permanent?" The same thought is more sonorous though less tellingly expressed by John Donne (1640, 823).

demand that art shall be allowed to reflect the Universe as a Whole.<sup>17</sup> Thus Coleridge (1816, 436-7) writes of the imagination as

that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors,

and proceeds to affirm that

A symbol . . . is characterized by the translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative.

Some people evidently find a profound satisfaction in such statements, but I do not know what it is. They do not seem to meet the criteria of intelligibility, let alone verifiability, current in science, or philosophy, or the ordinary interchange of reasonable discourse. Yet one can hardly discount the fact that they are offered and accepted as truth by highly intelligent people. Perhaps it is just that they *feel* right and comforting, the nice big words have such reassuring associations that reasons and explanations seem beside the point. "Orthodoxy is my doxy, heterodoxy is another man's doxy"; my attitude to such wordage is much like my attitude to the brides whose portraits fill the Saturday newspapers: they do not attract me at all, and I cannot see what satisfaction anyone finds in them, but I do not begrudge other people their fun.

### *Self-Knowledge*

The notion that art expresses the structure of society is even more notably incomplete than the corresponding theory about individuals. One could argue that an individual finds the act of expressing himself directly enjoyable, but one can hardly attribute enjoyment to a society as such, as distinct from its members; and one cannot see why the members of a

17. Cf. Frye (1957, 115): "The archetypal view of literature shows us literature as a total form and literary experience as part of the continuum of life, in which one of the poet's functions is to visualize the goals of human work." This offers art as much permanence as the "archetypal" structures of the mind, and the unalterable features of human life to which they are apparently related. But beyond this phase of meaning there is an "anagogic phase" in which "literature imitates the total dream of man, and so imitates the thought of a human mind which is at the circumference and not at the centre of its reality" (*ibid.*, 119). I will not pretend that this means anything, but it is clear that Frye does not think that archetypes are enough.



society should find the expression of its structure *ipso facto* delightful. In fact the expression is always assigned the obvious function of providing self-knowledge, and this self-knowledge in turn is always assigned either a sustaining or a reforming function. The sustaining function is usually thought of as operating in a somewhat mysterious way, the art unconsciously bodying forth the social structure and thus enlisting support for it unawares. But the reforming function is thought of as working through the acuity of an artist and the tender consciences of individual members of his public. Thus the "reform" theory is applied to economically advanced societies where the division of labour and the consciousness of individuality are strongly developed, the "sustaining" theory to pre-literate societies with a strong corporate sense and little tendency to analytical thought. Nor is this surprising, since industrial societies have little corporate feeling or life to express and preliterate societies tend to lack the concept of reform.

The notion that art strengthens the social system by symbolizing it seems to be an application to art of Durkheim's theory of the function of religion. Durkheim wrote (1915, 225) that "The believer is not deceived when he believes in the existence of a moral power upon which he depends and from which he receives all that is best in himself: this power exists, it is society." Of religion he says that "Before all, it is a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations which they have with it. This is its primary function." (*Loc. cit.*) "Before all, rites are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically" (*ibid.*, 387). Durkheim follows the usual practice in supporting these statements by a handful of striking examples, without any indication of how they are to be applied to situations where they seem to be false.

The transition from religion to art is easy and natural. One bridge is the equation of dance and drama with ritual, and the belief that the ritual dance is the most primitive art form. A second bridge is myth, to which both literary and religious significance is ascribed.<sup>18</sup> But it is not nearly so

18. The social-political significance of religious rituals, and the reflection of both political and religious institutions in mythology, has attracted much attention, partly because it can be illustrated from that most popular area, the Ancient Near East (cf. Hooke 1933, Gaster 1950). For an up-to-date version of Durkheim, cf. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940, 17-18): "Africans have no knowledge of the forces determining their social organization and actuating their social behaviour. Yet they would be unable to carry on their collective life if they could not think and feel about the interests which actuate them, the institutions by means of which they organize collective action, and the structure of the groups into which they are organized. Myths, dogmas, ritual beliefs and activities make his social system intellectually tangible and coherent to an African and enable him

easy to find a religious analogue for the visual arts: some carvings have a religious use, but not all do. The usual thing is to claim that all decorative arts have magical import, a claim I consider below (pp. 294 ff.). I do not know, however, of any reputable thinker who has stepped across these bridges to espouse this theory of art's function: my knowledge of it comes from conversation and from that dubious filter of lecturers' errors, the undergraduate mind. So I shall change the subject.

That every art form reflects some aspect of the society in which it originates is naturally believed by Marx and his followers, for whom art must form part of the "superstructure" reared on the economic foundation of society. But Marx, who was not concerned to build a system of aesthetics, did not restrict the manner of this reflection to any single mode: he did not go beyond the quasi-truism that the origins of a work of art must be sought where it originated, and his general belief that no explanation of any human activity or institution is really adequate till it is based on some economic reality. For the rest, Marx's comments on aesthetics are commonplace. The well-known marxist aesthetic is not based on any striking insight into what art does, but on a definitely held opinion of what art ought to do, and this opinion takes the form of a straightforward answer to the question of how an art which reflects society can further the cause of revolution. The answer is that it can truthfully state the facts which make revolution desirable.

Arts, like other elements of the superstructure, have their own semi-independent history, and may thus cease to stand in their normal relation of mirror to current society.<sup>19</sup> Also, art may reflect the "false conscious-

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to think and feel about it. Furthermore, these sacred symbols, which reflect the social system, endow it with mystical values which evoke acceptance of the social order that goes far beyond the obedience exacted by the secular sanction of force. . . . The African does not see beyond the symbols; it might well be held that if he understood their objective meaning, they would lose the power they have over him." It is so pleasant to meet the ghost of Hegel in the machine of modern science, not to mention the Rumpelstiltskin theme of the last sentence, that one feels it would be churlish to ask how these benighted souls manage to symbolize forces of which they have no knowledge, and how the symbols can have the required effect on one who does not understand their meaning. Apparently primitive man has wondrous mystic powers that we poor townsmen have lost.

19. Cf. Marx (1859, 18): "It is well known that certain periods of highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization." These contradictions are not taken as shedding doubt on the thesis of the primacy of the economic, because it is still true that we do not regard any explanations as satisfactory till we come to the economic factors, no matter what we may find on the way. Thus Marx is able to write (*loc. cit.*) of these apparent exceptions that "no sooner are they specified than they are explained"—because the "specification" itself would be in economic terms.



ness" of the bourgeois, or represent what is exceptional rather than what is typical. Opposed to these are the kinds of art which Marx approves, which are marked by *realism*. "Realism, to my mind," said Engels (1888, 41), "implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances." For it appears that Marx, like Aristotle, found the ultimate source of art in the urge to imitate;<sup>20</sup> it just happens that, man being what he is, his imitations have social and economic significance.

In a perfect society art would celebrate the existing order. But in the societies with which Marx and the rest of us have to do, riddled with "contradictions," it is art's job to point up these contradictions. But this does not mean that art is or ought to be propaganda, or that the artist himself should openly or even covertly espouse revolution. "The more the author's views are concealed," wrote Engels (1888, 42), "the better for the work of art. . . . Realism . . . may creep out even in spite of the author's views." And again (1885, 45):

A socialist-biased novel fully achieves its purpose, in my view, if by conscientiously describing the real mutual relations, breaking down conventional illusions about them, it shatters the optimism of the bourgeois world, instills doubt as to the eternal character of the existing order, although the author does not offer any definite solution or does not even line up openly on any particular side.

Thus what Marx and Engels required of the artist was the quality of his perceptions rather than his intentions. But later writers, forced to take a more practical view, saw that the kind of perception even the best artist has will not suffice for political purposes. Nor, indeed, is it necessary. Marx had been delighted to find that some writers, notably Balzac, possessed exceptionally sharp insight into reality: that is, their works supported his doctrines. But in the Soviet Union such acumen is unnecessary, since political affairs are already in the hands of those who understand reality. The authorities are therefore in a position to criticize authoritatively the artist's interpretations. Realism, we saw, involves the representation of what is typical. But as Malenkov said in 1946 (Simmons 1953),

In the Marxist-Leninist understanding, the typical by no means signifies some sort of statistical average. Typicalness corresponds to the essence of the given social-historical phenomenon; it is not simply the most widespread, frequently occurring, and ordinary phenomenon. The typical is the basic

20. Animals, writes Marx (1844, 14-15), "produce only themselves, while man reproduces all nature. . . . Animals create only according to the measure and need of the species, while man can produce according to the measure of every species and can everywhere supply the inherent measure of the object. Hence man also creates according to the laws of beauty."

sphere of the manifestation of the party spirit in realistic art. The problem of typicalness is always a political problem.

According to Marx, the artist portrayed the problem which demanded and determined a solution; according to Malenkov, the artist invents problems which lead up to the solution the politicians have already provided. But this does not really so much pervert marxism as eliminate its utopianism. For after all even Marx, though he supposed that a realistic art would be revolutionary in tendency, relied upon economics and not at all upon the artist's supposedly superior insight for his own information about social realities.

### AMELIORATION

IT CAN BE HELD that art maintains or improves societies otherwise than by reflecting their structure. Since no one thinks that art always or usually promotes reform otherwise than in the indirect way considered, it remains that it should be a means to harmony within the framework of existing institutions, whether social or pananthropic. Even here, no one says that all art in fact serves the purpose of maintaining order and producing unanimity, since it so obviously does not. Some have indeed held that all art ought to do so: Tolstoy, for one, maintained that art's true task was to express and maintain solidarity. It is more usual to say only that some art forms do this in some societies. A study which, like this one, does not presuppose the functional unity of art, need not discount such statements or be disconcerted by them.

Perhaps song is originally and essentially a means to solidarity. Work songs and chanties have the obvious function of maintaining synchronization and morale (cf. Bücher 1896), and it is well known that community singing can very rapidly produce an overpowering sense of comradeship. This social use of music is especially striking among the Bantu peoples of Africa, where it has the additional task of conveying moral instruction and censure (Tracey 1953). People confronted with such evidence may, like Vaughan Williams (1954), say that it is irrelevant because primitive music and work songs are "applied art," whereas music as such is "entirely useless"; or they may say, like Tolstoy, that such music is a paradigm for all art. The kindred notion that all music (or, less plausibly, all art) *originally* served such purposes, but that some forms of music have evolved or degenerated into pure music, is open to the standard objection: nothing is known about origins, but certain contemporary data are called "primitive" and others called "evolved" to suit some preconceived notion. The objection is hard to evaluate, but the most relevant points seem to be the



following. First, it requires great mental fortitude to deny the validity and importance of some such distinction as Durkheim draws (1893) between societies in which the division of labour is highly elaborated and those in which it scarcely exists. Second, one might expect that "pure" or socially functionless music would flourish with the division of labour and the specialization of artistic skills, and that socially functional music would tend to predominate in the more homogeneous societies. Durkheim provides more reasons for expecting this, in that the functional interdependence of city-dwellers is so great and so obvious that it does not need such emotional reinforcement as is required where each family is economically self-sufficient. This is of course a mere presumption, subject to empirical test. Also, it speaks of tendencies only: we should not expect to find societies where music was entirely functional, or entirely functionless. The most debatable point, however, is the third: is the transition from homogeneous to labour-dividing a natural development, a retrogression, or simply a change which is not in itself either for the better or for the worse? The case for the first of these possibilities, that the change is a natural growth, is often derided as resting on an analogy between societies and organisms. But in fact it would be directly supported if the following three propositions were all true: first, labour-dividing societies have arisen wherever food was regularly and plentifully available—that is, wherever the environment was favourable to human life (as in the old thesis that civilization arose in the great river-valleys); second, wherever homogeneous societies exist, either the environment is not favourable in this sense or something else gravely impedes human health; and, third, transitions from labour-dividing to homogeneous never occur at all, or occur only in catastrophes, while homogeneous societies become labour-dividing spontaneously or after improvements in their conditions of life. Of course, even if all these three were true one would still not *have* to regard the development as either natural or desirable: "civilization" might be regarded as a sort of disease due to over-eating. Circumstances that were favourable in the sense that they made for easy living might be unfavourable in other respects.

The view that the function of art is to cement human relationships, and that artists should accordingly be valued in proportion to the quality and quantity of the cement they provide, does not necessarily make artistic values relative to "society." It may take a quite general form: art may unite any group whatever, from a road-mending gang to mankind. In this broad general form the view is put forward by Tolstoy in his celebrated *What is Art?*, a work which writers on aesthetics always mention but seldom take seriously. But very seriously it should be taken, as the attempt

of an honest, brave, observant and intelligent man to clear his mind of the cant with which all talk about art is clotted. Even if we reject his conclusions we should at least make an effort comparable to his, and his work may help us to do so.

According to Tolstoy (1898, 170), art transmits feelings as words transmit thoughts; art "is based on the fact that a man receiving through his senses of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it."<sup>21</sup> Art thus forms "a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings and indispensable for the life and progress towards well-being of individuals and of humanity."<sup>22</sup> Since, then, the basic function of art is to unite men through feeling, and since the valuation of human sentiments is necessarily a religious matter, the art judged good will necessarily be that which expresses sentiments endorsed by the prevailing religion. This "religious perception" by which feelings are appraised is described (*ibid.*, 278) as "an understanding defining the highest good at which that society aims." But here we become involved in a paradox. The religious sense of a society will usually involve chauvinism, since the very intensity of feeling that binds the group will make for hostility toward other groups.<sup>23</sup> Love engenders hate: there is no "we" without a "they." So art becomes, in a way, a self-defeating activity unless it confines itself to expressing and transmitting those feelings in which all men are united. These favoured feelings include "the simple common feelings of life accessible to everyone without exception" (*ibid.*, 285); but Tolstoy adds to these, and is himself more interested in, the feelings of sonship to God and the brotherhood of man which Christianity (as he understands it) promotes.<sup>24</sup> Thus for Tolstoy it is the *nature* of art to communicate feelings, the *function* of art to unite men by this communication, and the

21. This entails that the artist must sincerely feel, as a man, the emotions which his work expresses. This is stated by Tolstoy (1898, 274 ff.), but the context suggests that what he really has in mind is not the artist's sincerity but the public's conviction that the artist is sincere, which is quite another matter. Cf. pp. 230-1 above.

22. Cf. *Yüeh Chi* (III, §1): "In music we have the expression of feelings which do not admit of any change; in ceremonies that of principles which do not admit of any alteration. Music embraces what all men equally share; ceremony distinguishes the things in which men differ. Hence the theory of music and ceremonies embraces the whole nature of man."

23. Cf. Ducasse (1929, 83): Art is a means of soul-exhibition; works of art attract some people, repel others. Therefore "the social function of art is not . . . social consolidation, but . . . social assortment. It is, to human beings . . . , what plumage is to birds: a means of recognition of kind." And it is notorious that Christianity, the religion of love, stands out among religions for the hatred fostered between its sects.

24. Cf. Stravinsky (1942, 21): the "essential aim" of music is "to promote a communion, a union of man with his fellow man and with the Supreme Being."



ultimate *mission* of art to unite all men in Christian feelings. Tolstoy is perhaps led to think that these three are closer together than they really are by failing to see the extent of the difference between a feeling that is common to all men in the sense that any man is likely to have it at some time, a feeling of togetherness with some actual intimate group, and an emotional conviction that all men are brothers, a conviction which must be somewhat abstract and literary.

If we set aside art's ultimate mission, what is left of Tolstoy's doctrine is essentially contained in his dictum (1898, 274) that "There is one indubitable sign distinguishing real art from its counterfeit—namely, the infectiousness of art," and that the greater the infection, the better the art. Since one is supposed to be thus infected "without exercising effort and without altering his standpoint," the position demands the rejection of all minority arts, critical skills, and acquired tastes. The "fine arts" are really upper-class arts, unknown to two-thirds of the world's peoples and to ninety-nine per cent of the population even of the lands where they flourish; their expense and elaboration are such that they "can only arise on the slavery of the masses of the people"; and they are necessarily unintelligible to those masses because they transmit "the feelings of people far removed from those conditions of laborious life which are natural to the great body of humanity" (*ibid.*, 193 ff.). The obvious reply to this argument is that appreciation of art certainly requires education and leisure, but these are good things and should be spread as widely as may be: what is wrong is not that the "minority" arts are perverted, but that too many people are worked too hard and taught too little. But Tolstoy will have none of this: the alleged education in the arts is nothing but habituation (cf. p. 283 above). Art differs from speech in that its language is understood by all: it works by contagion, and one needs no education to enjoy folk arts or the Bible. As for critics, "Critics have always been people less susceptible than other men to the contagion of art" (*ibid.*, 243); they are needed, not to discover and apply true standards, but to invent and perpetuate false ones.<sup>25</sup>

25. Professor Pepper writes (1945, 49–50) that one may say to a man who does not like olives, "You really ought to like olives, for it does not take long to overcome the dislike and there are so many occasions when one can enjoy olives!" . . . A critic is, so to speak, a man who has learnt to like olives." But this, despite its intentions, makes Tolstoy's point. For the consumption of olives generally takes place on high-class social occasions; the taste for them is a social accomplishment. The taste whose acquisition Pepper recommends in his example is, significantly, not one for a lower-class food like chitterlings, or an exotic one like witchetty grubs, or even an especially nutritious one like liver. And Tolstoy's argument is precisely that the artistic tastes promoted by critics are determined by fashion, snobbery, and the inability of jaded tastes to appreciate what is really good.

All of this is familiar as the ordinary bourgeois philistine's attitude to whatever in the arts he does not like: modern painting, or whatever, is a put-up job, promoted by some self-interested conspirators and the critics who are their lackeys.<sup>26</sup> The habit of ascribing unwelcome events to conspiracies is as foolish as it is common. But snobbery and self-deception do obviously play a great part in matters of "taste," and it is not easy to say where this part ends. The *New Yorker* for July 26, 1958, quotes in derision a certain Dr. George W. Crane as stating in the *Indianapolis Star* that Edgar Guest was a greater poet than Keats on the ground that, despite his technical banalities, "His writings deal with human relations. His genius lies in lifting out the psychological values of our social relations instead of mere light and shadow reflections on a pile of stones or a Grecian urn!" Now, I do not share this taste, but I do not see why it is supposed to be absurd. Is poetry not a public art?<sup>27</sup> And has it not always been a source of homely wisdom, and chiefly valued as such? The verse most people enjoy, remember, quote, take comfort from and ask the *New York Times Book Review* to identify is a gnomic doggerel which embodies the sentiments to which they attach most personal and social importance. And this preference is surely neither surprising nor deplorable; on the contrary, it reflects a conviction that if poets expect to be taken seriously they should concern themselves with what men take seriously. Dr. Davie remarks (1955, 158-60) of a judgement in the opposite sense to Dr. Crane's:

Certainly there is a sense in which one can say Pound's poem ["The Gypsy"] is much better *as a poem* [than Wordsworth's "Stepping Westward"]. But then it is a queer understanding of "poem" which obliges us, when we judge it as such, to leave out of account all the originality and profundity in what the poem says.

. . . Just those lines that have gone over into folk-wisdom are stigmatized as unpoetical. . . And there must surely be something wrong with theories that banish from poetry all that part of it which is taken up into popular wisdom.

Professor Parker objects (1920, 43):

Communists like Tolstoy demand that art express only those feelings that are already common, the religious and moral; they would exclude all values that have not become those of the race. But this is to diminish the importance of art; for it is art's privilege to make feelings common by providing a medium through which they can be communicated rather than merely to express them after they have become common.

26. Some quite serious-minded and intelligent musicians, it seems, really believe that atonal music is a gimmick invented and promoted, for motives of profit and prestige, by two leading European publishing houses.

27. Cf. Caudwell (1937, 148): "Aesthetic objects are aesthetic in so far as they arouse emotions peculiar not to individual man but to associated men. From this arises the disinterested, suspended and objective character of aesthetic emotion."



The criticism is persuasive, though not all highbrow art might be defensible in its terms. But in the meantime, as Tolstoy points out, most people have neither the leisure nor the social opportunities to cultivate their sensibilities to the point where such adventures become possible, and the adventurous arts must remain socially divisive. Similarly, when George Orwell (1950, 43) writes of Tolstoy that "His main aim, in his later years, was to narrow the range of human consciousness. One's interests, one's points of attachment to the physical world and the day-to-day struggle, must be as few and not as many as possible," one can only reply that Tolstoy's complaint was precisely that "upper-class" art was detached from the day-to-day struggle and that people engaged in that struggle do not need "points of attachment" to it.

Tolstoy's thesis, however, does in the end rest on a gross error: that the use of conventions is a perversion peculiar to the "upper-class" art of our society, rather than a necessary condition of all art, and that accordingly there are arts which are immediately accessible to all men. With this blunder excised, his thesis would be that the flourishing of different sets of conventions in one and the same society is a sign of social disharmony. And so, presumably, it is. In so far as these differences correspond to different degrees of sophistication and refinement of feeling, so that some find Keats artificial while others find Guest banal, they undoubtedly reflect differences in conditions of life and social opportunity which the egalitarian must deplore. But they do not create those differences; and it seems unreasonable for those in one walk of life to sneer at or deprecate the art forms appropriate to another. Besides, the fact that Guest has something that Keats lacks does not rule out the possibility that Keats has something that Guest lacks; and while highbrow arts may have a smaller public than folk arts, their public is more truly international. It is no doubt true that differences in the arts, while they do not create social differences, do perpetuate and exacerbate them.<sup>28</sup> But if we allow to the minority arts, as Parker does, a refining function, we may hesitate to propose their elimination on this ground. We find ourselves dealing here with a phase of the general social problem of inequality: can invidious distinctions be removed without sacrificing excellence?

28. I have of course denied elsewhere that the arts which Tolstoy attacks can accurately be described as "upper class" as opposed to proletarian arts: cultural communities do not coincide precisely with social classes as usually understood. For that matter, Dr. George W. Crane is no proletarian, and Keats was no aristocrat. But the part played by social opportunity is so large and so obvious that for the purposes of this argument we may let the equation stand.

## ART AND RELIGION

BEFORE OUR EXAMINATION of Tolstoy backed itself into a sociological corner we noted his association of art with religion. The association is common: Professor Herskovits, for example (1948, 347), says that religion and the arts form one "broad group of cultural aspects," apparently on the ground that they are all economically gratuitous activities whose function is to make life meaningful and enjoyable (*ibid.*, 229 ff.). At the beginning of this century it was widely assumed that all artistic activities had originally been religious or magical in significance, and that the present state of the arts of preliterate peoples proved it. "Wherever ethnologists have the opportunity of gaining some insight into the inner life of a savage tribe," wrote Yrjö Hirn in a book once famous (1900, 11), "they are surprised at the religious or magical significance which lies concealed behind the most apparently trivial of amusements." Now that the surprise has worn off, more careful field-work seems to have dispelled the notion that in such artefacts the religious function always predominates over the aesthetic one. Thus Dr. Elwin writes (1951, 102) of certain "magical" designs:

I doubt if anybody really believes that if he has a fish on his wall he will get more babies or if he has a tortoise on his floor his house will not fall down. But these things give a pleasant feeling: they look well and they are auspicious; they help, along with the entirely secular designs, to make a pleasant place to live in.

And the autonomy of aesthetic motivation is unmistakably revealed in that most detailed and intimate study of a primitive art, *The Pueblo Potter* (Bunzel 1929).

Despite this apparent disappearance of the supposed evidence for the connection of art with religion, many still write as if it held, especially when speculating about the origins of art. For in the days when the art of preliterate peoples was thought to be primarily religious in significance, that art was thought to be good evidence for the condition of art in its prehistoric origins; but nowadays it is no longer fashionable to regard "primitive" peoples as survivals from an earlier age, so that the discovery that they do not after all subsume the aesthetic under the magical and the religious has not sufficed to destroy the connection. It continues, accordingly, to be taken for granted that palaeolithic paintings of deer from the French caves are meant to ensure success in hunting.

The connection between art and religion is not a mere ethnological blunder. There seems to be a striking isomorphism between the problems



of aesthetics and those of the philosophy of religion;<sup>29</sup> and if Freud is right art and religion are very similarly related to the basic sexual drive he postulated. But without indulging in such speculative or indirect argumentation one can see perfectly obvious reasons *a priori* why such a connection should be expected, namely the grounds alleged by Tolstoy. Or, as John Dennis had said some time before (1704, 364):

Poetry is the natural Language of Religion, and . . . Religion at first produc'd it, as a Cause produces its Effect. In the first Ages of writing among the *Grecians*, there was nothing writ but Verse, because they wrote of nothing but Religion, which was necessary for the cementing the Societies which in those times were but just united. . . .

An artist's religion will comprise his deepest feelings about the world in which he lives (if it is really a religion and really his: when we speak of a religious artist we do not mean one who happens to belong to a religious organization, and when we speak of a religious painting we do not mean one which happens to have been commissioned by such an organization<sup>30</sup>); and one would expect such feelings to appear in his work, if not to dominate it. Similarly, in a society which shares a single religion by which the socially paramount sentiments about the nature of human life are integrated, it is obvious that the works to which most importance will be attached by the public, and most likely by the artist as well, will be those in which these important conglomerations of feeling are embodied or evoked.

To say that religion comprises what matters most to people and societies who are deeply religious is to risk tautology. But one may add that many people and societies are deeply religious, and that religions have as one of

29. Cf. Lewis (1951, 212-13): "The more the artist invests the commonplace realities of ordinary experience with the significance of his peculiar individual impressions of them, the more starkly do they also present to him an alien irreducible nature. . . . The closer the artist moves to reality the more is it alarmingly aloof, and so . . . in art there is an unveiling which is at the same time a concealment; in the very process of clarification there is also a deepening of mystery. . . . Mystery and illumination are one in art. . . . But is not this also how we think of religious experience and revelation . . . ?" For "veiled revelations" cf. p. 248 above. Some people find these remarks unintelligible, so presumably do not undergo experiences of the kind to which Lewis is referring. I do not know whether susceptibility to them is a hallmark of a religious sensibility; it seems possible to be aesthetically sensitive and lack them. Lewis goes on to equate the religious "act of faith" with the aesthetic "suspension of disbelief," saying that these prerequisites of acceptance represent not so much the will to believe as a willingness to submit to an experience (*ibid.*, 218-19). See further Sparshott 1961.

30. The explanation in this parenthesis seems, oddly enough, to be needed. Cf. Prall (1936, 158): "Art in the service of religion, all sanctimonious talk to the contrary notwithstanding, is no more likely to be successful as art than art in the service of capitalism or communism."

their chief functions the expression and integration of deep feeling. This seems to invite the conclusion that art must be either religious or trivial, that no irreligious man can be a great artist, and that art cannot flourish in a secular society. And people often do say just that. But really my argument does not support this position; for the fact that religions serve to integrate feelings does not prove that nothing else can do so—unless one chooses to re-define the term "religion" to mean whatever serves this purpose, and equates a man's religion with the system of his feelings.<sup>31</sup>

Religions also involve world-views; a world-view widely shared and emotionally significant would surely be looked upon as a religion, and would in any case almost certainly be connected with institutions unmistakably religious. And it could seriously be maintained that art's highest achievements, those most complex structurally as well as most deeply affecting and meaningful to their public, are possible only in terms of such a world-view (cf. Fergusson 1949). Myth and ritual, Professor Frye argues (1957, 109), are necessarily the content of drama and not necessarily (as Murray, Cornford, and others supposed) its origin. Presumably, therefore, such works will take on added meaning if their mythic content is also taken to be more than literary.

There is another point at which art and religion touch. Aesthetic and religious raptures seem to be, subjectively, very similar. They are not the same, because they plainly relate to different objects: aesthetic rapture distracts from religious duties, religious rapture aids them. But some have inferred from the similarity that God is a hypostatized correlate for an aesthetic rapture, or that art affords an intimation of divinity (cf. Bremond 1926). Both kinds of rapture lend themselves to explanation as sublimations of sexual ecstasy: it is notorious that mystical writers often use the metaphor of sexual passion, and Plato in his *Symposium* joins the sexual and the aesthetic in an erotic continuum.

The tangled problems of aesthetics, no doubt, are hardly likely to be cleared up by interlocking them with the equally tangled problems of the philosophy and psychology of religion. But, despite the inconvenience, it may be unrealistic to keep them separate.

## ART AND MORALITY

WE HAVE SEEN that works of art may, but need not, express and reinforce the deepest moral and religious feelings of the societies in which they are

31. This equation is often made. It seems to owe its current form, followed by the substitution of poetry for religion, to Matthew Arnold. Cf. Abrams 1953, 334-5.



produced. It follows that art has religious and social significance as well as a purely aesthetic worth, and accordingly that a relevant judgement may be passed on the contribution a work makes to whatever else in life seems good or right. Such a judgement would be no less relevant to a general estimate of the work's value than one based solely on its aesthetic excellence. And even if no work of art had any social or moral content it would remain true that aesthetic values themselves must be weighed against others. Aesthetic judgements are not made in isolation, since aesthetic production and appreciation must take their place amongst other activities in the lives of men and societies. A man with but one life to live can have but one set of values, however poorly he may integrate them, and aesthetic excellences must compete with others for his attention.

Every individual prizes some things and scorns others, and every society maintains some agreement as to what things are desirable. It is clear that a work of art may contribute in two ways to the good life as thus hazily conceived. First, as the very existence of the work shows, aesthetic worth is among the recognized excellences. Second, the work may endorse and support the other values of the person or group, as by celebrating what they celebrate or condemning what they condemn. Conversely, there are four ways in which a work may be thought to make life poorer. Most obviously, ugliness is an evil and aesthetic poverty a deprivation of good. But a work may also offend against social values. It may express opposed values, celebrating what the person or society condemns or vice versa.<sup>32</sup> Or it may suggest or support values not opposed to, but simply other than, those prevailing: all novelty must subvert the settled. Or a work (or even a whole artistic movement) may be condemned just for lacking positive moral or social relevance, for not performing the tasks of celebration and reinforcement that other works and movements successfully undertake. For their part, the artists may feel, articulately or not, that since aesthetic worth is an acknowledged excellence they have done their bit when they have contributed that.

Some might prefer to ignore the modes of art's relation to the good life: the good life is nobody's business, to each his own goods. What is of public importance is not good and bad but right and wrong, that a person shall do his duty by not breaking moral laws. For what morality condemns is what is destructive to society, displeasing to God or just downright intolerable. Morality is accordingly not just one set of standards among others,

32. Such celebration need not be subversive. There may be Saturnalia, times when values are strengthened by being playfully reversed. And if such public ceremonies are recognized it may be supposed that each individual may grant himself similar privileged occasions with no harm done.

not even a specially preferred set: it is the set that makes all others possible by providing the conditions in which positive goods can be sought. Art is related to morality less closely than to the good life in general, since aesthetic values are not moral values. But again it is obvious that a work of art could dissuade from crime and sin by condemning them or celebrating their opposites, whether it is art's proper task to do so or not.<sup>33</sup> It is partly because artists unwilling to act as missionaries or policemen have supposed that all non-aesthetic values were moral values that they have taken refuge in the doctrine of "art for art's sake."

If art can promote morality, it must be equally possible that it should offend against it. If experience affects character, it must be possible that a work of art should cause or induce its public to offend, or produce in them a tendency to do so. If there is no persuasion, a work might still promote evil-doing by presenting it sympathetically to the imagination, bringing what had seemed barbarous or inhuman conduct within the bounds of normality. Or it might simply accustom people to the idea of certain actions, not as things one might do oneself but as things that other people may do.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, it is often said that the arts tend to be neutral, failing to oppose evil (as they should) unequivocally. Would it not be better if wickedness were met with a continuous howl of artistic execration? Some genres, doubtless, do not lend themselves to this purpose; but need one cultivate those genres?

Art's apparent opposition or indifference to morality and other received values is often made into a virtue: artists fail to support old values because they divine new ones, fail to support narrow morality because their job is to broaden sympathies.<sup>35</sup> Doubtless it would be as unsuitable to defend all art for doing this as it would be to attack all art for undermining morality.

33. "Good holy pictures produce sublime impressions; sublime impressions produce sublime thoughts; and sublime thoughts produce sublime lives" (O'Mara 1952).

34. Again we have to ask whether we do not in fact all know all the worst already, so that what is taken as facilitating evil really reconciles us to the inevitable, or exorcizes evil powers. "It [a Punch and Judy show] is a wonderful prologue to the fair, inhuman, cruel, vicious, and altogether pleasing. Vicariously we beat our wife, hang our policemen, and start for the Heath uninhibited, purged of every criminal urge that might mar the day." (Jones 1951, 139.)

35. The opposition of fresh art to stuffy morality, made in various terms, is a commonplace of our times. Santayana has the neatest formulation (1896, 25): "While aesthetic judgements are mainly positive, that is, perceptions of good, moral judgements are mainly and fundamentally negative, or perceptions of evil." Mr. Fraser (1959, 13) dresses it up: "One looks in the greatest poetry not for the copy-book headings; but for either, or both, of two things: intense purity of vision: response to the fullness of life." And Sir Herbert Read (1955, 93), equating moral values with social values, can make yet grander claims for art: "Moral values are social values; aesthetic values are human values. Moral values promote and protect a particular way of life; aesthetic values promote and protect life itself,



But the defence fares better than the attack, for one cannot say that it is the artist's task to subvert, but one can say that it is his task to reveal and reconcile. Unfortunately, many who proclaim the breadth of artistic vision neglect to say whether they are describing art's practice or prescribing its task; nor is their enthusiasm always moderated by a sense of reality. Parker (1920, 332 ff.), for example, distinguishing the ethical point of view (concerned with the attainment of happiness) from the moral point of view (concerned with obedience to law and custom), claims that art is fundamentally ethical and fundamentally non-moral, since it makes for spontaneity, creativity, liberty and individuality. "The sympathy, realism and imagination of art," he writes (*ibid.*, 334), "are antagonistic to conformist morality. By making us intimately acquainted with individuals, art leads to skepticism of all general rules."

Every form of life has an inalienable right to expression. In order to be judged fairly, it must be allowed to plead for itself, and art is the best spokesman. And that we should know life sympathetically is of practical importance; for otherwise we should not know how to change it or indeed that it ought to be changed at all. . . . In comparison with the sublimity of this demand for the complete appreciation of life, the warnings of a rigorous moralism seem timorous. . . . Apart from aesthetic culture, there can be no rational morality, for that alone engenders the imaginative sympathy with individual diversity upon which the latter rests. (*Ibid.*, 336-8.)

This is grand stuff. Parker, one feels, could have sold a lot of snake-oil had the occasion arisen. But his spiel for art as a moral panacea has certain weaknesses. It sounds generous to grant forms of life an inalienable right to expression, but I do not know how forms of life can have rights, and if they did I do not know how one could tell whether the rights were inalienable. Nor is the general tendency of the argument clear. Is he saying that *every* work of art is a blow for ethics against morality? If so, he is surely wrong (cf. Hauser 1951, III.152): run through in your mind the first dozen or so works you happen to think of, and see if you can tell in each case what blow is being struck. Or is he only saying that on the whole the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility increases sympathy and decreases conventionality? If so, perhaps he has mistaken a conventional bohemianism for an absence of convention. Or does he really think that art-lovers tend to be more sympathetic than philistines? And, if he thinks that, has he tried to confirm his suspicions, or is he just convinced that, no matter what the evidence, this *must* be so? What he has actually done is, I think,

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as a vital principle. Moral values are based on sentiments, that is to say, on clear notions of goodness or happiness; aesthetic values are based on intuitions and feelings, that is to say, on obscure reactions to experience." It is interesting to consider whether Read and Santayana are making the same distinction.

to deduce the social consequences of the equation of art with intuition, and the accompanying definition of intuition, with which he starts his book (1920, 39 ff.). And neither that equation nor that definition seems to be grounded on observation rather than *a priori* fiat. What he says should, no doubt, be true: art as he understands it *should* make one concentrate on individualities rather than generalities, and so *ought* to refine sensibilities. But perhaps art as he understands it is wrongly understood;<sup>36</sup> or perhaps the refined sensibility so exhausts itself on art that it has no sympathy left for real life. Some people do seem to cultivate aesthetic sensitivity as a substitute for delicacy in personal relations. Yet Parker writes as if he were describing what he had found to be the case, rather than articulating a system in which "art" must occupy the assigned niche whether it fits or not.<sup>37</sup> Right or wrong, his account of art's relation to morality is just the old romantic opposition of natural expression to warping convention.

John Dewey reached a position very like Parker's from a different starting point. We saw that he detected in artistic activities a pure form of something present in all activity: the organism's tendency to maintain stability and resolve tension. Such a view might seem to make for conservatism. But societies evolve: their values emerge, or should emerge, from the changing problems of ever-new situations. So Dewey can write (1934, 348) that

Art is more moral than the moralities. For the latter either are, or tend to become, consecrations of the *status quo*, reflections of custom, reinforcements of the established order. . . . Art has been the means of keeping alive the sense of purposes that outrun evidence and of meanings that transcend indurated habit. . . .

36. It was precisely by generalities that Reynolds (1780, II.3-4) hoped to achieve the same refinement: The artist, he wrote, "deserves just so much encouragement in the state as he makes himself a member of it virtuously useful, and contributes in his sphere to the general purpose and perfection of society. . . . The beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual; it is an idea that subsists only in the mind; the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it: it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist, which he is always labouring to impart, and which he dies at last without imparting; but which he is yet so far able to communicate, as to raise the thoughts, and extend the views of the spectator." This effect, diffused, may "be among the means of bestowing on whole nations refinement of taste; which, if it does not lead directly to purity of manners, obviates at least their greatest depravation, by disentangling the mind from appetite, and conducting the thoughts through successive stages of excellence, till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in Virtue." Only the most refined ingredients are good enough for Sir Joshua's snake-oil.

37. We have seen, however, that no account of what art is could be an empirical generalization; and, since we must legislate, should our legislation not be systematic? And is not Parker's method of delimiting a field for art, namely by the kind of thinking involved in it, the most appropriate one possible?



Just as excessive specialization is dangerous for an animal species, we may say, making it vulnerable to any change in its environment, so excessive rigidity of moral or economic habits makes social systems precarious (cf. Sparshott 1958, §9.2213); and works of art could perform the same service as a crop of new mutations, providing or suggesting possibilities of stabilization in a new pattern more advantageous to the system. Art's creativity then includes the creation of new values.<sup>38</sup> Now this again may be true of some works of art, but it is hard to see how it could be true of all or most. It is kinder to take Dewey to be speaking of art in general, the very practice of producing and appreciating art, and to be saying not that it suggests particular new possibilities but that it literally "keeps alive a *sense*" of purposes and meanings, just by reminding us that things might be different.

The view which we have just discussed in some of its variants is the liberal orthodoxy of our day. It assigns to art the benefit of a Cartesian doubt: aesthetic expression is assumed justifiable even where no justification can be found. To defend art in its apparent transgressions against the entrenched standards of morality, we entrench aesthetic standards even deeper. But let us now consider how we should go about reconciling conflicts between aesthetic and non-aesthetic judgements if we rejected this orthodoxy. One way would be to deny that any conflict could arise. This could be tried by either denying that there are any specifically aesthetic

38. Mr. Kallen (1917, 437-9) regards art's creation of values as ineffectual: "Art does not substitute values for existence by changing their roles and calling one appearance and the other reality: art converts values into existence, it realizes values, injecting them into nature as far as may be." But it turns out that this is not very far: "It creates truth and beauty and goodness. But it does not claim for its results greater reality than nature's. It claims for its results greater immediate harmony with human interests than nature's. . . . Art . . . supplies an environment from which strife, foreignness, obstruction, and death are eliminated." Others, we have seen, find in art a source of genuine moral progress (cf. Pepper 1945, 67-8, and Hampshire 1959, 246). Probably these claims rest less on a realistic appraisal than on a folk-memory of Shelley (1840, 282-3): "Poetry . . . awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thoughts. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar. . . . The great secret of morals is love, or a going out of our own nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. . . . The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination." And of course the resounding conclusion (*ibid.*, 297): "Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present. . . . Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

values (all being subsumed under moral or social values) or denying that any non-aesthetic judgements are relevant to art. But neither attempt comes off. Since one must sometimes choose between works of art and other things, one can exclude non-aesthetic judgements only by subordinating all other values to aesthetic ones, allowing value to the non-aesthetic only in so far as it contributes to the aesthetic. But no one lives thus: one can imagine living thus, but such imagining is idle fancy. And if there are to be independent value judgements aesthetic judgements cannot be prevented from conflicting with them on occasion. One cannot live in such a way as to preserve spaces in which aesthetic judgements alone shall flourish, all others being held in abeyance. Nor, on the other hand, is it feasible to abolish aesthetic judgements by judging works of art for their social worth alone. For by recognizing them as works of art one already admits the possibility of assessing them as such, and so sets up at least a special sub-class of social judgements in terms of those social functions that are proper to works of art. And these will be aesthetic judgements in the sense that the present context requires, judgements made in terms of the concept of beauty as "the proper excellence of a work of art."

It is important that, just because aesthetic and non-aesthetic judgements may conflict, they cannot be mutually contradictory. What makes conflict possible is that conflicting judgements are made in accordance with different sets of standards.<sup>39</sup> And to show that something is good by one standard can have no tendency to show that it is not bad by another, independent standard. The judgements conflict, not in what they affirm, but in what they advise.

An aesthetic judgement cannot properly be said to conflict with a general eudaemonistic judgement of conduciveness to the good life. The general judgement and the specific one are not opposed as two different and independent judgements in opposite senses: *ex hypothesi*, the general judgement includes all aesthetic factors among those on which it is based, and thus already takes account of the other and overrides it. Real conflicts will arise only between aesthetic and other partial judgements. Little useful can be said in general terms about such conflicts and their resolu-

39. Maritain (1923, 6) recalls the scholastic doctrine that "Making is ordered to such-and-such a definite end, separate and self-sufficient, not to the common end of human life; and it relates to the peculiar good or perfection not of the man making, but of the work made. . . . One law only governs it [art]—the exigencies and the good of the work." This establishes the autonomy of the aesthetic judgement, but in a misleading way: Maritain goes on to say that the artist is also a man, and will work with prudence as well as art, and the use of the achieved end is also within the province of prudence.



tion, except that if aesthetic values are one set of real values among others they must sometimes prevail and sometimes succumb.<sup>40</sup>

It is when aesthetic and moral judgements are opposed that conflict becomes acute. Moral judgements are based on moral laws, which take the form of prohibitions, while other standards are couched as recommendations. Partly for this logical reason, but chiefly because of the supposed paramount importance of morality, some would say that a moral veto may never be overruled for any advantage. It is therefore possible that, though aesthetic values are real values, moral judgements should always prevail over aesthetic judgements. For aesthetic values are socially recognized not as mandatory but as a system of preferences: the bindingness of aesthetic duty (pp. 229-32) is not publicly accepted.

What I have just said does not entail that every scheme of value concepts must be dominated by those we think of as moral rather than aesthetic. Concepts that we should regard as aesthetic might well take first place in the criticism of conduct (Santayana 1896, 27 ff.). The basic terms of praise would be such as "fine," "noble," "splendid" or "great"; the terms of abuse "foul," "base," "loathsome," and the like. The hunger for righteousness would be neither a zeal to conform nor a regard for well-being, but simply a response to the attractiveness of virtue and the repulsiveness of evil.<sup>41</sup> Where a legalistic morality exists, however, it claims precedence. And it is the function of censorship to safeguard that precedence.

40. "It is as absurd to speak of art for art's sake as it is to speak of drinking for drinking's sake, if you mean that this interest is entitled to entirely free play. Art, like all other interests, can flourish only in a sound and whole society, and the law of soundness and wholeness of life is morality." (Perry 1909, 174.) It is not true that what most people mean by morality is the law of soundness and wholeness of life; it may not be true that art can flourish only in a sound and whole society; but it is true that aesthetic values co-exist with others and must be reconciled with them somehow.

41. "Her vivid life has taught me that beauty, moral and aesthetic, is the aim of existence; and that kindness, and love, and artistic satisfaction are among its modes of attainment" (Whitehead 1941, 8). Plato argues (*Republic* 401B) that morality cannot flourish unless art flourishes, since the love of the *kalon* and the hatred of the *aischron* are the root of both alike. According to G. Scott (1914, 162), "The 'dignity' of architecture is the same 'dignity' that we recognize in character. Thus, when once we have discerned it aesthetically in architecture, there may arise in the mind its moral echo." This is optimistic: Scott admits that dignity in architecture is achieved and recognized by distinctively architectural principles, so one would suppose that moral dignity could be achieved only by distinctively moral principles. If architectural standards are learned by practising and studying architecture, moral principles must be learned by practising and studying morality; one does not see how learning could be transferred from one context to the other.

*Censorship*

Censors operate in terms of morality, not in terms of general welfare. Some hold that the prohibition of morally offensive artefacts is wrong in principle, as though there were no circumstances in which the institution could be desirable. This position is scarcely tenable. Morality's entrenched position in our scheme of values reflects the recognition that if a social system is to cohere and continue there must be some actions that are forbidden to its members. If an artefact moved its public to commit those actions, contact between artefact and public must therefore be prevented. If it were proved that everyone who saw a certain statue committed thereafter a burglary or murder that he would not otherwise have committed no one would deny that it should be removed from public exhibition; and if it were shown to have that effect on all or most people of a certain kind, no one would deny that it must be prevented from coming into contact with people of that kind. But to admit this is to admit the principle of censorship, for it is precisely in order to defend the entrenched standards of morality that censorships are established.

Why, then, is censorship a controversial institution? First, because the claim for morality has been put too strongly. It is not true that all actions that can be described as breaches of the moral code are disastrous. A total neglect of the moral law would indeed constitute a breakdown of social relations; but one cannot assume *a priori* that no breach of the moral law could be justified unless one interprets morality so widely as to take in all values, including aesthetic ones. The second reason for doubting the propriety of censorship is a stronger one, that the principle does not justify the practice. "No girl was ever raped by a book": causal connections between specific crimes and exposure to specific artefacts have often been alleged but never demonstrated. People argue rather that works of certain kinds *must be* harmful, or *must have* contributed to certain results. There are indeed some works which do plainly offend because the works themselves constitute the offences: specifically, libellous works and publications prejudicial to fair trial. For the rest, controversy turns, not on the principle, but on the estimated probability of an undemonstrated connection and on the propriety of basing decisive action on such a contestable guess.

It should be noted that the actions whose production I envisaged as justifying censorship were not just immoral acts but crimes, actions themselves forbidden and penalized by law. It is reasonable that the law should prohibit whatever gives rise to actions that are themselves prohibited, such as treason, rape or arson. But if an action (such as fornication or adultery)



is not itself forbidden by law it would be strange to make the fact that an object impelled its public to commit such an act a sufficient reason for taking legal action to remove it from circulation. If the law allows me to be depraved and corrupt, why should it forbid me access to books that will deprave and corrupt me? The justification could only be that the book has a secret power that I cannot detect and from which I need to be protected, as from a food containing hidden poison. But that an artefact could have a moral power that was both so strong and indiscernible is hard to believe.

Granted that works may have such compelling power to corrupt, two arguments for censorship are possible. One is, that there exist men of superior moral insight able to detect a moral poison hidden from others less gifted or worse taught. This argument is sometimes put forward by clergy to justify ecclesiastical censorship. Just as children playing near a cliff, they say, can play more safely and happily if a thoughtful adult has set a fence between them and it, so the rest of us can take our aesthetic recreations more safely and happily if a responsible cleric has put a wall between us and perdition. So the analogy is: child is to adult as adult is to censor. Adults, however, are not children: it is just because children are not adults that they are supposed unable to exercise prudence in their own affairs. Let it be supposed, though, that prudence is not enough, that adults stand in need of a super-prudence that censors have. The censors must be thus endowed either *de facto* or *de jure*. If they are super-prudent *de facto*, this should appear in the wisdom of their decisions: the imprudent can usually recognize prudence in others. Whether censorships for whom this justification is offered do thus recommend themselves is a question I need not presume to answer. But their super-prudence may be *de jure*: they may be hierarchically charged with the duty of taking moral decisions for their flocks. The justification of such a structure of authority is a task for moral theology. I will only say that it is disingenuous to recommend such a system for its supposed results unless it is thought that persons thus charged do in fact decide wisely. If the fence is in the wrong place it will not save us from falling but only cramp us.

The other argument for censorship holds even if no one has super-prudence, but our censors must be people no better than ourselves. Of course, one argues, a community of free men may delegate one of their number to inspect their amusements, just as they appoint inspectors of weights and measures, just to save themselves the trouble of checking everything for themselves. Indeed, if artefacts had such compelling power as we are supposing, we should be well advised to appoint such persons and should doubtless do so, making sure that they were themselves either liberally dosed with some spiritual antidote or else kept locked up. But,

it is time we reminded ourselves, no work is known to have such powers.

It is less often argued that certain works cause crimes than that works of certain kinds tend to promote crimes, to make people more likely to commit them. And if even this could be shown most people would admit that censorship was desirable if practicable.<sup>42</sup> But not even such a connection has been established. "I saw it on television" is a self-exculpation more hopeful than realistic. Does a literature of violence encourage violent action, or does a propensity to violent action give rise to a literature of violence? Presumably such a literature gives expression to violent tendencies that already exist; but does it, by giving them voice, encourage them? Or does it rather, by providing a safety-valve, prevent them from issuing in action? Perhaps the same work might prove to some people an incentive to crime, to others a harmless substitute for it. Or perhaps works take effect only in the realm of fantasy, in a context so different from that of action as neither to affect nor be affected by it. All these possibilities are canvassed, with much confident opinion but little reliable evidence.

Some hold that, since works of art demand contemplation and one cannot be both active and contemplative at the same time, art in general inhibits action.<sup>43</sup> And certainly, whatever the effects of a literature of brutality may be, at least while one is engrossed in it one is neither committing nor planning brutalities. Such inhibition would be a good thing if the action inhibited were evil, a bad thing if the action were laudable.<sup>44</sup> In either case the argument suggests that we should distinguish between art on the one hand and propaganda and pornography on the other. Works of pornography and propaganda are designed to inflame desire or stimulate

42. The proviso of practicability is important. Uncontrolled administrative action, which many dislike, can be avoided only by legally defining what is to be condemned. But precise definitions can be evaded by the astute, while they catch the harmless but unwary; and vague definitions give the censor no guidance.

43. Parker argues (1920, 334) that since art is concerned with the imagination rather than with the will, and "is an appeal to mind as well as to sympathetic feeling," it cannot be inflammatory. Similarly, Keats wrote to Richard Woodhouse in 1818: "What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation." (Keats 1956, 166.)

44. Marxists condemn bourgeois art just because it inhibits moral (i.e. revolutionary) action. Thus Mr. Harap writes (1949, 115) that sophisticated art-forms by their reactionary content "influence social attitudes and consequently social action—often by promoting social inaction"; whereas "popular" art is "actually a form of narcosis which induces delusions of the acceptability of capitalism." He could, but does not, extend his strictures from the content of art to the concept of aesthetic "distance" itself.



action, works of art are designed as objects of contemplation.<sup>45</sup> If there is to be censorship, different actions and attitudes will be appropriate to the two classes of object. But it is not always easy to decide to which class a work belongs, though sometimes it is very easy. In order to provide a basis for such decisions, one might wish to distinguish between the proper effect of a work and its side effects. These may be distinguished in terms of the relation between representation and referent, or of the relative transparency of the medium. A book or picture may be so composed and worked that the appropriate reaction is to the scene or action shown or described and not to the work as artefact; or it may have its own value as composition. A work of pure pornography would be one that it would be pointless to study if not for the sake of the erotic stimulation it gave. But there are other works in which an erotic stimulus may be sought but which are more apt to provide a complex aesthetic satisfaction (intended presumably by the author and found there by its likely public) from which the erotic aspect could not readily be detached. People do act in strange ways, and some may pore panting over the pages of *Ulysses* while others savour the style of *Fanny Hill*; but surely it is legitimate to judge a work by its proper use and not by its abuse. It may be said that, on the contrary, one must not distinguish between the designed and the accidental effects of public actions: if measures intended to prevent goitre should prove to cause cancer, it would be irrelevant that the latter result was not meant. Unfortunately, even if the principle of distinction between what is art and what is not be accepted, it will not be easy to apply. Recent controversies over censorship have concerned works whose status and intentions are equivocal in that they lend themselves with equal facility to different attitudes.

If nothing is to be forbidden that does not certainly promote crime, it should by now be clear that censorship cannot in fact be justified. If it is immorality rather than illegality that is to serve as basis the same difficulties arise and are compounded by the possible impropriety of forbidding the promotion of what is not forbidden. If there are censors, apparently, they are going to make lots of mistakes; and why should any citizen prefer another's errors to his own?

45. The contrast between inflammation and contemplation is Platonic, and is most readily stated in archaic terms: works are condemned in so far as they make for disorder in the mind or the city, producing lust (pornography) or violence (horror comics, etc.) or rebelliousness (sedition) or irreligion (blasphemy); they are praised in so far as every work of art is orderly and makes for order (pp. 329 ff.). One could say that the imaginative disorder was an inoculation against real disorder and therefore hygienic. Otherwise the worth of a work will depend on whether it is a greater force for order or for disorder.

There are still two arguments in favour of censorship, one weak and the other strong. The weak one rests on a possibility we have ignored, that it is not our attitudes to wickedness but our knowledge of it that is affected. If there were some obscure but horrid misdeed whose very possibility the unperturbed mind would not suspect, would it not be reasonable to prohibit anyone who stumbled upon it from divulging its nature? More realistically, since there are unlikely to be any new sins but heresies are always cropping up, might it not be proper to forbid the publication of dangerous beliefs and discoveries, obscure truths or subtle errors subversive of the established order? Perhaps so. But the propriety holds only for an established authoritarian order in which both moral and intellectual truth are supposed immutably and infallibly secure. Otherwise one might say that perhaps the convincing error convinces because it is no error; that what the truth subverts is well subverted; and that perhaps if the recondite sin became less recondite it would be seen to be no sin. Within such an established order, on the other hand, the moral censor already has *de jure* super-prudence and needs no further justification for the exercise of his office.

The strong argument that remains to justify censorship is that it should be based neither on illegality nor on immorality, but on impropriety: that what should be excluded is not what harms, but what shocks. The two are often confused. Attorneys, required to show that a work is degrading, will argue that it is disgusting. But the difference is important. Morality requires justification, propriety does not; morality is supposed to be based on invariant principles, propriety changes from time to time and place to place and is determined solely by what is felt fitting for a context. It used to be improper to print what everyone said; now it is improper to say what everyone prints. What is decent in the *Partisan Review* would be indecent in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

We have then to ask: do people have the right not to be shocked? Perhaps it does them no harm, but if they dislike it why should they have to endure it? If there are standards of what is done and not done, why should they not be enforced? Here at least the problem of evidence, that so severely limited the justification of a censorship based on illegality and immorality, does not apply: a man who claims to be shocked is surely entitled to be believed. What better authority could there be?

No one has an absolute right not to be shocked. In the first place, anyone may be shocked or disgusted by anything. In the second place, being shocked is partly voluntary: one who says "I'm shocked" or "You disgust me" is not simply describing what is happening to him but is expressing an attitude, taking up a social position, whose relation to his feelings may be



tenuous (Sparshott 1961b).<sup>46</sup> If there is a right at all, it is a right to have public standards observed. Unfortunately, as I have said, these vary subtly, and it is not easy to keep censors accurately informed of what standards are current in various social contexts. It is easy to apply standards of impropriety, for one has only to consult the feelings of the appropriate persons. What is hard is to determine which standards are the right ones. Moral standards, on the other hand, are as we have seen harder to apply than to determine.

Since propriety varies with social context, people unwilling to be shocked should stay away from contexts where they risk offence. Nuns are expected not to eavesdrop on barrack-rooms. If, then, there is to be censorship for impropriety, it should impinge differently on different arts. What is imposed on the public ear and eye, as by poster or public broadcast, may be expected to conform to standards more rigid than what none need see or hear unless they wish, such as books or private exhibitions. Indeed, one does not see how a case could be made out for condemning any such object for impropriety. For whose susceptibilities are to be considered? The maiden with blushing cheek may put the book down;<sup>47</sup> those for whom it is intended will not be shocked by it, for their disgust would itself show that they were not its proper public.

If a work shocked everyone it would have no proper public. And that might lead one to think that there was never any need for a censorship based on impropriety. The social penalties of giving offence are direct. If a cinema poster really shocked the public, no one would go to the film; if a book disgusted everyone no one would read it. In fact, as we know, one can be sure of selling many copies of a book that is publicly proclaimed obscene, for the standards of propriety officially upheld do not prevail throughout the community. A great many people not only rejoice in pornography, but see no reason why they should not. It is because it seems grotesque to denounce as disgusting what gives most people no offence that attacks on impropriety are often disguised as attacks on immorality.

At this point I may be expected to denounce the hypocrisy of the age. I shall not do so. The concept of hypocrisy applies to morals: a man should be good and not merely seem so, and a bad man is little mended by his pretence of goodness. But propriety is altogether a matter of how actions appear, so that the concept of hypocrisy does not apply. If a man seems to give no offence, he gives no offence. Why, then, should a society

46. It is this that justifies, if anything can, the laughable pretence of middle-aged lawyers to be disgusted by books whose publishers they are prosecuting.

47. Bernard Mandeville remarked (1714, 65-6) that the maiden's cheek is likely to blush only if she is *found* reading something improper.

not have public standards of propriety different from those applied by each citizen to his own private conduct? It would be no more absurd to advertise filthy movies by decorous posters than it is to advertise decorous movies by filthy posters; and if a society in which everyone avidly read pornography were to forbid its public sale, that would mean only that it combined a taste for such reading with a taste for decorum.

Though it may seem hard to defend a public check on private improprieties, it is not absurd to demand the public observance of standards of decorum that are shown by the very need of enforcement to differ from those held by most private persons. But is such a control desirable? Perhaps it is good for shockable people to be shocked: their readiness to be disgusted may be a sign of a moral complacency that is itself harmful. But one might argue on the other side that it is the best and most sensitive people who are most easily disgusted, and that it is immoral as well as improper to surround such people with what they think coarse and low. Not only does it distress them, and to distress a person without cause is no virtuous act, but so far from stimulating them into awareness it depresses them and resigns them to evil. What harm may a person not take from being perpetually deluged with what he is convinced is foul and shoddy? One could argue, too, that even the circulation of improper material among those who welcome it should be hindered, on the ground that public consumption is no proof of public taste: most people can distinguish their higher from their lower impulses, and while they will indulge the latter if they can they will at heart be glad to be forbidden this indulgence. The censor of propriety stands to his public not as parent to children but as representative of each man's "real" self to his "lower" or "natural" self. That is not an absurd argument, though it is not fashionable, but it assumes that standards of propriety differ only as being looser or more stringent, and that the most stringent set is the best. And both these assumptions are questionable.

If the standards of propriety that censorships enforce are not actually those accepted even for public observance by most people, and are not demonstrably those of the morally best people, whose are they? And why are they enforced? I suspect that they are the standards of wowsers, and are enforced because wowsers must be placated. A "wowser" is a person with a passion for saving people from themselves by taking their moral and prudential decisions for them. Wowsers tend to be morally obtuse, since the basis of their activity is a failure to respect the moral status of other persons; and they tend not to distinguish between immorality and impropriety, for the same reason: they use their own susceptibilities as sole criterion of good and bad. Such persons are abundant and active in



our society and are much given to forming committees and writing to government officials. It is possible that some government censorships exist not to protect the public but to keep the wowsers quiet. Fortunately there are some artefacts, such as filthy postcards, which are easily recognized, unlikely to become respectable, and devoid of aesthetic pretension. Such material might as well circulate surreptitiously as openly—indeed, overt suppression might be welcomed by distributors as keeping prices up; and a carefully chosen censor might serve a useful purpose by diverting the energies of wowsers against these cultural scapegoats. It could be held, however, that it is wrong to encourage wowsers in their form of moral depravity.

## THE ANALYSIS OF ART

THE MAJOR DIVISIONS of topic that give this inquiry its structure can often be stated in various ways without much affecting the course of the discussion. The topic named in this chapter and discussed throughout the rest of the book is the problem of how works of art are to be described: that is to say, which aspects of them should engage the attention of critics, and do engage that of "true" lovers of art. As I suggested at the beginning of chapter VIII, our present topic as thus considered might be handled by simply applying what was said about art's function. One who knows what art in general is for has both a means of telling (in principle at least) whether a work is good or not and a method of so describing it as to back up his judgement. But the topic might have been presented in terms that made the dependence less obvious. I might have said, for example, that we were now turning from what the artist does to what he makes, or from the function of the activity to the criteria of the product. I might even have said that we were now leaving the philosophy of art for the philosophy of criticism. The formulation I have chosen is the one that seems to me to bring out most clearly the proper order of problems.

It seems obvious that without knowing the function of art we cannot tell what form analyses or descriptions of works of art should take. Wherever human purposes or interests enter, acceptable descriptions refer overtly or covertly to those purposes or interests, and where there is no interest or purpose involved there is usually no call for a description. One asks for a description, normally, either to aid recognition (and subsequent appropriate action), or to guide choice, immediate or potential. One who asks what the 1962 model cars are like, or reads a report on their performance, puts himself for the time being into the mental posture of one who is thinking of getting a new car. Likewise, anyone who describes a work of art otherwise than to aid recognition of it, and *a fortiori* anyone who reviews or criticizes one, does so either to guide selections or to sway



judgements. Underlying such activities there must be a system of values, which can rest securely only on a notion of what art is for. It seems reasonable to say, too, that if one is going to describe a work of art one must describe it as a work of art and not as one of the other things it may also happen to be, such as an investment, a hunk of rock, a therapeutic aid or what not. And in a sense this is so, but, reasonable as it sounds, it is misleading. For it seems to imply that, as Mr. Osborne suggests (1955, 109), those critics are confused who praise works for qualities which are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions of art. But Mr. Williams rightly objects (1958, 410) that it is absurd to say that if I commend an opera for its possession of qualities appropriate to operas but not to paintings I am commending it as an opera *as opposed to* a work of art; and that the existence of airplanes does not make it inappropriate to commend a sports car for its speed. However, an account of art's function or functions is not the same as a definition of art, so that neither the suggestion nor the objection are really in point here.

Obvious as it may seem that analysis must be in terms of a function or functions already known, it is not true. What I have just called "describing a thing as a work of art" might equally have been called describing it in aesthetic terms, that is, in the terms critics use, and what these are can be determined from critical practice. The concept of a "work of art" might be derived, not from consideration of artistic institutions and their functions, but by way of abstraction from critical discourse: anything is a work of art in so far as a certain kind of discourse is appropriate to it. Or one might go further and say that it is from a discovery of what kind of discourse is actually found suitable to certain objects that we infer what their function must be. To use my earlier analogy, it is from examining the 1962 models that their functions are to be inferred—whether they are designed primarily as means of transportation, as symbols of prestige, or as ways of sublimating the sexual aberrations of their owners, or equally as all. Similarly one may say that it is only by examining particular works of art that one can discover how they should be criticized and what function they are fitted to perform; for no one would maintain that the artists who make them work with such a function in mind, or that if they did that function would necessarily be the one their work really served. Yet this too is misleading. The examination of cars by which their chief function is determined is possible only in the light of a general knowledge of the kind of interests that may be involved in the design, sale and use of cars; the examination of works of art must be similarly guided, and critical discourse rests on such guided examination. In fact, as I have said before (p. 117), we need a dialectic. Though it is true that we must know in

some vague way what art is for or about, and what is or is not a work of art, before we can begin description, it is no less true that it is in and by describing and analysing that we make our antecedent vague knowledge precise, and acquire means of distinguishing more firmly between what is and what is not art. And if we did not start with a class of works of art and artistic activities already delimited, however imprecisely, we should not be in a position even to ask what the function of art was. So by mutual comparison and correction our notions of what differentiates art from other things, of what art's function is, and of how works of art should be described may each contribute to the others' correctness.

My argument has tended to suggest that if one is sufficiently judicious in proceeding it matters little what one takes as a starting point, so that the description, and hence the proper methods of description, of works of art should do as well as any. But it may be argued that to start here prejudices the whole discussion by assuming that aesthetic value belongs to the work in its own right, rather than resulting from an encounter between artefact and percipient.<sup>1</sup> However little difference it may make whether we start with analysis or function, it is likely to make a good deal whether we start with the work of art or with the "aesthetic experience." Structure in the one case may appear merely as causing a desired effect, aesthetic delight in the other merely as reaction to a thing properly made. Moreover, as we have already seen, arguments about function tend to consider artistic activity as well as its products; whereas discussions of analysis are likely to be concerned with artefacts to the exclusion alike of aesthetic experience and activity. By starting with analysis one may ensure a *purser* discussion, such as those who (like Professor Wimsatt) advocate this approach want. An inquiry that starts with function will ignore less, but at the cost of possible untidiness, since every mode of description implies a theory of function, but a theory of function need not prescribe at all precisely any particular mode of analysis.

In so far as function does determine analysis, which is quite some distance, the following chapters inevitably retrace many paths already covered in the pursuit of function. But I hope the change of emphasis will be great enough to eliminate most mere repetition.

If we are to classify ways of analysing or describing works of art other-wise than by the types of function they imply, the most obvious method is by the kind of relation the analysis discerns, and the kinds of elements

1. Cf. Pepper (1945, 66): "Considerations of sense materials come up last in contextualist aesthetics rather than first as in the mechanistic. The normal structure of a mechanistic book on aesthetics is from the elements to the wholes; that of a contextualistic book from the wholes to the details." "The aesthetic work of art is the cumulative succession of intermittent perceptions" (*ibid.*, 71).



related. The most fundamental distinction will then be that between modes of description which imply systems of relations and those modes (to which the term "analysis" cannot be applied) which do not. The latter group includes all those which imply the belief that the experience of a work of art is a seamless unity, no aspect of which can be traced to any isolable feature of the work. This belief is characteristic of those who take as the basic datum of aesthetics an "aesthetic emotion," for if works of art are all and only those artefacts which produce a characteristic kind of shiver there is no compelling reason to suppose that they must have other aesthetically relevant properties in common, and no form of description of such properties will be more appropriate than any other. Those too who argue that aesthetic qualities are *Gestalt* qualities are likely, though not certain, to deny that they can be traced to elements in relation (cf. Arnheim 1958, 82 ff.). The remainder, who think that works of art have describable structures that may be relevantly analysed, are most naturally subdivided into those who speak of internal relations only, relations between the different aspects and components of the work itself, and those who look to external relations, relating the work to some physical or psychical reality lying outside it.

The non-relational and relational approaches, like most such pairs, can be combined, as they are by Professor Pepper, who writes (1938, 22-3): "There are two aspects of a given event, the relational and the qualitative. . . . These two aspects are complementary and opposite. . . . Unless there were some intuition of the whole to be analysed, there could be no analysis: and unless there were some details in relation, there could be no whole intuited." This reconciliation is so far typical that there is really little temptation to make what he calls "intuition" preclude analysis. In what follows, therefore, I have made the main distinction between descriptions that go beyond the work itself and those that do not. The distinction is not a simple one: there are few cases where it is not matter for controversy whether a given pattern of analysis really implies outside reference or not, largely because "outside" and "inside" are used metaphorically and the metaphor may be taken in different ways. But the initial appearances are plain enough for the division to serve as a starting point. It divides explanations in terms of "form" from those in terms of "content" or "representation," as those terms are most commonly used.

The classification of modes of description here followed does not follow the main line of differentiation in artistic practice, which is doubtless not that between the "abstract" and the "representational" but that between the "emotional and instinctive" and the "speculative and intellectual," between the urge to express and the search for an objective order, between

freedom and discipline (Langui 1959, 71). Either of these may find expression in representational or in abstract work. The reason for not using this distinction as the basis of discussion is that unless one believes that there exists some definite kind of objective order to which works of art should be related one must regard the urge to order as just another urge to be expressed; while if one accepts one kind of sought order as authentic one must regard all quests directed to other forms of order as wild-goose chases. So M. Langui's principle of classification can hardly be followed in a work so neutral as this one.

### *Analysis and Criticism*

Modes of analysis seem, like ascriptions of function, to be inseparably bound up with systems of criticism. We have indeed seen that value judgements in criticism may be deemed superfluous. When analysis is complete, the value judgement is already implicit (cf. p. 12). The change in the critic's overt role from judge to explicator follows the change in literature's overt function from that of a pleasure for the cultivated to that of a task for the student. Hence what is needed is no longer someone to guide or predict our enjoyments, but someone to help us through our examinations. But as Professor Wimsatt remarks (1954, 245-50), descriptions are not in fact a substitute for evaluations (the terms in which they are couched are usually evaluative), but a means of making and substantiating evaluations at the same time. Certainly if a system of values is agreed on a description will imply a value judgement, which need not therefore be stated. But it is still the implied system of values that gives the description its point.

Whereas ascriptions of function legitimately entail critical canons, modes of analysis seem rather to be derived from critical *systems*. And any viable system of criticism would hold more than the canons that could be derived from the ascribed function. Criticism is made in terms of genres, that is, in terms of the critic's knowledge of accepted conventions and procedures. How then can an account of possible modes of analysis of art be given without a theory of genres, the "comparative grammar of the arts" which Professor Frye wanted aesthetics to become and which I have declined to attempt? The answer is that some classifications of modes of analysis purport at least to cut across such typology. Some theorists claim that some ways of describing are appropriate, and others inappropriate, to all works of art whatsoever. It is with these that we shall be chiefly concerned.

It is all very well to say that critical systems yield methods of describing, but do not the best critics operate less with systems or criteria than with a trained perception, a skill as immediate in its operation as the ability



to drive a car, developed not at all by reflection but by the close and continual study of actual works of art (cf. Arnheim 1958, 82)? Even the reference of a work to its genre is a poor substitute for an exact estimate of the artist's undertaking, that is, of what kinds of structure are relevant to this particular work; for no generic classification can be both exhaustive and pertinent. If this is so, the logical order of dependence seems to be reversed. We start by developing modes of description from discoveries of what there is to describe, attempting to enumerate and relate to one another the factors in the work to which its felt quality can be ascribed. By reflecting on the developed modes of describing we may elicit "canons" or criteria whose application would however represent a mere inference from or brief notation for the full process of appreciating and expounding. Finally we might derive, from reflection on what these elicited canons, criteria or systems of criticism imply, some notion of art's possible functions. This final notion of function would in its turn need to be checked and validated by an independent general view of the nature of human life and society, which would itself rest on induction from just such evidence as that which the original examination of works of art provides.<sup>2</sup>

The reversibility of hierarchy just pointed out represents the familiar dialectic of fact and principle, to set beside that of fact and function already mentioned. In neither case is it wise to proceed in one direction only.

2. Cf. Pepper (1945, 7-8): "Structural corroboration is the corroboration of fact with fact. It is not a multiplicity of observations of one individual fact, but an observed congruence of many different facts towards one result. . . . In tracing the main evidential support of criticism to structural corroboration, and thence finding that we are thereby led to world hypotheses, we discover that criticism is philosophical in its foundations. Sound criticism is the application of a sound philosophy to works of art."

## SURFACE AND FORM

### AESTHETIC SURFACE

TO WHAT ASPECTS of a work should we attend when describing it? If we accept Schiller's basic idea that it is art's character to dwell on appearances and not on realities, it seems to follow that we should analyse works in terms of the appearances they present, confining our attention to what can actually be seen and heard—in a word, to aesthetic surface. And if we define the aesthetic (as the word's derivation encourages us to do) as that which is available to sensory discrimination, rather than as that which is judged in terms of beauty and ugliness, the legitimate kinds of analysis will correspond to the possible types of sensory discrimination. "The aesthetic aspect of experience," writes Prall (1936, 7), whose work together with that of Hanslick on music dominates the field of our present preoccupation, "is that in which . . . we spend our whole attentive energy upon discriminating and realizing its full character as given." But already we see a difficulty. For if it is truly given, how can energy be needed for its realization?

It is not clear what may be legitimately included in the aesthetic "surface." Sensible qualities and qualitative relations, presumably, and discernible space and time relations belong there. But is that all? The "representational" elements in works of art seem to inveigle the attention beyond or away from the content presented to perception, hence away from the "aesthetic" as defined by Prall. Some therefore reject all representational aspects of art as aesthetically irrelevant and distracting. Others, however, deny that representation takes us beyond the surface.

The idea that representation directs the beholder away from the surface of the work of art derives some of its persuasiveness from the ambiguity of the notion of representation itself, which I discuss in the next chapter, and some from the attitude embodied in my phrase "the content *presented*



to perception." That phrase implies that perception is passive, but of course it is not. Perception is an activity involving the personality of the perceiver, with all his interests and learned habits. One reasons that what the eye perceives must be a "visual field," a complex of sense-data, but one does not and cannot see things thus: what one sees is things and people, movements and actions. Perceived content as perceived is meaningful and affecting: it is by reflection that we come to think that the aesthetic surface must after all be analysable in terms of the possible orderings of what could actually be transmitted by auditory and optic nerves (so Dewey 1934, 16, and Gombrich 1960, *passim*).<sup>1</sup> When, therefore, we say that representation must take us beyond or away from the surface, we may mean either of two things: that it requires us to *transfer our attention* from what is before us to some other independently existing order of facts, or that its interpretation *depends on experience* of things other than the work in question. A "presentational aesthetic" whereby we can and must confine our attention to aesthetic surface without ignoring representation depends for its feasibility on drawing a precise distinction between these two. That sounds as if it should be easy, but it is hard.

No perceived quality or structure lacks a directly grasped significance which is derived from the perceiver's experience of living in a perceptible world. Thus Prall writes (1936, 155-7) that

The adequate picture is one in which, if attention is focussed on just what is presented in color and spatial form, and dwells on these as there before it, not explicitly comparing them or the whole picture to other things or to other pictures, nor distracted by any other concern, theoretical or practical, the natural attentive process, being intimately connected within the organism and totally directed by the presented object, will deepen into a unitary qualitative feeling, which is as clearly and fully emotional as it is intellectually discriminating.

So when we are confronted by a painting of a house "offensive in dilapidation," he continues, "We apprehend its offensiveness as directly and simply, and usually much more definitely, than its exact shape and the details of color that mark, say, its dilapidation." But unless we have apprehended all these formal details quite definitely, "We have not apprehended this particular dilapidation, but only some marks that led us to think dilapidation, or the word *dilapidation*, as we already know these. . . . In fact, so far as we have only noticed that dilapidation is here represented, we have not even seen the picture." That is, it is not true that the dilapidation of the building or the gaiety of a waltz is inferred from sensible clues:

1. Professor Gombrich (1960, 328) quotes Gibson 1952: "The visual field is the product of the chronic habit of civilized men of seeing the world as a picture. . . . So far from being the basis, it is a kind of *alternative* to ordinary perception."

any such inference made would be a reaction to a verbal symbol or a pre-conceived notion and not to the work itself. The gaiety or dilapidation resides in the surface, and is the precise gaiety or dilapidation of the aesthetic surface, not gaiety or dilapidation in general.

A man may be said to look sad if his face and posture suggest that he has feelings of the kind classifiable as sad. But any particular man who looks sad looks as if he had precisely the feeling which his precise expression and posture suggest, and which, since feelings are indefinitely various, can be accurately specified only by the expression and posture which constitute the looking sad. So it may be suggested that so far from its being paradoxical that aesthetic surface should have the quality of a particular feeling, it is only in such surface that feeling becomes precise.<sup>2</sup> Now, in the case of the man, we can say that he looks sad but is not really sad; but a piece of music cannot sound sad without being sad, because sounding is its way of being. If it is true that sadness can be neither recognized nor distinctly felt otherwise than in a presented surface, it is not a paradox but a commonplace that sadness should be a quality of a surface that neither represents someone's feelings of sadness nor produces feelings of sadness in anyone.

The foregoing argument implies that to locate the sadness of sad music one must simply analyse its audible quality and structure: the specific feeling of the work is inseparable from its specific discriminable sensible properties. It is pointless to ask why just this pattern should constitute just this kind of sadness, for the subtlety of possible perceptual discrimination far exceeds that of any linguistic differentiation. The recognition of the specific sadness simply is the response one has learned to make by living in the perceptible world. And the question how any analysis of sensible properties could possibly be the analysis of a feeling, which looks so unanswerable, is in fact easily answered: since it is only in its sensible correlates that any feeling ever has any reality definite enough for analysis to be possible, what other form of analysis could possibly be required? It is true that such analysis does not analyse the *concept* of sadness or whatever, but there is no imaginable reason why it should; and it does not analyse

2. Prall (1936, 149) goes so far as to say that an "inward" feeling of sadness and the sadness of a particular funeral march differ not in that one is an inward feeling and the other an outward expression, but only in "clarity, simplicity and determinateness." For it is only by being directed upon specific objects that our feelings acquire any determinate quality: love exists only as a particular person's feeling for a particular person under a specific aspect in a specific context. This, however, confuses the issue. To recognize a tune's sadness is not to feel sad. We must distinguish the two true propositions: (1) sadness is *felt* only as a specific kind of sadness determined by and referring to a specific situation; (2) sadness is *recognized* only as a specific kind of sadness embodied in a specific appearance.



anyone's personal feeling of sadness etc., but that is not in question and there is no reason why it should be.

The position now outlined is not without its difficulties. The first objection to saying (or difficulty in telling what is meant by saying) that expressed feeling is a property of aesthetic surface is precisely that just now cavalierly dismissed, that the analysis in terms of strictly sensible properties does not analyse the feeling. At no point does such an analysis begin to use the terminology of feeling. Wherever else this happens we say that what is actually and explicitly analysed is not the explicandum itself but its cause or ground; Prall himself makes this point about explanations of colour in terms of light waves, or of sound in terms of vibrations. To this objection it might be replied, however, that whatever view is taken no kind of analysis can be suggested that would be an analysis of the feeling-quality in terms of feeling-quality, and that the location of the feeling elsewhere than on the aesthetic surface would therefore not alleviate the supposed difficulty. The objection therefore cannot be met directly, but is to be overcome by recognizing that the demand implied in it is illegitimate. Our "cavalier" dismissal turns out to be justified.

The second objection to Prall's thesis is more serious if not fatal. It is that the expressiveness of a representational work differs in relevant and fundamental ways from that of a non-representational work. The depicted house and face together with their dilapidation and dejection are indeed recognized, not inferred, and recognized on the basis of ordinary life experience. Prall in his more detailed discussions of this matter confines himself to such representation and recognition, thus leaving untouched the question of what kind of experience grounds our recognition of the feeling-tone of music or of abstract painting. Plainly Hals's *Laughing Cavalier* is gay in a way quite other than that in which a canvas by Riopelle is gay, and the difference is only obscured and in no way reduced by saying that in either case we can only describe the gaiety by describing the aesthetic surface. Prall offers no help in getting over the fact that the Hals picture owes most of its feeling-tone to the fact that it is a picture of a man with a particular expression, and that nothing in the Riopelle canvas corresponds to this. Or again: if our recognition of the painted house's particular state of offensive dilapidation depends on our experience of a sensible world in which there are dilapidated houses to offend us, on what kind of experience does our *recognition* of the sadness of a funeral march depend? Is it, indeed, "recognition" in the same sense at all? If we say it depends on our experience of music, we leave it quite unclear whether the significance of music is entirely conventional or not, and if not, what

accounts for it; but if this is not made clear we cannot tell what the doctrine commits us to.

The third objection to Prall is that he ignores conventions and systems of symbolism. This, however, is not a serious objection except in so far as the second objection includes it, for these things function not as objects to be detected and methods to be applied but as ways in which one learns to condition one's perceptions. Prall himself does seem to infer from his general doctrine that conventions are gratuitous evils; but the inference is unwarranted. Fundamentally, the theory is unaffected by what precise conditions make recognition possible. It is only if we take Prall as literally as he takes himself when saying that precise sensory discrimination is the necessary and sufficient means of understanding art that we must follow him into this absurdity of supposing that we need not understand an artist's iconography, and even that there is a kind of natural language of sound and colour that is the same for all, no matter what their cultural training.

A fourth objection seems possible: that so far from precise distinctions of sensible quality being the unique bearers of meaning teachers of art can make such distinctions perceptible only by divesting them of the semantic associations which normally blind us to them. But this objection fails, because such training does not work by replacing emotional distinctions with sensory ones, but by substituting subtle and precise sensory-emotional discriminations for crude and imprecise ones.

Prall includes poetry among the arts with which he is dealing, drawing attention to the importance of time and rhythm. But it seems quite ridiculous to suggest that the proper analysis of poetry could be in terms of its "aesthetic surface," and Prall does not even suggest how such analysis might proceed. The general thesis might be saved by denying that the literary arts are "art" in the required sense; but the difficulties raised by poetry are only extreme cases of those raised by representation in the visual arts (cf. pp. 343 ff. below).

Prall makes his location of all significance in the aesthetic surface convincing and apparently important only by ignoring all the relevant distinctions. He does not obliterate them, or re-state them in terms of his thesis, for the former is impossible and the latter drains the notion of "surface" of all its attraction. His arguments accordingly neither invalidate the distinctions conventionally made, which I adopt in what follows, nor even show that they should be reinterpreted or how they could be. All he leaves us with is the solid and salutary warning that when confronted with a work of art it is the work itself we should concentrate on, and not something else.



*Quality and Texture*

Among those aspects of aesthetic surface that we are not tempted to think of as representational, we may distinguish elements of form or pattern; elements of pure perceptible quality, as colour or sound, with no discernible structure; and elements of texture, where what may be analysed into perceptible structure is yet felt as quality. Among these, form turns out as we shall see to have after all a representational aspect; which leaves us with quality and texture.

It seems obvious that some of the enjoyment derived from art is due to its sensuous qualities, but equally plain that not all is. I say "enjoyment" advisedly: richness and purity of colour or sound contribute more to pleasure than to understanding. "Shape . . . is a more efficient means of communication than colour," writes Arnheim (1954, 273); "on the other hand, the expressive impact of colour cannot be obtained by shape." And he reminds us that in the interpretation of Rorschach protocols choice by colour is taken for a sign of emotionalism, choice by shape for a sign of pedantry. So we should expect to find that while a description of a work of art normally includes some reference to colour or tone quality, the importance attached to it varies widely. Some prefer a singer with "no voice at all, but *what* a musician"; others prefer golden-voiced idiots. And so with the other arts. In general, those who go for sumptuous tone and colour are hedonists in aesthetics; those who think of art rather as improving or instructing belittle sensuous quality. Hindemith has said (quoted by Mason 1954, 77) that one should

measure all music against the values that Bach has demonstrated. The outward hull of music, sound, will then shrink to nothingness. If originally it was the element which drew us toward music, which alone seemed to satisfy our longings, it is now only a vessel for something more important; our own betterment.

It is easy to see how this opposition of hedonist and pedant transforms itself into that of plain man and expert, of slob and connoisseur (cf. p. 137). So Hanslick (1854, 92) speaks of "the naive delight which the uncultured masses take in the material aspect of the various arts," the aspect which directly affects the nervous system, which makes us *hear* music but does not even encourage us to *listen*. The same feeling probably underlies the opinion still often expressed, that books of reproductions of paintings should be printed in black-and-white and not in colour. The reason usually given is that colours are inaccurately rendered and that the methods of printing used necessarily blur outlines. But since all but the worst of modern reproductions give some notion of the colour scheme employed, of which the

monochrome gives no hint but substitutes a quite different set of tonal relations forming patterns which correspond to nothing in the original, what the preference implies is that colour in painting does not matter and consequently no possible precision in rendering form should be sacrificed in trying to render colour.<sup>3</sup>

To say that colour and sound as such have emotional rather than intellectual significance, or yield a merely sensual pleasure, sounds plausible but lacks precise meaning, since neither "pleasure" nor "emotion" is a term that does more than indicate a general direction of thought. What is meant seems to be that to attend to sound and colour is to be superficial, to yield too readily to first appearances, or rather perhaps to react subjectively rather than objectively: certain colours and sounds produce in us a feeling of euphoria, and we give in to this euphoria instead of paying heed to the work. Gay colours are believed to attract children; fleshly sinners flaunt in bright hues, and members of austere sects dress drably. Gay plumage in birds attracts mates, gaily coloured flowers tempt insects. So colour and sound become associated with fleshly appetites and hence with self-indulgence generally.<sup>4</sup> But form is respectable: is not God a geometer?—One is tempted to dismiss all this as a blend of folk-lore, social convention and pure cant. Perhaps this much is true, though: one can enjoy colour

3. Since the use of black-and-white falsifies formal relations too, this is not a good reason. There are other objections to coloured prints. First, cheap ones lose *texture* in preserving colour—one cannot tell what is the quality of the paint. Black-and-white prints can look more like paintings. Second (Gilson 1957, 71–3), since their colours are never quite accurate and are sometimes travesties, they put paintings "out of tune" and are unbearable to any one at all sensitive to colour. But are these distortions always worse than those produced by chemical changes with age in the original? And, if not, are we to say that a black-and-white print is better than the original of any but a very new painting? Dr. Hauser (1951, II.96) associates this strange preference for monochrome with the sober, conservative taste of the puritan business-man. A large part of the objection to colour seems to be mere snobbery—quite common people buy books of coloured plates, and enjoy looking at them. Some writers evidently feel that one ought not to cater for people who lack time and money to tour the galleries of the world. But if one allows that it is legitimate to seek information about a painting that one cannot see, surely coloured and monochrome plates may each show something that the other cannot.

4. An asceticism of this kind seems to lie behind Plato's odd remarks in the *Philebus*, 51B–D, where, after distinguishing in painting between the relative beauties of representation and the beauties of simple geometrical forms which give a pure pleasure that does not depend on associations but is proper to them, he attributes to pure colours and clear, unmixed tones an analogous beauty. There seem to be two points made: that complex tones and colours, or blends of them, derive their attractiveness from their real-life associations and therefore like real life itself can never give pleasure unalloyed with distress; and that to prefer complexity and sumptuousness over simplicity and austerity betrays, in art as in politics, an unspiritual animality.



and sound in relaxation, but form demands concentration. If one concentrates on sound and colour one either becomes quickly bored or else discovers structure in the combinations of sound and colour themselves.

If we think of colour and sound as emotional we may come to wonder what emotion attaches to particular kinds of sound or colour. Answers are easily supplied. Whether through socially determined associations or through some recondite physiological nexus of repercussions, trumpets sound martial, violas languorous, oboes nostalgic. As for colours, Lipps's subjects found "a pure yellow happy, a deep blue quiet and earnest, red passionate, violet wistful" (Parker 1920, 256). Whether we think such associations significant will depend on what we think determines them, but in any case their relevance to the understanding of art must be indirect or slight. If it should turn out that (for example) long-wavelength colours are always associated with an expansive reaction and short-wavelength colours with constriction (Arnheim 1954, 276), the fact would be relevant to the discussion of paintings. But any direct effect of such association would presumably on any particular occasion be outweighed by the effects of combining the colours and by their various functions in representing things and their relations in space.

In conclusion, then: the sensual qualities of works of art, whether singly and in isolation or singly with a felt quality derived from their setting or in combinations that are nevertheless felt as unities, must be taken into account at four levels at least. First, they may be directly pleasing or unpleasing (as a too loud noise hurts); we have seen that Professor Eysenck (1957, 315 ff.) thinks he has evidence that there is a decorum of colour choice and colour combination independent of any local convention or personal or social associations. Second, they may have more complex feeling-tones determined physiologically: whether this possibility is fulfilled it would presumably be hard to determine. Third, and not in practice always to be distinguished from the foregoing, there are conventional associations, as when in Bach the sound of the trumpet symbolizes the Majesty of God (Bukofzer 1939). Thus in Western literature a complex of associations has grown up around the colours red and white (wine and bread, blood and skin, sin and innocence—cf. Frye 1957, 144), and these associations of the colour concepts may sometimes cling to the actual colours when used in painting. Fourth, there is the significance of a particular colour used in a particular way on a particular occasion, through its place in the structure of the picture and its representational or allusive value. But this fourth aspect, in practice the most important, belongs not to the realm of quality but to those of form and representation.

*Texture.* Much of what was said of quality may stand of texture, by which I mean any variation of a surface making its effect as quality rather than as pattern. One must distinguish two-dimensional textural qualities (e.g. "stippled") from three-dimensional ones (e.g. "impasted") and both of these from the *representation* of three-dimensional textures (e.g. paintings of velvet or brick). The second and third of these, but not the first, appeal to the tactual sense of which Berenson speaks so highly: people differ greatly in their responsiveness to this appeal. The first and third of them, but not so much the second, play a major part in our awareness of distances (Gibson 1950). More and more emphasis has been placed in recent times on the three-dimensional textures of paintings and sculptures, till pictures are sometimes modelled and statues appear crusted. This emphasis has replaced that on two-dimensional texture, and the representation of texture, which so preoccupied the picturesque painters:

The horse in itself, is certainly a nobler animal, than the cow. His form is more elegant; and his spirit gives fire and grace to his actions. But in a *picturesque light* the cow has undoubtedly the advantage; . . . the bones of the cow are high, and vary the line, here and there, by a squareness, which is very picturesque. There is a greater proportion also of concavity in them; the lines of the horse being chiefly convex.

The cow also has the advantage, not only in its picturesque lines, but in the mode of filling them up. . . . The very action of licking herself, which is so common among cows, throws the hair, when it is long, into different feathery flakes. . . . Cows are commonly the most picturesque in the months of April and May, when the old hair is coming off.

The cow is better adapted also to receive the beauties of light. (Gilpin 1786, II.248-9.)

Texture would seem to be something peculiarly visual, since sounds can suggest tactual qualities only indirectly. But there are musical properties which are suitably called "texture" by analogy. The difference between staccato and legato is textural; and so, more obviously, are those between spare and opulent orchestration, between bare fifths and clotted ninths, and between simple and florid or decorated melody. To speak of texture in literature is perhaps to wade deeper into metaphor, but even here the effect of complex alliteration and assonance may be thought of as textural, and so may certain aspects of imagery. Mr. Peacock (1957, 99), for example, says that

The quality of the intertexture is decisive for recognizing true art; it is the organic unity of the image structure, seen in every part, that bears witness to the genuine creative imagination, and not, as is so often suggested, the architectonic "unity" of the whole work.



It is this pervasive complexity of writing, in which imagery and argument join in a single rhetoric, that Mr. Holloway describes in *The Victorian Sage* (1953).

## FORM

WHATEVER MAY BE controversial about aesthetic surface, it is plain that the qualities and textures it has must have some formal arrangement: that is, it must be possible to analyse the surface into parts or elements standing to each other in definite space or time relations. Many have said that all aesthetic effect (or all "genuine" aesthetic effect) is produced by the formal arrangement of sensible parts. This may be taken for a truism—*of course* a visible surface consists of visible parts visibly arranged. But what these writers intend is rather a paradoxical extension of that truism: that in interpreting a work of art one need never go beyond the perceived shape to anything associated with it or represented or suggested by it. Thus they not only insist on keeping our attention to the aesthetic surface, but refuse to accept Prall's hazardously extended notions of what is present in that surface.

The thesis that a work of art should be analysed in terms of formal relations alone is attractive for three reasons. The first is that it ensures that our discussion will be confined to the work itself, the sole guarantee of relevance.<sup>5</sup> The second is that it offers a refuge from that subjectivity which all conscientious critics rightly fear.<sup>6</sup> The formal properties of a work at least can be shown to be there: lengths and musical intervals can be measured, and measurement, as Plato remarked (*Republic*, 602), is man's only safeguard against illusion. The third is that the concept of form, and formal analysis, are applicable equally and in the same sense to arts of sound and arts of sight,<sup>7</sup> which is a great help to those wishing to build up a theory applicable to all the arts.

5. Cf. Hanslick (1854, 49): "Every art sets out from the sensuous and operates within its limits"; and Gilson (1957, 129): "Since the painter creates a form, by means of which he gives existence to a new being, all his obligations are to the very form that he creates and to the new being to which his art aims to impart existence, not to any external object, being, or landscape that he might try to imitate."

6. Cf. Wellek and Warren (1949, 240): "What the formalist wants to maintain is that the poem is not only a cause, or a potential cause, of the reader's 'poetic experience' but a specific, highly organized control of the reader's experience, so that the experience is most fittingly described as an experience of the poem." This theme is elaborated by Hepburn (1959, 200-3).

7. Cf. for example Birkhoff (1933, 193): "Sight presents to us the three-dimensional 'metric manifold' of ordinary space; likewise, hearing presents the one-

Attractive as it is, the thesis is vulnerable. First, it is radically ambiguous as applied to the visual arts: it may be taken as referring to the two-dimensional forms actually traceable on the picture's surface, or to the three-dimensional forms projected (as it were) on to that surface. But in its former interpretation the thesis is ludicrous, unless accompanied by a no less ludicrous rejection of most extant painting as improper; and the latter interpretation extends the notion of surface no less radically than Prall does. One who refers, as Roger Fry is said to have done once, to the figure of God the Father in some painting as "this very important mass," is not attending solely to what is visibly in the painting as opposed to what it represents, but is attending to some aspects of what is represented to the exclusion of others. And once one admits some aspects of representation, it is hard to justify a refusal to admit all aspects.

The next objection to the thesis, a more general and more damaging version of the first one, is that it assumes that one can in fact discriminate forms without paying heed to what they are forms of. But the isolation of even a two-dimensional form is an action involving one's experience of things in the world. It is through unconscious acts of interpretation that one takes configurations of line and gradations of tone to constitute shapes. To ascribe aesthetic value to shapes perceived but not interpreted is to ascribe it to something that can scarcely occur in visual experience, though in music it may.

The third objection, if it is an objection at all, is one by now familiar: that the thesis has no obvious application to the literary arts. There is literary form, and there are literary and poetic forms; but these are only to a limited extent present in the sensuous material. But again this may be just one more reason for not thinking of the literary arts as "art."

I have been writing as if perceived forms could be exhaustively and satisfactorily analysed into parts. This is not so. Even in so far as perception of form is independent of recognition, percipients tend automatically to "fill in the gaps" of perceived patterns and edit what is perceived in the interests of simplicity (see Arnheim 1954, *passim*). It is arguable, too, that the parts into which what is perceived can be analysed are less components of the perceived form than suggestions on the basis of which the form as perceived is constructed. So once again the prospect of reducing what has aesthetic value to what can be measured recedes.

There is an ambiguity in the notion of "form" that has been a stumbling-block: one may mean by this word recurrent formal patterns exemplifiable

dimensional manifold of time. Spatial form and temporal form are therefore of the same abstract nature, and the aesthetic enjoyment of spatial and temporal objects arises in large measure from the formal relations of metric manifolds."



in many works (e.g. "the sonnet form"); or one may mean rather the specific formal properties of a particular work of art. Many objections to the distinction of form and content and hence to the use of the term "form" rest on the mistaken assumption that the word always has the first of these senses.<sup>8</sup>

The thesis that aesthetic value depends solely on formal properties has three variants. Aesthetic value may be ascribed to formality, that is to say, regularity; or to the occurrence of certain specified shapes or ratios; or simply to whatever is not representational. The second of these variants, which I treat successively in that order, is usually but not always put forward as an elaboration or specification of the first.<sup>9</sup>

### *Form and Order*

As soon as we interpret "form" more narrowly than as whatever arrangement the discernible parts of anything may happen to have, we arrive at the notions of pattern, formality, orderliness. It is obvious that most works of art have been orderly, the product of selection and arrangement, in a way in which segments of one's life-experience are not: even the "slice-of-life" novel selects, and even the abstract expressionist's drips may be well or ill ordered. So it has often been said that beauty is wholly or in large part a matter of orderliness (cf. pp. 84 ff. above), and that the value of art is that by being orderly it provides objects, or an environment, which have affinities with and hence are agreeable to the human mind with its passion for order. Thus John Dennis (1704, 336) writes:

The great Design of Arts is to restore the Decays that happen'd to human Nature by the Fall, by restoring Order: The Design of Logick is to bring back Order, and Rule, and Method to our Conceptions. . . . The Design of Moral

8. The considerations raised in this and the preceding paragraphs are developed in chapter XIII.

9. In current art criticism "form" has been replaced as an o.k. word by "space." The influential Hildebrand already urged the primacy of space over form: "Pictorial representation . . . has for its purpose the awakening of this idea of space, and that exclusively by the factors which the artist presents" (1893, 48); "The value of a picture . . . [depends] on the intensity of the unitary spatial suggestiveness concentrated in it" (*ibid.*, 56); "Ideas suggested by form, as expressive, not of space, but of organization, function, or movement, take their place as factors in art only after the spatial ideas are established" (*ibid.*, 100). The substitution does aesthetic theory no good. First, space can be made out to depend on form more easily than form to depend on space. Second, since the space suggested or created by a painting may be ambiguous and is almost always indeterminate, the advantages sought from the definiteness of form are lost. Third, space cannot be extended to music as form can. But the one word has not really taken over the other's function: space is represented rather than presented as form is. Even there, as Professor Gombrich says (1960, 240), "It is never space which is represented but familiar things in situations."

Philosophy is to cure the Disorder that is found in our Passions. . . . Those Arts that make the Senses instrumental to the Pleasure of the Mind, as Painting and Musick, do it by a great deal of Rule and Order.

The most clear and explicit statement of the thesis is perhaps that of Aquinas, who writes (*Summa Theol.*, I.5.4 ad 1):

Beauty pertains to the cognitive faculty; for those things are called beautiful which please on being seen. Hence, beauty consists in due proportion, for the sense delights in things duly proportioned, as in things akin to itself; for sense also is a kind of reason (*ratio*) and so is every cognitive faculty. And because cognition comes about by assimilation, and similitude has to do with form, the beautiful properly has to do with the nature of the formal cause.<sup>10</sup>

But in Aquinas this account of beauty has no special connection with the arts. That connection is provided by Leibniz (1690, 698):

Everything that emits sounds gives off invisible impulses. When these are not confused, but proceed together in order but with a certain variation, they are pleasing; in the same way, we also notice certain changes from long to short syllables, and a coincidence of rhymes in poetry, which contain a silent music, as it were, and when correctly constructed are pleasant even without being sung. Drum beats, the beat and cadence of the dance, and other motions of this kind in measure and rule derive their pleasurable nature from their order, for all order is an aid to the emotions. And a regular though invisible order is found also in the artfully created beats and motions of vibrating strings, pipes, bells, and, indeed, even of the air itself, which these bring into uniform motion. Through our hearing, this creates a sympathetic echo in us, to which our animal spirits respond. This is why music is so well adapted to move our minds, even though this main purpose is not usually sufficiently noticed or sought after.

There can be no doubt that, even in touch, taste, and smell, sweetness consists in a definite though insensible order and perfection. . . .

From here one may proceed in two directions. One, that followed by Leibniz himself, and the more obvious, is to equate order with the measurable. For orderliness seems to appeal to the intellect more than to the feelings, and the most natural way for the intellect to proceed seems to be by comparing, analysing, measuring and the like. What, indeed, would we mean by form if not that with which geometry deals, and by

10. Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, 27.1 ad 3: "It is implied in the definition of the beautiful that appetite should be assuaged in the sight or cognition of it. Hence those senses have particularly to do with the beautiful that are most connected with cognition, namely sight and hearing, which minister to reason. For we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds. But we do not apply the word 'beautiful' to the objects of the other senses—we do not call tastes or smells beautiful. Thus it becomes plain that beauty goes beyond the good in providing to the cognitive faculty a certain order, in such a way that what simply gratifies appetite is called good, but that is called beautiful of which the very awareness is pleasing."



order if not intelligible and hence measurable and describable arrangement? So Leibniz later wrote (1714, 1042):

Even the pleasures of sense are reducible to intellectual pleasures, known confusedly. Music charms us, although its beauty consists only in the agreement of numbers and in the counting, which we do not perceive but which the soul nevertheless continues to carry out, of the beats or vibrations of sounding bodies which coincide at certain intervals.<sup>11</sup> The pleasures which the eye finds in proportions are of the same nature, and those caused by other senses amount to something similar, although we may not be able to explain them so distinctly.

But since any two measurable things presumably stand in some definable relation to one another, the mind could find proportions everywhere. Even orderliness as perceptible pattern is hardly enough to ensure beauty—"Order combined with ugliness serves but to render that ugliness more obvious and to stamp it gloomily upon the mind," as Geoffrey Scott remarked (1914, 207). So the irresistible next move is to try to find which proportions are "due proportions": that is, to trace beauty to the presence of certain selected figures or ratios.

The alternative road is that taken by Kant, for whom the aesthetic judgement, since it does not employ concepts, must not treat the beautiful object as exemplifying any definable shape: a perfect circle would be judged, precisely, perfect and not beautiful. As the teleological judgement finds in nature a *purposiveness without purpose*, we might say, the aesthetic judgement finds beauty in an *orderliness without order*. The formal properties which delight the mind because of their affinity with its impulse to order cannot, on this view, be further specified than by such vague terms as "balance" and "rhythm"—for we distinguish the rhythm that satisfies the ear from the metre that the mind discovers to be regular, the perceived balance from the symmetry disclosed by measurement.<sup>12</sup> This is the road

11. Hanslick justly observes (1854, 65-6) that beauty in music has nothing to do with mathematics, since mathematical considerations never enter into musical composition; and (*ibid.*, 102) that Shakespeare's eulogy of music in *The Merchant of Venice* rests on a "confusion of ideas, music itself being confounded with its principles of euphony, consonance and rhythm." But Gilson (1957, 193) affirms that "No calculation is required from the mind of the onlooker; it is not even certain that the painter himself did literally calculate his work, but the numbers are in it, and they are *seen* by the eye." Even if it were true, as it is not, that paintings in which such proportions are present were invariably preferred over those where they are not, or even could infallibly be distinguished from them, one would be at a loss to know in what sense "numbers" are "seen."

12. Cf. Whitehead (1919, §64.7): "A rhythm involves a pattern and to that extent is always self-identical. But no rhythm can be a mere pattern; for the rhythmic quality depends equally upon the differences involved in each exhibition of the pattern. The essence of the rhythm is the fusion of sameness and novelty;

associated principally with the name of Mr. Clive Bell. One reason for taking it is the discovery of where the alternative route leads. I proceed to examine both in turn.

### *Specific Forms*

Many have taken the tempting road from the notion that beauty lies in the adequation of form and intellect to the ascription of beauty to certain definite shapes and classes of shapes. The shapes preferred are usually chosen for their geometrical regularity and simplicity, as being those most easily grasped by the mind with the aid of a readily intelligible formula. The oldest, best grounded, and most stubborn of such ascriptions is connected with the musical consonances and with the name of Pythagoras—it was to music that Leibniz first appealed to establish the intellectual nature of beauty in the arts. The order of proceeding here seems to be as follows: it is *perceived* that certain intervals are consonant and others dissonant; it is *discovered* that consonant intervals correspond to simpler mathematical relationships than do dissonances; it is *inferred* that the beauty is perceived because the discovered simplicity gratifies the mind. The very fact that the listener is normally unaware of the ground of his gratification may lead to further speculation on the importance of mathematically simple proportions in the structure of the world. Such were the convictions of the followers of Pythagoras; and it seems likely that some such speculation supports most other attempts to ground beauty on the integers.

The most famous attribution of beauty to simple geometrical figures is Plato's in the *Timaeus*, 53E ff. But the two triangles there called "most beautiful" are said to be so, if one may judge from the context, not at all because they are pleasing to look at but because their versatile simplicity delights the geometrizing mind; and the same holds for the regular solids whose faces are constructed from them.<sup>13</sup> More relevant to aesthetics is that passage in the *Philebus* (51B ff.) where Plato says that pure pleasure can be got from beauty of colour and form, contrasting beauty of form with beauty of representation and the beauty of living things. These beau-

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so that the whole never loses the essential unity of the pattern, while the parts exhibit the contrast arising from the novelty of their detail. A mere recurrence kills rhythm as surely as does a mere confusion of differences. A crystal lacks rhythm from excess of pattern, while a fog is unrhythmic in that it exhibits a patternless confusion of detail."

13. M. Ghyka makes the transition from intellectual to visual satisfaction, and is therefore shocked that even cubists should be ignorant of the rudiments of solid geometry (1946, 87). Sir John Rothenstein painstakingly and unanswerably points out (1956, 270 ff.) that one cannot defend abstract art by an appeal to Platonic idealism: a visible circle is no more Platonically ideal than any other visible thing.



tiful forms he equates with those which can be constructed by plane methods; they are beautiful in themselves and always, not in a particular context only, and the pleasure they give shares nothing with that (mixed with pain) of scratching an itch. Plato does not in the end make it clear, however, whether he is ascribing visual beauty to what is geometrically simple, rather than simply saying that pure and absolute visual beauty must inhere in form and colour divorced from any suggestion of representative content.

Whatever may be the case with Plato, there is no doubt that people of some temperaments find geometrically regular or semi-regular, crystalline forms especially delightful. A sustained and moving expression of this love takes up much of the last chapter of Sir Herbert Read's *The Green Child* (1935). Among the shapes most favoured by such people is the "golden section" rectangle whose sides  $a$  and  $b$  bear the relation  $a:b::b:a+b$ —a ratio which has many fascinating mathematical properties and to which from time to time cosmological significance has been ascribed. Such rectangles have been consciously used in planning facades of buildings, and in painting (cf. Ghyka 1946). But the chief notoriety of "golden section" rectangles in aesthetics comes from the experiments of Fechner (1897, I.184–202), who sought to establish experimentally that such rectangles were, other things being equal, generally preferred over those of all other proportions. His results are generally rejected (cf. Osborne 1952, 180 ff.);<sup>14</sup> but in any case it should be noted that his undertaking was quite unlike Plato's. Fechner was concerned with what was actually preferred in a given kind of context, Plato not at all with that but with what deserved to be preferred, on the basis of certain stated reasons.

Next to the musical consonances, the place where simple ratios have been most consistently sought is in the proportions of the human body. Polyclitus, Leonardo and Dürer are responsible for the most famous of such attempts at human geometry. The impulse seems originally to have been Pythagorean philosophy, later supplemented by a straightforward reverence for geometry, and above all by the urge to find some analogue in the microcosm for the order revealed by astronomy in the macrocosm. There is also the technical desirability of rules of thumb which the draftsman could apply to the most usual subject of his labours (cf. Clark 1956, 15–22, and Gombrich 1960, ch. v).

Besides the general thesis of the adequation of the intellect and its proper object, the importance attached to geometry in cosmology and in

14. For a polemic against numerological aesthetics in general, and M. Ghyka's work in particular, see Borissavlievitch 1952. Unfortunately his own positive suggestions are no better than those he attacks.

the economy of intellectual operations, and the supposed results of experiment, other stranger and more specialized explanations have been used to support the aesthetic claims of particular forms either in general or in particular kinds of context. One of the oddest and best-known attempts in modern times is that of Birkhoff (1933), according to whom aesthetic value may be determined by the equation  $m=o/c$ , where  $m$  is the "feeling of value,"  $o$  is the "order, more or less concealed, which seems necessary to the aesthetic effect," and  $c$  is the "complexity" of the object which is proportionate to the "preliminary effort of attention, which is necessary for the act of perception." The application of this doctrine purports to show the excellence of designs whose parts are mutually interrelated by very many mathematically simple proportions. If one discounts in all this the pretence that  $m$ ,  $o$  and  $c$  can be quantified, or that if they cannot be quantified it is in no way misleading to pretend that they can, and refrains from asking why the correct equation is  $m=o/c$  rather than  $m=o-c$  or  $m=o^2-oc$  or any other arrangement of these variables, one is left with nothing more than the traditional belief that beauty depends on unity in variety, and that this is achieved through formal relations which must consist of proportions between the parts, and that these proportions (since any two quantities can be united in an infinite number of mathematical formulae) must be those conforming to certain mathematically simple types. All of which is reasonable enough, but would not suffice for a book without the diagrams and calculations which make so brave a show to so little purpose.

The impulse to find a fixed measure to stabilize what the eighteenth century called "the fluctuation of taste" is often rewarded by seeming success. A favoured shape can be detected in many works. But then comes the temptation to find the shape everywhere, to pretend that everyone really always prefers works that have it to those that lack it, and to invent fanciful reasons for its excellence. Hence the host of quaint theories, in some of which, and perhaps in all, a genuine insight lurks under the heap of hokum. The latest of such absurdities to meet my eye has been that of Mr. Fagg (1958), who when he fails to find exponential curves (representing vital force) in Negro sculpture thinks the manner of their absence significant. More elaborate are the eighteenth-century constructions of the historian Winckelmann and the painter Hogarth, both of whom are primarily interested in norms of human beauty.

Winckelmann uses a travesty of the Principle of Sufficient Reason to prove that there are absolute standards of facial beauty, to which the Greek facial type conformed. The preferred features are described in quasi-geometrical terms—features should have no unnecessary slants or



kinks<sup>15</sup>—the deviation of the faces of other nations from “the harmony, unity and simplicity, in which beauty . . . consists” (Winckelmann 1763, IV.ii, §15) being attributed, in the classical Greek manner, to the excesses of the climates in which they have to live.<sup>16</sup> The demands of unity and simplicity are tyrannical: not only must form be regular, but individuality must be lacking, and to be completely beautiful a work must not even express “any one state of the mind or affection of the passions, because these blend with it strange lines, and mar the unity” (*ibid.*, §23). But Winckelmann has to concede that in art this pure beauty, being “insipid,” must compromise with the claims of “expression” (*ibid.*, §24), thus coming round by a devious route to the old formula of unity with variety. Winckelmann is less specific about bodies than about faces, but still contrives to give what he says a geometrical look (*ibid.*, §29):

The forms of a beautiful body are determined by lines the centre of which is constantly changing, and which, if continued, would never describe circles. . . . The greater unity there is in the junction of the forms, and in the flowing of one out of another, so much the greater is the beauty of the whole.

Winckelmann, claiming (*ibid.*, §§5–6) to reach his notion of beauty by induction, has no more explanation of it to offer than that “the different ideas of the forms which constitute beauty are probably dependent on the nature of the nerves” (*ibid.*, §13), a probability which has sustained the hopes of speculators till the present day without attaining either precision or substantiation. But William Hogarth, writing somewhat earlier in the same tradition, was bold enough to claim a more definite basis for at least two of the six

fundamental principles, which are generally allowed to give elegance and beauty, when duly blended together, to compositions of all kinds whatever.

15. “The more oblique . . . the eyes . . . , so much the more does their direction deviate from the fundamental form of the face, which is a cross, whereby it is divided equally . . . if of two lines one deviate from the other without reason, a disagreeable impression is produced. . . . The flattened nose of . . . distant nations, is also a deviation, for it mars the unity of forms according to which the other parts of the body have been shaped. There is no reason why the nose should be so much depressed, should not much rather follow the direction of the forehead; just as, on the other hand, it would be an exception to the variety displayed in the human conformation, if the forehead and nose were formed by one straight line, as in beasts.” (Winckelmann 1763, IV.ii, §16.)

16. Negroes’ lips are swollen from the heat, the small eyes of northern and eastern peoples are stunted by the cold; only a temperate climate permits regularity of shape (*ibid.*, §16). “Consequently our ideas and those of the Greeks relative to beauty, being derived from the most regular conformation, are more correct than those that can possibly be formed by nations which . . . have lost one half of their likeness to the Creator” (*ibid.*, §17). Heaven, of course, is famous for its temperate climate.

. . . The principles I mean, are fitness, variety, uniformity, simplicity, intricacy, and quantity;—all of which co-operate in the production of beauty, mutually correcting and restraining each other occasionally. (Hogarth 1753, 11.)

The aesthetic pleasure given by simplicity and intricacy is attributed, as by so many later writers, to movements made by the eye in scanning even stationary objects. "Simplicity, without variety, is wholly insipid . . . but when variety is join'd to it . . . it enhances the pleasure of variety, by giving the eye the power of enjoying it with ease" (*ibid.*, 21); while intricacy is defined as "that peculiarity in the lines, which compose it, that leads the eye a wanton kind of chace, and from the pleasure that gives the mind, intitles it to the name of beautiful" (*ibid.*, 25), the wanton chase being enjoyable because "pursuing is the business of our lives," men instinctively love hunting. Intricacy and simplicity are combined in one variety of those curves "the centre of which is constantly changing" which Winckelmann admired, a variety in which Hogarth accordingly finds exceptional beauty and grace. "Observe," he writes, "that a gradual lessening is a kind of varying that gives beauty. The pyramid diminishing from its basis to its point, and the scroll or voluta, gradually lessening to its centre, are beautiful forms" (*ibid.*, 17); and, more particularly "That sort of proportion'd, winding line, which will hereafter be call'd the precise, serpentine line, or *line of grace* is represented by a fine wire, properly twisted round the elegant and varied figure of a cone" (*ibid.*, 39). And we are shown how such serpentine lines are found throughout the bones, muscles and limbs of the human body. But that will be quite enough of that.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Arnheim's protests that experimental investigation of aesthetic preferences is fundamentally misconceived,<sup>18</sup> most of us would be glad of

17. As Winckelmann echoes Hogarth, Hogarth echoes Lomazzo, whom he quotes (and who quotes Michelangelo): "And because in this place there falleth out a certaine precept of *Michael Angelo* much for our purpose, I wil not conceale it, leaving the farther interpretation and vnderstanding thereof to the iudicious reader. It is reported then that *Michael Angelo* vpon a time gaue this observation to the Painter *Marcus de Sciena* his scholler; that he should alwaies make a figure *Pyramidall, Serpentine, and multiplied by one two and three*. In which precept (in mine opinion) the whole mysterie of the arte consisteth. For the greatest grace and life that a picture can haue, is, that it expresse *Motion*: which the Painters call the *spirite* of a picture: Nowe there is no forme so fitte to express this *motion*, as that of the flame of fire. Which according to *Aristotle* and the other Philosophers, is an elemente most actiue of all others: because the forme of the flame thereof is most apt for motion, for it hath a *Conus* or sharpe pointe wherewith it seemeth to divide the aire, that so it may ascende to his proper sphere. So that a picture having this forme will bee most beautifull." (Lomazzo 1598, I.17.)

18. Arnheim 1954, 282. He argues that such investigation rests on the mistaken belief that art's primary function is to give pleasure, whereas its principal function



verified information about what shapes are preferred by what sort of people under what conditions, though we may feel that extraordinary ingenuity would be called for in setting up such experiments and extraordinary caution in their interpretation. But speculations of the kind I have been recording seem most unlikely to bear fruit. Yet they fascinate some minds, so much so that Mr. Osborne, for example, after denouncing as futile all such attempts to specify beautiful forms *a priori*, himself goes on to demonstrate the properties of various proportions (1952, 180 ff.). More important, many artists (especially architects) have designed in accordance with schemes of proportions; and because such designs have often been successful (though of course it is open to anyone to claim that the architect could have done as well or better without his scheme) we should hesitate to condemn all such ideas out of hand, silly as they may seem. Perhaps we should limit ourselves to suggesting that they may be more useful in the process of composition than in discovering or explaining the merits of what is composed. Hogarth, we saw, complained that Dürer's scheme prevented him from "deviating into grace." Dürer did not have a chance to explain what he thought Hogarth's scheme had prevented him from doing. Perhaps one of the things a scheme prevents one from doing is appreciating works constructed on some other principle.

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is really cognitive, so that the proper thing to test is not what pleases but what is perceived. There is also the methodological consideration, that the evaluations performed or likings expressed in laboratory situations may not reflect the preferences that would be acted on in real-life contexts, but are themselves of no particular interest; whereas tests of perception are likely to be less delicately related to context, and yield data interesting in themselves and capable of being integrated with a mass of other experimental data.

## FORM AND CONTENT

WE SAW THAT there were good reasons for confining critical discussion of works of art to the works themselves, and not extending it to other things to which the works may be related. It is desirable, too, to confine attention to what is actually perceptible, as opposed to the material conditions of what is perceived. By this double restriction critical discussion, it is hoped, may be differentiated from autobiographical subjectivities on the one hand, and from studio technicalities on the other, and art may thus be treated as both a public and a serious matter. We saw, too, that there are strong arguments against saying that the aesthetic "surface" thus isolated includes expressed feelings or what would otherwise be thought of as represented forms. Such inclusion is disquieting and unsatisfactory because its purport is obscure: what precisely is meant by saying that the feeling is *in* the music heard? Those who say such things usually explain and defend them only by denying propositions which no one wants to affirm; so that one is left wondering whereabouts in the undenied residue a positive statement might be lurking, and feeling that such locutions are mere verbal dodges to enable one to talk about what a work expresses or represents while pretending not to do so. Such misgivings may be unjustified, but they are strong enough to make one wish to confine aesthetic analysis, and assign aesthetic value, to such apparently indubitable "surface" factors as quality, texture, and shape if that is at all possible.

These good reasons for concentrating attention on "form" are perhaps less compelling in practice than the bad reason of supposing that if one allows what is expressed or represented to be relevant in describing works of art one must also concede that it is relevant in evaluating them, and thus open the way to two systems of evaluation favoured by the vulgar but derided by the cognoscenti. One of these systems judges the excellence of works by the excellence of their subject-matter; whereas it is possible to write good poems about lice and bad ones about God. The other judges



works by the accuracy of their representation, as though the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna were lesser works than the frescoes of the Queen's Robing Room at Westminster. The most obvious way to support the view that such judgements are based on irrelevancies is to argue that representation in the visual arts is irrelevant. Unfortunately, the thesis is untenable.

One who wishes to rule out representation may still think that attempts to trace beauty to particular forms are unsuccessful and even necessarily ridiculous. These attempts go wrong, he may say, in speaking of forms rather than form, and in appealing to intellect rather than feeling. The correction of these two errors yields a new kind of theory.

Focillon (1942) adumbrates a treatment of art history as the genealogies and biographies of particular isolable shapes or patterns, having their own recognizable and describable structure and following their own laws of development, that can be dealt with in abstraction from the works of art in which they appear. With forms thus conceived as semi-independent entities we may contrast form conceived simply as the sum of whatever formal properties the work in hand may have, not consisting of denumerable parts, not exhaustively describable, specific to the work and presumably unique. This contrast may appear not as one between approaches to the description of all works and styles, but (like that between form and representation itself) as one between kinds of art and hence between approaches respectively proper to different styles. Thus Sir Herbert Read (1956, 18-19) distinguishes "organic" from "abstract" form, the abstract being developed from the organic:

When a work of art has its own inherent laws, originating with its very invention and fusing in one vital unity both structure and content, then the resulting form may be described as *organic*. . . . When an organic form is stabilized and repeated as a pattern, and the intention of the artist is no longer related to the inherent dynamism of an inventive act, but seeks to adapt content to predetermined structure, then the resulting form may be described as *abstract*. . . . These opposed entities of style . . . may, I think, be directly related to the concepts "romantic" and "classical."

It was the notion that form has affinities with the intellect that led to the high valuation of geometrically simple shapes and curves, on the ground that the mind delights most in what it most surely grasps. If one thinks this valuation irrelevant to art, and if one finds it absurd to say with Leibniz and Gilson (as one seems obliged to say if it is really to the intellect that form appeals) that the consonances in music are agreeable because the mind unconsciously recognizes the ratios on which they are based, one may wish to say that form appeals not to intellect but to feeling; or, if this

seems to involve a dubious faculty psychology, to say that art objects give immediate satisfaction in virtue of formal properties of which we need not be aware. Moreover, allowing the appeal to be thus emotional avoids the unfortunate necessity of excluding from the concept of "form" the sensuous qualities and textures of the work, so that the term can be used simply in contradistinction to "representation" or "content."

This double move, substituting emotions for intellect and form for forms, yields the celebrated doctrine of Mr. Clive Bell:

Lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art. (Bell 1914, 6.)

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. . . . 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. (*Ibid.*, 25.)

The trained sensibilities of persons of superior refinement<sup>1</sup> ensure that when confronted by works of art they experience an "aesthetic emotion," whose occurrence is the only satisfactory criterion of a work of art (*ibid.*, 6). Works able to provide this experience come to be highly valued. Persons less sensitive and less trained, hearing that such works are valuable but unable to appreciate the formal properties in which their value lies, impute value to the properties which they can appreciate but which are in fact irrelevant: to the associations of the subject-matter, or to the effectiveness of the representation. Such judgements are common indeed, but they are not true judgements of value at all. They are merely what comes of trying to find grounds for the genuine value judgements of others in situations where the true grounds of those judgements are inaccessible. To find the attitude to art which Bell is opposing one need look no further than Rudyard Kipling's *The Light that Failed* (1891), where the fight between true and false art is represented as that of realism vs. prettification and technical prowess vs. botching.

Bell uses "form" to include sensuous quality, and does not abstract the relations and combinations of colours from the colours themselves. Roger

1. Mr. Bell's thesis cannot be properly understood without reference to his book *Civilization*, written at the same time as *Art* but published later (1928), in which the importance of such cultivated minorities is stressed.



Fry, often concerned to tone down Bell's extremism,<sup>2</sup> was at one time more extreme than Bell himself in taking "form" in a more usual sense and asserting that "In all cases our reaction to works of art is a reaction to a relation and not to sensations or objects or persons or events" (Fry 1926, 4). Like pleasure in representation, pleasure taken in texture and quality may be perfectly genuine but is irrelevant to the proper effect of "pure" works of art. But no doubt he means only that, as he says elsewhere (1920, 30), the "purposeful order and variety" which arouse our sympathetic interest in the work of art make sensual attractiveness unnecessary: pleasure given by colours and textures as such is irrelevant, but colour and texture as elements in design are not. Colour cannot be left out of account because relations cannot be considered in abstraction from their relata.

Bell's use of the term "significant" must be remarked on, if only because a widely used textbook suggests that Bell calls aesthetic form "significant" because it expresses the artist's emotion (Rader 1934, 230). This is quite wrong: the suggestion that form has this function is thrown out by Bell purely as a conjecture, and as one in the realm of what he calls "metaphysics," not of aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> He does not in fact say anything to justify his use of the term or explain what he means by it, but presumably he is using it as the antonym of "insignificant," as meaning approximately "worthy of note." If it be objected that whatever is significant must signify something (a frivolous objection anyway), perhaps we may reply with Focillon (1942, 3): "Whereas an image implies the representation of an object, and a sign signifies an object, form signifies only *itself*."

Mr. Bell appeals here only to the experience of the best qualified. But

2. Mr. Bell himself acknowledges this in a recent work (1957, 62 ff.) in which he repudiates the over-simplification and intolerance of his earlier position. Fry's opinions went through various changes which are hard to reconstruct: they are chronicled by Professor Weitz (1950, 12-13).

3. "It seems to me possible, but by no means certain, that created form moves us so profoundly because it expresses the emotion of its creator" (Bell 1914, 49); but "It is useless to go to a picture gallery in search of expression; you must go in search of significant form. When you have been moved by form, you may begin to consider what makes it moving." (*Ibid.*, 62.) "Why are we so profoundly moved by forms related in a particular way? . . . The question is extremely interesting, but irrelevant to aesthetics. . . . For the purposes of aesthetics we have no right . . . to pry behind the object into the state of mind of him who made it." (*Ibid.*, 11.) For the temptation to wander away from formal considerations into irrelevancies, cf. Ruskin (1860, 224): "I am always led away, in spite of myself, from my proper subject here, invention formal, or the merely pleasant placing of lines and masses, into the emotional results of such arrangement. The chief reason for this is that the emotional power can be explained; but the perfection of the formative arrangement, as I said, cannot be explained, any more than that of melody in music."

Professor Gilson attempts argument: because painting need not be representative, he reasons, the painter must not represent, or he will cease to be a painter: the painting that represents "begins to become a book" (1957, 242-3). But why? If painting represents, it does so in different ways and by different means from the arrangement of a vocabulary in grammatical structures. As well say that a book that describes "begins to become a picture."

As so often happens, what was proclaimed as a gospel of liberation from the tyrannies of academism soon hardened into an academic dogma.<sup>4</sup> It is an attractive dogma, and its central point is unshakably valid. As Plato said, if it is art's function merely to copy appearances, art is unworthy of serious attention. "Man may be prouder of having invented the hammer, the nail, and so forth, than of achieving feats of mimicry" (Hegel 1835/1886, 83).

But we do not really have to choose between saying that it is the sole function of works of the graphic arts to imitate appearances and saying that they can be interpreted without reference to anything beyond themselves. It may be that representation and design support each other. In fact Bell's position is untenable, for two reasons, of which the more important, more relevant to our present purpose, and by now more familiar one is the impossibility of treating form in isolation from representation—an impossibility most recently demonstrated by Professor Gombrich (1960). The other reason I have touched on already (pp. 264 ff.): the difficulty of using the "aesthetic emotion" as criterion of art and as starting point in aesthetics.

Aesthetic systems are constructed for public use, and their basis must be something publicly accessible. But we have seen that it is impossible to say how aesthetic emotions are to be recognized, whereas it is not too hard

4. Cf. Gardner (1936, 470): "Though they are charged with being psychiatrists or poets rather than painters, one can hardly avoid finding in the work of the best surrealists high esthetic quality; that is, organic structure. However, if the observer does not learn to see organic structure in the work of the 'old masters,' where representational content is the chief cause of his satisfaction, he cannot be blamed for not seeing it when it lies naked before his eyes in abstract, nonobjective and surrealist art." This appears in a history of art long used in the instruction of American youth, with no hint that what is said is or has ever been controversial. Note the assumption that the "charge" of being a poet is a serious one. It was not always so:

Ut pictura poesis erit; similisque poesi  
sit pictura; refert par aemula quaeque sororem,  
alternatque vices et nomina; muta poesis  
dicitur haec, pictura loquens solet illa vocari

(Du Fresnoy 1661, *ad init.*; cf. also pp. 104 ff. above.)



to obtain some sort of agreement about what is or is not a work of art. Perhaps I as an individual recognize true art by the emotion it arouses in me, but my public cannot be always with me to share my emotions, whereas they can acquaint themselves with the works I thus recognize, or at worst with reproductions of them.

The real weakness of Bell's position, however, is that the interpretation of form almost always depends on the recognition of content (cf. Arnheim 1954, 26 ff.), which accordingly cannot be ignored by the viewer; and if it cannot be ignored one sees no cogent reason for stopping short of recognizing its positive function, even if one does regard its role as secondary. "If the representation of three-dimensional space is to be called 'representation,'" wrote Bell (1914, 27), "then I agree that there is one kind of representation which is not irrelevant." But as Fry later pointed out (1920, 295), it is never just *space* that is represented: "any, even the slightest, suggestion of the third dimension in a picture must be due to some element of representation." Bell sets his connoisseur the task of recognizing what is represented only so far as to interpret it as three-dimensional; but how could anyone do this? If it be said that this trick of the attention, hard though it may be, must be achieved if art is to be appreciated, and that it is just because of this that such appreciation is rare, one can reply that the interpretation of form itself often depends strictly on the recognition of things, and this in at least four ways. First, to suggest space painters depend on our knowledge of the comparative sizes of things; by how big they are painted we are to know how distant they are meant to be. More significantly still, by deviating from these "natural" sizes painters achieve compressions, distortions, etc., of space which can be managed by no other means: almost all subtle and complex spatial effects depend on recognition of things, though some of the simplest and dullest may not. Second, even in two-dimensional compositions our breaking up of the surface into units depends on our recognition of suggested objects no less than on the bare integrating tendencies of perception itself. Such recognition is so immediate in its working that it is hard to convince ourselves that it operates, although in such experiences as recovering from a faint one may momentarily be aware of a visual field quite lacking organization. Third, in pictures showing actions the balance of the composition depends on the intensity and direction of the depicted movements as well as on the opposing masses of colour. So in Carracciolo's *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Vienna (Baldass 1938, no. 476) the composition depends on the leftward sweep of motion being opposed with violence by one man. This same picture illustrates my fourth point, that facial expressions themselves, the directions of glances

and the meanings of grimaces, may be elements in formal composition.<sup>5</sup> For the head of the resisting man, at the extreme top left of Carracciolo's canvas, serves to oppose the leftward motion and to balance the large masses of the lower right: it does the latter because this small mass acquires great importance by being a human head with a vigorous, a ferocious expression, and it does the former because his scowl is directed backward against the struggling others. Indeed, any composition in which human figures appear is likely to depend for much of its structure on the interweaving of glances and gestures.

Showing that representation is relevant to structure in the visual arts does not tell against Bell's main point, since it does not assign to representation any independent value. For after all Bell is just saying in a highly dressed-up and misleading way that highly trained and perceptive devotees of the visual arts nowadays respond to form rather than content. And this may well be true. Even if one cannot ignore either, since everything has a shape and every shape is the shape of something, surely people may respond differently to different aspects of what they are aware of. Our interpretation of this fact about art-lovers would then depend on what we thought conditioned this mode of response. Do tendencies to respond to form and representation respectively not perhaps depend on innate psychological determinants and correspond to types of personality? In that case the urge to regard one kind as better than the other might be weakened. Even if a preference for form comes from the trained elimination of what can be shown to be irrelevant, a response called aesthetic because uniquely differentiated from other modes of response (not moral, not practical and so on), that would still leave open the judgement of value, whether such responses should be cultivated in their purity, or are better blended with other modes. Perhaps in the end we might conclude that the function of representation in art is primarily to enrich the possibilities of design.<sup>6</sup> I deal in chapter xv with attempts to make out a case for the independent value of representation. Meanwhile it may be timely to remind ourselves that the dichotomy of form and representation does not exhaust the possibilities: in some contexts we may wish to lump both together and oppose them to some third, as Wang Wei (c. 420-478 A.D.) did:

In discussing painting people usually pay attention only to formal aspects and effects, but the ancients did not make their paintings simply as records

5. Professor Waterhouse (1960) points out that in Claude's *Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Sylvia* (Ashmolean) the prospective trajectory of the arrow which Ascanius is about to shoot produces a "compelling horizontal accent."

6. Professor Gilson (1957, 259) suggests in the course of a splendid analysis of the problem of representation in painting that the term "representation" should be reserved for "not that which represents, but, rather, that which fulfills no other



of the sites of city and country districts or to make out the limits of towns, villages and watercourses. They had their origin in forms, but these were made to blend with the spirit and to excite the heart. If the spirit has no perception of them, they exercise no influence; the eyes can see only the limits, but not the whole thing (Sirén 1936, 17).

Thus far I have confined myself, following Bell, to the visual arts. How does the exclusion of representation work in arts other than painting? In some arts it works better. In music the imitation of natural sounds is somewhat rare; where it occurs it is more commonly accounted a defect than an asset, and is certainly seldom valued as representation, apart from its role in the musical structure. Nor do the representational functions of musical phrases usually affect the interpretation of their formal properties.

What might those ancient artists who worked out the possibilities of the Fugue form have had in mind to express? They did not want to express anything; their thoughts did not travel outwards, but inwards, into the inmost nature of their art. They who adhere to meanings betray thereby their dislike of the inner aspect of things and their preference for outward appearance. (Herbart 1831, §72.)

Architecture is commonly taken as the paradigm of an art free from representation. About the only non-formal demands usually made of architecture are that a building should not look as if it was going to fall down, and that its design should express its function. But we have seen that the most plausible interpretation of the latter requirement is the negative one, that a building should not be got up to look like something it is not, that is, that representation should be excluded.

Sculpture seems not to need separate consideration from painting. In ceramics and decorative arts generally representation, when present, is usually subordinated to design. Gardening one would think to be a matter

function in a picture than to represent." This makes an important and valid point. But one does sometimes need to speak of the representational function of that which also (from some points of view, primarily) serves a formal function.

7. It was an eighteenth-century pastime to consider which of the arts were "imitative," and in what manner and what degree, and which not. James Harris, for example, wrote of music, painting and poetry that "these Arts exhibit to the mind *Imitations*. . . *Colour and Figure* are the only Media, through which Painting imitates. Music, passing to the Mind through the *Organ of the Ear*, can imitate only by Sounds and Motions." Poetry is like music in this, but because its sounds stand for ideas it can express anything (1744, ch. 1): "There is a *Charm* in Poetry, arising from its very *Numbers*; whereas Painting has Pretence to no Charm, except that of Imitation only" (*ibid.*, ch. v). Music powerfully rouses affections, though its representation is less accurate than that of poetry and painting (*ibid.*, ch. vi). And "From the *Accuracy of the Imitation*, and the *Merit of the Subject imitated*, the Question concerning which Art is most Excellent, must be tried and determined" (*ibid.*, ch. 1). Kames (1762, ch. xviii) says that of the five fine arts painting and sculpture are by nature imitative, whereas music and architecture produce not copies but originals, and language is imitative only when onomatopoeic.

of pure form, but this is questionable. The Japanese art is mentioned below (p. 382); but even in England we find such remarks as that in garden design "Objects should be less calculated to strike the immediate eye, than the judgement of well-formed imagination; as in painting" (Shenstone 1777, 112), and Dr. Sedlmayr claims (1957, 18-20) that European landscape gardens at the height of their popularity were "cult centres of a nature cult, in which all is calculated to fix the feeling and imagination onto an omnipotent directing being."

All these arts corroborate the general tendency of Bell's thesis. Even in the dance, which ranges all the way from pantomime to what seems sheer formalism, there is some tendency to belittle the purely mimetic aspect. But in the literary arts, even if formal values are stressed they cannot be said to inhere in the aesthetic surface. Verse may indeed have beauty of sound, though this may depend on a skilled reader or a sympathetic inward ear; but this counts for little, as has often been shown, in so far as such things are demonstrable, by constructing melodious verses whose meaning is trivial or grotesque and in which accordingly the melody makes little or no impression (for an example, see Richards 1929, 252, or Press 1955, 126). In pointing out such felicities of versification one usually shows that the sound pattern is appropriate to what is being said, rather than that it is beautiful in its own right, thus reversing the subordination I suggested for painting. It is probable, indeed, that the supposed harmony of verse is often nothing but a fancied reverberation of the thought.<sup>8</sup> Form in novels depends hardly at all on sensible qualities; it is a matter of balancing incidents, interweaving biographies and the like. In a sonnet formal excellence comes from balancing sentiments against each other within the framework of line and rhyme. So if in literature we are to assert the primacy of form over representation we shall oppose (for example) the way the flow of thought interacts with its verbal pattern to the merits of whatever opinions we may elicit from the resulting unity. What is true of the visual arts is more obviously true of literature, that the abstraction needed to perceive uninterpreted forms cannot be carried out, and if it did

8. Cf. Knight (1805, 51): "It appears to me, that the most melodious versification affords very little, if any at all, of mere sensual gratification; the regularity of metre or rhyme being rather calculated to assist memory and facilitate utterance, than to please the ear." John Dennis (1701, 264) takes the opposite view: "That the Noble Senses find their Account in an accomplish'd Poem, no one who has read one, can a Moment doubt. Nor *Corelli's* Hand, nor *Syphace's* Voice, could ever, to a judicious Ear, equal the *Virgilian* Harmony: Which has all the Mastery, with all the Air, and all the Sweetness, with all the Force, that the most delicate Ear can require." The force of this tribute is diminished when one reflects how little Dennis' pronunciation of Latin can have resembled that of Virgil or his first audience.



what was perceived would not be the relevant aesthetic structure of the work. In linguistic structures the elements are not sounds but phonemes, whose sensuous quality may vary widely from person to person and from occasion to occasion: they are what they are only in virtue of their constant relation to other phonemes in speech patterns which cannot be understood except in terms of their semantic functions.

In drama, stage designer and director may produce a formal beauty of settings and groupings, but this is of minor importance. Dramatic form is a matter of shaping action, of economy in characterization, and the like. What could be opposed as content or representation to this form? Presumably only the play's "message," or any historical events or typical situations or character types to which the play might be alluding. If this is the contrast, one may well agree that for description as well as for evaluation the most important elements will belong to the formal side. But this contrast is far from that which Bell makes in the visual arts: one can interpret dramatic form as thus understood only in terms of one's knowledge of human affairs and of the evaluation of them which the playwright assumes.

The case of the film, like that of the dance, is complex. What I said of drama may hold also of the ordinary photographed film. But films drawn direct on celluloid, like those of Mr. Norman McLaren, may be as free from representation as any painting. Such films, however, even more than such paintings, tend to let allusions to the world of things creep in: almost everything that moves, especially if its movement is irregular, looks as though it were alive, and in fact Mr. McLaren's films usually make a virtue of this near necessity and hold the attention by parodying life.

### "FORM" AND "CONTENT"

I began by treating the question whether works of art were more appropriately described in terms of formal properties or of what was represented as though it were a simple one whose meaning was clear and which could be decided on its merits. But even in the graphic arts I immediately encountered the question whether the three-dimensional properties of the forms suggested were to be classed as "form" or as "representation"; and in poetry, though it did seem to have "surface" qualities of sound and relations between sounds, the important distinction between literary form and content was one within the sphere of reference itself. It is therefore obvious that the distinction between form and content is by no means clear.

Many people deny that any distinction between form and content can be usefully or even meaningfully made. The grounds of this denial seem to be four, of which two are frivolous, the third important but insufficient, and the fourth serious but mistaken.

The first of the trivial objections is that, pedagogically, it is inexpedient to encourage students to think in terms of such dichotomies: students, an idle race, are all too prone to shy away from studying a work on its own terms, dividing their efforts between counting beats on their fingers and detecting incorrect rhymes, and providing paraphrases and listing sources. "Form and content" appears thus to be not a critic's tool but a school-master's crutch. But the sufficient reply to this objection is that abuse does not discredit use: it is true that this kind of thing goes on, but not all discussions of form are foolish in this way, nor is classroom utility an ultimate criterion of critical practice.

The second trivial objection is that (as I have shown, as if it needed showing) form may depend on content and content on form, so that neither can be conceived as existing without the other. And to this the sufficient answer is that unless we make this distinction we cannot say what depends on what, and so cannot describe the situation which is supposed to invalidate the distinction.

The third objection (made by Weitz 1950<sup>9</sup>) is really a more reasonable form of the first two together: that all such distinctions obscure the "organic" nature of the work of art, and that to begin with a form-content antithesis, even as stressing two aspects of what is admittedly indivisible, precludes adequate discussion of the kind of unity that a work of art presents. This objection needs more extended consideration.

It is a commonplace in describing the production of successful works of art to say that form and content become fused. Thus Roger Fry wrote in 1913 in a letter to G. Lowes Dickinson about poetry (Woolf 1940, 183):

I want to find out what the function of content is, and am developing a theory . . . that it is merely directive of form and that all the essential aesthetic quality has to do with pure form. It's horribly difficult to analyse out of all the complex feelings just this one peculiar feeling, but I think that in propor-

9. Of various distinctions between "form" and "content" he writes: "We can . . . recommend the rejection of all these usages on the grounds that none of them does full justice to the nature of the art object"—but would not partial justice be enough for a single distinction to make? Full justice is a tall order—; "and furthermore, that they lead to misdirected or specious aesthetic disputes" (Weitz 1950, 44). Content and form each comprise *all* that is in the work of art (*ibid.*, 47), which is "an organic complex, presented in a sensuous medium, which complex is composed of elements, their expressive characteristics and the relations obtaining among them" (*ibid.*, 44). He alleges that his recommendation "corresponds with the facts" (*ibid.*, 49). I shall adduce some more facts that it does not correspond with.



tion as poetry becomes more intense the content is entirely remade by the form and has no separate value at all.

(Note here, by the way, the curious equation of "pure form" with "one peculiar feeling.") The same point is made more elaborately and carefully in a famous but usually misunderstood dictum of Walter Pater (1894, 140):

*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.* For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance—its subject, its given incidents or situation; that the mere matter of a picture—the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape—should be nothing without the form, the spirit, or the handling; that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter:—that is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.<sup>10</sup>

Both these passages are written in terms of the fusion of a form and content which in some sense are initially separable; it is hard to see in what other terms they could be rewritten, and equally hard to deny that they make sense.

The gradual shaping of a work of art may be thought of as the gradual infusion of form into matter, or as the bringing of a mass of more or less intractable material into order. These seem to be two equivalent ways of describing the same phenomena, but perhaps they are not. The former way of speaking implies that a form and matter pre-exist, and is thus appropriate only to works which show "abstract" as opposed to "organic" form; the latter formulation does not require that the form should ever be thought of as in any sense separable. So to treat them as two ways of saying the same thing is to assimilate organic to abstract form. However, there is something to be said in favour of a terminology which implies the relevance of a form which the work does not yet have, even in works whose form is organic, for a work roughly ordered may suggest both the possibility of a material not so ordered and of a perfect order to which the work does not attain. Thus Mr. Spender writes (1951, 313-14):

It then occurred to me that form does not lie simply in the correct observance of rules. It lies in the struggle of certain living material to achieve itself within a pattern. The very refusal of a poet to sacrifice what he means to a

10. Cf. Hegel (1835, II.169): "The central point of art's evolution is the union, in a self-integrated totality, carried to the point of its freest expression, of content and form wholly adequate thereto. This realization, corresponding as it does with the entire notional concept of the beautiful, towards which the symbolic form of art strove in vain, first becomes apparent in *classical art*."

perfectly correct rhyme, for example, can more powerfully suggest the rhyme than correctness itself would. For it reveals the struggle towards the form, which because it has direction and movement, and is indeed an expression of will, projects the idea of an ideal form towards which the poem is moving, reaching even beyond the form itself.

I doubt whether imperfect rhymes alone are enough to produce this effect. But it may well be that some contrast between the formed and the unformed, and hence between "form" and some opposed term, is necessary to describe the processes of producing works of art, whether the form be conceived as a pre-existing pattern into which a pre-existing material is coaxed or as a terminal state only dimly foreseen and never clearly envisaged except in the act of its achievement. Donald Tovey wrote (1910, 913):

In every art there is an antithesis between form and matter, which becomes reconciled only when the work of art is perfect in its execution. And, whatever this perfection, the antithesis must always remain in the mind of the artist and critic to this extent, that some part of the material seems to be the special subject of technical rule rather than another. In the plastic and literary arts one type of this antithesis is more or less permanently maintained in the relation between subject and treatment. The mere fact that these arts express themselves by representing things that have some previous independent existence, helps us to look for originality rather in the things that make for perfection of treatment than in novelty of subject. But in music we have no permanent means of deciding which of many aspects we shall call the subject and which the treatment.

The contrast between form and matter here appears as that between what the artist has done and what he has done it with; and surely Tovey is right in saying that a critic cannot ignore this if he knows of it. Obviously the artist cannot.

Tovey's last point, which is not applicable to music only but to all arts, that if form and content are treatment and subject it is not always obvious which is which, may introduce the fourth objection: that this pair of terms has served to cover so many different contrasts that its use is confusing.<sup>11</sup> This is true, and is a sound reason for always explaining what the terms mean in any given context. It does not in the least tend to show that any of the contrasts themselves should be given up, but one might go so far as to say that the *terms* should be abandoned, since even if the user keeps their meanings distinct it is unlikely that his readers will be able to.

To "form" at least three terms may be opposed: "content," "matter"

11. Weitz (1950, 38-41) lists the following uses as current in aesthetics: (1) shape and thing shaped, or shape and total work; (2) how and what, either as expression and theme or as arrangement and elements or as medium and idea; (3) *successful* arrangement and elements; (4) abstract pattern and completion of pattern.



and "representation." In the preceding paragraphs I have used them almost interchangeably; but they suggest very different things. In contrasting form with matter we tend to think of the latter as a pre-existing raw material: crude experience to be worked up into significant form, or stone to be carved into shape, or pigment to be applied in an orderly way. The form contrasted with this may be thought of not as pre-existing but as manifested in the final state of the material. (Note that what is formed matter in one context may be "raw" material in another, as when one man makes a parody or a free copy of another's painting.) If, on the other hand, it is with content that form is contrasted, we tend to think of the form as a pre-existing abstract pattern, and of the content as the subject-matter that fills out this pattern; this content we do not necessarily think of as pre-existing, but perhaps simply as the body which the form fabricates to itself for this incarnation. The contrast between form and representation, finally, carries no suggestion about pre-existence either way but implies rather a distinction between two complementary aspects of the completed work—on the one hand its relations to other things suggested or referred to by it, and on the other its perceptual qualities and the relations between them. There is no excuse for equating representation with pre-existing matter, as is often done. But it is on this mistaken equation that most objections to "representation" in art rest. What leads to it is that representation may be significant in two ways: a portrait may be valued as a portrait-of-a-man, as exemplifying a good way of portraying humanity, or as an effective memento of a particular person. The latter valuation, though legitimate itself, is aesthetically irrelevant; but it still relates to the function of the painting and not to its origin, and the former evaluation is in any case not to be reduced to it.

So we have two kinds of dynamic contrast, one starting from pre-existing matter and the other from pre-existing form, and one kind of static contrast. Each of these three kinds may be variously exemplified. As pre-existing matter we may consider at least three things. It may be the *material* worked up: pigments with their limitations, wood or stone with their distinctive textures and structural properties, a specific language with its characteristic phonemic patterns and vocabulary. Or it may be the *subject* of poem or painting: The Fall of Man, Napoleon's Retreat from Moscow—a subject already having a certain structure as situation or narrative or thing.<sup>12</sup> Or it may be the *theme* of the work, as for example

12. Cf. Bradley (1909, 9 ff.): The subject of a poem "is not, as such, inside the poem, but outside it." It "is not the matter of the poem at all; and its opposite is not the form of the poem, but the whole poem." However, "the truth shows that the subject settles nothing, but not that it counts for nothing. The Fall of Man is really a more favourable subject than a pin's head"; it is "an inchoate poem or

sin, or jealousy, or maternal love. To pre-existing matter as each or any of these three may be opposed as form one of several things: the completed work as a whole, as informed matter, or the medium (sculpture, painting or what not), or within the given medium the mode of treatment, at any level of generality. As pre-existing form there are again at least three things to be considered. The most obvious is such *set forms* as sonata, sonnet and so on, contrasted with what is actually done with the form on a given occasion as content. But one may also regard as pre-existing form any *determinate relations* or *principles of balance* or harmony that the artist may use in constructing his work, and contrast with these as content the terms between which the relations hold, and the particular elements in which the principles are realized, in a particular work. And one may also take as pre-existing form *genres* or *modes* which prescribe not merely the structural skeleton but also the feeling-tone of the work: tragedy or pastoral, for example. Opposed to these as content would be the particular exemplifications of pattern and feeling.

What I have said implies that from the kind of pre-existing form specified we could tell what would be properly contrasted with it, but could make no such inference from a specification of pre-existing matter. "Content" thus appears as a term more definite in its meaning than "matter": indeed, some of the things I have called pre-existing form could have been named "matter" with no more than a mild suggestion of paradox, since each of them is something the artist takes as given and works on.

I have mentioned two aspects of the "static" contrast between form and representation. Contrasts within the presented surface itself between any "elements" ordered and the manner of their ordering might also be regarded as "static." No answer to the question "What *is* an element?" can be given: anything may be *treated as* an element that is capable of entering into an order. Nor is there a simple hierarchy, such that what is an element in one order may itself have elements ordered within it. A work of art will manifest as many different kinds of order as there are types of relations discernible in it.

The number of different things that may be material to be ordered, or elements discerned in an order, suggests that it might be profitable just to enumerate some of the things that may enter on one side or the other into some form-content dichotomy. For the sake of simplicity I confine myself to painting, where the matter has been most discussed.

the debris of a poem" and "already in some degree formed or organized." The distinction made in my text between subject and theme is from Hospers (1946, 16 ff.), who also makes other distinctions in this area.



First of all comes what is "there" in the presented surface as opposed to what is "read into" the surface. But since an aesthetic surface is essentially an object for perception, we must include under this head whatever is necessarily and automatically attributed to the surface and thus "read into" the picture by all observers. This will not be very much. It will presumably include (1) the picture as a whole, as a parti-coloured surface; (2) individual brush-strokes or similar marks; (3) homogeneous patches of colour, if any.

Next, there will be what is "in" the surface in the somewhat remote sense that it is "read into" the picture by all *competent* observers; that is, by anyone who understands the conventions employed. It is possible that for some of those to be named no such understanding is necessary. On the other hand, there may be some of which it is doubtful whether to say that all competent observers see them is to say more than that those who do see them do see them, and that this group includes the artist or some other person or persons of privileged judgement. All the entities named from now on are therefore of questionable status. None the less, they figure in meaningful discussions. They include (4) the two-dimensional forms comprising the elements (2) and (3) aforesaid, defined by outline or by tonal contrast or by any other means, taken simply as shapes in a plane; (5) the same forms taken dynamically, as involving stresses and tensions; (6) the three-dimensional forms unequivocally presented by whatever means, taken simply as masses; (7) the same forms taken dynamically, as having weight, movement, impetus, as involved in mutual thrusts and pressures; (8) the same forms interpreted, where appropriate, as being certain kinds of thing: in a portrait of a lady, for example, the figure taken neither as a mass having certain geometrical and dynamic properties nor as an imitation of a real lady, but as a lady-in-a-painting to whom may be attributed without logical impropriety all qualities discernible to sight (e.g. blue-eyed) or reasonably inferable from visual clues (e.g. consumptive) but no others. To these may be added two others not in the same series, whose precise status is more debatable: (9) the over-all feeling-tone of the picture if any—for some paintings are certainly sombre, some serene, some gay, but I do not see why we should feel obliged to ascribe a definite feeling-tone to every painting, even an indefinable one; and (10) the spatial ambience of the picture as a whole.

Numbers (4) to (8), which are parts of the picture, each correspond to a view of the picture taken as a whole comprising such parts. This yields the picture conceived as (11) a system of demarcated surfaces lying in a plane, (12) a system of balanced tensions between such surfaces, (13) a congeries of masses, (14) a system formed by the interplay of such masses

in tension (pictures which invite this viewpoint are sometimes called "machines"), and (15) a painted scene or situation or event.<sup>13</sup>

Let us consider the spectator, the interpreter who may take the picture in these varying ways. He will bring to the painting (a) a greater or less understanding of painting as practised in the society or societies to which he and the painter belong; (b) a manner of interpreting pictures derived from this understanding and knowledge, made more or less idiosyncratic by the vagaries of his experience in learning; (c) a knowledge of life and of the real world in general which enables him to understand what the painter is painting; (d) a personal life-history which will cause him to associate all manner of things with what he finds in paintings, regardless of what the painter might have intended or reasonably expected; (e) a disposition, however acquired, to like some things and dislike others; (f) on each occasion when he sees the picture, a mood which may unpredictably affect alike his perceptions, his understanding, his preferences and his likings. I have thus far written, and shall continue to write, as if (a) and (c) alone were operative. That is not so. My justification for maintaining the fiction is that these two alone are judged relevant, that responsible critics and students of paintings attempt to describe and assess in terms of these alone, doing their best to discount all other factors and attempting to become aware of them to this end. And thus far at least the factors I have mentioned have been ones to which idiosyncracies of taste and vision would make no difference.

Because a painting strictly controls the responses of a careful beholder, to (8) we can without ambiguity add: (16) the lady in the portrait conceived as a real lady,<sup>14</sup> which is not to be confused with (17) the nearest possible real lady to the one in the picture. That is to say: the remarks of

13. Similarly, different ways of viewing parts of pictures entail different ways of viewing their elements: a patch of paint forming part of a form taken as three-dimensional is itself taken as (e.g.) a facet of such a solid at a particular angle to the picture plane. It would be otiose to go through all the possibilities generated by such considerations.

14. Wellek and Warren write (1949, 14): "A character in a novel . . . is made only of the sentences describing him or put into his mouth by the author. He has no past, no future, and sometimes no continuity of life." This confuses the literary analogues of (7), (8) and (16). *Qua* "made of sentences" he has no life, let alone continuity of life; it is *qua* imaginary character strictly reconstructed from the author's clues that his life may be continuous or discontinuous, depending on how much information the author has given. Most readers of novels assume that characters do live in the intervals between their appearances, even if we are told nothing and imagine nothing of their lives; that is, we adopt the attitude of (16). Any other would be frantically silly. What Wellek and Warren are objecting to is concentrating on (17) and constructing imaginary biographies for fictitious characters. Attacks on the Shakespearean criticism of A. C. Bradley usually rest on this inability to distinguish between (16) and (17).



many people when confronted with a work painted in a convention strange or repugnant to them are such as would be appropriate were the picture-frame a window and they looking through it (which is how Alberti in his treatise *On Painting* said pictures should be looked at) at people whose legs were too long, or whose eyes both on the same side of the nose, or whatever; and even if one thinks this a silly way to look at a picture, judgements thus made are perfectly intelligible. That is number (16). But even when a portrait alludes only in the most oblique way to the physical appearance of the sitter it is possible to see a likeness and so to tell with more or less certainty and exactitude what the sitter looked like, thus postulating as it were an ideal referent for the painting, number (17). I do not now want to discuss whether these ways of interpreting pictures are appropriate or relevant, but only to point out that they are possible, and that their status is that of intelligible ways of looking at and interpreting the picture itself, not that of personal reveries chancing to be aroused by it.

From the spectator's imputation or reconstruction of a non-painterly reality we may turn to such reality itself, independent of the work of art but causally or referentially related to it. Here we may distinguish (18) the actual lady (if any) as seen by the artist from (19) the lady herself who is having her portrait painted, with her own history and social setting.<sup>15</sup> One should never speak of "what is represented" in a work of art without being quite clear to oneself which of numbers (16) to (19) one means.

Within the sphere of reality a painting may also on occasion be related to (20) Nature or the World, to reality conceived as a physical or meta-physical system whose general nature may in some sense be represented or embodied or referred to by it.

Thus far I have dealt with the work itself, with the world in which it exists and to which it may refer, and with the ideal spectator whose vision and interpretation, right or wrong, are not personal and singular. I have still to deal with the artist. His personal peculiarities, unlike the spectator's, cannot and should not be excluded from consideration, since they will

15. The distinction between (18) and (19) may remind us that "This is a painting of Miss Tyle" is ambiguous: it may mean "This is a painting for which Miss Tyle was the model," or it may mean "This is a painting designed to serve as a portrait of Miss Tyle." There is a detailed discussion of this and related distinctions in Beardsley (1958, §16). The distinctions I am making are analogous to those made by John Dewey (1938, 118-19) between subject-matter, content and object: "As *undergoing* inquiry, the material has a different logical status from that which it has as the *outcome* of inquiry. In its first capacity and status, it will be called by the general name of *subject-matter*. When it is necessary to refer to subject-matter in the context of either observation or ideation, the name *content* will be used. . . . The name *object* will be reserved for subject-matter so far as it has been produced and ordered in settled form by means of inquiry."

obviously affect the work as it exists for all others. But by way of transition from reality let us begin with the antecedent or circumstantial actualities other than his motif with which the painter must grapple, and which (let us remind ourselves what we are talking about), may figure as one term in a form/content dichotomy. These include (21) the pre-existing set forms into which his work may be cast, which in some situations will be merely opportunities for expression which he is free to exploit or to ignore, and in others will be mandatory in the sense that his work will not be bought, performed or attended to unless he uses them. Then there are (22) other formal conventions, such as systems of perspective and counterpoint, canons of rhyme or rhythm, which function as a language which he must use if he is to be readily understood; and (23) systems of public symbolism, such as the Byzantine use of different-shaped haloes to indicate different degrees of mortality and beatitude, or the use of the bee as a symbol of industry or the owl of knowledge, which again may be either prescribed procedures for the artist or opportunities of ready intelligibility. The most general form of these systems of symbolism is the artistic tradition, the general "way of seeing" or of handling a medium, which is what the artist acquires in his training.

Besides the ways of thinking and expressing of which the artist may avail himself, there are other external factors of a more material kind. These include (24) the media at his disposal—dancers of limited strength and skill; actors of limited mind and agility; stone of a given grain and strength; a particular language with its own grammar and idiom and typical phonemic patterns; musical instruments with precisely determined compass and timbre; players of limited wind and dexterity; pigments whose relative permanence, miscibility, drying qualities and so on can be manipulated but not completely controlled.<sup>16</sup> And in many cases there will also be (25) the demands of client or patron; for architects at least must design buildings their clients will be prepared to use,<sup>17</sup> and in the other

16. Cf. Mueller (1951, 8): A musical composition "reflects the currently available instruments and their technological characteristics, the contemporary organization of society, the source of its economic sustenance, its political and social standards, all vaguely lumped together by certain mystically-minded writers as the 'spirit of the age.'" I have not had the nerve to list all these as separate factors on my own responsibility.

17. An architect can of course draw any kind of prospective building he pleases; but his *œuvre* is what gets built. Wren's rejected plans for St. Paul's may have been better than the accepted version, but Wren's St. Paul's is the one that stands—the others are only might-have-beens. The relation between architect and client varies, of course: F. L. Wright was said to be able to make his clients pay for buildings that thwarted their wishes; another architect describes an architect's first interview with his client as "half way between a wrestling bout and a Japanese tea party."



arts many of the greatest works have been done in execution of commissions more or less precise, some of which seemed to the artists burdens rather than opportunities.

Let us now turn from the external conditions of the artist's work to what he brings to it of himself. Here we may start with (26) his conception of the real world, if he has one—the subjective counterpart of number (20). Many artists, including most serious novelists, work in the conviction that what they do is substantiated by the nature of the world to which it refers. In some cases there is, as an alternative to this, (27) a clearly conceived fantasy-world to which the work alludes. Such work is seldom of major interest, though it may become very popular (e.g. the writings of Mr. Ray Billington), for an artist is unlikely to put forth his whole strength in relation to something he does not believe. Apparent exceptions are generally allegories, where the relations in the fantasy-world correspond to relations in a world in which the artist does believe, which are his real subject. This would be true of the fictions of Professors C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, not to mention Spenser and Bunyan. In such cases the fantasy world has the status of (28) a private symbolism used by the artist—private, not in the sense that no one else can understand it (though that may happen) but in the sense that the artist works it out *ad hoc* rather than adopting it from the conventions of his society.

From (18) and (19), the stimulus the artist receives and the object which is its source, we must distinguish (29) the artist's mental image or images of the thing to be painted, if he has any. Such an image may be a simple memory-image, more or less modified; or it may have no reference to any particular object at all;<sup>18</sup> or it may be related to an object as stimulus in some such way as in A. Y. Jackson's anecdote (1958, 47) of Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer:

It rained continuously. Harris carried a large sketching umbrella, while Lismer sulked in his tent. He had thrown his packsack in a corner; as he looked at it with half-closed eyes, it began to assume the form of a big island lying off the mainland; the straps became a ridge of rock in the foreground and the light coming through the folds of the tent became an intriguing sky.

When Harris returned there was a sketch in Lismer's box.<sup>19</sup>

18. Cf. Raphael's letter to Count Baldassare Castiglione (Goldwater and Treves 1945, 74): "In order to paint one fair one, I should need to see several fair ones. . . . But as there is a shortage both of good judges and of beautiful women, I am making use of a certain idea which comes into my mind. Whether this is possessed of any artistic excellence, I do not know. But I do strive to attain it."

19. Cf. Leonardo's recommendation (1939, 873-4) of the use of a damp-stained wall to suggest landscapes. For further examples see Gombrich 1960, chapter 6.

Next we may put (30) the artist's scheme for his work, if any, or rather his successive notions of what his work as a whole is to become. Less specific than image and plan are (31) the theme and (32) the subject of the work, as these were defined above (p. 351). We should also include (33) the particular experience or emotion of the artist to which a work gives form, although the function of such experience and its relation to the completed work are debatable (cf. ch. xvi); and to this we might add (34) the passing personal moods which may affect his performance as their counterparts affect the spectator's reaction. These are all specific to one work of the artist. Among his more permanent equipment we might single out (35) his feeling for the material in which he works—whether he likes to slap paint on in gobs, or to apply respectful glazes; and more broadly (36) his technical equipment, his acquired skills and habits of work which he brings to all that he does. Finally there is (37) the artist's life-experience and emotional equipment as a whole—or rather that part of it which is available to his work, for we cannot take it for granted that no aspects of a man's experience and feeling are sealed off from his art.

The above enumeration does not pretend to be exhaustive. One could go in this fashion almost *ad infinitum*, certainly *ad nauseam*. I have for the most part dealt only with painting; music would presumably yield a smaller collection, literature one equally large but differently made up. The scale of this work, the fatigue of its author, and the boredom of its readers call, in unison, a halt.



## REFERENCE

WHEN A Plain Man is shown a non-representational painting, his usual reaction is to say "It looks like"—whatever grotesque object he is able to associate with it. Unable to discover the inner harmony of the work, he is forced back on the game of "pictures in the fire"; and the fact that the painting baffles him ensures that the pictures he sees will be unpleasant or ridiculous, expressing his hostility or affirming his superiority (cf. p. 138 above). This familiar fact supports Bell's claim that interpretations in terms of subject are always the result of failure to interpret in terms of form. But the support is inadequate. For some works of art do portray real or imagined objects and scenes, as others do not; and it is rather absurd to say that the portrayal, on which such pains have been bestowed, is irrelevant where it is present. One might accept here Gilson's distinction (1957, 260-1) between the arts of painting and picturing, to the latter alone of which representation is relevant. In that case, most of those usually called painters will in fact have been practising the "mixed" art of picture-painting. It is possibly only in the last decade or so that the pure art of painting as Gilson understands it has been practised, an art which deliberately excludes everything but the working of paint on canvas or board. It is significant that practitioners of this art have called painting "a place in which to live." An abstract expressionist's canvas is his castle. However, a ten-year trend may not last for a millenium, so we may continue to take seriously the problem of reference in art.

From now on I want to set aside the doubts raised as to whether representation in art always or ever refers to anything outside the work in any sense other than that it may be stimulated by such a thing or referred to it by a philistine. Nor do I wish to emphasize the differences I mentioned between the senses in which a work may be said to be "of" or "about" something. I just want to take the "content" that is correlative to Mr. Bell's "form" and, assuming that works of art are properly described in

terms of what they represent and how they represent it, inquire into the different kinds of things that may be said to be represented. For we have seen that descriptions in terms of form alone are in some cases impossible and in most cases inadequate. Form, however, unlike content, cannot be thought to be irrelevant, so we shall be prepared to find that the complementary descriptions in terms of what is represented will be inadequate or incomplete. These two modes of description will be either equally valid alternatives, or complementary facets of a single adequate description; or perhaps in any satisfactory description of a work of art neither form nor representation figures separately, but only a compound in which these are elements, discriminable perhaps but not separable.

## SYMBOLIZATION

### *Signs and Symbols*

IN PERCEIVING, one may rest in the contemplation of the thing perceived or refer that object to some further thing, of which one is then said to take the perceived object as a *sign*. One may thus *take* any thing as a sign of any other thing. When, however, the further reference is of a kind regularly made, in virtue of some causal connection or of some established convention of meaning, the thing perceived is said to *be* a sign of the other. There are three possibilities that should be kept distinct: that the perceived thing should be noticed and also referred to that of which it is the sign; that it should be unnoticed and taken *merely* as a sign; and that its perceptible qualities and signifying functions should be intricately connected. In so far as works of art are signs or complexes of signs, they belong typically to this third class.

When the connection between sign and signified is causal, the sign is said to be a natural sign. Such signs are almost irrelevant to aesthetics.<sup>1</sup> When the connection is conventional or when the sign is constructed in order to refer to what it signifies we speak of "symbols." Symbols "stand for" or "refer to" the things of which they are signs. These things may be near or distant, it makes no matter. Language, which is among other things a way of dealing with things by proxy, is a system of symbols. But the things to which natural signs refer stand in a fixed spatio-temporal relation to them. It is widely and quite reasonably held to be the distinctive

1. I say "almost" because (a) appearances may, though they should not, be taken as natural signs of a reality that causes them; (b) the sight of a man about to clash cymbals, natural sign of an impending din, may (though again it doubtless should not) affect aesthetic appreciation.



mark of human intelligence that it can operate with symbols, not with natural signs only.

### *Standing For and Referring To*

What does it mean to say that a symbol "stands for" a thing? Attempts to answer this question reveal that there are important differences between symbols whose neglect has led to much confusion. I shall be brief: the subject has been much discussed (see especially Ullmann 1951). What the phrase "stands for" seems to imply is that the symbol is a substitute for the thing symbolized, stands in place of it. + on a map stands for a church, the word "tree" stands for a tree, a man in a painting stands for a real man. Now, a map is indeed very like a small-scale substitute for the district it maps. The + on the map has some of the same spatial relations to the other signs on the map as the church it stands for has to the objects the other signs stand for, and the whole map may be said without absurdity to stand for the whole district. So too in a painting the painted objects hold to one another complex relations analogous to those which the objects portrayed would hold to each other in reality, and the painted scene as a whole portrays a real scene. But though the sentence "Parting is such sweet sorrow" refers to the world, one cannot find in the world either things which the words stand for in the same sense that we have been considering, nor *a fortiori* a total situation which the whole sentence might stand for.<sup>2</sup> Even in sentences such as "John kicked Mary," where the words have referents, there is a striking difference in the extent and specificity of the relations asserted. In map or picture, relations of indefinite complexity may be discovered between the signs, as between their referents; in the sentence, one relation only is singled out. A better analogue of map or picture would be a chapter, or a whole book; but even here we have not a continuum but an aggregate of separate relationships.

### *Icon and Ideogram*

I have just distinguished systems of symbolism where the relations employed are structurally analogous to those asserted or shown from those where they are not. This distinction corresponds to a general difference between two ways in which symbols (words, parts of paintings or whatever) may "stand for" or "represent" things, though in practice the two ways will usually be blended. The first way is by imitation: the representing part presents an appearance in some way resembling some real or pos-

2. C. I. Lewis (1946, 51 ff.) accordingly argues that, because no isolable entity exists to correspond to the content of a factual assertion, all such assertions should be thought of as ascribing complex properties to the world.

sible thing of which it is the symbol. These we may call (following Morgan 1955) iconic. They may be of two kinds, not sharply distinguished: they may be replicas, possessing some structural properties which the thing signified is thought to possess; or they may be likenesses, objects calculated to produce in the spectator sensations analogous to those that would be his were he to view the thing signified in certain conditions.<sup>3</sup> The other way of standing for things is by way of conventionally assigned meaning. Such signs we may call ideograms. As Morgan says, our plastic arts make little use of them; but a very common sort of sign is the semi-ideographic, where a certain form, possessing some analogies with the thing signified, has come by convention to be the only acceptable way of representing that thing. Such semi-ideographic images differ in important ways from the iconic images where resemblance is only inconspicuously controlled by convention. The former, since their meaningfulness depends on the public's prior knowledge that this sign means so-and-so, can refer only to familiar types of things or to well-known individuals. But the latter can really only refer directly to real or possible individuals, and to particular aspects of individuals at particular times and places, at that. For if an image looks like a man, it must do so by looking more like some than others, and there will presumably be some one man it looks most like of all (the "nearest possible," no. 17, in ch. XIII). This may be some existing individual; or an idealized individual; or a typical individual; but an individual it must surely be. Such signs can refer to the type only through the typical, whereas words, and ideographic and semi-ideographic signs generally, refer to individuals, whether typical or atypical, only through the type.

Words, then, referring to individuals through types only, are ideographic signs; paintings and their parts tend to be iconic, and refer primarily to individuals. But the signs on maps are between the two: though the sign + in one place on the map always stands for one particular church, and the context determines rigorously without need of further explanation which church it is, wherever the sign + occurs it always refers to some church. And the particular sign refers to its particular church only as a church, without reference to its size, architectural style and so forth. It refers directly to the individual, but only *as* a specimen of a type.

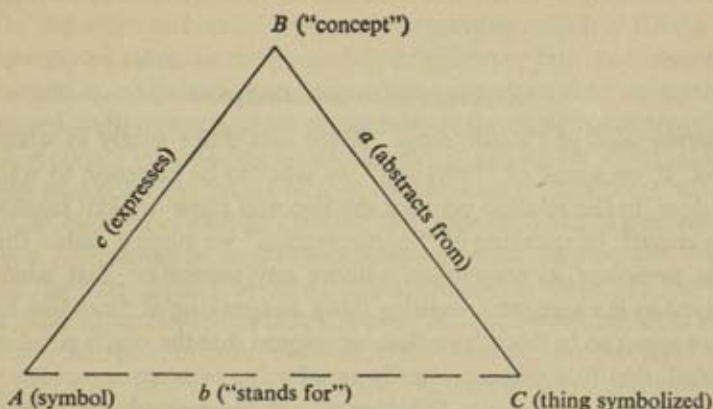
### *The Triangle of Meaning*

Because with ideographic and semi-ideographic signs the sign *A* refers to the individual *C* as a specimen of the type *B*, symbolization seems to be a

3. The distinction between likeness and replica is Plato's (*Sophist*, 235D-236A).



three-termed relation. So we are led to construct that celebrated little diagram the "triangle of meaning," which seems indispensable though it defies precise interpretation:



What in effect this diagram does is to split the relation of "standing for" into two parts: a general concept *B* is formed by abstraction from particular things *C* and is then expressed in a symbol *A*. *A* stands for *C* only by expressing *B*. In the triangle we have one dubious relation *b*, the indirect relation of "standing for," and one dubious entity *B*, the "concept" or "mental abstraction"—dubious because it has an air of having been called into existence to explain the process of symbolization. From what has been said already it will be apparent that the triangle as drawn, which is that specifically designed to illustrate the symbolic functions of general words, could be modified slightly to illustrate a variety of different symbolic relations: that in fact the relation of *b* to *a* and *c* in symbolization is not clear, simple or constant. Moreover, almost anything that can be hypostatized as a "mental content" can be put at *B*.

Some people seem to confine the term "symbol," which is so variously used, to *A*'s that refer to or stand for *C*'s only through *B*'s, thus excluding the iconic signs, such as parts of paintings, which represent *B*'s only through portraying *C*'s. It may equally be argued, however, that perception itself is a "symbolic" process explicable in terms of our triangle. For just as + stands for a church *qua* church, so we interpret what we see: we have no uninterpreted percepts, whatever we see we see *as* something. The lamp that I see before me I pick out from its surroundings in the very act

of perceiving and see *as* a lamp. "Uninterpreted" precepts would be patches of mere colour,<sup>4</sup> or a coloured continuum; what I actually see is a world of things, isolated and interpreted immediately in terms of the conceptual scheme I use (cf. p. 319 above).

### *Representation and Imitation*

The terms used of "iconic signs" in the arts differ subtly in what they suggest. If we speak of "imitation" we seem to be referring to what the artist does, to the relation between the sign and some original from which it was copied. In speaking of "representation" we suggest rather that the sign is *perceived as* something, without any suggestion that what it is perceived as is a separately existing thing. In speaking of "standing for," if one can speak so in this connection, we suggest that the sign is perceived as a symbol, that it is taken primarily as referring to some separately existing thing or kind of thing. Whether or not these words do carry these suggestions, it is evident that all three ways of interpreting iconic signs are possible.

We have seen that any interpretation of a representational work that takes us away from the work to something else, as in "imitation," can be condemned as distracting. But we have also seen that representation cannot be ignored. In the two remaining possibilities, though, the "seeing as" is of the same immediate kind as we apply in interpreting perceptual experience in general—if indeed it is proper to use so definite a word as "interpreting" for something so automatic that it must be inferred from reflection on the nature of the perceptual process. For this reason some have spoken of an aesthetic "illusion" (cf. Ziff 1951 and references there given); but wrongly, for what we see a painted man as is precisely a man-in-a-painting (no. 8 in ch. XIII). Now, if one assumes both that what the painted man is taken as is not no. 8 but no. 16, a real man, and that the iconic sign is an imitation, one is likely to go on to speak of representational painting as "deception" or as having deception for its ideal, as though its *modus operandi* were its aim, and as though all representational elements or aspects of art were imperfect attempts at *trompe l'œil*. So Professor Gilson writes (1957, 245–7) that in so far as painting is representa-

4. So ingrained is our habit of seeing things as things that even when we speak of patches of colour we have a hard time not thinking of them as pieces of coloured material sewed or glued on to the surface of things.



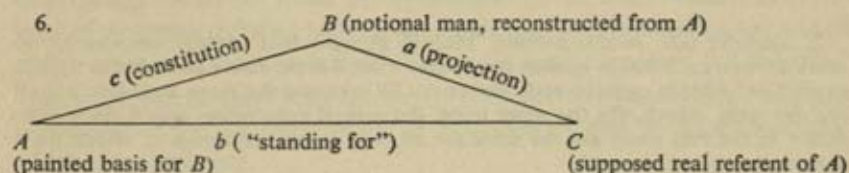
tional it must be a deception and aim at producing illusion; "deception . . . is the perfection of imitation."<sup>5</sup> But obviously, in so far as a picture is not referred to another thing, no deception is involved: nothing is substituted for anything else. In so far as it is referable to something beyond itself, it is so precisely by way of reference and not by way of substitution. Even in the extreme case of *trompe l'œil* painting, which if Gilson were right should be taken as the perfection of picturing but is of course not, there would be no point in the pains taken to produce the "deception" if it remained undiscovered, which presumably is the objective of true deception. A *trompe l'œil* painting could not be recognized, let alone admired, by those whom it deceived. In fact, of course, such paintings are admired, if at all, as displays of skill and not for their representational qualities.

Only if representation be taken as imitation, it seems, can our "triangle of meaning" be applied to iconic signs; otherwise there are not three terms. An analogous triangle can, however, be constructed, with the shapes constituting the painted man (no. 4) at *A*, the notional man (no. 8) as whom these shapes are seen at *B*, and at *C* the "nearest possible real man" (no. 17) as a projection of *B*.<sup>6</sup> But this triangle is not all that it may seem to be. For the relation of notional man to paint is on line *c*, which is *not* the line of "representing" or "standing for" which is peculiar to line *b*. And whereas in the typical cases of symbolization diagrammed on the normal triangle *A* is derived from *C*, the symbol from the external thing, here *C* is derived from *A*, and by a dubiously legitimate process at that. In fact, the postulation of *C* may be ascribed to a mistaken urge to assimilate painting to talking, to complete the triangle come what may.

### Expression

A second error may come from a mistaken attempt to "complete the triangle," to assimilate all symbols to the same model. Although if *B* is a concept the relation *a* must hold between it and some *C*, there might well be mental contents, feelings or what have you, that are capable of being

5. Cf. Isidore of Seville (*Etymologies* XIX.xvi, §1): "Pictura autem est imago exprimens speciem rei alicuius, quae dum visa fuerit ad recordationem mentem reducit. Pictura autem dicta quasi fictura; est enim imago ficta, non veritas. Hinc et fucata, id est ficto quodam colore inlita, nihil fidei et veritatis habentia."



expressed in art but art not related in any discernible way to any experience of anything in the outside world (cf. Hanslick 1854, 52). In such a case some people might be tempted to postulate some experience from which the mental content was supposedly extracted, and say that the work symbolized that supposed experience. Thus according to Mrs. Langer (1953) a work of art expresses *ideas* of feeling, knowledge about feelings, so that the work symbolizes a kind of mental content other than that which it expresses. Alternatively, it is possible, and indeed it is common, to say that the work *symbolizes* the feeling it expresses. This, if it is not a simple confusion of the two relations I have tried to distinguish, is to say that what is expressed is to be taken as uninterpreted experience, so that no process of abstraction has intervened to differentiate the mental content from its originating stimulus. This banishment of intellectual activity from the artist's mind and consequent reduction of artistic meaning to expression is common enough.

### *Arbitrariness*

Obviously, symbols are useless unless they can be recognized as standing for what they stand for. Such recognition may presumably rest, as I have said, on likeness or on convention, and thus may be in varying degree arbitrary or natural. But if as we now see "standing for" involves the two relations of abstraction and expression arbitrariness may enter into either or both. There are also two current senses of the term "arbitrary" to be distinguished. It may mean simply dependent upon the decision of some man or men, or it may mean capricious, without sufficient reason.

In the relation of abstraction, concept formation can hardly be capricious. It is possible for the mind to form concepts capriciously, as psychological experiments have shown; but presumably in real life concepts are formed because the grouping and classifying of experiences which they represent is useful. Concepts may still, however, be arbitrary in the other sense, in that no classification of experience is inescapably *imposed* by experience, though it may to a great extent be guided and controlled by experience.<sup>7</sup> The vocabulary of one language may make a distinction which another language ignores, or may (as in colours) draw distinctions in different places in continua; but the two schemes will be based on observ-

7. Aristotle (*De Interpretatione*, 16a3-8) thought that abstraction was in no sense arbitrary: "What is spoken symbolizes mental experiences and what is written symbolizes what is spoken; and, just as not all men use the same alphabet, not all use the same speech. On the other hand, the mental experiences which these symbolize in the first place are the same for all, and so are the things of which these experiences are likenesses."



able differences and will thus be readily graspable by those who do not know the language into which they are built.

On the side of expression the case is different. The concept of fish is no doubt common to many peoples using many languages, but there is no reason why one word for this concept should be preferred to another: the choice of sound and shape to express a concept is usually capricious, in the sense that no present user of the language knows a reason for it. When the choice of word for concept is not entirely capricious but is governed by some notion of suitability, still the suitability is not such as to determine the choice.

In systems of symbolism other than languages something similar may hold. Thus the cartographer's decision to have a special sign for a church is arbitrary in the sense that it rests on a decision, is not dictated by the terrain; but it is not capricious, for it rests on non-cartographic habits of thought of the people for whom the map is made. On the side of expression, the choice of the sign + is again not capricious, but is guided by its suitability as an easily recognizable mark with churchly associations; yet at the same time this particular symbol need not have been chosen. Most cartographic symbols are of this nature; and what is true of them is true also of the semi-ideographic signs of stylized arts.

With the iconic signs of the representational arts, for which the "normal" triangle cannot be constructed, of course arbitrariness cannot enter in the same ways. The widespread notion, against which Gombrich (1960) wages his polemic, that the representational arts are "conventional" and arbitrary in their use of artistic "languages," is almost entirely due to a failure to distinguish different kinds of symbols. To say that a sign is iconic is to say that there is no place for capriciousness in its way of symbolizing. The reader may readily determine for himself in what ways the lesser degree of arbitrariness may enter into such symbolization.

Because with ideographic and semi-ideographic symbolization the choice of symbol for concept may be capricious, an utterance or act may (causally) express without publicly expressing. Such utterances or acts are not regarded as symbols, which must be recognizable as such. A symbolism called "private" is one peculiar to one user or a small group of users, but of which the key is at least accessible to investigation. If this condition is not fulfilled we do not speak of "symbolism" at all. And because the relation of expression forms part of the process of symbolization, the use of that term is sometimes restricted also: some would speak of "expression" only when the relation between *B* and *A* is publicly intelligible, reserving some other term for cases where *A* is merely caused by *B* or associated with it for the nonce.

*Emblems*

Levels of symbolism may be as complex as levels of interpretation. Thus in the visual arts either iconic or ideographic signs may serve as a third kind of sign, the *emblem*. Emblems are signs which signify one thing by standing for another. This may be by resemblance or through convention, but is in fact normally through convention based on some supposed likeness. Thus a lamb in a painting, which "stands for" a lamb, may also "stand for" Jesus; the use of this emblem was presumably based at first on some supposed analogy between sign and signified, but it is not necessary to know what this was—a shared quality of meekness, a shared relation to the Passover sacrifice, or both, or what. In such cases, a real lamb (or whatever) may be *taken as* standing for Jesus by anyone at any time, or not. With painted lambs we have no choice: convention fixes the contexts in which the further interpretation is to be made.

We do not have to stop at this level. In a painting of the Virgin holding an apple to the infant Jesus, the painted lady of course "stands for" the Virgin; but the apple-holding Virgin obviously "stands for" the Virgin giving suck; and the Virgin giving suck doubtless "stands for" the life-giving forces of nature.

*Symbolization: A Broad Sense*

I have written as if it were improper to speak of "symbols" where the relation of "standing for" did not hold: that is, the symbol must be other than what it symbolizes (a thing cannot be substituted for itself), and, by implication, must be involved in communication; to say that *X* stands for *Y* is to say something about a system of communication, not about some individual's psychic processes etc. But in so doing I was advocating a restriction of the sense of the term "symbol." The term is in fact very variously used. Professor Frye, for example, defines a symbol (1957, 71) as "any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention," a definition which seems unrelated to anyone else's use of the term. More usually, things are said to be symbols or symbolic if they are in any way meaningful or significant, and especially if their significance is obscure and portentous.

Paintings taken as wholes may be taken as iconic signs made up of the iconic or other signs that are their parts. But there is another sense in which works of art as wholes are said to have meaning: not by standing for something which they are taken to stand for, but by imitating or manifesting something of which neither artist nor spectator need ever be aware but whose relation to the work makes it meaningful and effective. Thus Mrs. Langer writes (Werner 1955, 5):



A work of art is a symbol—a single, indivisible symbol; which is not saying that it is unanalysable, but indivisible in the sense that an individual is so, though it is in many ways analysable. . . . Art is a process of constructing symbols, but it is not a symbolism, as language is. Every work of art is a whole and new symbolic form, and expresses its import directly to anyone who understands it at all.

The term "symbol" is here being used in a sense extended by analogy: we form concepts in order to make experience manageable; concepts are embodied in symbols; symbols, then, may be defined as "any device whereby we are enabled to make an abstraction" (Langer 1953, xi), that is to say, to make something intelligible; a work of art in some sense makes something intelligible, if only itself ("Form signifies itself"—Focillon 1942, 3); a work of art may therefore be called a symbol. So too we may say of a work of art that in its entirety it is expressive in some specifiable or un-specifiable way, or that it expresses or reveals the nature of reality or of some aspect of or opinion about reality. In such cases we have "meaningfulness" without, perhaps, specifiable meaning.<sup>8</sup> There is something like abstraction and something like expression, but no "standing for": indeed, to complete our "normal" triangle we should have in some cases to fabricate entities for *B* and *C* both. It is in such marginal cases that we might prefer to speak of a feeling of having understood rather than of understanding (cf. p. 260 above).

8. Cf. Hanslick (1854, 50): "In music there is both meaning and logical sequence, but in a musical sense; it is a language we speak and understand, but which we are able to translate." Hanslick thinks music is a language because it has a quasi-vocabulary (a repertoire of admitted sounds) and a quasi-grammar. Mrs. Langer thinks it is not a language because its "vocabulary" answers to no concepts, does not in fact function as a vocabulary. Now along comes Mr. Cooke (1959) who persuasively argues the implausible thesis that music is a language with a meaningful vocabulary of phrases which can *almost* be translated and which account for one aspect of musical meaning.

## REFERENCES

AMONG THE POSSIBLE kinds of referent suggested for works of art one can work out a certain dialectical development, which presumably answers to no historical or psychological fact but which does enable us to establish some kind of intelligible relation between the different views. The development governs the sequence of subjects in this chapter and the next, and goes thus. It is obvious that paintings that refer outside themselves—and it is around paintings that this controversy has chiefly raged—refer to particulars in the first instance. For one thing, the signs typically used are iconic; for another, the fact that whole pictures generally include settings tends to tie them to particular events or situations; but the decisive factor is that of course paintings being spatially extended have to be of what is spatially extended, which one would take to be the mode of existence of particular things rather than of (for example) types. So the first impulse is to say that referents of paintings are particulars. But this makes art trivial. To escape this triviality one may take two courses. The first is to say that the important thing is not which particulars are represented, but the style of their depiction. Styles of depiction, however, if they are representatively significant, must get their importance from a view of the nature of Reality which they imply; so that one seems driven on to say that paintings, in depicting particulars, also and more importantly depict Reality. The alternative course is to say that through portraying particulars paintings convey a general truth—reaching, as I have said, the type through the typical. The next step may be taken from either position. Art, one may feel, cannot after all be concerned with the typical, since this is the province of scientific and discursive thought. It must, then, be concerned after all with particulars, but not in any anecdotal way: it serves rather to emphasize the individuality of individuals, and in doing so will be the complement of discursive thought (cf. pp. 268 ff. above). Alternatively, if after saying that art bodies forth the nature of Reality one goes on to ask how this can be



done, one may very well reach the conclusion that Reality consists of individual things, and it is just because of this fact that art can come closer to revealing it than can the sciences. In saying this, though, one has again ignored settings, and ruled out of court even landscape-paintings, in which what is painted is not in any acceptable sense an individual but a scene determined by a viewpoint. So one might go on to say that though art does emphasize the unique and thus fill a gap left by discursive reason, *what* is depicted is again of less importance than *how* it is depicted: what the work is to be taken as really referring to is the unique experience or emotion that the artist has incorporated in it. But since this involves the unwelcome, even absurd notion that works of art are always to be taken as autobiography, one may prefer to say that they embody not the artist's emotion but his knowledge of emotion. This has the advantage of not seeming to confuse expression with symbolization. Finally, reflection on the position thus at last reached may show that one has got far away from anything in terms of which works of art could actually be described. And this conclusion might lead one to decide that it was a fundamental error to treat these as alternative explanations of the representational aspects of art, rather than as different factors that may all simultaneously be relevant and which may all function in a single description or in a discussion of that description.<sup>1</sup>

## PARTICULARS

MR. A. K. LAWRENCE, R.A., in praise of academic art, says (1951, 190) that it is based on

the principle . . . that painting is a representational visual art, rooted in the conviction that the genuine artistic impulse is to create the illusion of reality, that is, visual reality, in a naturalistic style to the limits of the painter's skill and the possibilities of the medium. All great European art has resulted from the acknowledgement of this principle.

And certainly the principle has had a long run. Plato (*Republic* X) asserts it, the elder Pliny's anecdotes of birds taken in by painted grapes and painters by painted blinds (*Natural History* XXXV, ch. 65 etc.) presup-

1. Professor Abrams (1953, 313) lists five notions of poetic truth current among the Romantics: correspondence to a supra-sensible reality; real existence of the poem and its standing as effect and cause of real experiences; correspondence to "objects which contain, or have been altered by, the feelings and imagination of the observer"; correspondence to concrete experience of wholes; and sincerity, correspondence to the poet's actual state of mind.

pose it, the fifteenth-century Italians affirm it.<sup>2</sup> "The belief that the plastic arts transcribe the artist's visual experience," said M. Malraux (1953, 308), "and the collateral belief that they are expressions of an instinctive drive, are not theories in the ordinary sense; they are persistent illusions." But illusions must have non-illusory causes, and a persistent illusion must have a real persistent cause; and the persistence is more easily demonstrable than the illusoriness. The position, indeed, seems almost not to require defence—it is so obviously what painters have generally done: they present for their public a visual experience bearing an obvious and more or less close likeness to the visual experience one might have by looking in a certain direction on some real or possible occasion in some real or possible locality. The trouble is that, as we have already seen, if this is all painters do one cannot see why their work should be thought valuable or important. And, as Plato says, if the most successful painting is the one that creates the most complete illusion, the art of painting should be condemned outright, since neither deceiving nor being deceived is a worthy aim.

I have already disposed of the idea that the aim of representation could be deception. But if it is not, what could be the purpose of this production of simulacra? Aristotle traces the allure of the imitative arts to a human instinct for imitation, on the artist's part, and the pleasure of recognition, on the spectator's (*Poetics*, 1448b4 ff.). Art, while thus intimately connected with the drive towards knowledge and the joy in its possession which are the two sides of man's essentially rational nature, would be rather a by-product or overflow of them than a serious employment. This explanation will not do. I do not suppose that there is an instinctive urge to imitate, or that if there is painting gives it an outlet; but if there were and it did, and if this were the sole psychological spring of the painter's activities, it would follow that when painting for his own satisfaction the painter would simply copy whatever chanced to be before him. Mr. Lawrence suggests

2. Cf. Alberti (*On Painting*, III [c. 1435]): "I say the function of the painter is this: to describe with lines and to tint with colour on whatever panel or wall is given him similar observed planes of any body so that at a certain distance and in a certain position from the centre they appear in relief and seem to have mass." And Leonardo (1883, I, no. 529 [c. 1492]): "When you want to see if your picture corresponds throughout with the objects you have drawn from nature, take a mirror and look in that at the reflection of the real things, and compare the reflected image with your picture, and consider whether the subject of the two images corresponds in both, particularly studying the mirror." Both Leonardo and Alberti were developers and promoters of scientific perspective. But it is noteworthy that, in paintings seen under ordinary conditions, scientific perspective is not calculated to produce illusion—indeed, the one viewpoint from which the perspective "works" is often one inaccessible to the spectator (cf. White 1957, *passim*). What such perspective does is rather to create the illusion of creating an illusion.



that "academic" painters do this, but though he is such a painter himself I do not believe him. And on the other hand, if the pleasures of recognition were the only ones available to the spectator, all recognizable paintings would afford equal delight, which is not the case; and coloured photographs would always be acceptable substitutes for paintings, which is not the case either. Not that the pleasures of recognition are not real—anyone who has drawn for a child knows that they are;<sup>3</sup> it is rather that the development of photography, satisfying so cheaply and easily some of the functions of the graphic arts, has brought more forcibly to our attention the jobs that painters can do better than photographers.<sup>4</sup>

One function is undoubtedly performed by some paintings and not by others: to serve as mementos of people or places. Photographs have to some extent taken over this function too, but not altogether, because a portrait is a ceremonial affair: a memorial of someone is not just something to remember him by, and even the best photograph lacks the air of specialness that even the worst painting has.<sup>5</sup> This memorial function is usually thought of as a non-aesthetic one, but this is so only in a limited sense. Never in any age, even at times when exactness in portrayal was most valued, has it entered into the judgements of connoisseurs of paintings; but on the other hand it is a function fulfilled by the painting as a painting rather than as an article of commerce, and may be thought of as a special case of that general celebration which some think of as art's prime task.

A final suggestion is that the delight given by representation is taken in the skill employed.<sup>6</sup> The behaviour of the artless in galleries shows that

3. This is not quite right, because a child does not get the same pleasure from a photograph as from a drawing, or from a completed drawing as from one in progress. Perhaps what pleases the child is rather finding a *way of drawing* a kind of thing; nothing is more striking in children's drawings than their way of borrowing (semi-ideographic) representational conventions from drawings they see.

4. But see Arnheim (1933, 18 ff.) for the reasons why a photograph can never function as a *mere* record of appearances.

5. I do not know how far this aspect of painting (or "picturing" as Gilson would say) is covered by Veblen's remarks (1899, 94 ff.) on the value attached to hand-made as opposed to machine-made objects. The distinction made in the text does not apply in circles where having a photograph taken is a major event, and having a portrait painted unheard of.

6. Cf. Dennis (1702, 285): "Now the Pictures which are done after the Life, if they are drawn by Masters, will certainly please Masters, and all who are able to judge of the boldness and the delicacy of the strokes: but the People who judge only of the resemblance, are most delighted with the Pictures of their acquaintance." Also Arnheim (1933, 44): "What is pleasing about a pen-and-ink sketch by Van Gogh is not the ploughed field that he has perpetuated on paper . . . , but the fact that he has succeeded in conveying something of the optical impression of a real ploughed field by strokes of his pen."

there is something in this: the common man likes pictures in which he can marvel at how every brick and grass-blade is shown while he also gets the "pleasure of recognition" from deciphering the expressions and conjecturing the motives and life-stories of the people there shown. Whether this is Human Nature or the aftermath of Ruskin's last phase I do not know. In either case it will perhaps be objected that the fact does not adequately support the explanation, since painterly skill can be just as well shown in non-objective paintings. But this objection will not stand, for it is just those who have no taste for, and hence no ability to detect skill in, non-objective painting who revel in skilful and evocative representation. Human dexterity is always fascinating, both to attain and display and to admire, and representational painting is one field where such dexterity is hard to attain but easy to judge. And if representational painting is not mere jugglery of this kind it cannot be merely representational, for surely there is no such lack of visibilia that we should need to duplicate them or add to their number.

Representational painting, *qua* representational, really does fulfil these functions of displaying dexterity, providing reminders and memorials, and affording the pleasures of recognition. And these functions suffice to justify painting as a hobby and an object of curiosity and admiration. But they do not account for painting as it is, or as one of the fine arts, or for the esteem in which it is held. To suppose that representational painting does nothing but represent is to suppose that any departure from "photographic realism" is due to incompetence, which is idiotic. It is a common idiocy, but one possible only for those who have never noticed either the nature of their own binocular vision or the extent to which their own favourite painters resort to conventions and dodges in rendering their subjects.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, not even the most ardent representationist can deny the importance of good composition, nor deny (though he may deplore) the existence of non-objective painting in which composition is all or much and representation nothing. Again, as Fry observed (1920, 17), excessive stress on representation cuts painting off from the other arts, especially music. But perhaps most telling is the fact that painters and their admirers think of painting not as a form of entertainment but as an important activity to which other values may have to be sacrificed, and of the painter

7. Scientific perspective is founded not on the facts of vision but on the geometrics of a notional optic cone (cf. Alberti *On Painting* and Panofsky 1925, 260). Professor Gombrich's vindication (1960, 250 ff.) of the "correctness" and hence non-conventionality of perspective shows only that it is neither capricious nor misleading about spatial relationships, not that it is uniquely appropriate as a scheme for portraying visual reality.



not as an entertainer but as a seer to whom we go to be improved or instructed.

You may feel that I have been flogging a horse that never lived. No matter what Leonardo may have said, none of his paintings represent exactly what he can ever have seen before him. And even Mr. Lawrence is charmingly inconsistent, for of a composition of his own he writes (*loc. cit.*), apparently with the intention of illustrating his thesis, that "The draughtsman . . . is intent on expressing the idea of Leda as it exists in his visual imagination; the essential subject, therefore, being the form, movement, line, pattern and, in the painting, to heighten these, colour." Moreover, I have written, absurdly, as if there were two kinds of things a painter could copy, real things and possible things. But of course one cannot tell from a painting itself what relation it may bear to any motif. If representational painting is to be referred to the appearance of the visible world it must be in some more general way. None the less, it is from a consideration of this compelling but preposterous and even unintelligible view that one may best arrive at the alternative explanations of the representational aspects of art.

### *Tension*

One thing about representational art always seems strange: that many works seem at the time of their production to be completely naturalistic to the point where the appropriate response is to their subject and not to themselves as artefacts, but to a later age seem plainly conventional in their style of portrayal, and to excel as works of art and not as replicas or likenesses of the seen world.

Art styles taken to be naturalistic correspond less to the unalterable facts of human vision, whatever they may be, than to the habits of seeing of their age, which are themselves largely fashioned by the arts: artists, it is often said, teach people to see. The work of art seems an exact likeness of its subject because it answers to the "mental image" of the subject which its public has, belonging as it does to a style which has gone to form that image.

Such mental images need not depend on artistic convention. Stroboscopic photographs of people and animals in motion, for example, seem to show that certain phases of a movement may be more expressive of it than others; and the sense of movement may even be best conveyed (as with the "flying gallop") by positions which do not really occur. Mr. Waley (1921, 38-9) cites an eighteenth-century anecdote to the effect that the action of a player who took the part of a reaper from Shinano in the Nō play *Tokusa* was once criticized by some spectators who said that they were

reapers from Shinano and the actor was handling his sickle wrong. In a later performance the actor followed the reapers' instructions, but "The performance was a failure, for it 'startled the eye.'"

In the same vein Van Gogh writes (1958, II.401):

Tell Serret that *I should be desperate if my figures were correct*, tell him that I do not want them to be correct, tell him that I mean: If one photographs a digger, *he certainly would not be digging then*. . . . Tell him that, for me, Millet and Lhermitte are the real artists for the very reason that they do not paint things as they are, traced in a dry analytical way, but as *they*—Millet, Lhermitte, Michelangelo—feel them. Tell him that my great longing is to learn to make these very incorrectnesses, those deviations, remodellings, changes in reality, so that they may become, yes, lies if you like—but truer than the literal truth.

It is noteworthy here that Van Gogh runs together what might seem to be two motives for his "distortions": that one must distort to portray movement convincingly (otherwise one portrays arrested movement), and that one should express a personal point of view of one's own—as though it were the force of the painter's own feelings that carried conviction. In the portrayal of static things also certain aspects of a thing may be chosen as more representative of it than others, as in the "frontal" style of Egyptian and Archaic Greek art in which figures are often shown to the spectator with each of their parts in its broadest aspect, each part being as it were imagined separately in its most distinctive form (cf. Loewy 1907). But in a more far-reaching way an art style that is highly formalized may be taken as naturalistic by its contemporaries, presumably because its expressive vividness in relation to the expectations of its public creates an illusion of reality and "presence." Similarly, successive improvements in recording techniques have been described when new as indistinguishable from the original sound, not because they stood up to comparison with the unreproduced music but because they had a more realistic and vivid sound than previous techniques had led people to accept. Artists, then, create and develop ways of seeing what others adopt: "The public now sees and feels," writes Berenson (1950, 37), "in what it had previously regarded as nature, things that hitherto it had seen and felt only in recent works of art, paintings, narratives, music" (see also p. 96 above).

The value of representational art, it may now seem, lies not in its fidelity to appearances but in its departure from them,<sup>8</sup> in its providing by its example a system of visual order whereby people can make their own visual experiences orderly. I have been considering situations where the

8. See Munro (1949, 407 ff.) for a discrimination of five kinds of representation: realistic, stylized, distorted, abstract and fantastic.



spectator is unaware that his experience has been thus ordered; but perhaps such obliviousness is possible only in a period dominated by one uniform style. At other times one is likely to be aware of the differences between a painter's visual order and the visual world, and to take delight in the tension between them. Such felt discrepancy between the visual world and an artist's visual order may be valuable in three ways at least: first simply as a triumph of "mind over matter," and as an example of man's imposition of order and humanization of the inhuman; second as the conveying of a privilege of seeing through another's mind and hence as an enrichment of one's own visual experience through the imparting of another's way of seeing; and third, perhaps, as the revelation of an objective order underlying the confused world of appearance.

This tension between art and experience is as important in literary as in visual art. Novelists describe and narrate, and descriptions and narrations proceed by selecting and emphasizing. Obviously no account of an event can be a replica of it. The novel that is "true to life" is one that presents a systematic selection and distortion of the kinds of things that happen and of their aspects that carries conviction to readers. It is because conviction is carried, because readers feel "Yes, that's the way things are," that one speaks of "truth to life." But because in fact events are tendentiously selected one ought perhaps rather to speak of "acceptable attitudes to life": conviction is carried because selection and distortion are consistently carried out and follow a notion of what is important that readers can accept as satisfactory.<sup>9</sup> What they can so accept depends on fashion, on recognized conventions (as with detective stories), on the taste and experience of the readers, and on the skill and persuasiveness of the writer. It may even be that some ways of selecting and distorting are satisfactory because some kinds of events and forms are really more representative of the way things are and happen than others, as the Marxists and Aristotle believe. On the other hand, it may not. Speaking of acceptable and unacceptable attitudes to life leaves this question open; speaking of truth to life shuts it, implying that the ground of acceptance and rejection of fictitious worlds must be their correctness or incorrectness, that there can be no other reason for preferring one selection over another than that it more adequately presents the nature of reality.<sup>10</sup> Those who are prepared to

9. As Aristotle remarks (*Poetics*, 1460a25). "Likely impossibilities are always preferable to unconvincing possibilities."

10. The question is discussed by Professor Hospers, who asks (1958, 47): "If a character is convincingly drawn, is not this because it is truly drawn?" But James (1884, 12) writes: "The character, the situation, which strike one as real, will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix. The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber is a very delicate shade;

judge thus must either know more than I do about the nature of reality or have reflected less earnestly on the character of their own experiences.

## ESSENCES

IT IS SO obvious that the characteristic works of some of the arts are most readily describable in terms of a represented content that if we find that it will not do to say that they merely reproduce appearances the only result is to make us ask what they do represent. And of course the only answer that seems possible is that since they do not represent appearances they must represent realities. If this is accepted three possibilities are apparently open. First, that they do represent individual things, but by somehow representing their inner nature rather than simulating their appearance. Second, and most obviously, that since they do not represent particulars they must represent universals, or the typical as opposed to the individual. Third, that there is no actual imitation of any thing or type of thing, or that if there is it is merely a means to the end, which is the bodying forth of reality or some more oblique reference to what is taken to be the general truth about the way things are.<sup>11</sup>

Schopenhauer (1818) effects a synthesis of these three possibilities: music reflects reality itself (cf. below, p. 383, n.17), while the other arts arrive at the "Platonic Ideas" through exclusive concentration on individuals. But the metaphysic on which this synthesis is based, and hence the synthesis itself, seem to me at least without any plausibility whatever. So, though Schopenhauer subsumes all the leading trends of the aesthetics of the previous century and himself is prodigiously influential, providing the leading ideas of thinkers so different as Mr. Bell, Mrs. Langer and Nietzsche, I concentrate on less comprehensive but more digestible views.

it is a reality so coloured by the author's vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model. . . . Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odor of it, and others have not. . . ."

11. Some philosophers may protest that since there is no such general truth it is waste of time to treat of such opinions. But so far as I can see the objections to "statements about the universe as a whole" are not objections to the significance and importance of the kinds of things that are said, but logical objections to considering the universe as a totality. Such statements do presuppose or incorporate judgements of importance or value. But then if these judgements should be justifiable the objections would fall. And if they are not strictly justifiable but are merely intraculturally viable this is very much what we should expect, since art is neither value-free nor free from cultural determination; and it does not make the reference to "reality" any less appropriate, since we cannot suppose that all views about "the way things are" are equally capable of being viable within a culture (cf. Sparshott 1958, 256 ff.).



*Reality*

The "tension" of which I spoke between depicted forms and what would be the appearance of the corresponding things in the real world results from the imposition of an artist's personal vision of things through his style. But style, as many have said, is not a matter of technical tricks: "Any artist's . . . style is the exercise of a set of rules (in the sense of rules of a game) which formalize and define his strongest and most personal feelings about the world" (Forge 1957, 850); and any common style shared by the artists of a culture or subculture becomes "a homogeneous, coherent formal environment, in the midst of which man acts and breathes" (Focillon 1942, 16).<sup>12</sup> And thus a style corresponds to a method of interpreting reality, and the artist may be thought of as a "visionary" if we despise him, or a "seer" if we respect him.

There are at least four different ways in which art may be thought to reveal the nature of reality, all of which have been touched on in my section on "Art and Insight" (ch. ix) and are here approached from a slightly different angle. The most obvious and least striking of these alleged ways of revealing is by making plain some general truth about human affairs or the looks of things or whatever that has escaped others' attention. It is of this that Henry James writes (1908, 50-1):

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million—a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. At each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white. . . . And so on, and so on. . . .

12. M. Malraux, following Focillon, writes (1953, 272): "For us, a style no longer means a set of characteristics common to the works of a given school or period, an outcome or adornment of the artist's vision of the world; rather, we see it as the supreme object of the artist's activity, of which living things are but the raw material. And so, to the question, 'What is Art?' we answer: 'That whereby forms are transmuted into style.'" And his book as a whole is given up to demonstrating how the styles which artists thus produce embody values and convictions. Here the "tension" seems almost to have disappeared, but I think the appearance is illusory: we cannot know what the style is, nor what values it sustains, if we do not know what the world looks like without it. Let us lay down this axiom: a people that thinks its art is naturalistic is a people without self-knowledge.

Many views are possible because an "event" can only be defined in terms of an interpretation or attitude—human actions cannot be intelligibly described by listing bodily movements. "The cement which binds any artistic production into one whole and therefore produces the illusion of being a reflection of life," writes Tolstoy (1894, 64), "is not the unity of persons or situations, but the unity of the author's independent moral relation to his subject." And all descriptions are necessarily made from such a standpoint. So Wellek and Warren (1949, 236) say with reason that "Lifelike" might almost be paraphrased as 'art-like,' since the analogies between life and literature become most palpable when the art is highly stylized: it is writers like Dickens, Kafka, and Proust who superimpose their signed world on areas of our own experience." The intenser the unity of the personal vision, the stronger the impression of reality, no matter what discrepancy there may be between things as portrayed and things as they are; for the emotional unity gives them the same kind of coherence and vividness that events in our own experience derive from their relation to our own impassioned involvement. "Reality" indeed may almost be defined as "what matters," the real is that which cannot be left out of account. A view of reality will therefore correspond to a system of concerns and different viewpoints on reality will answer to different life-projects.

The second way in which art may be thought to reveal the nature of reality is by some kind of apocalypse of spiritual realities underlying the perceptible world. Theories of this kind naturally tend to entail elaborate metaphysical constructions, upon whose merits one's estimate of the merits of the attached aesthetic must largely depend. So I can do little more than parade once more, with a new set of quotations, the old familiar names. As a paradigm of the kind of theory here at issue we may take (because, being innocent of any attempt at intellectual justification, it is most readily isolable), the creed promulgated by W. B. Yeats (1903):

- 1) That the borders of our minds are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
- 2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.
- 3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.<sup>13</sup>

13. Something similar was said about symbols by Coleridge (p. 298 above). But in Coleridge there is a reference to an articulate neoplatonic philosophy. So too Schelling's remarks may sound like those of Yeats, but are outcroppings of a developed system: beauty, he says, which is "the fundamental quality of every work of art," is "the infinite finitely presented" (1799, 620), so that it is through art alone that "absolute objectivity" can be attained: "Art brings man in the entirety of his being to the knowledge of the highest; and thereto pertains the eternal uniqueness and wonder of art" (*ibid.*, 630).



This notion of a world-mind in which all share with a communion realized only through certain special experiences meets us in many forms at almost all times and places. We are bound to accept it, if not as truth, at least as answering to a permanent delusion or need of the human spirit. But we are not so obliged to accept its more specialized forms. Hegel, for example, writes (1835/1886, 12-13):

Fine art . . . only achieves its highest task when it has taken its place in the same sphere with religion and philosophy, and has become simply a mode of revealing to consciousness and bringing to utterance the Divine Nature, the deepest interests of humanity, and the most comprehensive truths of the mind. . . .

The mind is able to heal this schism [between sensuous and supra-sensuous "worlds"] which its advance creates; it generates out of itself the works of fine art as the first middle term of reconciliation between . . . nature with its finite actuality and the infinite freedom of the reason it comprehends.

But if anyone should feel disposed to doubt that art thus "belongs to the supreme sphere of Spirit" along with religion and philosophy, from which it differs only "in the *forms* under which they present their object, that is, the Absolute, to human consciousness" (Hegel 1835, I.138-9), I cannot see that Hegel is much concerned to persuade him: it is enough, perhaps, to show that art can be brought within the system by discussing its particular manifestations in some detail—one cannot argue *for* the Hegelian dialectic, from outside as it were, one can only let competing views fall by their own one-sidedness, contradictoriness, and isolation. So we must let the matter rest there.

It is not only in the European romantic-idealist tradition that art is held to reveal the underlying forces of the world. "Art was regarded as a kind of Zen," writes Mr. Waley (1923, 226) of one phase of Chinese painting, "as a delving down into the Buddha that each of us unknowingly carries within him. . . . Through Zen we annihilate Time and see the Universe not split up into myriad fragments, but in its primal unity."<sup>14</sup> And Mr. Harada

14. The first of Hsieh Ho's six principles of painting (5th century A.D.) is translated by Mr. Sirén as "Spirit Resonance (or, Vibration of Vitality) and Life Movement," and explained by him as follows. "The first character . . . signifies the life-breath of everything, be it man, beast, mountain or tree," and means something like "spirit" or "vitality"; the second character is "the Chinese expression for resonance, consonance, harmonious vibrations, etc., and it is used particularly of poetic compositions in which certain parts correspond." The two together stand for "a spiritual force imparting life, character and significance to material forms, something that links the works of the individual artist with a cosmic principle. But this is active in the artist before it becomes manifest in his works; it is like an echo from the divine part of his genius reverberating in the lines and shapes which he draws with his hand." (Sirén 1936, 19-23.) The six principles are more fully discussed by Acker (1954, xxviii-xliii).

(1956, 19) quotes from the *Tsukiyama Teizo-den* of the Japanese Soami (d. 1525 A.D.):

The ultimate aim of the landscape garden is to reveal the mysteries of nature and creation. This may be achieved by a simple flat garden with only a few rocks. However interesting may be the pattern and beautiful the scenes, the truth of the hills may be lost and even the heart of the master may appear ignoble, if the garden is lacking in coherence and incomplete in construction.

Everything in this universe is correlated. This is a natural law pre-ordained. When one is about to make a garden, one should not be absorbed merely by the pattern, or carelessly plant even one tree or place one rock without careful discrimination. . . . A plant which grows in the heart of a high mountain should not be planted by the pond. . . .

On this way of thinking, the artist neither produces a replica of nature nor manipulates nature, but his art is just another manifestation of the same creative power that is in nature.<sup>15</sup> Thus Nohl (1908, 31) reports that Böcklin meant the figures in his paintings to "grow out of a unified Nature as a concentration of the force that works within it"; and to Professor Gilson (1957, 289) the creativity of painters suggests "the presence, at the origin of universal becoming, of an inner force of invention and creativity." The work's relation to the supposed power may or may not be aesthetically operative. In some cases the spectator's mind is meant to be directed to the infinite, as in a garden designed by the late sixteenth-century tea-master Rikyu of which Mr. Harada relates (1956, 12) that

When a guest stooped to scoop out a dipperful of water from the water-basin, only in that humble posture was he suddenly able to get a glimpse of the shimmering sea by way of an opening through the trees, thus making him realise the relationship between the dipperful of water in his hand and the great ocean beyond, and also enabling him to recognise his own position in the universe; he was thus brought into a correct relationship with the infinite.

But when in *kabuki* plays (Ernst 1956, 72-9) not only the subordination of narrative to momentary effect but also the manner of staging, the stylization of gesture, and even the selection of plays for performance at various seasons are to be interpreted in terms of this system of beliefs, the work does not thus so much reveal reality as depend upon a certain interpretation of reality for its appreciation.

The remaining two modes of revealing reality impute no visionary power to the artist but consider that through his technical skill and reasoning power he can produce an artefact that displays clearly principles followed less clearly in the world itself:

15. Another variant of this idea, that art imitates not the products but the operations of nature, is discussed below (pp. 384 and 390 f.).



And so, all the diverse beauties of Painting serving as so many steps to bring us up to that sovereign beauty, what we see that is admirable in the proportion of the parts will lead us to consider how yet more admirable are that proportion and that harmony that are found in all creatures. The *ordonnance* of a fine painting will make us think on the beautiful order of the universe. (Félibien 1666, I.47.)

One of these modes we have touched on already: the supposition that God is a geometer, and that a correctly geometrizing art thus reveals the hidden principles of the world's construction. Thus Dennis writes (1701, 202):

Poetry . . . ought to be an exact Imitation of Nature. Now Nature, taken in a stricter Sense, is nothing but that Rule and Order, and Harmony, that we find in the visible Creation.<sup>16</sup> . . . As Nature is Order and Rule, and Harmony in the visible World, so Reason is the very same throughout the invisible Creation. For Reason is Order, and the Result of Order. And nothing that is Irregular, as far as it is Irregular, ever was, or ever can be either Natural or Reasonable.

This tradition stems, I think, from St. Augustine, whose *De Musica* and other early writings have the same constellation of ideas, though without applying them to arts other than music. But the same christianized Platonism, without its mathematical implications, provides the last of our views, according to which the artist imitates not the fallen world but an "unfallen" world, a golden age of innocence, or else a world of Platonic ideas such as here below are but imperfectly exemplified.<sup>17</sup> The last version

16. Cf. *Yüeh Chi* (I, §23): "Music is [an echo of] the harmony between heaven and earth; ceremonies reflect the orderly distinctions [in the operations of] heaven and earth. From that harmony all things receive their being; to these orderly distinctions they owe differences between them." So too the "harmony of the spheres" comes to be interpreted at last not as the mathematical ratio which it was at first but as the embodiment of that ratio in sound.

17. In music alone of the arts Schopenhauer finds a representation of the world as a whole. He claims (1818, §52) that on the analogy of the other arts music must copy something: its pleasures cannot be merely those of a mathematical order. But "it stands alone, quite cut off from all the other arts. In it we do not recognize the copy or repetition of any Idea of existence in the world. . . . We must attribute to music a far more serious and deep significance, connected with the innermost nature of the world and our own self." So while the other arts "objectify the Will indirectly only by means of the Ideas," and thus are inseparably linked with the phenomenal world, music "could to a certain extent exist if there were no world at all. . . . Music is as *direct* an objectification of the whole will as the world itself." Schopenhauer admits that this cannot be proved, but thinks that people will come to accept it after listening to much music "with constant reflection on my theory concerning it." If the criterion of a satisfactory aesthetic theory is that it should seem to explain to oneself one's own aesthetic experience, this is a fair enough challenge.

of this, however, which is perhaps the only one not readily dismissed as "escapism," is more readily discussed under the heading of "types."

All these doctrines may be taken as different ways of interpreting the injunction that art should "imitate nature." For nature may be imitated as agent, by stimulating its operations, or as artefact, by copying individuals or types.<sup>18</sup> And as agent it may be imitated simply in its creative fertility or in its particular modes of producing. At the lowest, "imitating nature" may mean just making another world. The artist's world is then a heterocosm, neither revealing nor representing anything: "True art, pure art, never enters into competition with the unattainable perfection of the world, but relies exclusively on its own logic and its own criteria, which cannot be tested by standards of truth or goodness applicable in other fields of activity" (Coomaraswamy 1934, 25). This point of view is chiefly associated with the names of Bodmer and of Breitingner, who asserts (1740, ch. 6) that the creative artist is limited in his work only as God Himself is limited—he must not contradict himself; indeed, to be *wunderbar*, his work not only need not but must not imitate the world of everyday life. And yet, however much autonomy the poet may claim for his world, it remains a world, and the things and events it contains are in the end "dredged from common clay," modelled after what he knows in the workaday world even if not judged by their likeness. If, like an abstract painter, one tries to renounce such material, the result is not greater freedom in creation but a restriction of expressive possibilities (cf. Rothenstein 1956, 278 ff.). Hegel appears to recognize this when he writes (1835, IV.100) that "The function . . . of poetry is to present a complete world, whose ideal or essential content must be spread before us under the external guise of human actions, events, and other manifestations of soul-life, with all the wealth and directness compatible with such art." And even if we succeed in regarding the artist's world as truly independent of the world in which it is an enclave, there will surely be some point at which its public will integrate it with the rest of their experience. "The poem-universe," writes Miss Sewell (1951, 99), ". . . aims at total independence. But in so far as it is a separate detached independent system, it might be set side by side with the universe of experience and offer possibilities of interpretation of the latter, not by identity of form but by analogy between forms." Yet

18. Professor Abrams (1953, 37 ff.) lists five things that the "Nature" to be imitated by art may be taken to be: beautiful, actual things; beautiful syntheses of natural objects or their parts; the statistical average of a biological species; some generic human type; and "permanent, uniform and familiar aspects of the outer and inner world." Dr. Hauser (1951, II.128) associates the transition from the belief that art creates from nature to the belief that art creates like nature with the rise of Mannerism.



surely we may go further and say that absence of self-contradiction is no sufficient principle of order; and that all positive principles of order are learned by artists, like everything else, from their experience of life, as are the criteria by which arrangements are judged satisfactory and unsatisfactory. The artist's heterocosm, let us say, has autarchy but not autonomy, and the artist, simply because he is a created or naturally-selected being, cannot be an authentic creator *ex nihilo* (cf. Aquinas as quoted below, p. 390).

Apocalyptic theories of art as revealer of reality, I said, often come with a metaphysic attached. Without this sometimes embarrassing accompaniment they tend to be little more than cheering slogans, suggesting to the artist that he is no end of a fellow without explaining what he has done to make him so. When Vaughan Williams (1953, 151) says that "The object of art is to stretch out to the ultimate realities through the medium of beauty," we are not inclined to believe that he has any clear notion of what realities are ultimate or of the manner in which art might reach them. There are degrees: when Maritain says (1923, 45) that music imitates "the invisible world stirring within us," or (1953, 33) that Western art in its search for self-expression "by the same token, has been busy revealing and expressing the secret aspects and infinitely varied meanings of things, whose visibility conceals but can, by virtue of man's spiritual power, reveal the ocean of being," we are inclined, since we know that he is a metaphysician, to believe that he has a metaphysical theory that would explain these apparently arbitrary collections of vocables. But when we come across such verbiage in the mouth of someone who is not a metaphysician, as when Sir William Rothenstein in an after-dinner speech says that art is "the revelation of the infinite in the finite" (Hulme 1924, 148), we are justified in dismissing it as empty. Even where a metaphysical context is provided, it too often remains too unclear what this "reality" is that the artist is supposed to reveal—and, more importantly, how he comes by the knowledge that he reveals. As Hirn remarked (1900, 23), many artists are surprisingly devoid of intellectual curiosity for people engaged in such a revelatory task. Well, perhaps they are the unconscious channels through which the world or something expresses itself. But one would like reasons for thinking that the alleged revelations are not just inventions or mistakes. Professor Frye (1957, 64) remarks that the artist's supposed view of reality may be just the projection of the formal requirements of his favoured genre.

The general objection to claims that artists have power to enlighten or instruct was stated once for all by Plato—in the *Ion*, the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Laws*. Perhaps the objection is nothing more than a peevish

cry of "Not fair!" from philosophers and scientists: they have to work so hard to find anything out, and be so careful in removing error from their opinions, that they cannot endure that anyone should claim to have knowledge about something which he has never bothered to investigate, and his opinions on which he has never troubled to submit to criticism. When Blake sets himself up to judge Newton, we cannot help being struck by this great difference between them: that Newton has good reason to believe that he is not mistaken, but Blake has no reason whatever to think that he is not mistaken. "I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only Wise. This they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning." (Blake 1790.)

### Types

If artists represent not the world as we know it but an ideal world, as its creator intended it to be or as they think it ought to be, the particular things and people that they portray or describe will represent idealized types, not the kinds of things with which we are in this world acquainted.<sup>19</sup> So Sir Philip Sidney wrote (1595, 8):

And the *Metaphisicke* though it be in the second & abstract Notions, and therefore be counted supernaturall, yet doth hee indeed build upon the depth of nature. Only the Poet disdeining to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect into an other nature: in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite a new, formes such as never were in nature: as the *Heroes*, *Demigods*, *Cyclops*, *Chymeras*, *Furies*, and such like; so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely raunging within the Zodiack of his owne wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich Tapistry as diverse Poets have done, neither with so pleasaunt rivers, fruitfull trees, sweete smelling flowers, nor whatsoever els may make the too much loved earth more lovely: her world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden. But let those things alone and goe to man, for whom as the other things are, so it seemeth in him her uttermost conning is imploied: & know whether she have brought forth so true a lover as *Theagenes*, so constant a friend as *Pylades*, so valiant a man as *Orlando*, so right a Prince as *Xenophons Cyrus*, so excellent a man every way as *Virgils Aeneas*. Neither let this be jestingly conceived, because the works of the one be essencially, the other in imitation or fiction: for everie understanding, knoweth the skill of ech Artificer standeth in that *Idea*, or fore conceit of the worke, and not in the worke it selfe. And that the Poet hath that *Idea*, is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellencie as he had imagined them: which delivering forth, also is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build Castles in the aire: but so farre

19. For a general treatment of this notion see Bredvold (1934), who finds its chief origin in Cicero's *Orator*, 7-10. Most of the quotations I give here are lifted from Bredvold.



substantially it worketh, not onely to make a *Cyrus*, which had bene but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a *Cyrus* upon the world to make many *Cyrusses*, if they will learne aright, why and how that maker made him.

So the painter or poet imitates, not nature, but *la belle Nature*: "Pas le vrai qui est; mais le vrai qui peut être, le beau vrai, qui est représenté comme s'il existoit réellement, et avec toutes les perfections qu'il peut recevoir" (Batteux 1746, 27). The putative ancestor of this way of thought is Plato. For Plato's complaint against the arts of imitation was that they imitated the appearances of particular things which were themselves imitations of eternal archetypal "Forms"; and it was inevitable that someone should reply that the artist had a vision of, and imitated, the Form itself. This reply is sometimes attributed to Plotinus, but he was too good a Platonist, and too intelligent, to suppose that one could make satisfactory visible replicas of such entities. What he seems to be saying in his treatise *On Intelligible Beauty* is rather that the artist interprets his model in the light of the Form it represents, and that he embodies in his work principles of structural beauty eternally belonging to the art itself.<sup>20</sup> It is rather to the literary Platonizers of the Renaissance and after, like Sidney, that we must look for the notion that art embodies an objectively suprasensible world. So we find Dacier in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (1692, 267) writing that the poet "should rather consult what anger may do, or should be expected to do, than what it has in fact done. He should rather work after nature, the true original, than amuse himself in following a particular, which is no more than an imperfect and confused copy, and perhaps even a vicious one. The artist should avoid that" (cf. Coomaraswamy 1934, 5, quoted on p. 231 above). It is instructive to note how Dennis (1711, 418) in adapting this passage gives it a psychological turn:

*Horace* . . . makes it as clear as the Sun, what it is to follow Nature in giving a Draught of human Life, and of the manners of Men, and that is not to draw after particular Men, who are but Copies of the great universal Pattern; but to consult that innate Original, and that universal Idea, which the Creator has fix'd in the minds of ev'ry reasonable Creature, and so to make a true and just Draught. For as ev'ry Copy deviates from the Original both in Life

20. "It is not unmusicalness but music that makes a man musical; and music in the perceptible world is produced by a Music prior to it. And if the arts are despised because they create an imitation of nature, one must first say that natural things are themselves imitations of others; and then one must realize that the arts do not simply imitate what is seen, but refer back to the intelligible principles from which nature comes; and then, too, that they make many things from their own resources—for, being in possession of beauty, they supply what is deficient in things. Phidias made his Zeus from no visible model, but by conceiving what Zeus would be like if he chose to be manifested to us through our eyes." (Plotinus, *Enneads* V.8.i.)

and Grace, and Resemblance, a Poet who designs to give a true Draught of human Life and Manners, must consult the universal Idea, and not particular Persons.<sup>21</sup> For Example, when a Poet would draw the Character of a covetous or a revengeful Person, he is not to draw after *Lucius* or *Caius*; but to consult the universal pattern within him, and there to behold what Revenge or Covetousness would do in such and such Natures, upon such and such Occasions.

For in maintaining that art represents, or ought to represent, types or ideals rather than particulars one may take up a position anywhere on a long range from the objective to the subjective. One may speak of objective types or Forms to be discovered, or of objective notions of types implanted by nature, or of notions of types culturally determined, or of purely subjective notions of types or personal ideals.

Dennis' mention of Horace, together with the fact that Dacier was commenting on Aristotle, reminds us that the belief that art's concern is with the typical may be reached by a quite different route, from considering the demand that characterization in drama should be convincing and consistent rather than historically authenticated. Aristotle had said that poetry was more philosophical than history, being concerned with what tends to happen rather than with what happens to have happened. As applied to character drawing this amounts to little more than saying that Achilles must always be like himself, that is, his actions must always be typical of a certain kind of character, though this "kind of character" need not be further specifiable:<sup>22</sup> dramatic characters must not (as real people sometimes do) shock our sense of human probabilities by unpredictably acting "out of character" (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1454a25). For if a real person acts unbelievably, this cannot shake our conviction that he is a real person. But our faith in stage persons can be thus shaken, and it is important that it should not be. Horace (*De Arte Poetica*, 120), however, with lamentable crudeness, took this as meaning that Achilles must always be shown as behaving in certain nameable ways; and Du Fresnoy and a host after him, influenced no doubt by the formality of the French court, worked this up into the notion of *decorum* whereby mankind was divided into a limited number of classes, occupations, sections, each of which when portrayed on stage must conform to the received notions of the behaviour proper to that station. So Dryden writes in his preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679, 217-19) that "By considering the second quality of man-

21. Cf. Richardson (1715, 137): "'Tis a certain maxim, No Man sees what things Are, that knows not what they ought to be."

22. Bergson (1900, 165) remarks that Hamlet is a "universal" character, not because he represents an eternal pattern, but because he is "universally" convincing, in that he can be accepted by everyone as a real person.



ners, which is, that they be suitable to the age, quality, country, dignity, etc., of the character, we may likewise judge whether a poet has followed Nature. . . . Though he [Sophocles] represents in Creon a bloody prince, yet he makes him not a lawful king, but an usurper." And he adds that, according to Bossu,

Mauritius, the Greek emperor, was a prince far surpassing Valentinian, for he was endued with many kingly virtues; he was religious, merciful, and valiant, but withal he was noted of extreme covetousness, a vice which is contrary to the character of a hero, or a prince: therefore, says the critic, that emperor was no fit person to be represented in a tragedy, unless his good qualities were only to be shown, and his covetousness (which sullied them all) were slurred over by the artifice of the poet.

Such "typing" recurs as precept, and persists as theatrical practice, not without reason: the inertia of actors, the conservatism of audiences, and the near necessity for playwrights to write for both, all make for it. Its most obvious justification is that it makes for ready recognition.<sup>23</sup> A stage clergyman must be immediately recognizable as a clergyman, and what he must conform to is not the realities of clerical life, but the expectations of the audience, which will depend more on stereotypes culturally transmitted than on their experience of life. Nor, of course, does this hold only of drama and literature. Pictures too must correspond to expectation rather than fact, wherever the two differ. Not all societies are so impressed by the looks of things, as opposed to their powers and uses, as our own: the concentration on appearances that to so many Western aestheticians is art's special virtue may to others seem merely a sign of superficiality. Linton (1958, 16) remarked of the primitive artist that he "tries to represent his subject as he and his society think of it, not as they see it," and Professor Gombrich has recently (1960) shown impressively how much more nearly than we think this is true of Western art also. It is moreover obvious that a stylized art, working with ideographic or semi-ideographic signs, can directly represent only kinds, not possible individuals. But Professor Arnheim (1954, 131) points out that "children and primitives draw generalities and undistorted shape precisely because they draw what they see." The Haida bear with its great claws looks far more like a live

23. Cf. Johnson (1759, ch. x): "The business of the poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as *recall the original to every mind*; and must neglect the minute discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristic which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness" (my italics). Note the oblivious alternation between what the poet does and what he "is to" and "must" do.

bear as one might expect to encounter it in the bush than does a photograph of an actual bear.

There is yet a third route—though doubtless these three ways all run through the same country—by which we might come to think that the artist's task is to portray kinds. The artist, it is said, imitates nature indeed, but *natura naturans* not *naturata* (cf. above, pp. 380 ff.). This is the way in which Dryden, we have just seen, thought one might "follow nature," and Félibien observed (1666, I.46) that "There is nothing in which man more closely imitates the omnipotence of God, Who formed this universe from nothing, than in representing with a few colours all the things that He has created." And Thomas Aquinas writes (*Aristotelis Politicorum*, Lib. I, Prologus S. Thomae):

The origin of those things that are made through art is the human mind, which is derived through a certain similarity from the Divine Mind, which is the origin of natural things. Necessarily, therefore, the procedures of art imitate the procedures of nature; and the things which exist through art imitate the things which exist in nature.<sup>24</sup>

Artists, after all, use their motif as a stimulus rather than as a prototype; and, as we found Sidney saying, the artist as creator produces possible or representative men, just as God in the first instance creates species rather than individuals (cf. p. 94, n. 1).

The general objection to this kind of talk is that notions of what is ideal or typical are arbitrary, as local and temporal variation shows. To talk thus is to attribute cosmological significance or normative status to personal day-dreams or to passing fashions. Such an objection does not of course tell against those who say that it is precisely their own ideals, or those current in their society, that artists should body forth; to them, the only sound objection would be that some artists and some arts may proceed thus, but that others do not, and there is no reason to demand that they should. Still less does it tell against those who merely deny that art is concerned with individuals; to them, the reply would be that some is, and that iconic signs are most readily interpreted thus. But against theories claiming objectivity for the implied judgements of typicalness or perfection the objection seems very strong.

24. Cf. also his Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, II.4, §6: "The explanation of the fact that art imitates nature is that the origin of artistic operation is knowledge. All our knowledge is received through the senses from sensible, natural things; hence in the arts we work to the likeness of natural things. What makes natural things imitable by art is that all nature is ordered to its end by an intellectual principle, so that the work of nature appears to be the work of intelligence, in that it proceeds by determinate means to fixed ends. This is what art imitates in its procedures."



Dürer in his *Four Books on Human Proportions* (1528) wrote that

There lives no man upon earth who could give a final judgement upon what the most beautiful shape of a man may be; only God knows that. . . . "Good" and "better" in respect of beauty are not easy to discern, for it would be quite possible to make two different figures, neither of them conforming to the other, one stouter and the other thinner, and yet we scarce might be able to judge which of the two may excel in beauty. (Holt 1957, 316.)

But Reynolds argues (1770, I.335) that this multiplicity of ideals is not a fatal objection:

The idea of beauty in each species of being is an invariable one. . . . It may be objected, that in every particular species there are various central forms, which are separate and distinct from each other, and yet are undeniably beautiful . . . which makes so many different ideas of beauty.

But these, he argues, are still types, for which there is a typical form; and moreover

The highest perfection of the human figure is not to be found in any one of them . . . but in that form which is taken from all, and which partakes equally of the activity of the Gladiator, of the delicacy of the Apollo, and of the muscular strength of the Hercules. For perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species. (*Ibid.*, 336.)

Precisely so; and since it is evident that such activity, delicacy, and strength cannot be combined in one figure, the notion of "perfect beauty in any species" must be vacuous.<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that species are figments of the imagination. But the fact that one can tell men from apes with fair certainty does not mean that one can frame an accurate notion of a perfect man, or even of a typical one.<sup>26</sup> And representations of men that are so stylized that they cannot be referred to any individual or any kind of man rather than any other are not for that reason to be referred to an

25. Cf. Clark (1956): ideals of human beauty in art are connected with a limited number of aesthetically satisfactory poses and the feelings associated with them.

26. Reynolds had earlier equated the ideal with the typical (1759, II.132-3). The form taken to be most beautiful is "the central form," and therefore the commonest. "As we are then more accustomed to beauty than deformity, we may conclude that to be the reason why we approve and admire it, as we approve and admire customs and fashions of dress for no other reason than that we are used to them; so that though habit and custom cannot be said to be the cause of beauty, it is certainly the cause of our liking it: and I have no doubt but that if we were more used to deformity than beauty, deformity would then lose the idea now annexed to it, and take that of beauty; as if the whole world should agree, that *yes* and *no* should change their meaning; *yes* would then deny, and *no* affirm." Presumably one could make a composite photograph of *homo sapiens* as Galton did of Engineer officers: but it would be a bold man who would claim that Galton's composite represented the height of beauty among engineers, and an optimist who would hope much from one more broadly based.

ideal or typical man: the stylization that prevents them from being individual likenesses prevents them from being like representative or idealized or imaginary individuals, too.

If we say that what the artist does or should portray is not the objectively perfect or the statistical norm but the common notions of his society, which he shares with everyone else, we escape the objections just considered. It is possible, however, that what we ought to say is that the common notions he uses are not notions about what things are or look like, but about how things of a certain kind should be represented in works of art. Some artists and some arts certainly do produce such typical images; but since they are embodying what everyone knows in a manner already socially accepted the representative aspect of such art can be of little significance: of course one has to recognize that the thing portrayed is a bear, or whatever, but the interest of the work must centre in its formal properties or the technical skill of its execution.

### *Individuals*

We have seen that the arts, in so far as they proceed by presenting and not by describing, are best fitted to represent individuals. Indeed they cannot directly present anything else:

For if one should desire the painter to make him the picture of a man, which is as much as to say, of a man in general; he meaneth no more, but that the painter shall choose what man he pleaseth to draw, which must needs be some of them that are, have been, or may be, none of which are universal. (Hobbes 1640, 15.)

And we have already seen that theories attributing cognitive importance to art tend to equate artistic insight with an "intuition" whose appropriate object is the individual rather than the species. Such intuiting and representing of individuals is not to be confused with the representation of particulars as already considered. What we had to do with there was the copying of, or production of an artefact systematically related to, the appearance of some perceptible thing: the artist showed or commented on how some thing or things or scene *looked*. The views we are now to consider think of the artist's motif not as stimulus or subject-matter but as object of some special regard.

There are many varieties of the notion that art traffics in individualities, but most of them have two things in common. Art, they say, gives direct knowledge of individuals as opposed to indirect knowledge about them; and the knowledge is intuitive or perceptual, not conceptual. It follows that the presented content of a work cannot be described or analysed, but only (if anything) evoked by what is in effect the construction of another work



of art. Perhaps the least unclear statement of the intended contrast between ways of knowing is that given by Father Gilby (1934, 9 ff.). Whereas "ordinary rational knowledge" is "general, abstract, conceptual,"<sup>27</sup> unsatisfied and deliberate," poetic experience

appears, first, as intensely individual, not general: a sense of a single situation in its very uniqueness. Secondly, as concrete, not abstract: without formalisation, it seems an embrace of a thing in its indefinable wholeness. Thirdly, as real, not conceptual: a union too intimate to be explained by thoughts about its object. Fourthly, as complete in itself, not pedagogic: an experience that does not point a moral, but is felt to be worth having for its own sake. . . . Finally, it comes as a moment of unpremeditated inspiration, an interruption to the calculating course of the reason.

But this is really not very specific about what is known or how it is known. Of the possible interpretations, one is long familiar from Schiller: art is concerned with appearances, *Schein*, which are all that perception yields and all that the artist reveals, and thus affords relief from the knowledge of things themselves which preoccupy our serious lives. To prefer appearance to reality seems frivolous. But reflection shows that art as thus conceived does not *imitate* the appearances of *things*, for that would leave us in the world of real concerns; rather, it *presents* semblances beyond which we do not go to ask what they are semblances of. It is by concentration on the isolated and emphasized appearance that we achieve the required exclusion of real concerns. And so we get our second variation, according to which the distinctive feature of art is that it presents the individual in isolation, as opposed to science which deals with things only by relating them to other things. Thus Muensterberg complained (1904, 18-19) that scientific truth "leads us away from the object we are interested in, leads us away to other objects with which it may be connected. . . . The highest truth about the thing must be the knowledge of the thing itself . . . with all its richness and all its meanings to the human mind." Here is an odd notion indeed of what a "thing itself" is, whereby the constituents of a thing are not it but what it may become, whereas its meanings for the mind are part of it. But perhaps all accounts of what a thing itself is must be equally odd: perhaps one can only speak of a thing itself by attributing selfhood to things, that is, by thinking of things as if they were people—a possibility to which I shall return shortly. However that may be, Muensterberg holds that art isolates the object for the mind, so that the mind does

27. Conceptual knowledge, he adds, is "not immediately commensurate with the whole substance of a thing. The mind still wants more, for it is made for Being without reserve." (*Loc. cit.*) This suggests that the contrast of ways of knowing depends on an archaic epistemology and metaphysic which no one would entertain for a moment except in a theological context.

not seek to go beyond it. Such isolation means beauty "whether nature or the imagination of the artist offers it" (*ibid.*, 21); but in fact nature does not offer things in isolation. "The painter alone can succeed in holding that wave in its wonderful swing on his canvas, and his golden frame can separate that *painted* wave forever from the rest of the universe" (*ibid.*, 23, my italics). So "To cut the single experience really away from everything else it must be transformed, and that transformation is the mission of art" (*ibid.*, 36). But if indeed the wave is transformed by art it is not the wave itself that we know but, precisely, the *painted* wave; and art, no less than science, has led us away from "the object we are interested in." Art, it seems, does not after all do the job Muensterberg assigns it of providing a special kind of knowledge of ordinary things, but provides knowledge of things of a special kind, namely, works of art.<sup>28</sup> And these are no more free of relations than anything else is; we must begin again. Perhaps what should have been said is that the work of art provides an object which, because of the interest of its surface, invites such isolation for perception, and thus helps the art-lover to enjoy such knowledge of other things by transferring to nature the skill learned in the gallery.

The upshot of Muensterberg's adventure suggests that art cannot give knowledge of individuals by concentrating on appearances, because the appearance is either isolated (hence not of anything, and not of the individual) or the appearance of something else, namely of the work of art. So we might try reversing the emphasis and saying that art does not record appearances but penetrates the realities of individuals. And this yields our third variation. In a treatise on landscape-painting written about 920 A.D., Ching Hao said:

Painting . . . is delineation; to measure the shapes of things, yet with grasp of Truth; to express outward form as outward form, and inner reality as inner reality. Outward forms must not be taken for inner realities. If this is not understood, resemblance may indeed be achieved, but not pictorial Truth. A "resemblance" reproduces form, but neglects spirit; but Truth shows spirit and substance in like perfection. (Waley 1923, 169-70.)

We would need some metaphysic to justify us in speaking of the substance, or essence, or reality, or true nature of individual things, and it is not obvious what the metaphysic should be. In any case, though, we seem to be required here to distinguish carefully between the "particulars"

28. Professor Gilson, considering the inadequacy of all possible answers to the question of what art represents, arrives by this rather different route at the conclusion that all answers and the quest itself are prompted by "the false belief that artistic beauty is found, not made" (1957, 204). And Mr. Hepburn (1959, 198) likewise observes that the only particular presented by a work of art is the work itself "taken as a complex but unified whole."



whose appearance art was said to record and the "individuals" whose nature it is said to reveal. For those "particulars" were simply segments of the sensible world, marked off from other such segments perhaps by no more than the convenience of the composing artist, and opposed simply to types. But these "individuals" are conceived on the pattern of individual persons, objects thought of as self-contained and with their own history. If Van Gogh's celebrated painting of the chair in his bedroom were taken to reveal the nature of the chair, and not just what Van Gogh felt about it (for one can have feelings about an "it" which is demarcated solely by one's feelings), this could only be because the chair was a thing with a nature of its own. Now, since the chair is both an artefact (and therefore conceived as a self-contained thing from the beginning) and portable (and therefore not organically or continuously joined to any surroundings it might at any time have), it can readily be thought of in this way. But this does not work so well for landscape-painting, since the unity of a landscape consists merely in its being visible as a unity from a certain point. To justify speaking of the nature of a landscape one would presumably have to take the basic constituents of reality to be momentary experiences of individual minds; but even then there would be no underlying "nature" to be probed, but the momentary vision would itself be ultimate.<sup>29</sup> To capture the "nature" of the experience would not be to probe some underlying reality, but rather to catch and accentuate its features so that the work has something of the character of the lived experience. Even in the case of artefacts and other "substances" whose status as individual things is less questionable, it seems likely that the idea that they have an inner reality to which the artist can penetrate is derived from the analogy of portrait painting. For the portrait painter may deviate from recording appearances not just to produce a greater vividness but to represent what he takes to be the character of the sitter. So one may go on to say that all painters bring out the "character" of the things they paint. But the analogy is false; the aspects of persons in virtue of which we attribute character and personality to them, their idiosyncratic behaviour patterns, are not present in other things.

It is strangely common to find simultaneously asserted, apparently as three ways of saying the same thing, that the artist paints the true reality of the individual, and what is characteristic of its species, and his own feelings about it. This combination is attributed by Bowie (1911, 77-9) to the traditional aesthetics of Japan:

29. In so far as a landscape has a character which the artist can bring out, this will belong to regions rather than to particular views, and for this reason belongs in the category of type rather than individual (cf. pp. 98-9).

Whatever the subject to be translated . . . the artist at the moment of painting it must feel its very nature, which, by the magic of his art, he transfers into his work to remain forever, affecting all who see it with the same sensations he experienced when executing it. . . .

In Japan the highest compliment to an artist is to say he paints with his soul, his brush following the dictates of his spirit. . . .

The Japanese artist is taught that even to the placing of a dot in the eyeball of a tiger he must first feel the savage, cruel, feline character of the beast, and only under such influence should he apply the brush.

It is obvious here that what is thought to be the individual tiger's nature is precisely what is thought to be essential to all tigers, not what differentiates one tiger from another. And this is nothing extraordinary: Western metaphysics has often looked for the "true" nature of individuals in their common form rather than in their differentiating matter. A similar triad to the Japanese one is implied by a letter Cézanne wrote to E. Bernard in 1905: "Let us get out and study beautiful nature, let us try to discover her spirit, let us express ourselves according to our own temperaments. Time and meditation tend to modify our vision little by little and finally comprehension comes to us" (Mack 1935, 382)<sup>30</sup>—though here, since landscape is in question, the underlying spirit is that of Nature rather than of a species. Perhaps what lies behind these mysterious-sounding pronouncements is only this: that in prolonged contemplation of his motif an artist gradually develops within himself and reads into what he sees the scheme of the painting he will make, this process naturally presenting itself at once as self-expression, as discovery of what was paintable in (hence "characteristic" of) the motif, and, this experience being a deeply moving one, a revelation of some deeper "reality."

However hard we try to show that art's concern is with the individual, the reality of all individuals other than persons always turns out, it seems, to be a manifestation of some further reality, which thus becomes the artist's true object. According to some interpreters, G. M. Hopkins sought to derive from Duns Scotus a metaphysic whereby one could speak of individual essences: the object of artistic endeavour is the "inscape," "the unified complex of those sensible qualities of an object that strike us as inseparably belonging to and most typical of that object, so that through the knowledge of this unified complex of sense-data we may gain an insight into the individual essence of the object" (Peters 1948, 2). But it seems to be doubtful whether that is exactly what Hopkins meant by

30. Cf. Chiang (1935, 48) on Sung painting: "The paintings were particularly concerned with seizing the significance of Form in objects. For this reason painting may be said to have grown realistic, but at the same time, Form was impregnated with philosophical Idea, and it became the goal of the artists to evoke the indwelling spirit of the images they painted and to harmonize it with their own spirit."



"inscape"; doubtful whether Scotus can be interpreted so;<sup>31</sup> and doubtful whether sense can be made of any claim to have knowledge of individual essences.

Perhaps we should do better to make a fresh start from where we began, and say simply that what is essential to art is the concentration on present reality, that is, on the immediately presented reality, art thus being the complement of science which leads away from what is presented to its relations with other things and to the analyses and classifications which it admits but which are not presented. This avoids the difficulty (which made itself felt in the doubt whether what was represented as knowledge of an object might not turn out to be feelings about the object) that the characteristic skills of artists do not seem such as to fit them to penetrate individual essences, any more than to know about types or ideals or the nature of reality.<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps significant that Bowie used the word "magic" of this alleged achievement, and that Symons (1899, 9) likewise said of a poetic fashion that had similar ambitions that "Description is banished that beautiful things may be evoked, magically." An absorbed concentration on the presented actuality, though, is just what the artist would in any case be expected to practise, and is not magical.

So we have returned to Muensterberg, except that we do not care about anything more than the appearance we concentrate on; and to Schiller, except that it is now not the unreality but the actuality of appearances that strikes us. The theory thus implied is precisely that of Bergson, for whom as for others art is necessary because the pressures of everyday living compel us to attend only to "the utilitarian side of things":

Between nature and ourselves, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness a veil is interposed: a veil that is dense and opaque for the common herd, — thin, almost transparent, for the artist and the poet. . . . We do not see the actual things themselves; in most cases we confine ourselves to reading the labels affixed to them. . . . So art, whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself. (Bergson 1900, 157–62.)

31. According to Professor Gilson (1952, 29–30, 543–55), Scotus maintained that fallen man cannot have knowledge of individuals, which would be intuitive knowledge: all actual human knowledge is abstractive. I suppose this leaves it open for someone to say that the poet offers a kind of salvation in remedying man's fallen condition.

32. This does not apply to disciplines, if such there be, in which the artist's training and preparation involve contemplation designed to produce such knowledge. Objections to such disciplines would rest on doubts about the feasibility of their project and the reliability of their results.

Schopenhauer (1818, §34) had said something like this of the "Platonic Idea," of which we read that if the spectator takes no relations into consideration but "looks simply and solely at the *what*," excludes all abstract thoughts and concepts and "gives the whole of his mind to perception," forgets his own individuality and "only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object," "then that which is so known is no longer the particular as such; but it is the Idea, the eternal form, the immediate objectivity of the will at this grade." But the "reality" with which Bergson would confront us is much more nearly Schopenhauer's "Will" unobjectified: it is, roughly, life as it would seem in the living of it if one were able to live without conceptualizing and classifying. So the painter is to catch, not the implications of a situation, nor its putative appearance at a mathematical instant as a camera might catch it, but the felt quality of a moment's experience as one may catch it if one is so fortunate as to have been born able to perceive things objectively.<sup>33</sup> Bergson speaks of "things" and "reality," but because the object of artistic revelation is always reality *as experienced*, ultimately the object of art is the inner life of man. In poetry and music, indeed, this is quite obvious:

Not only our external objects, but even our own mental states are screened from us in their inmost, their personal aspect, in the original life they possess. When we feel love or hatred, when we are gay or sad, is it really the feeling itself that reaches our consciousness with those innumerable fleeting shades of meaning and deep resounding echoes that make it something altogether our own? We should all, were it so, be novelists or poets or musicians. (Bergson 1900, 159-60).

Bergson's evaluation of such experiences seems as questionable as similar estimates of the uninterpreted visual experience I spoke of earlier (pp. 319, 343 ff.). In one sense, of course, "the feeling itself" does reach our consciousness or we should not know what Bergson was talking about, but the "feeling itself" in abstraction from the meanings it has for us would not be a purified version of ordinary experience but, precisely, something abstracted from it. Meanings are not screens.

Right or wrong, Bergson has gone over to the kind of theory discussed in the next chapter: the content of a work of art can only fitly be described as the artist's intuition, as the inner aspect of the individual

33. Bergson (*ibid.*, 160) seems to think that artists cannot train this faculty: "From time to time . . . in a fit of absent-mindedness nature raises up souls that are more detached from life . . . with a natural detachment, one innate in the structure of sense or consciousness, which at once reveals itself by a virginal manner, so to speak, of seeing, hearing, or thinking." But this assertion is quite gratuitous, and may be cut out without damage to the structure of Bergson's thought.



moment of experience. This theory has unfortunate implications which Bergson might have avoided, but seems to embrace, for he writes:

Art always aims at what is *individual*. What the artist fixes on his canvas is something that he has seen at a certain spot, on a certain day, at a certain hour, with a colouring that will never be seen again. What the poet sings of is a certain mood which was his, and his alone, and which will never return. What the dramatist unfolds before us is the life-history of a soul, a living tissue of feelings and events—something, in short, which has once happened and can never be repeated. (*Ibid.*, 164.)

But of what painting other than an open-air sketch is that true? Of what poem longer and more complex than the imagist fragment is that true? Our misgivings here are the same as those aroused by the contention that art literally portrays individuals. The artist need not be working from a model, and the "individuals" he portrays are likely to be ideal individuals, created rather than recorded by his art. So here also, it may be that if artists do embody feelings in their work these will not always be ones they have felt in the course of their everyday lives, but ones imagined by them for the purposes of their work (cf. pp. 418 ff. below).

Those who start by saying that art represents the nature of individuals, we have found, often end by saying more or less explicitly that art expresses the artist's inner experience or spiritual life. This comes about because since every man's sensory traffic is in any case with particulars, art must be differentiated rather by its way of apprehending than by what is apprehended. And this manner, for reasons given, must be one of absorbed concentration; and absorbed concentration is a form of meditation, a familiar spiritual exercise. This necessary fusion of self-expression and objectivity is the central theme of Maritain's *Creative Intuition* (1953).

Intense and dispassionate scrutiny is likely to turn into love; and, says Father Gilby (1934, 42), the result is "a mysterious experience which is not so much a rational judgement as a sympathy, a knowledge by affinity, nature, compassion." In other words, as Dewey says, aesthetic experience is neither emotional nor cognitive, but one in which both aspects become fused (cf. p. 261 above). This experience, Gilby adds (*ibid.*, 81), "need not be pleasurable. . . . The movement of love we place in the poetic experience is not a romantic passion, but closer to being, stronger and perhaps more bitter. But at last there will be peace and joy. Appetite is for this, *every appetite is for peace*." That italicized phrase is from Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theol.*, Ia IIae, 29, 2 ad 1). It seems only to mean that when you have what you want you stop wanting it; by analogy from which simple

fact one goes on to say that one never stops wanting something, so is never happy till changeable life ends in the contemplation of God. Gilby's language therefore suggests that poetic experience is a substitute for the Beatific Vision.



## EXPRESSION

SOME PEOPLE WANT very badly to find something for every work of art to refer to. So, when it proves impossible to find any such referent in the external world, they try to find one within the artist's consciousness. In terms of our discussion of symbolization, such a referent could only be expressed or embodied, not strictly represented or symbolized; but no matter—the terms of our discussion need not be accepted, and any referent is better than none. Nor, indeed, is this interest in the artist's mental furniture merely a *pis aller* for the mimetically minded. It is no less obvious that every composition implies a composer than that every depiction implies a depictum; and works which are not in any obvious way representational abound, whereas works of art which have no artist are, if not logically impossible, at least rare. After all, art is a branch of human activity, and it is perfectly natural to feel that one cannot understand the product except in terms of the art that produced it, or the act except in terms of the agent. What excites our interest in any artefact can only be the artist's work, the signs of human intervention in the inert world. So an interest in art inevitably leads to an interest in artists *qua* artists, if not *qua* men. Thus Sir John Rothenstein writes (1952, 21):

The more we know about both the artist and his subject the fuller is likely to be our comprehension of the work of art. It is difficult to think of any fact about an artist, any circumstance of his life, that may not have its effect upon his work. The idea that a painting or any other work of art can in fact transcend its creator is one which is tenable only on the assumption that the creative capacity of the artist is enhanced by a form of "inspiration" derived from some source outside himself. Until we have some knowledge of the nature of such extraneous assistance it is reasonable to assume that the artist possesses within himself the power of giving visible form to his conceptions. If this assumption is well founded, in what sense can a work of art, which is the expression of a part of a human personality, be said to transcend the whole? For me, therefore, the artist is, in a sense, more not less important than anything he creates.

This sounds more reasonable than it is, for we may be more interested in the expression than in what is expressed, or say that works of art are only potentially in the artist and we are not interested in them till they become actual outside him. Moreover, though doubtless it is true that every aspect of an artist's life may "have its effect upon his work," not all these effects need be such that a knowledge of them enhances our appreciation of the work. So we may ask, even if we sympathize with Sir John's general position, what actually gets out of the artist into the work of art? And this is a question which has been variously answered.

Postulated referents within the artist's experience could be classified in almost the same way as postulated referents in the external world. Just as a painting may be thought of as a mere replica of some particular thing or collocation of things, a work may be regarded as a simple embodiment of something actually felt, some particular emotion recollected in tranquillity: "What the picture that happens to *represent* a garden wall with shadows aesthetically presents," writes Prall (1936, 160), "so far as it accomplishes an artist's aim, is what the wall felt like to the painter." Or, as a painting's value may be thought to depend on the tension between the representing form and the form of the supposed referent, so a work may be thought of as a more or less oblique comment on an experience, its value perhaps residing in the quality of the irony with which the original feeling is put in its place. Again, as a work may be thought to derive its value from its ability to capture just what is characteristic in some individual, so it may be thought to have as its aim the provision of an "objective correlative" for whatever in a moment's experience seemed unique. To the notion that works of art should represent what is ideal or typical corresponds the belief that they should embody those of their authors' feelings which are either typical of those of mankind—what oft was felt, but ne'er so well expressed—or else such as, through the superior refinement of the artist's sensibilities, to set an example to his fellows (Dewey 1934, 348). Just as a work may be referred not to a particular referent but to reality as a whole, it may be taken to express not a single state of consciousness but a whole segment of the artist's experience which it sums up (Keble 1832, I.90). As a work may be taken to represent what really is typical or ideal, or what the artist's society takes to be such, or what he himself happens to think such, so an expressed feeling may be taken as typical of mankind or of the artist's society or of his own personality. Finally, as a work may be referred to nature as object to be copied or as power to be emulated, it may be taken as typical of the artist's passive experience or as revealing his active personality.

The classification just given fits the facts well, and the opinions isolated



by it are readily recognizable, but it is not the most natural or the most helpful way to arrange the material. The analogy on which it is based holds, but is not very important. I shall proceed in a more dialectical fashion, showing how one view may be reached by developing or reflecting on another.

*"Emotion" and "Expression"*

All the views under consideration here may be, and often are, summed up by saying that art expresses the artist's emotion. It follows that the word "emotion" is used in a variety of senses by writers on aesthetics: it may, in fact, refer to any aspect of a man's inner life—to anything in his experience, that is, except his sense-experience and his consciously elaborated and verbalized thought-structures. Emotion may be equated with such namable types of feeling as hate, love, fear, etc., though this is not usual. It may simply be contrasted with reason, as the "emotional," but this is rare except among tyros. More commonly, it may be equated with "feelings" or "attitudes" towards experiences or things, as in the remark just quoted from Prall. Again, the "emotion" expressed may be any experience having a feeling-tone, the inner aspect of any event towards which the artist was not merely indifferent. More perplexingly, the term may be used in a specialized sense which I shall consider later, tantamount to the imaginative mastery of an area of experience. Finally we may distinguish "moods," the over-all feeling-tones which colour all our experiences for a while, from the specific momentary "feelings" we may have about things; the word "emotion" may be applied to either or both of these. Professor Arnheim, indeed, after distinguishing the word "emotion" which is generally used to describe agitation from "feeling" which "centers about cognitive reactions that seem to defy further decomposition" (1958, 76), denounces the ordinary use of such terms as betraying a common defect of psychological reasoning, that of defining a mental act by one of its components: they should be re-defined so that "emotion" at least would appear as an aspect of perception describable only in terms of the associated percept (cf. Prall as quoted above, p. 319).

The verb "express" is no less ambiguous than the noun "emotion." I have already pointed out that expressing is not imitating. But "expressing" a feeling may be saying that one has it ("he expressed his disapproval"), or evincing or giving vent to it, though the latter is not I think current usage. In aesthetic theories "expressing" more usually means neither of these but rather articulating, either in the sense that one gives vent to one's feeling in a formalized, articulate, "expressive" fashion or that one puts into articulate and "expressive" form something that one may not personally

have felt at all. One is tempted to equate such articulate "expressing" with "making intelligible"; but this will hardly do, since it is usually held that in such matters there is no question of understanding. Perhaps it could be better represented as "making available to perception," except that emotions would seem not to be proper objects of perception. Plainly, to express an emotion by way of articulation must be some kind of translation or symbolization; but it is not communication, for there need not be anyone to receive a message. In the older criticism, when it was assumed that the same thought could be expressed in many different ways, "expression" meant the verbal trappings chosen to set off the thought: "Expression, and all that belongs to words, is that in a poem which colouring is in a picture" (Dryden 1695, 147). If the word were used thus, to say that art was essentially expression would be to say that attention should be focused on form to the neglect of content (for this assumption about the relation of thought to language at once gives the form/content dichotomy a precise sense). In present-day criticism, however, it is not customary to believe that the same thought can be couched in many different ways: rather, at the level of precision on which poetry and art generally are supposed to operate, what is said is determined by how it is said: thoughts are not clothed in words but become incarnate in them (cf. Pitt 1960). The point of saying that art is essentially expression therefore becomes much harder to discern: with what is "expression" now contrasted? It is no wonder that, with "expression" and "emotion" both so variously and bafflingly used, critiques of theories using these terms have often been wide of the mark.

### THE CONTAGION OF FEELING

THE FOLLOWERS OF Dionysus danced to the sound of the pipes in their biennial rituals till they fell exhausted and entranced. Every student of adolescent behaviour knows that music and song can excite people and subserve the contagion of violent feeling. The excitement thus aroused seems to be a "crowd phenomenon" generated by participation in the performance or its reception rather than the effect of the expression of some individual's particular feelings. However, one may be deeply moved by music heard in solitude, and may also be affected by the gaiety or gloom of one's companions; so it is often said that the task of art is always to promote this contagion of feeling, though the contagion must take different forms in solitude and in crowds. So, as we have seen, Tolstoy (1898, 170) thought that 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 ex-



perienicing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it." Tolstoy and those who think like him, who think that art just intensifies social bonds, tend to assume that the feelings transmitted are broad general emotions such as joy, sorrow and gloom, just as in the social situations mentioned it is a vague gloom or cheerfulness that we "pick up" from our associates—or rather, since of course every feeling is specific in that it is just the feeling it is, they attend only to the broad class to which the feeling belongs. So Reid wrote (1785, 754) that harmony and discord in music are based on the characteristic sounds of the human voice in conversation and quarrel respectively, and that a melody may be "an imitation of the tones of the human voice in the expression of some sentiment or passion," which implies that different "sentiments" or kinds of feeling will generate different kinds of melody. Hanslick indeed argues (1854, 21–2) that it is only in so far as feelings are thus namable that they become precise, picked out from the general mush of vague emotiveness, and this because of their very describability and association with a definite conceptual content; but one could as easily, perhaps more easily, argue the opposite way that feelings are namable and classifiable only because of what they share with other feelings, that no feeling is *felt as* an example of something. However that may be, it is for Tolstoy a sufficient condition of art that feeling should be transmitted, a process for which he uses the term "infection"; and his view is endorsed by A. E. Housman (1933, 12), according to whom "To transfuse emotion—not to transmit thought, but to set up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer is the peculiar function of poetry." One might think it significant that both these are literary men; for it is in the literary arts, where feelings can be most unambiguously referred to, and in the "time" arts where there is least reference to the external world, that art is most readily interpreted thus. But in fact it was from Véron that Tolstoy received his inspiration, and it was primarily of the plastic arts that Véron was thinking when he wrote (1878, vii) that "*L'artiste vraiment ému n'a donc qu'à s'abandonner à son émotion pour que son émotion devienne contagieuse et qu'il recueille les applaudissements auxquels il a droit,*" and therefore need not bother his head with "*des recettes académiques.*"

In so far as they are concerned with broad kinds of feeling rather than nuances, theories of the kind just adumbrated tend to be reductionist in tone: art is unlike other kinds of communion only perhaps in the greater efficacy of its communication. Even Véron, we have just seen, interprets his thesis as making unnecessary the more special and technical devices of the arts. Their way of speaking of communication or transmission rather than expression is connected with this same concentration on the broad generali-

ties: the feeling or attitude concerned is thought of in so generalized and unstructured a way that the mere expression of it could hardly be of more significance than a yell; it is the ability to get it across and not the ability to get it out that matters.

The belief that art consists in transmitting generalized moods or feelings seems open to at least four objections. First, the favourite metaphor of "infection" or "contagion" seems applicable only to arts where artist and public are in personal contact and in general treats as similar phenomena that differ widely: surely there are fundamental differences between the ways one is affected by a picture in a gallery, by a companion's distress, and by the music of a dance in which one is taking part. To the first part of this objection one might reply that contagion can take place through "carriers," and that it is precisely the function of the artefact to provide such a substitute for personal contact; and the second part of the objection could simply be denied, by saying that in the communal situations individual responses reinforce each other in sympathy, and so become much stronger while yet remaining the same in kind, while if a work of art does not affect one as simply and directly as a companion's genuine distress it is not true art. The second objection is more serious: that the excitements which the theory takes to be art's typical product depend on a facility of immediate response that is incompatible with depth: the most profoundly moving music and verse, and the works of the visual arts, have no such effects. One might counter this objection by saying that it holds only of crude emotions, that the profounder and subtler works communicate subtle shades of feeling. It is not that some art conveys feelings and some does not, but that different kinds of feeling are transmitted in different ways. But in that case, as I have suggested already, the artist's task is less to communicate his passion than to express or find a symbolic counterpart for his precise mental or emotional state. And that is another matter entirely. So the third objection comes to be made, that contagion of feeling is not proportionate to, nor even in any obvious way connected with, what critics and cognoscenti take to be aesthetic merit. It may be possible, or even desirable, to set up a new system of aesthetic valuation in these terms alongside the conventional one; but to suggest that all the valuations of those who have studied the arts most carefully are simply wrong is a little extreme. The fourth objection arises from the answer I offered to the first: it is, that contagion of feeling is neither exclusively nor most effectively achieved by what we ordinarily think of as art. A revivalist sermon will arouse communal excitement; laughter, and thus amusement, may be irresistibly contagious, and so may yawning. It is possible to say that the distinctions commonly made between art and preaching, or



art and hilarity, are mere snobbisms; but this is a position not to be taken up lightly, or unawares, since it means throwing out all our notions of education and culture. Those who are committed to the accepted values of our aesthetic culture do not, therefore, speak of the contagion of broadly defined feelings but rather of the expression and communication of specific feelings about specific situations.

The equation of art with a straightforward contagion of feeling has its root in the belief that the lyric poem is a cry from the poet's heart. "Song," said A. W. Schlegel (1801, 277), "is the human version of the emotive noises of the animals, as it were an articulate outcry"; and he says of such emotive noises and passionate gestures, whose significance needs no previous knowledge to be immediately apprehended and which "give away" unawares and involuntarily our real feelings, that "the word 'Expression' (*Ausdruck*) is very appropriately chosen for them: what is in us is pressed out as though by a force alien to us" (*ibid.*, 91-2). The theory, it will be noted, claims both that language is primarily expressive rather than communicative, and that the lyric is the most primitive form of speech. It is only when the lyric is taken as the paradigm of literature, and literature as the paradigm of all the arts, that this can become generalized into a theory of art (cf. Abrams 1953, 84-5).

### *Mood and Feeling*

If one believes that art expresses the artist's feeling much as a cry or a gesture does, though in a more elaborate way, one may still be thinking of either or both of two aspects of the work of art. One aspect would be an over-all mood which the work as a whole conveyed, of gloom or gaiety or such. The other would be, in the time arts, the evanescent and ever-changing feelings embodied successively in the work, unified only by the structural relations of the work and not by any shared feeling-tone; and, in the space arts, the precise complex experience conveyed by the work in its structural totality. It can hardly of course be maintained that the one characteristic function of art is both to convey such a mood and to deploy the ground of such a complex experience, since these tasks are very different from each other and not very closely related. But it may well be that a full description of a work would include an account both of the mood it conveys and of what we may call its emotive structure. One might be reluctant to include the former in a description of a work, on the ground that the "mood" may be differently interpreted by different people and that if it can be agreed to exist it is aesthetically irrelevant:

There is no specifically aesthetic emotion but . . . there is a distinction between what may be called an artistic and an unartistic emotion. The one rises out

of and is the direct fusion of the details of the work of art. . . . But an un-artistic emotion is one set off possibly by a work of art, but based upon conflicts not integral to the work. (Pepper 1938, 105.)

The contrast implied here, however, is misleading. If all or most agree what mood the work evokes or expresses, the mood must be controlled by the work no less than the finer structure. And though not all would spontaneously light on the same word to describe the mood, there seems often to be close agreement in choosing one rather than the other of two suggested terms for it. The mood of a work can hardly be left out of account altogether, then, though it may not always be of much importance. As a matter of fact, the importance of mood seems to vary from genre to genre. Popular works, especially in music, seem often to be strongly moody and evocative, and this holds too of more esoteric forms derived from popular forms. This may be because popular music is typically functional, not designed for listening so much as for helping on activities such as dancing, marching, sleeping or work, and when the forms thus generated are taken up into "pure" music, as symphonic minuets and the like, the traditional character of the music is maintained. And it is obviously by expressing and reinforcing sustained moods that functional music functions. But music with no functional affiliations, designed purely for the attentive ear, need evoke no mood. Anyone, therefore, who thinks of art as a special form of human activity gradually discovered as its social functions were pared away is justified in thinking of the mood of a piece of music as artistically irrelevant.

## THE DISTILLATION OF EXPERIENCE

IN ORDER TO believe that art expresses emotion it is by no means necessary to suppose that a work of art communicates the passions that the artist happens to be undergoing at the moment of composition. "Emotion" is more often taken to mean the whole of one's state of consciousness at a moment, or some structure abstracted therefrom or built up out of a series of states of consciousness. Such views make art a more serious business than those we have just been considering, and one admitting if not requiring more complex gifts. Also, since success in expressing such a state or abstraction is in itself a considerable feat, it is not necessary and not usual to make it also part of the artist's task to communicate what he has expressed to his public; rather, it is thought to be up to his public to make the effort, and even acquire the training, necessary to make out what is expressed. This division of labour is, indeed, inevitable: to make com-



munication the artist's responsibility is to confine him to expressing what is simple enough to conform to his public's preformed expectations.

The idea that art expresses such complex mental states or constructs has won great prestige in this century, largely under the influence of Croce combined with the rapid changes of style which have made the active part played by the public more evident than it had been in days when a taste once formed and an understanding once acquired would serve for a lifetime. But the theory is by no means new. So Mr. Chiang writes (1935, 42) of the painters of the T'ang dynasty: "It was not only necessary to have a mastery of technique, but also the ability to expand freely the individual mind; the artist's knowledge, thought, personality, mental equipment were all embodied in their works. . . . The expression of a painter's inner spirit had come to be the first essential of a good work of art. . . ."

### *The Moment*

The most straightforward theory of the type I have just described makes it the artist's task to express the unique quality of his state of consciousness at a particular moment, so that one who interprets the work correctly recaptures the flavour of that moment. This aesthetic seems not to have been clearly formulated by those who appear to have held it, perhaps because no one who holds it is likely to set store by careful explanations. I am therefore obliged to fall back on a description of it by an eminent critic, expounding the theory underlying Symbolist and post-Symbolist poetry:

The assumptions which underlay Symbolism lead us to formulate some such doctrine as the following: Every feeling or sensation we have, every moment of consciousness, is different from every other; and it is, in consequence, impossible to render our sensations as we actually experience them through the conventional and universal language of ordinary literature. Each poet has his unique personality; each of his moments has its special tone, its special combination of elements. . . . Symbolism may be defined as an attempt by carefully studied means—a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors—to communicate unique personal feelings. (Wilson 1931, 21-2.)

Each moment in the lifetime of an individual must be different from every other, because each moment's experience is included in the latent memories which form the background of all later experiences; and by the same token no moment in one person's experience can be exactly like any moment in the experience of another person with a different set of memories. If, then, it is the function of the work of art to convey the peculiar character of such particular moments, it seems reasonable to say

that the work's value lies in the uniqueness of the moments which it conveys, and in its own uniqueness derived therefrom. But this is misleading. It is not the fact that there are no others like it that matters, nor would its value be affected by the discovery of others exactly similar: the supposed value of "uniqueness" is just that the work is not valued *as* a member of a class or as referable to a class. Uniqueness as such does of course confer value, but the value is a purely commercial one, the limiting case of scarcity value. The supposed uniqueness enters into aesthetic valuations only negatively, then, in that a work of art is judged (on this view) according to its conformity to its own principles, not according to its conformity with the specifications for some already familiar type: it is in this respect that prizes in art shows differ from prizes in cat shows (Macdonald 1949, 124-5).<sup>1</sup>

Two further implications may be drawn from this doctrine that works of art capture the flavour of a moment's experience. One is, that in recapturing the moment the work of art alters it for the artist himself, and its significance for the artist derives from this alteration:

We had the experience but missed the meaning,  
And approach to the meaning restores the experience  
In a different form, beyond any meaning  
We can assign to happiness.<sup>2</sup> I have said before  
That the past experience revived in the meaning  
Is not the experience of one life only  
But of many generations—not forgetting  
Something that is probably quite ineffable:  
The backward look behind the assurance  
Of recorded history, the backward half-look  
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.  
(Eliot 1944, 28-9)

Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern.  
Can words or music reach

1. This argument owes quite a lot to a paper read by Professor Mary Mothersill at the 1960 meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association.

2. Cf. Hauser (1951, IV.224-5): "Proust is the first to see in contemplation, in remembrance and in art not only one possible form, but the only possible form in which we can possess life." And he says that the Proustian novel is the justification of Bergson's philosophy of time, which in turn is the purest expression of impressionistic thinking: the uniqueness of the moment is one of the fundamental experiences of the nineteenth century. But he adds that "Proust's philosophy is merely the self-consolation and self-deception of a sick man, of a man already buried alive." To which one can only say that nowadays it seems that a lot of people *want* to be buried alive.



The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
 Moves perpetually in its stillness.  
*(Ibid., 12)*

Since the form is immaterial, it is not subject to the corruption of time. But because what is "revived in the meaning" is the incorruptible form it has a stillness, a serenity, and hence a tolerability, that the raw experience lacked: emotion is recollected into tranquillity. The other implication is that, the moment being what it is only because it continues and recapitulates other moments, the poem that realizes the moment is in some measure a summation of experience. Both these implications will be pursued shortly in other contexts.

So far as the statements we have looked at go, any moment is as good as any other and any man's experience as worth capturing as any other's; and the technique of symbolism as thus described is a mere copying, the dexterity shown in manipulating metaphor being surely of no more significance than the manual dexterity an art student acquires in rendering visual form. It seems more reasonable to suppose that the artist's experience is of an exceptionally precious kind, and that the moments he preserves are for some reason especially worth keeping. So Dr. Bowra (1949, 5) says of Hopkins that "What mattered for him were certain moments when he felt himself possessed by an influence so extraordinary that it could only be supernatural. For him every word must be charged with power. . . ." Such moments are now customarily called "epiphanies," a term introduced by James Joyce (1944, 612) for moments when what he called *claritas* was perceived (p. 259 above). They are most commonly, I think, thought of in the following way. Some of the things which a poet sees, hears, imagines or (especially) reads about become associated with each other in his mind, usually if not always unconsciously; they take on the form of a poem, still unconsciously; then, when all is ready, they as it were crystallize and emerge as a poem into the consciousness of the poet, who may become violently excited and feel himself inspired or possessed. This notion of the "poetic process" is very popular (cf. above p. 242). Unfortunately, its obvious relevance is only to those poems which are written extempore, not to those which are arduously constructed, and it cannot therefore be regarded as a theory of poetry or poetic composition as such, even if it may

3. Cf. Bowie (1911, 35): "A distinguishing feature in Japanese painting is the strength of the brush stroke, technically called *fude no chikara* or *fude no ikioi*. When representing an object suggesting strength . . . the moment the brush is applied the sentiment of strength must be invoked and felt throughout the artist's system and imparted through his arm and hand to the brush, and so transmitted into the object painted; and this nervous current must be continuous and of equal intensity while the work proceeds." Cf. also Wang Yü as quoted below, p. 414.

be elaborated into such a theory; nor is it obvious that an account of the process by which the original ingredients have been fused, or of the ingredients themselves, is relevant in a description of the finished work.

The picture of the artist as a man with a fortunately constituted unconscious mind which writes poems or paints pictures for him, of A. E. Housman secreting poetry on long walks after heavy meals, is misleading even if we concede that the artists thus depicted are atypical; for it suggests that artists are idlers. In fact, such automatism comes, like all un-laborious success, only to those who assiduously practise their craft (cf. p. 233, n. 13). Even if the unconscious mind is the true genius, it has to be taught its trade consciously. So Rilke writes of Rodin (1946, 10) that

There was no haughtiness in him. He pledged himself to a humble and difficult beauty that he could oversee, summon and direct. The other beauty, the great beauty, had to come when everything was prepared, as animals come to a drinking-place in the forest in the late night when nothing foreign is there.

And this statement suggests that one speaks of the "unconscious mind" in connection with artistic creation, as earlier writers spoke of "inspiration," just by way of acknowledging that the mind cannot command the success of its operations: one can be confident that one will write a novel or paint a portrait, but cannot be confident that it will be a good one, and so one invokes some indiscernible force other than one's own powers as cause of the excellence of one's work, should it be excellent. "Where *can* such spontaneous inspirations originate, if not in the composer's unconscious?" asked Mr. Cooke (1959, 172 n.).

### *Mental Isolates*

It will be seen that we are no longer thinking of the work of art simply as a means of preserving the unique experience of a moment, since uniqueness would not be enough to make it worth preserving. A moment may derive significance from its setting in a lifetime on which it throws light, or from its relation to a work of art that can be made out of it. In the one case, what is experienced may be described or portrayed; in the other, it is supposed to be transmuted or embodied (cf. Hough 1960, 10). And not all moments call for such description or transmutation. The moment of "epiphany," then, may be significant only as that in which something emerges into consciousness. If it is for its own sake that it is found significant, it must either hold in itself something that refers beyond itself (as the quotations from Mr. Eliot already suggested) or possess some valuable structural properties of its own. "The moment's experience" is then an



unsuitable phrase for a complex of experience held together by more than mere compresence in an individual's momentary awareness. At the very least, one should make Mr. Skelton's restriction (1956, 75) that "The poem, in patterning experience, patterns only the essential core of that experience, and . . . the poem as experience has a coherence, definition and unity. . . . It does, in fact, abstract from the experience a gestalt." But what the poem patterns is more likely to be a construct not otherwise related to any particular moment than by the fact that it is then given form. Such an autonomous and independent constellation of experience bears a close analogy to what is called in vulgar psychology a "complex"; it is therefore not surprising that some poets should, as we have seen, regard their poetry as a means of as it were objectifying and so getting rid of their private obsessions:

The pathology of poetic composition is no secret. A poet finds himself caught in some baffling emotional problem, which is of such urgency that it sends him into a sort of trance. And in this trance his mind works, with astonishing boldness and precision, on several imaginative levels at once. The poem is either a practical answer to his problem, or else it is a clear statement of it; and a problem clearly stated is half-way to solution. (Graves 1959, 214.)

And joy in creation may be nothing but relief from a mental oppression too familiar to be noticed, as Ezra Pound seems to be suggesting when he writes (1954, 4):

An "image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . . It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation, that freedom from time and space limits: that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of a great work of art.

This way of thinking owes most of its prestige to Freud, who not only provides a rationale for what would otherwise be merely fanciful but also by his distinction between *Vorlust* and *Endlust* diverts attention from aesthetic form to symbolic content, and through his general prestige from conscious to unconscious, from the mental constructs that works of art may be to the mental tangles in which they may start; so that Dylan Thomas (1934) could write that "Poetry must drag further into the clear nakedness of light more even of the hidden causes than Freud could realise."

### *Expression as Articulation*

Perhaps we have been led astray by the too easy analogy between the work of art struggling to be born and the suppressed complex of feeling struggling for expression. What is interpreted as relief from personal obsession might equally be taken as the relief of discovery after long search.

The emotive disturbance which is at the root of inspiration . . . is merely a reaction on the part of the creator grappling with that unknown entity which is still only the object of his creating and which is to become a work of art. Step by step, link by link it will be granted him to discover the work. (Stravinsky 1942, 51.)

So in the following passage, from the seventeenth-century painter Wang Yü, the unconscious elaboration of the work of art is deliberately induced without any discernible relation to any aspect of the artist's personal life:

Before one starts on a painting the inspiration must be nourished either by looking at clouds and springs, or by contemplating flowers and birds, or by burning incense, or by sipping tea. . . . One must wait until something has been grasped in the bosom and the desire for expression is overwhelming. When the inspiration rises, spread the paper and move the brush, but stop as soon as it is exhausted; only when it rises again, you should continue and complete the work. If you do it in this way, the work will become alive with the moving power of Heaven and far superior to the things of the dusty world. (Sirén 1936, 210.)

It is of course ridiculous, as Hindemith (1952, 55-6) and many others have said, to suppose that the emotion the artist expresses (if that is what he does) in any large-scale work is that which he as a man feels at the moment of expressing it, as though Michelangelo's toil on the Sistine ceiling were a record of the vagaries of his feelings during that time. At most he could be recapturing the feelings of some especially significant moment; but surely in the act of capture the feelings are changed. So Mr. Cooke (1959, 15-16) says that "An artist has two separate selves: the everyday, conscious self, which is a prey to many passing trivial emotions, and a deep, unconscious, creative self, which is always there to return to, 'inspiration' permitting, and which is apt to intrude itself intermittently, as 'inspiration,' during his everyday life." But this is to admit that the "emotion" expressed is of a very special kind, whose nature moreover must be understood from the work of art that embodies it rather than itself providing any kind of explanation of the work. The "emotion," that is, must be understood in relation to the end in which it issues and not in relation to any personal origins.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it makes no sense to speak of it as

4. For "unconscious incubation" as directed meditation on the motif as such, cf. the "Introduction to my Pictures of Hua Mountain" by the fourteenth-century landscapist Wang Li (Waley 1923, 245): "Till I knew the shape of the Hua Mountain, how could I paint a picture of it? But after I had visited it and drawn it from nature, the 'idea' was still immature. Subsequently I brooded on it in the quiet of my house, on my walks abroad, in bed and at meals, at concerts, in intervals of conversation and literary composition. One day when I was resting I heard drums and flutes passing the door. I leapt up like a madman and cried 'I have got it!' Then I tore up my old sketches and painted it again." Cf. also the Dedicatory



existing separately from the work of art in which it is incarnate. Accordingly, the most sophisticated and influential of the theories which would equate art with the expression of emotion, those of Croce and Collingwood, maintain that a work of art structures or gives form to an emotion or intuition—it matters little which word is used, since whatever word is used must be given a special sense—which does not exist at all before it is thus given form: the structure *is* the emotion. “Expressing” in this sense is sharply contrasted with “evincing” (that is, giving signs of having) a feeling. Especially in Collingwood, “expression” comes to refer simply to a peculiar relation of means to end, to an absence of rhetorical or magical intent, and the task of expressing as thus understood is a kind of creative introspection.<sup>5</sup>

A bad work of art is an activity in which the agent tries to express a given emotion, but fails. This is the difference between bad art and art falsely so called. . . . In art falsely so called there is no failure to express, because there is no attempt at expression; there is only an attempt (whether successful or not) to do something else.

But expressing an emotion is the same thing as becoming conscious of it. A bad work of art is the unsuccessful attempt to become conscious of a given emotion. . . . (Collingwood 1938, 282.)

As Bradley said (1909, 23), pure poetry “springs from the creative impulse of a vague imaginative mass pressing for development and definition. If a poet already knew exactly what he meant to say, why should he write the poem?” Perhaps we should rather say, if he knows *exactly* what he means to say he has already written the poem.

In making an emotion or intuition clear to oneself one would also be making it clear to others, Croce argues (1901, 195): if one can put oneself in the artist’s place historically, and he has seen clearly, then one must necessarily see clearly also. The spectator reconstitutes the artist’s mental construct. Coomaraswamy (1934, 202) attributes the same doctrine to an ancient Indian treatise: a painting is produced in colours “‘for the sake of attracting spectators,’ though the very picture is not in the colors, but subsists as the art in the artist, and by the spectator’s own effort again as

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Letter to Byrd 1610: “Furthermore, there is such a hidden and secret force in those sentiments themselves (I speak from experience) that to one who is meditating on Holy Writ, diligently and seriously mulling it over, musical phrases of perfect appropriateness suggest themselves, I know not how, as if of their own accord.”

5. This has not always been seen. Cf. Listowel (1933, 100): “The connection between emotion and its expression by means of gesture and bodily movements is immediate and involuntary, an elementary psycho-physical phenomenon; therefore the expression of feeling cannot in itself possess, despite Croce and his fellow expressionists, any artistic significance at all.” Despite this howler, the noble lord got his Ph.D.

art in him." But I am not sure that Coomaraswamy's interpretation has not been influenced by his knowledge of Croce.

We have seen that there are difficulties in thus holding that the artist's experience and that of his public can be the same (pp. 265-6). But the motive for saying they are is clear: it is to escape from the need for critical categories and academic rules. Really, Croce's emphasis on the sufficiency of expression and Bell's on the possibility of significant form are parts of the same revolutionary movement, whose aim was to provide a conceptual justification and a critical language for an aesthetic universalism: Croce, for whom historical knowledge of an artist's background is all the knowledge necessary to appreciate his work, embraces a cultural relativism which has no defeatist implications, while Bell more optimistically proclaims a millenium in which all that is aesthetically relevant in any work of art is immediately accessible to any civilized observer.

If the aesthetically relevant aspects of all observers' experiences are the same as those of the artist, if they can precisely reconstitute his "emotion," then the artefact which mediates between him and them loses all the independent significance that it derives, on other theories, from the fact that the artist may have put into it more than he knew and more than anyone finds there, and from the doctrine that there may be many equally valid alternative explanations of one work. From this relegation of the artefact two inconvenient consequences are often alleged to flow. The first is that the medium in which the work of art is carried out becomes unimportant: the same emotion could be embodied in a painting, a poem or a dance,<sup>6</sup> which is absurd, and the familiar fact that artists often depend on the experience of manipulating such physical media as clay and paint is denied. But this does not in fact follow, for reasons to be given shortly. The other is that "No one has ever seen a work of art," which is obviously not true. But this objection is trivial: the theory does not deny that anyone has seen anything that is commonly taken to be visible. At the most, the phrase "work of art" is re-defined in an unusual and perhaps inconvenient way,<sup>7</sup> as "emotion" and "expression" have already been. It may be right to quarrel with the terminology, but it should not be thought that any matter of substance is at issue.

6. Such an equivalence of the arts has been asserted, but not by Croce: "If the 'words' had been materialized by temporal design as pure tones, the poem would have come out as a piece of music; if they had been condensed as colors by a spatial design, it would have been a picture; if the words had cut themselves a design in stone, a cathedral or a statue" (Jordan 1952, 48). Jordan can say this only because he holds that "The substance of a work of art . . . is never experience" (*ibid.*, 82).

7. Cf. Collingwood (1939, 2): "No 'work of art' is ever finished, so that in that sense of the phrase there is no such thing as a 'work of art' at all."



*Recollection and Discovery.* If it be true that to express an emotion is to give it form and thus give it definite existence and so discover it, it becomes intelligible that artistic creation should often seem more like the recovery or recollection of something already existent but elusive. So Stephen Spender can write (Ghiselin 1955, 116):

Obviously these lines are attempts to sketch out an idea which exists clearly enough on some level of the mind where it yet eludes the attempt to state it. At this stage, a poem is like a face which one seems to be able to visualize clearly in the eye of memory, but when one examines it mentally or tries to think it out, feature by feature, it seems to fade.

However, I find that in an early notebook of my own, after I had written that "I find correction of a 'given' poem difficult,<sup>8</sup> feeling it as an attempt to recover an original rather than achieve an aim," I added "Of course, this may be illusion; the 'original' may be my general sense of form acquired by much reading and writing, and have no relation to the specific poem."

"*Imagination and Memory*, are but one thing," says Hobbes (1651, 5), "which for divers considerations hath divers names." And certainly Collingwood's account of expression is scarcely to be distinguished from what Proust says of recollection:

Impressions such as those which I was endeavouring to analyse and define could not fail to vanish away at the contact of a material enjoyment that was unable to bring them into existence. The only way to get more joy out of them was to try to know them more completely at the spot where they were to be found, namely, within myself, and to clarify them to their lowest depths. (Proust 1927/1932, 999.)

It is true, what I experienced in those hours of love, all men undergo likewise. One goes through an experience, but what one has felt is like those negatives which shew nothing but black until they have been held up before a lamp and then, too, must be looked at from the reverse side; one has no idea what they contain until they have been held up before the intelligence, and only when it has thrown light upon them do we distinguish—and with what effort!—the outline of what we have felt. (*Ibid.*, 1014.)

One is inclined to say that an articulated memory is not, at least not necessarily, a work of art, nor a work of art an articulated memory;<sup>9</sup> but just what is the difference? Perhaps only that in one case the structure is imputed to some past moment, in the other not; Proust, after all, has no real reason to think that what he is developing is what was on the negative.

8. By a "given" poem is meant one written without premeditation or hesitation, like Mr. Sassoon's "Everyone Sang" (cf. Sassoon 1945, 140).

9. Wordsworth's account of poetic composition, however, is couched in terms of a Proustian recollection (p. 223 above).

## EXPRESSION AS INVENTION

NO DOUBT SOMETIMES a work of art expresses, gives form to or finds equivalents for, what the artist as a man already in some fashion feels; but this is surely not always so, and even if it were it would not be a necessary truth—no discovery of what the artist as a man had or had not felt would alter our estimate of the work he produced. Nor do all feelings lend themselves to the kind of articulation necessary to a work of art. "We talk as if thought was precise and emotion was vague," says Mr. Eliot (1927, 135). "In reality there is precise emotion and there is vague emotion." And it is presumably only precise emotion that can appear as art. The artist's expressions, Collingwood writes (1938, 238),

are conscious expressions, consciously invented, and these can be appropriate only to emotions which themselves belong to the conscious level of experience. It is not all emotions that can be expressed in language, but only emotions of consciousness or psychical emotions raised to the level of consciousness. . . . What are called unexpressed emotions are emotions at one level of experience, already expressed in the way appropriate to that level, of which the person who feels them is trying to become conscious.

So we may say that if it was indeed true that Proust's narrator was recapturing the past, it cannot also be true that he had felt no more than other men feel: if the snapshot of his feelings could be developed, that shows that something patterned was there to be developed—and, indeed, printed. But it may be better to abandon altogether the supposition that the artist must feel as a man what he expresses as an artist. "The less you feel a thing, the fitter you are to express it as it is. . . . But you must have the capacity to make yourself feel it." (Flaubert 1852.) So even in a lyric the "I" who speaks should be taken always as a dramatic *persona*, not as the poet's real self (cf. Wimsatt 1954, xv). This, indeed, as Professor Hoppers says (1956, 294–5), is the point of the idiosyncratic way in which Croce and Collingwood use the word "expression": finding it generally agreed that expression is the artist's business, they are acquiescing in the agreement and saying that this business is not primarily to externalize what is felt but to achieve clear intuitions.<sup>10</sup>

10. Similarly, MacCallum (1937, 179), rather than say with Collingwood that every emotion has its own level of articulation, or with Eliot that some emotions are vague and some precise, confines the term "emotion" to what is precisely articulated, giving the name "commotion" to the vague feelings that are usually thought of as typical emotions; for it is agreed that emotion is what the artist expresses, so that what does not figure in aesthetic expression should not be called emotion: "Commotion is a form of physiological bondage which weighs heavily



What is spoken of as expression, then, is as I said before not the manifestation or presentation of a present or past experience, but the articulation of an idea which is the idea for a work of art. What is to be articulated will then be something inseparable from the artistic genre and specific medium in which it is to be expressed.<sup>11</sup> Collingwood shows himself aware of this when he writes (1938, 245) that "If there is no such thing as an unexpressed feeling, there is no way of expressing the same feeling in two different media." But Croce may have been less aware of it; he certainly thought that the act of externalizing the expressed intuition was aesthetically irrelevant. For this he was criticized by Bosanquet (1915, 60-1), who regards "the feeling for the medium" as the "clue to the fundamental question of aesthetics, which is 'how feeling and its body are created adequate to one another.'" But, as Professor Hospers points out (1956, 296-8), the irrelevance of externalization does not mean that the medium and the feeling for it are irrelevant: the "intuition" may well be in terms of the medium as the artist conceives it, and may indeed only be gradually "expressed" or formed in the process of working on the stone or paint. What Croce does seem to leave out of account is rather the actual work on the material as a physical stuff. He seems, certainly, to have lacked interest in at least some aspects of the physical world:

To see Croce getting into a car was amusing and in a way illuminating. He did not adopt the usual device of entering it sideways: he simply approached the door frontally in the same way as he might enter the wide gate of his palazzo in Naples. Naturally any car seemed too small for him, who was so small himself. Indeed, he completely lacked any interest in the technical side of things, in machines or inventions. (Calogero 1952.)

Ducasse blames him (1929, 47) for writing as though all works of art were made in a special medium, "image-stuff," which should rather be thought of as an alternative medium to physical media, easier to manipulate but less permanent. But the criticism is perhaps beside the point. Croce, fol-

on a man's spirit, and rightly. . . . Emotion as a liberation occurs when the disintegrated body is restored to order through the agency of a formalised pattern of bodily motion, or dance, and all the arts may be traced to this source, whether it be the muscles of the arm, of the throat and chest, or of the whole body which execute the dance. It is through pattern that commotion becomes emotion."

11. Cf. Prall (1936, 160): "If the picture is adequate to the sort of intention that defines a work of art, it certainly will put on the canvas such spatial and colored elements as trained perception will agree to constitute this feeling." This is because (*ibid.*, 154) "Artistic technique consists in clarifying feelings by means of such operations [sc. operations 'upon a medium'], completing in external structural form an apprehensible content"; and "A feeling is never the feeling of nothing. . . . And what we feel, since we are conscious beings, is sensuously qualified content." The feeling thus cannot be separated from the concrete work in which it is embodied.

lowing Hegel in equating the rational with the real, is interested only in the formal properties of the work of art, not in the fact that there is or is not a material stuff in which the properties inhere. If the artist needs to wrestle physically with his materials, that is a personal matter for him; what is aesthetically relevant is only the expression he achieves, the material is relevant only in so far as it is expressive. "What do we call rational in the domain of artistic production? The work of art itself: an artistic fact, if it were ugly, would not be an artistic fact. . . ." (Croce 1906, 58.) And really I do not know how one could quarrel with this position except by misunderstanding it.

If the "feelings" expressed in art are thus peculiar to the medium in which they are expressed, the two alternatives named by Valéry (1939, 109), though differing in their origin, are the same in their issue:

Something quite unexpected wakes the poet in the man, some incident within or outside himself: a tree, a face, a "subject," an emotion, a word. Now it will be the desire to express that will start the ball rolling, the need to translate something felt; now it will be some formal element, the first rough draft of an expression seeking its cause, its meaning, in the spaces of his spirit. Note well this possible duality of stimulus which can set the poetic invention moving: sometimes it is a feeling that desires to express itself, sometimes the medium of expression seeking employment.

In either case, what is thus begun is not the alleviation of a feeling but, precisely, the production of a poem. So as artist one proceeds from confusion to clarity, whether or not one also, as man, proceeds from oppression to relief.<sup>12</sup>

The theory at which we have at last arrived succeeds better, perhaps, in accounting for artistic failure than for success. Failure is failure in working out the idea: either intellectual failure to achieve clarity,<sup>13</sup> or moral failure to persevere in the attempt to reach precision and a consequent relapse into prefabricated rhetoric and trickery; or, of course, technical failure at the level of "externalization," as of a sculptor who splits the stone. Some failures that might have been thought thus technical, however, are rather intellectual. Since what is to be expressed is essentially an idea for a work of art, and exists only as expressed in the work, it is only the technically competent who are capable of having the idea; the particular brush strokes

12. "A poet may believe that he is expressing only his own private experience; his works may be for him only a means of talking about himself without giving himself away" (Eliot 1951a, 411); but "The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates" (Eliot 1919, 18).

13. "The artist arrives at purity of expression precisely by eliminating the ugly which threatens to invade it; and this ugliness is his tumultuous human passions striving against the pure passion of art." (Croce 1913, 86.)



or whatever that constitute the artefact are not attempts, which may be dextrous or clumsy, to embody an idea; the idea, if fully worked out (if, that is, there is no intellectual failure), itself prescribes or includes the particular strokes that shall be used. And, since painters do not usually if ever know what precise strokes and so on they will use until they come to use them, it is in fact in the physical act of painting that the idea to be expressed first finds expression and thus comes into being.

The trouble with this final form which the doctrine that art expresses emotion has taken is that it says no more than that what artists do is to give form to works of art, and that what is thus formed is in some quite vague and general sense part of the artist's experience—and what else could it conceivably be? But, if the idea thus expressed is taken to be an idea for a work of art, it is useless to postulate it as referent for the work; if it is taken in any other way, there is no reason to believe in its alleged connection with the work.

## ART AS EXPRESSION

WHAT, IN THE END, should we say of the assertion that art expresses emotion? If the words are taken in their ordinary senses it is paradoxical, claiming that art does what it plainly does not. Taken in its most refined sense it becomes the platitude that art does whatever it does; but a platitude couched in terms of the paradox. The point of uttering it, as with all other such platitudinous and virtually tautologous claims (e.g. those of Mr. Bell in connection with "significant form"), is to exclude other suggested referents from consideration. On either interpretation it relates the work of art to its artist in preference to any other object, whether in a personal way or not, and whether his feelings or his thoughts be taken as primary. So the attempt to track down an indisputable referent for the work of art brings us back to something which is not a referent at all, whether because it is nothing but a shadow of the work (for which it is the "idea"), or because it is extraneous and irrelevant (belonging to the artist's private life), or just because it is expressed and not represented.

Saying that art expresses emotion may be a way of solving two problems, one that of how works of art come to be made, the other that of how they are to be interpreted and criticized. Croce's primary concern is to answer the latter question (cf. Donagan 1958, 163), and in general one associates the platitudinous form of the doctrine with this and the paradoxical form with the other question, for obvious reasons; but in practice they are seldom kept distinct, and most writers seem to suppose that in answering

either they have answered both. In any case, however, it is the latter question that is primary; for it is only when one has decided what is actually to be found in the work of art that one can hope to determine what extraneous factors may have led to its being there.

Once more, then, we seem to come round to preferring the epistemological interpretation over the psychological. We must distinguish, says Professor Wimsatt (1954, 59), between "passion as objectified and embodied in poems—passion, that is, in its grounds and reasons as a public and negotiable 'thing,' the poem—and passion, along with intentions and other thoughts, as the psychological source of a poem, its inspiration, or 'cause' in the efficient sense." And if the distinction is made in these terms it is obvious that only the former can be relevant to the analysis of art, that to introduce the latter is to talk rather of the human function of art. But, if this is so, it is evident that the actual analysis of works of art is not chiefly carried on in terms of what is *expressed*. All talk of expression must be primarily related to function, or to nothing. One speaks of the expression of emotion, in the last analysis, in order to make comprehensible, not the structure of a work of art, but the fact of its production and its place in the affairs of men. "There must be some correspondence," says Ernest Jones (1949, 101), "however disguised and transformed, between feelings a poet describes and feelings he has himself experienced in some form. The act of creation would otherwise be quite incomprehensible." And David Masson (1914, 12–14) held that

Disconnect our impressions of . . . works of Art . . . from our knowledge of their authors . . . and our Literary Criticism . . . degenerates into dilettantism. . . . Not till every poem has been, as it were, chased up to the moment of its organic origin, and resolved into the mood, or intention, or constitutional reverie, out of which it sprang, will its import be adequately felt or understood. This is a stubborn conviction, which increasing sophistication in academic criticism is unlikely to uproot; the attempt to steal and sterilize its vocabulary has failed.

## IDEAS OF FEELING

IT CAN HARDLY matter to the painter's public whether or not he was relieving through his work painful feelings of his own. And if we concede that the artist does express feelings, we have seen that these may well be feelings generated in the process of creating the work of art itself, or simply ideas for a work of art. So perhaps we should say that "The function of art is the symbolic expression not of the artist's actual emotions, but of his knowledge of emotion." This correction was actually made by Mrs.



Langer (Werner 1955, 7), whose writings on aesthetics are all elaborations of this thesis.

The need for Mrs. Langer may also be seen if one confronts with one another the theories of music of Bergson and Schopenhauer. We may gather from Schopenhauer that if the flux of existence is not somehow stabilized and objectified it cannot be an object of knowledge and no satisfaction can be taken in it. But from Bergson we learn that the devices of conceptualization which we use to make life knowable prevent us from enjoying it. So, if we agree with them that it is the task of art to make human life knowable in all its richness (a doctrine which supposes that the flux of experience evades knowledge because of its infinite variety and constant change, and that the crude utilitarian classifications which we impose on it in the act of thinking do not reveal but conceal its nature), we must suppose that it does so by using some stabilizing and symbolizing device that is not a classification. And this is just what Mrs. Langer does suppose.

Mrs. Langer follows Ernst Cassirer in holding that neither the external world nor the inner life of men is in itself intelligible and therefore comfortable: man comes to terms with the world and himself by imposing symbolic forms, or patterns, which are themselves orderly and therefore intelligible. Languages do their part of the job by providing systems of classification which can be applied to things; but art, defined (1953, 40) as "creation of forms symbolic of human feeling," provides not schemes of classification but perceptible analogues for aspects of inner experience: "Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life" (1953, 27).<sup>14</sup> The point of a work of art, even a representational one, is never that it represents some particular thing, but that it presents, clarified and isolated, a percept having the *kind of pattern* characteristic of an important aspect of human life. The patterned percept is intelligible, as the raw experience is not, because it is purer and more orderly; and the work of art gives us an understanding of that aspect of experience. Artistic forms are thus "symbols"<sup>15</sup> for the

14. Mrs. Langer is here exploiting the notion of logical form as she had earlier expounded it in her *Introduction to Symbolic Logic* (1937, ch. 1, §5).

15. Mrs. Langer's use of the term "symbol" has given much trouble (cf. Nagel 1943, 356). One usually thinks of a symbol as standing for something other than itself. But a work of art does not: it simply manifests in a pure form a mode of order which in a less pure form characterizes some aspect of human life. A particular work of art need not correspond to any one possible experience belonging to that aspect; its relationships are potentially analogous to an infinite number of other sets. The definition of "symbol" that is to legitimate this usage is given, I think for the first time, in Langer (1953, xi): "A symbol is any device whereby we are enabled to make an abstraction." However, she has at last given up this very confusing use of the term, and prefers now to speak of "expressive" rather than "symbolic" form (Langer 1957, 126-7).

articulation of feeling, and convey the elusive and yet familiar pattern of sentence" (Langer 1950, 521). How this theory is applied to the different arts we have already partly seen (pp. 148 ff.).

A complete theory of art, adequate to the needs of description, criticism and functional explanation, would do five things. It would explain the ground of the unity of the arts; it would relate that ground to some need of men, whether individual or social; it would relate the different kinds of art to functions differing in important ways but each related in much the same way to the common ground; it would show how there can be an indefinitely large number of works fulfilling in different but equally important ways the function of each of the kinds (that is, it would not suggest that the perfect specimen of a kind could be produced by the simple application of a formula for the kind, and that all other works should be regarded as failures to produce that specimen—as Aristotle seems to have regarded all other tragedies as unsuccessful versions of *Oedipus Rex*); and it would carry with it a usable and intelligible vocabulary for describing and criticizing works of art. Unless the first four of these tasks can be fulfilled there can be no satisfactory "theory of art" and the project of constructing one should be given up: aesthetics should become rather the critical handling of limited topics. If the first four tasks can be carried out but the fifth cannot, theories of art, however intellectually satisfying in themselves, will be but tenuously related to artistic and critical practice, and can therefore hardly be accepted as theories of *art* as it is.

Mrs. Langer comes closer than anyone to meeting the first four requirements. The unity of art lies in its being "the creation of forms symbolic [or expressive] of human feeling." The human need is that for understanding, achievable through symbolization: man is primarily a symbol-using animal. The differentiation of the arts rests on the possibility of identifying areas or aspects of human experience.<sup>16</sup> And since these are areas or modes of experience and not particular experiences art may be as various as the actual experiences in these modes or areas—which is to say, indefinitely various. Formally, then, her theory is excellent. But is it true? It is a theory very hard to grasp or present clearly, and it is hard to say whether this is

16. One might think that the proper way to proceed would be first to determine what the important aspects are and then to verify the hypothetical theory of art by discovering whether there are in fact arts corresponding to these aspects. Mrs. Langer does not do this, but accepts the conventional enumeration of the arts and asks, assuming that each art does express some aspect of feeling, what aspect it expresses. I suppose the reason for this would be that it is only through the arts that feeling is symbolized, and hence it is only through reflection on known kinds of art that one can discover what the significant aspects of human experience are. That the result could be interpreted as a systematic classification I have already shown (p. 150).



because it is subtle or because it is evasive: one just cannot tell, for example, what her account of architecture (1953, 93 ff.) commits us to. The theory does not really attempt to fulfil the fifth of the tasks I mentioned (cf. Nagel 1943, 360). Given the general function of the art to which a work belongs one could presumably say something about how well the work performs this function, and the characteristics of its structure which enable it to do so; but the theory seems not to prescribe any way of discussing those aspects of it which differentiate it from other equally satisfactory works in the same mode. This may be a good thing; but it does mean that this theory, which has been reached by what at least seemed to be the successive rejection of all suggested alternatives, and to which Mrs. Langer has given an air of finality by repeatedly restating it in versions which incorporate the slogans of almost all rival theories, leaves us right where we started in our quest for the proper way of describing a work of art. But this matters little, if it is true, for there is no reason why works of art should be exhaustively discussible; and whether it is true or not one may ask whether the theory is plausible at the level of abstraction on which it functions. As to this I will do little more than offer an opinion, which is that in its starting point, the theory of music derived from Schopenhauer and Bergson,<sup>17</sup> it is persuasive enough. Professor Nagel's objections (1943, 356-8) that a piece of music according to Mrs. Langer neither represents a particular kind of feeling<sup>18</sup> nor articulates a single unique feeling, which some critics seem to think fatal, may be taken rather as defining the kind of relation which she claims music and feeling have; his objection (*ibid.*, 360) that it is false that anyone after hearing a piece of music knows more about emotion than before is no doubt true in the sense that no new information is acquired or can be retailed, but not necessarily so in the

17. "Beneath these joys and sorrows which can, at a pinch, be translated into language, [musicians] grasp something that has nothing in common with language, certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his inmost feelings, being the living law—varying with each individual—of his enthusiasm and despair, his hopes and regrets" (Bergson 1900, 161-2). That music does not portray feelings but shares something of the movement of feeling was already said clearly by Wackenroder (1799, 189-90): "In the mirror of music the heart of man comes to self-knowledge; it is through music that we learn to feel Feeling. . . . But what flows in these waves is really only the pure, *formless* essence, the process and the colour, above all the thousandfold *onflow* of the feelings; ideal, angel-pure art knows in her innocence neither the origin nor the goal of her movements. . . ." See also the next note.

18. This was already seen by Webb (1762, 102): "As music has no means of explaining the motives of its various impressions, its imitations of the Manners and Passions must be extremely vague and undecisive"; thus "tender and melting tones" serve indifferently for love, benevolence, friendship, pity, etc., and the "rapid movements of Anger" will do also for "Terror, distraction and all the violent agitations of the Soul."

more relevant sense that one is no better able to live with oneself. But he has a more formidable objection: that there are no positive reasons for thinking that just this is what music actually does, that the theory is not only tenable but true (*ibid.*, 359). This seems to be so; but if a theory of music must reckon with the facts that almost everyone finds some emotional import in music, that there is none the less little definite agreement as to what particular emotion a given piece expresses or conveys, and that such expressive functions must somehow be related to the actual complex structure of music, it may seem that there is little room left for manoeuvre. It is the application of the theory generalized from this<sup>19</sup> to other arts that arouses serious misgivings: even when the explanation is most successful one may be left feeling that she is not so much explaining the essential nature or function of the arts as illustrating them by interesting analogies. Indeed, if we grant that for example in tragedy "Fate is not what the play is about; it is only what the movement of the action is like" (1953, 360), we must suppose that to know that this is true we must know what fate is like without being acquainted with the drama, so that the symbolizing function of the arts appears superfluous.

## EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

There is a standing controversy as to whether language is primarily a matter of expression or of communication.—Or rather, there is a perpetual disagreement; for both sides usually treat their own position as self-evident and that of their opponents as an outmoded and unscientific superstition, so that the question is little discussed. Those who hold that language is primarily a means of communication may argue thus. First, the most obvious function of language is to facilitate co-operation within a community, and linguistic acts can only be properly understood as facets of social situations. Describing, informing, requesting, inquiring, commanding, permitting, forbidding, warning, reassuring, admitting, denying, promising, refusing, commending: these and such as these are the uses of language, and they are plainly social in nature, forms of communication rather than of expression. Second, if one considers how a language is learned by children or foreigners one finds that the language as an existing system is picked up in communication—by receiving communications from others and overhearing others in mutual communication; it is not invented afresh by each individual as a means to his own expression.

19. The relation is avowed and defended: "The proper way to construct a general theory is by generalization of a special one" (Langer 1953, 24).



Third, one may point, as Lucretius does in the fifth book of *De Natura Rerum*, to the rudimentary forms or analogues of language in the brute creation, whose mating calls, warning honks, antenna-wavings and honeycomb-dances are so obviously means of communicating for the preservation of the species and the good of the hive, herd, colony, or what have they. Fourthly one may argue that even solitary thinking, where language is least communicative, has traditionally been called "the soul's conversation with herself"; that thought is an internalization of talk rather than talk being a replica of thought: "How can I tell what I think till I hear what I say?"

The case just made seems unanswerable, but let us try to answer it. It may be argued that the primary function of language cannot be communication, for that presupposes expression. What is communicated can never be a state of affairs independent of any observer, but is always an interpreted situation, so that the primary function of language must be this interpretation of experience, the classification of occurrences that makes the world intelligible and thus makes communication possible. Every language has a vocabulary, which is a means of classifying objects and events, and within which there are regular means of word-formation which enable the classification to be carried further. It has also an accidence and syntax which classify relationships.<sup>20</sup> If language's main function is social unification, it achieves this end not solely by making communication possible, however important that may be, but in the first place by providing a framework within which all users of the language can arrange their own experience in mutually similar ways: only thus do the different life-experiences of different individuals become comparable and thus communicable. To the argument that language is transmitted through communication it is rejoined that children, when they first learn to talk, use this new skill less to communicate than to formulate and express their attitudes and recognitions (cf. Collingwood 1938, 228 ff.). At the other extreme, an adult who is learning a foreign tongue begins to feel that he has made the language his own at the moment when he ceases to think in his own language and translate, thus using the foreign lingo merely to communicate, and begins to think in the new language, thus using it to express. These facts suggest that the use of language to communicate is relatively superficial and derivative. Then again, though the function of the animal analogues of language is to contribute to the well-being of the

20. Herder (1770, 51 ff.) says of the naming of the beasts by Adam: "Man invented language!—from the sounds of living nature!—as tokens of his victorious understanding! . . . What was this first language, but a collection of the elements of poetry? . . . A glossary of the soul, that is at the same time a mythology and a wonderful epic of the words and deeds of all beings!"

herd and the preservation of the species, they are not consciously directed to this end but are responses to an external stimulus compelled by an inner necessity: so far as the animal uttering them is concerned, they must be deemed expressive rather than communicative. Finally, so far from thinking being an interior conversation, the first and often the hardest task of the thinker is to find words. A problem is not a problem, a thought not a recognizable thought, until it is given verbal form. The primary function of language here is to make thought articulate and thus recognizable.

This case, in its turn, looks as unanswerable as the other. In fact, both are true: the example of animal cries, with their mechanism of expression and their function of communication, should suggest that neither can take precedence over the other, or at least that equally justifiable choices of criteria of primacy will yield a different precedence. No doubt if language did not first express it could not be used to communicate; but though it may seem that it can express without communicating, that a man might invent a language and soliloquize in a world otherwise deaf and silent, Wittgenstein (1953) at least appears to argue that this is not possible. All that Wittgenstein proves, I think, is that there could not be a language in which communication was impossible in principle; but in any case one cannot doubt that it is their function in communication that determines the forms languages take: both their manifestation in audible and visible forms, and their public, shared and hence approximate character. It is social pressures that determine their phonemic structure, the scale and composition of their vocabularies, their local variations and uniformities.<sup>21</sup>

Some linguists use a distinction between *speech* and *language* which may help us here. " 'Language' . . . serves as a collective name for an organized system of knowable linguistic facts, and . . . 'speech' is a *nomen actionis* for the activity of which the most evident symptoms are articulation and audibility" (Gardiner 1932, 107). Expression, then, in the sense of the structuring and ordering of experience, the imposition of a graspable order on the world, is a function of language; communication is a function of speech. But when this is said it is evident that expression in the sense of finding a specific verbal form for a thought, or attitude, or feeling, is likewise a function of speech. We have, in fact, been trying to answer two questions at once: Is speech more fundamental than language? (*answer*: Neither can be more fundamental than the other) and: Within

21. "The autistic speech of children seems to show that the purely communicative aspect of language has been exaggerated. It is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualization of the tendency to see reality symbolically, that it is precisely this quality which renders it a fit instrument for communication and that it is in the actual give and take of social intercourse that it has been complicated and refined into the form in which it is known today." (Sapir 1933, 159.)



speech, is expression more fundamental than communication? (*answer*: Perhaps it is, in a sense, but one would rather not assign priorities here either).

I have been discussing this question throughout in the terms in which it is usually put, using "expression" in a wide sense which includes not only the articulation in perceptible form of a mental content but also the process of abstraction by which the mental content itself is derived from what is perceived—a sense which covers the whole of what I before called "symbolization" (ch. xiv). This usage is defensible on the ground that abstraction cannot take place without expression, and it is the expression and not the abstraction that makes the language: as I have said, the presupposition of all this talk is that thought is not clothed in speech but incarnate in it. If expression is thought of as something separable from abstraction, it at once becomes a mere means of communication, of no independent significance at all. So, because to speak of symbolization implies a reference to the external world that may not be present, I shall continue to use "expression" in this wider sense.

In such arts as music and painting, as in language, there are expression and communication both; but in these arts there is, so to say, more speech than language. Glossaries and grammars of meanings and structures can be compiled: Mr. Cooke (1959) has a musical phrase-book, Mr. Birkhoff (1933) a sort of visual syllabary. But they do not get one very far, and cannot be used to construe a work of art in the same way that dictionaries and grammars enable one to learn a language and construe whatever is said in it. In artistic activity, then, as in speech, there can be no communication without expression, whereas there can be expression without communication, however undesirable that may be to the artist and his potential public alike.<sup>22</sup> Since there is no finite definable system of symbolization it is even in principle possible that there should be expressions which cannot communicate, if there is no way in which the spectator can "place himself at the point of view" of the artist. But again, in the arts as in languages, the forms which the phenomena take are in fact largely determined by the communicative aspect: the physical restrictions on the sensible forms which the work can take, the arrangements for memorizing and transcribing forms with their repercussions in standardizing the forms used in expression (e.g. musical scores with their elimination of nuances of rhythm, etc., verbal tags in oral epics), the formation and

22. Hirn (1900, 101) wrote that "It would be wrong to say that art in any one of its higher manifestations aims at transmitting a feeling. Its purpose is far rather an immortalization." But he adds that this aim, whatever the artist may think, can be explained only by reference to "the enhancing and relieving power of social expression."

transmission of styles and conventions. Here again the chief difference between arts and languages lies in the smaller part played in the former by the formal "language" component; and this is perhaps best taken as reflecting the fact that in speech little attention is paid by speaker or hearer to the medium of communication, as opposed to what is communicated. The purposes of everyday intercourse, where speech must be produced promptly and issue speedily in action, are served by a rough-and-ready pre-existing set of classifications. But in the arts the attention of artist and public is, or should be, concentrated on the medium itself, so that it is possible, as we have seen, to argue that one cannot even distinguish between the medium of communication and what is communicated. Speed is not essential, time can be taken to study the work; and approximation is less tolerable. So the part played by a pre-existing structure of conventions is much less, and there is much less reason to abide strictly by what conventions there are.

Since the arts have an expressive and a communicative aspect, aesthetic theories which identify art with either alone tend to have characteristic stresses and omissions. To equate art with expression is to stress the integrity of the artist and warn against the rhetorical manipulation of the minds of others; to equate art with communication is to stress the need for coherence and intelligibility, and to warn against the eccentricities and esoteric *chi-chi* of a Greenwich Village. To speak of communication in this context is to lay the responsibility for ultimate intelligibility on the artist; to speak of expression is to lay it on the public. So each tends to warn against the excesses of what the other encourages, and to ignore the dangers of which the other warns. Those who speak of expression tend to ignore the public character of the symbolism artists use, and the conventions within which they work, and also to minimize the difference between a day-dream and a work of art. Those who speak of communication encourage, by ignoring whatever is characteristic in the artist's methods and attitude, a confusion between art and propaganda. It will be seen, too, from what was said of the parts played by expression and communication in language and speech, that stress laid on either in aesthetics not only leads to a characteristic emphasis but stems from a concern with different problems. Those who speak of expression concentrate on what the artist does, what goes on in him, what starts him off; their inquiries border on psychology. Those who speak of communication stress the social function of the artist, how he is effective, why his work is valued; their inquiries border on sociology. So the question whether art is essentially expressive or communicative is better not asked. Either aspect may need to be emphasized, depending on what aberrations one is trying to combat.



## EXPRESSION AND ITS RIVALS

WHY SHOULD THERE be one and only one right way of discussing works of art, or one set of criteria by which they should be assessed? Presumably there is no reason why anything that can be said of any work should not be said. It might be objected that in calling something a work of art we are not referring to the medium in which it is executed but to the function it performs, and hence to the kind of things that it is appropriate to say about it, so that such permissiveness destroys the concept of art. And so perhaps it does; but I have suggested that our original datum is not the concept but the institution of art, the unity of which depends not on the unity of function but on the interrelatedness of acceptable functions and ways of speaking. The suggestion, made above, that all rivals to Mrs. Langer's theory had been eliminated was only partly true: the objection to other theories was not that they failed to apply at all to any art and any work, but that they could not hold of all arts and all works or that they could not be the whole truth of any work. Why should not different modes of description be appropriate to different works, or many kinds of things be sayable about any work? Doubtless if this were so there could be no such thing as a complete and simple theory of art; but perhaps there can't.

If we consider the various ways of discussing art that have been enumerated it seems evident that there is no necessary conflict among them, though there may be priorities; and one feels inclined to say that in so far as a work of art is an ordered system one must take account of as many different kinds of order as there are in it.<sup>23</sup> In so far as it is a single ordered system one must suppose that these kinds of order will be intelligibly related to one another, as means to end or as mutually supporting either within the common structure or in producing a common effect in terms of which the structure is to be understood. Let us then see, by way of example, how far acceptance of Mrs. Langer's account would tell against accepting the accounts previously considered.

It is plain that if a work of art is expressive of ideas of feeling in virtue of its structural properties, as Mrs. Langer says, its structural properties, that is, its *form*, must be attended to; and into that form will necessarily enter, as accent at the very least, both *quality* and *texture*. Granted this, there can be no reason why regular or *geometric form* should not enter into such a pattern as one aspect of it, or why it should not make an im-

23. M. Piguet (1958, 85) remarks that most European aestheticians see the work of art as a structure involving three kinds of order: "presence," which answers to what I have called form, "representation" and "expression."

portant difference when it does occur; although its presence, however gratifying, would presumably not contribute much to the presumed primary function of the work unless it either corresponded to some constant aspect of feeling, or formed the groundwork of a significant pattern (involved in a tension such as I said might lend significance to a represented form), or played some constant part in the process of ordering and articulating feeling for our understanding.

If Mrs. Langer's theory rules out none of the alternatives considered under the heading of form, it is no less compatible with the other possibilities canvassed under that of expression. If art works express aspects of feeling with which they are in some obscure way isomorphic, the artist must have a knowledge of feeling, which knowledge he expresses: he must have *intuitions* of feelings, he may well imagine himself as having the feelings he intuitively has or have them as imagined (as Aristotle suggested, *Poetics*, 1455a29 ff.). Nor is there any reason why he should not (sometimes at least) build up this knowledge of feeling from clues given in his own everyday experience—though particular clues may be small and even deliberately restricted.<sup>24</sup> Nor, again, is there any reason why the feeling whose knowledge is expressed should not have the form of some complex of feelings of his own; and, if and when it does, the work might surely both express and relieve some oppression of the artist's while at the same time expressing ideas of feeling in Mrs. Langer's more general sense.

Neither possession of form nor expressiveness of feeling precludes a work of art from representing natural objects (though it seems obvious that not all do), which representation may be indispensable to the realization of the particular form or to the expression of the feeling. Though iconic representation is of some possible *individual* or *particular* scene or event, this does not stop it being taken as an *ideal* or as *typical*, or embodying some definite notion of the nature of true or ideal *reality*, and this whether or not there is felt to be a *tension* between the representing form and the supposed referent.

It would seem, then, that the alternatives mooted are rendered incompatible only by the claim that some one of them answers to art's one true function, and that the others are relevant only as relating to means to this end, or by the claim that they can and should be considered in isolation. We have seen at least that the last claim cannot be allowed. What we have not seen is how many ways there are of establishing and explaining the mutual connections. One way of doing so, and thus providing a unified theory of aesthetics, is the one I followed of relating all other forms of

24. Cf. Henry James's anecdote of Lady Ritchie (1884, 12-13) and his celebrated preface to *The Spoils of Poynton* (1908a).



order to that proposed by Mrs. Langer. But there may be other possibilities. If one were to say that art's task is to make experience orderly by providing experiences of order and thus to reveal some important aspect of reality, it would not be hard to bring all the suggested possibilities in. But to do so would presuppose a metaphysic of unapparent order, such as we have found common enough among writers on aesthetics. Neoplatonic and Neokantian aesthetics, then, can each provide a single consistent theory of art, mutually incompatible though very similar. But it would be rash to adopt a somewhat ambitious metaphysic, simply in order to provide the kind of aesthetic theory we should like.

My discussion of the suggested possible functions of art already revealed a similar plurality, neither mutually unrelated nor reducible to unity. Art may heal, adjust, reveal, and improve under the guise of play, and give pleasure in so doing, and may thus operate in a social or a private context. To say that not all works do all these, or do them equally, is not to deny that the tasks are functionally related. Emphasis on the "autonomy of art," on the fact that works of art are more closely related to other works of art than to anything else and on the originality and independence of the artist-creator, seems to negate such functional pluralism; but the appearance is deceptive. Such an emphasis refers only to the direction in which the artist's attention is concentrated while he is working, and to some of the expressive means at his disposal. The fact that works of art can only be described and evaluated in terms derived from the study of other works does not mean that aesthetic values are unrelated to other values, only that they cannot be by-passed or analysed away. There are two errors to be avoided: reduction of the aesthetic to the non-aesthetic, which trivializes art by trivializing its procedures, and compartmentalization, which trivializes art by isolating it from other concerns.

"Unity in multiplicity," then, seems as attractive a motto in systematic aesthetics as in the criticism of works of art. A multiplicity alike of functions and of kinds of order need not reduce aesthetics to chaos: knowledge depends, as Plato said (*Philebus*, 16C ff.), on replacing both infinite variety and undifferentiated unity by an ordered plurality.

## CONCLUSION

IS AESTHETICS, after all, a possible subject of study? We have seen that it has four main problems: the meaning and viability of the concept of art; the function of art; the existence and nature of aesthetic judgements, and the meaning of the terms characteristic of them; and the proper mode of analysis of works of art. The first two of these are characteristic of a philosophy of art, the third of a philosophy of beauty, the fourth of a philosophy of criticism. None of the questions can be properly dealt with in isolation from all the others. Theories about the proper analysis of works of art and about the function of art must be mutually dependent. Views on the proper analysis of works of art and on the meaning of the concept of "beauty" and kindred concepts cannot be kept separate, and we saw that the concept of art probably depends for its intelligibility, in the sense in which writers on aesthetics have used it most, on the concept of an aesthetic judgement—though in this case the connection arises out of suggested answers to the questions, not out of the implications of the questions themselves. And of course the meaning of "art" and the function of art cannot be treated independently. We saw, further, that the other problems of aesthetics arise as aspects of or in connection with these four, though because of the very interrelatedness of the problems my location of these ancillary questions could not be definitive.

To ask any one of the questions of aesthetics is therefore enough to raise all the others. The unity and viability of the subject are thus demonstrated if it is granted that any one of its questions can be asked. But that, no doubt, is the point originally at issue. For perhaps the concept of art does not exist, the word being a mere *flatus vocis*: there is no kind of unity among the arts, and no characteristic type of aesthetic judgement. Different "arts" have radically different functions, and accordingly different criteria are applicable to them and different vocabularies should be applied. None of this can be shown, of course, except by answering the



questions of aesthetics when they have been raised, so the possibility of it is not enough to stop us doing aesthetics; but if the answers when found were such as these, they would show us that we need not and should not ever have started.

I claim to have shown that the grounds generally alleged in favour of such scepticism are altogether insufficient and in most cases frivolous. On the other hand, the upshot of my labours may seem to suggest that the construction of a system of aesthetics involving a single function for art and a single mode of aesthetic analysis would be a most hazardous enterprise, and could not be neutral with respect to other philosophical disciplines. A pluralistic system, however, has not been ruled out. Aesthetics thus systematically pursued would be a philosophy of man. Perhaps in the end all philosophy is a philosophy of man; but it is of ethics and aesthetics, which avowedly deal with what man makes of himself, of his world and of his relations with his fellows, that this is most obviously true. And we have seen that, even if we forgo any kind of systematic construction, there are plenty of genuine problems to be tackled piecemeal; even the minimal interpretation of philosophy's task as the removal of confusion by conceptual analysis would leave the aesthetician scope for much heavy labour. But in the last resort aesthetics will be taken seriously only by those who are convinced that the arts have a distinctive and important place in human affairs. And it is at least not absurd to think that they do. Again and again throughout this book we have been offered reasons for thinking that the capacities and propensities which are most plainly and purely shown in producing and enjoying works of art are at least akin to those which enable us to live as social beings and to frame coherent notions of the world, to our capacity for reflection and to whatever spiritual freedom we may claim. We do not know what men altogether without art would be like; we do know that, as Professor Hampshire says (1959, 245), they would not be human as we know humanity. And if this is so, then however little may fruitfully be sayable in aesthetics, that little will always need to be borne in mind when the question is asked: What is man? Perhaps we would rather not ask that question, but it is likely to keep on arising.

Aesthetics will be counted one of the main philosophical disciplines whenever those aspects of humanity with which it deals assume a central importance in the concept of humanity itself. That will come about whenever attention is paid to the concept of a creative (or constitutive) imagination: when it is supposed both true and important that the "situation" in which men find themselves is one that depends largely on their own interpretations. It is in art that such imaginative powers are most incontro-

vertibly exercised, so that the philosophy of art may come to serve as a starting point for epistemology, metaphysics and ethics.

Aesthetics has been given its present form by the belief that there is a special connection between art and beauty, by the discovery or postulation of an affinity between creation and appreciation. The link between them is the concept of *order*: men like to put things in order, and like to find order in things. The concept of order is central to the notion of a constitutive imagination: the order that we find in the world gives us pleasure because it is one that we have ourselves (by whatever means and in whatever measure) brought into being, and is therefore akin to us. It would seem, then, that to bring the concepts of art and beauty into close enough relation is to make some form or derivate of idealism inevitable. But perhaps it now needs as much philosophizing to keep the concepts safely sundered as it once did to unite them.



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