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and Art Criticism

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Knowledge and Control in the Field of Aesthetics

BY
THOMAS MUNRO

IN times of war and economic distress, anyone who writes, reads, or teaches aesthetics is likely to feel an obligation to defend such an outlay of time and energy. Assuming that those who make this outlay are not called upon at present for more immediately practical service in support of civilized institutions, what apologia for aesthetics is possible?

One defense is to admit that aesthetics is a useless subject — perhaps the most completely so of all subjects — and then to urge the value of keeping alive some spark of interest in pure theory for its own sake; some example of the uncorrupted love of truth and beauty to which humanity may return when the storm is over.

Inspiring as this ideal may be, it goes unnecessarily far in admitting the complete impracticality of aesthetics. To be sure, no one can claim for aesthetics important immediate results in action, comparable to those of military strategy, chemistry or statecraft. Nor can one easily prove that aesthetic theory has had much effect on action, even in the field of art. For trends in aesthetic theory have on the whole followed, not preceded, major trends in art; justifying or condemning the latter after the fact, and largely ignored by later artists. But this inefficacy is not necessarily permanent, and may perhaps be corrected by a different approach to aesthetics itself.

Obviously, we have not yet achieved scientific understanding and control of art, or of human nature by the means of art, in any degree approaching that to which we have achieved these ends in other fields of phenomena. Through chemistry and physics we do, in substantial degree, control the physical world, for good and for ill; through medicine, hygiene, animal husbandry and horticulture we control, to a less extent, the world of plant and animal life. Through the social sciences we have achieved some understanding of human institutions and group behavior, but considerably less control. Through psychology and its educational and therapeutic applications, we are beginning the scientific conquest of mental phenomena.

The relations of art and of aesthetics to these other fields are manifold. A work of art is in some respects a physical and chemical phenomenon; in some respects a social and economic one; in some respects, psychological. Knowledge about its nature, origins and functioning can be derived through the methods and viewpoints of all these sciences, and all can show us how to use and control it in certain ways. But none is especially interested in works of art as such, or devotes a major part of its effort to describing and experimenting with them. They enter the social and psychological sciences as one among many types of phenomena, and are studied there in rather limited, specialized ways. Aesthetics is traditionally the subject which concerns itself with works of art and their attributes, directly and explicitly. But so far, it has failed not only to achieve scientific understanding and control in the realm of art, but even to accept that aim as one to be consciously and systematically worked for. Even the words "control of art," or "control by means of art," have a strange, fantastic sound, as if one were proposing something impossible, and perhaps undesirable.

Yet such control is, to some extent, being actively practiced today, and has been practiced for several millennia. As all students of history know, art has been one of the most powerful instruments of control by organized religion, by governments and dominant social groups. As a means of propaganda, it is a potent weapon of totali-

tarian states today, in such forms as oratory, pageantry, music, idealized portraits and repulsive caricatures. In the service of modern capitalism, it has achieved complex and costly developments in the form of advertising and other commercial arts. Educators make increasing use of art, such as textbook illustrations, models, motion pictures, and theater projects, as means of directing the mental development of students. Doctors use art to correct mental maladjustments and relieve nervous distress. To some extent, nearly everyone uses art and thus achieves some sort of control with it; not necessarily for any ulterior end, but perhaps for the immediate enjoyment, escape, or enriched experience it can bring. That is, he uses it to control his own immediate moods and trains of thought.

In the hands of clever manipulators, such as are found among advertising and propaganda agencies, radio, book, and cinema producers, the control of art reaches high levels of efficiency, though usually along restricted lines. These persons can often predict with fair statistical success what effects a certain type of art will have on masses of people, as manifested in their willingness to buy, listen, vote, obey, or fight. But such control is not only selfish and anti-social in many cases; it is also, on the whole, unscientific, empirical, rule-of-thumb. It often fails for no apparent reason, and contains a large element of guesswork. People can use art and achieve some control by it, as they used heat to cook and fermentation to make wine, long before scientific physics and biochemistry understood the basic principles requisite for their accurate, extensive control.

In every realm of phenomena, human thought passes gradually from folklore to science; from guesswork, wishful thinking, dogmatism and vague speculation to verified knowledge; and as a result, to more effective control, including collective use and management for the common welfare. In several realms (the older, more exact sciences) it has achieved the passage to a comparatively high degree, although by no means completely. In aesthetics and ethics, it has scarcely begun, but is in a state of slow transition, as new scientific resources become available for approaching ancient problems — or,

rather, for approaching afresh the phenomena of art and human conduct. (In the process, the ancient problems sometimes turn out to have been based on misconceptions and false assumptions, and to require a thorough restatement.)

Modern science had gone a considerable way before Francis Bacon gave conscious, explicit utterance to certain of its aims and methods. As more clear-sighted progress in the older sciences followed Bacon's heralding, so now it might occur in the study of art if Bacon's own approach were consistently applied there. The understanding and control of art are advancing apace without waiting for aesthetic theorists to give the word. They are advancing, not only through scattered scientific researches and experiments, but through extremely practical and sometimes mercenary — even deceptive and destructive — uses, as in the management of advertising, propaganda, and other arts for popular consumption. Applied aesthetics does not wait for pure aesthetics to solve its abstract problems, but proceeds to experiment with rule-of-thumb hypotheses derived from practical experience, and usually not regarded as pertaining to aesthetic theory. Pure aesthetics, on the other hand, might learn much by observing the results of such practical experience in the control of art.

This cannot come while aestheticians are still so largely preoccupied with the traditional problems handed down to them from past philosophies. Notice how *aesthetics* is defined in Webster's *New International Dictionary* (2nd ed.): "The branch of philosophy dealing with beauty or the beautiful, esp. in the fine arts; a theory or the theories of beauty, its essential character, the tests by which it may be recognized or judged, and its characteristic relation to or effect upon the human mind. . . ." Thus the aesthetician's quest is directed from the start, not toward a set of actual phenomena to be understood and if possible controlled, but toward a conceptual will-o'-the-wisp, an abstraction whose meaning is endlessly debatable and ambiguous, so that he never can be sure that he has found his quarry or is looking at it. Hence he may spend his days as many writers

have, and cover countless pages, with fruitless debate over the proper definition of beauty.

The outlook is scarcely clearer if he is told, as in Webster's following definition, that aesthetics is "the scientific study of taste (sense 7)." For taste, in its turn, is said to mean "the power of discerning and appreciating fitness, beauty, order, congruity, proportion, symmetry, or whatever constitutes excellence, esp. in the fine arts and belles-lettres." Again, "taste" in this sense is not an objective term for a set of phenomena which can be sought out and studied by anyone. Whether any particular case is or is not an example of it is debatable from the start.

To be sure, the *word* "beauty" and the word "taste," like "ugly," "sublime," "romantic" and other names for the traditional aesthetic categories, *are* phenomena of human thought and behavior, and can be objectively studied as to their origins, meanings and uses. But the scope of aesthetics can hardly be limited to mere semantic study of its own terminology. In modern times, it refuses to confine itself to the study of a few abstract categories, attributes, and alleged standards of value. Its discussions usually deal with *works of art*, and these are commonly recognized as its primary field of phenomena. If "art" itself is not defined in a confusingly eulogistic sense as restricted to very skillful, good or beautiful products; if it is conceived objectively, so as to include *any* picture, any statue, any poem or piece of music, and works in other mediums as well, whether good or bad, it denotes a readily accessible field of phenomena.

German writers have made more use than we of the concept "general science of art" (*allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*). Some writers understand it in a sense different from "aesthetics," the latter being taken in the more traditional, philosophical sense. The principal German periodical in the field has been called "Journal of Aesthetics *and* General Science of Art." Others identify the two, and conceive of aesthetics itself as the general science of art. The term "science of art" is still avoided by writers in English; partly because they are impressed by the degree to which present studies

of art still fall short of scientific status. The term "science of art" stands for a future goal, not a present achievement; but there is some advantage in keeping the goal explicitly before our minds. In so far as aesthetics itself becomes regarded as the science (or would-be science) of art, there is of course no need for the distinction.

To describe aesthetics as a future science tends to suggest at once the approach of Fechner and his followers up to the present day; a disappointing approach so far, which has undeservedly monopolized the term "experimental aesthetics." For it has implied, not the broadly experimental attitude of all intelligent thinking, but an over-reliance on attempts at exact quantitative measurement and the laboratory type of psychological procedure. The progress of aesthetics to scientific status can not be hastened beyond certain limits, and is even retarded by a misguided, premature devotion to extreme behaviorism and statistical measurement, with consequent ignoring of less exact, less rigorously objective methods. Most attempts at exact measurement in aesthetics so far have turned out to be either dubious or trivial, avoiding central problems or advancing specious claims to have solved them. In the thirty-three substantial volumes of the *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik*, there has been comparatively little of such deceptive arithmetic, and the goal of a science of art has been approached on the whole in a more tentative and flexible way.

In all countries, most of the recent books, articles and courses produced under the name "aesthetics" have extended to a much wider scope than debate over the abstract meaning and supposed laws of beauty. Even the more distinctly philosophical tend to make increasing reference to particular works of art, as well as to specific types and styles of art. Although one hears of the "aesthetics of music," the "aesthetics of sculpture," etc., most aesthetic discussions emphasize comparisons between the arts, and factors common to them. Recent aesthetics has become, on the whole, a rather highly generalized kind of art criticism, reporting current issues in the interpretation and evaluation of old and modern art, with some attempt at clarification by the author, and defense of one or another view. Its methods

have been literary, along lines of informal exposition and argument, rather than attempts at quantitative or even strictly logical demonstration. It has remained fairly distinct from art history and cultural history, in spite of some overlapping, largely through avoiding chronological or genetic organization. Instead, it has sought to explain the basic nature and principal varieties of structure in art, the elements in form and how they are organized.

It deals with questions of value, sometimes to analyze the philosophical or psychological nature of aesthetic value; sometimes to discuss alleged "art principles" or laws and standards of value in art. Here it has been, on the whole, increasingly timid about affirming definite standards, and increasingly relativistic in conceding that many different kinds of art may be good under different conditions and for different purposes. This has come about, not so much through the arguments of philosophic relativists, as through the wider acquaintance of modern aestheticians with the tremendous variety of art forms, past and present, each of which has fulfilled some function in its own cultural setting.

Another main element in recent aesthetics has been the psychology of creation and appreciation; of the artist's processes and of aesthetic experience. Most systematic texts on aesthetics include chapters on these subjects, under one name or another. In other words, aesthetics is not only the science of art itself, of works of art, but also the study of those types of human activity and experience most closely related to art. It is the study of art as an activity, and also of the contemplation, use and enjoyment of works of art. Say Webster, in an additional definition, aesthetics is "the psychology of the sensations and emotions that have the fine arts for their stimulus." But one can hardly limit the study to sensation and emotion, for reasoning, imagining, and other functions also have important roles in the process. Since there is still much obscurity surrounding the nature of those complex, variable processes we vaguely call "creation" and "appreciation," and since they are hard or impossible to observe in a behavioristic way, current accounts of them in aesthetic theory are

likely to be a compound of speculation, introspection, and scraps of laboratory research.

Limited as our knowledge and control of them are at present, they provide another field of phenomena for aesthetics to examine. From a psychological point of view, even "taste" can be objectively considered, if we give that word a different meaning from the one quoted above. Taste, that is, need not be defined as "good taste;" as ability to discern and appreciate value in art; but in a more factual sense, as a tendency to like certain things and dislike others; as a set of actual habits and standards of preference, whether right or wrong. In that sense, everyone has taste, and the problem of its genesis, varieties and modes of operation becomes an objective psychological problem. In aesthetics or aesthetic psychology, we study it with special reference to works of art and certain closely related types of object, such as scenes in nature.

But "taste" in any sense is not the whole problem of aesthetic psychology, and has long been overemphasized, in general theory and in experimental research. When paramount stress is laid on the question of what people like or should like in art, what they consider beautiful or ugly, and for what reasons, the whole subject is likely to appear rather trivial to the outside world. Such an emphasis often springs from a narrowly individualistic hedonism in regard to art in general, and a consequent ignoring of the many important functions — intellectual, moral, practical, and other — which art exerts in society, in addition to pleasing the senses and emotions of the individual.

Again, the task of control in this field is one that society has to undertake with or without the aid of aesthetics. It does so, for example, in art education; in training the prospective artist, in teaching "art appreciation," or in teaching simple artistic techniques as a part of general education. It undertakes, by implication at least, to develop the abilities of the student in dealing with works of art: his powers of creation, of appreciation, or both. Yet what are these powers, and how do they function in the actual processes of creation

and appreciation? How do individuals differ, and how does a given individual develop from childhood to maturity as an artist or a connoisseur? To what extent can powers of imagination, perception, or original conception and expression be taught, and what are the best ways of doing so? To what extent is technical discipline in traditional forms, or free expression, the more effective means to these ends? Teachers of the arts must assume some hypothetical answers to such questions and act upon them, either blindly or with full recognition of the underlying problems. But as yet, aesthetic psychology gives them little scientific help in devising effective means to ends. Hence our educational control of art abilities is still extremely slight and uncertain. We do not even know how much effect any system of formal education can have, in interaction with the potent forces of heredity, home environment, and enveloping socio-economic trends.

Discussion under the name of aesthetics has been steadily branching out away from its traditional preoccupation with abstract categories, to take in a wider and wider subject-matter. The old problems are not lost permanently from view, for we keep returning to them with a clearer understanding of their cultural genesis, and of their specific implications when applied to concrete data. For example, the concept of "unity in variety, order in multiplicity" appears in ever-new and changing lights as we discover how many different ways, unsuspected by classical philosophers, artists of primitive, exotic, and contemporary cultures have found for organizing their diverse materials. Aesthetics does not need to stop being philosophical, merely because it carries on more detailed, empirical research than in the past. There is always need — in fact, greater need as the scope of investigation extends — for the philosophical work of coordination and generalization. The old, speculative aesthetics "from above" will not be wholly replaced by the opposite, Fechnerian kind, "from below." As in all other sciences, there will be constant oscillation between empirical data and theoretical hypotheses, both narrow and broad in scope.

As aesthetic discussion keeps taking in more data and theory from cultural history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and other sources, traditionalists occasionally ask, "But is all this really the proper field of aesthetics?" Is it not the task of psychology to study the processes of creative and aesthetic experience? Is it not for the social sciences to study the social origins and functions of art? Is it not for art history and criticism to analyze in detail the countless different types of form in art? These questions reveal a misconception of the nature of science, as if its "fields" were like the sharply bounded plots of land claimed by private owners under capitalism, and by sovereign states under nationalism. On the contrary, the fields of all sciences overlap indistinguishably. No science owns any one to the exclusion of other workers who may wish to deal with it. The various sciences are merely somewhat different points of view, or phases in a vast, cooperative endeavor. The boundaries between their fields of phenomena are flexible and arbitrary, based on temporary expediency rather than on deep-lying divisions in the universe itself. The more significant question to ask in regard to any particular phenomenon or problem is not "to whom does it rightfully belong?" but "in what various ways can it be effectively studied, with a view to social understanding and control?"

Certainly, all the data and problems of aesthetics are studied by other sciences, from other points of view and in other contexts. Psychology might consistently take them all in as incidental parts of its general description of human nature; but as a matter of fact psychologists rarely consider works of art in any great detail. Sociology might also take them in as social phenomena; but in most books on sociology they are overwhelmed and reduced to cursory treatment by a mass of other material. Art history and cultural history are usually so preoccupied with chronological trends and influences that they pass rapidly over questions of general type and principle. These and many other subjects yield occasional revealing commentaries on the arts; but all have other major interests.

Because of the admitted importance of the subject-matter, there is need for some science, some fairly distinct group of workers, to concentrate upon the theoretical study of the arts and related types of experience. Whether it be called "aesthetics" or not is immaterial; but that traditional name is already in use. It needs no radical redefinition, but only a general acceptance of the extended meaning which actual trends in discussion have already given it. It should draw upon all other sciences, all other sources of information and facilities of research and experiment, for aid in its inquiries.

There is much to be done along this line, in bridging the gulfs which various groups of scholars and scientists have dug between each other, in the form of university departments, specialized professional schools and associations, and specialized periodicals. It is to be hoped that this new *Journal* will help secure genuine cooperation between the many workers in fields now artificially separated, who are interested in various approaches to aesthetics.

World conditions could hardly be more unfavorable to new ventures in a subject of remote and debatable practicality. But conditions in the world of science and scholarship are in some ways highly favorable to the rapid progress of aesthetics toward scientific status. As Comte pointed out a century ago, the possibility of scientific advance in any field depends to a large extent on whether the necessary prerequisites are available. For aesthetics, they were not present in sufficient amount in Fechner's day. But the past three generations have accumulated enormous resources, along two main lines. One is the understanding of art forms, their variety, cultural development, and relation to other factors in social history such as the economic, political, religious and technological. (It is necessary to glance at a mid-nineteenth-century book on art history to realize how vastly our horizon has since expanded, as a result of archaeological and ethnological research, exploration, translation, musical recordings, museum collections, and reproductions of unfamiliar types of art.) The other is a greater understanding of human nature through the many branches of scientific psychology and psycho-

analysis. This provides a general framework of knowledge and theory, within which the student of aesthetic psychology can endeavor to fill out some of the remaining large gaps in our understanding of how people think, perceive, feel and imagine, learn, and develop in the complex situations of art.

Modern aesthetics can undertake not only a synthesis and reinterpretation of these recent discoveries, but also a systematic sponsorship of new inquiries based upon them. As a result, we may look forward to an increase in the extent and reliability of generalizations and predictions concerning (a) the psychological and cultural configurations, individual and social, which tend to produce various types of art; and (b) the tendency of certain types of art to produce certain effects upon certain types of person under certain conditions, both in direct experience of the type usually termed "aesthetic," and also in other types of experience and behavior. Such generalizations are a prerequisite for scientific control in the field of aesthetics.

Curator of Education, The Cleveland Museum of Art.

The Symbolic Values of Art Structure

BY

RAYMOND S. STITES

MASTER KUNG, it is said, found the music of Tsi more excellent than that of any other state in China.¹ Nevertheless his teacher there remonstrated with him for studying a certain theme more than ten days. Content with Kung's progress, the tutor advised his pupil to try another tune but Master Kung demurred; although he had "almost learned the melody," he said, "he had not yet caught all the nuances of its rhythm." After many more days, when Kung had assimilated this, he again refused to leave the tune, saying that he had not caught its exact "mood." Again, having understood the mood, he refused to desert the work until he could discover from its inner composition the kind of man who had composed it. Nor did he deem that he had mastered the music until he had discovered, through its character, that its creator had been dark complexioned, tall, strong, calm, and with such a mind that he was capable of having ruled the four quarters of the earth. So Master Kung concluded that the music must have issued from the great King Wen himself, for only such a man had a character universal enough to have composed it. Then the teacher acknowledged that Kung-Fu-Tze was indeed *his* master, for the

¹Crow, Carl, *Master Kung, The Story of Confucius*, Harpers, 1940, p. 127-131.

legends of Tsi, which had been unknown to Kung, confirmed this attribution.

Probably no better story than this exists to explain the relationship between the work of art, its philosophic interpreter, and its original creator. A great work of art, being a symbolic representation of the complex thought-feeling of an entire personality revealing his relationship to his own epoch, can only be comprehended by one who does not cease exploring its possibilities until he has recovered every potentiality of its original creator. This, of course, calls forth from the critic thoughts and feelings, or at least a philosophic attitude, in most points matching that of the original creative moment.

Thus it was more than coincidence which led the artist-philosopher Goethe to discover that the psychical center of Leonardo's *Last Supper* was not the head of the Christ, as most historians had agreed, but the heavenward pointing finger of St. Thomas. Nor was it less of deep philosophic insight that lead Paul Valéry, in 1894, to pierce the veil of illusion created by the novelists about the famous "La Gioconda Smile." This philosopher affirmed, "It is shrouded behind a mass of words and disappears amongst the many paragraphs that begin by calling it 'disturbing' and finish with a description of *soul*-generally vague. It would justify less intoxicating studies. They were no inaccurate observations or arbitrary symbols that Leonardo utilized, or *La Gioconda* would never have been painted. He was guided by a perpetual sagacity."¹

The observations of Goethe and Valéry correspond to a certain further revelation in the study of Art, which Master Kung made through his study of the music of Tsi. His attention had been first called to the excellence of this music while he was on his way to the capital of that country as he observed the gait of a country boy carrying a heavy wine jug along the roadway. At once Master Kung realized that here was something superior, for the natural rhythm of this peasant far surpassed that shown by those who walked in his own country of Lu.

¹ Valéry, Paul, *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci*, John Rodker, London, 1929, p. 58.

The music of Tsi, like all other folk ballads, had descended through countless generations of bards. Although Kung's song had kept most of the original rhythm of King Wen, it had been modified by succeeding generations. So the Master had to pierce through the later interpretations in order to discover its original character. His first thought was to immerse himself in the rhythm of the country, and then to subtract from the composition its succeeding accretions of culture. This leads the modern critic to observe that a work of art, being itself a living organism as it emerges from the hands and eyes of its creator does not die with him. If it be at all rich in associations, strong in composition, and useful as a medicine to the race, it will even grow in men's minds by taking to itself further associational values, as long as the culture which created it persists as a generally understood mode of thought.

Thus the task of the philosopher in art becomes a dual one. First, he must think as a historian of culture, removing, by diligent research, succeeding layers of varnish from the picture. Secondly, when its original condition is apparent, he must be a recreative artist capable of probing beneath its surface character for the thoughts and emotional patterns of the one who conceived it. In this, and succeeding articles, such an attempt will be made, beginning with some of the works of Leonardo da Vinci, and broadening out into similar works by artists in other times and places. Leonardo offers a peculiar invitation to this kind of research by reason of the enormous mass of biographical material and the innumerable sketches which he left to enlighten us concerning the genesis of his creations.

In beginning with the works of da Vinci, a second great advantage arises because, like his master, Verrocchio, Leonardo apparently "constructed" his works, often around a basic architectonic plan, building up the effects by means of models, and then modifying them with the use of *chiaroseuro* and colorful *sfumato*. Finally, we are in the spirit of the man himself when we examine him in this way, for as Valéry mentioned in 1919, there is in him "no uneven-

nesses; no intellectual superstitions. No unnecessary terrors. No fear of analysis — he carries analysis — or it carries him — to its farthest conclusion; and he comes back to reality without effort. He imitates, innovates; he does not reject the old because it is old nor the new because it is new; he studies in both something that is eternally of the present.”¹ In short, Leonardo creates an art in which the inner logic is particularly strong. It is therefore particularly amenable to scientific analysis.

Consciously, or unconsciously, we study every work of art in terms of three values, which are essentially three points of view. The first of these is the use which the work has to society (medicinal, educational, recreational etc.). The second is its associational or literary value; the third, its value as an issue of playful manipulation, or expression. This latter usually appears either in its formal structure or its joy in verisimilitude. Our various modes of aesthetic measurement have also consciously (or unconsciously) been conceived with reference to one or more of these modes of thinking. Although we must always remember that the great work of art, one totally effective for the greatest number over the longest time, holds such a finely equilibrated interweave of parts that they appeal to all these senses of values, yet there are works which strongly appeal to one or the other. For example, in late 19th or early 20th century art, the Impressionists created much which was relatively low in use values and had very small associational appeal but was relatively strong in its suggestion of color structure. Again, in Expressionism, association returned somewhat, in that here one may find suggestions of symbolism; but most of these composition structures, dynamic in character, do little more than to suggest vague inner tensions of the artist mind. So these works appear interesting only as either pure design or else as self revelation to the artist of his own feelings. Surrealism, in turn, although revelatory, is rich in associational passages; oftentimes correspondingly weak in formal structure.

¹ Valéry, *opus cit.*, p. 9.

The works of Leonardo here to be discussed seem to fall between the two latter classes. For although they are rich with associations, each is built upon a simple geometric figure, the triangle, whose apex in every case rests upon some vital point. Usually, in the finished works of the master, such obvious geometric schemes are completely submerged in the appearance of the objects portrayed. Indeed, Leonardo's entire philosophy, seen as a whole, probably lies closer to that of the medieval nominalist than it does to the scholastic realist, for he glories in the particular; in his own words "All our knowledge begins with the senses."

The present study begins with an examination of some little-known works by Leonardo, specifically; six long unrecognized sculptures in terra-cotta (figures A to F). These objects are chosen chiefly because, having been unnoticed by the romantic literary art historians of the Victorian era they may be examined easily now without the necessity of piercing through accreted associational values. In 1924 Cook attributed a little terra-cotta madonna in the Victoria and Albert Museum to Leonardo.¹ Between 1924 and 1930 eight related terra-cotta figures were published in *Art Studies*,² and in 1930 W. R. Valentiner, investigating the relationship between Leonardo and Verrocchio,³ identified certain other terra-cotta figures in a relief from the Villa Carreggi, Florence, as also being by Leonardo.³ Since all these works were obviously related in technique and style the circle of identification was complete. The pieces discussed in this paper have received further recognition by the writers of the *Encyclopedia Italiana*. They have, however, been ignored by the Victorian Leonardists, with the exception of MacCurdy, chiefly, I imagine, because most of them are inferior to the sculptures of Michelangelo; nor can they be called, in purely classical terms, charming. In short, they reveal the primitive, virile masculine

¹ Cook, Sir Theodore, *Leonardo da Vinci, Sculptor*, London, 1924.

² Stites, Raymond S., *Leonardo da Vinci, Sculptor*, *Art Studies*, Vol. 4, 1926, Vol. 6, 1928, Vol. 8, 1930.

³ Valentiner, W. R., *Leonardo as Verrocchio's Coworker*, *The Art Bulletin*, Volume XII, No. 1.

strength of the man, without that *sfumato* which so appeals to the romantics.

The proper significance of the terra-cottas may be judged only in relation to the development of Leonardo's finished art work. They should be studied first as incomplete sketches which reveal something of the transitional thought processes of one who is on the road to some more universal composition. Only two of the terra-cottas can be shown to have contributed directly to a finished work by Leonardo, although others, becoming the property of late Renaissance workshops, furnished the bases for compositions by Leonardo's pupils and followers such as Andrea del Sarto and Raphael. To us these sketches reveal a common peculiarity, pointing the way to a hitherto unrevealed aspect of artistic construction, namely the possible symbolic value of even the formal playful aspect of art structure.

In point of time, the first piece (Fig. A), an infant Christ was probably created just before Leonardo left Florence for Milan. It is covered with a glaze (probably fired in the della Robbia kilns) and is related to other pieces which Leonardo and Verrocchio created together. Here the apex of the triangle points to a stream of water flowing from a grotto. The infant, cup in hand, seems to be inviting us to drink; above his head, on the rocks, appears a loaf of bread. The symbolism seems obvious; the Christ child calls us to the "Living Waters" and the "Bread of Life." But precisely what are these waters — and what the bread — Spirit or Substance? It is the fundamental question of all philosophy.

The second two groups (Figs. B and C) show children struggling with each other. They are dateable through a sketch of a similar subject; (No. 12564 in the Windsor Collection). Clark brings this sketch into close connection with Windsor drawing, No. 12561r., and this in turn connects them with groups D, E and F. Throughout the long period of his life Leonardo left a few drawings which are composed by the geometric method (Fig. G). They all fall in his early Milanese period. There is on page 191 r.a. of the *Codex*

Atlanticus a discussion entitled "Body formed from the perspective by Leonardo da Vinci, disciple of experience — this body may be made without the example of any other body but merely with plain lines."¹

Similar drawings (Windsor No. 12702 and 12703r) were made between 1480 and 1490 during the period when the terra-cottas were created. These obviously bear direct relation to the genesis of *The Last Supper* composition.

The two urchins in Group B struggle with each other, each pulling the other's hair. The one on the left has his right finger in the mouth of his companion. In Group C the quarrel has grown more violent. Here two iconological symbols appear to enlighten us further as to its meaning. The infant on the right holds a bagpipe; the one on the left a small organ or regal. So this would seem to portray an *estrif* or *debat* between the proponents of two types of music. For the pagan bagpipe, being a reed instrument, derives from the aulos or flute (related to Ishtar), which, in Platonic terms, was a sensual instrument; the other, an organ, being a church instrument sacred to St. Cecilia, with its measured tones, might be considered a more celestial form. The mouth of an infant, in both groups being the apex of the triangle, was probably the point of importance to Leonardo. Here the ultimate personal meaning would only be completely clear after deeper psychological analysis.

In the fourth group, Figure D, the madonna attempts to instruct the infant by reading from a book. This subject, one of frequent occurrence in late medieval sculpture, refers to the teaching of the Schoolmen that the child should be instructed from the Scriptures even upon its mother's knee. Here the apex of the triangle, obviously fastened upon the exposed breast, indicates a point of much greater importance to the thoroughly pragmatic infant. We return in thought to the question proposed by Group A.

In the fifth group, Figure E, three children appear. One, at the right, cries and scratches its head as though bothered by lice; the

¹ MacCurdy, George, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. 2, p. 365.

second, above, is interested in the breast of the mother, and the third, at the left, holds what appears to be a flower. The face of the first is in pain, the second laughs, but the third has an expression of peace. Significantly, the mother gazes toward the infant who holds the flower, and her hand clasps his. A second, horizontal triangle, whose base is formed by the first two heads, has its apex at the point where the mother and infant clasp hands. An answer to the primary question is here suggested again. He who loves a symbol of Beauty merits the attention of the woman.

In the final group, Figure F, the apex of the triangle comes at the point where mother and child clasp hands. Here parent and offspring show a tender regard for each other; the child laughs happily. A sense of equilibrium infuses the whole. This group is more finished than the others, the modelling is stronger, and the clay has been colored delicately.

The scientific Leonardo, dropping pebbles in still waters, observed the movement of concentric rings and formulated a theory of the wave transmission of energy. This he corroborated by observing similar effects with relation to percussion and sound; nor did he stop until he had suggested that light is but another form of heat which radiates from the sun and which can be focussed by the rays from a concave mirror until it has the power to inflame. Then he theorized that the eye must be like this point, and so must have the power to give forth rays of power to distant objects, much as it takes them in. From this, it is no far cry to imagine Leonardo consciously regarding the triangles within the terra-cotta figures as revealing some inner mental state.

The moment of creative experience revealed in the little groups partakes of both scientific and intuitive extremes of thought; the geometric structure on which each group is built has a symbolic value which seems to unite these modes of thinking in a sort of educative fashion. Since, in every case, this message and structure is much more obvious than in most of the completed paintings of

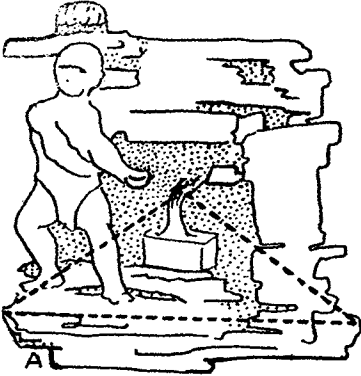
Leonardo it disturbs the modern aesthete, more particularly as we live at a time when the dominant aesthetic temper has become one which decries the educative function and associational values of art. We are also prone, because of Baroque sensist tendencies in criticism, and because of a thoroughly romantic decryal of classical schemata, to belittle the obviously geometric symbolic composition forms common to the early Greeks, the archaic Romanesque, the Byzantine and the Gothic; or else, with modern expressionists, and cubists, we tend to employ them simply for their own sake.

Any completely satisfying explanation of the phenomena observed in these terra-cotta groups must, it seems, rest upon the assumption that they form part of a connected line of thought which Leonardo was exploring during this, perhaps the most vital period of his career. Further, drawing upon our knowledge of Oriental and ancient Greco-Roman art, we must assume that Leonardo, either consciously or unconsciously recapitulated methods of composition used by the Greeks, the Buddhist artists, (Fig. H) and by his immediate medieval forerunners, Figure I.

Actually we need really to *assume* very little, for the evidence presented by his manuscripts shows that he did proceed by some method related analogically to the ones we here have suggested. The clue to these works, it seems to me, is given by a drawing in the Ambrosian Library of Milan. Here a woman, obviously related by the shape of her head, her drapery and the general proportions of her body, to the women in the terra-cottas, has drawn upon the ground a number of figures (Figure J). The stylus in her hand points to either a square enclosed by a circle or to an equilateral triangle. An infant, whose body is exactly like those in the groups, kneels, looking down at the mathematical symbols as though he were being instructed. Throughout Leonardo's long life, as I will show in later papers, he fluctuates between philosophies which sometimes considered the soul of man to be a triangle, at others a circle enclosing a square, or finally a flamelike curve. In the next paper

those finished compositions in which the triangle is a dominant form, will be examined with their accompanying philosophical passages, and in the further articles, there will be explored phases of Leonardo's life in which he considered 'the man four square' or the "flame of life," as the "*summum bonum*."

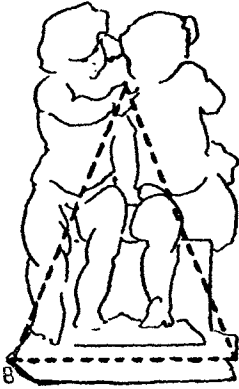
Antioch College.



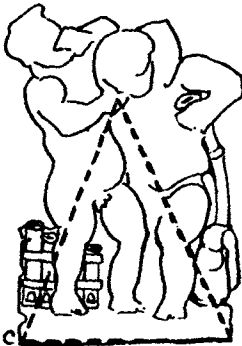
A. Infant Christ and Fountain of Life,
(Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin)



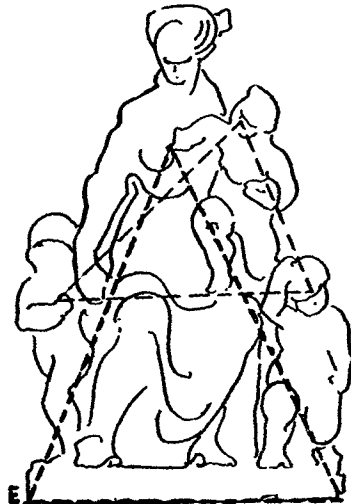
D. Teaching Madonna,
(Kaiser Friedrich Museum)



B. Playing Infants,
(Victoria and Albert Museum)



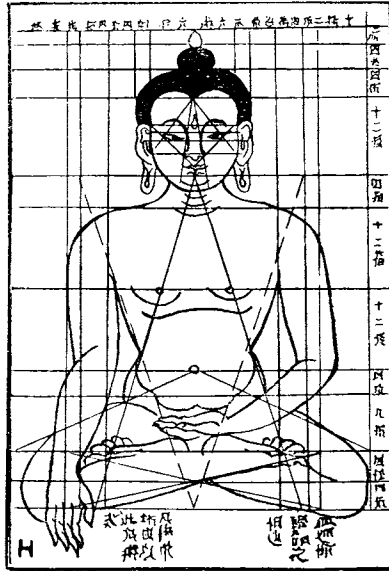
C. Struggling Infants,
(Kaiser Friedrich Museum)



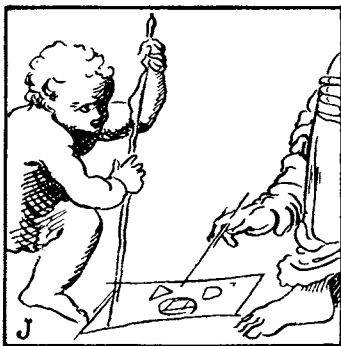
E. Madonna and Children,
(Victoria and Albert Museum)



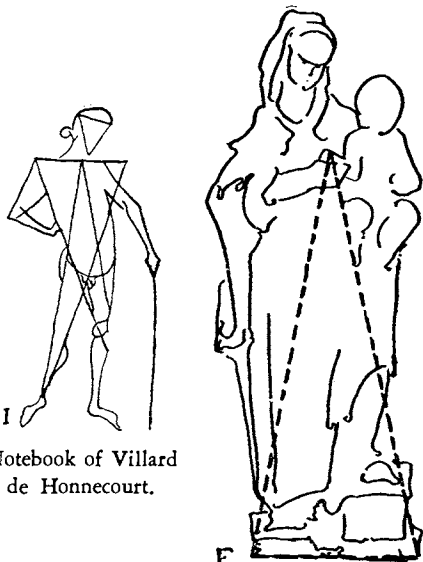
G. 249 Verso, Codex Atlanticus, New Artistic Concept Rising from Geometric Designs.



H. Diagram of Buddha after Drawing in Japanese Translation of Sastranyagrodha-parimandala-buddhapratima-laksanama—by B. Hemmi, *Kokka*, No. 470, 472 (1930).



J. Drawing, Ambrosian Library, Milan, Leonardo da Vinci.



Notebook of Villard de Honnecourt.

F. Mother and Child, (Kaiser Friedrich Museum)

Aesthetic Experience in the Light of Current Psychology

BY
MAX SCHOEN

THE emphasis in psychology today, both implied and expressed, is upon a biological conception of psychological events and a view of original nature as undifferentiated mass activity. The biological outlook conceives of psychological events as processes through which an adjustment is established between organism and environment; in other words, that the psychological nature of a living body consists of the specific activities in which that body engages in order to maintain its life, while the new view of original nature holds that these activities emerge gradually by a process of differentiation out of native, non-specialized, mass activity, in contrast to the previously held view that development consisted of an integration into larger units of what were at first discrete elements of behavior and experience. The adjustive and mass conceptions of psychological phenomena fit well together, which fact may be considered as favoring their soundness, in that as acts become increasingly more differentiated out of original mass behavior they also become more and more adjustive as definite responses to specific situations.

The purpose of this paper is to present a view of aesthetic experience that fits into this picture of what human nature is and of how it develops, and to show that this view embraces every characteriza-

tion of aesthetic experience to be found in the outstanding aesthetic theories of philosophy. I shall first trace the development of common experience as pictured by current psychology, then indicate where the aesthetic belongs in this picture, and finally compare the result with the aesthetic theories of philosophical origin.

According to current psychology, every experience occurs originally as an organization of sensory impressions. Some experiences begin as integrations of sensory events, other as coordinations of them. Thus, a musical tone, an odor, a taste, are integrations, or blends of sensory elements, in which each element loses its identity in the whole, and can be isolated only by a direct act of attention, while a tree, a painting, a face, are coordinations, in which each part of the whole retains its identity, but all of them present a single impression of belonging-togetherness. But both integrations and coordinations are at first vague, blurred outlines, and therefore indistinct and undifferentiated from each other. This original vagueness of wholes is displaced in time by definiteness as the parts or details of the whole come more and more to the forefront. Whatever a thing is, it is that in terms of its components. These give it not only body, but uniqueness or distinctiveness. Consequently, the more that the parts of a whole are outstanding, the more distinct and definite does the whole become. A simple example of this relation between definiteness and detail may be drawn from tonal timbre, or that attribute of tonal experience by which a tone is referred to its source. A violin tone is readily distinguished from a cello tone. But the distinction can be made to disappear by eliminating certain of the partials from each tone. As the parts of several wholes recede into the background the wholes become indistinguishable from each other. Thus the first process in the genesis of finished experience is a differentiation between wholes as their components become increasingly clear. By differentiation chaos becomes order.

Simultaneously with the process of differentiation goes on the process of interpretation, or the process that makes experience meaningful. As experience becomes increasingly definite by differ-

entiation it also becomes increasingly meaningful by interpretation. Life calls for action, for adjustment. But so long as a situation is vague the behavior it stimulates is uncertain, exploratory, and the adjustment is incomplete. As the situation becomes more definite it also becomes a clue, a sign, for a specific act, and only specific acts are effectively adjustive acts. The meaning of a situation is therefore the behavior it provokes, and definiteness of behavior is in proportion to definiteness of stimulus. Consequently, when experience has reached the stage of interpretation it is complete experience, for then the biological function of adjustment has been fulfilled. Nothing more is needed. This is the story of experience as psychology presents it. Life satisfies its needs, maintains itself, through the environment, and it learns to know that environment through the stages of differentiation and interpretation. The organism can dwell in a situation, has established an equilibrium between itself and a situation, when the situation is clearly distinguished from other situations, enabling a distinctively appropriate response to it.

Where does aesthetic experience come into this picture? Obviously, aesthetic experience can arise only from ordinary experience by doing something to it. And there are but two things that can happen to ordinary experience: adding something to it, or taking something from it. But the only thing that can be added to ordinary experience is more of itself, namely, more differentiation and interpretation, and these only make it more ordinary. Hence, aesthetic experience must arise by the elimination or abstraction from common experience of that which makes it common.

Now it cannot be the product of the process of differentiation that stamps experience as common, since without differentiation there would be no experience other than vagueness. What makes experience useful, biologically adaptive, and stamps it common, is the fruit of the process of interpretation, namely, meaning as definite response to a definite situation. For ordinary experience, therefore, the product of differentiation is but a sign for an act, a means to an end, the end being an act that satisfies a need of the organism. For

ordinary experience the world of objective phenomena is but a store-room of labels for this or that act in the service of biological existence. It is, in the language of Schopenhauer, intellect in the service of the will to live, or, as Bergson has it, that since life is action, it "implies the acceptance only of the utilitarian side of things in order to respond to them by appropriate reactions; all other impressions must be dimmed or else reach us vague and blurred." The aesthetic experience therefore must arise by an act of imagination in which experience is rid of that which is imposed upon it by biological necessity in interpretation, so that what is left is the world of differentiation, or a world of forms. Aesthetic experience is thus form become significant as form, or intrinsic meaning displacing extrinsic meaning, in which both mind and matter become pure existence. It is the essence of experience cleansed of its attributes in the imaginative act of abstraction. It is a condition in which experience rather than the fruit of experience is the end, as Walter Pater has it, or in the words of Schopenhauer, the world become "the Will-free Subject of Knowledge. . . ." The aesthetic condition is one of absorption in the object of experience, as contrasted with practical experience, in which interest is centered on the experiencing subject seeking some satisfaction through the object of experience. The practical and the aesthetic are the only two ways of experience and exclusive of each other. The one is calculating, questioning, partial, greedy, assertive, demanding; the other is contemplative, inviting, wholesome, and surrendering. Both are coextensive with the whole realm of experience, in that the one or the other attitude is possible towards any presentation. But the incompatibility between the two is final and fatal. Neither can yield the least to the other and remain its true self. In the one life is a becoming, in the other it is a being. The one seeks to live, the other lives. Where in the one thought and emotion struggle to attain, in the other both find repose in attainment. The two present life in its only two aspects: as a process of fulfilling and as a condition of fulfillment.

From this contrast between the practical and the aesthetic, the

adjustive function of the aesthetic stands out in bold relief. Where the practical adjusts to the environment, making living possible, the aesthetic adjusts to the practical, making life endurable. Thus the aesthetic may be said to have a biological function, since there is ample evidence that there is in human life a craving for respite from life as "an ever becoming and a never being." And it is significant that the protests against the demands of the practical come from persons most richly endowed with the will to live, namely, the outstanding creative minds of the ages. It seems that those most fully alive, and therefore most eager for life, also find burdensome the incessant demand of life for more and more of the same, and desire release, a vacation, from themselves, in order to come back refreshed to themselves. What one is most eager for also oppresses him to such a degree as to create a counter desire for release from it. Death seems to have terrors only for those who have little of life to lose. The will to live so oppressed Schopenhauer that its negation by death, or at least by the immortality of the Platonic Idea, became an obsession with him. Hence his profound conception of the aesthetic and his glorification of genius as the objectification—which amounts to the annihilation—of the will. Had he not been excessively driven by life he could not have longed for the peace of death. Keats longs to forget

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies,
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs;
 Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

Wordsworth deplures our laying waste our powers with getting and spending, giving our hearts away, a sordid boon, our being out of tune to the pure experience of

This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,

and proclaims that he'd rather be

A pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Even Nietzsche's Superman is but a gesture of defiance or challenge at life on the part of a weary soul, and who knows but that skepticism, cynicism, pessimism, optimism are each of them but escape mechanisms, consolations for living. There are no skeptics, cynics, pessimists, or optimists among human beings who are no more than vegetative systems. The aesthetic seems to be the one wholesome, good-natured antidote of the practical, for it is not a denying or a rejecting of it, but a purification of it and a resting from it. The purgation of an object of its impurities is also a catharsis of the subject, for as imagination divests experience of its extrinsicities it also rids life of its strivings. The aesthetic arises as a protest against the demand of the practical upon life to become, declaring its inherent right to be. Being and becoming are supplementary, the one calling upon the other as its corrective, for becoming without being exhausts life and being without becoming annihilates it. The one keeps life moving, keeps it alive, the other enables life to savor of itself, to taste of the joy of living.

At the basis of the aesthetic response there must function a high degree of susceptibility to the sensory stuff of experience, for when the intrinsic aspect of experience is not sufficiently vivid to be meaningful in itself meaning can come only from the extrinsic. It is like the person, who, if he has not enough business of his own to mind will mind other peoples' business, if he is to have anything to mind. If genius is then a condition of objectification of the will, it is also true that the senses of genius, as has been claimed, "are not narrow paths, but broad highways whereon march armies of impressions, thronging to the citadel of his mind." And there is some experimental data pointing to the conclusion that aesthetic

response to music is a function of the degree of sensitivity to the sensory material of music, namely, that persons who cannot find meaning in music as such are driven to seek its meaning in extra-auditory imagery. Walter Pater here seems to be in the right when he maintains that it is the sensuous element of art that is essentially artistic, from which follows his thesis that music, the most purely formal of the arts, is also the measure of all the arts. This high sensitivity to the intrinsic in experience may also be the basis for the protest against the demands of the practical for preoccupation with the extrinsic, for the extrinsic is an imposter, an intruder, where the intrinsic holds sway. Speaking in psychological terms, this amounts to saying that degree of sensitivity to the details of the organized whole determines the degree of the significance of the whole as such, and that when the sensitivity is not sufficient to make the whole definite enough to engender meaning, this has to be sought, if it is to be found at all, outside the directly presented. When the directly presented is vague it can become definite only in terms of something other than itself.

The view of the aesthetic as the realm of pure experience, or of form become significant as such, seems to be corroborated by the common implication of the words beautiful and artistic, as well as by the theories of beauty.

The term "beautiful" is frequently used outside the realm of art to indicate a unique value attached to commonplace events. Thus we speak of a beautiful idea, a beautiful act, a beautiful movement, a beautiful friendship, and so on. Now what does beautiful signify in those connections? What is it that is beautiful in the idea, act, movement, or friendship? What is the difference between a good idea and a beautiful idea? The goodness of an idea comes from its implications. It is good because of its usefulness. The goodness is a derived value, extrinsic to the idea itself. The same holds for a true idea. It is true always in terms other than itself. The idea is beautiful, then, because it is prized for what it is. It has intrinsic value, and as intrinsic it is a form. Similarly, a good act is good in

terms of some function it has performed, while the beauty is in the act itself, and the act itself is a form.

The terms art and artistic also refer to form. A product is never judged to be art just because it is a product of a particular class of objects. If a painting is art it is not such because it is a painting of a field, a tree, a barn, or a person. Nor is a drama or novel an art product just because it deals with a particular human situation. What is left, then, is, again, form. If prose is judged to be artistic it is the style, the form of presentation, that is artistic, not the subject-matter of the prose. The ideas may be false, absurd, yet the writing can be artistic. When something is artistically done, it is not *what* is done that is artistic, but *how* it is done. Thus, the aesthetic, as experience, is pure experience, and as activity, is pure activity. It is the aristocrat of experiences, excluding anything and everything that is not of its essence. In the aesthetic the realms of phenomena will be prized on their own merits, for whatever they are and as they are, or they vanish into oblivion.

The definition of the aesthetic as an abstraction of the practical is also supported by the theories of beauty, since every one of the theories states in varied terminology that beauty is pure experience, or experience of form versus experience of content. Those who find a contradiction among aesthetic theories have simply not taken the trouble to grasp the gist of each theory, and assume that a difference in terminology also represents a different conception of the nature of that to which the terminology refers. The fact of the matter is that each theory stresses, or perhaps overstresses, some one characteristic of the complex experience and calls that the whole experience. Thus some theories concern themselves with the nature of the experience itself, others with what the experience is experience of, and some with what the experience does to the experient. To the first class belong the theories of *intrinsicity*, *disinterestedness*, and *objectification*; to the second the theories of *significant form* and *intuition*; and to the third those of *psychical distance*, *aesthetic repose*, and *catharsis*. It can be shown not only that the theories in each

group are aspects of each other, in that each includes the others, but that all the theories imply the aesthetic as the negation of the practical.

Disinterestedness, intrinsicity, and objectification belong together, in that a disinterested attitude gives rise to an intrinsic experience, and in an intrinsic experience the subjective is objectified. However, the disinterestedness of the aesthetic must be distinguished from that of science or philosophy. In science and philosophy disinterestedness is deliberate because of the desire to reach a truth supported by fact. It is a search for objectivity, for an unprejudiced conclusion. In the aesthetic the disinterestedness arises from an interest that attains an absorption in what is directly and immediately perceived, and in such disinterestedness there is objectification, since subject dwells in object. Santayana puts the cart before the horse when he defines beauty as pleasure objectified. It is not the objectified pleasure that accounts for the presence of beauty; it is rather the presence of beauty that makes for the objectification of the pleasure. In other words, in beauty the person dwells in the object, so that the feeling of pleasure is also experienced as dwelling in the object. But this a mere matter of detail, the important point being that any one of the three characteristics of beauty includes the other two.

The theories of significant form and intuition come to the same thing, in that both call attention to what it is that is experienced in beauty. Bell defines significant form as the common quality in all visual art—there being no reason for his limiting it to vision excepting that his book is limited to painting—and this common quality lies in lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms that stir the aesthetic emotions. Croce contrasts intuition with intellect by calling intuition the process by which we obtain knowledge of individual things—or differentiation—while intellect gives knowledge of relation between things—or interpretation. His examples of intuitive knowledge are an impression of a moonlight scene by a painter, a musical theme, the

words of a singing lyric, all of which are "intuitive facts without a shadow of intellectual relation," and as such they are forms.

Of the third group of theories that of catharsis is the oldest and most widely known. Aristotle states in the *Poetics* that it is the service of tragedy to effect a proper catharsis or purgation of the emotions of pity and fear, and attributes such an effect also to music in the *Politics*. Now whereas Aristotle nowhere explains directly the nature of this purgation, we can infer what he had in mind from his definition of fear in the *Rhetoric* as "a species of pain or disturbance issuing from an impression of impending evil which is destructive or painful in its nature." It is clear, from this definition, that a catharsis of fear must consist of the elimination from it of the "impression of impending evil," in which case the fear becomes, in the words of Butcher, "an almost impersonal emotion, attaching itself not to this or that particular incident, as to the general course of action which is for us an image of human destiny." In other words, the emotion is stripped in imagination of its biological implications and becomes intrinsic experience. In such case, the restlessness, the drive to action, that is the predominant trait of every-day emotion, also disappears, resulting in a state of repose in tension. And this is Puffer's definition of beauty as aesthetic repose. There is, in beauty a state of aesthetic repose through catharsis. Bullough's theory of psychical distance states the same thing in different language. If a person is psychically distanced from himself when standing on a hillside with lightning playing about him he is at repose because he is engrossed in the phenomena rather than in the thought of the danger to himself. Psychical distance is but another name for catharsis, only it explains how the catharsis is effected. It is this condition of aesthetic repose resulting from catharsis by psychical distance that leads to the characterization of aesthetic experience in such mystical terms as the perfect moment, a moment of eternity, the annihilation of self, experience that is timeless and spaceless, contact with ultimate reality, and several other similar descriptions. Aesthetic repose, being a state of total equilibrium of

forces, is a perfect moment because it is a moment of fullness and completeness, free of straining and striving, and therefore also a moment that is eternal, since consciousness of time and space are phenomena of the will to live, and it is the will to live that generates self-consciousness. A will-less, self-less state, which is a state of perfection and eternity, also presents ultimate reality, because beyond that experience cannot reach out.

Now, when we put the three classes of aesthetic theory together what do we find? We find that disinterested-intrinsic-objectified experience is experience of form become meaningful as form, and in such experience there is repose, a catharsis of striving, which makes for a perfect moment, a moment that marks eternity, a moment that is therefore timeless and spaceless and therefore also self-less, marking a moment of finality or of ultimate reality.

To summarize: every characterization of aesthetic experience in aesthetic theory arises from the experience of form, which is the result of divesting experience of its everyday garb of the practical, or, in psychological terminology, the ridding of experience of the accretions from the process of interpretation, leaving for contemplation the fruit of the process of differentiation, which is the world of pure being, the world of forms. Psychologically, then, aesthetic experience is primitive experience, or experience of the organized whole become significant as such in the fullness of its detail.

Carnegie Institute of Technology.

The Aesthetic Idea of Impressionism

BY

LIONELLO VENTURI

TO theoretically justify the aesthetic idea of Impressionism, two conditions are necessary:

1. A precise understanding of the historical phenomenon called Impressionism. A few Impressionistic paintings executed between 1870 and 1880 had a widespread influence on sculpture, literature, music, and even criticism. Thus many productions were considered Impressionistic in spite of the fact that, besides Impressionistic elements, they also contained tendencies entirely foreign and often opposed to Impressionism, such as realism, symbolism, pointillism, scientificism, fauvism, etc. To understand means to limit. The historian must purify an historical phenomenon of all heterogeneous matter in order to understand the essence and the contingency. But when this has been accomplished, only the historical, not the aesthetic idea of Impressionism has been determined.

2. If the essence of Impressionism can be found only in the historical phenomenon of Impressionism, there is no need to discuss the aesthetic idea of Impressionism. Only if the essence of Impressionism can be found in the process of artistic creation in every era and in every country, only then can the essence of Impressionism be considered an eternal moment of art and therefore an aesthetic value. The coincidence between that value and historical Impres-

sionism signifies that the Impressionistic moment in the creation of a work of art was the entire art created by Impressionists. That is, the Impressionists realized that value more essentially than others did, and with less extraneous artistic elements; they demonstrated that that value was self-sufficient for the creation of art, which would, incidentally, contribute toward identification of, instead of distinction between, the artistic process and the artistic result.

The problem of the eternal life of Impressionism was perceived by Werner Weisbach in 1910¹. Unfortunately, he failed to discern the essence of historical Impressionism which he confused with illusionism. Neither did he keep separate the aesthetic and the cultural problems. Today, factual data are available on both the ideal and the practical conditions which led to the union of the Impressionistic painters after 1870 and to their disbandment around 1880². The first condition of the problem settled, the second is more easily attempted.

The origin of Impressionism can be traced in a legendary though accurate way. In the years just prior to 1870, three young men, Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro used to sit on the banks of the Seine and the Oise and paint landscapes. They were realist painters, greatly interested in rendering the reflex of light on the water which showed continual movement and gave a new life to the water. Furthermore, the many colours found in the reflexes suggested to them the idea of expressing light by opposing colours without using dark tones for shadows. And so they clarified their palette unconsciously, and divided colours unaware of the theory of complementaries. For some time, they painted water in this new way, and hills, trees, houses, and sky in the old realistic tradition. But this resulted in unbalanced canvasses. To avoid this mistake, they then tried to portray everything, even human figures, in the same way they painted water. They saw every image not in abstract form, not in

¹ Impressionismus. Ein Problem der Malerei in der Antike und Neuzeit, Berlin, 1910. 2 volumes.

² L. Venturi, Les archives de l'Impressionnisme, Paris, 1939.

chiaro-scuro, but in reaction to the reflex of light, either real or imaginary. They had selected only one element from reality—light—to interpret all of nature. But then, light ceased to be an element of reality. It had become a principle of style, and Impressionism was born.

How the term, Impressionism, originated, is a familiar story. Claude Monet had sent to the exhibition of a group of painters in 1874, a landscape entitled *Impression, Soleil Levant*. A journalist, to express his contempt, called not only the author of that canvas, but all the artists represented there, Impressionists. At their third exhibition, these painters accepted this appellative as a challenge, but with no pride in it. They never made a manifesto; they considered themselves victims rather than aggressors. In 1874, they formed an association for the sole purpose of exhibiting their paintings refused by the Official Salon. Due to the constant persecution of the public and critics, they disbanded around 1880 and each tried to follow his own bent. Just when they had become convinced of their mistake and failure, after years of uncertainty, they suddenly discovered that success had come their way in a measure far exceeding their idlest dreams. They had converted the entire world to their taste in every manifestation of art. But it was too late for the founders of this great discovery to return to their own taste of the years prior to 1880. No painter was Impressionistic all his life. The real, the genuine Impressionism, ended at the very moment of its triumph.

If we limit our analysis to the conception of Impressionism during the decade between 1870 and 1880, we find homogeneous characteristics.

Impressionists were well aware that what they painted was not reality, but the *appearance of reality*. This is an old idea. We need only recall Plato's remarks in his *Republic*, Book X, in which he describes the imitator, including the painter, who constructs things in "appearance" as one who takes a mirror and turns it round in every direction. The imitation of the painter is not the imitation of the

real nature of real objects, but of the apparent nature of appearances. In other words, it is an imitation of a phantasm, and not of truth. . . . The same objects look either concave or convex owing to mistakes about colours to which the eye is liable. And it is just this natural infirmity of ours which is assailed with every species of witchcraft by the art of drawing. . . . When the rational element of the soul, after frequent measuring, informs us that one thing is greater or less than another thing, it is contradicted at the same moment by the painting of the appearance. Of course, Plato condemned this art of illusion which takes advantage of the weakness in our nature that allows erroneous impressions to prevail over reason. It is interesting to note that when Plato speaks of painting, he denies the existence of any spiritual activity independent of reason.

You are no doubt aware that this problem of the relation between imagination and reason continued through the centuries and contributed largely to the establishment of aesthetics in the XVIII century. It was Kant who observed that when "pleasure is related to the simple apprehension of the form of an object of intuition without referring this apprehension to a concept directed toward certain knowledge, the representation does not refer to the object, but only to the subject."¹ It is difficult to find a more adequate representation of Impressionism than the simple apprehension of the form of an object without the knowledge of the object and with reference only to the subject.

Naturally, the Impressionists had not read Kant. But an idea illustrating the same problem from a different angle was then current in France.

Quatremere de Quincy, the greatest representative of neo-classic criticism in France, wrote at the beginning of the XIX century: "Imitation in Fine Arts means producing the resemblance of an object in a different object which is its image." A work of art must be not only different but distinct from reality — distinct because of its different nature. Mechanical arts produce similarity by identity.

¹ Critic of Judgment, Introduction, Chapter VII.

Fine arts produce resemblance by image. There is the same difference between the object and the work of art as between the reality and the appearance. An artist's image is the image of the appearance of reality.¹

The first step in art is the contact with appearance. It is the essential condition in art without which there can be no art. Sensation, which is the origin of any work of art, is the sensation of an appearance. Leonardo da Vinci was certainly not an Impressionistic painter. However, he mentions the suggestions produced on his imagination by spots on a wall. Nor was Coleridge an Impressionistic poet, but Mr. J. L. Lowes demonstrated in the "Road to Xanadu" how the poet's imagination was fired by impressions entered in his Note-Book. Pierre Henri de Valenciennes was a neo-classic landscapist, but in his treatise (1800) he emphasized the necessity of maintaining the first impression of the ensemble in the complete picture of nature.

What the Impressionist painters actually accomplished was the finding of a form closer to the first impression of the appearance of things than other painters had. And it was closer because of their vivid sensibility whereby they understood the absolute value in art of the appearance, and their mind was sufficiently free of traditional principles of abstract form to undervalue their impressions.

Impressionism has been considered a branch of Realism. But it must be pointed out that Impressionism was a reaction against Realism. This can be perceived after reading Emile Zola's remarks about the Salon of 1865, which anticipated Impressionism. He expressly states that he expects an artist to express his personality and his temperament, and not to reproduce reality. He censures Courbet, and exalts Manet and Pissarro.

In the history of French literature, you find that Symbolism appeared after Realism. But in painting, there was an interval of a few years between Realism and Symbolism during which there was neither Realism nor Symbolism, but Impressionism. Too fond of

¹ *Essai sur l'imitation dans les Beux-Arts*, Paris, 1823, p. 3 and foll.

free imagination, too aware of the importance of the personality of the artist in the creation of art, the Impressionists rejected both the objectivity of Realists and the intellectualism of Symbolists.

This detachment from objectivity was an ideal, but it was not an intellectual ideal because it was based on sensation. This ideal of an expression of sensations, derived from nature without any pre-conceived knowledge of nature, was better expressed by Impressionists, perhaps, than by any other group in the history of art. Of course, this was a very old ideal. At the beginning of the XVIII century, in France, a good example was given by Dubos when he stressed the importance of understanding art by feeling and not by rules.¹

That Impressionists based their style only on sensation has been denied. It has been said that their division of colours followed the scientific theories of Chevreul, Maxwell, and Rood. This is not true. Pissarro, in a letter dated November 6, 1886,² explains that the idea of applying scientific theory to painting originated with Seurat. And Seurat was the leader of neo-Impressionism or pointillism which constituted a reaction against Impressionism — the first reaction of doctrinarians against sensationists.

A curious consequence of the consideration of sensation as the basis of painting is the theory of Renoir, set forth as a plan for a society in 1884. Renoir contended that the chief point in any artistic problem was *irregularity*. He stated that in art as in nature, all beauty is irregular. Two eyes, when they are beautiful, are never entirely alike. The segments of an orange, the foliage of a tree, the petals of a flower are never identical. Beauty of every description finds its charm in variety. Nature abhors both vacuum and regularity. For the same reason, no work of art can really be called such if it has not been created by an artist who believes in irregularity and rejects any set form. Regularity, order, desire for perfection (which is always a false perfection) destroy art. The only possibility of

¹ Reflexions sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture, Dresde, 1760.

² L. Venturi, Archives de l'Impressionnisme, II, p. 24.

maintaining taste in art is to impress on artists and the public the importance of irregularity. Compare these ideas of Renoir with Aristotle's definition that beauty consists of grandeur and order, and you will understand the opposition of two different worlds. Impressionists opposed irregularity and variety of sensations to the order of reason.

The opposition between Impressionism and Neo-classicism from the angle of irregularity and order cannot be too strongly emphasized.

But there is another angle from which the difference is less pronounced. The theory of art for art's sake has been attributed to Romanticists. However, Winckelmann defined beauty as indifference towards passion. This is an abstraction from life, which is the very beginning of the theory of art for art's sake. And even if this theory has been impaired by aestheticism and snobbery, there is no doubt that its basis is sound because it underlines the autonomy of art. No one can expect art to be devoid of life, but the world can expect a work of art to completely absorb life in form. In romantic painting, the representative of art for art's sake was Ingres, always linked with neo-classicism. The opposition was Delacroix. Impressionists had great respect for Delacroix's colouring and imagination. But they did not approve of his subjects: poetic, historical, political, which were typical of him. As a matter of fact, during the romantic and realistic period, the most striking difference between the followers of the principle of art for art's sake, and their foes, lay in the choice of subject matter. Too much emphasis had been placed on historical and patriotic themes. They had offered opportunity for painted rhetoric, for hypocritical propaganda, chiefly during the Second Empire. The only channel open for authentic art was beyond the limitation of subject matter. For this reason, even realistic painting was considered art for art's sake, for instance, by the Goncourt.

From this point of view, Impressionism was not like Realism, diametrically opposed to neo-classicism. The Impressionists' inde-

pendence of nature, through their use of coloured light, enabled them to find a subject within and not beyond their own scope. Their lack of subject matter was not a passive element as it was with the Realists; it was an opportunity for creating motifs instead of representing subjects.

Walter Pater discovered in Giorgione a new creative impulse because he did not use Christian or pagan subjects drawn from the Bible, mythology, or history as did his contemporary Florentine painters, but invented his own motifs, and subordinated them to his form and colouring. Before Walter Pater's disclosure, the artistic value of Giorgione was discovered by Manet when Giorgione's *Concert Champêtre* in the Louvre inspired him to paint *Le Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe*.

Transformation of subject matter into motif is possible only when an ideal can be introduced between the object represented and the painting representing it.

Of what did this ideal consist?

Impressionists painted simple trees instead of monumental trees; peasant cottages instead of palaces; plain girls instead of great ladies; working-men instead of noblemen. This was not for the purpose of advancing a political issue, but the expression of a natural sympathy towards the lower bourgeoisie or working-class to which they themselves belonged and with which they were completely satisfied. They felt a human dignity in humble personalities; they found them the most natural people because it was natural that they should like and praise them. This meant the discovery of a new beauty where, before, it had not been believed that beauty existed. 1870-1880, the decade of Impressionism, was the period known as the end of the notables who had ruled France in the Second Empire. The fall of the Empire was the end of their influence on French life. An oak of Théodore Rousseau is still a notable; a poplar of Pissarro, no longer. Impressionism was the artistic symbol of the rise of a new class to human consciousness.

This had interesting consequences.

Impressionists were criticized for not finishing their work. Zola, who had encouraged the movement in the beginning, lost faith in them because he felt they did not finish and perfect their pictures (finishing to Zola was a powerful means of imposing himself). The Goncourt disapproved of the Impressionists not only because they belonged to a lower class, but also because their works did not show sufficient finish. Nobody could definitely determine when a painting was finished. Apelles won fame in Greece because he knew when to take his hand off the canvas. It seems to us that Cezanne did also. But his contemporaries were not of the same opinion. To their accusation, Cezanne replied that what they wanted was the finish of imbeciles. His ambition was to realize a true expression of his vision — nothing more, nothing less.

Another charge made against Impressionists was that they painted only fragments. This is rather amusing. When has a painter existed who represented all of nature? Naturally every artist represents fragments. True painters concentrate in a fragment, the feeling of entire nature, which is nature itself. So did the Impressionists. Their feeling of nature was their style. And their motifs, which were fragments of nature, were subordinated to their style, which constituted a value, a quality, a totality.

An Impressionistic painting is not picturesque; it is pictorial. At the end of the XVIII century, the so-called category of the picturesque was added to the two categories of the beautiful and the sublime. But because it was identified with some aspects of nature, picturesque was never the attribute of perfect art. If the personal style of an artist absorbs the picturesque fragments of nature, the result is a pictorial painting. This was true of the works of the Impressionists.

A certain credit was given Impressionists from their very start. They had clarified their palette. But this characteristic has often been considered of secondary importance. Even today, some aestheticians believe drawing essential to painting, and color only contingent. Through the centuries, a bloodless battle has been

waged between the sponsors of color and of drawing. In the Middle Ages, color was the supreme element. During the Renaissance, in Florence, drawing was the dominant factor; in Venice, color. At the end of the XVII century, de Piles observed that drawing preceded color, but color perfected drawing. Neo-classicism again gave predominance to drawing. Kant considered only drawing essential; Ingres and Delacroix were the opposing champions of drawing and colour. But Baudelaire was the first to recognize that Delacroix's drawing was not inferior to Ingres; it was different. His drawing was the form of his colouring. This idea was grasped by the Impressionists. They changed traditional form in order to find a form adapted to their colouring. They again found that simultaneous vision of space and color which had been spoiled by the prejudice in favor of drawing. Ernst Mach, in his *Analysis of Sensations*¹, recognized the unity of space and color sensation. Impressionists probably contributed to this truth.

All these ideas or trends can be found in the paintings executed between 1870 and 1880 by Manet, Renoir, Cezanne, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley — in other words, the greatest Impressionist painters in their most Impressionistic period.

Similarity to and difference from Impressionism can be traced in various fields of art.

The Goncourt are considered Impressionist writers, but pride of their nobility, passion for elegance, virtuosity, artificiality formed a barrier between them and the Impressionist painters. Their taste delighted in XVIII century painting, Japanese prints and Raffaelli, a secondary follower of the great Impressionists. They lacked the popular, spontaneous, natural seriousness of the Impressionists.

Zola possessed this seriousness, this devotion to nature, but he was far too occupied with social and political problems; too fond of action, and victory over his contemporaries to be able to maintain that indifference towards the Parisians and that faith in the religion

¹ Die Analyse der Empfindungen, 1885, p. 84.

of the open country, which constituted the strength of the Impressionists.

It is easier to understand how the Impressionism of Mallarmé, Verlaine, or Debussy is a contingent element in comparison with their essential symbolism. Painters on a par with them are Gauguin, Odilon Redon, Carrière — not the Impressionists.

Even a kind of criticism has been considered Impressionistic: that of Anatole France and Jules Lemaître. Here we find some confusion between Impressionism and skepticism. The transposition of an attribute from art to criticism is, however, only metaphoric. But morally, the influence of the Impressionists is perceptible. Lemaître says that, "It is proper and necessary to begin criticism with the sympathetic reading of a work without any preconceived idea, if possible." This principle, which seems merely honest, is a product of the exemplar modesty of the Impressionist painters. And Gustave Lanson, the classic critic, who gave so much attention to genres and rules, admitted that Impressionistic criticism is "the only method which gives the sensation of the energy and beauty of books."

Naturally, the reality of Impressionism is very complex and cannot be limited to this moral attitude, important as it may be. But the modesty of the Impressionists in their approach to nature in some way accounts for their satisfaction with appearance and their lack of intellectual artificiality. Their faithfulness to appearance resulted in their finding a new form of appearance without pretending that their form of appearance was the form of reality. This pretence would have involved a judgment of reality, an approach to criticism of reality which is foreign to art. To them, reality meant an ideal vision of space, conceived as light and colour. And in order to avoid virtuosity when they had arrived at light and colour, they stopped finishing. They reduced the subject matter to the state of motif in order to keep the content of a work of art in the state of sensation. This prevented their illustrating any unfamiliar subject (unfamiliar in the sense of foreign to their every-day life, the life

of poor people and open country). Their richness was nothing less than the light of the sun.

And now consider the other real painters of all ages and all countries. There are none with the exclusive ideal of the Impressionists. But more or less they all included that ideal in their own. With the necessary reservations for different mediums, sculptors, musicians and poets also included that ideal. Without it, there cannot be a work of art. This is why Impressionism is a necessary moment in the eternal process of art.

Some Aspects of St. Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty

BY

EMMANUEL CHAPMAN

IT is unfortunate that the recent history of esthetics by Gilbert and Kuhn,¹ which claims to go to the "fountainheads," should lean so heavily on secondary sources in the chapter on *Medieval Esthetics*. Though these authors finally deny the oft repeated errors and are forced to admit that, "Esthetics was neither crushed out in the Middle Ages by the Christian moral resistance nor confounded to its perdition by theology," they fail to appreciate the new polarities generated by the Christian dialectic. This results in such arbitrary interpretations as that, "The recalcitrant human nature of the Fathers and their not infrequent acquaintance with classical literature and philosophy led them to find ingenious reasons for the defense of those arts and beauties which at other times their consciences compelled them to repudiate." This unwarranted projection of a "conflict," and the failure to appreciate its true nature, derive from certain misconceptions. Contrary to all the primary evidence is the further unjustified assertion that, "For the Christian philosophers, nothing was wholly and unconditionally real but God alone. God was the ultimate subject of every judgment. Matter, the sense organs, the local habitation of beauty and the apparatus

¹ *A History of Esthetics* by Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, New York, The Macmillan Co. 1939.

of its first apprehension by man, therefore, were in a strict sense illusory." The Christian philosopher's affirmation of an infinite God as the supreme reality did not diminish but brought out more sharply the reality of finite subjects each exercising its own inviolable act of existence and possessing its own degrees of unity, truth, goodness and beauty. Unlike the later idealist dialectic in which this polarity was destroyed, the infinite did not swallow up the finite, the necessary did not obliterate the contingent, the absolute did not eclipse relative beings, the spiritual did not negate the material. For the Christian thinker, matter was real and good, and so too were the body and its sense organs.

Such misinterpretations which come from a misreading or a lack of knowledge of the primary sources is particularly unfortunate in the cases of St. Augustine. Admitting that their "entire treatment of St. Augustine is greatly indebted to K. Svoboda,"² it is not surprising that Gilbert and Kuhn repeat his gratuitous charge that Augustine turned away more and more from beauty as he advanced in his Christian faith.³ Had Augustine turned against his many affirmations that only the beautiful is loved, he would have said so in his *Retractions* where he was so careful to point out the opinions in his voluminous writings to which he no longer assented. It would be more correct to say that as Augustine became more profoundly Christian his appreciation of contingent and passing beauty deepened. For Augustine, as indeed for all Catholic thinkers, there was no problem of reconciling the claims of beauty and morality, for as he put it, "We Catholics worship God, the principle of all good great or little, the principle of all beauty great or little, the principle of all order great or little. The more measure, beauty and order shine out in created things, the more are they good, the less the shining out of measure, beauty and order, the less are they good. Measure, beauty and order are the

² K. Svoboda, *L'Esthétique de St. Augustin et ses Sources*, Brno, 1933.

³ E. Krakowski also makes this mistake in his *L'Esthétique de Plotin et Son Influence*.

three general goods that we find in all created things whether spiritual or material."⁴

Who did Gilbert and Kuhn have in mind in generalizing that "in so far as early Christianity interpreted matter and the body as evil and outside the providence of God, the sensible and material properties of art were not tolerated." For the Christian thinkers, unlike the Greek, providence extended even to the lowest things, and Augustine generously credits Plotinus in showing this by citing the beauty of flowers and leaves, but he omits to mention that in the following passages of the *Enneads* Plotinus denies this by speaking of the influences of the stars and not the providence of God. Unlike Plotinus, for whom "that which remains completely foreign to all divine reason is absolute ugliness," Augustine held that there could be no absolute ugliness since wherever there was any being there was some beauty. The ugly which differs from the beautiful not in kind but in degree, is simply the privation of the beauty or form a thing should have, and nothing could be completely deprived of beauty for otherwise it would not be. W. T. Stace's⁵ strictures on the disastrous worship of symmetry on the part of philosophers which has prevented them from including the ugly in their treatment of beauty, cannot be applied to St. Augustine whose dialectical conception of beauty realized in the opposition of contraries widened to its utmost the range and inclusiveness of the beautiful.

Bosanquet who credited Augustine with enlarging and advancing aesthetic appreciation, especially in his decided emphasis on the ugly as a subordinate element in the beautiful,⁶ regretted that Augustine allowed his early *De Pulchro et Apto* to perish as trivial, and Svoboda not only attempts to recount what this lost book contained but even traces its sources. Augustine, however, as he tells us in his *Confessions*, did not regret the loss of his separate treatise

⁴ De Natura Boni, ch. III.

⁵ *The meaning of Beauty, A Theory of Aesthetics.*

⁶ *History of Aesthetics* p. 133.

on the beautiful, written as a young man when he was still under the influence of the materialism of the Manichaeans. The loss was certainly made up by Augustine not only in his *De Musica* where he directly treats the problem of the beautiful, but in many of his other writings where he discourses on the beautiful when it is least expected, in his dogmatic and polemical writings, sermons, commentaries on the scriptures, diverse questions, epistles, etc. St. Augustine's vast intelligence, which cultivated so many different fields of inquiry, overflowed any arbitrarily imposed limitations into abundant digressions on the beautiful. It should be pointed out too, that his concepts never hardened into fixed meanings which remained constant throughout his writings, but were more like seminal ideas which unfolded on different levels of inquiry, not only the philosophical and the psychological, but the theological and mystical. It is not enough to investigate his interrelated concepts of number, form, unity and order which sum up in beauty. No matter from what direction analysis is pursued, his doctrine of divine illumination is reached. The aesthetic object is an illumination of these formal constituents, which are also expressional, shining out in beauty. The beautiful is a synthesis of the formal aesthetic elements, illumination and expression, and the failure to bring this out explains the inadequacy of the few works devoted to St. Augustine's philosophy of beauty.⁷ Contemporary aesthetic thought which is divided by such conflicting views as those pointed out by E. F. Carrit⁸ as intellectualist, formalist, expressionist, emotionalist, etc., could learn much from the Augustinian synthesis.

Though emphasizing the importance of number as one of the constitutive elements of the aesthetic object, Augustine did not fall into the error of reducing all the aesthetic constituents to formal numerical relations, the kind of reduction which has tempted those who have tried to find in art geometrical laws, the golden section,

⁷ The author of this article has attempted to bring together the formal elements, illumination and expression in his *St. Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1939.

⁸ *The Theory of Beauty*.

etc. Beauty in bodies endowed with life, Augustine shows, is due not only to color supervening on the harmony of parts, but to life itself. The life animating a worm, and moving it with measure, reveals a higher unity, and hence more beauty, even better than the body with its splendor of colors and delicacy of form. Anyone acquainted with St. Augustine's praises of the beauty of a worm, a cock fight, the beauty of man in his body, soul and virtues, the beauty of the universe as a whole and its Creator, would certainly disagree with Gilbert and Kuhn's judgment that, "One feels the absence in him of such delicacy of feeling and closeness to the phenomena of beauty as one finds in Cicero's sudden appreciation of the dignity of his paved portico and colonnade, or in his fastidiousness about the stuccoing of a ceiling." St. Augustine went much further in his appreciation of the beautiful than Cicero who awakened him, as he tells us in the *Confessions*, to the love of philosophy, and much deeper than the Stoics about whose philosophy of beauty so little is known. The freshness can still be savoured of St. Augustine's praises of "the splendour of light, the magnificence of the sun, moon and stars, the somber beauties of forests, the colours and perfumes of flowers, the multitude of birds differing in song and plumage, the infinite diversity of animals among which some of the smallest are the most admirable, the works of a worm or a bee which seem more surprising than the gigantic body of a whale, the sea which provides such a great spectacle with the different colors clothing it like so many different costumes, sometimes green and at other times blue and purple (what pleasure there is in seeing the sea raging and storming if one is safe from its waves), the multitude of vestments furnished by trees and animals, and so many other things which can hardly be listed, let alone described, so much time would it take to include them all."

Art for St. Augustine was an illumination which integrates the lights of the noetic order and the order of making, and though he insists that art is a function of reason not to be confused with

imitation, this principle is sometimes applied quite surprisingly. On the assumption that unlike music or architecture, painting and sculpture imitate nature, then it follows that these latter arts are to be ranked lower than the former. This explains Augustine's attitude towards some of the plastic arts which he did not estimate very highly because he thought they imitated nature. Whether Augustine's attitude toward painting and sculpture was influenced by the belief that they had their origin in the worship of the dead and the veneration of demons can only be a conjecture. It might, however, help to explain why Augustine preferred nature to painting or sculpture which he held to be imitative. Augustine's low estimate of some of the plastic arts is in no way inconsistent with his insight that art as such cannot be confounded with imitation.

Poetical works, Augustine observes, are not imitations but works of the imagination. This recognition of the relation between art and the imagination was reached by hardly any ancient thinker besides Philostratus. In our time, the French poet Paul Claudel has developed some of Augustine's insights in his *L'Art Poétique* and other artists, too, have expressed them in their own way. St. Augustine's aesthetic principles can illuminate contemporary art, and have the vitality to inspire future realizations.

Fordham University.

Il Faut être de son Temps¹

BY
GEORGE BOAS

ONE of the most important slogans of the French romantic philosophers and artists forms the title of this paper. It is almost the only recorded word of Daumier, for instance, which is left to us, forming, as it were, his heraldic device.² It is the burden of the famous *Préface des études françaises et étrangères* of Emile Deschamps.³ The practice of new metres, styles, techniques, and subject matters, which would appear to be a consequence of its adoption as a program, is a characteristic of French arts in the first half of the nineteenth century. Elaborated into a theory by Deschamps, it had even been given a special name, *heli-kiasticism*, by an Italian jurist and literary critic, Romagnosi.⁴

To argue that artists should be of their time presupposed the notion that there were such things as *times*; that history was divided into epochs which differed from one another not in superficial traits, such as costume — although even this was not apparently always

¹ The author's debt to the work of Professor A. O. Lovejoy will be apparent to all students of the history of ideas. It requires special acknowledgment, however, since reference cannot be made in footnotes to private conversations.

² See the frontispiece of Arsène Alexandre's *Honoré Daumier, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre*, Paris, 1888. Hereafter French publications will be understood to have been issued in Paris, unless otherwise noted.

³ Ed. of Henri Girard, in the *Bibliothèque romantique*, [1923], *passim*, but esp. p. 17.

⁴ The place of Romagnosi in Italian romanticism is discussed at length in G. A. Borgese, *Storia della critica romantica in Italia*, Milan 1920, ch. vi. Romagnosi's term first appeared in the *Conciliatore*, no. 3, p.11, according to Borgese, *Op. cit.*, p. 135, n.l. See also Paul van Tieghem, *Le Mouvement romantique*, 1923, p. 103. On the *Conciliatore*, see Kent Roberts Greenfield, *Economics and Liberalism in the Risorgimento*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1934, pp. 161 ff.

known — and language, but in such fundamental matters as ways of thinking and evaluating. Such a notion is of course as old as recorded occidental literature, for the legend of the ages is a theory of epochs, if we take the word “theory” loosely enough. Whether this theory was primitivistic or anti-primitivistic, it maintained that human nature varied in time and varied to so deep an extent that men of one age would reverse the moral judgments of another. The influence of Plato and Aristotle with their emphasis upon the universal, of Stoicism with its belief in cosmopolitanism, of Christianity with its acceptance and extension of both, must have been to make men lose sight of temporal as well as of geographical differences, and even when writers belonging to these traditions used the old familiar metaphors or played upon the degeneration of man and nature, as was common in patristic authors,⁵ it was in order to insist that the *true*, the best character of man had appeared in one of the epochs, whereas in the others he had lived a monstrous, corrupted, or perverse life.

There is no need in this paper of tracing the history of the idea of epochs as the Romanticists used it. But we may at least suggest some of the earlier phases of the idea in pre-romantic thought. Of these, two are the most important, that to be found in Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, according to which man's whole “spiritual” life varies from age to age — his feeling of justice, beauty, truth, and goodness — and that found as early as Turgot and which developed into Comte's law of the three stages, according to which the thinking processes of men were a function of the period in which they lived.⁶ If men

⁵ See, for instance, Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, II, 5, V, 6; St. Ambrose, *Hexameron*, III, x; St. Augustine, *Civ. dei*, Bk. XIII, ch. 20, 21; XV, 9, among others.

⁶ *Principii d'una scienza nuova* was first published in 1725 and republished in a highly revised edition in 1730. It was translated in French by Michelet in 1827. Turgot's version of the law of the three stages was first pronounced in a speech on universal history given in 1750, but not published until 1808. I have sketched its history through Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and Comte in my *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1925, pp. 265 ff. Such theories must not be confused with theories like that of Mme de Staël in her *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*. She too believed that literature changed, but as a function of social—by which she usually meant political—institutions.

during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. A reader of think differently according to the period in which they are born and if their judgments of goodness and beauty vary similarly, the whole question of the validity of universal values immediately arises. One could argue (1) that the variation consists either in degeneration or progress or some combination of the two, cyclical or undulatory, or (2) that there was no inherent rightness in any of the periods, but that man's whole spiritual life was determined by what has sometimes been called the *Zeitgeist* and that there was no criterion by which the *Zeitgeist's* variations could be judged. The two points of view are not only logically different, but the psychological attitude presumably associated with them might very well be opposed. Thus a man who believed in undeviating progress towards the better would maintain that his period was the best period *so far*, but that its goodness consisted in its attainment to a certain degree of a universal end whose inherent value would be even greater. Psychologically he might feel that his duty was to improve his time with the universal end in mind. The extreme *belikiastic* would refuse to judge his time by any other, past or future, and would naturally attempt to discover its peculiarities and to give them what is usually called "aesthetic expression."

The second was the attitude of the predominant French romantics. They were not always consistent about it nor even clear in their intentions. But on the whole the preface of Emile Deschamps maintains that regardless of what other times have been, it is the duty of writers to be of their own time *avant tout et en tout*. Since this preface appeared in 1828, it becomes chronologically at any rate part of a movement to which Comte's law of the three stages (first published in 1825)⁷ and Vico's *Scienza Nuova* in Michelet's translation gave added impetus.

Michelet's version of Vico's masterpiece, which greatly abbreviated the original work, was the source of Vico's influence in France

⁷ In "Considérations philosophiques sur les sciences et les savans," *Producteur*, 1825, Vol. I, 289. Comte maintained that he "discovered" the law in 1822.

this book would have found Vico's theses presented simply and clearly, in a terminology which would have seemed less barbarous than that of the original. He would have seen in Michelet's introduction the division of history into three periods, the divine or theocratic, the heroic, the civilized, and the doctrine that the differences between the periods was most clearly marked by the type of language which they spoke.⁸ The Heroic Age spoke a metaphorical and poetic language, the Theocratic *une langue hiéroglyphique ou sacrée*. It would thus have been impossible for a man not to be of his epoch, for epochs were homogeneous.⁹

As for Deschamps, he was convinced that the importance of the romantic movement in literature lay in its sponsorship of modern art as distinguished from the art of the past. He emphasized in his famous preface "two great truths,"

qu'il n'y a réellement pas de romantisme, mais bien une littérature du dix-neuvième siècle; et en second lieu, qu'il n'existe dans ce siècle, comme dans tous, que de bons et de mauvais ouvrages, et même, si vous voulez, infiniment plus de mauvais que de bons.^{9a}

The first truth was not open to discussion, if words were taken in their literal meaning. The second immediately opened the question of the criterion of good literature. In what sense of the word could a book written in the nineteenth century be bad? The answer would be simply that bad literature was literature that imitated the work of another century. The writer must always strive for novelty.

Les hommes d'un vrai talent de chaque époque sont toujours doués d'un instinct qui les pousse vers le nouveau.¹⁰

But here again a number of questions arise, of which two are outstanding: (1) Is there anything besides chronology which defines an epoch; (2) could not novelty consist precisely in imitating or

⁸ *Principes de la Philosophie de l'histoire*, 1827, p. xvii.

⁹ Similar thoughts stimulated by a reading of Vico, were to be found in the Traditionalists, Bonald and Maistre. In fact, they were a commonplace of Catholic writers. See Elio Gianturco, *Joseph de Maistre and Giambattista Vico*, Washington, 1937.

^{9a} *Ed. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁰ *Id.*, p.7.

reviving a previous style? If, that is, literature of the nineteenth century is simply literature written between 1800 and 1900, is not literature which continues the tradition of earlier periods but which is written between these two dates as much a part of the total body of nineteenth century art as a selected portion of that literature? In the second place, was it not peculiar to the early nineteenth century to attempt the revival of Roman, if not Greek, styles? Much of the work of David, Canova, Delille, Ingres, Huvé, perhaps Spontini also, succeeded in establishing an artistic style which even with our perspective we see as peculiar to its time.

We do not know whether Deschamps ever seriously considered these questions. He was writing polemics, not history, and he was trying to justify the artistic practices of a group of his contemporaries who were producing relatively novel works of art. His argument ran, French poetry is strong in philosophical epistles, didactic poems and fables; it is weak in the epic, the lyric, the elegiac. Therefore men who write the former run after *des palmes déjà cueillies*; it is no longer possible to write masterpieces in these fields which are encumbered with them.¹¹ But in the latter field there is still room and it is in that field that Deschamps's friends, Hugo, Lamartine, and Vigny, were working. The fact that they were producing new forms of French poetry ought to have sufficed to justify them in his eyes. But Deschamps, unhappily for logic, utilizes other criteria of greatness, as when he praises Hugo's odes for their lack of false ornament, cold exclamation, *enthousiasme symétrique*, and for the presence in them of "all the secrets of the heart, all the dreams of the imagination, and all the sublimity of philosophy."¹²

If one went then to the most influential manifesto of the Romantics to find out what a "time" was, one would be disappointed. It is easy enough by running through the periodical literature of the Restoration to find a copious supply of paragraphs emphasizing the differences between epochs, the necessity of being modern, the need

¹¹ *Id.*, p. 9.

¹² *Id.*, p. 13 f.

for originality, but if one seek a clear definition of a period and a receipt for belonging to a period, the search will be vain.

There was, however, another element in the idea which must not be overlooked. That was the opposition to something known as "ideal beauty." This opposition appears among those who might be called theoretical writers in a very pronounced form in Stendhal. We all know the influence which the *Idéologues* and their theory of the analysis of ideas had upon him and how much of his literary technique is an application of ideological analysis. His hatred of the "empty ideas of Plato, Kant, and their school,"¹³ was never reticent. This expresses itself more forcibly in the life of Rossini, the letters on Haydn, and in his history of painting.¹⁴ But Delacroix, too, who was no great admirer of Stendhal at least in the twenties,¹⁵ resents the idea of unchanging and absolute beauty. In 1823 or 1824 he writes,

La question sur le beau se réduit à peu près à ceci: Qu'aimez-vous mieux d'un lion ou d'un tigre? Un Grec et un Anglais ont chacun une façon d'être beau qui n'a rien de commun.¹⁶

In fact, the idea of the varieties of beauty ran constantly through his mind and we find one of his rare theoretical writings given over entirely to that subject.¹⁷ Though he attacks originality and novelty, (15 May 1824), he also attacks copying and imitation.¹⁸ But more

¹³ *Promenades dans Rome*, 1829, I, 241. Cf. Garat on the German infatuation with the *idées platoniques de Mendelssohn* and his school in the *Conservateur*, no. 50, 29 vendémiaire VI (20 Oct. 1797), p. 396.

¹⁴ *Vie de Rossini*, ed. Champion, 1923, p. 17: *le beau idéal* change tous les trente ans en musique; *Lettres sur Haydn*, same edition, 1914, Letter XIX and reply, esp. pp. 209 ff; *Histoire de la Peinture en Italie*, same edition, 1924, I, 133. Cf. H. Delacroix's *Psychologie de Stendhal*, 1918, pp. 213 ff.

¹⁵ See his *Journal*, under 24 January 1824, after reading Stendhal on Rossini.

¹⁶ *Journal*, 1926, I, 47.

¹⁷ "Variations du beau," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 July 1857. Cf. his "Questions sur le Beau, Id. 15 July 1854.

¹⁸ 1834, no date. *Journal*, I, 194. It should not be forgotten that as Delacroix grew older, his ideas on many subjects changed. To take but one example, and that a very striking one, he said in May 1824 that he could paint only when his *esprit brouillon s'agitte, défasse, essaye de cent manieres, avant d'arriver au but dont le besoin me travaille dans chaque chose . . . Si je ne suis pas agité comme un serpent dans la main d'une pythoïsse, je suis froid; il faut le reconnaître et s'y soumettre. Tout ce que j'ai fait de bien a été fait ainsi.* But on April 7, 1849 he writes, *L'art n'est plus alors ce que croit le vulgaire, c'est-à-dire une sorte d'inspiration qui vient de je ne sais où, etc.*

influential than such almost unknown pronouncements must have been Daumier's caricatures, whose burdens during the forties were the ugliness of the nude human body, a subject dear to believers in ideal beauty, and the absurdity of the French classical drama. These two series of caricatures would have sufficed to make what the classicists called ideal beauty an object of ridicule.¹⁹ Given their date, these drawings could not have initiated the campaign against the ideal, but they were the strongest kind of propaganda in orienting the public mind against it.

No one in the nature of things could have told what ideal beauty was. And consequently in practice its pursuit meant the following of certain academic rules regarding subject matter and technique in vogue in the academies and exemplified by the established artists of the late eighteenth century. David apparently knew the rules in painting as Delille did in poetry. To be of one's time therefore meant in effect to write poetry which was not like that of Delille and to paint pictures which were not like those of David. It is a commonplace of the history of art that the subject matter of David was classical, in the sense of its being chosen from Greek and Roman mythology and history, and that his technique was classical in subordinating color to sculpturesque form and in calm and well-balanced compositions. Similar remarks could be made about literature: J-B. Rousseau, Lebrun, Bertin, Parny were polished and facile writers, but they lacked what Deschamps called inspiration and greatness. With their imitations of Greek and Latin pastorals, they avoided contemporary subjects unless they could present them in allegorical form. Such men painted pictures and wrote books which exemplified the rules.

It was the revolt against the rules — which in actual practice meant the departure from the habitual — which seemed to annoy the critics of romanticism the most. It was the defence of romantic departure from the rules, from "correctness," which occupied the

¹⁹ See especially the *Baigneurs* (1842), the *Physionomies tragico-classiques* (1841) and the *Physionomies tragiques* (1851)

last part of Deschamps's preface. The defence rested mainly upon the thesis that there simply was no correct way of writing which would be correct for every subject and, what is more important, for every man. *Autant d'hommes de talent, autant de styles.*²⁰ But again, Deschamps gives us no clue as to how he would discover a man of talent. A man without talent, however, is more simply defined; he is a man who writes *comme tout le monde*.

If artists of the romantic period wished to find originality, they could do it in two ways, by seeking new subject matters and by developing new techniques. Among the former were scenes from contemporary life, emphasis upon national tradition as distinguished from Pagan tradition, painting scenes from Christian rather than from Greek and Roman history and hence Gothic rather than Classical themes, emphasizing color more than line and form. Each of these items when developed became an artistic creed in the nineteenth century. Peasant life, urban life, the ugly, all provided material for the new artists. Since one must be original, one must experiment, and the artist quickly grew as convinced as the scientist of the truth of the proposition that all truth was not as yet discovered. That was perhaps one of the most fundamental changes in outlook which nineteenth century artists had to face. For when they believed in eternal beauty, it was simple enough to believe that there were eternal rules for achieving it. Just as the believers in eternal truth spent their time expounding it rather than in experimenting, so believers in eternal beauty spent theirs in reproducing it. But as soon as the notion gained ground that beauty was something which changed from epoch to epoch, there was no reason why the rules for achieving it should not change as rapidly.

The problem facing philosophers of art accordingly became that of determining what the modern epoch "really" was. It does not take deep reflection to see that every epoch is by nature complex. When one passes beyond the limitations of Australian bush-society — if the usual accounts of that society be true — when labor be-

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

comes specialized, different interests are bound to arise and the question of which interest or set of interests "really" typifies the society arises also. We are fortunately not called upon to discuss the validity of the answers; we need simply indicate them.

Such terms — as "pastoral," "military," "theocratic," "heroic," when applied to societies and epochs apparently mean — when interpreted most charitably — that the controlling forces in the societies and epochs so named could most fittingly be qualified by such adjectives. To call a society "pastoral" could no more mean that everyone in it was a shepherd than the term "heroic" could mean that everyone living in heroic society was a hero. For our purposes, it is important to know what the thinkers of the early nineteenth century, whether "romantic" or not, thought was the dominant character of their time and nothing more. Nor shall we list all the various opinions of that period, but confine ourselves to the most important examples.

As one goes through the literature the following points of view appear among the more prominent.

1. *Nineteenth century society was a return to the Catholic royalism of the Capetian dynasty.*

This was the opinion of the so-called Traditionalists, among the most prominent of whom was the Vicomte de Bonald. Authority, tradition, good taste, the principles of eternal beauty, were among their most frequently repeated phrases. This group was the nucleus of the famous Société des Bonnes Lettres, which was an organization of Parisian aristocracy, including at its start Chenedollé, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Charles Nodier, and Alfred de Vigny, though later most of these men became leaders of the aesthetic opposition.²¹ The affiliation of the anti-romanticists with royalism is best illustrated by two selections from articles which appeared in the *Annales de la littérature et des arts* (Vol. XX, 1825, p. 501).

Qu'est-ce que le romantique? C'est, il me semble, l'indépendance de

²¹ This is from the list of members for 1826. See Ch.-M. des Granges, *Le romantisme et la critique*, 1907, p. 197.

toutes les règles et autorités consacrées: c'est tontôt l'imitation exacte d'une nature brute et sans choix, tantôt l'expression recherchée d'une nature fantastique; c'est l'alliance de l'ignoble et du maniéré, du buffon et de l'ampoulé. En un mot, c'est l'absence de goût.²²

This in itself would not be an expression of royalism, but when it is coupled with the following, the intention becomes clearer.

Ecrivains royalistes, couers pleins de loyauté, pleins de flamme, espoir d'une littérature illustrée par des noms si fameux, gardez-vous de prendre un étendard différent du nôtre, quand nous combattons d'une même ardeur les doctrines impies, les fureurs révolutionnaires. Tout blasphème contre Racine ou Fénelon vous irrite, sans doute, autant qu'une diatribe contre Henri IV ou Louis XIV, car tout se lie dans les sentiments royalistes; ainsi que les éloquents auteurs du *Génie du Christianisme, de la Législation primitive* et de *l'Essai sur l'indifférence*, marchons au combat, précédés par les images de nos pères.²³

2. The nineteenth century was the reconciliation between the spirit of revolution and that of royalism, between authority and individual reason.

This was the point of view of Cousin and the eclectic school in general, the philosophy of the *juste milieu*. A contemporary of Cousin describes the early years of the Restoration in the following words.

Quel tableau que celui des années 1816 et 1817! l'ordonnance du 5 septembre, la chambre de salut contre la contre-révolution, la loi des élections, la loi de recrutement, la loi sur la presse; la tribune devenue, d'un premier élan, rivale de la tribune anglaise, d'une splendeur de parole dégagée du théâtral de la révolution, mais gardant l'essor vers le beau en même temps que vers le vrai; tous les partis armés de foi, de verve et d'éloquence, toutes les plumes aiguës et alertes au combat; la *Minerve* libérale, le *Conservateur* royaliste, les *Archives* doctrinaires; et au-dessous, je ne sais combien de journaux inexpérimentés, mais sincères quoi qu'on en ait dit; ici, de bonapartistes de la veille, se réveillant malgré eux libéraux par nécessité de défaite et de défense d'abord, puis par reflexion et conviction acquise au combat; là, de royalistes, hier encore absolutistes, forcés aussi,

²² Quoted by Des Granges, *Op. cit.*, pp. 192 f. Cf. Alexis Dumesnil, *Histoire de l'esprit public en France depuis 1789*, 1840, p. 122 f.

²³ From the *Annales*, XIII, 1823, p. 415; quoted by Des Granges, *Op. cit.*, p. 206. Cf. Des Granges, pp. 187 ff, 194, 214, 225.

comme les vaincus qu'ils foulaient aux pieds, de se réfugier dans la liberté, leur grand tribun en tête qui leur jetait dans la *Monarchie selon la Charte* un livre de Montesquieu!²⁴

This picture of a society in which the most extreme elements were brought together in a kind of legal freedom may have been composed after reflection rather than upon observation. But in any event it presents one with the kind of picture which the leader of the Eclectics, Victor Cousin, would have admired. For above all things he stood for something which he called "reconciliation" and he no doubt honestly believed that reconciliation was a synthesis of antithetical characters. It was in that spirit that the *Globe*, which tried to be fair to all parties, insisted that romanticism was not the name of a *genre* and that the romanticists were as much in disagreement over their policies as the classicists.²⁵ Cousin thought that his philosophy was an expression of the same spirit as that introduced into literature by Chateaubriand and Mme de Stael,²⁶ and both Stendhal and Deschamps wrote of him as the spokesman of their contemporaries.

But for Cousin ideal beauty was far from being an illusion. It was in fact the one reality, identical in substance with the true and the good. All the mysticism of Plotinus and Schelling was expressed in his enthusiasm for the ideal. And when he came to appreciate works of art, we find him a fervent admirer of the French seventeenth century. Corneille, Racine, Boileau, Lesueur, Poussin, Claude, in fact all the great and solemn masters of the age of Louis XIV. There was little here upon which a new aesthetics could be founded.

3. *The nineteenth century was the age of positivistic science, observation of facts, not explanation of causes, industrial organization, the domination of society by economic forces.*

This was in particular the theory of Comte, but was of course

²⁴ Paul Dubois, *Cousin, Jouffroy, Damiron, Souvenirs*, 1902, pp. 40 ff.

²⁵ See *Du Romantique* signed "O", [Duvergier de Hauranne?] in the *Globe* of March 24, 1825, p. 423.

²⁶ *Du Vrai, du Beau, du Bien*, iii.

²⁷ Stendhal in *Racine et Shakespeare*, ch. vii; Deschamps in *Op. cit.* p. 25.

shared in varying degrees by Saint-Simon and Proudhon. Comte believed that when the nineteenth century really fulfilled itself, there would be a ruling class which would direct the work of artists as well as of scientists. The true aim of art for Comte was "to charm and ameliorate humanity,"²⁸ and that aim could only be accomplished by strengthening the social order. When one asked who would determine what strengthened and what weakened the social order, the answer was clearly the political rulers of society.

Whatever French artists may have thought about the purpose of their art, it is obvious that the new subject matters were as they would have been if the artists had believed in the doctrines of Comte. Daumier is a special case, since his craft was that of a caricaturist and his political beliefs were of the opposition. But even in artists who had no political bias as artists, men like the members of the Barbizon School, there was a turning away from scenes of court life, from Pagan history and mythology, from illustration to classical drama. One is not a positivist for painting peasants, but when artists began to paint peasants seriously, without idealization, it became possible for positivists to see their work as the glorification of labor. So when Courbet later painted nudes which did not illustrate the canon of human proportion as taught in the academies, it was possible for Proudhon to interpret them as satires of the bourgeoisie, "deformed by fat and rich living."²⁹ It should be understood by now that no work of art is univalent. But of all works of art, pictures, because of their having usually a subject matter which may be interpreted either literally or figuratively, are most likely to be invested with a multiplicity of values. Thus regardless of what Courbet may have intended to put into his *Baigneuses*, Proudhon found in it a social document, a commentary on a social class with a "message" which he was undoubtedly free to interpret as he would. And it was largely through the interpretation of nineteenth century

²⁸ *Politique positive*, Vol. I, p. 280. Cf. *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period*, pp. 296 ff.

²⁹ *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, 1865, p. 287.

paintings, and not through the subject matters as seen by angels removed from space and time, that an artist became of his time.

It is clear that the nineteenth century was not only an industrial century, it was also a century of constitutional monarchy and of Catholic royalism. It was a century of democratic progress, a century of imperialistic exploitation, a century of scientific exploration, in fact, a century of whatever a commentator felt to be its most important innovation — and there was a large choice. For no time is simple, but all would appear to be highly complex tissues of conflicting and harmonious tendencies. In the history of ideas and of institutions one finds three phenomena at all times; the retention of certain traditions, the revival — deliberate or accidental, conscious or unconscious — of antiquity, the development of what was merely inchoate in previous times. Thus in the early nineteenth century in France, one finds the retention of French classical traditions in art, as in Ingres and his school, the revival of the Gothic, and the development of what might be called the "sentimentalism" of Rousseau. No one of these details is the complete picture of the time — nor are all three — but it is precisely in the peculiar combination of various — and sometimes conflicting — tendencies that the time is characterized.

It is for that reason that when one goes back to the twenties and thirties of the last century and tries to select the Frenchmen who most perfectly symbolize the romantic movement for us, one thinks of Delacroix, Hugo, Berlioz, and possibly Viollet-le-Duc. Yet if we read the journals of these men we find that their respect for one another was frequently very slight. Delacroix loathed the music of Berlioz (who in turn loathed that of Rossini). He particularly admired the paintings of Meissonier, of whom he said, "Après tout, de nous tous, c'est lui qui est le plus sûr de vivre."³⁰ Yet no one would think to-day of classifying Meissonier in the same group with Géricault and Delacroix. His opinion of Hugo was as low as

³⁰ Quoted by Baudelaire in his famous letter on Delacroix in the *Opinion Nationale*. See his *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. F.-F. Gautier, Vol. IV (*l'Art Romantique*), 1923, p. 194.

Hugo's opinion of him.³¹ And the only time Viollet-le-Duc is mentioned in his journal is when he includes him in a list of guests at a dinner party (July 31, 1855). Delacroix was not the whole romantic movement, to be sure, nor can he speak for all, but a student would find that his attitude towards his fellow romantics is not unusual.

To be of one's time is a task which one fulfills through the fatality of one's dates. Artists make their time as other people do and the notion that there is a time external to the events which take place in it requires but a little reflection to be discredited. What the aestheticians of the early nineteenth century wanted was some justification for being different from their predecessors. Why they should have wanted to be different is not explained by their dates alone; all artists—as the history of art shows—have been different from their predecessors. But in the early nineteenth century the whole structure of French society, political as well as ideological, had changed, and men no doubt felt uneasy in repeating ideas and making gestures which seemed more appropriate to a previous society. The break between revolutionary France and royalist France was one which was profoundly felt in all ranks of society and in all fields of human activity. Times had not only changed but everyone was aware of the changes that had taken place. The Restoration was an attempt to return to the age of Louis XIV, as the Empire was an attempt to return to that of Augustus Caesar. Both attempts now seem like complete failures. But the writers and other artists of that period saw the difference between their epoch and previous epochs. That does not mean that they were able either to understand or even to define in what the difference lay. Nor need we, reading their books and looking at their pictures, feel that we see in them what their creators saw.

The Johns Hopkins University.

³¹ See Delacroix's *Journal*, ed. cit., I. 210 and note.

The System of the Arts

BY

HELMUT KUHN

THERE are countless ways of arranging the books of a library, and as the needs of the readers are variegated and subject to change, it will ever remain impossible to establish an ideal order. Similarly the order in which an author of a book on aesthetics treats the various arts is a matter of convenience, and insofar the problem of the preferable order is devoid of theoretical interest. However, the thinkers past and present who worked out a "system of the arts" believed something more important was at stake than an expedient arrangement for purposes of exposition. Not seldom the principle of systematization was the corner-stone of their doctrine. It stood, within the field of aesthetics, for the universal problem of the relationship between the One and the Many. The theory answers the question: what is art? If the answer is to convey a fruitful notion of the nature of art, it must imply the diversification of the simple essence into that variety of manifestations as which art presents itself. The universal Form or genus "art" must unfold into its species such as music, painting, dancing, and the like. Far from being a merely practical device the system articulates the universal idea. It is the body of the idea of "art as such," and the latter, deprived of its systematic ramification into concreteness, would fade away into a useless abstraction.

An example for the inter-relatedness of basic definition and

system is found in Schleiermacher, whose theory shows more good sense and honest observation than the bolder constructions of most of his fellow idealists. First, a provisional concept of art as expression leads us to review the "expressionist" arts: music, dancing, acting. A second approach brings out image-making as another constituent manifested by the figurative arts. A final step of the argument reveals the ultimate unity of expression and imaginative construction typified by poetry. Once the synthesis is achieved, it may be supplemented by analysis. Instead of ascending to the ultimate unity, we may take our departure from this unity and point out how a polarity inherent in it results in a bipartition of the realm of art, with the expressionist arts as a counterpart to the image-making or figurative arts, and with poetry in the superior position of a mediator.

This outline of a natural system of the arts, plausible though it may seem, does not stand the test of a closer examination. Its basic disjunction was gained from a duality in the mental processes. Emotive impulse issuing in gestures was set over against a play of ideas culminating in the formation of images. But the artistic urge must materialize within temporal-spatial reality, and in order to become creative it needs the contact with some malleable material. Thus alternative systems, determined by the structure of the outer world, offer themselves, one of the possible divisions being that between the arts of succession and the arts of simultaneity. The co-existence of these and other competing principles of systematization aroused the suspicion that each derived from a partial aspect of art rather than from its essence; while the bold attempts to find the system of the universe duplicated in the system of the arts, brilliant fire-works of the speculative imagination, gave no lasting clarity. The endless rivalry of the systems finally discredited the enterprise of systematization, and there was a general feeling of relief when Croce suggested that it be deposited on the junk-heap of time-honored misunderstandings. The problem, once a stimulant of philosophical exertions, was now decried as futile. Art, Croce

tells us, is one, the unity of intuition and expression; and both the actual intuitions and the media of expression are many. The many intuitions and the many media give rise to an unlimited plurality of works. There is no way of telling how many or of what kind except by collection and enumeration. New media may be discovered and with them new types of expression, old ones may vanish. The system, object of obstinate research, simply does not exist. In this view, the One, the essence of art, does not organize its manifold materializations but it is merely instanced by an infinite and unpredictable variety of cases. The so-called genera are no more than names for groups of such cases collected and arranged for the sake of convenience.

There is, however, some stirring of the bones in the Crocean graveyard. We still hear people talk about the laws of pictorial representation and their violation or fulfillment by individual works. It still happens that the student of the history of literature or painting or architecture is struck by the vitality and presistence of generic rules handed down through centuries of continuous tradition; and the relation and interaction between the arts still offers remarks too interesting to be dismissed as irrelevant to the main purpose of aesthetics. Considering this the idea occurs that perhaps the problem of a system grew cloying and insipid only because it was treated as something apart from the conjunction and mutual intercourse of the arts in actual life. If the logical coördination of the arts were to reflect their actual coöperation, the concept of a natural system would appear less presumptuous and more concrete. With this idea in mind a reconsideration of the matter may be attempted.

To obtain knowledge of any object we must, first of all, see it within its appropriate context. The student of the nature of battles must study battles as occurrences in a war; the analyst of generation must view the generative processes as a part of the life-process. Defining what battle, what generation means is the same as to determine the locus or function of a battle within the total phenomenon "war," or of generation within the total process of life. In like

manner art presents itself within its natural horizon, and as determined by this horizon. And no theory should be allowed to mutilate this concomitant halo or "field of discovery" for the sake of methodical simplicity, or in order to assimilate aesthetics to a procedure successfully employed elsewhere. Sociological aesthetics, for example, or the mathematical analysis of beauty lay themselves open to the charge of curtailing the experience in which their object is given.

To denote the horizon of art no better and less vague term offers itself than that of "human life," and the place occupied by art in life may tentatively be determined as "festival." It is in the nature of art to celebrate; and this definition of its nature simultaneously defines the role assigned to it within the totality of life. That such location could provide a principle for the articulation of the whole realm of art may seem at least not improbable. As contributors to the festival the arts engage in a coöperative effort and become members of a working community. They join and coalesce into a living, organized unity, and yet does each one of them retain its unique character. They adapt themselves to this comprehensive pattern not at the bidding of a purpose foreign to art but following an innate bent. And even after the public and institutional forms of celebration have disintegrated, as it is the case in our own civilization, the potentiality of such collaboration survives in the arts and determines their mutual relations.

In order to develop the meaning of these assertions, it may be well to answer some objections which will present themselves at this juncture. (1) The thesis "art is discovered within the horizon of human life" may seem meaningless because of its generality. Any object of knowledge, and not only art, is discoverable "within human life." (2) The idea that "the festival is the locus of art in life," implying a conception of art as a social phenomenon, seems subject to the limitations and one-sidedness of all sociological aesthetics. (3) The suggested view may seem either a wilful innovation little supported by traditional aesthetics; or, even worse, a resurrection of

the thoroughly discredited romantic dream of the "total art-work" encompassing and fusing all arts.

(1) "Art is discovered in the horizon of human life." As experience, and that means human experience, is the sole source of our knowledge, all objects of knowledge may be said to offer themselves "in the horizon of human life." This is correct with reference to the starting-point of the process of knowledge, but it does not apply to the process itself. Mathematics, physics, sociology — they all start out from that characteristic occurrence in human life which may be described as "the contact of the intelligent mind with all kinds of objects." They then subject the original datum to a process of elimination and stylization under the guidance of a conceptual ideal — the ideal of spatial and numerical relations in mathematics, the ideal of a causal explanation of qualitative change in terms of quantity in physics, the ideal of a universal pattern determining human relations in sociology. The findings of these sciences are considered true only if the outcome of the idealizing process stands in a clearly defined relation to the original datum. The idealization that yields knowledge is not creation or addition, nor is it a mere sifting out of the relevant. It is explication. The idealized abbreviation of reality must be found in, and developed out of, experience.

This general scheme of the cognitive process applies to aesthetics with one important qualification. The remark that the physicist analyses reality as only a physicist sees it, would hardly be taken as an objection; but a similar observation regarding the student of art would. What is the reason for this discrimination? The cognitive idealization, in the latter case, must not issue in a specialized outlook on the part of the investigator. He has to view art as an intelligent lover of art, his rational discernment and his aesthetic sensibility working in unison. The process of idealizing abstraction must preserve the unabridged breadth of the original experience. Instead of narrowing down the field of analysis to, say, the world of quantitative relations or social events, we must visualize the aesthetic object in the light of a total vision of life. The idealizing intuition fasten-

ing on the characteristic features of art as such must be regulated by the "contuition" of the ambit in which it belongs. Thus the quest of the nature of art is interlaced with that of the nature of human life. In other words, aesthetics is a philosophical study. This, and not a meaningless truism, is expressed by the assertion that the appropriate horizon of art is human life. And the verdict to be passed on mathematical or sociological aesthetics will be that they restrict the horizon of their datum and thus do violence to the experience which they ought to elucidate.

(2) "The festival is the locus of art in life." This seems a sociological proposition and as such obnoxious to the criticism just suggested. But "festival" or "celebration" is not primarily or solely a sociological notion. An impressive array of anthropological and sociological facts might indeed be adduced to bear out our point. There are above all the well known facts of primitive life, the *sacer ludus* from which drama sprang, and the ritual or magic significance of nearly all those products which, by a later reflection, were combined under the modern term "art." We might comment on mediæval art, employed as *ancilla theologiae*, building and adorning the places of worship, making devotion audible and visible, punctuating with beauty the ecclesiastic rhythm of day and year; and the remark will naturally come that the history of other religions offers a similar spectacle. To this might be added abundant instances of worldly power solemnizing itself by an artistic display, from the athletic victories of kings and noblemen celebrated by Pindar down to the triumphal procession of Francesco Sforza for which Leonardo da Vinci had to set the stage; and the unavailing attempts of modern dictators to immortalize their mock-grandeur by artistic monuments may be cited as a case in point. Indubitably these facts are relevant; but by themselves they do not afford a basis for our argument. No proof is needed to show that festivals, worldly and religious, in the Western and the Eastern world, in ancient and modern times, have always convoked the arts into a synod of glorification. But we are concerned with the meaning of this fact. Some will hold it to be

adventitious in respect to the essence of art. They will say that artists are liable to bow to the imperious demands of priests and suzerains and to cater to the yearning for fame of those in power, but that such demands and such pliability have nothing to do with art itself. This, however, is not the view advocated in these pages. The thesis that "the festival is the locus of art in life" is concerned with a topology of the mind. The locus must be discoverable in the individual life as well as in the life of a group. But what, it will be asked, is the precise meaning of "festival"?

The festival is life reaching its consummation. An anticipated perfection, latent in ordinary existence, for a brief while comes true. At the same time, the festival is not life but symbolizes or represents life — with strife as its motor-force, love as its culmination, and death as its limit — life in its entirety. Although real itself, it possesses a vicarious reality akin to semblance. This dual character of the festival, as actual perfection and vicarious representation of perfection, determines its temporal structure. It is emphatically present, life lived in terms of the *nunc stans*. The meaning of life, laboriously and fragmentarily to be worked out, under the guidance of an anticipating knowledge, into a continuous chain of actions, achieves instantaneous fulfillment by a supreme act of affirmation. This act is dependent upon the kind of life from which it grows and whose wealth or poverty it reflects. At the same time, it rises above the ineluctable limitations of this life to a greater intensity and freedom. Certainly the festivities familiar to us show at best faint vestiges of ecstatic splendour; and at their worst they counterfeit it by whipping despair into hysteria. But even the childish fumbling may exhibit the veiled features of the secretly coveted original. Even the banal week-end may catch a ray of the Great Sabbath with its retrospective sanctification: "And behold, it was very good."

The festival is not art but it is the natural locus and the matrix of art. It is something greater than any artistic creation but also inferior to it. It excels art insofar as it uses the separation of actor and spectator, producer and audience, and therewith the aesthetic

illusion, only as a stepping-stone. If it attains completion, each participant is both creator and looker-on; or, if the distinction is to be maintained, we must assume a superhuman spectator for whose benefit a human spectacle is offered. But this, of course, is admissible only as an expression *per analogiam*. On the other hand, the festival is inferior to the work of art because it is less perfectly controlled by the presiding intelligence. There is in it an ineradicable element of the mere "happening" as distinct from the planned work. Passing beyond artistic perfection and also lagging behind it, the festival provides the framework within which art may develop. Wherever a work of art is created, it feeds upon the surrounding atmosphere of celebration, intense as it was at the time when Inigo Jones' prodigious masquing devices revived the Dionysian pageantry in Renaissance costume, or rarified as in Sir Joshua Reynolds' century, when English ladies posed as ideal shepherdesses. And the work, in its turn, radiates a halo of celebration as its cognate element.

Celebrating a *fête* a community offers its own life to itself as a spectacle, and it takes a great idea of this life to make that possible. The same joyful affirmation which flowers out into the Great Feasts permeates the whole of life and creates those formalized ornamental patterns of behavior which we call ceremonies. Ceremonial conventions are to the festival as the casual bow to the genuflexion of the worshipper. There is in all ceremonies the same duplication of life as in the festival. To the doing of the thing is added an emphasis on the performance as such, to the act the display of the acting, and as a result there is the same reaching out toward art. The robe and periwig of the judge derive from the same historical origin and, what is more, they have much the same meaning as the actor's costume and periwig. We may spurn these old-fashioned trappings as useless. But then we should be consistent and not expect the court building to express the dignity of jurisdiction. Any office building will do. Slighting ceremonial display we inadvertently dispose of architecture as an art. At the peace

negotiations of Lelingham in 1384 John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, insisted on having the pictures of battlescenes removed from the walls of the meeting-place. Peace negotiations, he thought, should not be surrounded by pictures of war. We are free to call the Duke of Lancaster silly. But it seems that our modern contempt for significant display rather than the Duke's unartistic view of the matter is detrimental to art. It has contributed most toward driving art into its modern exile, the museum. Portraiture disintegrated after people forgot how to pose for a portrait. A similar observation holds good of art in general. The pomposity of modern mass celebrations may well seem intolerable to a sensitive mind: much noise and little to glory in. But once we have actually convinced ourselves that there is nothing in this life of ours to glory in, then no poetical glorification of this life will ever be forthcoming again. Art is not a *creatio ex nihilo*: it completes the doings of life. Its work must be anticipated in the festival and in that net-work of ceremonies which, radiating from the central celebrations, spreads over the entire expanse of human existence.

(3) The suspicion that our thesis wilfully relinquishes the traditional track of aesthetics may have been dissipated by the preceding remarks. As a matter of fact, this thesis suggests a return to a strain of thought from which aesthetics sprang. It is obviously conceived as a variation of the play-theory. In modern thought, this theory met the peculiar fate of first being lifted to the stratosphere of speculation by Schiller, and then sinking below human experience in Spencer's naturalistic version. Its original form, in Plato's *Laws*, is both concrete and worthy of its object. For Plato, the noblest play, more serious than any serious business, is "praise"; and the encomiastic play in which the life of the city culminates is a unity of poetry, music, and dancing. Through it man is revealed as "god's plaything": the movements of the human puppet, falling into a rhythmical pattern, exhibit a harmony which ordinarily is lost in the fume and fret of disorderly lives. The Platonic notion is toned down but preserved in Aristotle. The place of the *Poetic* in the

Aristotelian world is indicated by its relation to the treatment of leisure and play in the eighth book of the *Politica*.

The Platonic-Aristotelian view grew out of the observation of facts. One of the oldest extant reports on the Greek bard places him on the dancing-ground, the "common" of early Hellenic society. At the castle of King Alcinous, so we read in the *Odyssey*, a feast is celebrated, and Demodocus, at the king's behest, is going to sing a lay. "And there rose up the chosen public umpires, nine in all, and they made smooth the dancing-ground and wide the meeting place. And the herald brought the harp to Demodocus and he went into the middle; and on either side of him rose youths in their prime, skilled in dancing, and they beat the divine floor with their feet. Then he touched his harp and began sweetly to sing." Demodocus may have sung "the immortal gifts of the gods and the endurances of men," to put it in the words of the *Hymn to Apollo* (190); and we should remember that the words for "sing" in both ancient and modern languages are frequently used as synonymous with "laud" or "celebrate," such as the Greek *hymneisthai*, the Latin *cantare*, the Italian *lodare*, the German *besingen*. If we compare the performance at the court of Alcinous with a medieval Easter celebration in some French or German cathedral, we find rustic simplicity supplanted with the gorgeous display of Christian civilization at its height. The dancing-ground, smoothed by the nine umpires, has been transfigured into the choir created by an architect and his helpmates, the stone-masons, the sculptors, and the painters. The primeval coördination of dancing and song is differentiated into an infinitely richer scheme, and the object of celebration, the divine gifts and the endurances of men, has assumed a profounder meaning. But the basic pattern of the feast has not changed with the passage from paganism to Christianity. Adding then, as a third example, Wagner's *Festspiel*, the romantic dream of the total art-work come true, we at once perceive the gulf which separates the genuine festival from its romantic reconstruction. The theatre may, through a process of differentiation, grow out of the ritual, it may even find

its place in the temple or in the church. But the theatre, in its turn, cannot be re-translated into a place of worship. The center of the art-organism, as Wagner conceived it, is dislocated, and Nietzsche's verdict stamping him as a predominantly "histrionic genius" appears ultimately just. The festival, as the true locus of art, unites the various genres into an organism while setting strict limits between them. These limits change with the degree of differentiation reached at a given moment of history. Wagner's experiment, however, tended toward a fusion of differentiated forms. It is historically associated with the attempts at a poetry which is pure musical sound, a music which paints, a pictorial art that sings. These mutual encroachments indicate a profound disturbance. As the belief in that which gives art meaning crumbles, the artist desperately tries to believe in art.

The attempted location of art may shed some light on various aesthetic problems such as the problem of representation and of the relevance of the subject-matter in the representational arts; or on the old quarrel between "art for art's sake" and the upholders of the intrinsic usefulness of art. But what is its contribution towards solving our present problem of the "system of the arts"?

Our topological thesis does not lead to any classification, though perhaps to the concrete facts which underly the divers attempts at classification. It makes us visualize the general type of a situation in which the arts actually coöperate, exhibiting mutual affinities and polarities in a working community. There are innumerable instances of this typical situation. Its features, worn thin and hardly recognizable in our own time, stand out in bold relief in earlier periods, for a last time in the Baroque civilization. Omitting the more casual traits we arrive at the following model. The core of the festival is "drama" in the original sense of the word, action, re-enactment of the basic theme of our actual life indicated by the polar terms of happiness and misery. The periphery is delimited by wall and roof, the artificial universe which architecture supplies. In an intermediate zone, we find the works of sculpture and painting with their dual

relation. As representations they are related to the drama in the center which they reflect; and at the same time, as informed matter, they belong to the artificial world created by the architect. They are the surface of the wall or the ceiling, the column shaped into human or animal form. The whole of center, periphery, and middle sphere is life and world lived again, re-enacted in the ecstatic transfiguration of the *ludus sacer*, the Feast. And this "second world," the true and only microcosm, becomes rhythm and sound in music, world translated into an acoustic phenomenon, pervading the whole from center to periphery.

This scheme of the world of the arts, based on a comprehensive experience rather than on logical artifices, dispenses with the crude division into representational and non-representational arts. Recognizing an element of representation as ubiquitous, it makes it possible to distinguish between types of representation and to group these types in an ascending scale, from the building which symbolizes the cosmic framework of human existence to the actor who repeats life in its own medium. The proposed scheme dispenses likewise with the bisection into temporal and spatial arts, a cheap distinction with no bearing on the mode of existence peculiar to the various arts. Instead it suggests a subtler differentiation. All arts join in the effort of immortalizing the moment, but each one achieves the common end in its own temporal mode. Architecture endeavors to impose upon life the eternal recurrence of the sanctified order for which it sets the lasting framework. It seems incredible that no tragic chorus should traverse any more the orchestra of the Greek theatre; and for Horace the vestal virgin scaling the steps of the Capitol for her diurnal sacrifice was the symbol of permanence. The building stands in stolid calm as if hopelessly competing with the universe itself, as if expecting to harbour a human likeness of the alternation of the seasons and of day and night. On the other hand, those arts which, according to our symbolic construction, are close to the center, do not entrust their ecstatic presence to the doubtful durability of stone or pigment. They pay for the closeness to life by

sharing in the transience of life. But they participate also in that possibility of repetition which is characteristic of human life and which we denote by the term "tradition." Again there is no break, no heterogeneity, but continuous transition from center to periphery. The time-borne movement of the dancer partakes of a timeless rhythmical pattern. And architecture, seemingly the negation of time, reflects the human gesture which comes and goes in an instant.

The arts largely subsist outside their working community, and our thesis would be worthless if it did not apply to their emancipated condition. Now this emancipation must not be understood as an emancipation from the festival as the locus of art (this we consider impossible), but from the organized and externalized form of the festival. Isolated and thrown upon their own resources, the arts undergo peculiar changes which should not be hastily branded as degeneration. Gain and loss are inextricably interwoven. First it must be borne in mind that such isolation is never absolute and irrevocable. An example is T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. The master of a highly individualistic art, called upon to write a play for a celebration in Canterbury Cathedral, developed a new verse rhythm which carried him beyond the limitations of his earlier poetry. In the second place, the various arts, compelled to carry on their work single-handed, have a tendency to make up for the loss by contriving fresh modes of expression. This may result in an encroachment on foreign spheres, as it was the case with program music and the mimetic dance; but the same tendency may also become an incentive to the explorer of undiscovered potentialities. Especially poetry knew how to thrive on the dearth and to expand its inner kingdom after its verses had ceased to be on the lips and in the ears of the people thronging to its feasts. The poet, leaving the public revelries to Punch and the amusement managers, and officiating instead at the solitary celebrations of the soul, began to speak the esoteric language of the monologue. But again we must remember that the distinction between the "inner" and the "public" celebration is relative. Absolute solitude would not mean a novel

elevation and a purer language but despair and numbness of the soul.

The ability to reproduce the lost cosmos of the festival in their own medium is not equally distributed among the arts. It is least given to architecture, the most institutional of all arts. Churches cannot be built when the service is dead. In this respect, poetry is the counterpart to architecture. It is unsurpassed in its capacity for rearranging on its own limited ground the aesthetic microcosm, the working community of the arts. It is able to invent a music not heard by human ears, to imagine and evoke dances and pictures after these arts have fallen into decrepitude, and it may even devise an imaginative substitute for the jubilant crowd, though the actual crowd may long have turned from the artist to the showman. One thing poetry cannot invent, but it must pre-exist as a tangible reality, as a firm ground to stand upon. This is the object of celebration, that which is affirmed in the act of affirmation as which we regard the festival. Poetry, the least institutional of all arts, i.e. the one least dependent on an organized celebration, cannot exist without thus being linked to an ultimate purpose beyond all festivals and rendering festivals possible. The meaning of our thesis concerning the "locus of art in life" is best illustrated by the relation of the Doer and the Sayer, as Emerson expressed it; of the one who does the deed and the other who glorifies it in words. But the two parts may well be played by the same actor. An anthropologist tells us of an Eskimo who, while hunting, suddenly found himself on a piece of ice drifting out into the sea, and a day passed before he was rescued. In the meantime, he made a song, a queer hymn on the spirit which gave him courage — lines deriding the cold ice, the insidious water, and his own poor shivering limbs. Dante, when he wrote his poem in praise of "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars," certainly achieved a greater work of art; but essentially he did the same thing that was done by the Eskimo. And all plays, tunes, statues, pictures, and temples of the world can do nothing else.

University of North Carolina.

The Relativity of Form In Art

BY

ANDREUS USHENKO

A COMPLETE unity of form and content, which is the only definition of beauty I understand, is essentially a quality of the aesthetic experience. By form I mean the order of articulation, i.e. of the combination of elements in a work of art; accordingly, the components of form have the function of relating the elements to one another. The content then consists of elements which are terms in the relations of the form. My contention is that in an experience of beauty the elements of content are felt to be so intensely relevant to one another as to become in effect relating agencies, while relations are directly given as if they were qualities; which means that it is impossible to tell "what" the work of art expresses from "how" the expression is achieved.¹

It may seem senseless to speak of form and content as if they were two and yet assert that they are indistinguishable, or one and

¹ My definition, although more specific, is in essential agreement with Dewey's statement that beauty is "the total esthetic quality of an experience" (*Art as Experience*, p. 130). While I prefer to say that beauty qualifies masterpieces only and treat inferior works of art as only approximating to beauty to the extent to which they approach integration of form and content. I have no objection against expressing nearly the same by saying that there are degrees of beauty and that works of different aesthetic quality show beauty in different degree. To those who argue that even an inferior work of art has a unified form and content because its elements must have some relevance, however trivial, to one another, I should reply that in aesthetic experience trivial relevance is no relevance at all. During a conversation on play-writing Chekhov once remarked that if a shot-gun on the wall was mentioned in the first act, shooting must be done at least by the last act. The gun which is left to hang unused is an element of content that remains unintegrated into the total form.

the same thing. And even if I point out, as I must, that the average work of art is not beautiful, but an object of aesthetic disintegration in which form and content fall apart, the embarrassment still remains, since it is evident that the distinguishable form and content of an inferior work are not identical with either the form or content of a masterpiece.¹ Furthermore, there is no denying that through aesthetic criticism, for example, by reading Wölfflin on the painting of the Renaissance, much can be learned about structure or form in a great art. These difficulties disappear if, what I believe is true, form in art is relative (and from now on I shall mean by art masterpieces only). There is no absolute distinction between form and content. This is to say that elements of content can also function, relatively to some standpoints of critical analysis, as relations and vice versa. For there are alternative orders in a work of art, any of which can be chosen as the form at the expense of all others. However the relativity of form is not unrestricted. Alternative orders are usually of unequal value, and the predominant order is the one to be called form rather than the others, unless in their interplay they all become "sublimated" in a new kind of articulation. Such an emergent articulation in aesthetic experience would, indeed, be the Form, to be distinguished by a capital "F," but as a final integration of orders, that relatively to one another take their parts of form or content, it has already been introduced under the name of beauty.

In order to substantiate and illustrate my thesis I shall make use of three simple experiments in the field of general perception. The first embodies "the principle of perceptual transformation." If you watch a stranger's profile and then steal a glance at his full-face, you will probably be startled to realize that you had expected to see a different pattern. As you come gradually to learn "the form" of his face, you find that it is neither the profile, nor the full-face, nor an appearance from any other angle, but a transformation of all of

¹ By a work of art I mean throughout not the physical object but the aesthetic experience which it causes in a qualified observer.

them into something which, perhaps, is not a geometrical shape at all. Thus the structure of a presentation is the effect of several or many experiences. The second kind of experiment illustrates "the principle of perceptual shifting" in accordance with which there is transition from one order of forms to another; both orders generated by the same source, yet mutually exclusive. Experiments of this nature are well known from popular texts in psychology: a broken line which is seen now as a staircase and then as an overhanging ceiling or a plane drawing of a cube that appears to face you with a side that recedes to the background after another side comes to the fore. The experiments demonstrate that the relativity of perceptual form is sometimes a matter of alternative perspectives, i.e., of different distributions of elements in the "foreground-background" opposition. Unlike this and the preceding kind of experiment, the third kind, which introduces "the principle of multiple forms," consists of a simultaneous presence of two or more orders. Visualize three coloured spots in a row, red, yellow, and orange, in this order. Although in your visual space yellow will be between red and orange, a different order of betweenness, that of hues, in which orange is between red and yellow, will be felt simultaneously with the other. Now if you want to describe the form of your percept you may either specify the order in space or the order of hues, or else you will refuse to be satisfied with exclusive forms because you feel that somehow both orders are in coordination. Let the two orders be graphically represented, each along a different axis of a plane coordinate system, by dots in immediate succession. Let the coordinates of the horizontal dots be $(1, 0)$, $(2, 0)$, and $(3, 0)$ and of the vertical dots $(0, 1)$, $(0, 2)$, and $(0, 3)$. Then one may say that the axis of hues symbolizes form, while the axis of space stands for content, because the dots of space would have fused into a solid line if they were not punctuated into distinctness by different colours. Colour gives articulation. On the other hand, red would gradually shade off into orange, and orange into yellow, if it were not for the articulation of contrast given by the spatial

rearrangement of the hues. From this point of view, the roles are reversed and the symbol of form is the axis of space-order. But the fact that both axes are indispensable to one another in their effects of articulation means that in some sense the two orders coincide or are integrated. We can represent their integration, in a two-dimensional graph, by means of a curve which connects three points with the respective coordinates (1, 1), (2, 3), and (3, 2). The unity of form and content, or the curve, requires a medium which is more complex or of a higher dimension than that of either form or content.

The three experiments, while introducing different principles, serve the one purpose of demonstrating the relativity of form by showing that there is a mutual involvement of disposition and actuality in perception. Actuality is taken here not only in the sense of specific and exclusive data, but also as something either seen or touched or perceived through definite bodily channel. Disposition is to be understood as a strain which is felt with a specific direction and force, but not as an explicit sense-datum. As I look at the figure "∧," I see it in the shape of a triangle, but while its sides are explicit and actual, the base is felt as a disposition. The framework of actuality, explicit shapes, beats, and rhythms, is seldom exhaustive of perceptual form. As I have pointed out, the result of looking at a thing from different angles is not a purely geometrical shape; different actual perspectives may be built upon the same disposition-source; and, finally, actual rearrangements of hues in space cannot break the feeling of their unique intrinsic order, the feeling, that is, of a standard disposition.¹ The two axes required for a graph of the orders of space and hues symbolize the two dimensions of actuality and disposition. And in analyzing perception one can identify form with the order of actuality or, alternatively, with the order of disposition or else try an integration of the two. This is the relativity of perceptual form.

¹ Cf. my "Aesthetic Immediacy," *The Journal of Philosophy*, January, 1941.

The principles which I have found in simple cases of general perception are even more significant in a complex experience of art. The principle of transformation is particularly important in the so-called temporal arts, such as music, where reverberations mould the quality of the emergent sounds. But in temporal arts transformation appears to be from one quality into another of the same kind, which supports the psychological theory of sensation modified by apperception. In visual observation, however, the psychological explanation fails when we remember the so-called experiment in the observation of a human face from different angles. If the sense-datum is a full-face and the apperception a profile, the two shapes cannot yield a third shape, because they are co-exclusive. The resultant form, since it cannot be an actual shape, must be in part dispositional: we see a face not as a rigid mask but dynamically, with incipient expressions and turns. It is true that Picasso in some of his pictures, the "Woman with Long Hair," for example, has attempted to join a full-face with a profile into a composite shape. But these pictures have only the value of reminding us that in life form is never perceived as an exclusive shape in a single perspective; intrinsically Picasso's composite faces are valueless because of being grotesque. They are grotesque because they miss the quality of disposition, which has been replaced by an unnatural combination of actuality.

Because aesthetic balance is most stable when the elements of a composition converge upon a single focal point, it is unlikely that the principle of shifting forms has been used except as a trick and in inferior works of art. The reader may remember a story called *The Monkey Hand*, where the pairing of events allows for two different interpretations: either every pair is depreciated as coincidence and one of the events is kept in the background, or the connection is attributed to a mysterious power which endows both events with significance. But, if not constitutive of a work of art, interchange between background and foreground is indispensable as a means of discernment of detail during the process of aesthetic

experience, in becoming familiar with the work of art, that is. We are familiar with the brown and green of gothic rocks encircled by streams and lakes in the background of the "Mona Lisa," because we have spent some time in studying the landscape during which we made it the foreground.

The principle of multiple form is the basis of aesthetic relativity. To illustrate its effect in the art of poetry I shall quote at length from Stevenson.¹

" . . . We have been accustomed to describe the heroic line as five iambic feet, and to be filled with pain and confusion whenever, as by the conscientious schoolboy, we have heard our own description put in practice.

'All night the dreàd less an gel ùn pursued,'²
goes the schoolboy; but though we close our ears, we cling to our definition, in spite of its proved and naked insufficiency. Mr. Jenkin was not so easily pleased, and readily discovered that the heroic line consists of four groups, or, if you prefer the phrase, contains four pauses:

'All night the dreadless angel unpursued.'
Four groups, each practically uttered as one word: the first, in this case, an iamb; the second, an amphibrachys; the third, a trochee; and the fourth, an amphimacer; and yet our schoolboy, with no other liberty but that of inflicting pain, had triumphantly scanned it as five iambs. Perceive, now, this fresh richness of intricacy in the web. . . . What had seemed to be one thing it now appears in two; and, like some puzzle in arithmetic, the verse is made at the same time to read in fives and to read in fours.

. . . Variety is what is sought; but if we destroys the original mould, one of the terms of this variety is lost, and we fall back on sameness. Thus, both as to the arithmetical measure of the verse, and the degree of regularity in scansion, we see the laws of prosody

¹ "On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature" (*Learning to Write*, pp. 209-13, Scribner's Sons, 1888).

² Milton.

to have one common purpose: to keep alive the opposition of two schemes simultaneously followed; to keep them notably apart, though still coincident; and to balance them with such judicial nicety before the reader, that neither shall be unperceived and neither signally prevail."

The only remark I wish to add is that the simultaneous presence of two schemes is less of a puzzle if we admit that while the line is being read with four pauses, the other scanning is only felt as a disposition, and that the actual reading does prevail, allowing one to treat the disposition as an element of content. The schoolboy's performance remains a memento of the relativity of the form-content distinction. But we need, further, to be satisfied that a disposition can take the part of form without ceasing to be disposition, in other words, that it can dominate actuality. Much evidence for this can be found in painting, and I shall quote again, this time from a recent essay by R. W. Church.¹ The passage is concerned with Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne."

"... the line of the shin of Ariadne's right leg carries over into the flow of the drapery of Bacchus. And the expression of this line is strengthened by the contrast in which it stands against the thrust of Ariadne's body, as well as against the lines of her drapery. This felt contrast brings Ariadne into relation with the right-hand side of the picture."

The line mentioned in this passage is not actually drawn, yet, as Mr. Church puts it, it "carries over . . .", it is undeniably felt as a specific and dynamic disposition. And since it overpowers the actual separation between the figures of Bacchus and Ariadne and brings into relation the two sides of the picture, we have here an example of a disposition which, in exercising control over actual figures and colours, has assumed the agency of form.

We are now in a position to understand the nature of art-criticism when it claims to deal with form. To the extent to which the claim is justified, there is a restriction upon the relativity of form. But it

¹ "An Essay on Critical Appreciation," p. 274. Allen and Unwin, 1938.

can be justified only when the critic has found and singled out the dominant features in a composition. And this accomplishment requires weighing dispositions against actuality and involves considerations far more complex than those which seem to establish the conventional distinction between form and content. Some intelligent critical comments, an occasional observation concerning the relative sizes of figures and objects in a painting for example, may seem to be based on the conventional notion of form, but only because the context of the analysis is disregarded. In discussing Leonardo's "Last Supper" Wölfflin writes:

"... Leonardo's table is far too small! If the covers are counted, we find that the required number could not possibly be seated. Leonardo wished to avoid the dispersal of the disciples down the long table, and the impressiveness thus given to the figures has such force that no one notices the want of room."¹

If Wölfflin had stated that the table is too small without adding qualifications which amount to a reversal of that judgment, he would have been observing what might be a defect from the standpoint of the conventional notion of form. But since the context shows that he mentions the size in order to emphasize that "no one notices the want of room," his point really is that the force of disposition, "the impressiveness thus given to the figures," counteracts the distortion of actuality. There would be a point in mentioning distortion of size for its own sake only in adverse criticism. And when Wölfflin tells us that in Raphael's "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" the boats are too small, we should take this as a censure because we can not help seeing that they are far too small.¹ This same picture, however, gives another opportunity of realizing that disposition can be stronger than actuality.

"With marvellous skill, the occupants of the boats are all brought into one great line, which rises by the rowers, mounts over the bending forms, finds its culminating point in the upright figure,

¹ *The Art of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 31. London, W. Heinemann.

¹ *The Art of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 111.

then suddenly sinks and finally rises once more in the figure of Christ. Everything tends towards Him, He gives the movement its object, and, although insignificant in mass and placed quite at the edge of the picture, His figure dominates all the others. No such composition has ever yet been seen.”²

The very center of the painting is a disposition since actually it is at the edge of the picture.

If the groupings which a critic notices in a work of art were of equal prominence with alternative groupings left unnoticed, art-criticism would be an unqualified expression of the relativity of form. Even then critical analysis would be important as an exercise in aesthetic discrimination. But when a critic discovers the predominant order of a composition he overcomes relativity. This means that guided by his sensitiveness to dispositions and in an effort to see his way through the complexity of a multi-dimensional structure, the critic has felt that articulation or pulse in the aesthetic experience which is the Form as the totality of content put in a definite order.

Princeton University.

² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Music in the Film: Notes for a Morphology

BY
PAOLO MILANO

IT is only with the varying relationships between the visuals of the modern sound-film and that part of its sound-track which we can recognize as music that these notes are concerned. At this time I purposely refrain from all judgments or appreciations of the greater or lesser aesthetic legitimacy of one form as compared with another. This latter undertaking requires a much fuller examination.

I shall, to begin with, exclude from my survey those other components of the sound-track — natural sounds (or noise) and words (spoken, sung, intoned, etc.) — which are, except in rare cases, linked naturalistically to the film's images, and present a different set of problems. It is perfectly just to argue that these elements not only can be treated "musically" but must exist in harmonious or dramatic relationship to the music of the combined sound-track; my formulation of music-image relationships does not exclude these other possibilities — its intention is to clear some of the confusion from around this part of the problem.

Excluded from these notes are also those musical films aimed only at the mechanical transference from existing theatre works (operas, operettas, musical comedies). What does concern us

explicitly are those films for which music has been composed, or those film translations *into terms of the cinema* of musical works.

It is generally recognized that the aesthetic outline of music in films was established in the period of the silent film and that all the potential forms of musical accompaniment were contained in the adjustments of the upright piano and the more calculated suitability of the orchestral scores in the larger theatres.

The point of view from which this grammar of music-film relationships has been conceived is that of the *dominant artistic language*. No one will deny that sound and image are two different media of expression, or artistic languages; but when they are combined into one medium — the sound-film — their aesthetic relation may be of three kinds: (A) *dominant visuals*, to which the musical matter depends, as comment or auxiliary; (B) *dominant aural*, in converse relation; (C) *an equal collaboration* of the two to unite in a composite and interdependent relation. It is simple to see that not quantity but creative intention establishes the correct placement of any film-music passage in these or any subsequent categories.

The lesser or greater subordination of the music with regard to the images might be represented as in the graph (*see page II*). Setting out from the extremity of maximum subordination of the musical contribution of the visual expression, we meet the first relationship to be considered:

1. *Neutral Music* — This term refers to music whose function is not aesthetic in any way, but rather “practical,” with a variety of practices: neutralizing real or imaginary embarrassment caused by silent projection, possible counteraction to auditorium noise — in other words present in, but not functioning *within* the film. A characteristic place for such a use of music is the “travelogue,” where the accompaniment often appears to have been chosen quite arbitrarily. The second type moves us a step closer to function.

2. *Casual Music* — Music with a natural, usually visible source, the choice of which music has been made almost accidentally, or without regard to it as music, i.e. brief musical passages casually

included in the plot of a film: a clock chiming the hour, an errand-boy whistling a tune, etc. In this type the expressive autonomy of the musical in reference to the visual medium is still not explicit.

3. *Music as rhythmic comment* — This music consciously functions as an aural mirror to some rhythmic visual pattern in the film, i.e. the “repeats” ad infinitum of a simple musical pattern accompanying the walking of a character, drawn upon every time this shot appears. This does not have the shape or structure of the next type.

4. *Illustrative Music* — This music is gauged to “follow” physical dramatic action within the images (a chase, with its changing speeds, for example) or, in its more purely descriptive phases, to harmonize with camera movement — as in music accompanying the fade-in of a wide landscape, or the camera’s inspection of a room’s content.

5. *Music as psychological comment* — Here music *characterizes* the visuals, either by underlining the dramatic situation or by expressing the feelings of a character. This is the most frequent use of music in films. Usually it is chained to realistic conventions totally void of poetry (the *rinforzando* of the approaching climax or the *smorzando* of melancholy or resignation), but in the hands of a talented and imaginative composer, it often achieves genuinely artistic and convincing effects.

In all these instances the aesthetic relation between the music and the image is that of dependence of the former on the latter: the film’s theme has determined the visuals and the score is planned only for their adornment. There have, however, been attempts, and sometime successful ones, to employ the two media in a different relationship altogether, in which the music contradicts the theme expressed by the images on the screen, evokes or creates other ideas, and so competes with the visual medium, and the two do not accumulate their effects as in the preceding cases but rather complement one another. An example: amidst the fury of a vehement fight shown silently on the screen, the music returns to the peaceful tune that the hero used to sing in the calm of his rustic home. Or

(the example is borrowed from Marc Blitzstein, cfr. note 2): a sleeping face and the wild music of a nightmare. We will call this type:

Counterpoint — We do not give any number to this, (if there were one it would be 3i, 4i, 5i), because the functions of the "counterpoint" are, *in quality*, similar to those of the preceding types, and equally psychological, illustrative or rhythmic. Their essential diversity becomes visible only from the viewpoint (which we have purposely selected) of the "dominant artistic language"; in the "counterpoint," of the two media — music and images — neither dominates, they operate on a level of *aesthetic equality*. At what extent this discord can be harmonized into an artistic unity, and with what frugality this contrapuntal device should be used if it is to succeed artistically, is a concrete aesthetic problem, and a problem of general psychology, which lies beyond the scope of these pages.¹

In "Counterpoint" the graph has reached its apex, in the climb of music from complete subordination to the image to complete equality on the plane of aesthetics that counterpoint represents. But in the development of the sound-film, dominance could logically be, and in many cases actually was moved from one element — the picture, to the other — the sound-track. So that, theoretically and practically, there are enough instances of this change of domination to carry us over and down an analogous and inverse graph: the stages of an ever-increasing subordination of the images to the music. All the types already examined (1 to 5) are here found in an inverse ratio, with exact correspondences to the first half of the

¹ Since we have adopted, in a very definite and limited meaning, the term "Counterpoint," we may mention here its commonly opposed term, "Parallelism." From the time when both were introduced, if we are not mistaken, by the Russian film-director V. Pudovkin until many recent treatments, they have lent themselves to considerable confusion. Pudovkin's distinction between "parallelism" and "counterpoint" (which by the way he proposed at the very beginning of the sound-film era), lies in the sounds' being (or not) simultaneously expressed with the images of the objects or persons to which they refer. This empirical criterion is, from the aesthetic viewpoint of the "dominant artistic language," both irrelevant and misleading. There is no place, in our tentative morphology, for the term "parallelism"; as for "counterpoint," we adopt this excellent term in a completely different acceptance.

graph. This would seem a method of classifying the multiple aesthetic forms to be found in films where music has been given an obviously dominating function, such as in Walt Disney's *Fantasia*.

5a. *Images of psychological comment*—An example: during the progress of a song, the camera searches the faces of the various listeners to register emotions that reflect those of the song.

4a. *Illustrative images*—An example: the dramatized shots of the instrumentalists in *Fantasia*.

3a. *Images as rhythmic comment*—The work of Disney and other cartoon-producers is full of this instance, a basic for their work, particularly in the *Silly Symphonies*, where constant lower register rhythms may be swinging spiders and constant upper register rhythms may be circling, dancing daisies. The most obvious instance can be found in the completely abstract moving shapes of Oskar Fischinger's studies (from which *Fantasia's* opening "Toccatà and Fugue" seems to derive).

2a. *Casual Images*—Chosen in the cutting room, perhaps, to make some link with the score; for example, a shot of a shepherd-boy playing bag-pipe coinciding with some part of a bag-pipe solo in the score.

1a. *Neutral Images*—Meaningless shots (of orchestral players and spectators) accompanying the score in an attempt to alleviate one's natural boredom at a filmed concert.²

And so with the return of each single form in an inverse proportion, the circle is sealed. We like to believe that the morphology

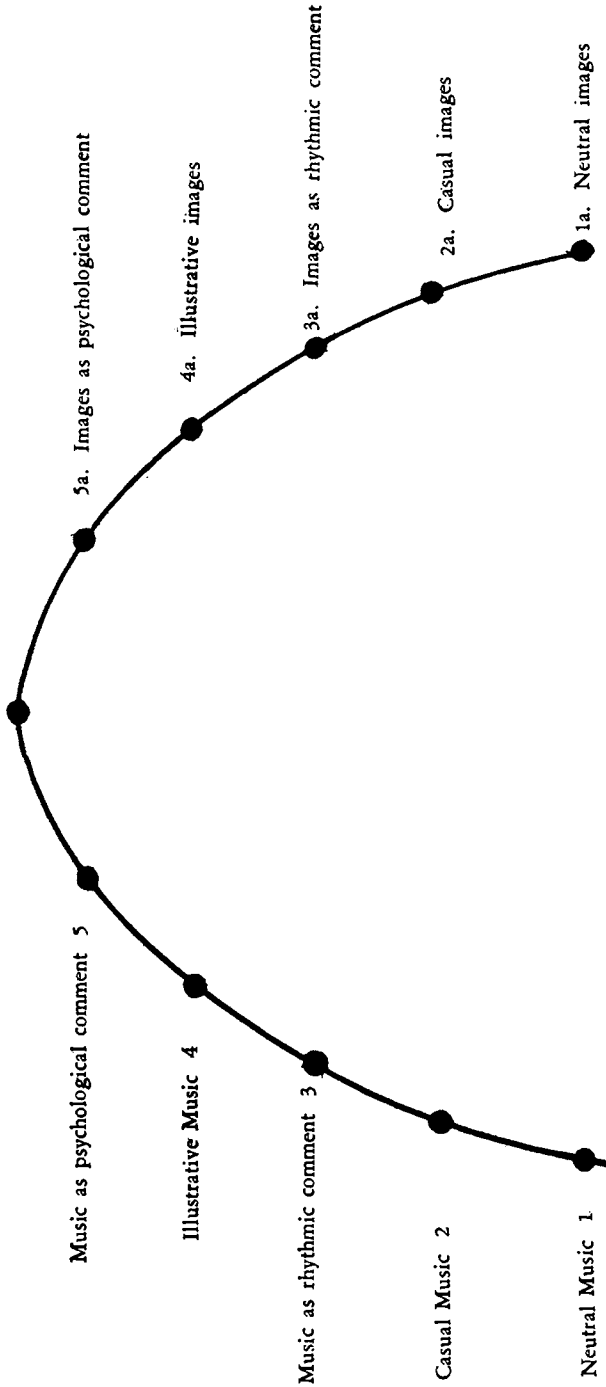
² It might be interesting to quote recent attempts at classification of this matter, contained in the answers of Marc Blitzstein and Karol Rathaus to a symposium sent out by the periodical *Films* (vol. I. no. 4.). Blitzstein, neglecting the viewpoint of the "dominant medium," confuses relationships which, to our eyes, ought to be clearly separated; but the division he advocates is certainly worthy of note: "While we are on this subject, I may as well advance my theory of four musical relationships to film: *harmony foreground*, (promoting action, * * * or as in a song sung to cover the escape of the singer's lover); *harmony background*, (following the action as in a chase); *counterpoint foreground*, (as in a sleeping face and the wild music of a nightmare); and *counterpoint background*, (in the "night-walk" of *Fight for Life*, where the young doctor's mental storm is not accompanied but heightened by Joe Sullivan's jazz)."

With analogous objections I shall quote from Karol Rathaus' answer to the same symposium: "There are four main objectives for film-music: to express, to associate, to illustrate and to superimpose."

we have here outlined may be sufficiently exhausting. In any case, no matter how useful such an exposition may appear, the essential problem is still the other, which we have purposely refrained even from touching upon: that of the legitimacy and artistic value of these various forms or types. In this field there still reigns the greatest confusion, both on the part of psychologists as well on that of aestheticians and artists. One way of facilitating the inquiry would be an approach by analogy. For centuries there has been in the history of music a problem which has many points of contact with that presented by the relationship between music and images in the film: the problem of the opera, of the relationship between music, dialogue and dramatic action in the music-drama. It seems to us that a comparison — not a haphazard but a close one — with the classical and modern solutions of the problem of the opera might provide valuable suggestions.

Queens College

[3i, 4i, 5i]
Counterpoint



II

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MUSIC AND IMAGES
IN THE FILM

See page 69

The Function and Value of Aesthetics

BY

VAN METER AMES

THE function and value of aesthetics may be shown by comparison with the other philosophic disciplines: the history of philosophy, metaphysics, the philosophy of science, logic, philosophy of religion, ethics, and theory of value. It may be fruitful to inquire what aesthetics has in common with these studies, what it has borrowed from and given to them, and wherein it is peculiar.

In the history of philosophy each man who has taken up aesthetics has approached it in terms of his thought about other things; while his aesthetic reflections have usually illuminated his other ideas and the common notions he shared with his time and place. This is particularly true of Plato. He did not single out the subject of aesthetics and fence it off. In discussing it he did not seem aware that he was talking of something different from politics, ethics, education, or metaphysics. His aesthetics was integral to his thought as a whole. To understand why he regarded art as an imitation of an imitation is to see how earnestly he took his doctrine of Ideas; how ironic he was about the artist's pretension to create in the sphere of sense. On the other hand, he recognized the power of art to lead youth toward reason before the rational capacity had developed. And when he regarded beauty as the divine shining through the

clearest sense, he declared his nostalgia for the eternal realm of perfection.

Aristotle's aesthetics also reveals predilection for an established order of types. Though concerned with the individual, through his biological training, he thought of art as overcoming the aberrations of the individual from the typical. For Aristotle it was the business of art to exhibit not the particulars in nature but the universals that nature strives to realize. His Platonic esteem for universal features of structure and order led him to subordinate character to plot in tragedy.

The perfection of the Parthenon, or of a Phidian statue, reflects the timeless present in which the Greeks wished to live — in which they did live in so far as they lacked our historical perspective, our eagerness for evolutionary and genetic considerations. The aesthetics of the Greeks culminated in the One of Plotinus because they were charmed by the universal, the finished. Individualistic and self-expressive as they were, they did not think of art as self-expression but as emulation of supra-individual reality.

The culture of the ancient Greeks is plain in their aesthetics; and the modern *Weltanschauung* is evident in the aesthetics of Kant and his successors. The sea-change of the centuries wore on the world-structure contemplated by the Greeks until, with Kant, it became a construction of the mind — a framework based on mental rather than divine forms. The Greeks accepted fate with its limitations upon individuals who, for all their personality, did not rebel against their lot without fear of nemesis. But Kant had the romantic yearning for infinite self-development and expression; he felt the urge to freedom which exploded in the French Revolution. After being caught in the net of science, from which the only apparent escape meant submission to the categorical imperative, he found the outlet of the aesthetic attitude. In *The Critique of Judgment*, as George H. Mead says, Kant described "a creative process that puts things together in such a fashion that we can enjoy them."² This

² *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 68.

is a far cry from Plato's condemnation of art for not reflecting the eternal verities; and from his praise of beauty as a flash of objective perfection.

For Kant the aesthetic experience was no longer covered by the concept of beauty which meant the balance, serenity and formal perfection associated by the Germans with Greek art. Because beauty seemed too prim to include the formless yearning aspects that aesthetic experience had taken on for the romantic Germans, Kant supplemented the concept of beauty with that of the sublime. Others have added the tragic, the comic, the ornamental, and even the ugly, as independent aesthetic categories. The reason why art and aesthetic experience outgrew the ancient limits of beauty is that since the Renaissance, the Reformation, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, man has become less an onlooker and more a participant in the universe. Having discovered himself and his powers, he has been increasingly interested in expressing himself and in making the world over to suit himself. Hence knowledge as power became attractive in contrast to knowledge as contemplation. Since modern man prides himself on the initiative and independence exercised in putting things together for his enjoyment, what appeals to him is not the formal perfection that has gone by the name of beauty, but rather what strikes him as evidence of personal energy and ingenuity, what is expressive of unique insight and power.

The demand for modern science arose from the wish to release personal initiative from tradition; and has been confirmed to such an extent that metaphysics has virtually been superseded by science in our outlook. The aesthetics of antiquity reflected the exaltation of the metaphysical background. Modern aesthetics shows interest in scientific method as the means of transforming the human foreground to enrich the life of the individual and of society.

Philosophy today is chiefly philosophy of science, in which the ancient world-view of repetition and return, through the recurrent manifestation of unchanging forms, must accommodate itself to

novelty. Aristotle could praise poetry as more philosophical than history, because poetry dealt with universal rather than with particular happenings. Now philosophy follows the focus of attention upon the individual (at least when he is not blotted out by the recent reversion to tribalism), valuing him as the point where novelty continually appears. Art especially glorifies the individual. But G. H. Mead has remarked that science too is a roll-call of proper names, being carried on by individuals using their own wits and senses in the search for something particular and exceptional by which to modify or reconstruct an accepted view. In such activity the most original scientist relies upon a cooperative body of work and seeks the corroboration of other investigators. The exception is sought in order to test laws for prediction and control. Yet Mead seems justified in stressing the importance of personal experience of the extraordinary instance in our science as in our newspapers and all our life, as well as in our art. This is a contrast to ancient concern with universal verities at the expense of the individual and novel; and may account for the difference between modern aesthetics and that of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. Certainly modern art production and appreciation are not centered in unchanging forms but in the emergence of experience so personal that only the name of a person could name it.

One function of aesthetics, then, is to point out the shift from ancient interest in the universal to modern interest in the particular, a shift paralleling the transition in the history of philosophy from metaphysics to what is predominantly philosophy of science. This transition may be illustrated by the difference between Plato's conception of beauty and Whitehead's conception of feeling. Whitehead wants to retain the Platonic element of timelessness, but regards "the actuality of what is temporal" as equally important. He says "We are here . . . applying Hume's principle that ideas of reflection are derived from actual facts." He says further: "Each actual entity is conceived as an act of experience arising out of data. It is a process of 'feeling' the many data, so as

to absorb them into the unity of one individual 'satisfaction.'"³ Whitehead's "feeling" is almost identical with Kant's "aesthetic judgment" as stated by Mead as "a creative process that puts things together in such a fashion that we can enjoy them." Thus Whitehead shows the transition from metaphysics to philosophy of science, in relation to aesthetics, because his basic concept of "feeling" is metaphysical, yet imbued with modern science and aesthetics.

Another function of aesthetics is to bring out the kinship between the artist and the scientist. At the stage of having gathered his data, when he is seeking cues for a hypothesis, the scientist is like the artist awaiting inspiration. And when the artist gets an inspiration he tries to work out its implications like the scientist developing his hypothesis, on the basis of "If S, then P." Once the palette has been chosen, or the mood of a story established, what follows is as logical though strange as what befell Alice in Wonderland. Though impossible it must seem probable, as Aristotle said, who was very modern in this respect.

Not only do the artist and scientist proceed similarly, but science may be considered aesthetically, as if it were art. Science may easily be seen to have the interest of a vast drama in its clash with opposing metaphysics and religion; and more especially in its internal conflict between old laws and new discoveries whereby science adds to what Santayana calls the landscape of nature and history. Science endows art with new subjects, new materials, new instruments, and a new sensibility; and also opens up the past. But for archaeology our imaginations as well as museums would be impoverished. Anthropology and history, in making familiar the art of people we had thought barbarous, have given us a new opportunity to become civilized.

Whether the science of experimental psychology has learned more about human nature from the complex experience of great works of art than it has contributed to the understanding of art by isolating elements of the aesthetic experience, aesthetics must judge. But

³ *Process and Reality*, pp. 64, 65.

while many aestheticians are skeptical about the value of experimental results so far, it is characteristic of research workers to distrust grandiose hypotheses until they have withstood patient investigation. Since modern aesthetics, by and large, assumes that its field is in the experience of individuals, any information which can be gathered about the processes of individual experience must be pertinent to aesthetics—whether that information is acquired by controlled observation of behavior, by the psychologist's introspection, or by his study of the reported introspection of others. It is well that in every aspect of human nature, by every likely means, the source and explanation of aesthetic experience should be sought. Biological urges have been exploited by exponents of the play theory of art. The phenomena of the will have been chosen by various voluntarists to explain the problems of aesthetics. Others have seized upon the feelings in general or pleasure in particular as the answer. The knowledge process has been tested for its aesthetic possibilities. Theories of empathy have been suggestive. And whether the men who tried these keys to aesthetics have been called philosophers or not, they have been psychologists in seeking light in the subject rather than in the object of the aesthetic experience. They have not confined themselves to the individual subject, but have got help from the social sciences in general. Even the revolt against the subjective emphasis in favor of a fuller analysis of the art object has been the work of men as much psychologists as philosophers.

The new emphasis on the object has led to what is called *Kunstwissenschaft* or art science in distinction from the main trend of modern aesthetics up to 1900, and even since. Traditional aesthetics has been largely concerned with beauty and the effect of art upon an appreciator. Art science is more occupied with the nature of art and the artist. Aesthetics has not ignored art and the artist; but, concentrating upon the attitude of the beholder, it has led away from art; whereas study of the artist, his make-up, activity and technique, leads toward the work of art and involves a more thorough

analysis of it than was usually felt to be required in traditional aesthetics. But art science does not neglect the subject. As Dessoir says, the aesthetic subject and object are not to be separated; even the attitude of the appreciator, when fully studied, is seen to be controlled by distinguishable relationships in the structure of the object.⁴

Yet in spite of all the help philosophy receives from psychology and other sciences in studying aesthetics, even when aesthetics becomes art science it remains a philosophic discipline in so far as it draws back from science to reflect upon its method and logic. In addition to having a relationship with the history of philosophy, with metaphysics, and various sciences, aesthetics is linked with logic. In stressing what is of special significance to the individual, contemporary aesthetics has the logical problem of relating this significance to meanings which can be generally understood. The aesthetician may say to the logician that the artist is picking out what he feels to be significant and trying to express it so as to give it general meaning without destroying its peculiar significance. The artist, in projecting an individual experience, or his own interpretation of it, is indicating values to be salvaged, disvalues to be avoided. Mead would say that the artist, like the scientist, is reporting something that can be validated only through his experience, his autobiography. But he reports it in such fashion that it can be verified and used by others — perhaps in a reconstruction of society. If, however, the aesthetician is to make an intelligible statement of what the artist and art lover are doing, he must learn from logical procedure to define the aesthetic experience, the work of art, and cognate terms.

In return the aesthetician may be able to help the logician in the question whether relations are external or internal, vital and organic; at least in so far as aesthetic experience is an index to experience in general. Most accounts of aesthetic experience would seem to deny external relations, separable from their relata. Whitehead has said

⁴ *Beitraege zur Allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 23, 24.

that the aesthetic elements which are related must be interesting in themselves, apart from their relations, if the greatest interest is to be aroused. But, interesting as these elements may be in isolation, they apparently cannot remain unaltered when they enter into an aesthetic context. Colors in a painting, which from the realistic standpoint are simply there inasmuch as we are able to think about them, are not simple enduring universals, because in combination each of them has qualities it would not have alone. What is seen in a painting is the result of combination and suffusion and is not reducible to originally distinct pigments. Whitehead has called this "the doctrine of real unities being more than a mere collective disjunction of component elements."⁵

Yet while the relations of elements in an art work seem internal to it, there are repetitions among the related elements which are formal in character, like eternal objects having achieved ingression into events. The literary art of Proust was based upon formal recurrences which he considered as Platonic essences; and the same is true of Thomas Mann's work. These modern artists, while engaged in expressing personal experience or personal insight, have been delighted to find particulars falling into patterns which laid upon them the obligation to pursue their work, as if under an aesthetic imperative no less categorical than the moral one of Kant — a command to find unity in variety. Such artists reconcile the modern stress on the private and unique with the ancient emphasis on the universal.

Aesthetics notes that the formal structure of art tends to have a religious as well as a logical interest, perhaps because form carries the individual back from self-consciousness and absorption in the particulars of his experience to a sense of belonging to a large inclusive order. As a work of art formalizes a part of life, religion works over the whole of life aesthetically — with the help of art itself, of magic, myth and science, philosophy and every resource of imagination. Mead has supposed that the aesthetic approach to

⁵ *Process and Reality*, p. 349.

religion came first with people like those who were disappointed with the outcome of the French Revolution, who became wistful about the Middle Ages which had not seemed romantic while they lasted.⁶ This would seem to imply something reactionary and sentimental in the aesthetic attitude. But such an implication arises only when the formal, static, nostalgic character of aesthetic experience is emphasized at the expense of its eagerness for originality.

In seeking the aesthetic the individual is looking for experience that is satisfying. As Dewey puts it, the good consists of aesthetic experience. Then the question comes up as to whether there is any difference between the content of ethics and of aesthetics. Ethics, in the broad sense of 'the study of what behavior ought to be' will tend to coincide with aesthetics broadly considered as the study of what experience is actually most satisfying. There will remain a discrepancy in so far as what satisfies one person may not interest another. Ethics is more concerned with enduring and general welfare; aesthetics more with intense and particular instances of the good.

Kant, Schiller, Schopenhauer, Max Dessoir, and a number of other distinguished aestheticians, think of the aesthetic experience as isolated from the rest of experience. But men like Dewey and Buermeyer regard any experience as aesthetic when it stands out as being *an experience* — that is, when it succeeds in being what experience always tends to be at its best, when it is complete and satisfying because means and ends are fused. Dewey insists that aesthetic experience is of a piece with ordinary life, but confesses a difference after all. His opponents, while stressing the isolation of the aesthetic, admit its roots and branches in common life. They show how and why aesthetic experience arises in the midst of experience that is not aesthetic: as a result of desire to be free from practical need, from the effort of thought, or the burden of emotion. But Dewey contends that the aesthetic experience brings release and

⁶ *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 72, ff.

⁷ Cp. Wheelwright, *Critical Introduction to Ethics*.

satisfaction because it is simply the fulfilment continually sought and seldom achieved in daily life. For Dewey the aesthetic quality involves a 'unique transcript of the energy of the things of the world.'⁸ Put the emphasis on the word "unique" in this quotation and Dewey becomes an aesthetic isolationist. Emphasize that it is the energy of things of the world which is transcribed, and he comes out against isolation, in favor of such a broad interpretation of the aesthetic as to identify it with the good wherever it appears. This liberal interpretation has the democratic appeal of implying that the best of experience, instead of being inherently the monopoly of a few, could and should be widely shared. But this view runs the risk of including so much under the head of aesthetic that it ceases to have a distinctive meaning.

At any rate aesthetics joins hands with ethics and value theory, as well as with the other disciplines of philosophy. To teach ethics without reference to aesthetics would be to teach it without reference to the good. This is hardly possible. Ethical discussion cannot leave out the essence of art, which is "a creative process that puts things together in such a fashion that we can enjoy them." This statement of Mead's implies that though value is a matter of enjoyment, the meaning of which cannot be found in physical objects, it is not subjective in the sense of being cut off from the environment. Value is rather a relation between us and our world, a relation in which the world takes on qualities it would not have without us. Value comes from a process which does something to things; a process in which we are creative.

In contrast with the aesthetics of the Greeks, aesthetics which is really of today does not tend to seek value in the abstractly finished and perfect, but in the work of art considered as a process whereby the artist finds himself in the object. Modern man, with his heightened self-consciousness, is indeed fortunate when he can engage in a creative process. Usually he cannot fully enjoy things except as he has worked at putting them together. Appreciation is

⁸ *Art Experience*, p. 185.

apt to be thin unless close to creation; and no work is creative if a man cannot enjoy it in the very process. Having enjoyed the process he will find the product a joyful summation of the whole operation.

Aesthetics, in studying the nature of the aesthetic experience and related matters, not only shows why this is the most satisfying kind of experience, but indicates that it may spread to any activity in which men are able to put things together to suit themselves. Wherever and whenever they succeed in doing that, they are freed from practical demands, from uncomfortable thought and emotion; their pleasure is objectified in works worth contemplating; their attitude becomes disinterested and psychically distanced. But for such activity to be generally accessible, men must have something like the imagination of the artist. This they have as children. To keep it they must be free as men to exercise the capacity that should still be in them — the capacity to put things together enjoyably. This is the social implication of aesthetics.

University of Cincinnati.

Mind and Medium in the Modern Dance

BY

KATHARINE EVERETT GILBERT

COMPARING small things with great, we may say that the renaissance of the modern dance resembles in various general respects the classical Renaissance in Italy. One of these respects is the emphasis on *humanism* and a *return to nature*. At both times humanism has almost implied in itself a return to nature because man was thought of as in harmony with the physical universe, enjoying, reflecting, and focussing the world around him. Setting forth the first principles of the modern dance, Mary Wigman (born 1886) says: "Since I am expected to speak of the dance as I perceive, love, and understand it, I do not wish to start with art. . . . I wish to speak of him on whom art depends for sustenance, who portrays and demands art. I refer to the human being."¹ The verbal opposition in this sentence between art and the human being is intended merely as an opposition between an art that has cut itself off from its human root and so has become academic and mechanical, and an art that acknowledges and even claims its human root and is therefore vital. Dead art has meant to the pioneers of the modern dance "impersonal and graceful arabesques," "the superstitious execution of a mere formula," the "servile coquetry" of the academic ballet, a decorative schema or abstract design, in a word, the ex-

¹ Virginia Stewart, *Modern Dance*, "Mary Wigman," (New York, 1935), p. 21.

ploitation of a repertory of clichés. The living art which these pioneers advocate and teach must express human emotion and speak the language of natural feeling.

Already as early as 1760 the French *maître de ballet* and writer on the dance, Noverre, had stated the need of restoring the dance to man and nature. He thus furnished, a century and more in advance, certain features of the program of the choreography of 1900. He says:

Steps, the ease and brilliancy of their combination, equilibrium, stability, speed, lightness, precision, the opposition of the arms with the legs — these form what I term the mechanism of the dance. When all these movements are not directed by genius and when feeling and expression do not contribute their powers sufficiently to affect and interest me, I admire the skill of the human machine, I render justice to its strength and ease of movement, but it leaves me unmoved. . . .

Dancing is possessed of all the advantages of a beautiful language, yet it is not sufficient to know the alphabet alone. But when a man of genius arranges the letters to form words and connects the words to form sentences, it will cease to be dumb; it will speak with both strength and energy; and the ballets will share with the best plays the merit of affecting and moving.² The book from which this excerpt is taken, *Letters on the Imitative Arts in General and on the Dance in Particular*, is the first item in the select bibliography of the founder of the systematic theory of the modern dance, Rudolf von Laban, for his work, *Die Welt des Tänzers*.³ In a sense, Noverre might himself be called the founder of the modern movement.

The general demand for a return to natural human feeling, common to all the moderns, shows various phases. These phases can be distinguished and will here be evaluated on the basis of the treatment of mind and medium.

The first extreme reaction from the frigidity of the ballet is sufficiently represented by the views of Isadora Duncan (1878-1927).

² Jean Georges Noverre, *Letters on the Imitative Arts in General and on the Dance in Particular*, translated and published by C. W. Beaumont (London, 1930), pp. 19-20.

³ Rudolf von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers* (Stuttgart, 1920), p. 262.

She put "soul" back into the dance at approximately the moment when William James was deleting it from psychology. "Soul" signified to her two things: (a) a value, raising to the dignity of a major art what had dropped to the level of mere virtuosity and amusement; and (b) an *arché* or principle, i.e., the authentic basis for an art-form built out of the stuff of movement.

(a) In the simple philosophy, more mythology than science, guiding her reform, Isadora Duncan at times placed soul as the bearer of worth in contrast to the body, the heavy element pulling man down to earth. The highest class of dancers, she writes, understands that

the body, by force of the soul, can . . . be converted to a luminous fluid. The flesh becomes light and transparent. . . . When, in its divine power, it completely possesses the body, it converts that into a luminous cloud and thus can manifest itself in the whole of its divinity. This is the explanation of the miracle of St. Francis walking on the sea. His body no longer weighed like ours, so light had it become through the soul.⁴

At such moments she thinks of the perfecting of her art as involving the conquest of body with its crassness and slavery to the force of gravity. After the necessary preliminary discipline of the gymnasium, she writes, "the body itself must be forgotten."⁵ As a great dancer, she believed, of course, in the glory of the body. But she confusedly associated the feeling of soaring and of dominating her physical medium with the virtue of holiness. She seems often to overlook the beauty of the body *per se* and to find beauty in expression of soul.

(b) In the second place, Isadora Duncan, here reflecting from afar the Plato whom she admired, identified the spring of motion with the soul. In outlining the proper instruction of the child in the dance, she says that first attention must be given not to drill in patterns of movement but to the cultivation of the soul, which will then naturally express itself in appropriate movement.⁶ "The only

⁴ Isadora Duncan, *The Art of the Dance* (New York, 1928), p. 51.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

power that can satisfactorily guide the child's body is the inspiration of the soul."⁷ Isadora's language is vague, but she obviously envisaged a line dividing man's spiritual inside, quick and energetic, from his derivative and instrumental outside. She sought not only value and dignity for her art (the dance, she said, must choose between being religion and merchandise⁸), but spontaneity and creativeness. She charged that those who tried to adopt her method, copying the mere externals of her movements, failed—"not understanding that it was necessary to go back to a beginning."⁹ The analogy between her views of the primacy of the soul in movement and the teaching of the *Phaedrus* and the *Laws* in this respect is too obvious to escape notice. "Self-motion is the very idea and essence of the soul. . . . For the body which is moved from without is soulless."¹⁰ It will be recalled that the first illustration given by Ernst Cassirer in his *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* of a notion wavering in ancient Greek thought between the twilight of mythology and the clear light of reason is that of the *arché*. It stands, he says, for the moment of transition from the mythical notion of "beginning to" the philosophical notion of "principle."¹¹ Isadora's "soul" is such a twilight symbol.

The mythical habit appears also in Isadora's references to the bond connecting humanity and nature. The human soul was, she thought, a mirror and symbol of the World-Soul. "Where," she inquires, "are we to look for the great fountainhead of movement?"¹² And she answers that since a moving human being is not apart from organic and inorganic nature, "his movement must be one with the great movement which runs through the universe; and therefore the fountainhead for the art of the dance will be the study of the movements of nature." The dancer moved by spiritual stir-

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰ *Phaedrus* 245 (trans. Jowett).

¹¹ Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* (Berlin, 1923), Volume II, pp. 3-4.

¹² Duncan, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

rings has heard, she says, an inward music, "an expression of something out of another, a profounder world."¹³ The "holy" dancer, Isadora's ideal, mirrors cosmic motion: "her movements will become godlike, mirroring in themselves the waves, the winds, the movements of growing things, the flight of birds, the passing of clouds, and finally the thought of man in his relation to the universe."¹⁴ She once declared that the gestures of Duse elevated the actress to participation in the circling of the spheres.¹⁵

The free improvisations of Isadora Duncan (to quote Serge Lifar) "had a word to say" to the world of dance, but did not inaugurate a new era.¹⁶ The conception she advocated was too tightly bound to her own fascinating personality for transmission, and exhausted itself in lyrical effusion. She had insisted on the beginning of movement without providing sufficiently for the middle and end. She perhaps fertilized the Russian ballet, but she had no lineal descendants in her own manner.

In the second phase of the modern dance movement, attention shifts from mind to medium. In the floating dream and unavailable ecstasy of Isadora Duncan, there was no work of art with determinable ratios and proportions, no universal language with grammar and vocabulary, no method or technique that could be taught to others, allowing the art to be propagated and so start or join a tradition. The German pioneer of the modern dance movement, Rudolf von Laban (born 1879), undertook to formulate a grammar of motion and a system of notation. For him the value of the new form could not be located in soul alone. A system of intelligible relations was indispensable, a firm frame for creativeness in this new kind.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁶ "Les Grands Courants de la Chorégraphie travers le XXe Siècle," *Deuxième Congrès International d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art* (Paris, 1937), Tome II, p. 482.

Von Laban's grammar of motion deals with both the content and form of dance movements. First, as to the content. Now on any theory, ancient or modern, the movement of living bodies is the material out of which the dance is constructed, but the will to restore the dance to "nature" and the "human being" makes movement in the modern dance teleological instead of mechanical. The ballet is condemned for being a combination of senseless motions—spins as of a top, bounces as of a ball, ascents and floatings as of a balloon; the reformed dance, on the contrary, is to be developed out of mind-informed and goal-directed movements, in a word, out of gestures. Von Laban defines the dance as a sequence of gestures rounded into an artistic whole.¹⁷ Instances of gesture would be the greeting of friendship or the withdrawal of indignation.

Gesture in its turn breaks down for our modern analyst into parts; but intention and significance must be present in the parts as they animate the whole. A gesture, then, may be divided into tensions, or *Spannungen*, or rather it is the passage from tension to release, or from release to tension. A *Spannung* appears to be like what the psychologist Bentley calls a "vital indicator, which announces the position of the organism upon matters at issue."¹⁸ It is the minimum act by means of which a mind or psyche asserts the fact and mode of its distinction from death, or brute matter. *Spannung* is obviously a correlative term—it always stands over against the moment of release or conciliation. As thus part of a polar situation, *Spannung* recalls the dimensions of feeling worked out by Wundt. Wundt noted that feeling swings between *Spannung* and *Beruhigung*, also between *Spannung* and *Lösung*. Von Laban's thinking is not scientific, so that the parallel with the terms used by these psychologists cannot be pressed. It is true, however, that modern dancers voluntarily raise the "vital indicator," or sense of life and force, so that a movement's defiance of gravity and the earth-drag can be clearly shown.

¹⁷ Von Laban, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁸ Christian Ruckmick, *The Psychology of Feeling and Emotion* (New York, 1936), p. 59. See also Lincoln Kirstein, *Dance* (New York, 1936), p. 1.

To illustrate the rise of the tensions that constitute gesture and which are, therefore, close to the formative influence of the human dance, von Laban describes the alteration in a man's posture, when, after sleep or inattention, he suddenly becomes charged through and through in a joyous upward swing. The head lifts, the facial muscles tense, expression breaks, as it were, through a veil, the whole body, repudiating its submission to gravity, accents its own power, arching the feet and rounding the chest. One arm is raised, as if to contradict gravity, the other arm and a backward-thrust leg maintaining the delicate balance. If now, a motivated passage occurs by means of which this *Spannung* is exchanged for another in which the extended arm is placed athwart the chest, the head slightly lowered, the balance of the body eased backward, an expression of thoughtful benevolence substituted for that of dynamic assertion, a gesture pattern, that is, the germ of the dance, has been exhibited.¹⁹

The sequence of gestures, or again, the sustained rhythm of tension and swing, requires a proper receptacle to contain it. This receptacle is the so-called *Raumkörper*. The spatial body, which is to be the place of a meaningful sequence, must itself harmonize with the expression of opposition and reconciliation; it must even take part in that expression, for it functions in the dance as well as contains it. Not thus functional is the three-dimensional space in which the ballet dancer cuts his figures. What surrounds him is an indifferent environment, not a plastic partner. Order in space means for him a track on the floor, a collection of linear figures, the so-called five positions orienting the only accepted relations of his two feet to each other, and his own three dimensions. How, for the modern dance, the spatial body joins in, becomes internal to, the choreic process may be clarified by a comparison. In discussing the drawing of mammoths in the prehistoric caves of France and Spain, Baldwin Brown notes the very great importance of the first attempt to accommodate a sketched animal to the space which includes it. When, as in the Dordogne caves, the interest was confined to the

¹⁹ Von Laban, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

presentation of the mammoth only, with no feeling for the relation of its form to the proportions of the wall or ceiling, art did not yet exist. With conscious proportioning of the animal to fit nicely into the shape and size of the field, genuine aesthetic concern begins.²⁰

The proportions and relations of the total space, then, are made real for the dancer by the way in which, within it, groups are balanced, or swept toward, or away from, each other. Diagonal lines tracked out are oriented in respect to indicated right lines and angles. A solo dancer sometimes appears to make lines roll around his body. He remains constantly aware of the axes around which planes are shifting or masses revolving. "The *Raumkörper*, the space-body," says Elizabeth Selden, "is to the dancer as substantial and real as his physical body."²¹

But the formal part of medium is defined by von Laban not only through the organization of total space, but in terms of the system of motions anatomically possible to the individual dancer. This system he determines as a twenty-faced crystal, or icosahedron. Von Laban reckoned that the obliquely extended arms and legs of a dancer placed within the three planes that contain him, first, the vertical, up-down plane, second, the lateral, right-left plane, and third, the suspended, front-to-back-at-waist plane, would trace the axes of this twelve-cornered die. If one, then, thinks of the dancer's movement as rotating on these axes, one deduces the desired serial order. Since this geometrical form was to be interpreted, not primarily as the boundary of a body in repose, but as the law of the dancing process, von Laban developed quasi-musical scales, one of six double swings for men (the B scale), and one of twelve single swings for women (the A scale). One scale embodied in the icosahedron is identical with the sequence of parades in fencing. The crystal becomes in this way a system of systems of function.

The directions in which the crystallized human thrusts himself forth have their intrinsic emotional charges. As the larger space

²⁰ G. Baldwin Brown, *The Art of the Cave Dweller* (New York, 1932), pp. 22-3.

²¹ Elizabeth Selden, *The Dancer's Quest* (Berkeley, 1935), p. 40.

was made pathic and organic by men and women wheeling and counterpointing within it, so, for one man, upward implies lightness and merriment; downward, strength and heaviness; inwardizing, bashfulness or tightness; expansion, happiness and confidence; motion backward expresses fear or self-defense; and a forward march, attack, greeting, or welcome.²²

A dance script is not external to the formal aspect of medium, because the demand that movement relations be identifiable by fixed signs reacts upon the choreographer. He must make a clear and distinct form, if the pattern is to be converted into sign-language. Von Laban devised a system of notation by means of which dance forms could be preserved and passed from group to group for repetition and criticism. The simple signs he uses indicate direction, extent, intensity, and time-value of movements of specific parts of the body. The script is recorded on a staff of five lines and four spaces, like that of music. The movements of the lower part of the body and the legs are indicated by signs *within* the staff; the movements of the upper part and the arms by signs *outside*. The staff is further parcelled out: the position of the feet is indicated in the two inner or middle spaces, the movements of the legs in the air by the two outer spaces. Immediately outside the staff are recorded the movements of the torso; signs for arm movements are to be found a slight distance away. Wedges tell the dancer whether to go forward or backward, right or left. Every lengthening of signs retards, every abbreviation accelerates, the movement; proportion of length of signs indicating whether two, three, or four fold. Variations and combinations of these basic signs give the dancer the necessary instructions for the turns, transfers, gestures, jumps, amount of stress and expansion of movements, repetitions, parts of the floor to be used, etc.²³

Thus far we have attempted no more than historical exposition of the initial forms assumed by two elements indispensable to all

²² Irma Otte-Betz, "The Work of Rudolf von Laban: II," in *The Dance Observer*, January 1939 (Vol. VI, No. 1), p. 162.

²³ Rudolf von Laban, *Script Dancing* (Leipzig, 1928).

arts, mind and medium, at the beginning of the modern dance movement. America made mind lyrical, but attempted no structural analysis of medium. Germany furnished a first draft of aspects of the medium. The necessary supplementation of the American "soul" was destined to be supplied by fusion with an alien style, the Russian ballet. But the necessary supplementation of the German medium, the Germans supplied of themselves; let us observe how.

An examination of von Laban's book, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, for a statement of the dancer's psychical source, tempts one to describe it as the mystical center of a mystical cosmology, microcosm feeling its kinship with macrocosm. But this interpretation von Laban forestalls. He says: "Men like to dismiss everything that resists that privileged measurer of the world — the understanding — as mystical, occult, intuitive, or the like. I say that there is no living being to whom swimming fancies . . . are more distasteful than to the dancer."²⁴ Even in connection with this repudiation of haziness, a counter-balancing suspicion of the rational understanding is expressed. It is true, however, that von Laban tries to develop a conception of the dancer's mind which shall transcend the opposition between reason and feeling.

His treatise seems to assign, among certain others, two defining properties to the mentality of the dancer: (1) completeness, (2) power of communication. What he means by these two characteristics, we shall now try to explain, using his own examples.

As the only complete human being, the dancer must be distinguished from the partial men: knowers, doers, and feelers. The distinction may be made by examining four different modes of apprehending a composite pictorial form, built up by contrast and sequence. The author describes in detail two scenes from an imagined sequence:²⁵ the first scene played by two poorly-clad and temperamentally opposite old men, in a mood of troubled concern, talking politics, in a smoke-begrimed inn; the second scene played

²⁴ Rudolf von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, p. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 158 ff.

by two conventional and finely-dressed society women, one dark, one light, talking together of pleasant nothings against the background of a gold-framed mirror and crystal chandeliers.

Confronted by this drama, the knower will apprehend the scenes in the manner of common-sense realism. He will neither like nor dislike what he sees — von Laban makes this vivid by saying that not even the odor of stale tobacco in the first scene, nor alluring perfume in the second, will stir up favor or disfavor in this cool spectator. The contrasts or “tensions” present will seem to the “knower” as much particular properties of an objective field, as the shapes and colors of the separate objects.

The feeling-perspective on the scene introduces blurring sympathy. Mood intensifies and irradiates the emotional values; for example, of gray-green in the shabby old clothes of the men versus rose-color in the satin apparel of the women. Although the sentimental observer feels all the existing contrasts of color, line, texture, odor, mood as intensified, he at the same time feels an interplay of the contrasting elements, so that the scenes acquire a dramatic or emotional unity almost by virtue of the increase in the conflict of these elements. The over-againstness of the perceptual field gives way in the act of perceiving, and the perceiver lives or feels himself into the presentation.

The man of will forces his ego arbitrarily upon the scenes, and sees what is before him as a reflex of his own energy. He tears out of the complex certain preferred elements, neglecting the remainder. For him the swing of a shrill laugh, an abrupt thought, or a violent gesture, substitutes itself for the expressive process as a balanced whole.

This departmentalizing of the perceptual process into three parts von Laban matches with three distinct artistic styles: the realistic imitative; the impressionistic; and the expressionistic. The first presents the sum of separate facts with conventional superficiality. Impressionism fuses the parts and may alter the color — perhaps tones the flesh blue because of the emotional value of a perfume.

Expressionism emphasizes by distortion, and colors symbolically anything at its lordly pleasure — makes a grasping hand blood-red or a jealous hand yellow. For expressionism, “the contours in the drama embrace, withdraw, or bind together the sensible object in flaring curves or hacked angles.”²⁶

How does the total perception and style of the dancer differ from these partial ones? Logical realism yields only unmeaningly grouped pieces; the other two, sentimental emphases. If the expressionist’s tendency is indeed toward selecting for attention the chief topic of speech, the ground mood of an occurrence, and the basic key of a melody, even so his experience is not “pure.” What, then, is “purity”? It is grasping the harmonious interplay of these tensions as the process of crystallization. The complete mind of the dancer, then, is that kind of consciousness which is disposed and proportioned for the discovery of crystalline relationships in things.

The term “crystallization” is, of course, a metaphor. But von Laban is doing more than illustrating his theory by tropes. He would say that a dancer sees colored solid forms hardening and dissolving within the fluid continuum of his environment, these appearing and disappearing forms being themselves, let us say, cubes, prisms, rhomboids, with perhaps octohedrons for interspacing, certain icosahedrons present turning on well-known axes in varying directions, the whole governed by visible mathematical law, and impressing the mind as a sort of tremendous music of crystals in place of the traditional music of the spheres.

It is interesting to observe the recourse of other recent writers on art to the same metaphor. Roger Fry says: “Almost any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist this detached and impassioned vision, and, as he contemplates the particular field of vision, the (aesthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begins to crystallize into a harmony.”²⁷ And regarding the drama itself, Angna Enters writes: “Mime is a kind

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁷ Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (New York, 1924), p. 51.

of crystallization of phases and transitions, past or contemporary—before your eyes—of life, for which words are merely descriptions, however illuminating.”²⁸

There is a close connection between the interpretation of the dancer as “complete” and the interpretation of him as a “communicant.” One might call the dancer the typical speaker, or user of language, if speech and language did not normally connote exclusively words read and spoken. Gesture is for von Laban the original and archetypal language, of which all other languages are later and more limited branches. The ideal pattern according to which the mind gives and receives meaning is total bodily gesture—expressive movement. The dancer, then, may be defined as the one who has the maximum power of exchanging meaning with the rest of the world. He might be named the *communicant*, *per se*. To every level of living creature belongs a typical pattern of movement, symbolizing the cognitive relation set up between speaking center and responding environment. The hard cohesion of a stone speaks self-concentration and world-exclusion. We might perhaps say that the stone has the typically Forsytean (von Laban’s word is *nehmend*) disposition. The linear up-stretching and down-drooping of a plant symbolize the desire for light and the droop of sorrow. Its mood is supplication. The lower animals move, on the whole, horizontally, seeking nourishment on their own flat and earthly level—hunters. Man’s motions are typically centripetal; they pass out in all directions from a center—loving and giving, like Friday’s child.²⁹ The dancer’s intelligence is aware of, and reacts to, every variant of approach and withdrawal, swinging and reaching, pushing and pulling, folding and unfolding, that makes up the world process. He stands at the cross-roads of in-working and out-going streams of power.³⁰

²⁸ Angna Enters, “A Speech—The Mime as Commentator,” in *Twice a Year* [1940-1], p. 284.

²⁹ Rudolf von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, p. 74.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

The two chief properties of the dancer's mind are brought together by von Laban in the sentence: "The phenomena of the world are to the dancer crystallizations of gesture-might."³¹ Less competent perception, he believes, stops with limiting surfaces, inert masses, and surface relations. But the gesturing man reads off the true nature of things in the manifold transformations of tension-form.³² The dancer as such, then, being the supreme agent of gesture, classifies entities according to their content of gesture-power.

The philosophy of Mary Wigman, the first and chief follower of von Laban, has much in common with her master's. She emphasizes the *Raumkörper*, the determinant tensions and crystallizations in the choreic medium, the unitary mode of apprehension, the archetypal language power of the dancing being. Surely in all this body of ideas there is more concern for pattern and medium than in the rhapsodies of Isadora Duncan. Romantic or, as it is alternatively called, musical "feeling" is appraised by these Germans as a one-sided bearing of the soul toward the world. We cannot forget that logical knowing, however, is rated as even thinner and poorer. "At that point," writes Wigman, "when knowing about things stops, and experiencing becomes law, the dance begins."³³ This marked distrust of the intellect is a main note of modern dance theory. Von Laban concludes his book on the dancer's world by a warning against the morbidity of scientific literature, a sickness graver, he thinks, than the fantasies of sectaries. "For the sharpening of keen judgment, rationalistic works will not serve."³⁴

Witness these summarizing statements delivered by von Laban before the International Congress of Aesthetics in Paris in 1937:

The grand rhythm of envining Nature and the slight dance of the individual creature are inwardly bound together by a common law, a common archetype, and a common development. In the growth of the crystal — and what is not crystal? — in the life of plants, of animals, in the spirit of solidarity of whole peoples and races — in the web of farthest being, which we

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³³ Rudolf Bach, *Das Mary Wigman-Werk* (Dresden, 1933), p. 19.

³⁴ Von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, p. 262.

call the cosmos, no other force can be discerned than that which also built the dance. And there are no other shapes than those which are tracked out in the ways and paths of the dancing body. This infinite manifold of the powers and forms, which are always building themselves anew, is immeasurable and imponderable.³⁵

We noted that Mary Wigman roots the dance in living experience, but "experience" immediately becomes cosmic in scope for her. On the other hand, John Martin also invokes experience as the matrix of the art. But his conception of experience is akin to John Dewey's—the development of all the elaborations of human behavior out of crude beginnings in the satisfaction of survival needs. Biological truth is what we must study. The process of eating, for example—the assault upon the environment for the satisfaction of hunger, the appropriation of food, and the subsequent assimilation of it to the bodily tissues—furnishes the type we require. Our organs exist to keep us alive and happy.³⁶

In this "radically empirical" doctrine of the basic nature of the dance, what is mind and what is medium? The medium is "experience"—experience as human movement, because, as Martin says, the movement of behavior is only another name for experience.³⁷ The parts of this material often listed in the manuals of the modern dance are as follows: "walking, strutting, running, leaping, hopping, skipping, galloping, turning, sliding, rolling, crawling, bending, stretching, balancing, folding, unfolding, soliciting, repelling, etc."³⁸ This is a selection from the complete series of significant human movements, coined in the mint of the necessity of man's adaptation to his environment. For a more comprehensive study of the range of expressive movement, the empirical student would turn to Dar-

³⁵ "Wege zur Aesthetik der Tanzkunst," *Deuxième Congrès International d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art* (Paris, 1937), Tome II, p. 474.

³⁶ Cf. James M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*: "Fairies think such a lot of dancing, you know; and although they forget the steps when they are gloomy, they remember directly they get gay again. That is why fairies never say, "We feel happy," but "We feel *dancey*." It is nearly the same thing . . . Happiness gets into one's feet very easily."

³⁷ John Martin, *The Modern Dance* (New York, 1936), pp. 7-10.

³⁸ Margaret M. H'Doubler, *The Dance* (New York, 1925), end.

win's *The Expression of the Emotions* or the psychologist Allport's recent work, *Studies in Expressive Movement*.

The *mind* for the empiricist — *it* is itself almost the same as motor experience. The dancer is he who feels the primary human urges and knows how to move for satisfaction and expression. As we all know, the empiricists of Dewey's faith object to a radical separation of the mind from its object, or its environment, or from the material on which it works. At the beginning of his book, *Art as Experience*,³⁹ Dewey takes the position, for example, that the Parthenon is not so much the embodiment of architectural beauty shining on a hill as the fulfillment of the civic and religious needs of the Athenian citizens. In other words, mind and medium here tend to lose their clear distinction from each other, as they did in the earlier mystic forms of dance theory.

For the theory of the modern dance the mind has thus far played three distinguishable roles: (1) that of soul, value-bearer and spring of motion; (2) the complete man and the archetypal communicant; (3) the empirical self — or better, biological organism. Medium has assumed two forms (since Isadora's "soul" expressed itself freely without systematic submission to the conditions of a medium): (1) the *Raumkörper* and icosahedron, and (2) the complete set of empirical motion-modes. Let us now try to bring these two elements into relation to each other. While both concepts, mind and medium, are indispensable in aesthetic analysis, they must come together in the crucial aesthetic fact: the work of art.⁴⁰ Not mind and not medium alone, but the result of the operation of the artist's mind on the artist's medium produces the thing of value. It is the dance-form brought into independent being by the interaction of the two elements, and showing the characters of both, which puts to the proof the interpretation of mind, medium, and their mutual relations. Art is that activity, Aristotle says, which produces some-

³⁹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, 1935), p. 4.

⁴⁰ Cf. K. Koffka, *Art: A Bryn Mawr Symposium* (Bryn Mawr, 1940): "There must, then, be a psychology of the work of art, and this . . . task of the psychologist would be the fundamental one" (pp. 186-7).

thing distinct from the act of producing it.⁴¹ Unlike moral prudence, which is an activity continuous with its issue — wise human conduct — art realizes itself in something other than itself. Doubtless, Aristotle was thinking in this particular context of a craftsman such as the builder of a house, where it is easy to interpose a space between the mind that makes and what it produces. But his principle suggests one valuable general criterion of aesthetic excellence. The dance as work of art must be, among other things, an artificial creature, which will poise itself in external space-time to be looked at. It must be able to be the object of *theoria*. The function of art, Ruskin said, acknowledging the Aristotelian origin of the idea, is to secure man the happiness that may be defined as the energy or fulfillment of contemplation.⁴² But Aristotle's total treatment of the arts is flexible and sensitive to the various situations in which arts finds itself. He even sets a definite problem suggested by the tendency of self-subsistence to disappear in the art of music. The relation between music and its soul-intention, we may paraphrase him as saying, is immediate; that between painting and its soul-intention is mediate, because painting employs external signs — figure and color. Figure and color are a stage removed from emotion, because not motion, he implies.⁴³ The figurative arts employ a somewhat arbitrary language; music is almost communication purified of a medium, because music is motion and the feelings or ideas imitated [as Aristotle says] are also motion. Like knows like intuitively. "Why do rhythms and tunes, which after all are only voice, resemble moral characters, whereas savours do not, nor yet colors and odours? Is it because they are movements, as actions also are?"⁴⁴ There is, as it were, for Aristotle, an underground passage connecting the mobile energy of the soul and the mobile energy of music that gives the one quick access to the other.

⁴¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, 5: "Art . . . has its excellence . . . in something other than itself, but this is not so with prudence" (Peter trans.).

⁴² Katharine Gilbert, "Ruskin's Relation to Aristotle," *The Philosophical Review* (January, 1940), p. 59.

⁴³ *Politics* 1340 a.

⁴⁴ *Problems*, Book 19, sec. 29 (Oxford trans.).

He is interested apparently in the problem of what he calls the differences of imitative capacity, or what we should probably call natural expressiveness in the different arts. Of course, he is also interested in showing what arts are most useful in moral education.

Thus Aristotle set a standard for critical justice to the inevitable double orientation of art—toward independent status as analyzable structure, the object of *theoria*, and toward *psychic* expression, with a leaning toward practical involvement. "In any art, the more artistic [the work] is, the more form is there, i.e. the more measurable, definable, calculable, is it—the more rational or intellectual. Yet on the other hand, everybody since the world began has associated with art strength of feeling and unconsciousness of effort. A great piece of music can be taken to bits like a clock; a great poem, compared with any other piece of language, is intensely artificial; yet the amount of feeling which they represent is stupendous when compared with the song of a bird or a simple story."⁴⁵ The complete loss of either pole for any alleged art or case of art is fatal to its specific value as art.

Now the arts vary intrinsically in the distance they normally interpose between the object and the human response, and so in their satisfaction of the obligation to *theoria*. As Aristotle said that music made an immediate transit to the hearer, without delay by signs, so Mr. Edward Bullough treats the dance as (to use his phrase) running a special risk of a loss of distance, because of the physical presence of living human beings as vehicles. He even hints that the decline of the status of the dance among the arts since Greek days may be due to its tendency to let distance disappear.

To measure the total resistance of the dance to "distancing" it is necessary to add together the factor pointed out by Aristotle in music, motion, to that pointed out by Bullough, presentment of the

⁴⁵ Richard Lewis Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains* (London, 1901), p. 62. Cf. "It is . . . the peculiar depth of symbols that both their subjective and their objective aspect should be endowed with significance, and no one can do them justice unless he be aware of this duality" (Richard Bernheimer, *Art: A Bryn Mawr Symposium*, p. 54).

actual living body. In the dance the *contemplative* attitude is retarded by the constitution of the medium, namely the rhythmic movements of the actual human body. To the testimony leading to this conclusion of the ancient philosopher and the contemporary psychologist may be added the professional word of a *maître de ballet*, Serge Lifar. He declares that the dance is the most *bête* (dependent on the exploitation of the full animal body) of all the arts.⁴⁶

If immediacy is one characteristic property of the dance as such, the problem before us is: Is this general property augmented in the modern dance? The first answer would seem to be No. Certainly both von Laban and Wigman lay stress on the requirements of the dance as a work of art, and on the distinction between dance as an inclusive human type and as formed structure. Moreover, the trend toward abstraction in the modern dance would, it would seem, weaken the sense of a moving human presence. For example, Mary Wigman might be said perhaps to lose *qua* dancer her specific human character and to metamorphose into a bare space-tension. She is, one might suggest, a sort of animated brush stroke, painting in in three dimensions the interesting intelligible constitution of a spatial volume. Or to use another figure, one might say that the dancer demonstrates effectively the processes of crystallization. The formulae of certain geometrical relations are through art made visible and vivid by active instruments—instruments which happen also to be living bodies. Indeed, such an idea is actually stated by Merle Armitage in a book on Martha Graham: [In the dance] "Mathematics, Geometry, and Numbers become neural and are projected as emotive patterns which live in space as well as in time."⁴⁷

Abstraction not only minimizes the sense of human presence, it might be argued, but also substitutes pattern for passion. The abstract pattern of the dance is built as an architect builds, it would

⁴⁶"Les Grands Courants de la Chorégraphie a travers le XXe Siecle," *Deuxième Congrès International d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art* (Paris, 1937), Tome II, p. 478.

⁴⁷Merle Armitage, *Martha Graham* (Los Angeles, 1937), p. 82.

seem, with something of the cool attitude of the architect. A figure or phrase being devised, this may then be repeated, reversed in direction, accumulated by the employment of further parts of the body, and by contrasts in tempo. It becomes, again, we might say, such an architectonic whole as a fugue or a sonata, which we think of as built up by similar methods out of voices, themes, and movements. The modern theorists, being interested in the autonomy of their art, do not, on the whole, admit that a dance, which they might name "Counterpoint" or "Canon," is an interpretation of a musical composition. Rather they insist that the choreic counterpoint or canon or arabesque is a parallel phenomenon, constructed by combining in proportionate ways the original "music" of the body. In this attitude they have the support, of course, of the history of the interrelations of music and the dance. Much of the liveliness and variety which gives charm to the sonata and symphony is the result of the assimilation of dance measures — the minuet, polonaise, sarabande, etc., so that the dance may claim equal primacy with music. Bach's C Minor Passacaglia, for instance, derived from a dance form. Doris Humphrey has recently constructed a modern dance which she calls by this name and which uses a two-piano arrangement based on Bach's music. It is easy to point out the large use of pre-classic forms among the moderns. Though obviously the substance of even these formal dances is a vehicle of some general mood, as is a fugue or a sonata, still because pantomime — realistic suggestion — is practically ruled out, these dances may illustrate what "abstraction" in the modern dance means. It means essentially the deletion of mimicry.

We recur to the problem of degree of distance. While abstract modern dances evoke emotion very little compared with a second large group of modern dances, immediately to be noted, they are more moving than the classical ballet, and thus increase the "risk" of the general dance beyond its already considerable tendency to allow "psychical distance" to disappear. It is easy to see why this is true. The general spirit of the modern dance, being a "return

to nature" and "common humanity," even a pavane or a polonaise becomes through it recharged with our contemporary attitudes and with natural human sentiment. Again, abstraction in the sense of realization through bodily movement of space-relations is almost a stripping of human behavior to its primitive dynamic elements. If space is to be re-created by the dancer in terms of tensions and resolutions, let us suppose, if we will, that the dancer evaporates into a space tension. He will, even so, be a fighter or a lover, an embodiment of fear, or a builder of group solidarity. Let a choric group work together to show how a python-soul constructs a labyrinth, a spell-binding will draws a magic circle, witchery makes zig-zag intercrossing lines, as a result the line, circle, network, or diagonals created may actually be more starkly pathic than the confessed dramatic pantomime, because the simplified meaning of movement may be revealed without the dilution of associative content. This reminds us of Aristotle's description of music, music as a motion awakening soul as motion, like to like, without a detour through representation of objects.

The modern dance, however, uses pantomime or dramatic action as well as abstraction. In this latter favored form the intrinsic emotional appeal of the dance leaps to new heights. The material preferred is religious ritual, particularly primitive, and political, even revolutionary comment. Witness the titles: by Wigman: Dance to the Virgin Mary; Sacrifice, which includes (a) Dance for the Sun, (b) Summons of Death, (c) Dance for the Earth, (d) Dance to Death; The Celebration, which includes (a) The Temple, (b) The Mark of Darkness, (c) Festive Clamour; — these by Martha Graham: Vision of the Apocalypse; A Project for a Divine Comedy; Primitive Canticle; Primitive Mysteries, which includes (a) Hymn to the Virgin, (b) Crucifixes, (c) Hosanna; Bacchanalia; Dithyrambic; Incantation; Satyric Festival Songs; and American Provincials, which includes (a) Act of Piety, and (b) Act of Judgment. Under social comment, we may list the following by Graham: Immigrant, including (a) Steerage, (b) Strike; Sketches from the People;

Frontier; by Margaret Sage: Song of Labor and Revolutionary Hymn; by Jooss: The Green Table and The Big City; and by Doris Humphrey: With My Red Fires. In this phase of the modern dance, the powerful passions linked with religion, revolt, war, and lust are fully exploited by the present-day choreographers. That in these cases distancing would tend to be cut down is obvious.

To all those who emphasize the life-furthering aspect of art, its Dionysian element, and who distrust its formalism and artificiality, its Apolline element, the drift of the modern dance would seem a desirable aesthetic tendency, an accentuating of its already prerogative position among the expressive arts. Such persons are more interested in what mind—especially feeling—contributes than what medium demands. These make the dance a full-bodied and forceful communication about the social fundamentals. All other arts are taken, in this view, as specialities of gesture-language—poetry, for example, is fundamentally the behavior of the tongue, larynx, etc. Loss in force, but gain in delicacy of idea, accompanies for them the rise of painting, sculpture, music, and literature. The return of the dance, then, to primal urges is no more than the recollection and reaffirmation of all art's birth-right.

On the other hand, those who prize the shape and technical development of art, regret the revolutionary naturalism of the modern dance. A valid observer ought to be able to enjoy the dance's pattern, they feel, and even isolate the pattern. Decorative motifs of twining or bending forms should even be allowed temporarily to hold the field of attention. Why should not a circular dance flicker in its effect between the smooth flow of motion returning into itself and the symbolic suggestion of magic or social solidarity? Those who believe in the ballet, moreover, see in the condemned adjustments of step and poise which contradict natural stance and gait, only the legitimate and inevitable underlining in the case of the dance of the fact of style. Style means not continuity with nature, but break with her; a human surplusage, a deliberate alteration for aesthetic effect is the claim. Perhaps we may begin to

infer that in the ballet, quite as much as in the group opposed to it, the modern dance is at its best. Is it not part of the modern dance liberally interpreted? Indeed the *maîtres de ballet* of the present claim for their new ballet most of what modernism urges: justice to the plastic will of man, freedom of theme, the support of modernistic music and painting, also an inclusive space interpreted as a system of felt relations. But the ballet claims to have over and above this a more developed sense of style, the acknowledgment of the distinction between man and nature, as well as the mutual dependence. Ballet more easily remains within the frame.

The chief objection of the masters of the Russian ballet to the modern dance is the weakness that must follow from repudiating a hard-won technical development. Some of them admit that they received a certain impact from the modernistic movement, but, on the whole, they reject its implications of complete revolt. Why? Because the history of an art is the natural food of an art. In discussing his relation to Isadora Duncan, Fokine is quoted as saying: "Her dance is free, mine stylized. . . . I was working on dancers with a fixed technique and an old tradition, she, for an individual, herself."⁴⁸

Serious lovers of any art must regret the loss of artistic momentum and subtlety in invention which results from snapping off a tradition. T. S. Eliot in his essay on "Tradition and Individual Talent" has stated clearly the truth that any work of art is a member of a historical continuum, whether the artist so wills it or not. He says that the expression of natural, contemporary, or personal emotion is stunted and childish outpouring: "No artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new

⁴⁸ Arnold L. Haskell, *Balletomania* (New York, 1934), p. 127.

work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it.”⁴⁹

Of course tradition can kill. But the tradition of an art at its best multiplies the technical training of the individual, as a tool multiplies the power of the living hand. To be merely *modern* seems to me as mistaken as to be *merely* traditional, even in the dance.

Duke University.

⁴⁹ T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (New York, 1930), pp. 49-50.

Note: Throughout this paper I have used the word *choreic* as meaning pertaining to the dance. This seemed to me the best word in spite of its untoward medical association.

Book Reviews

STITES, RAYMOND S.: *The Arts and Man*. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1940, XIII. 872 pp.

A book on art the purpose of which is to "create an informed and friendly understanding of art" necessarily reflects the view of its author on the nature of art and its place in human life. It is therefore one of the merits of Professor Stites' volume that he sets forth in his Introduction what he holds to be the primary values of an art work and then goes on to show how these are to be realized in the process of art education.

A work of art, the author holds, has a use value, an associational value, and a formal value. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address serves him as an illustration. It had use value when first delivered as a restatement of the purposes for which the Northern States fought, and still has this value "on every occasion when we feel that the democratic principle is at stake." Its associational value lies in the emotionally toned words "our fathers" which suggest a prayer, and in the words "fourscore and seven" which linked the audience with the patriot founders. And the address also has the formal values of rhythm, harmony and alliteration. Professor Stites finds these values even in a piece of music. Whereas Beethoven's Fifth Symphony does not have an obvious use value, the author argues that its musical patterns are traceable to a period in the evolution of the art when it served practical purposes. And "if we have any musical education whatever, we cannot help thinking of the deafened genius pitting himself against fate," asking the question in the first eight tones and receiving his answer in the later development of the composition. Professor Stites insists that those who deny music such associational values are superficial, and seems to ignore the fact that he could very easily be charged with reading both a use and an association value into the music just to prove his point. The formal value in music is, of course, obvious.

Professor Stites argues mightily for his three values. He denies any soundness to the distinction between fine and applied art. In fact, he sets out to show that all art is fine, and that since "the element of usefulness connects art with our daily living, and the element of association explains our more personal feeling" it seems necessary to include these two values in the study of art. A philosophy of art founded on formal values alone withdraws art "from the very source of its power, the struggle between the economic or sensate and the ideational forces in life." He argues further that "a study of art from the side of formal values alone, withdrawn from the context of associational and useful values, demands as its basis the a priori assumption that purely formal values exist alone or are based upon a separate aesthetic instinct". Experience, he claims, does not support this point of view. This is a somewhat arbitrary way of dismissing from consideration a thesis presented by no less a person than Walter Pater—a sentence of whose, by the way, Professor Stites not only misquotes on page 9, but attributes to Plato—that the value of art lies precisely in its being purely formal. This convenient device of dismissing whatever does not readily fall into his framework with a wave of the hand is unfortunately resorted to frequently by the author. One does not prove a point simply by throwing out of court all those at variance with it.

Professor Stites also recognizes three classes of art, the static, the dynamic and the awe-inspiring. The static work of art is beautiful, the dynamic is energetic, and the awe-inspiring is sublime. This leads him to define art as "an expression of the nature of man in significant patterns which tend to induce feelings for the Beautiful,

the Energetic, and the Sublime." At this point it is pertinent to raise the question whether this definition of art is not purely in terms of form, and is therefore a contradiction of the author's contention that the formal view of art is inadequate because it is insufficient.

With this view of the triple value and the triple nature of art for his foundation, Professor Stites feels that to attain an informed and friendly grasp of art the art education program must lead the student to an understanding of the classics of art, a recognition of the principles of art, the critical use of art principles, and the enjoyment of art through re-creation. In other words, the student must be shown how a great work of art arose from its pertinent cultural pattern, he must become acquainted with the principles of composition in a particular art, he must be convinced that intelligent criticism enhances the creation and enjoyment of fine works of art, and he must be encouraged to take an active part in the creation of the art of his time. The pedagogic method for achieving these four objectives includes geographical and historical study, discovery of formal values in specific art works, the creation of art works by the student based upon these values in the laboratory, with oral and written critical discussion to exercise the critical faculty, and the encouragement of a spirit of communal play in the laboratory work.

The contribution of this book to art education lies in its synthetic approach. Following a chapter on the principles and elements of art structure to be found in nature, each of the historical periods of art is discussed from the cultural, formal and critical points of view. To properly appreciate any work of art the student should first ascertain who made it and what its maker wanted to portray or express. Next he must proceed to learn something about the culture that brought it forth and the relationship of the artist to that culture, in order to discover its social purpose. Then comes the examination of the art work for the way in which formal values are used to express that social purpose so that its effectiveness for that purpose can be determined. Finally, the work should be examined critically by first raising the question "Do I feel drawn to the work of art?" Second, "Does it correspond to my Gothic or Classic mood of art criticism?" Third, "How did it appear to the culture that produced it?" and last, "What is the relation between the formal and associational values within the work, that is, do they balance or does one weigh heavier than the other?"

The book is profusely illustrated, well-written, and every page of it shows the great enthusiasm of its author for his subject.

Carnegie Institute of Technology.

—MAX SCHOEN.

A History of Esthetics by Katharine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, 582 pp. The Macmillan Company, N. Y.

The authors content themselves with leading the serious student progressively from one historical stage to another. "Producers of an historical spectacle", they call themselves, revealing "illustrious and enlightened minds engaged in a discussion of beauty and art." The book deals with every conceivable aspect of aesthetics from madness and poetry to the mathematical canon of beauty, from music to natural science, from the Hellenic ideal of beauty to the Christian, and from medieval and renaissance conceptions of art as represented by Aquinas and Dante, Leonardo and Dürer, to classical German aesthetics as represented by Kant, Goethe, Humboldt and Schiller. All in all, we find here a panorama of the course and progress of artistic creation as well as of human wisdom. In addition, there is an exhaustive treatment of contributory thought-currents. For example, in the section dealing with Kant, all three Critiques are summoned for the purpose of leading the reader to an adequate conception of Kant's theory of art which is foreshadowed in the two earlier Critiques and expounded in the third, the Critique of Judgment.

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FRED O. NOLTE: *Lessing's "Laokoon"*. Lancaster Press, Lancaster, Pa., 1940. 175 pp.

The reader who is attracted to this book by its title will find that he need read only Chapters 1, 2, 3, 10, 15, 16, 17, and parts of 4, 9, 11, 14. These are devoted to a carefully separated exposition and criticism of Lessing's efforts to determine the proper boundaries of painting and poetry. The author describes the *Laokoon* chiefly by displaying its kinship to the rationalist currents of the eighteenth century, especially as they flourished in French criticism and in the Leibnitz-Baumgarten aesthetics. The criticisms urged against Lessing are the best part of the book, but those which deal with the reasoning and data of the *Laokoon* itself are of greater interest than those which chide Lessing for not living in the twentieth century, or at least in the nineteenth. Mr. Nolte is doubtless right in insisting that Lessing had no great appreciation of art and was guilty of *tours de force* in rounding out the symmetry of his *a priori* deductions. Lessing's virtues, on the other hand, far outweigh his faults: "The enduring significance of Lessing's criticism lies, not in the statement of universally acceptable doctrines, but in the consummate formulation of principles that may be profitably reckoned with" (p. 150). Many modern readers in touch with the latest fashions of taste, even though they may agree with Mr. Nolte that the *Laokoon* was a bad illustration for Lessing's own purposes, will be disappointed to see expressed the traditional opinion, with Pater quoted for authority, that the period in which this statue was produced was "decadent."

A Preface or Introduction of some kind would have been helpful to explain the relation of the discussion of Lessing to the remainder of the volume, given over to an exposition of Mr. Nolte's aesthetics and theory of criticism. These sections can hardly be said to display the same degree of excellence as the others, though the fault may lie partly in the limitation of space. The chapters on "The Value of Definitions" and "The Definition of Art" are particularly unconvincing and their deletion would improve the book. The central principles of this aesthetics, which in accordance with the by-now-traditional method is presented as the true synthesis of (pseudo-) classicism and romanticism, are "medium" and "composition." The latter term seems to imply formalism, and, in conjunction with the depreciation of content and the emphasis on exploitation of the medium, comes very near an "art for art's sake" position. Pater, Wilde, and Whistler are quoted several times. Perhaps the best tag would be "medium for medium's sake."

The last chapter, "Criticism for the Sake of Criticism," while containing material that belies the title, is one of the most interesting in the book (no function is served by the strange last paragraph, on Shakespeare's attitude toward the Jew Shylock in contrast to Lessing's attitude toward the Jew Nathan). Criticism is not legislative, or explanatory, or interpretative; in fact, it "has nothing immediate to do with art" (p. 170). Rather it is an end in itself—but it also sharpens the intellect, quickens the senses, regenerates the spirit, frees us from the vulgarity and animalism which art promotes, and preserves our heritage of civilization.

Princeton University.

—D. O. ROBBINS.

DICTIONARY OF THE ARTS

We take pleasure in announcing the formation of an editorial committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Dagobert D. Runes for the preparation of a **DICTIONARY OF THE ARTS** to be published by the Philosophical Library in New York in the spring of 1942. Among the members of the committee are professors Kenneth J. Conant, Stephen C. Pepper, Walter Gropius, Helen H. Parkhurst, Thomas Munro, George Boas, Van Meter Ames, Max Schoen, Lionello Venturi, T. M. Greene, Warren D. Allen, Joseph Hudnut, Carroll C. Pratt, Emmanuel Chapman, Betty Lark-Horovitz, Edward N. Barnhart.

Aesthetic Motive by Elisabeth Schneider. Macmillan, New York, 1939.

On the basis of some highly speculative psychology, Miss Schneider claims that the fundamental aesthetic need is the human mind's perpetual but unconscious desire for oneness of the self with "the world-without". Having thus fortunately located *the* genuine aesthetic problem, an accessory definition of the "central, or original, or characteristic mark" of the aesthetic experience is produced: in brief, "the imaginative symbolic unification of actually or apparently non-unified reality". The triumph of unity over diversity by symbol construction is therefore the essential work of the creative artist. If we discount for the present the vague and too inclusive conception of symbol employed here, we must observe that the aesthetic *motive* is explained equally with the aesthetic *effect* as the result of our "unconscious" striving to recapture the homogeneous selfhood of pre-natal embryonic existence. This seems to be over-working the unity-in-variety theme for no appreciable gains in understanding. It is suspiciously reminiscent of the high priori way when the author refuses to treat, in an empirical and differentiated fashion, the really separate questions of: (1) "primary aesthetic impulse" (and the author assumes there is a simple answer to this complex question!); (2) the creative motive (again in the singular); (3) the appreciative experiences of art or of any kind of aesthetic situation.

But what the author fails to achieve for the foundations of aesthetics, she in part supplies by her sensitive and enterprising suggestions about several vexing elements in aesthetic experience. For example, consult her discussion of freedom in the arts through the domination of medium by form; or the approach to a basic distinction between artistic integrity and propagandizing in art; or the exposure of the delusion of "simplicity" of form and symbol in good art. Aptness in illustration, and suppleness in style are additional reasons for turning to all save the "theory" in Miss Schneider's little essays with friendly expectations.

New York University.

—ADRIENNE KOCH.

LLERENA, JOSE ALFREDO: *Aspectos de la Fe Artística*. Editorial Atahualpa, 1938. Quito, Ecuador. S.A., 70 pp.

This little treatise represents, according to its author, an introductory sketch to what he calls an "artistic faith." Art has in common with philosophy the desire for a total view of things and the aim of directing attention toward the ideal. But whereas the philosopher may be content with the mental construct of his ideal, the artist is forever seeking to express what exceeds his grasp. Art shares the fervor and devotion of religious faith, and desires to identify the object of its devotion with the symbol by which it is represented, but even more than religion it cannot find adequate symbols for the essence of nature which it seeks to express. It has a passion for the infinite.

Art is neither an imitation of objective nature, nor the expression of the temperamental, subjective bias of the artist. It is rather the expression of an inner conflict. Hence there is a tragic element in all great art. After the manner of Kant, the writer maintains that artistic ability and form are not derived from experience but are inherent in the artist. With reference to the historical development of art, both the theory of evolutionary progress and the Spenglerian theory of cycles are rejected in favor of a dialectical theory according to which art is said to follow the line of economic development upon which it depends.

Elmhurst College.

—HERMAN J. SANDER.

NOTES AND NEWS

During the past few months, several steps have been taken by the Carnegie Corporation, at the suggestion of Dr. Thomas Munro, to stimulate work in aesthetics and related subjects. One was a grant of funds to the Cleveland Museum of Art for translating important foreign books and articles in this field. The first product was a translation of the tables of contents of the German *Journal of Aesthetics* (*Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*) from its founding in 1906 until 1939, with a classified index of authors and subjects. This was issued in mimeographed form.

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Art: a Bryn Mawr symposium, by Richard Bernheimer, Rhys Carpenter, K. Koffka, Milton C. Nahm. Bryn Mawr Notes and Monographs IX (1940).

These lectures illustrate an attempt to unify the liberal-arts curriculum by instituting conferences where representatives of different departments, sciences and methods all discuss one topic. Richard Bernheimer, art-historian, thus defends representation as opposed to abstract art; Rhys Carpenter, archaeologist, explains artistic evolution in terms of technical processes and cultural-psychological attitudes, discusses ancient sculpture and modern painting; Koffka, Gestalt psychologist, points out some problems in the psychology of art; Nahm, philosopher, criticizes ideals of form and definitions of art's function.

As mere news, Koffka's contribution is by far the most important: it is this leader of Gestalt's first venture in aesthetics. One cannot do justice to his method or its contents in a brief review which oversimplifies and distorts; such an important document ought to provoke much comment, criticism, contradiction and amplification. The scope of Bernheimer's defense of representation is too vast: his dialectic embraces the whole history of all plastic arts, generalizes too easily, neglects countless possible and often valid objections. But his discussion of symbols develops skilfully an ingenious and fruitful dialectic similar to the *Theory of Signs* of C. W. Morris. Rhys Carpenter's observations are often informative, but his conclusions sometimes seem hasty or glib.

The philosopher's contribution is, alas, the least novel: it reveals the dreadful predicament of aesthetics in an age which knows too many theories, too little method. Nahm rapidly refutes several dialectical theories of art, especially those of Plato and Kant, which seek, in an infinite regress leading to sheer abstraction, to define "absolute" form; then he refutes other dialectics which interpret the function of art in terms of what-have-you. We are thus left with precious little—except all logical method, as opposed to dialectics, and the whole problem of aesthetics as Aristotle illustrates it in his *Poetics*, which Nahm neglects. For formal analysis of individual works of art, or of carefully selected classes of art, can at least reveal what the artist seeks to achieve and how his technique succeeds or fails in this purpose.

University of Kansas City.

—EDOUARD RODITI.

J. M. RICHARDS: "*An Introduction to Modern Architecture.*" Penguin Books, Limited, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1940.

In this book of 126 pages with 32 plates, many ground-plans and diagrams, and an excellent bibliography, the author explains the origin and the character of modern architecture, and the influence of new machinery, building materials and methods on the modern style.

The book is highly recommendable. I only wonder, if Richards in his explanation of the origin of the new style does not lay too great a stress on mechanical things. Let me give an example. It was not the invention of the piano which caused the expressive style of music of 1850-1900. On the contrary, the new sentimental feeling of this period led to a growing discontent with the inexpressive harpsichord and the invention of another instrument which would be more appropriate in the expression of revealing sentiments. At the utmost we can say the piano contributed later to the further development of the new expressive style.

The same applies to modern architecture. The new machinery, building materials, etc. did not cause the modern style, they were only conducive to its further development.

On page 18 Richards turns out to be a cycle-theorist. He professes: "The very rigidity of a system (style?) itself breeds its own destruction: after a rational age the pendulum inevitably swings towards a romantic age".

Thus the whole history of art is, according to Richards, an alternation of Classic and Romantic.

How does this tally with Richards' assertion in the Introduction of his book: "Architecture is a social art, related to the life of the people it serves".

I agree with the latter conception. The style of architecture has always been and will always be the style of life.

Brooklyn College.

—LEO BALET.

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