Clive Bell Art

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PREFACE

IN this little book I have tried to develop a complete theory of visual art. I have put forward an hypothesis by reference to which the respectability, though not the validity, of all aesthetic judgments can be tested, in the light of which the history of art from paleolithic days to the present becomes intelligible, by adopting which we give intellectual backing to an almost universal and immemorial conviction. Everyone in his heart believes that there is a real distinction between works of art and all other objects; this belief my hypothesis justifies. We all feel that art is immensely important; my hypothesis affords reason for thinking it so. In fact, the great merit of this hypothesis of mine is that it seems to explain what we know to be true. Anyone who is curious to discover why we call a Persian carpet or a fresco by Piero della Francesca a work of art, and a portrait-bust of Hadrian or a popular problem-picture rubbish, will here find satisfaction. He will find, too, that to the familiar counters of criticism—*e.g.* "good drawing," "magnificent design," "mechanical," "unfelt," "ill-organised," "sensitive,"—is given, what such terms sometimes lack, a definite meaning. In a word, my hypothesis works; that is unusual: to some it has seemed not only workable but true; that is miraculous almost.

In fifty or sixty thousand words, though one may develop a theory adequately, one cannot pretend to develop it exhaustively. My book is a simplification. I have tried to make a generalisation about the nature of art that shall be at once true, coherent, and comprehensible. I have sought a theory which should explain the whole of my aesthetic experience and suggest a solution of every problem, but I have not attempted to answer in detail all the questions that proposed themselves, or to follow any one of them

along its slenderest ramifications. The science of aesthetics is a complex business and so is the history of art; my hope has been to write about them something simple and true. For instance, though I have indicated very clearly, and even repetitiously, what I take to be essential in a work of art, I have not discussed as fully as I might have done the relation of the essential to the unessential. There is a great deal more to be said about the mind of the artist and the nature of the artistic problem. It remains for someone who is an artist, a psychologist, and an expert in human limitations to tell us how far the unessential is a necessary means to the essential—to tell us whether it is easy or difficult or impossible for the artist to destroy every rung in the ladder by which he has climbed to the stars.

My first chapter epitomises discussions and conversations and long strands of cloudy speculation which, condensed to solid argument, would still fill two or three stout volumes: some day, perhaps, I shall write one of them if my critics are rash enough to provoke me. As for my third chapter—a sketch of the history of fourteen hundred years—that it is a simplification goes without saying. Here I have used a series of historical generalisations to illustrate my theory; and here, again, I believe in my theory, and am persuaded that anyone who will consider the history of art in its light will find that history more intelligible than of old. At the same time I willingly admit that in fact the contrasts are less violent, the hills less precipitous, than they must be made to appear in a chart of this sort. Doubtless it would be well if this chapter also were expanded into half a dozen readable volumes, but that it cannot be until the learned authorities have learnt to write or some writer has learnt to be patient.

Those conversations and discussions that have tempered and burnished the theories advanced in my first chapter have been carried on for the most part with Mr. Roger Fry, to whom, therefore, I owe a debt that defies exact computation. In the first place, I can thank him, as joint-editor of *The Burlington Magazine,* for permission to reprint some part of an essay contributed by me to that periodical. That

obligation discharged, I come to a more complicated reckoning. The first time I met Mr. Fry, in a railway carriage plying between Cambridge and London, we fell into talk about contemporary art and its relation to all other art; it seems to me sometimes that we have been talking about the same thing ever since, but my friends assure me that it is not quite so bad as that. Mr. Fry, I remember, had recently become familiar with the modern French masters —Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse: I enjoyed the advantage of a longer acquaintance. Already, however, Mr. Fry had published his *Essay in Aesthetics*, which, to my thinking, was the most helpful contribution to the science that had been made since the days of Kant. We talked a good deal about that essay, and then we discussed the possibility of a "Post-Impressionist" Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries. We did not call it "Post-Impressionist"; the word was invented later by Mr. Fry, which makes me think it a little hard that the more advanced critics should so often upbraid him for not knowing what "Post-Impressionism" means.

For some years Mr. Fry and I have been arguing, more or less amicably, about the principles of aesthetics. We still disagree profoundly. I like to think that I have not moved an inch from my original position, but I must confess that the cautious doubts and reservations that have insinuated themselves into this Preface are all indirect consequences of my friend's criticism. And it is not only of general ideas and fundamental things that we have talked; Mr. Fry and I have wrangled for hours about particular works of art. In such cases the extent to which one may have affected the judgment of the other cannot possibly be appraised, nor need it be: neither of us, I think, covets the doubtful honours of proselytism. Surely whoever appreciates a fine work of art may be allowed the exquisite pleasure of supposing that he has made a discovery? Nevertheless, since all artistic theories are based on aesthetic judgments, it is clear that should one affect the judgments of another, he may affect, indirectly, some of his theories; and it is certain that some of my historical generalisations have been modified,

and even demolished, by Mr. Fry. His task was not arduous: he had merely to confront me with some work over which he was sure that I should go into ecstasies, and then to prove by the most odious and irrefragable evidence that it belonged to a period which I had concluded, on the highest *a priori* grounds, to be utterly barren. I can only hope that Mr. Fry's scholarship has been as profitable to me as it has been painful: I have travelled with him through France, Italy, and the near East, suffering acutely, not always, I am glad to remember, in silence; for the man who stabs a generalisation with a fact forfeits all claim on good-fellowship and the usages of polite society.

I have to thank my friend Mr. Vernon Rendall for permission to make what use I chose of the articles I have contributed from time to time to *The Athenaeum:* if I have made any use of what belongs by law to the proprietors of other papers I herewith offer the customary dues. My readers will be as grateful as I to M. Vignier, M. Druet, and Mr. Kevorkian, of the Persian Art Gallery, since it is they who have made it certain that the purchaser will get something he likes for his money. To Mr. Eric Maclagan of South Kensington, and Mr. Joyce of the British Museum, I owe a more private and particular debt. My wife has been good enough to read both the MS. and proof of this book; she has corrected some errors, and called attention to the more glaring offences against Christian charity. You must not attempt, therefore, to excuse the author on the ground of inadvertence or haste.

CLIVE BELL

November 1913

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

To bring *Art* up to date, that is to make what I thought and felt in 1911 and 1912 square with what I think and feel to-day, would be to write a new book. That I shall not do: for one thing because I am lazy; for another because, if *Art* has any value for future generations it will be as a record of what people like myself were thinking and feeling in the years before the first War. So let exaggerations, childish simplifications and injustices stand.

Some errors have been rectified in this or earlier editions; of these the most surprising—one that survived for years in numerous editions produced in this country and America—was the printing of "Gaugin" for Gauguin. It is surely to the credit of reviewers of my generation, many of whom were not much in love with my ideas, that not one thought fit to reproach me with this misprint—except Professor Tonks who was not a reviewer. Whether it was magnanimity that prevented them espying a gross tautology in my statement of the aesthetic hypothesis I cannot be sure: this stain, I may say, was obliterated long ago. To the best of my belief I have never been taken to task for a sentence (it is still there) which ranks Seurat slightingly with Signac and Cross. For this judgment my only excuse was that I had seen very little of the master's work, and that, of course, is no excuse for anyone who has taken it on himself to favour the public with his views. On the other hand, I would like to make some apology for a denigratory note which, in another book, *Landmarks in Nineteenth Century Painting,* I let fly at Degas. Degas was a great, a very great, artist; but I had been exasperated by a fashion, at one time prevalent amongst English people who knew very little of French painting, of belauding the Beach Scene in the Tate at the expense of better pictures.

La Plage is far from being one of Degas' masterpieces; but it is brilliant, and brilliant in a way that can be easily appreciated. I was indignant, and, as generally happens when one is in that exalted state, said something silly.

These are particular blemishes; the more general faults of this book are not altogether unbecoming to youth. The tone is too confident and too pugnacious. A whiff of propaganda emanates from pages where propaganda is out of place; but you must remember that "the battle of Post-Impressionism" had just been joined. The best that even Sickert would say for Cézanne, in 1911, was that he was "un grand raté," while Sargent called him a "botcher," and the director of the Tate Gallery refused to hang his pictures. Van Gogh was denounced every day almost as an incompetent and vulgar madman; M. Jacques-Emile Blanche informed us that, when cleaning his palette, he often produced something better than a Gauguin; and when Roger Fry showed a Matisse to the Art-Workers Guild the cry went up "drink or drugs?" To lose one's temper with "Art-Workers" or a Slade professor may be silly, but do not forget that honoured artists and critics—to say nothing of novelists, poets, judges, bishops, politicians and biologists—joined in the cry. Hark to Sickert: "Matisse has all the worst art-school tricks" . . . "Picasso, like all Whistler's followers, has annexed Whistler's empty background without annexing the one quality by which Whistler made his empty background interesting." Perhaps we did well to be angry. Nevertheless, anyone who reads this book will see that, being angry, I speak absurdly and impertinently of the giants of the High Renaissance, that I under-rate the eighteenth century, and that I think it necessary, for ridiculous doctrinaire reasons, to qualify my admiration for the Impressionists. The tone of the book, as I said, is too confident besides being aggressive. The generalisations are too sweeping; the history of fourteen hundred years, which is told in seventy-five pages, is told, not as it should be told if it is to be told so briefly, in black and white, but in violently contrasted colours: also some of the colours are false. Besides all this, there is a

deal of optimism which has been made to look funny by the events of the last thirty-five years; but then events were not under the author's control. And yet, re-reading *Art*, and taking into account all, but I think no more than all, the extenuating circumstances that may be urged in its defence, I cannot but feel a little envious of the adventurous young man who wrote it.

CLIVE BELL

CHARLESTON, *October* 1948

I
WHAT IS ART?

I. THE AESTHETIC HYPOTHESIS
II. AESTHETICS AND POST-IMPRESSIONISM
III. THE METAPHYSICAL HYPOTHESIS

1. THE AESTHETIC HYPOTHESIS

IT IS improbable that more nonsense has been written about aesthetics than about anything else: the literature of the subject is not large enough for that. It is certain, however, that about no subject with which I am acquainted has so little been said that is at all to the purpose. The explanation is discoverable. He who would elaborate a plausible theory of aesthetics must possess two qualities—artistic sensibility and a turn for clear thinking. Without sensibility a man can have no aesthetic experience, and, obviously, theories not based on broad and deep aesthetic experience are worthless. Only those for whom art is a constant source of passionate emotion can possess the data from which profitable theories may be deduced; but to deduce profitable theories even from accurate data involves a certain amount of brain-work, and, unfortunately, robust intellects and delicate sensibilities are not inseparable. As often as not, the hardest thinkers have had no aesthetic experience whatever. I have a friend blessed with an intellect as keen as a drill, who, though he takes an interest in aesthetics, has never during a life of almost forty years been guilty of an aesthetic emotion. So, having no faculty for distinguishing a work of art from a handsaw, he is apt to rear up a pyramid of irrefragable argument on the hypothesis that a handsaw is a work of art. This defect robs his perspicuous and subtle reasoning of much of its value; for it has ever been a maxim that faultless logic can win but little credit for conclusions that are based on premises notoriously false. Every cloud, however, has its silver lining, and this insensibility, though unlucky in that it makes my friend incapable of choosing a sound basis for his argument, mercifully blinds him to the absurdity of his conclusions while leaving him in full enjoyment of

his masterly dialectic. People who set out from the hypothesis that Sir Edwin Landseer was the finest painter that ever lived will feel no uneasiness about an aesthetic which proves that Giotto was the worst. So, my friend, when he arrives very logically at the conclusion that a work of art should be small or round or smooth, or that to appreciate fully a picture you should pace smartly before it or set it spinning like a top, cannot guess why I ask him whether he has lately been to Cambridge, a place he sometimes visits.

On the other hand, people who respond immediately and surely to works of art, though, in my judgment, more enviable than men of massive intellect but slight sensibility, are often quite as incapable of talking sense about aesthetics. Their heads are not always very clear. They possess the data on which any system must be based; but, generally, they want the power that draws correct inferences from true data. Having received aesthetic emotions from works of art, they are in a position to seek out the quality common to all that have moved them, but, in fact, they do nothing of the sort. I do not blame them. Why should they bother to examine their feelings when for them to feel is enough? Why should they stop to think when they are not very good at thinking? Why should they hunt for a common quality in all objects that move them in a particular way when they can linger over the many delicious and peculiar charms of each as it comes? So, if they write criticism and call it aesthetics, if they imagine that they are talking about Art when they are talking about particular works of art or even about the technique of painting, if loving particular works they find tedious the consideration of art in general, perhaps they have chosen the better part. If they are not curious about the nature of their emotion, nor about the quality common to all objects that provoke it, they have my sympathy, and, as what they say is often charming and suggestive, my admiration too. Only let no one suppose that what they write and talk is aesthetics; it is criticism, or just "shop."

The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be

the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art. I do not mean, of course, that all works provoke the same emotion. On the contrary, every work produces a different emotion. But all these emotions are recognisably the same in kind; so far, at any rate, the best opinion is on my side. That there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, &c., &c., is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects.

For either all works of visual art have some common quality, or when we speak of "works of art" we gibber. Everyone speaks of "art," making a mental classification by which he distinguishes the class "works of art" from all other classes. What is the justification of this classification? What is the quality common and peculiar to all members of this class? Whatever it be, no doubt it is often found in company with other qualities; but they are adventitious —it is essential. There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne? Only one answer seems possible —significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of

lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.

At this point it may be objected that I am making aesthetics a purely subjective business, since my only data are personal experiences of a particular emotion. It will be said that the objects that provoke this emotion vary with each individual, and that therefore a system of aesthetics can have no objective validity. It must be replied that any system of aesthetics which pretends to be based on some objective truth is so palpably ridiculous as not to be worth discussing. We have no other means of recognising a work of art than our feeling for it. The objects that provoke aesthetic emotion vary with each individual. Aesthetic judgments are, as the saying goes, matters of taste; and about tastes, as everyone is proud to admit, there is no disputing. A good critic may be able to make me see in a picture that had left me cold things that I had overlooked, till at last, receiving the aesthetic emotion, I recognise it as a work of art. To be continually pointing out those parts, the sum, or rather the combination, of which unite to produce significant form, is the function of criticism. But it is useless for a critic to tell me that something is a work of art; he must make me feel it for myself. This he can do only by making me see; he must get at my emotions through my eyes. Unless he can make me see something that moves me, he cannot force my emotions. I have no right to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally; and I have no right to look for the essential quality in anything that I have not *felt* to be a work of art. The critic can affect my aesthetic theories only by affecting my aesthetic experience. All systems of aesthetics must be based on personal experience—that is to say, they must be subjective.

Yet, though all aesthetic theories must be based on aesthetic judgments, and ultimately all aesthetic judgments must be matters of personal taste, it would be rash to assert that no theory of aesthetics can have general validity. For, though A, B, C, D are the works that move me, and

A, D, E, F the works that move you, it may well be that *x* is the only quality believed by either of us to be common to all the works in his list. We may all agree about aesthetics, and yet differ about particular works of art. We may differ as to the presence or absence of the quality *x*. My immediate object will be to show that significant form is the only quality common and peculiar to all the works of visual art that move me; and I will ask those whose aesthetic experience does not tally with mine to see whether this quality is not also, in their judgment, common to all works that move them, and whether they can discover any other quality of which the same can be said.

Also at this point a query arises, irrelevant indeed, but hardly to be suppressed: "Why are we so profoundly moved by forms related in a particular way?" The question is extremely interesting, but irrelevant to aesthetics. In pure aesthetics we have only to consider our emotion and its object: for the purposes of aesthetics we have no right, neither is there any necessity, to pry behind the object into the state of mind of him who made it. Later, I shall attempt to answer the question; for by so doing I may be able to develop my theory of the relation of art to life. I shall not, however, be under the delusion that I am rounding off my theory of aesthetics. For a discussion of aesthetics, it need be agreed only that forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws do move us in a particular way, and that it is the business of an artist so to combine and arrange them that they shall move us. These moving combinations and arrangements I have called, for the sake of convenience and for a reason that will appear later, "Significant Form."

A third interruption has to be met.

"Are you forgetting about colour?" someone inquires. Certainly not; my term "significant form" included combinations of lines and of colours. The distinction between form and colour is an unreal one; you cannot conceive a colourless line or a colourless space; neither can you conceive a formless relation of colours. In a black and white drawing the spaces are all white and all are bounded by black lines;

in most oil paintings the spaces are multi-coloured and so are the boundaries; you cannot imagine a boundary line without any content, or a content without a boundary line. Therefore, when I speak of significant form, I mean a combination of lines and colours (counting white and black as colours) that moves me aesthetically.

Some people may be surprised at my not having called this "beauty." Of course, to those who define beauty as "combinations of lines and colours that provoke aesthetic emotion," I willingly concede the right of substituting their word for mine. But most of us, however strict we may be, are apt to apply the epithet "beautiful" to objects that do not provoke that peculiar emotion produced by works of art. Everyone, I suspect, has called a butterfly or a flower beautiful. Does anyone feel the same kind of emotion for a butterfly or a flower that he feels for a cathedral or a picture? Surely, it is not what I call an aesthetic emotion that most of us feel, generally, for natural beauty. I shall suggest, later, that some people may, occasionally, see in nature what we see in art, and feel for her an aesthetic emotion; but I am satisfied that, as a rule, most people feel a very different kind of emotion for birds and flowers and the wings of butterflies from that which they feel for pictures, pots, temples and statues. Why these beautiful things do not move us as works of art move is another, and not an aesthetic, question. For our immediate purpose we have to discover only what quality is common to objects that do move us as works of art. In the last part of this chapter, when I try to answer the question—"Why are we so profoundly moved by some combinations of lines and colours?" I shall hope to offer an acceptable explanation of why we are less profoundly moved by others.

Since we call a quality that does not raise the characteristic aesthetic emotion "Beauty," it would be misleading to call by the same name the quality that does. To make "beauty" the object of the aesthetic emotion, we must give to the word an over-strict and unfamiliar definition. Everyone sometimes uses "beauty" in an unaesthetic sense; most people habitually do so. To everyone, except perhaps here

and there an occasional aesthete, the commonest sense of the word is unaesthetic. Of its grosser abuse, patent in our chatter about "beautiful huntin'" and "beautiful shootin'," I need not take account; it would be open to the precious to reply that they never do so abuse it. Besides, here there is no danger of confusion between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic use; but when we speak of a beautiful woman there is. When an ordinary man speaks of a beautiful woman he certainly does not mean only that she moves him aesthetically; but when an artist calls a withered old hag beautiful he may sometimes mean what he means when he calls a battered torso beautiful. The ordinary man, if he be also a man of taste, will call the battered torso beautiful, but he will not call a withered hag beautiful because, in the matter of women, it is not to the aesthetic quality that the hag may possess, but to some other quality that he assigns the epithet. Indeed, most of us never dream of going for aesthetic emotions to human beings, from whom we ask something very different. This "something," when we find it in a young woman, we are apt to call "beauty." We live in a nice age. With the man-in-the-street "beautiful" is more often than not synonymous with "desirable"; the word does not necessarily connote any aesthetic reaction whatever, and I am tempted to believe that in the minds of many the sexual flavour of the word is stronger than the aesthetic. I have noticed a consistency in those to whom the most beautiful thing in the world is a beautiful woman, and the next most beautiful thing a picture of one. The confusion between aesthetic and sensual beauty is not in their case so great as might be supposed. Perhaps there is none; for perhaps they have never had an aesthetic emotion to confuse with their other emotions. The art that they call "beautiful" is generally closely related to the women. A beautiful picture is a photograph of a pretty girl; beautiful music, the music that provokes emotions similar to those provoked by young ladies in musical farces; and beautiful poetry, the poetry that recalls the same emotions felt, twenty years earlier, for the rector's daughter. Clearly the word "beauty" is used to connote the objects of quite

distinguishable emotions, and that is a reason for not employing a term which would land me inevitably in confusions and misunderstandings with my readers.

On the other hand, with those who judge it more exact to call these combinations and arrangements of form that provoke our aesthetic emotions, not "significant form," but "significant relations of form," and then try to make the best of two worlds, the aesthetic and the metaphysical, by calling these relations "rhythm," I have no quarrel whatever. Having made it clear that by "significant form" I mean arrangements and combinations that move us in a particular way, I willingly join hands with those who prefer to give a different name to the same thing.

The hypothesis that significant form is the essential quality in a work of art has at least one merit denied to many more famous and more striking—it does help to explain things. We are all familiar with pictures that interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art. To this class belongs what I call "Descriptive Painting"—that is, painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information. Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations, illustrations of all sorts, belong to this class. That we all recognize the distinction is clear, for who has not said that such and such a drawing was excellent as illustration, but as a work of art worthless? Of course many descriptive pictures possess, amongst other qualities, formal significance, and are therefore works of art: but many more do not. They interest us; they may move us too in a hundred different ways, but they do not move us aesthetically. According to my hypothesis they are not works of art. They leave untouched our aesthetic emotions because it is not their forms but the ideas or information suggested or conveyed by their forms that affect us.

Few pictures are better known or liked than Frith's "Paddington Station"; certainly I should be the last to grudge it its popularity. Many a weary forty minutes have

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I whiled away disentangling its fascinating incidents and forging for each an imaginary past and an improbable future. But certain though it is that Frith's masterpiece, or engravings of it, have provided thousands with half-hours of curious and fanciful pleasure, it is not less certain that no one has experienced before it one half-second of aesthetic rapture—and this although the picture contains several pretty passages of colour, and is by no means badly painted. "Paddington Station" is not a work of art; it is an interesting and amusing document. In it line and colour are used to recount anecdotes, suggest ideas, and indicate the manners and customs of an age: they are not used to provoke aesthetic emotion. Forms and the relations of forms were for Frith not objects of emotion, but means of suggesting emotion and conveying ideas.

The ideas and information conveyed by "Paddington Station" are so amusing and so well presented that the picture has considerable value and is well worth preserving. But, with the perfection of photographic processes and of the cinematograph, pictures of this sort are becoming otiose. Who doubts that one of those *Daily Mirror* photographers in collaboration with a *Daily Mail* reporter can tell us far more about "London day by day" than any Royal Academician? For an account of manners and fashions we shall go, in future, to photographs, supported by a little bright journalism, rather than to descriptive painting. Had the imperial academicians of Nero, instead of manufacturing incredibly loathsome imitations of the antique, recorded in fresco and mosaic the manners and fashions of their day, their stuff, though artistic rubbish, would now be an historical gold-mine. If only they had been Friths instead of being Alma Tademas! But photography has made impossible any such transmutation of modern rubbish. Therefore it must be confessed that pictures in the Frith tradition are grown superfluous; they merely waste the hours of able men who might be more profitably employed in works of a wider beneficence. Still, they are not unpleasant, which is more than can be said for that kind of descriptive painting of which "The Doctor" is

the most flagrant example. Of course "The Doctor" is not a work of art. In it form is not used as an object of emotion, but as a means of suggesting emotions. This alone suffices to make it nugatory; it is worse than nugatory because the emotion it suggests is false. What it suggests is not pity and admiration but a sense of complacency in our own pitifulness and generosity. It is sentimental. Art is above morals, or, rather, all art is moral because, as I hope to show presently, works of art are immediate means to good. Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist. But descriptive pictures which are not works of art, and, therefore, are not necessarily means to good states of mind, are proper objects of the ethical philosopher's attention. Not being a work of art, "The Doctor" has none of the immense ethical value possessed by all objects that provoke aesthetic ecstasy; and the state of mind to which it is a means, as illustration, appears to me undesirable.

The works of those enterprising young men, the Italian Futurists, are notable examples of descriptive painting. Like the Royal Academicians, they use form, not to provoke aesthetic emotions, but to convey information and ideas. Indeed, the published theories of the Futurists prove that their pictures ought to have nothing whatever to do with art. Their social and political theories are respectable, but I would suggest to young Italian painters that it is possible to become a Futurist in thought and action and yet remain an artist, if one has the luck to be born one. To associate art with politics is always a mistake. Futurist pictures are descriptive because they aim at presenting in line and colour the chaos of the mind at a particular moment; their forms are not intended to promote aesthetic emotion but to convey information. These forms, by the way, whatever may be the nature of the ideas they suggest, are themselves anything but revolutionary. In such Futurist pictures as I have seen—perhaps I should except some by Severini—the drawing, whenever it becomes representative as it frequently does, is found to be in that soft and common

convention brought into fashion by Besnard some thirty years ago, and much affected by Beaux-Art students ever since. As works of art, the Futurist pictures are negligible; but they are not to be judged as works of art. A good Futurist picture would succeed as a good piece of psychology succeeds; it would reveal, through line and colour, the complexities of an interesting state of mind. If Futurist pictures seem to fail, we must seek an explanation, not in a lack of artistic qualities that they never were intended to possess, but rather in the minds the states of which they are intended to reveal.

Most people who care much about art find that of the work that moves them most the greater part is what scholars call "Primitive." Of course there are bad primitives. For instance, I remember going, full of enthusiasm, to see one of the earliest Romanesque churches in Poitiers (Notre-Dame-la-Grande), and finding it as ill-proportioned, over-decorated, coarse, fat and heavy as any better class building by one of those highly civilised architects who flourished a thousand years earlier or eight hundred later. But such exceptions are rare. As a rule primitive art is good—and here again my hypothesis is helpful—for, as a rule, it is also free from descriptive qualities. In primitive art you will find no accurate representation; you will find only significant form. Yet no other art moves us so profoundly. Whether we consider Sumerian sculpture or pre-dynastic Egyptian art, or archaic Greek, or the Wei and T'ang masterpieces,[1] or those early Japanese works of which I had the luck to see a few superb examples (especially two wooden Bodhisattvas) at the Shepherd's

[1] The existence of the Ku K'ai-chih makes it clear that the art of this period (fifth to eighth centuries), was a typical primitive movement. To call the great vital art of the Liang, Chen, Wei, and Tang dynasties a development out of the exquisitely refined and exhausted art of the Han decadence—from which Ku K'ai-chih is a delicate straggler—is to call Romanesque sculpture a development out of Praxiteles. Between the two something has happened to refill the stream of art. What had happened in China was the spiritual and emotional revolution that followed the onset of Buddhism.

Bush Exhibition in 1910, or whether, coming nearer home, we consider the primitive Byzantine art of the sixth century and its primitive developments amongst the Western barbarians, or, turning far afield, we consider that mysterious and majestic art that flourished in Central and South America before the coming of the white men, in every case we observe three common characteristics—absence of representation, absence of technical swagger, sublimely impressive form. Nor is it hard to discover the connection between these three. Formal significance loses itself in preoccupation with exact representation and ostentatious cunning.[1]

Naturally, it is said that if there is little representation and less saltimbancery in primitive art, that is because the primitives were unable to catch a likeness or cut intellectual capers. The contention is beside the point. There is truth in it, no doubt, though, were I a critic whose reputation depended on a power of impressing the public with a semblance of knowledge, I should be more cautious about urging it than such people generally are. For to suppose that the Byzantine masters wanted skill, or could not have created an illusion had they wished to do so, seems to imply ignorance of the amazingly dexterous realism of the

[1] This is not to say that exact representation is bad in itself. It is indifferent. A perfectly represented form may be significant, only it is fatal to sacrifice significance to representation. The quarrel between significance and illusion seems to be as old as art itself, and I have little doubt that what makes most palaeolithic art so bad is a preoccupation with exact representation. Evidently palaeolithic draughtsmen had no sense of the significance of form. Their art resembles that of the more capable and sincere Royal Academicians: it is a little higher than that of Sir Edward Poynter and a little lower than that of the late Lord Leighton. That this is no paradox let the cave-drawings of Altamira, or such works as the sketches of horses found at Bruniquel and now in the British Museum, bear witness. If the ivory head of a girl from the Grotte du Pape, Brassempouy (*Musée St. Germain*) and the ivory torso found at the same place (*Collection St. Cric*), be, indeed, palaeolithic, then there were good palaeolithic artists who created and did not imitate form. Neolithic art is, of course, a very different matter.

notoriously bad works of that age. Very often, I fear, the misrepresentation of the primitives must be attributed to what the critics call, "wilful distortion." Be that as it may, the point is that, either from want of skill or want of will, primitives neither create illusions, nor make display of extravagant accomplishment, but concentrate their energies on the one thing needful—the creation of form. Thus have they created the finest works of art that we possess.

Let no one imagine that representation is bad in itself; a realistic form may be as significant, in its place as part of the design, as an abstract. But if a representative form has value, it as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life. The pure mathematician rapt in his studies knows a state of mind which I take to be similar, if not identical. He feels an emotion for his speculations which arises from no perceived relation between them and the lives of men, but springs, inhuman or super-human, from the heart of an abstract science. I wonder, sometimes, whether the appreciators of art and of mathematical solutions are not even more closely allied. Before we feel an aesthetic emotion for a combination of forms, do we not perceive intellectually the rightness and necessity of the combination? If we do, it would explain the fact that passing rapidly through a room we recognise a picture to be good, although we cannot say that it has provoked much emotion. We seem to have recognised intellectually the rightness of its forms without staying to fix our attention, and collect, as it were, their emotional significance. If this were so, it would be permissible to inquire whether it was the forms themselves or our perception of their rightness and necessity that caused aesthetic emotion. But I do not think I need linger to

discuss the matter here. I have been inquiring why certain combinations of forms move us; I should not have travelled by other roads had I enquired, instead, why certain combinations are perceived to be right and necessary, and why our perception of their rightness and necessity is moving. What I have to say is this: the rapt philosopher, and he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own; that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life find no place. It is a world with emotions of its own.

To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space. That bit of knowledge, I admit, is essential to the appreciation of many great works, since many of the most moving forms ever created are in three dimensions. To see a cube or a rhomboid as a flat pattern is to lower its significance, and a sense of three-dimensional space is essential to the full appreciation of most architectural forms. Pictures which would be insignificant if we saw them as flat patterns are profoundly moving because, in fact, we see them as related planes. If the representation of three-dimensional space is to be called "representation," then I agree that there is one kind of representation which is not irrelevant. Also, I agree that along with our feeling for line and colour we must bring with us our knowledge of space if we are to make the most of every kind of form. Nevertheless, there are magnificent designs to an appreciation of which this knowledge is not necessary: so, though it is not irrelevant to the appreciation of some works of art it is not essential to the appreciation of all. What we must say is that the representation of three-dimensional space is neither irrelevant nor essential to all art, and that every other sort of representation is irrelevant.

That there is an irrelevant representative or descriptive element in many great works of art is not in the least surprising. Why it is not surprising I shall try to show elsewhere. Representation is not of necessity baneful, and highly realistic forms may be extremely significant. Very

often, however, representation is a sign of weakness in an artist. A painter too feeble to create forms that provoke more than a little aesthetic emotion will try to eke that little out by suggesting the emotions of life. To evoke the emotions of life he must use representation. Thus a man will paint an execution, and, fearing to miss with his first barrel of significant form, will try to hit with his second by raising an emotion of fear or pity. But if in the artist an inclination to play upon the emotions of life is often the sign of a flickering inspiration, in the spectator a tendency to seek, behind form, the emotions of life is a sign of defective sensibility always. It means that his aesthetic emotions are weak or, at any rate, imperfect. Before a work of art people who feel little or no emotion for pure form find themselves at a loss. They are deaf men at a concert. They know that they are in the presence of something great, but they lack the power of apprehending it. They know that they ought to feel for it a tremendous emotion, but it happens that the particular kind of emotion it can raise is one that they can feel hardly or not at all. And so they read into the forms of the work those facts and ideas for which they are capable of feeling emotion, and feel for them the emotions that they can feel—the ordinary emotions of life. When confronted by a picture, instinctively they refer back its forms to the world from which they came. They treat created form as though it were imitated form, a picture as though it were a photograph. Instead of going out on the stream of art into a new world of aesthetic experience, they turn a sharp corner and come straight home to the world of human interests. For them the significance of a work of art depends on what they bring to it; no new thing is added to their lives, only the old material is stirred. A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy: to use art as a means to the emotions of life is to use a telescope for reading the news. You will notice that people who cannot feel pure aesthetic emotions remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people who can, as often as not, have no idea what the

subject of a picture is. They have never noticed the representative element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about the shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colours. Often they can tell by the quality of a single line whether or no a man is a good artist. They are concerned only with lines and colours, their relations and quantities and qualities; but from these they win an emotion more profound and far more sublime than any that can be given by the description of facts and ideas.

This last sentence has a very confident ring—over-confident, some may think. Perhaps I shall be able to justify it, and make my meaning clearer too, if I give an account of my own feelings about music. I am not really musical. I do not understand music well. I find musical form exceedingly difficult to apprehend, and I am sure that the profounder subtleties of harmony and rhythm more often than not escape me. The form of a musical composition must be simple indeed if I am to grasp it honestly. My opinion about music is not worth having. Yet, sometimes, at a concert, though my appreciation of the music is limited and humble, it is pure. Sometimes, though I have a poor understanding, I have a clean palate. Consequently, when I am feeling bright and clear and intent, at the beginning of a concert for instance, when something that I can grasp is being played, I get from music that pure aesthetic emotion that I get from visual art. It is less intense, and the rapture is evanescent; I understand music too ill for music to transport me far into the world of pure aesthetic ecstasy. But at moments I do appreciate music as pure musical form, as sounds combined according to the laws of a mysterious necessity, as pure art with a tremendous significance of its own and no relation whatever to the significance of life; and in those moments I lose myself in that infinitely sublime state of mind to which pure visual form transports me. How inferior is my normal state of mind at a concert. Tired or perplexed, I let slip my sense of form, my aesthetic emotion collapses, and I begin weaving into the harmonies, that I cannot grasp, the ideas of life. Incapable of feeling the austere emotions of art,

I begin to read into the musical forms human emotions of terror and mystery, love and hate, and spend the minutes, pleasantly enough, in a world of turbid and inferior feeling. At such times, were the grossest pieces of onomatopoeic representation—the song of a bird, the galloping of horses, the cries of children, or the laughing of demons—to be introduced into the symphony, I should not be offended. Very likely I should be pleased; they would afford new points of departure for new trains of romantic feeling or heroic thought. I know very well what has happened. I have been using art as a means to the emotions of life and reading into it the ideas of life. I have been cutting blocks with a razor. I have tumbled from the superb peaks of aesthetic exaltation to the snug foot-hills of warm humanity. It is a jolly country. No one need be ashamed of enjoying himself there. Only no one who has ever been on the heights can help feeling a little crest-fallen in the cosy valleys. And let no one imagine, because he has made merry in the warm tilth and quaint nooks of romance, that he can even guess at the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art.

About music most people are as willing to be humble as I am. If they cannot grasp musical form and win from it a pure aesthetic emotion, they confess that they understand music imperfectly or not at all. They recognise quite clearly that there is a difference between the feeling of the musician for pure music and that of the cheerful concert-goer for what music suggests. The latter enjoys his own emotions, as he has every right to do, and recognises their inferiority. Unfortunately, people are apt to be less modest about their powers of appreciating visual art. Everyone is inclined to believe that out of pictures, at any rate, he can get all that there is to be got; everyone is ready to cry "humbug" and "impostor" at those who say that more can be had. The good faith of people who feel pure aesthetic emotions is called in question by those who have never felt anything of the sort. It is the prevalence of the representative element, I suppose, that makes the man in the street so

sure that he knows a good picture when he sees one. For I have noticed that in matters of architecture, pottery, textiles, &c., ignorance and ineptitude are more willing to defer to the opinions of those who have been blest with peculiar sensibility. It is a pity that cultivated and intelligent men and women cannot be induced to believe that a great gift of aesthetic appreciation is at least as rare in visual as in musical art. A comparison of my own experience in both has enabled me to discriminate very clearly between pure and impure appreciation. Is it too much to ask that others should be as honest about their feelings for pictures as I have been about mine for music? For I am certain that most of those who visit galleries do feel very much what I feel at concerts. They have their moments of pure ecstasy; but the moments are short and unsure. Soon they fall back into the world of human interests and feel emotions, good no doubt, but inferior. I do not dream of saying that what they get from art is bad or nugatory; I say that they do not get the best that art can give. I do not say that they cannot understand art; rather I say that they cannot understand the state of mind of those who understand it best. I do not say that art means nothing or little to them; I say they miss its full significance. I do not suggest for one moment that their appreciation of art is a thing to be ashamed of; the majority of the charming and intelligent people with whom I am acquainted appreciate visual art impurely; and, by the way, the appreciation of almost all great writers has been impure. But provided that there be some fraction of pure aesthetic emotion, even a mixed and minor appreciation of art is, I am sure, one of the most valuable things in the world—so valuable, indeed, that in my giddier moments I have been tempted to believe that art might prove the world's salvation.

Yet, though the echoes and shadows of art enrich the life of the plains, her spirit dwells on the mountains. To him who woos, but woos impurely, she returns enriched what is brought. Like the sun, she warms the good seed in good soil and causes it to bring forth good fruit. But only to the perfect lover does she give a new strange gift

—a gift beyond all price. Imperfect lovers bring to art and take away the ideas and emotions of their own age and civilisation. In twelfth-century Europe a man might have been greatly moved by a Romanesque church and found nothing in a T'ang picture. To a man of a later age, Greek sculpture meant much and Mexican nothing, for only to the former could he bring a crowd of associated ideas to be the objects of familiar emotions. But the perfect lover, he who can feel the profound significance of form, is raised above the accidents of time and place. To him the problems of archaeology, history, and hagiography are impertinent. If the forms of a work are significant its provenance is irrelevant. Before the grandeur of those Sumerian figures in the Louvre he is carried on the same flood of emotion to the same aesthetic ecstasy as, more than four thousand years ago, the Chaldean lover was carried. It is the mark of great art that its appeal is universal and eternal.[1] Significant form stands charged with the power to provoke aesthetic emotion in anyone capable of feeling it. The ideas of men go buzz and die like gnats; men change their institutions and their customs

[1] Mr. Roger Fry permits me to make use of an interesting story that will illustrate my view. When Mr. Okakura, the Government editor of *The Temple Treasures of Japan*, first came to Europe, he found no difficulty in appreciating the pictures of those who from want of will or want of skill did not create illusions but concentrated their energies on the creation of form. He understood immediately the Byzantine masters and the French and Italian Primitives. In the Renaissance painters, on the other hand, with their descriptive preoccupations, their literary and anecdotic interests, he could see nothing but vulgarity and muddle. The universal and essential quality of art, significant form, was missing, or rather had dwindled to a shallow stream, overlaid and hidden beneath weeds, so the universal response, aesthetic emotion, was not evoked. It was not till he came on to Henri-Matisse that he again found himself in the familiar world of pure art. Similarly, sensitive Europeans who respond immediately to the significant forms of great Oriental art, are left cold by the trivial pieces of anecdote and social criticism so lovingly cherished by Chinese dilettanti. It would be easy to multiply instances did not decency forbid the labouring of so obvious a truth.

as they change their coats; the intellectual triumphs of one age are the follies of another; only great art remains stable and unobscure. Great art remains stable and unobscure because the feelings that it awakens are independent of time and place, because its kingdom is not of this world. To those who have and hold a sense of the significance of form what does it matter whether the forms that move them were created in Paris the day before yesterday or in Babylon fifty centuries ago? The forms of art are inexhaustible; but all lead by the same road of aesthetic emotion to the same world of aesthetic ecstasy.

2. AESTHETICS AND POST-IMPRESSIONISM

BY THE light of my aesthetic hypothesis I can read more clearly than before the history of art; also I can see in that history the place of the contemporary movement. As I shall have a great deal to say about the contemporary movement, perhaps I shall do well to seize this moment, when the aesthetic hypothesis is fresh in my mind and, I hope, in the minds of my readers, for an examination of the movement in relation to the hypothesis. For anyone of my generation to write a book about art that said nothing of the movement dubbed in this country Post-Impressionist would be a piece of pure affectation. I shall have a great deal to say about it, and therefore I wish to see at the earliest possible opportunity how Post-Impressionism stands with regard to my theory of aesthetics. The survey will give me occasion for stating some of the things that Post-Impressionism is and some that it is not. I shall have to raise points that will be dealt with at greater length elsewhere. Here I shall have a chance of raising them, and at least suggesting a solution.

Primitives produce art because they must; they have no other motive than a passionate desire to express their sense of form. Untempted, or incompetent, to create illusions, to the creation of form they devote themselves entirely. Presently, however, the artist is joined by a patron and a public, and soon there grows up a demand for "speaking likenesses." While the gross herd still clamours for likeness, the choicer spirits begin to affect an admiration for cleverness and skill. The end is in sight. In Europe we watch art sinking, by slow degrees, from the thrilling design of Ravenna to the tedious portraiture of Holland,

while the grand proportion of Romanesque and Norman architecture becomes Gothic juggling in stone and glass. Before the late noon of the Renaissance art was almost extinct. Only nice illusionists and masters of craft abounded. That was the moment for a Post-Impressionist revival.

For various reasons there was no revolution. The tradition of art remained comatose. Here and there a genius appeared and wrestled with the coils of convention and created significant form. For instance, the art of Nicolas Poussin, Claude, El Greco, Chardin, Ingres, and Renoir, to name a few, moves us as that of Giotto and Cézanne moves. The bulk, however, of those who flourished between the high Renaissance and the contemporary movement may be divided into two classes, virtuosi and dunces. The clever fellows, the minor masters, who might have been artists if painting had not absorbed all their energies, were throughout that period for ever setting themselves technical acrostics and solving them. The dunces continued to elaborate chromophotographs, and continue.

The fact that significant form was the only common quality in the works that moved me, and that in the works that moved me most and seemed most to move the most sensitive people—in primitive art, that is to say—it was almost the only quality, had led me to my hypothesis before ever I became familiar with the works of Cézanne and his followers. Cézanne carried me off my feet before ever I noticed that his strongest characteristic was an insistence on the supremacy of significant form. When I noticed this, my admiration for Cézanne and some of his followers confirmed me in my aesthetic theories. Naturally I had found no difficulty in liking them since I found in them exactly what I liked in everything else that moved me.

There is no mystery about Post-Impressionism; a good Post-Impressionist picture is good for precisely the same reasons that any other picture is good. The essential quality in art is permanent. Post-Impressionism, therefore, implies no violent break with the past. It is merely a deliberate rejection of certain hampering traditions of modern growth.

It does deny that art need ever take orders from the past; but that is not a badge of Post-Impressionism, it is the commonest mark of vitality. Even to speak of Post-Impressionism as a movement may lead to misconceptions; the habit of speaking of movements at all is rather misleading. The stream of art has never run utterly dry: it flows through the ages, now broad now narrow, now deep now shallow, now rapid now sluggish: its colour is changing always. But who can set a mark against the exact point of change? In the earlier nineteenth century the stream ran very low. In the days of the Impressionists, against whom the contemporary movement is in some ways a reaction, it had already become copious. Any attempt to dam and imprison this river, to choose out a particular school or movement and say: "Here art begins and there it ends," is a pernicious absurdity. That way Academization lies. At this moment there are not above half a dozen good painters alive who do not derive, to some extent, from Cézanne, and belong, in some sense, to the Post-Impressionist movement; but tomorrow a great painter may arise who will create significant form by means superficially opposed to those of Cézanne. Superficially, I say, because, essentially, all good art is of the same movement: there are only two kinds of art, good and bad. Nevertheless, the division of the stream into reaches, distinguished by differences of manner, is intelligible and, to historians at any rate, useful. The reaches also differ from each other in volume; one period of art is distinguished from another by its fertility. For a few fortunate years or decades the output of considerable art is great. Suddenly it ceases; or slowly it dwindles: a movement has exhausted itself. How far a movement is made by the fortuitous synchronisation of a number of good artists, and how far the artists are helped to the creation of significant form by the pervasion of some underlying spirit of the age, is a question that can never be decided beyond cavil. But however the credit is to be apportioned—and I suspect it should be divided about equally—we are justified, I think, looking at the history of art as a whole, in regarding such

periods of fertility as distinct parts of that whole. Primarily, it is as a period of fertility in good art and artists that I admire the Post-Impressionist movement. Also, I believe that the principles which underlie and inspire that movement are more likely to encourage artists to give of their best, and to foster a good tradition, than any of which modern history bears record. But my interest in this movement, and my admiration for much of the art it has produced, does not blind me to the greatness of the products of other movements; neither, I hope, will it blind me to the greatness of any new creation of form even though that novelty may seem to imply a reaction against the tradition of Cézanne.

Like all sound revolutions, Post-Impressionism is nothing more than a return to first principles. Into a world where the painter was expected to be either a photographer or an acrobat burst the Post-Impressionist, claiming that, above all things, he should be an artist. Never mind, said he, about representation or accomplishment—mind about creating significant form, mind about art. Creating a work of art is so tremendous a business that it leaves no leisure for catching a likeness or displaying address. Every sacrifice made to representation is something stolen from art. Far from being the insolent kind of revolution it is vulgarly supposed to be, Post-Impressionism is, in fact, a return, not indeed to any particular tradition of painting, but to the great tradition of visual art. It sets before every artist the ideal set before themselves by the primitives, an ideal which, since the twelfth century, has been cherished only by exceptional men of genius. Post-Impressionism is nothing but the reassertion of the first commandment of art—Thou shalt create form. By this assertion it shakes hands across the ages with the Byzantine primitives and with every vital movement that has struggled into existence since the arts began.

Post-Impressionism is not a matter of technique. Certainly Cézanne invented a technique, admirably suited to his purpose, which has been adopted and elaborated, more or less, by the majority of his followers. The important

thing about a picture, however, is not how it is painted, but whether it provokes aesthetic emotion. As I have said, essentially, a good Post-Impressionist picture resembles all other good works of art, and only differs from some, superficially, by a conscious and deliberate rejection of those technical and sentimental irrelevancies that have been imposed on painting by a bad tradition. This becomes obvious when one visits an exhibition such as the *Salon d' Automne* or *Les Indépendants,* where there are hundreds of pictures in the Post-Impressionist manner, many of which are quite worthless.[1] These, one realises, are bad in precisely the same way as any other picture is bad; their forms are insignificant and compel no aesthetic reaction. In truth, it was an unfortunate necessity that obliged us to speak of "Post-Impressionist pictures," and

[1]Anyone who has visited the very latest French exhibitions will have seen scores of what are called "Cubist" pictures. These afford an excellent illustration of my thesis. Of a hundred cubist pictures three or four will have artistic value. Thirty years ago the same might have been said of "Impressionist" pictures; forty years before that of romantic pictures in the manner of Delacroix. The explanation is simple—the vast majority of those who paint pictures have neither originality nor any considerable talent. Left to themselves they would probably produce the kind of painful absurdity which in England is known as an "Academy picture." But a student who has no original gift may yet be anything but a fool, and many students understand that the ordinary cultivated picture-goer knows an "Academy picture" at a glance and knows that it is bad. Is it fair to condemn severely a young painter for trying to give his picture a factitious interest, or even for trying to conceal beneath striking wrappers the essential mediocrity of his wares? If not heroically sincere he is surely not inhumanly base. Besides, he has to imitate someone, and he likes to be in the fashion. And, after all, a bad cubist picture is no worse than any other bad picture. If anyone is to be blamed, it should be the spectator who cannot distinguish between good cubist pictures and bad. Blame alike the fools who think that because a picture is cubist it must be worthless, and their idiotic enemies who think it must be marvellous. People of sensibility can see that there is as much difference between Picasso and a Montmartre sensationalist as there is between Ingres and the President of the Royal Academy.

now, I think, the moment is at hand when we shall be able to return to the older and more adequate nomenclature, and speak of good pictures and bad. Only we must not forget that the movement of which Cézanne is the earliest manifestation, and which has borne so amazing a crop of good art, owes something, though not everything, to the liberating and revolutionary doctrines of Post-Impressionism.

The silliest things said about Post-Impressionist pictures are said by people who regard Post-Impressionism as an isolated movement, whereas, in fact, it takes its place as part of one of those huge slopes into which we can divide the history of art and the spiritual history of mankind. In my enthusiastic moments I am tempted to hope that it is the first stage in a new slope to which it will stand in the same relation as sixth-century Byzantine art stands to the old. In that case we shall compare Post-Impressionism with that vital spirit which, towards the end of the fifth century, flickered into life amidst the ruins of Graeco-Roman realism. Post-Impressionism, or, let us say the Contemporary Movement, has a future; but when that future is present Cézanne and Matisse will no longer be called Post-Impressionists. They will certainly be called great artists, just as Giotto and Masaccio are called great artists; they will be called the masters of a movement; but whether that movement is destined to be more than a movement, to be something as vast as the slope that lies between Cézanne and the masters of S. Vitale, is a matter of much less certainty than enthusiasts care to suppose.

Post-Impressionism is accused of being a negative and destructive creed. In art no creed is healthy that is anything else. You cannot give men genius; you can only give them freedom—freedom from superstition. Post-Impressionism can no more make good artists than good laws can make good men. Doubtless, with its increasing popularity, an annually increasing horde of nincompoops will employ the so-called "Post-Impressionist technique" for presenting insignificant patterns and recounting foolish anecdotes. Their pictures will be dubbed "Post-Impressionist," but

only by gross injustice will they be excluded from Burlington House. Post-Impressionism is no specific against human folly and incompetence. All it can do for painters is to bring before them the claims of art. To the man of genius and to the student of talent it can say: "Don't waste your time and energy on things that don't matter: concentrate on what does: concentrate on the creation of significant form." Only thus can either give the best that is in him. Formerly because both felt bound to strike a compromise between art and what the public had been taught to expect, the work of one was grievously disfigured, that of the other ruined. Tradition ordered the painter to be photographer, acrobat, archaeologist and littérateur: Post-Impressionism invites him to become an artist.

3. THE METAPHYSICAL HYPOTHESIS

FOR the present I have said enough about the aesthetic problem and about Post-Impressionism; I want now to consider that metaphysical question—"Why do certain arrangements and combinations of form move us so strangely?" For aesthetics it suffices that they do move us; to all further inquisition of the tedious and stupid it can be replied that, however queer these things may be, they are no queerer than anything else in this incredibly queer universe. But to those for whom my theory seems to open a vista of possibilities I willingly offer, for what they are worth, my fancies.

It seems to me possible, though by no means certain, that created form moves us so profoundly because it expresses the emotion of its creator. Perhaps the lines and colours of a work of art convey to us something that the artist felt. If this be so, it will explain that curious but undeniable fact, to which I have already referred, that what I call material beauty (*e.g.* the wing of a butterfly) does not move most of us in at all the same way as a work of art moves us. It is beautiful form, but it is not significant form. It moves us, but it does not move us aesthetically. It is tempting to explain the difference between "significant form" and "beauty"—that is to say, the difference between form that provokes our aesthetic emotions and form that does not—by saying that significant form conveys to us an emotion felt by its creator and that beauty conveys nothing.

For what, then, does the artist feel the emotion that he is supposed to express? Sometimes it certainly comes to him through material beauty. The contemplation of

natural objects is often the immediate cause of the artist's emotion. Are we to suppose, then, that the artist feels, or sometimes feels, for material beauty what we feel for a work of art? Can it be that sometimes for the artist material beauty is somehow significant—that is, capable of provoking aesthetic emotion? And if the form that provokes aesthetic emotion be form that expresses something, can it be that material beauty is to him expressive? Does he feel something behind it as we imagine that we feel something behind the forms of a work of art? Are we to suppose that the emotion which the artist expresses is an aesthetic emotion felt for something the significance of which commonly escapes our coarser sensibilities? All these are questions about which I had sooner speculate than dogmatise.

Let us hear what the artists have got to say for themselves. We readily believe them when they tell us that, in fact, they do not create works of art in order to provoke our aesthetic emotions, but because only thus can they materialise a particular kind of feeling. What, precisely, this feeling is they find it hard to say. One account of the matter, given me by a very good artist, is that what he tries to express in a picture is "a passionate apprehension of form." I have set myself to discover what is meant by "a passionate apprehension of form," and, after much talking and more listening, I have arrived at the following result. Occasionally when an artist—a real artist—looks at objects (the contents of a room, for instance) he perceives them as pure forms in certain relations to each other, and feels emotion for them as such. These are his moments of inspiration: follows the desire to express what has been felt. The emotion that the artist felt in his moment of inspiration he did not feel for objects seen as means, but for objects seen as pure forms—that is, as ends in themselves. He did not feel emotion for a chair as a means to physical well-being, nor as an object associated with the intimate life of a family, nor as the place where someone sat saying things unforgettable, nor yet as a thing bound to the lives of hundreds of men and women, dead

or alive, by a hundred subtle ties; doubtless an artist does often feel emotions such as these for the things that he sees, but in the moment of aesthetic vision he sees objects, not as means shrouded in associations, but as pure forms. It is for, or at any rate through, pure form that he feels his inspired emotion.

Now to see objects as pure forms is to see them as ends in themselves. For though, of course, forms are related to each other as parts of a whole, they are related on terms of equality; they are not a means to anything except emotion. But for objects seen as ends in themsleves, do we not feel a profounder and a more thrilling emotion than ever we felt for them as means? All of us, I imagine, do, from time to time, get a vision of material objects as pure forms. We see things as ends in themselves, that is to say; and at such moments it seems possible, and even probable, that we see them with the eye of an artist. Who has not, once at least in his life, had a sudden vision of landscape as pure form? For once, instead of seeing it as fields and cottages, he has felt it as lines and colours. In that moment has he not won from material beauty a thrill indistinguishable from that which art gives? And, if this be so, is it not clear that he has won from material beauty the thrill that, generally, art alone can give, because he has contrived to see it as a pure formal combination of lines and colours? May we go on to say that, having seen it as pure form, having freed it from all casual and adventitious interest, from all that it may have acquired from its commerce with human beings, from all its significance as a means, he has felt its significance as an end in itself?

What is the significance of anything as an end in itself? What is that which is left when we have stripped a thing of all its associations, of all its significance as a means? What is left to provoke our emotion? What but that which philosophers used to call "the thing in itself" and now call "ultimate reality"? Shall I be altogether fantastic in suggesting, what some of the profoundest thinkers have believed, that the significance of the thing in itself is the significance of Reality? Is it possible that the answer to

my question, "Why are we so profoundly moved by certain combinations of lines and colours?" should be, "Because artists can express in combinations of lines and colours an emotion felt for reality which reveals itself through line and colour"?

If this suggestion were accepted it would follow that "significant form" was form behind which we catch a sense of ultimate reality. There would be good reason for supposing that the emotions which artists feel in their moments of inspiration, that others feel in the rare moments when they see objects artistically, and that many of us feel when we contemplate works of art, are the same in kind. All would be emotions felt for reality revealing itself through pure form. It is certain that this emotion can be expressed only in pure form. It is certain that most of us can come at it only through pure form. But is pure form the only channel through which anyone can come at this mysterious emotion? That is a disturbing and a most distasteful question, for at this point I thought I saw my way to cancelling out the word "reality," and saying that all are emotions felt for pure form which may or may not have something behind it. To me it would be most satisfactory to say that the reason why some forms move us aesthetically, and others do not, is that some have been so purified that we can feel them aesthetically and that others are so clogged with unaesthetic matter (*e.g.* associations) that only the sensibility of an artist can perceive their pure, formal significance. I should be charmed to believe that it is as certain that everyone must come at reality through form as that everyone must express his sense of it in form. But is that so? What kind of form is that from which the musician draws the emotion that he expresses in abstract harmonies? Whence come the emotions of the architect and the potter? I know that the artist's emotion can be expressed only in form; I know that only by form can my aesthetic emotions be called into play; but can I be sure that it is always by form that an artist's emotion is provoked? Back to reality.

Those who incline to believe that the artist's emotion

is felt for reality will readily admit that visual artists—with whom alone we are concerned—come at reality generally through material form. But don't they come at it sometimes through imagined form? And ought we not to add that sometimes the sense of reality comes we know not whence? The best account I know of this state of being rapt in a mysterious sense of reality is the one that Dante gives:

> "O immaginativa, che ne rube
> tal volta sì di fuor, ch' uom non s'accorge
> perchè d'intorno suonin mille tube;
>
> chi move te, se il senso non ti porge?
> Moveti lume, che nel ciel s'informa,
> per sè, o per voler che giù lo scorge.
>
> . . . . .
>
> e qui fu la mia mente sí ristretta
> dentro da sè, che di fuor non venia
> cosa che fosse allor da lei recetta."

Certainly, in those moments of exaltation that art can give, it is easy to believe that we have been possessed by an emotion that comes from the world of reality. Those who take this view will have to say that there is in all things the stuff out of which art is made—reality; artists, even, can grasp it only when they have reduced things to their purest condition of being—to pure form—unless they be of those who come at it mysteriously unaided by externals; only in pure form can a sense of it be expressed. On this hypothesis the peculiarity of the artist would seem to be that he possesses the power of surely and frequently seizing reality (generally behind pure form), and the power of expressing his sense of it, in pure form always. But many people, though they feel the tremendous significance of form, feel also a cautious dislike for big words; and "reality" is a very big one. These prefer to say that what the artist surprises behind form, or seizes by sheer force of imagination, is the all-pervading rhythm that in-

forms all things; and I have said that I will never quarrel with that blessed word "rhythm."

The ultimate object of the artist's emotion will remain for ever uncertain. But, unless we assume that all artists are liars, I think we must suppose that they do feel an emotion which they can express in form—and form alone. And note well this further point; artists try to express emotion, not to make statements about its ultimate or immediate object. Naturally, if an artist's emotion comes to him from, or through, the perception of forms and formal relations, he will be apt to express it in forms derived from those through which it came; but he will not be bound by his vision. He will be bound by his emotion. Not what he saw, but only what he felt will necessarily condition his design. Whether the connection between the forms of a created work and the forms of the visible universe be patent or obscure, whether it exist or whether it does not, is a matter of no consequence whatever. No one ever doubted that a Sung pot or a Romanesque church was as much an expression of emotion as any picture that ever was painted. What was the object of the potter's emotion? What of the builder's? Was it some imagined form, the synthesis of a hundred different visions of natural things; or was it some conception of reality, unrelated to sensual experience, remote altogether from the physical universe? These are questions beyond all conjecture. In any case, the form in which he expresses his emotion bears no memorial of any external form that may have provoked it. Expression is no wise bound by the forms or emotions or ideas of life. We cannot know exactly what the artist feels. We only know what he creates. If reality be the goal of his emotion, the roads to reality are several. Some artists come at it through the appearance of things, some by a recollection of appearance, and some by sheer force of imagination.

To the question—"Why are we so profoundly moved by certain combinations of forms?" I am unwilling to return a positive answer. I am not obliged to, for it is not an aesthetic question. I do suggest, however, that it

is because they express an emotion that the artist has felt, though I hesitate to make any pronouncement about the nature or object of that emotion. If my suggestion be accepted, criticism will be armed with a new weapon; and the nature of this weapon is worth a moment's consideration. Going behind his emotion and its object, the critic will be able to surprise that which gives form its significance. He will be able to explain why some forms are significant and some are not; and thus he will be able to push all his judgments a step further back. Let me give one example. Of copies of pictures there are two classes; one class contains some works of art, the other none. A literal copy is seldom reckoned even by its owner a work of art. It leaves us cold; its forms are not significant. Yet if it were an absolutely exact copy, clearly it would be as moving as the original, and a photographic reproduction of a drawing often is—almost. Evidently, it is impossible to imitate a work of art exactly; and the differences between the copy and the original, minute though they may be, exist and are felt immediately. So far the critic is on sure and by this time familiar ground. The copy does not move him, because its forms are not identical with those of the original; and just what made the original moving is what does not appear in the copy. But why is it impossible to make an absolutely exact copy? The explanation seems to be that the actual lines and colours and spaces in a work of art are caused by something in the mind of the artist which is not present in the mind of the imitator. The hand not only obeys the mind, it is impotent to make lines and colours in a particular way without the direction of a particular state of mind. The two visible objects, the original and the copy, differ because that which ordered the work of art does not preside at the manufacture of the copy. That which orders the work of art is, I suggest, the emotion which empowers artists to create significant form. The good copy, the copy that moves us, is always the work of one who is possessed by this mysterious emotion. Good copies are never attempts at exact imitation; on examination we find always enormous differences between

them and their originals: they are the work of men or women who do not copy but can translate the art of others into their own language. The power of creating significant form depends, not on hawklike vision, but on some curious mental and emotional power. Even to copy a picture one needs, not to see as a trained observer, but to feel as an artist. To make the spectator feel, it seems that the creator must feel too. What is this that imitated forms lack and created forms possess? What is this mysterious thing that dominates the artist in the creation of forms? What is it that lurks behind forms and seems to be conveyed by them to us? What is it that distinguishes the creator from the copyist? What can it be but emotion? Is it not because the artist's forms express a particular kind of emotion that they are significant?—because they fit and envelop it, that they are coherent?—because they communicate it, that they exalt us to ecstasy?

One word of warning is necessary. Let no one imagine that the expression of emotion is the outward and visible sign of a work of art. The characteristic of a work of art is its power of provoking aesthetic emotion; the expression of emotion is possibly what gives it that power. It is useless to go to a picture gallery in search of expression; you must go in search of significant form. When you have been moved by form, you may begin to consider what makes it moving. If my theory be correct, rightness of form is invariably a consequence of rightness of emotion. Right form, I suggest, is ordered and conditioned by a particular kind of emotion; but whether my theory be true or false, the form remains right. If the forms are satisfactory, the state of mind that ordained them must have been aesthetically right. If the forms are wrong, it does not follow that the state of mind was wrong; between the moment of inspiration and the finished work of art there is room for many a slip. Feeble or defective emotion is at best only one explanation of unsatisfactory form. Therefore, when the critic comes across satisfactory form he need not bother about the feelings of the artist; for him to feel the aesthetic significance of the artist's forms suffices. If the

artist's state of mind be important, he may be sure that it was right because the forms are right. But when the critic attempts to account for the unsatisfactoriness of forms he may consider the state of mind of the artist. He cannot be sure that because the forms are wrong the state of mind was wrong; because right forms imply right feeling, wrong forms do not necessarily imply wrong feeling; but if he has got to explain the wrongness of form, here is a possibility he cannot overlook. He will have left the firm land of aesthetics to travel in an unstable element; in criticism one catches at any straw. There is no harm in that, provided the critic never forgets that, whatever ingenious theories he may put forward, they can be nothing more than attempts to explain the one central fact—that some forms move us aesthetically and others do not.

This discussion has brought me close to a question that is neither aesthetic nor metaphysical but impinges on both. It is the question of the artistic problem, and it is really a technical question. I have suggested that the task of the artist is either to create significant form or to express a sense of reality—whichever way you prefer to put it. But it is certain that few artists, if any, can sit down or stand up just to create nothing more definite than significant form, just to express nothing more definite than a sense of reality. Artists must canalise their emotion, they must concentrate their energies on some definite problem. The man who sets out with the whole world before him is unlikely to get anywhere. In that fact lies the explanation of the absolute necessity for artistic conventions. That is why it is easier to write good verse than good prose, why it is more difficult to write good blank verse than good rhyming couplets. That is the explanation of the sonnet, the ballade, and the rondeau; severe limitations concentrate and intensify the artist's energies.

It would be almost impossible for an artist who set himself a task no more definite than that of creating, without conditions or limitations material or intellectual, significant form ever so to concentrate his energies as to achieve his object. His objective would lack precision and

therefore his efforts would lack intention. He would almost certainly be vague and listless at his work. It would seem always possible to pull the thing round by a happy fluke, it would rarely be absolutely clear that things were going wrong. The effort would be feeble and the result would be feeble. That is the danger of aestheticism for the artist. The man who feels that he has got nothing to do but to make something beautiful hardly knows where to begin or where to end, or why he should set about one thing more than another. The artist has got to feel the necessity of making his work of art "right." It will be "right" when it expresses his emotion for reality or is capable of provoking aesthetic emotion in others, whichever way you care to look at it. But most artists have got to canalise their emotion and concentrate their energies on some more definite and more maniable problem than that of making something that shall be aesthetically "right." They need a problem that will become the focus of their vast emotions and vague energies, and when that problem is solved their work will be "right."

"Right" for the spectator means aesthetically satisfying; for the artist at work it means the complete realisation of a conception, the perfect solution of a problem. The mistake that the vulgar make is to suppose that "right" means the solution of one particular problem. The vulgar are apt to suppose that the problem which all visual and literary artists set themselves is to make something lifelike. Now, all artistic problems—and their possible variety is infinite—must be the *foci* of one particular kind of emotion, that specific artistic emotion which I believe to be an emotion felt for reality, generally perceived through form: but the nature of the focus is immaterial. It is almost, though not quite, true to say that one problem is as good as another. Indeed all problems are, in themselves, equally good, though, owing to human infirmity, there are two which tend to turn out badly. One, as we have seen, is the pure aesthetic problem; the other is the problem of accurate representation.

The vulgar imagine that there is but one focus, that

"right" means always the realisation of an accurate conception of life. They cannot understand that the immediate problem of the artist may be to express himself within a square or a circle or a cube, to balance certain harmonies, to reconcile certain dissonances, to achieve certain rhythms, or to conquer certain difficulties of medium, just as well as to catch a likeness. This error is at the root of the silly criticism that Mr. Shaw has made it fashionable to print. In the plays of Shakespeare there are details of psychology and portraiture so realistic as to astonish and enchant the multitude, but the conception, the thing that Shakespeare set himself to realise, was not a faithful presentation of life. The creation of Illusion was not the artistic problem that Shakespeare used as a channel for his artistic emotion and a focus for his energies. The world of Shakespeare's plays is by no means so lifelike as the world of Mr. Galsworthy's, and therefore those who imagine that the artistic problem must always be the achieving of a correspondence between printed words or painted forms and the world as they know it are right in judging the plays of Shakespeare inferior to those of Mr. Galsworthy. As a matter of fact, the achievement of verisimilitude, far from being the only possible problem, disputes with the achievement of beauty the honour of being the worst possible. It is so easy to be lifelike, that an attempt to be nothing more will never bring into play the highest emotional and intellectual powers of the artist. Just as the aesthetic problem is too vague, so the representative problem is too simple.

Every artist must choose his own problem. He may take it from wherever he likes, provided he can make it the focus of those artistic emotions he has got to express and the stimulant of those energies he will need to express them. What we have got to remember is that the problem—in a picture it is generally the subject—is of no consequence in itself. It is merely one of the artist's means of expression or creation. In any particular case one problem may be better than another, as a means, just as one canvas or one brand of colours may be; that will depend upon the temperament of the artist, and we may leave it to him.

For us the problem has no value; for the artist it is the working test of absolute "rightness." It is the gauge that measures the pressure of steam; the artist stokes his fires to set the little handle spinning; he knows that his machine will not move until he has got his pointer to the mark; he works up to it and through it; but it does not drive the engine.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? No more than this, I think. The contemplation of pure form leads to a state of extraordinary exaltation and complete detachment from the concerns of life: of so much, speaking for myself, I am sure. It is tempting to suppose that the emotion which exalts has been transmitted through the forms we contemplate by the artist who created them. If this be so, the transmitted emotion, whatever it may be, must be of such a kind that it can be expressed in any sort of form—in pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, textiles, &c., &c. Now the emotion that artists express comes to some of them, so they tell us, from the apprehension of the formal significance of material things; and the formal significance of any material thing is the significance of that thing considered as an end in itself. But if an object considered as an end in itself moves us more profoundly (*i.e.* has greater significance) than the same object considered as a means to practical ends or as a thing related to human interests—and this undoubtedly is the case—we can only suppose that when we consider anything as an end in itself we become aware of that in it which is of greater moment than any qualities it may have acquired from keeping company with human beings. Instead of recognising its accidental and conditioned importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading rhythm. Call it by what name you will, the thing that I am talking about is that which lies behind the appearance of all things—that which gives to all things their individual significance, the thing in itself, the ultimate reality. And if a more or less unconscious apprehension of this latent reality of material things be, indeed, the cause of that strange emo-

tion, a passion to express which is the inspiration of many artists, it seems reasonable to suppose that those who, unaided by material objects, experience the same emotion have come by another road to the same country.

That is the metaphysical hypothesis. Are we to swallow it whole, accept a part of it, or reject it altogether? Each must decide for himself. I insist only on the rightness of my aesthetic hypothesis. And of one other thing am I sure. Be they artists or lovers of art, mystics or mathematicians, those who achieve ecstasy are those who have freed themselves from the arrogance of humanity. He who would feel the significance of art must make himself humble before it. Those who find the chief importance of art or of philosophy in its relation to conduct or its practical utility—those who cannot value things as ends in themselves or, at any rate, as direct means to emotion—will never get from anything the best that it can give. Whatever the world of aesthetic contemplation may be, it is not the world of human business and passion; in it the chatter and tumult of material existence is unheard, or heard only as the echo of some more ultimate harmony.

II

ART AND LIFE

I. Art and Religion
II. Art and History
III. Art and Ethics

1. ART AND RELIGION

IF IN my first chapter I had been at pains to show that art owed nothing to life the title of my second would invite a charge of inconsistency. The danger would be slight, however; for though art owed nothing to life, life might well owe something to art. The weather is admirably independent of human hopes and fears, yet few of us are so sublimely detached as to be indifferent to the weather. Art does affect the lives of men; it moves to ecstasy, thus giving colour and moment to what might be otherwise a rather grey and trivial affair. Art for some makes life worth living. Also, art is affected by life; for to create art there must be men with hands and a sense of form and colour and three-dimensional space and the power to feel and the passion to create. Therefore art has a great deal to do with life—with emotional life. That it is a means to a state of exaltation is unanimously agreed, and that it comes from the spiritual depths of man's nature is hardly contested. The appreciation of art is certainly a means to ecstasy, and the creation probably the expression of an ecstatic state of mind. Art is, in fact, a necessity to and a product of the spiritual life.

Those who do not part company with me till the last stage of my metaphysical excursion agree that the emotion expressed in a work of art springs from the depths of man's spiritual nature; and those even who will hear nothing of expression agree that the spiritual part is profoundly affected by works of art. Art, therefore, has to do with the spiritual life, to which it gives and from which, I feel sure, it takes. Indirectly, art has something to do with practical life, too; for those emotional experiences must be very faint and contemptible that leave quite untouched our characters. Through its influence on character and point

of view art may affect practical life. But practical life and human sentiment can affect art only in so far as they can affect the conditions in which artists work. Thus they may affect the production of works of art to some extent; to how great an extent I shall consider in another place.

Also a great many works of visual art are concerned with life, or rather with the physical universe of which life is a part, in that the men who created them were thrown into the creative mood by their surroundings. We have observed, as we could hardly fail to do, that, whatever the emotion that artists express may be, it comes to many of them through the contemplation of the familiar objects of life. The object of an artist's emotion seems to be more often than not either some particular scene or object, or a synthesis of his whole visual experience. Art may be concerned with the physical universe, or with any part or parts of it, as a means to emotion—a means to that peculiar spiritual state that we call inspiration. But the value of these parts as means to anything but emotion art ignores—that is to say, it ignores their practical utility. Artists are often concerned with things, but never with the labels on things. These useful labels were invented by practical people for practical purposes. The misfortune is that, having acquired the habit of recognising labels, practical people tend to lose the power of feeling emotion; and, as the only way of getting at the thing in itself is by feeling its emotional significance, they soon begin to lose their sense of reality. Mr. Roger Fry has pointed out that few can hope ever to see a charging bull as an end in itself and yield themselves to the emotional significance of its forms, because no sooner is the label "Charging Bull" recognised than we begin to dispose ourselves for flight rather than contemplation.[1] This is where the habit of recognising labels serves us well. It serves us ill, however, when, although there is no call for action or hurry, it comes between things and our emotional reaction to them. The label is nothing but a symbol that epitomises for busy

[1] "An Essay in Aesthetics," by Roger Fry: *The New Quarterly*, No. 6, vol. ii.

humanity the significance of things regarded as "means." A practical person goes into a room where there are chairs, tables, sofas, a hearth-rug and a mantelpiece. Of each he takes note intellectually, and if he wants to set himself down or set down a cup, he will know all he needs to know for his purpose. The label tells him just those facts that serve his practical ends; of the thing itself that lurks behind the label nothing is said. Artists, *qua* artists, are not concerned with labels. They are concerned with things only as means to a particular kind of emotion, which is the same as saying that they are only concerned with things perceived as ends in themselves; for it is only when things are *perceived* as ends that they *become* means to this emotion. It is only when we cease to regard the objects in a landscape as means to anything that we can feel the landscape artistically. But when we do succeed in regarding the parts of a landscape as ends in themselves—as pure forms, that is to say—the landscape becomes *ipso facto* a means to a peculiar, aesthetic state of mind. Artists are concerned only with this peculiar emotional significance of the physical universe: because they *perceive* things as "ends," things *become* for them "means" to ecstasy.

The habit of recognising the label and overlooking the thing, of seeing intellectually instead of seeing emotionally, accounts for the amazing blindness, or rather visual shallowness, of most civilised adults. We do not forget what has moved us, but what we have merely recognised leaves no deep impression on the mind. A friend of mine, a man of taste, desired to make some clearance in his gardens, encumbered as they were with a multitude of trees; unfortunately most of his friends and all his family objected on sentimental or aesthetic grounds, declaring that the place would never be the same to them if the axe were laid to a single trunk. My friend was in despair, until, one day, I suggested to him that whenever his people were all away on visits or travels, as was pretty often the case, he should have as many trees cut down as could be completely and cleanly removed during their absence. Since then, several hundreds have been carted from his small park and pleasure

grounds, and should the secret be betrayed to the family I am cheerfully confident that not one of them would believe it. I could cite innumerable instances of this insensibility to form. How often have I been one of a party in a room with which all were familiar, the decoration of which had lately been changed, and I the only one to notice it. For practical purposes the room remained unaltered; only its emotional significance was new. Question your friend as to the disposition of the furniture in his wife's drawing-room; ask him to sketch the street down which he passes daily; ten to one he goes hopelessly astray. Only artists and educated people of extraordinary sensibility and some savages and children feel the significance of form so acutely that they know how things look. These see, because they see emotionally; and no one forgets the things that have moved him. Those forget who have never felt the emotional significance of pure form; they are not stupid nor are they generally insensitive, but they use their eyes only to collect information, not to capture emotion. This habit of using the eyes exclusively to pick up facts is the barrier that stands between most people and an understanding of visual art. It is not a barrier that has stood unbreached always, nor need it stand so for all future time.

In ages of great spiritual exaltation the barrier crumbles and becomes, in places, less insuperable. Such ages are commonly called great religious ages: nor is the name ill-chosen. For, more often than not, religion is the whetstone on which men sharpen the spiritual sense. Religion, like art, is concerned with the world of emotional reality, and with material things only in so far as they are emotionally significant. For the mystic, as for the artist, the physical universe is a means to ecstasy. The mystic feels things as "ends" instead of seeing them as "means." He seeks within all things that ultimate reality which provokes emotional exaltation; and, if he does not come at it through pure form, there are, as I have said, more roads than one to that country. Religion, as I understand it, is an expression of the individual's sense of the emotional significance of the universe; I should not be surprised to find that art

Bonaventure

was an expression of the same thing. Anyway, both seem to express emotions different from and transcending the emotions of life. Certainly both have the power of transporting men to superhuman ecstasies; both are means to unearthly states of mind. Art and religion belong to the same world. Both are bodies in which men try to capture and keep alive their shyest and most ethereal conceptions. The kingdom of neither is of this world. Rightly, therefore, do we regard art and religion as twin manifestations of the spirit; wrongly do some speak of art as a manifestation of religion.

If it were said that art and religion were twin manifestations of something that, for convenience sake, may be called "the religious spirit," I should make no serious complaint. But I should insist on the distinction between "religion," in the ordinary acceptation of the word, and "the religious spirit" being stated beyond all possibility of cavil. I should insist that if we are to say that art is a manifestation of the religious spirit, we must say the same of every respectable religion that ever has existed or ever can exist. Above all, I should insist that whoever said it should bear in mind, whenever he said it, that "manifestation" is at least as different from "expression" as Monmouth is from Macedon.

The religious spirit is born of a conviction that some things matter more than others. To those possessed by it there is a sharp distinction between that which is unconditioned and universal and that which is limited and local. It is a consciousness of the unconditioned and universal that makes people religious; and it is this consciousness or, at least, a conviction that some things are unconditioned and universal, that makes their attitude towards the conditioned and local sometimes a little unsympathetic. It is this consciousness that makes them set justice above law, passion above principle, sensibility above culture, intelligence above knowledge, intuition above experience, the ideal above the tolerable. It is this consciousness that makes them the enemies of convention, compromise, and commonsense. In fact, the essence of religion is a conviction that

because some things are of infinite value most are profoundly unimportant, that since the gingerbread is there one need not feel too strongly about the gilt.

It is useless for liberal divines to pretend that there is no antagonism between the religious nature and the scientific. There is no antagonism between religion and science, but that is a very different matter. In fact, the hypotheses of science begin only where religion ends: but both religion and science are born trespassers. The religious and the scientific both have their prejudices; but their prejudices are not the same. The scientific mind cannot free itself from a prejudice against the notion that effects may exist the causes of which it ignores. Not only do religious minds manage to believe that there may be effects of which they do not know, and may never know, the causes—they cannot even see the absolute necessity for supposing that everything is caused. Scientific people tend to trust their senses and disbelieve their emotions when they contradict them; religious people tend to trust emotion even though sensual experience be against it. On the whole, the religious are the more open-minded. Their assumption that the senses may mislead is less arrogant than the assumption that through them alone can we come at reality, for, as Dr. McTaggart has wittily said, "If a man is shut up in a house, the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky. But it would not be prudent to infer that, if he walked out of the house, he could not see the sky, because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it." [1]

Examples of scientific bigotry are as common as blackberries. The attitude of the profession towards unorthodox medicine is the classical instance. In the autumn of 1912 I was walking through the Grafton Galleries with a man who is certainly one of the ablest, and is reputed one of the most enlightened, of contemporary men of science. Looking at the picture of a young girl with a cat by Henri-Matisse, he exclaimed—"I see how it is, the fellow's astigmatic." I should have let this bit of persiflage go un-

[1] McTaggart: *Some Dogmas of Religion.*

answered, assuming it to be one of those witty sallies for which the princes of science are so justly famed and to which they often treat us even when they are not in the presence of works of art, had not the professor followed up his clue with the utmost gravity, assuring me at last that no picture in the gallery was beyond the reach of optical diagnostic. Still suspicious of his good faith, I suggested, tentatively, that perhaps the discrepancies between the normal man's vision and the pictures on the wall were the result of intentional distortion on the part of the artists. At this the professor became passionately serious—"Do you mean to tell me," he bawled, "that there has ever been a painter who did not try to make his objects as lifelike as possible? Dismiss such silly nonsense from your head." It is the old story: "Clear your mind of cant," that is to say, of anything which appears improbable or unpalatable to Dr. Johnson.

The religious, on the other hand, are apt to be a little prejudiced against common-sense; and, for my own part, I confess that I am often tempted to think that a common-sense view is necessarily a wrong one. It was common-sense to see that the world must be flat and that the sun must go round it; only when those fantastical people made themselves heard who thought that the solar system could not be quite so simple an affair as common-sense knew it must be were these opinions knocked on the head. Dr. Johnson, the great exemplar of British common-sense, observing in autumn the gathered swallows skimming over pools and rivers, pronounced it certain that these birds sleep all the winter—"A number of them conglobulate together, by flying round and round, and then all in a heap throw themselves under water, and lie in the bed of a river": how sensibly, too, did he dispose of Berkeley's Idealism—"striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone"—"I refute it thus." Seriously, is the common-sense view ever the right one?

Lately, the men of sense and science have secured allies who have brought to their cause what most it lacked, a little fundamental thought. Those able and honest people,

the Cambridge rationalists, headed by Mr. G. E. Moore, to whose *Principia Ethica* I owe so much, are, of course, profoundly religious and live by a passionate faith in the absolute value of certain states of mind; also they have fallen in love with the conclusions and methods of science. Being extremely intelligent, they perceive, however, that empirical arguments can avail nothing for or against a metaphysical theory, and that ultimately all the conclusions of science are based on a logic that precedes experience. Also they perceive that emotions are just as real as sensations. They find themselves confronted, therefore, by this difficulty; if someone steps forward to say that he has a direct, disinterested, *a priori*, conviction of the goodness of his emotions towards the Mass, he puts himself in the same position as Mr. Moore, who feels a similar conviction about the goodness of his towards the Truth. If Mr. Moore is to infer the goodness of one state of mind from his feelings, why should not someone else infer the goodness of another from his? The Cambridge rationalists have a short way with such dissenters. They simply assure them that they do not feel what they say they feel. Some of them have begun to apply their cogent methods to aesthetics; and when we tell them what we feel for pure form they assure us that, in fact, we feel nothing of the sort. This argument, however, has always struck me as lacking in subtlety.

Much as he dislikes mentioning the fact or hearing it mentioned, the common man of science recognises no other end in life than protracted and agreeable existence. That is where he joins issue with the religious; it is also his excuse for being a eugenist. He declines to believe in any reality other than that of the physical universe. On that reality he insists dogmatically.[1] Man, he says, is an animal who, like

[1] I am aware that there are men of science who preserve an open mind as to the reality of the physical universe, and recognise that what is known as "the scientific hypothesis" leaves out of account just those things that seem to us most real. Doubtless these are the true men of science; they are not the common ones.

other animals, desires to live; he is provided with senses, and these, like other animals, he seeks to gratify: in these facts he bids us find an explanation of all human aspiration. Man wants to live and he wants to have a good time; to compass these ends he has devised an elaborate machinery. All emotion, says the common man of science, must ultimately be traced to the senses. All moral, religious and aesthetic emotions are derived from physical needs, just as political ideas are based on that gregarious instinct which is simply the result of a desire to live long and to live in comfort. We obey the by-law that forbids us to ride a bicycle on the footpath, because we see that, in the long run, such a law is conducive to continued and agreeable existence, and for very similar reasons, says the man of science, we approve of magnanimous characters and sublime works of art.

"Not so," reply saints, artists, Cambridge rationalists, and all the better sort; for they feel that their religious, aesthetic, or moral emotions are not conditioned, directly or indirectly, by physical needs, nor, indeed, by anything in the physical universe. Some things, they feel, are good, not because they are means to physical well-being, but because they are good in themselves. In nowise does the value of aesthetic or religious rapture depend upon the physical satisfaction it affords. There are things in life the worth of which cannot be related to the physical universe, things of which the worth is not relative but absolute. Of these matters I speak cautiously and without authority: for my immediate purpose—to present my conception of the religious character—I need say only that to some the materialistic conception of the universe does not seem to explain those emotions which they feel with supreme certainty and absolute disinterestedness. The fact is, men of science, having got us into the habit of attempting to justify all our feelings and states of mind by reference to the physical universe, have almost bullied some of us into believing that what cannot be so justified does not exist.

I call him a religious man who, feeling with conviction that some things are good in themselves, and that physical

existence is not amongst them, pursues, at the expense of physical existence, that which appears to him good. All those who hold with uncompromising sincerity that spiritual is more important than material life, are, in my sense, religious. For instance, in Paris I have seen young painters, penniless, half-fed, unwarmed, ill-clothed, their women and children in no better case, working all day in feverish ecstasy at unsaleable pictures, and quite possibly they would have killed or wounded anyone who suggested a compromise with the market. When materials and credit failed altogether, they stole newspapers and boot-blacking that they might continue to serve their masterful passion. They were superbly religious. All artists are religious. All uncompromising belief is religious. A man who so cares for truth that he will go to prison, or death, rather than acknowledge a God in whose existence he does not believe, is as religious, and as much a martyr in the cause of religion, as Socrates or Jesus. He has set his criterion of values outside the physical universe.

In material things, half a loaf is said to be better than no bread. Not so in spiritual. If he thinks that it may do some good, a politician will support a bill which he considers inadequate. He states his objections and votes with the majority. He does well, perhaps. In spiritual matters such compromises are impossible. To please the public the artist cannot give of his second best. To do so would be to sacrifice that which makes life valuable. Were he to become a liar and express something different from what he feels, truth would no longer be in him. What would it profit him to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? He knows that there is that within him which is more important than physical existence—that to which physical existence is but a means. That he may feel and express it, it is good that he should be alive. But unless he may feel and express the best, he were better dead.

Art and Religion are, then, two roads by which men escape from circumstance to ecstasy. Between aesthetic and religious rapture there is a family alliance. Art and Religion are means to similar states of mind. And if we are licensed

to lay aside the science of aesthetics and, going behind our emotion and its object, consider what is in the mind of the artist, we may say, loosely enough, that art is a manifestation of the religious sense. If it be an expression of emotion—as I am persuaded that it is—it is an expression of that emotion which is the vital force in every religion, or, at any rate, it expresses an emotion felt for that which is the essence of all. We may say that both art and religion are manifestations of man's religious sense, if by "man's religious sense" we mean his sense of ultimate reality. What we may not say is, that art is the expression of any particular religion; for to do so is to confuse the religious spirit with the channels in which it has been made to flow. It is to confuse the wine with the bottle. Art may have much to do with that universal emotion that has found a corrupt and stuttering expression in a thousand different creeds: it has nothing to do with historical facts or metaphysical fancies. To be sure, many descriptive paintings are manifestos and expositions of religious dogmas: a very proper use for descriptive painting too. Certainly the blot on many good pictures is the descriptive element introduced for the sake of edification and instruction. But in so far as a picture is a work of art, it has no more to do with dogmas or doctrines, facts or theories, than with the interests and emotions of daily life.

2. *ART AND HISTORY*

AND YET there is a connection between art and religion, even in the common and limited sense of that word. There is an historical connection: or, to be more exact, there is a fundamental connection between the history of art and the history of religion. Religions are vital and sincere only so long as they are animated by that which animates all great art—spiritual ferment. It is a mistake, by the way, to suppose that dogmatic religion cannot be vital and sincere. Religious emotions tend always to anchor themselves to earth by a chain of dogma. That tendency is the enemy within the gate of every movement. Dogmatic religion can be vital and sincere, and what is more, theology and ritual have before now been the trumpet and drum of spiritual revolutions. But dogmatic or intellectually free, religious ages, ages of spiritual turmoil, ages in which men set the spirit above the flesh and the emotions above the intellect, are the ages in which is felt the emotional significance of the universe. Then it is men live on the frontiers of reality and listen eagerly to travellers' tales. Thus it comes about that the great ages of religion are commonly the great ages of art. As the sense of reality grows dim, as men become more handy at manipulating labels and symbols, more mechanical, more disciplined, more specialised, less capable of feeling things directly, the power of escaping to the world of ecstasy decays, and art and religion begin to sink. When the majority lack, not only the emotion out of which art and religion are made, but even the sensibility to respond to what the few can still offer, art and religion founder. After that, nothing is left of art and religion but their names;

illusion and prettiness are called art, politics and sentimentality religion.

Now, if I am right in thinking that art is a manifestation—a manifestation, mark, and not an expression—of man's spiritual state, then in the history of art we shall read the spiritual history of the race. I am not surprised that those who have devoted their lives to the study of history should take it ill when one who professes only to understand the nature of art hints that by understanding his own business he may become a judge of theirs. Let me be as conciliatory as possible. No one can have less right than I, or, indeed, less inclination to assume the proud title of "scientific historian": no one can care less about historical small-talk or be more at a loss to understand what precisely is meant by "historical science." Yet if history be anything more than a chronological catalogue of facts, if it be concerned with the movements of mind and spirit, then I submit that to read history aright we must know, not only the works of art that each age produced, but also their value as works of art. If the aesthetic significance or insignificance of works of art does, indeed, bear witness to a spiritual state, then he who can appreciate that significance should be in a position to form some opinion concerning the spiritual state of the men who produced those works and of those who appreciated them. If art be at all the sort of thing it is commonly supposed to be, the history of art must be an index to the spiritual history of the race. Only, the historian who wishes to use art as an index must possess not merely the nice observation of the scholar and the archaeologist, but also a fine sensibility. For it is the aesthetic significance of a work that gives a clue to the state of mind that produced it; so the ability to assign a particular work to a particular period avails nothing unaccompanied by the power of appreciating its aesthetic significance.

To understand completely the history of an age must we know and understand the history of its art? It seems so. And yet the idea is intolerable to scientific historians. What becomes of the great scientific principle of water-tight compartments? Again, it is unjust: for assuredly, to understand art we need know nothing whatever about history. It may be that from works of art we can draw inferences as to the sort of people who made them: but the longest and most intimate conversations with an artist will not tell us whether his pictures are good or bad. We must see them: then we shall know. I may be partial or dishonest about the work of my friend, but its aesthetic significance is not more obvious to me than that of a work that was finished five thousand years ago. To appreciate fully a work of art we require nothing but sensibility. To those that can hear Art speaks for itself: facts and dates do not; to make bricks of such stuff one must glean the uplands and hollows for tags of auxiliary information and suggestion; and the history of art is no exception to the rule. To appreciate a man's art I need know nothing whatever about the artist; I can say whether this picture is better than that without the help of history; but if I am trying to account for the deterioration of his art, I shall be helped by knowing that he has been seriously ill or that he has married a wife who insists on his boiling her pot. To mark the deterioration was to make a pure, aesthetic judgment: to account for it was to become an historian. To understand the history of art we must know something of other kinds of history. Perhaps, to understand thoroughly any kind of history we must understand every kind of history. Perhaps the history of an age or of a life is an indivisible whole. Another intolerable idea! What becomes of the specialist? What of those formidable compendiums in which the multitudinous activities of man are kept so jealously apart? The mind boggles at the monstrous vision of its own conclusions.

But, after all, does it matter to me? I am not an historian of art or of anything else. I care very little when things were made, or why they were made; I care about their emotional significance to us. To the historian everything is a means to some other means; to me everything that matters is a direct means to emotion. I am writing about art, not about history. With history I am concerned only in so far as history serves

o illustrate my hypothesis: and whether history be true or alse matters very little, since my hypothesis is not based on history but on personal experience, not on facts but on feelings. Historical fact and falsehood are of no consequence to people who try to deal with realities. They need not ask, "Did this happen?"; they need ask only, "Do I feel this?" Lucky for us that it is so: for if our judgments about real things had to wait upon historical certitude they might have to wait for ever. Nevertheless it is amusing to see how far that of which we are sure agrees with that which we should expect. My aesthetic hypothesis—that the essential quality in a work of art is significant form—was based on my aesthetic experience. Of my aesthetic experiences I am sure. About my second hypothesis, that significant form is the expression of a peculiar emotion felt for reality—I am far from confident. However, I assume it to be true, and go on to suggest that this sense of reality leads men to attach greater importance to the spiritual than to the material significance of the universe, that it disposes men to feel things as ends instead of merely recognising them as means, that a sense of reality is, in fact, the essence of spiritual health. If this be so, we shall expect to find that ages in which the creation of significant form is checked are ages in which the sense of reality is dim, and that these ages are ages of spiritual poverty. We shall expect to find the curves of art and spiritual fervour ascending and descending together. In my next chapter I shall glance at the history of a cycle of art with the intention of following the movement of art and discovering how far that movement keeps pace with changes in the spiritual state of society. My view of the rise, decline and fall of art in Christendom is based entirely on a series of independent aesthetic judgments in the rightness of which I have the arrogance to feel considerable confidence. I pretend to a power of distinguishing between significant and insignificant form, and it will interest me to see whether a decline in the significance of forms—a deterioration of art, that is to say—synchronises generally with a lowering of the religious sense. I shall expect to find that whenever artists have allowed themselves

to be seduced from their proper business, the creation of form, by other and irrelevant interests, society has been spiritually decadent. Ages in which the sense of formal significance has been swamped utterly by preoccupation with the obvious, will turn out, I suspect, to have been ages of spiritual famine. Therefore, while following the fortunes of art across a period of fourteen hundred years, I shall try to keep an eye on that of which art may be a manifestation—man's sense of ultimate reality.

To criticise a work of art historically is to play the science-besotted fool. No more disastrous theory ever issued from the brain of a charlatan than that of evolution in art. Giotto did not creep, a grub, that Titian might flaunt, a butterfly. To think of a man's art as leading on to the art of someone else is to misunderstand it. To praise or abuse or be interested in a work of art because it leads or does not lead to another work of art is to treat it as though it were not a work of art. The connection of one work of art with another may have everything to do with history: it has nothing to do with appreciation. So soon as we begin to consider a work as anything else than an end in itself we leave the world of art. Though the development of painting from Giotto to Titian may be interesting historically, it cannot affect the value of any particular picture: aesthetically, it is of no consequence whatever. Every work of art must be judged on its own merits.

Therefore, be sure that, in my next chapter, I am not going to make aesthetic judgments in the light of history; I am going to read history in the light of aesthetic judgments. Having made my judgments, independently of any theory, aesthetic or non-aesthetic, I shall be amused to see how far the view of history that may be based on them agrees with accepted historical hypotheses. If my judgments and the dates furnished by historians be correct, it will follow that some ages have produced more good art than others: but, indeed, it is not disputed that the variety in the artistic significance of different ages is immense. I shall be curious to see what relation can be established between the art and the age that produced it. If my second hypothesis—that

art is the expression of an emotion for ultimate reality—be correct, the relation between art and its age will be inevitable and intimate. In that case, an aesthetic judgment will imply some sort of judgment about the general state of mind of the artist and his admirers. In fact, anyone who accepts absolutely my second hypothesis with all its possible implications—which is more than I am willing to do—will not only see in the history of art the spiritual history of the race, but will be quite unable to think of one without thinking of the other.

If I do not go quite so far as that, I stop short only by a little. Certainly it is less absurd to see in art the key to history than to imagine that history can help us to an appreciation of art. In ages of spiritual fervour I look for great art. By ages of spiritual fervour I do not mean pleasant or romantic or humane or enlightened ages; I mean ages in which, for one reason or another, men have been unusually excited about their souls and unusually indifferent about their bodies. Such ages, as often as not, have been superstitious and cruel. Preoccupation with the soul may lead to superstition, indifference about the body to cruelty. I never said that ages of great art were sympathetic to the middle-classes. Art and a quiet life are incompatible I think; some stress and turmoil there must be. Need I add that in the snuggest age of materialism great artists may arise and flourish? Of course: but when the production of good art is at all widespread and continuous, near at hand I shall expect to find a restless generation. Also, having marked a period of spiritual stir, I shall look, not far off, for its manifestation in significant form. But the stir must be spiritual and genuine; a swirl of emotionalism or political frenzy will provoke nothing fine.[1] How far in any particular age the production of art is stimulated by general exaltation,

[1] I should not have expected the wars of so-called religion or the Puritan revolution to have awakened in men a sense of the emotional significance of the universe, and I should be a good deal surprised if Sir Edward Carson's agitation were to produce in the North-East of Ireland a crop of first-rate formal expression.

or general exaltation by works of art, is a question hardly to be decided. Wisest, perhaps, is he who says that the two seem to have been interdependent. Just how dependent I believe them to have been, will appear when, in my next chapter, I attempt to sketch the rise, decline, and fall of the Christian slope.

3. *ART AND ETHICS*

BETWEEN me and the pleasant places of history remains, however, one ugly barrier. I cannot dabble and paddle in the pools and shallows of the past until I have answered a question so absurd that the nicest people never tire of asking it: "What is the moral justification of art?" Of course they are right who insist that the creation of art must be justified on ethical grounds: all human activities must be so justified. It is the philosopher's privilege to call upon the artist to show that what he is about is either good in itself or a means to good. It is the artist's duty to reply: "Art is good because it exalts to a state of ecstasy better far than anything a benumbed moralist can even guess at; so shut up." Philosophically he is quite right; only, philosophy is not so simple as that. Let us try to answer philosophically.

The moralist inquires whether art is either good in itself or a means to good. Before answering, we will ask what he means by the word "good," not because it is in the least doubtful, but to make him think. In fact, Mr. G. E. Moore has shown pretty conclusively in his *Principia Ethica* that by "good" everyone means just good. We all know quite well what we mean though we cannot define it. "Good" can no more be defined than "Red": no quality can be defined. Nevertheless we know perfectly well what we mean when we say that a thing is "good" or "red." This is so obviously true that its statement has greatly disconcerted, not to say enraged, the orthodox philosophers.

Orthodox philosophers are by no means agreed as to what we do mean by "good," only they are sure that we cannot mean what we say. They used to be fond of assuming that "good" meant pleasure; or, at any rate, that pleasure was the sole good as an end: two very different propositions. That "good" means "pleasure" and that

pleasure is the sole good was the opinion of the Hedonists, and is still the opinion of any Utilitarians who may have lingered on into the twentieth century. They enjoy the honour of being the only ethical fallacies worth the powder and shot of a writer on art. I can imagine no more delicate or convincing piece of logic than that by which Mr. G. E. Moore disposes of both. But it is none of my business to do clumsily what Mr. Moore has done exquisitely. I have no mind by attempting to reproduce his dialectic to incur the merited ridicule of those familiar with the *Principia Ethica* or to spoil the pleasure of those who will be wise enough to run out this very minute and order a masterpiece with which they happen to be unacquainted. For my immediate purpose it is necessary only to borrow one shaft from that well-stocked armoury.

To him who believes that pleasure is the sole good, I will put this question: Does he, like John Stuart Mill, and everyone else I ever heard of, speak of "higher and lower" or "better and worse" or "superior and inferior" pleasures? And, if so, does he not perceive that he has given away his case? For, when he says that one pleasure is "higher" or "better" than another, he does not mean that it is greater in *quantity* but superior in *quality*.

On page 7 of *Utilitarianism*, J. S. Mill says:—

"If one of the two (pleasures) is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account."

But if pleasure be the sole good, the only possible criterion of pleasures is quantity of pleasure. "Higher" or "better" can only mean containing more pleasure. To speak of "better pleasures" in any other sense is to make the goodness of the sole good as an end depend upon something

which, *ex hypothesi*, is not good as an end. Mill is as one who, having set up sweetness as the sole good quality in jam, prefers Tiptree to Crosse and Blackwell, not because it is sweeter, but because it possesses a better kind of sweetness. To do so is to discard sweetness as an ultimate criterion and to set up something else in its place. So, when Mill, like everyone else, speaks of "better" or "higher" or "superior" pleasures, he discards pleasure as an ultimate criterion, and thereby admits that pleasure is not the sole good. He feels that some pleasures are better than others, and determines their respective values by the degree in which they possess that quality which all recognise but none can define—goodness. By higher and lower, superior and inferior pleasures we mean simply more good and less good pleasures. There are, therefore, two different qualities, Pleasantness and Goodness. Pleasure, amongst other things, may be good; but pleasure cannot mean good. By "good" we cannot mean "pleasureable"; for, as we see, there is a quality, "goodness," so distinct from pleasure that we speak of pleasures that are more or less good without meaning pleasures that are more or less pleasant. By "good," then, we do not mean "pleasure," neither is pleasure the sole good.

Mr. Moore goes on to inquire what things are good in themselves, as ends that is to say. He comes to a conclusion with which we all agree, but for which few could have found convincing and logical arguments: "states of mind," he shows, alone are good as ends.[1] People who have very little taste for logic will find a simple and satisfactory proof of this conclusion afforded by what is called "the method of isolation."

That which is good as an end will retain some, at any rate, of its value in complete isolation: it will retain all its value as an end. That which is good as a means only will lose all its value in isolation. That which is good as an end will remain valuable even when deprived of all its consequences and left with nothing but bare existence. There-

[1] Formerly he held that inanimate beauty also was good in itself. But this tenet, I am glad to learn, he has discarded.

fore, we can discover whether honestly we feel something to be good as an end, if only we can conceive it in complete isolation, and be sure that so isolated it remains valuable. Bread is good. Is bread good as an end or as a means? Conceive a loaf existing in an uninhabited and uninhabitable planet. Does it seem to lose its value? That is a little too easy. The physical universe appears to most people immensely good, for towards nature they feel violently that emotional reaction which brings to the lips the epithet "good"; but if the physical universe were not related to mind, if it were never to provoke an emotional reaction, if no mind were ever to be affected by it, and if it had no mind of its own, would it still appear good? There are two stars: one is, and ever will be, void of life, on the other exists a fragment of just living protoplasm which will never develop, will never become conscious. Can we say honestly that we feel one to be better than the other? Is life itself good as an end? A clear judgment is made difficult by the fact that one cannot conceive anything without feeling something for it; one's very conceptions provoke states of mind and thus acquire value as means. Let us ask ourselves, bluntly, can that which has no mind and affects no mind have value? Surely not. But anything which has a mind can have intrinsic value, and anything that affects a mind may become valuable as a means, since the state of mind produced may be valuable in itself. Isolate that mind. Isolate the state of mind of a man in love or rapt in contemplation; it does not seem to lose all its value. I do not say that its value is not decreased; obviously, it loses its value as a means to producing good states of mind in others. But a certain value does subsist—an intrinsic value. Populate the lone star with one human mind and every part of that star becomes potentially valuable as a means, because it may be a means to that which is good as an end—a good state of mind. The state of mind of a person in love or rapt in contemplation suffices in itself. We do not stay to inquire "What useful purpose does this serve, whom does it benefit, and how?" We say directly and with conviction—"This is good."

When we are challenged to justify our opinion that anything, other than a state of mind, is good, we, feeling it to be a means only, do very properly seek its good effects, and our last justification is always that it produces good states of mind. Thus, when asked why we call a patent fertiliser good, we may, if we can find a listener, show that the fertiliser is a means to good crops, good crops a means to food, food a means to life, and life a necessary condition of good states of mind. Further we cannot go. When asked why we hold a particular state of mind to be good, the state of aesthetic contemplation for instance, we can but reply that to us its goodness is self-evident. Some states of mind appear to be good independently of their consequences. No other things appear to be good in this way. We conclude, therefore, that good states of mind are alone good as ends.

To justify ethically any human activity, we must inquire—"Is this a means to good states of mind?" In the case of art our answer will be prompt and emphatic. Art is not only a means to good states of mind, but, perhaps, the most direct and potent that we possess. Nothing is more direct, because nothing affects the mind more immediately; nothing is more potent, because there is no state of mind more excellent or more intense than the state of aesthetic contemplation. This being so, to seek any other moral justification for art, to seek in art a means to anything less than good states of mind, is an act of wrong-headedness to be committed only by a fool or a man of genius.

Many fools have committed it and one man of genius has made it notorious. Never was cart put more obstructively before horse than when Tolstoi announced that the justification of art was its power of promoting good actions. As if actions were ends in themselves! There is neither virtue nor vice in running: but to run with good tidings is commendable, to run away with an old lady's purse is not. There is no merit in shouting: but to speak up for truth and justice is well, to deafen the world with charlatanry is damnable. Always it is the end in view that gives value to

action; and, ultimately, the end of all good actions must be to create or encourage or make possible good states of mind. Therefore, inciting people to good actions by means of edifying images is a respectable trade and a roundabout means to good. Creating works of art is as direct a means to good as a human being can practise. Just in this fact lies the tremendous importance of art: there is no more direct means to good.

To pronounce anything a work of art is, therefore, to make a momentous moral judgment. It is to credit an object with being so direct and powerful a means to good that we need not trouble ourselves about any other of its possible consequences. But even were this not the case, the habit of introducing moral considerations into judgments between particular works of art would be inexcusable. Let the moralist make a judgment about art as a whole, let him assign it what he considers its proper place amongst means to good, but in aesthetic judgments, in judgments between members of the same class, in judgments between works of art considered as art, let him hold his tongue. If he esteem art anything less than equal to the greatest means to good he mistakes. But granting, for the sake of peace, its inferiority to some, I will yet remind him that his moral judgments about the value of particular works of art have nothing to do with their artistic value. The judge at Epsom is not permitted to disqualify the winner of the Derby in favour of the horse that finished last but one on the ground that the latter is just the animal for the Archbishop of Canterbury's brougham.

Define art as you please, preferably in accordance with my ideas; assign it what place you will in the moral system; and then discriminate between works of art according to their excellence in that quality, or those qualities, that you have laid down in your definition as essential and peculiar to works of art. You may, of course, make ethical judgments about particular works, not as works of art, but as members of some other class, or as independent and unclassified parts of the universe. You may hold that a particular picture by the President of the Royal Academy is a

greater means to good than one by the glory of the New English Art Club, and that a penny bun is better than either. In such a case you will be making a moral and not an aesthetic judgment. Therefore it will be right to take into account the area of the canvases, the thickness of the frames, and the potential value of each as fuel or shelter against the rigours of our climate. In casting up accounts you should not neglect their possible effects on the middle-aged people who visit Burlington House and the Suffolk Street Gallery; nor must you forget the consciences of those who handle the Chantry funds, or of those whom high prices provoke to emulation. You will be making a moral and not an aesthetic judgment; and if you have concluded that neither picture is a work of art, though you may be wasting your time, you will not be making yourself ridiculous. But when you treat a picture as a work of art, you have, unconsciously perhaps, made a far more important moral judgment. You have assigned it to a class of objects so powerful and direct as means to spiritual exaltation that all minor merits are inconsiderable. Paradoxical as it may seem, the only relevant qualities in a work of art, judged as art, are artistic qualities: judged as a means to good, no other qualities are worth considering; for there are no qualities of greater moral value than artistic qualities, since there is no greater means to good than art.