

CT 10

# ETHICS AND ÆSTHETICS ;

OR,

ART AND ITS INFLUENCE ON OUR  
SOCIAL PROGRESS.

A Lecture

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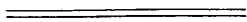
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BY

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THERE can be no doubt that there are conflicting and often contradictory constituent elements in man. He is God's fairest creature, but often capable of the meanest and most cruel actions, of which no animal is guilty. This is, and will always be the case, whenever these conflicting elements are not properly developed and trained. Man, at times, is more stupid than an animal ; the assertion that he learnt his first steps in art from plants and animals, beginning with the lowest animals, is not a mere hypothetical assertion, but a fact. Man, in his first periods of development, often acts on mere unconscious impulses. He recognises outward objects, sees them only as detached incoherent units, and cannot yet observe them as the emanations of one general idea, according to which they are formed. At a later period, however, he becomes conscious of his power to recognise detached objects in their coherence, and traces in them general features which unite them into grand harmonious groups. The more he extends this latter power, the more he becomes master of the surrounding phenomena of the outer world, and the more his artistic powers develop. The force to create is as inborn in man as the force to think. The former power is based on imagination affecting his emotional element, the latter on reason affecting his intellectual capacity. Our reason must be guided and cultivated as carefully as the art of walking. A child left to itself would scarcely ever learn how

to walk upright—it must be taught to do so. Our imagination requires the same training as our reason. Necessity is the mother of invention, and all that is unnecessary is looked upon as superfluous and useless. But necessity is not the only mother that leads us on to activity. As soon as we have satisfied our wants, they cease to excite us to further action, and we step into a second stage of our intellectual faculty; we strive to embellish, to beautify the means by which we have succeeded in satisfying our wants. A knife with an ornamented or carved handle does not cut better than one with a plain handle; neither does a heavy club kill a brother more quickly because its handle is ingeniously decorated with geometrical patterns; a plain pint jar does not hold more water because it is glazed or painted with flowers and groups of dancing nymphs, and still even savages decorate, ornament, and embellish their every-day utensils, their huts, and their very bodies. The faculty, the striving to improve upon nature, is as much part of our entity as breathing, eating, drinking, and money-making. The power of enjoying and becoming conscious of the cause of our enjoyment ought to be as much cultivated as our endeavours to know. To cultivate our reasoning faculty one-sidedly, and to pretend that the world is a mere machine, is one of the most objectionable fundamental errors, one which would turn humanity into a grand fraternity of “Boulderbys” continually echoing the question into your ears, What is the good of flowers on a carpet, or of mouldings on a house, if only the sewage be good, the ventilation perfect, and the wet kept out? So long as a nation is in a transition state from barbarism into civilization, these “Boulderbys” reign supreme; but the moment that higher ethics take the place of low conceptions concerning God and the world, the inborn force of æsthetics begins to ferment, to work in man, and to drive him to resign

his Hebrew-Puritan coarseness, and to begin to ornament, to improve the outer aspect of his houses and towns, his every-day utensils, and to foster with great energy the culture of the Fine Arts. As little as birds can rise and sing in the heavens whilst the storm is raging, but will wait until it is abated, so it is with artists; their hearts and imagination are dumb whilst utilitarian indifference oppresses the social atmosphere, or political passions rage in a nation. If the Fine Arts could be imported, as tallow is from Russia, indigo from India, or turnips from Sweden, we might do a tolerably good trade; but the Fine Arts do not grow like mushrooms in musty and moist, in dark and hidden places, but only in the broad daylight of general culture. It is not in vain that we speak in the artistic world so much of our "stars." Stars shine only when there is night; the darker the night the brighter are the stars, which often lose their lustre in the light of a tolerably bright full-moon of criticism. We can see, however, the bright dawn of a greater love of art tinting our horizon; but we must learn, above all, to look upon æsthetics as an important branch of our education. We are living in the amiable conceit that a knowledge of the "Beautiful" is a mere matter of opinion. We wrap ourselves in the saying "de gustibus non est disputandum." But we dispute about the eastern postures, the real presence, the right of believing in a personal devil, the essence of the Divinity, and the efficacy of embroidered petticoats for dancing priests, who patronise a kind of art which has long gone out of fashion, and will as little come into general use as "tattooing" or pretty silk tailcoats in union with iron armour, spears, cross-bows, and helmets.

If there be no absolute law in æsthetics, there is none in ethics. For ethics, in fact, regulate relative beauty in actions, whilst æsthetics regulate relative taste in forms. Ethics teach us how to act rightly;

æsthetics, how to see and appreciate beauty. The one discerns between good and evil; the other between beautiful and ugly. The one is philosophy of action; the other philosophy of form. The one may be stated to be the logic of virtue; the other the logic of taste. But between virtue and taste there is merely a formal difference: the one affecting, as I have said, reason; the other imagination—both constituent faculties of our mind. Ethics teach us the idealisation of our nature, elevating us into true human beings; and æsthetics teach us the idealization of nature, transfiguring her works into works of art. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the moral teacher influences ever-changing agents and agencies, whilst the æsthetical teacher influences the highest god-like nature of man, through which works, that may delight humanity for thousands of years, can be created in stone, on paper, or on canvas. Morality is an utterly abstract and at the same time relative notion, like "beauty;" but both may be defined as based on the laws of the "Cosmos;" and the Greeks used the same word for "beautiful" as for the "universe." The laws of nature form the basis of all our right actions, and only so far as our actions are in accordance with these eternal laws can we say that we are really moral. It is a fact that the more nations deviated from these laws, the more they built themselves "codes," based on a heated imagination; the more monstrosities they created in arts, the more sanguinary cruelties they perpetrated in history. For morals and arts have one and the same basis—namely, conformity to the laws of nature. Morals consist in our becoming masters of our own nature, and make us fit to live as human beings in a social condition. This is exactly what æsthetics teach us with reference to the forms of nature. We have to learn how to use the laws of nature in creating anything so as to make

it a real work of art. The question whether our reason or our sentiment was to be most affected by a work of art led to two different schools, which still leave it unsettled. Sentiment was to be placed above sensation, or imagination above emotion; as though we could have sensations and emotions without our sentiments being aroused by our imagination through outward impressions. The question cannot rest on effects, but first on causes, producing certain effects. The cause of all our striving after emotions is found in the intellectual force with which we are endowed, and which, driven into false grooves through an imagination wrongly acted upon, may seek for emotions which are either false, ugly, pernicious, or monstrous. Nature everywhere shows forces forming endless forms in space and time. Here she differs from art, which has to bring in space and time the creations of an unlimited imagination into limited shapes and forms. Infinity is the attribute of nature; finiteness the element of art. Still, whilst nature in her infinity works only to transform, or apparently to destroy, art produces in her finiteness works which, stamped with the power of intellect, outlast the works of nature, and can be said to be immortal. How many beautiful men and women passed away whilst the marble-wrought gods of Phidias still live amongst us. Where are Æschylos, Sophokles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Schiller, and Goethe? The creatures of their imagination still live amongst us. We hear the unrestrained curses of "Prometheus Bound" resounding in our hearts; we mourn with Antigone; we are horrified with Medea; Brutus, Antony, have vanished, but their memories, their very speeches, have been recorded for ever by the immortal Shakespeare; Mary Stuart has been clothed in an eternal, never-fading beauty by Schiller; and Faust and the Devil have become incarnations of a higher type through Goethe's master-mind.

Gazing at the heavens on a starry night, we see, in addition to myriads of sparkling worlds floating in the air, a great quantity of nebulæ. Either decayed systems of worlds, or worlds in formation. Worlds which have lost their centre of gravity and fallen to pieces; or worlds which are seeking, according to the general law of gravitation, to form a central body by the attraction of cosmical ether. The one phenomenon is that of destruction, the other that of formation. This double cosmical process is continually repeating itself in the development of art. Art is like a mirror—whatever looks into it is reflected by it. If a poor untrained imagination stares into the mirror, no one must be astonished that poor and distorted images result. Nature furnishes us with mortar and stones for the building, but the architect's intellectual force has to arrange the elements and to bring them into an artistic shape. Nature furnishes us with flowers, trees, animals, and men; but the artist has to reproduce and to group them so as to impress the objective forms of nature with his own intellectual subjectivity. To become thoroughly conscious of the distinction between the "sublime" and "beautiful" is the first step towards a correct understanding of works of art.

During the long period of the geological formation of the earth, when mountains were towered upon mountains, rocks upheaved, islands subsided; when air, water, fire, and solid matter seemed engaged in never-ending conflict—nature was *sublime*. The dynamic force appeared to be the only working element in nature, and the counterbalancing static force seemed to be without influence. Gradually, vegetable and animal life in their first crude forms commenced to show themselves. Zoophytes developed into megatheriums and mastadons. Mammoths and elks sported on plains which now form the mountain-tops of our continents. Scarcely visible coral insects were still engaged in construct-



ing mountain chains, and a luxuriant vegetation covered the small continents which were surrounded by apparently endless seas. Such changes, transformations, and convulsions are gigantic, grand, awe-inspiring—*sublime*—but not beautiful. Whenever nature is at work disturbing the air with electric currents or shaking huge mountains so that they bow their lofty summits, or when the dry soil is rent asunder, and sends forth streams of glowing lava, we are in the presence of the sublime—but not of the beautiful. Whenever man's nature is overawed, whenever he is made to feel his impotence by the phenomena of nature, he faces the sublime. When, however, the cosmical forces had expended their exuberant powers, when a diversified climate had produced those plants and animals that surround us, when man appeared in his threefold development, as black, yellow, and white man on this revolving planet, and by degrees reached his highest development, then only art acquired, through man's consciousness of what is beautiful, a real meaning and existence on earth. Science eternally tries to vanquish error. Industry subdues matter, and uses it for utilitarian purposes: but the vocation of art is to produce beauty for beauty's sake, and to idealise nature.

Nature produces like art. It is characteristic that some people continually talk of the Divinity as a "maker," which at once shows the low conception they have of the incomprehensible first cause. We may talk of a "watchmaker" or a "shoemaker," but to speak of a "world-maker" degrades the divinity which endows matter with inherent laws, and then, according to the immutable law of causation, allows it *unconsciously* to assume its variegated forms. The products of art, on the other hand, are the results of the *conscious* intellectual power of the artist. It is the free yet well-regulated consciousness of the artist that elevates his

productions into works of art. Undoubtedly the great store-house of the artist is nature; he learns from her how to create, but he has to discern, to combine, to adapt, to select his forms, and to know the laws of combination, adaptation, and, above all, *selection*; for the whole success of an artist, in whatever branch he works, depends on his power of *selection* and *rejection*. This power of selection varies in the three groups of mankind.

The negro is triangular-headed (*prognathos*), with his facial lines drawn downwards; he is the fossil, or the antediluvian man, and as such indulges in an antediluvian taste; his mechanical skill is that of a child; he never goes beyond geometrical figures and glaringly bright colours. The negro is still the woolly-headed, animal-faced being represented on the tombs of the Pharaohs, because his bodily structure and facial lines have not altered during thousands of years. In studying his artistic products, his customs and manners, we are struck with their resemblance to those which our more direct forefathers, the Turanians and Aryans, used when still in a savage state. They used, and still use, the same kind of flint instruments; their pottery is the same; their clubs, paddles, the cross-beams of their huts, are adorned with the same rope and serpent-like windings and twistings.

Next we have the Turanian (from "tura," swiftness of a horse); he is square and short-headed, (*brachikephalos*), the traditionary *yellow* man. His face is flat, his nose deeply sunken between his prominent cheeks, and his reasoning faculty only developed to a certain degree. He has small, oblique eyes, the lines of his face being turned upwards, expressing cunning and jocularly. He is an excellent rider, but a slow, though steady walker. He looks on nature with a nomadic shepherd's eye, and not with that of a settled artist. He possesses remarkable technical ability, has great powers of

imitation, can produce geometrical ornamentations of the most complicated and ingenious character, and excels in a realistic reproduction of flowers, fishes, butterflies, and birds; he has no sense for perspective, and no talent for modelling by means of shade and light. He is incapable of drawing a dog, a horse, or a human being.

Finally, we have the Aryan, the long or oval-headed man (*dolichocephalos*), the historical *white* man, the crowning product of the cosmical forces of nature so far as our globe is concerned. His facial lines are composed of the emblems of the two conflicting forces working throughout nature, the *static*, represented by a horizontal, and the *dynamic* by a vertical line, both framed in by an oval. To him alone we owe art in its progressive development and its highest sense. He surpasses the two other groups of humanity not only in technical skill, but especially in his inventive and reasoning power, critical discernment, and purity of artistic taste. The white man was unquestionably the founder of all the different religious systems. He tried with his inborn faculty of intellect to answer the three questions: Where from? what for? and where to? He measured synthetically the three dimensions of space and time; he tried to trace the three ever-stable and still ever-varying phenomena of creation, preservation, and transformation. Art was the most important means to give utterance in forms to these answers; and thus the art-forms of the Orientals, as well as of the Greeks, are but continuous commentaries on their religious conceptions. It is this fact that necessitates a correct knowledge of the phases, developments, and changes in the different religions, as the abstract products of our endeavours to solve the mysterious questions forced upon us by nature, and their concrete results in visible forms by means of works of art. The Indians, in striving to give shape and form to abstract

notions, lost themselves through an ill-trained, overwhelming imagination, and produced caricatures. The Persians, in worshipping the Deity in pure thoughts, engendering pure words and producing pure deeds, built magnificent palaces, but scarcely any temples. We have no representations of their Divinities; neither of Ormuzd nor of Ahriman, but we have Fervers and Devas, the former as winged human beings, the latter as winged animals or compositions of animals, chimeras, or as symbols of the King's power. The theological, religious, and symbolical elements are altogether neglected in the Perso-Assyrian and Babylonian reliefs. We have the friends, relations, attendants, and servants of the King; tributaries submitting to Kings; officers holding fly-flaps of feathers; horses crossing rivers; kings hunting and slaying lions; armies before besieged towns; warriors returning from battle; infantry and horse with spears, bows and arrows; boats floating on rivers; galleys going to sea; damsels and children with musical instruments; and mathematical tablets with calculations of square roots. We might study all this and verify what I say at this moment, if our magnificent British Museum were not a book, provided with the seven seals of Sabbatarian bigotry, closed to the nation as a means of higher education on the Sunday. We should see in these Assyrian works of art the very opposite of Egyptian art; the one the outgrowth of man's capacity as a human being, and the other the result of a gloomy, mighty hierarchy looking on man as created for another world—neglecting houses, but constructing monumental temples in honour of the gods. In every form Egyptian art reflects the stifling influences of a hierarchy. But the East never succeeded, whether in Asia or Africa, in freeing itself from the influence of the marvellous. Now the marvellous can only form a certain constituent part in man's artistic products; so far as it reflects the sublime

impressions of natural phenomena. These impressions, working through our senses on our intellect, must come under the regulating and checking influences of reason, engendering symmetry, eurythmy, proportion, action, and expression. The Indians tried to explain the phenomena of nature in an abstract sense, and to bring metaphysics into outward shapes; the Persians were bent on the glorification of power, visible on earth in the person of the despot, and their sculptures are but monotonous rows of stiff attendants as far as the men are concerned. The animals are treated with greater freedom, because the artist was not tied down by court rules or ceremonials, as in the treatment of the King and his myrmidons. The Egyptians tried to copy the material phenomena of nature, brought them into geometrical forms, and marked them with realistically drawn symbols. When a deity as some force of nature was invested with a form, the form being one with some religious dogma or mystic emblem of the power of the gods, such form could not be changed; for it became in art what technical words are in science. When once a form with its symbols and emblems was settled, as that of Brahma, Vishnu, S'iva, Osiris, or Isis, or the serpent fixed as the symbol of eternity, the hawk as that of light, the inner spiritual life of the artist was tied down to outward forms with special inward meanings, and the constraining sway of misunderstood nature on one side, and the stationary precepts of an omnipotent hierarchy on the other, entangled the artist's imagination and paralysed every effort of his individual subjectivity. The different artistic forms of the Eastern nations became by degrees petrified and immutable national and religious incrustations. Even when geometrical figures, flowers or leaves, and animals were used, the combinations were marred by a want of harmony between the dynamic and static elements in their composition. There is

always a "too much," rarely a "too little." The East rent nature asunder, looked upon *matter* as *evil*, and yet matter was to be used to bring the eternal *spirit* into form. The element of S'iva, Ahriman, or Typhon was to give expression to the essence of Brahma, Ormuzd, or Osiris. What wonder, then, that the artists succeeded so badly, and that their gods looked *in abstracto* as well as *in concreto* so much like infernal monstrosities. So long as the Greeks were in these Asiatic fetters they produced similar forms, as also did Christian art in its infancy, as may be seen in the South Kensington Museum in the splendid cast of the Buddhistic gate of the Sanchi Topé, which is close to a cast by Veit Stoss, a Nuremberg sculptor of the fifteenth century. But as soon as the self-conscious spirit of youthful humanity was aroused in the Greeks through their poets and philosophers, art improved in the same ratio as the hierarchical power and the superstitious belief in their gods diminished. Feelings and emotions were as much fostered with the Greeks as the consciousness of these phenomena. Prometheus may be said to have been the best and most intelligible emblem of *classic* heathen humanity, as Faust may be considered the representative of *romantic* Christian humanity. Prometheus longed to bring matter into form; Faust to know what kept matter and spirit together, and what became of the spirit if once freed from matter. Prometheus made man of clay, stole fire from heaven, and vivified the image with his stolen fire. Faust knew that the heavenly fire was a force over which he had no control, and he called upon a spirit of the lower burning regions to teach him—"how all one whole harmonious weaves, each in the other works and lives." The formal outer-form is the longing of the Greek Faust, and the spiritual inner-life the aspiration of the Teuton Prometheus. Architecture and sculp-

ture were the distinguishing characters of Greek art; carving and painting were the elements of Christian art, especially in its first slow development, struggling to free itself in architecture as well as in sciences from the oppressive influences of an Indo-Egyptian hierarchy. To the immortal honour of that hierarchy it must be recorded that they helped humanity in the development of art with all their power. I will not enter into a painful inquiry as to how far they endeavoured, like the Egyptian priests or the Buddhistic Bonzes, to divert mankind from thinking and reasoning through the erection of mighty churches. These edifices were constructed in the old Egyptian sense so far as the subterranean vaults were concerned. The superstructures were simply revivals of Indo-Buddhistic rock-hewn temples, placed as detached, free-standing monuments in the midst of crooked small streets, with crooked little houses in which very crooked-thinking beings must have lived, shutting out the glorious daylight by means of painted glass or numberless leaden hexagons—probably so many symbols of the fetters which humanity had to shake off through a revival of Græco-Romanism in art and in our modes of thinking, building, and painting. How intimately our intellectual and scientific progress is interwoven with our progress in morals and political freedom may nowhere be studied to greater advantage than in the artistic life of the Greeks under Perikles, and the artistic movement of Italy during the sixteenth century, when the invention of the art of printing, the discovery of America, the study of the ancient classics and the Reformation brought new life, new ideas amongst the masses; and we must all be convinced that art requires a certain moral and intellectual condition under which alone it will live. If the intellectual or moral atmosphere be changed, the artists either work in an Egyptian or Indo-Assyrian

style. If a continual abhorrence of the body as the seat of thousands of devils be preached, we shall be furnished by our artists with those emaciated, elongated, spider-armed and legged saints that adorned the churches with their meagre half-starved frames during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. We shall have pictures representing men and women roasted, boiled, quartered, pinched with iron tongs, or broken on the wheel, or starved in dungeons. The influence of such an art must have been terrible on the ethical or moral education of mankind. For what pity could man have for his fellow-creatures when his eyes rested on the frightful scenes of the torments which St. Catherine underwent when broken on the wheel; St. Primatius, who was burnt alive; St. Peter, who was crucified with his head downwards; or St. Lambert, who was beaten with a club, and so on? Could men be expected to have treated their wretched fellow sinners with great kindness, when they could point to a crucified God, and to his best followers tormented to death? How much art was the mere reflection of this diabolical spirit of the darkest ages, and how much art again contributed to the demoralised hardening of the masses, it would be difficult to decide. It is a further fact that, with the revival of classic feelings in poetry and sciences, art turned with horror from these ugly scenes, and painted the Virgin with the child, bringing men through a more humane representation of the divinity into nearer relations with our higher aspirations. But if the surroundings of the artists be changed again through the superstitions of an ignorant mob, the despotic organisation of a government, or the rule of a wild and bigoted party, the artistic force will also change or die out altogether. The artist acts only to a certain extent on the public, whilst the public re-acts with a combined and often entirely crushing "*vis inertię*" on the artist. I have only here to mention



the evils which Puritanism, with its Hebrew hatred of art and refinement, produced in this once "merry Old England." Artists can often only reflect the intellectual atmosphere in which they live. How is a man who sees nothing but emaciated, beggarly, or sanctimonious faces, thin limbs, hungry looks, dwellings bare of all domestic comfort, decayed brick houses and crumbling walls, to paint convivial scenes of happiness and joy? Or let me draw another picture; how is a man to paint mighty dramatic scenes on a canvas, when he has to live in an atmosphere of so-called modern respectability, seeing always the same bland smiles around him, the same trimmed whiskers, the same stiff collars, with the same faultless but not less stiff bows, hearing the same stereotyped insignificant phrases about the weather, the funds, the high prices of coals or butcher's meat, receiving an order for a so-called nice little picture, with plenty of sentiment in a dead cock-robin, and the important question put under it, "Who killed cock-robin?" in old Gothic letters; or another for a yawning Christ, who, tired of his daily work, does not enjoy his god-head, brightly looking towards the hour when he is with his last breath on the Cross to redeem humanity. Such a poetical conception, painted yawning, is truly a sign of our times, but not one of the most encouraging. We are just passing through a crisis. We were too strongly Platonists in our notion of art until recently. Plato used to place artists in the same category with hair-dressers, cooks, and cheats, who continually try to belie us. This is a mean view for so divine a philosopher to take, but nothing is too mean for a divine philosopher to assert when it suits his preconceived hypotheses. Aristotle improved on Plato, and advocated "limitation," "order," and "symmetry." Aristotle already treats of "reality" in art, which has to assume the concrete form of beauty, and wishes that

our "imitation" (*μιμησις*) of nature should be done under the influence of purification (*κάθαρσις*), and he admits the effect which art must have on the general improvement of morals as they work ethically, pathetically, and practically. Plotinus, of the Alexandrian school, is next to be studied. Self-motion is with him the essence of absolute beauty, which self-motion is to be expressed in a work of art. With him a beautiful work of art is not a mere reproduction of reality, but he requires to see in it the reflection of the "moving (subjective) spirit" of the artist; as soon as the moving idea is not to be traced, he condemns the work as "ugly." Influenced by the spreading "spiritualism" of Christianity, he assumes "matter" as "evil," as the negative element of the "ideal" of "good." The vivifying and idealising element giving form to thoughts is the essential element of beauty. He goes beyond the principles of antiquity in sculpture and wishes the art of painting to concentrate all its efforts on the expression of an inner life through the eye. For nearly 1500 years art is left without a theoretical guide. After a life of beauty in the antique, we have a revived second life. This resurrection took place through the Renaissance, this true and mighty offspring of the Reformation. "Love," in its most sublime meaning, became the fundamental basis of modern art. It was in this glorious island that æsthetics received, like "political economy," a systematic form for the first time. We have continued to cultivate the study of political economy, with its regulations of demand and supply; we have even gone so far as richly to reward fat cocks and pigs, cows and bulls, big-eared rabbits, goitered pigeons, and have our horse, baby, and barmaid shows; but we have not continued the study of æsthetics, and have shut out the very word from our modern philosophical writings. Hutcheson, however (1694-1747), revived the study of the beautiful, and Cousin

is honest enough to accord to the Englishman the priority in having placed sentiment above sensation, and written on the laws of the beautiful. Hutcheson distinguished the faculty which perceives pure beauty from the two which were generally supposed to comprise the entire soul, namely, understanding and physical sensibility. The idea that art would decline when metaphysics, as some materialists chose to call æsthetics, flourished, is not borne out by facts in art-history; neither is that pernicious idea correct, "that the arts of poetry, painting and sculpture may exclusively flourish under a despotic government." Those who have studied art-history may point to the period of Perikles, under whom art flourished, and attained the very highest development in sculpture and architecture. Art began to flourish during the Middle Ages in the free-towns of Germany and Italy, and not under the despotic sway of the Imperial House of Hapsburg. French art revived under the Republic and during the Liberal Government of Louis Philippe; it flourished, and continues to flourish, under the sway of the liberal-minded Hohenzollerns in Prussia; it was neither under the despotic King John, nor under Henry VIII., but under the great and immortal Queen Elizabeth that Shakespeare wrote his master-works, his divine historical paintings in words. Freedom of thought in poetry and art may exist often under a despot, whilst even a Commonwealth, if swayed by purely utilitarian ideas, will stifle and kill art altogether. Quetelet is incorrect in saying that "modern art has suffered from a too servile imitation of the ancients." Art has suffered from a neglect of the study of the antique, and from the false notion that a slavish imitation of nature could be art. Whilst Germans and French continued in the path which Hutcheson was the first to point out, and introduced the study of æsthetics into all their schools, whilst no great

French or German philosopher could dare to separate ethics and æsthetics, our great thinkers consider the emotional beneath their dignity. They propound that only what can be weighed, demonstrated, or calculated deserves an earnest man's attention. It was that matter of fact, philosophical Bounderby, Reed, who said that the "Fine arts are nothing else but the language of nature, which we brought into the world with us, and have unlearned by disuse, and so find the greatest difficulty in recovering it. Abolish the use of articulate sounds and writing among mankind for a century and every man would be a painter, an actor, and an orator." It is perfectly astounding at times to see what some of our authorities venture to put on paper. Is there a single fact in the whole history of humanity to bear out this bold paradoxical assertion of a not entirely dementicated writer. But the mischief was done. In vain did Sir Joshua Reynolds try through theory and practice to raise art from the contempt into which it had fallen with us; in vain did many masters like Gainsborough paint; in vain did Flaxman with his chisel endeavour to revive classic sculpture, in surpassing many antique products and emulating the very best works of antiquity; in vain did Haydon sigh for higher aims in art, for historical paintings, and sacrifice himself at last, seeking despairingly death rather than a life under the baneful influence of indifference. Hogarth, this immortal Walter Scott in colours, Shaftesbury, Henry Home, and Edmund Burke also contributed some extraordinary theories on the study of æsthetics. It was the pride of Hogarth to have discovered the "serpent-line," or rather the waving line, as the line of beauty; so that a wriggling worm is the eternal prototype of beauty. The French early advocated a coarse realism, whilst the Germans are often too metaphysical and, to the detriment of technical execution, lay too much stress on the idea

which the artist intends to carry out. We have in later years made gigantic strides towards a correct study and appreciation of taste in general. We have done much towards an improvement in art. We possess more means for cultivating art than any other nation. No second British Museum, no second South Kensington Museum exists in the world. We need only employ the same energy with which we collect old, quaint-looking China, always with a keen eye to business, to attain great artistic results. We admire plates dressed as ladies in brocade and silk with flounces and lace, and ladies or mandarins walking about like tea-pots or flower-vases. Our symmetrophobia, which makes us hate every straight line, and our Chinomania and Cookomania, are excellent signs, not less than our Rinkomania and Cookomania. We have at last awakened to the emotional, if not yet in the right, at least in a better direction. It is no more the lispng spiritual adviser that interests us at a game of croquet. We prefer an old plate with bright flowers to him, and paper our walls with cups and saucers instead of whitewashing them; we do not discuss any longer the last dull sermon; we slide on little wheels on asphalte-ice, and prove to the world that with horse-racing, rowing, and rinking we intend to be the ancient Greeks in modern Ulster coats! All these freaks of a misdirected taste will die out; and now that the emotional is aroused, it will, when directed into a proper groove, produce marvels. We had once a Michael Angelo in words, what hinders us from having a Shakespeare in colours. Nothing but the indifference and tastelessness of the public. Let us only treat æsthetics at the central seats of our learning, in our colleges, but essentially in our ladies' schools, with the same fervour as ethics, and our symmetrophobia, Chinomania and Rinkomania will soon become matters of the past. There ought not to be a town with a mayor in this wealthy

kingdom that has not its public library, its museum, and, above all, its picture-gallery filled with the products of our talented, striving, home artists. Wedgwood made his fortune, and raised English china to works of art, through English artists; Minton did the same; and the Doulton manufactory of terra-cotta, &c. has recently sent for the International Exhibition at Philadelphia works of art, exclusively the work of English artists, that will do honour to our progress in this long neglected branch. We must try to support talent wherever we find it, and not only pay fabulous sums to those who happen to be fashionable, but to all those who strive to improve their artistic powers, and could do so still more if they received half the support an old China tea-pot or a Japanese monstrosity is capable of commanding, or is afforded to the establishment of rinks, which display angular gymnastics to the detriment of our sound limbs. Courses on æsthetics proving their identity with sound ethics, arousing and satisfying our emotional nature in a higher direction, would be of inestimable advantage to our political economy, our taste, and our fame as an artistic nation.

In conclusion, I may draw your attention to the three different points from which we may study æsthetics. We may do this from a realistic, an historical, or a philosophical point of view.

Realism and idealism may be traced in a continual conflict in the domains of æsthetics as in the domains of ethics. The realistic school of art has in later years had an immense influence with us. In the same ratio, I may say, as the realistic school in science. But whilst the realistic school in science continually tries to prove some general proposition, which is to be converted from a mere hypothesis into a systematically proven theory, art critics have gone so far as to demand from artists the very stratification of rocks, or of the different

kinds of soil, to such an extent that the farmer should be able to recognise the ground in which to sow his oats or wheat. Pictures, according to these æsthetical wiseacres, should be geological maps or mineralogical surveys; as far as flowers are concerned they ought to be perfect specimens fit for a herbarium; and as to the human body they should present correct diagrams of veins and sinews and strongly-protruding muscles. When these critics take up the archæological branch of art they advocate with indomitable tenacity the old forms and check the imagination wherever they can. Art is only to be a reflex of old Greek or Gothic forms, of Chinese or Indian curiosities, or a slavish reproduction of the Renaissance. The self-creative originality of the artist is neither guided nor even taken into consideration by this school.

The art-historians proceed in the right direction. They endeavour to bring before our eyes the past, so as to enable us to understand the present and to influence the future of our art. But the historians have driven us into two divergent backward directions. They either advocate the antique, or they are consistent Goths—sham Goths generally; the one holding that everything beautiful must be a fret, a meander, or a Korinthian pattern, or they delight in symbolic trefoils, finials, pinnacles, buttresses, thin and lofty spires, pointed arches, and darkish-painted windows; neither seeing what an anachronism is advocated. The philosophical school at last often indulges in tall phrases—the more unintelligible the better. We hear of the depth and breadth of the picture, of deep sentiment and nice feeling, of perspective in the clouds, &c. We are startled with hypothetical paradoxes, with speculations of the wildest sort on grouping, expression, and the flowing lines of the composition. As on theological and medical matters, everyone thinks himself justified to have an opinion of his or her

own on art matters ; as though ethics and æsthetics, like medicine, were not the results of thousands of years—now progressive, then again retrograde, but always onward striving movements of humanity. Music, poetry, and art have, as well as our morals, laws which must be known and studied. Music speaks in sounds, poetry in words, art in forms, morals in actions. But without harmony, music would become dissonance ; without rhythm, poetry would be but an inflated prose ; art without æsthetics, a vulgar and objectionable caricature ; and our morals without ethics, an arbitrary confusion of whimsical actions. Ethics and æsthetics will furnish us with that bright and real worship of God and his nature, reflected in our creative powers, for which so many of us yearn with eager hearts ; they will bring to us that bright future in which men, freed from all fetters of prejudice and superstition, will unite reason, as the father of science, with emotion, as the mother of art.

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