

ÆSTHETIC IMAGERY.

BY H. HEATH BAWDEN.

Every notable theory of the æsthetic consciousness has had to reckon with the question of the mutual relations of the sensuous and the ideal elements in beauty. Extreme sensationalist theories have reduced it all to terms of sense. Extreme intellectualist theories have reduced it all to the ideational or thought element. It is now generally recognized that both are essential, the problem at the present time being rather the respective parts played by each of these indispensable factors.

THE SENSE ELEMENT IN ART.

The word 'taste' originally, of course, referred to sensations of the palate. But it came to be used for æsthetic taste, and æsthetics is often called, as by Kant, the theory of taste. But in spite of Kant's protest against the use of the word 'æsthetics' it has come into more general use than his own phrase 'judgment of taste.'

'Æsthetics' by its etymology emphasizes the sense element. Kant distinguished the agreeable and the beautiful, *i. e.*, the pleasures of sense and æsthetic pleasures. Mere sense, he held, could not be made the basis of an æsthetic judgment—there must be an intellectual element. Hence the lower senses and even color and form and tone and rhythm, in the case of the higher senses, yield only the subjective appreciation 'I like it'; they do not yield the objectively valid æsthetic judgment 'It is beautiful.'

Kant's main contention must be admitted, that there must be an intellectual ordering of the sense materials in order to yield an æsthetic experience. Indeed, we have already seen, in terms of Dr. Marshall's discussion, how it is the ideal element, the imagery, which gives permanency to the pleasure-field of æsthetic emotion. But, on the contrary, it must equally be admitted that there can be no emotional, and therefore no

æsthetic, experience without a fundamental basis of sense elements. Emotion is described in current psychological theory as a complex of so-called lower sensations. But we need not appeal to this still uncertain psychological theory of emotion, for it is as true of ideational as it is of emotional life: there is a basis of sense underlying the most abstract intellectual processes.

The problem, therefore, concerns the respective parts played in the æsthetic experience by these two elements or factors — the sensuous and the ideal. Spinoza said that experiences of beauty are 'confused acts of thought,' and Baumgarten, following his lead, tried to establish a science of vaguely *felt* perfection (æsthetics), a science of obscure knowledge, alongside of the science of clearly *thought* perfection (logic), the science of precise knowledge. Kant agreed with them in holding that there are some things which can be felt which cannot be thought or willed, but he regarded the æsthetic experience as a union of sense and reason in accordance with certain laws of the understanding itself. In this respect Kant laid the basis of the subsequent development of æsthetic theory at the hands of the idealists. In Schelling beauty is 'the infinite represented in finite form' or the finite is racked and stretched to become an expression of the infinite. For Hegel beauty is the sensuous embodiment of the ideal, the revelation of meaning by matter, spirit shining through sense, the infinite and eternal manifested in the finite and temporal. Through all these modifications of its function in determining the nature of beauty, the sense element abides as an indispensable factor.

The eye and the ear are called the æsthetic senses primarily because they are the higher or more intellectual senses: the sense material is more mediated by thought. But this supremacy of the eye and the ear has interfered with the true understanding of the æsthetic experience — since beauty on the emotional side is grounded in the so-called lower senses. The distinction between the higher and lower senses is of ethical origin rather than intrinsic to æsthetic inquiry. The fact, for example, that the lower senses are more personal and interested, is not sufficient ground for ruling them out of the æsthetic sphere, for, as Professor Santayana says, even 'disinterested' and 'unselfish'

interests 'have to be somebody's interests' (*Sense of Beauty*, p. 39) : it is not the fact that touch and temperature and smell and taste are personal, that they are not ordinarily regarded as æsthetic, but because they are relatively unmediated.

It is asserted that the higher æsthetic senses are less violent and extensive than the lower senses. But rhythm is a striking exception to this rule. The universality of æsthetic pleasures is contrasted with the personal isolative character of the lower sense pleasures. But "nothing has less to do with the real merit of a work of imagination than the capacity of all men to appreciate it; the true test is the degree and kind of satisfaction it can give to him who appreciates it most" (*Sense of Beauty*, p. 43). The truth is, that the æsthetic character of an experience turns, not on the particular character of the sense elements present, but upon the use made of them when present. Odors, tastes, contacts, resistances may serve as the sensuous elements in art as truly as color, line, tone and rhythm.

Under what conditions, then, does a lower sense quality become æsthetic? This question may be answered in various ways. When more than one sense is stimulated at a time, the sensations involved in such consentient stimulation present the conditions for æsthetic treatment, since here is provided the opportunity for associative imagery to set in motion its machinery of irradiation of the feeling-tone and interpretation of one sense value in terms of another. In other words, here is provided a permanent pleasure-field with its focus and context, to use Dr. Marshall's metaphor. An unconstrued sense experience — a succession of ripples or bird-notes — is not æsthetic. To become æsthetic stimuli must be, not merely perceived, but apperceived. Beauty, as Professor Santayana says (*Sense of Beauty*, pp. 49-52), is pleasure objectified, pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing; æsthetic satisfaction is a mediated satisfaction; only the intellectually pleasurable can be æsthetic. Eating and drinking are æsthetic just in the degree that they differ, by being humanly mediated, from the feeding of brutes.

But this intellectualizing or mediating process must not be understood in too narrow a sense. Civilized man is ear-minded and eye-minded and the beautiful is the perfect for eye and ear;

but because this is true for most men it does not follow that it is true for all, nor that in time the other sense experiences may not become æstheticized. The reason why art in the past has been chiefly in terms of vision, hearing and tactile-kinæsthetic combinations with these, is because here we have found the conditions of the maximum combination of meaning and emotion, of stimulation and repose. The reason the lower senses (with the exception of rhythm and a few plastic effects) have not been the avenues of æsthetic appreciation to a greater extent is that they have been relatively poor in social, practical, scientific, ethical and religious content — not because there has not been a wonderfully rich emotional content of a personal sort in these sense experiences, but because of a warped and unfrank self-consciousness in things personal, these aspects of experience have remained unmediated and impulsive. Beauty is 'the characteristic in as far as expressed for sense-perception or for imagination' (Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetics*, p. 6), *i. e.*, for the intellectual imagery most closely connected with the habits and emotions. As Schiller said, "In the eye and ear aggressive matter is already hurled back from the sense, and the object is set at a distance for us, while in the animal sense we are directly in contact with it" (*ibid.*, p. 294). The highest type of beauty is found in the living object, because here we have the maximum of meaning with sensuous embodiment. Nothing dead or conceived of as dead seems as beautiful as the living. A flower growing in the woods is much more beautiful than cut flowers in a vase. Professor Knight suggestively brings out this in asking us to suppose the opal to be alive: how that would enhance its beauty!

The practical, logical, ethical, religious meanings, in other words, must be put into sensuous form before they can become æsthetic. This means that they must be put in concrete rather than abstract form before they can arouse the matrix of organic and tactile-æsthetic sensations and images which constitute the core of that pleasurable emotion which is essential to the æsthetic experience. In the words of Sully-Prudhomme, "It is only by first caressing our senses that art arouses our feelings and awakens our thoughts" (quoted by Hirn, *Origins of Art*,

p. 99). *To the degree that the so-called non-æsthetic intellectual contents can be organized into the art product and still arouse this emotional background of sensuous elements, the higher and greater the art.*

THE THOUGHT ELEMENT IN ART.

Sensation is the material which is ordered and controlled by that thought and reason which transform mere agreeable feeling into æsthetic emotion. This factor of control is the ideal element in art. Pleasure becomes æsthetic only when it becomes significant, when it serves to usher in an idea which is expressive. Hirn says: "When a savage had attained so high a state of development as to be able to control the impulse to dance and yell for joy, the first dithyramb had been composed" (*Origins of Art*, p. 49).

Thought is man's method of managing his experience. The image, idea or ideal is an instrument of control. There is no faculty of imagination or idealization. Imagery is a fact, not a faculty: it is a mere name, like attention or will, for the fact that experience goes on in a certain way and in accordance with certain laws, these laws being mere descriptive shorthand for this observed uniformity. The image or idea must not be regarded as an entity existing outside of consciousness and having an existence whether the individual is thinking or not—the fallacy of the associational psychology. Nor is it the mere copy of a reality lying outside of our experience—the fallacy of the representative theory of knowledge.

An image when it is not performing its function as an image, is a physiological habit—a part of the neural structure of the organism. There is no such thing accordingly, as the storing up of images as such: they are stored up only in the sense of producing modifications of structure in the nerve elements. The image originates in the irradiation and retention of the effects of sense-impressions after the immediate excitation has ceased. Every feeling or sensation produces a disturbance of the entire organism so that "a process set up anywhere in the centers reverberates everywhere, and in some way or other affects the organism throughout" (James, *Psychology*, B. C., p.

371). That is, physiological traces from every sensational experience are left in the nerve centers. These physiological traces are what in the race we call instincts and in the individual habits. These traces get organized into systems, and, under suitable conditions of difficulty or tension in adjustment, are brought to consciousness as apperceptive systems. Memory and imagination are just conscious habits.

But why and when do these habit-systems come to consciousness as such systems of images? This is the important question. The answer is: When, due to the relatively novel conditions of a situation requiring new types of adjustment, these habits are brought into consciousness for the sake of revision and modification. Let a habit fail to work in the new situation and it is thrown into the region of consciousness as an image where it remains until the adjustment is rendered adequate. The image is a middle term or intermediary between an old and a new experience; it is the bridge by which we pass over from one state of relatively immediate experience to another—it is the machinery of mediation. Imagination is simply *image*-ination, the turning over of habit-systems into chains of ideas (association) or systems of ideas (apperception). An idea is a habit turned outside in.

The sense element in art represents the materials of beauty in so far as they as yet are inadequate in calling forth the æsthetic response—in psychological terms, the sensation represents the relatively unstimulating and inadequately stimulating stimulus. The ideal element in art, the æsthetic imagery, represents inadequacy on the side of the habits of the artist or appreciator; they do not enable him to control the conditions, hence they must be brought to consciousness for reconstruction in the form of imagery: in psychological language, the æsthetic image results from the obstructed or inhibited or inadequately responding response.

The tactile-kinæsthetic imagery is the fundamental imagery of meaning in art, as elsewhere, because it is the imagery of action. Helen Kellar can have a highly developed intellectual life and rich experience of values because she has this primary imagery. It is inconceivable that she should be able to have

this, or even to survive, if it were lacking. It is not the most efficient instrument in relation to the ends of science. The visual and auditory imagery excel for purposes of verbal analysis and definition. But any image may mediate the æsthetic experience, if it fulfills the conditions of the law of stimulation and repose, because all images are more or less motor, *i. e.*, have a tactile-kinæsthetic basis. This is implied in the part they play as instruments of control in the reorganization of experience. The character of an image is determined primarily by its function in relation to the revision of habit systems, and this is a matter of sensori-motor coördinations—a matter of action. The value of an image lies therefore in its function as a motor cue, not in its being a good visual picture or auditory echo. The reality of an object must ultimately be defined in terms of our overt or incipient reactions to it. “Any object—a tree or chair, for instance—is a cluster of all the possible modes of touching and manipulating it that we do not carry out. . . . It stands for a number of suppressed contact reactions. . . . The image or object, therefore, as built up in human experience, represents an intricate system of translations, substitutions, inhibitions,” and since the image is merely one experience used to get another, standing for it and controlling it, it follows that the final image ‘coalesces with the object, *is* the object’ (Adams, *The Æsthetic Experience*, p. 16). In other words, the image lasts only as long as the experience is problematic, and falling short of what it aims to become.

But the image does in a sense and to a degree accomplish what it sets out to accomplish, and in so far as this takes place there develops a new phase which may be described as the distinctively æsthetic aspect. Miss Adams distinguishes between what she calls the ‘working image’ and the ‘æsthetic image’ (*The Æsthetic Experience*, pp. 17–18). The working image is the purely intellectual or conceptual aspect prominent in all serial or successive types of association. It is worn down to a mere cue or signal, having lost most of its fulness of sensory detail and emotional warmth. Drudgery exhibits the working image in its extreme form. The æsthetic image is one which has incorporated a more or less wide range of rich collateral

materials of a sensory and emotional character into a relatively simultaneous synthesis. If imagery in general represents controlled impulsive and habitual responses, the æsthetic image represents the maximum of such mediation or control compatible with the experience as a whole remaining pleasurable. And since all successful control is normally pleasurable, it follows that all practical and intellectual reconstruction of experience tends to culminate in an æsthetic moment. There must be stimulation, diversity, cognitive differentiation, conflict of habits and antagonism of impulses, in order to lift the experience from the plane of mere animal sense-impression. The æsthetic consciousness 'stands for the fullest possible simultaneous excitation of these old tendencies to response' (*ibid.*, p. 76) compatible with its remaining a predominantly pleasurable experience. This is doubtless Ruskin's meaning when he says: "That art is greatest, which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas, and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and, in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received."

THE RELATIVE FREEDOM OF THE ÆSTHETIC IMAGE.

The chief characteristics of the æsthetic image are its relative freedom or disinterestedness in form, and the intrinsic character of its content.

Kant says that "beauty is the form of purposiveness of an object so far as this is perceived in it without any representation of a purpose." That is, 'we contemplate beautiful objects as if they were purposive, but they may not be so in reality.' The æsthetic image must be a free image, not tied down to any non-æsthetic utility. The æsthetic judgment is an optional judgment, not instrumental to some transgredient end. "Everyone must admit," says Kant, "that an æsthetic judgment in which interest plays ever so small a part is partial and illegitimate. To be a judge in matters of taste, the existence of the thing to be judged must be indifferent to us." Nature is beautiful, he says, only when it exhibits the purposiveness of art; but art is beautiful only when it exhibits the freedom of nature.

The æsthetic judgment may not depend on any utility, since that would interfere with its disinterestedness. It may not be determined even by a standard of perfection, for according to Kant, the idea of perfection implies a criterion outside and beyond, and the æsthetic judgment must find its justification wholly from within. Kant distinguishes between free beauty and dependent beauty and holds that a perfectly free disinterested beauty cannot express an ideal, since an ideal suggests dependence on something beyond itself. Flowers in the state of nature, humming-birds, sea-shells, ornamental borders on wall-paper, he says represent free or self-subsistent or true æsthetic beauty, but flowers as they appear to the botanist, beauty of the human form, a church building, have only dependent beauty because they imply a certain purpose or use. Many writers since Kant have followed him in this doctrine of the aloofness and uselessness of art — it is one of the fallacious meanings of that ambiguous phrase ‘art for art’s sake.’

But if our preceding analysis of the relation of the sensuous and ideal elements in beauty is correct, it is not the presence or meaning of purpose but the irrelevance of the purpose, which interferes with an object being beautiful. Meaning is no barrier to beauty if the meaning be intrinsic, *i. e.*, relatively adequate as an embodiment of the relations which it suggests. We are free in the æsthetic experience, but we are not free from all ends or meanings; we are free only from necessary relation to an extrinsic end. Indeed, the freedom is gained just by the controlled or relatively adequate organization of what would otherwise be transgredient ends, into terms of an harmonious but internally diversified system.

Kant says: “We could add much to a building which would incidentally please the eye, if only it were not to be a church. We could adorn a figure with all kinds . . . of lines, if only it were not the figure of a human being. And again this could have much finer features and a more pleasing and gentle cast of countenance provided it were not intended to represent a man, much less a warrior” (Bernard’s translation of *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 82). But the true principle here should be to so embody the generic meanings of the

religious institution in the church building or of humanity in the warrior, that these individual creations would enhance these meanings, not seek to purify the æsthetic judgment by emptying it of all relevant meanings whatsoever. Not the presence of purpose but the particularity and arbitrariness of the purpose militate against beauty. There must be relevancy as well as elusiveness in order to call out those deep-lying intellectual habits whose exploitation along not too unfamiliar lines is pleasurable. The meaning, in other words, must be organic with its sensuous expression or embodiment: there must be a free interaction of its parts with each other. This is the truth in the doctrine of the freedom of the æsthetic image and the disinterestedness of art.

ITS MEANING RELATIVELY INTRINSIC.

There is nothing that in itself has æsthetic value. Beauty comes from the making intrinsic of the other values. Anything is artistic or beautiful in the degree that it involves the consciousness of an end in terms of an organic and functional synthesis of the means. "A mere work of art is a baseless artifice," says Professor Santayana (*Reason in Art*, p. 208). Art for art's sake is art become self-conscious in the bad sense, art become professional: the artist should have no consciousness beyond that of adequately organizing the meanings which come to him from other spheres of life. Beauty is its own excuse for being because it is just the other values finding adequate expression.

The æsthetic object, the thing of beauty which is a joy forever, consists of a functionally complete synthesis of the relevant elements in the situation. *The fundamental principle of artistic production and the key to æsthetic appreciation is this: such a disposition of the factors which enter into the object as will give to each its maximum meaning in the context.* "The purest beauty can only be said to exist where there is no portion of a contemplated total which is not considered part of an organic whole" (Spiller, *Mind of Man*, p. 485). The form must be an adequate embodiment of the content; the content must be an adequate individualization of the form. "Style is good,"

says Professor Buck, "only when it is precisely correspondent with thought, when it expresses faithfully just the idea involved. Style is bad when it is insufficient to convey the enfolded thought; bad when it obscures that thought with unilluminating words. . . . In style a word that finds its own life shall lose it; but the word that loses its own assertive identity for the thought's sake, the same shall find it." "Ornament construction, never construct ornament," said Richardson, the great architect. "In art," says Goethe, "there appears first a simple impression, then a stage of analysis, which is followed by a return and synthesis of the significant feeling of the whole, which is the æsthetic."

Fine art, from this point of view, is any human production whose form is a relatively adequate embodiment of its content.

Adequacy here means *utility*. Art is the idealization of the useful. Anything that is well-adapted to its purpose is in the way to become beautiful. Adequacy means *relevancy*. Beauty is the truth of art and art is the splendor of truth. "Things are not really grasped in their truth unless they are seen in that harmonious relation to the whole which yields complete æsthetic satisfaction" (Mackenzie, *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 126). Adequacy means cosmic *morality*, not necessarily morality in the conventional sense, but soundness ethically in relation to the abiding destiny of man. Adequacy means social *solidarity*. "We know of no world," writes Goethe, "save one that is related to man, and we may have no art except as an expression of that relation. . . . Each art demands the whole man. The highest attainment of art—the significant—demands all humanity."

CONCRETE VERSUS FORMAL BEAUTY.

The problem we have been discussing, on one side, is the problem of formal versus concrete elements in beauty. The formal elements, what may be called the principle of order, are found on the side of those sensuous qualities which give a pleasurable emotional consciousness. Such formal elements are color, light and shade, line, symmetry, proportion, tone, timbre, harmony, rhythm, arrangement or composition—any phase of

the beautiful object which depends upon the exploiting of sensori-motor habits within pleasurable limits.

The concrete elements in beauty, the principle of the content of the beautiful, or the beauty of ideas, are found on the ideational side, in the meaning or significance of the beautiful object, its associations, its practical, scientific, social, ethical, religious values. The content of the beautiful, in other words, is dependent upon mediation by ideas. It is a question of the logic of the situation or what might be called the dialectic of beauty. The formal elements in art were emphasized by the Greeks almost to the exclusion of the concrete elements. The extreme emphasis on the concrete elements is found in the modern art-theory of the Romanticists.

Mere thought is not concrete enough to arouse the habits and emotions essential to æsthetic pleasure — it must be found in or put into sensuous form. Yet, on the other hand, a mere succession of sense impressions is not in itself beautiful — it must mean something. The mere singing of a bird is not art — certainly not to the bird, and not to man until he becomes civilized. This is the limitation on Darwin's theory of the origin of art in the phenomena of sexual selection. Not until conditions arise which give mating and courting songs ideal significance may the artistic, and in this case the romantic, element be said to have arisen.

This ideal element or 'significance' in extreme instances gives value even to objects lacking in immediate sensuous appeal, but it is only because the sensuous element is vicariously present in the penumbra of the æsthetic image. The sight of some once frequented garden, as Professor Santayana reminds us, may call up an æsthetic emotion, even though the present fact may be indifferent or positively repellent (*Sense of Beauty*, p. 193). The mementos of a lost friend may not in themselves be beautiful. A trifle is often valued for its associations. The beauty of a large proportion of the ornaments in many a drawing-room is associative — as witness the historic interest or symbolic meaning of heirlooms, books, pictures, curios, antiques, etc.

Man is not beautiful, says Lipps, because of his form.

The human form is beautiful because it is to us the carrier of human life. The orange is the most beautiful of fruits, says Fechner, because of the romantic associations with the South which it calls up. "When we behold a beautiful form," says Brown, "all the images suggested by it, live in like manner in it." And long ago Alison wrote: "Wherever the appearances of the material world are expressive to us of qualities we love or admire; wherever, from our education, our connections, our habits, or our pursuits, its qualities are associated in our minds with affecting or interesting emotion, there the pleasures of beauty or of sublimity are felt, or at least are capable of being felt. Our minds, instead of being governed by the character of external objects, are enabled to bestow upon them a character which does not belong to them; and even with the rudest, or the commonest appearances of nature, to connect feelings of a nobler or a more interesting kind, than any that the mere influences of matter can ever convey."

But in the highest art the sensuous is controlled by the ideal element. The relation of impulse to ideal is the same here as in ethics. Sensuous emotion is impulsive, uncontrolled emotion. Ideal emotion is controlled, defined and articulated by significance or meaning, by the ideal element. It is possible to get satisfaction in either way, but the satisfaction that comes from ideal emotion is more permanent, generic, universal: it alone is æsthetic. The highest art is typical, representative, as well as sensuous: it does not stamp out the sensuous element but utilizes it to enrich an ideal social, ethical, religious, industrial, scientific, philosophic content or meaning. The intellectualists are right in insisting that the sense element alone can never be the basis of the æsthetic consciousness, because of the lack of permanency and ideal significance in the lower sense pleasures. But the sensationalists are right in insisting that the most abstract thought experience is ultimately grounded on a sensational basis. The truth is that the æsthetic quality lies not in certain experiences rather than others, but in such a ratio or proportion of these sensuous and ideal elements as gives the maximum of ideal mediation combined with the maximum of sensuous pleasurable emotion.

The great work of art is always an idealization. But a mere ideal is a contradiction in terms. The ideal is the projected actual. 'An idea is a tentative view of the fact,' says Professor Dewey. The ideal arises when there is inadequacy of the real, when there is a problem. Hence the principle which should govern is to see that the ideal is a natural outgrowth of the *real* while yet in a sense transcending it, just because it itself represents the reconstruction of the real. The only difference between the function of ideas in science and philosophy and ideals in art is that in the latter case we put the limitation upon them that they must be pleasurable. We insist that the function of art is to inspire, not to instruct; but this, in the last analysis, means simply that its instruction shall be given in pleasing forms.

Great artists have always insisted that the aim of art is "to produce a representation of nature in which the essential characters enjoy an absolute sovereignty" (Taine). "Conception, fundamental brain-work — that is what makes the difference in all art" (Thomas Davidson, *History of Education*, p. 44). This is as true of art as it is of science. Art cannot get along without a content of great meanings if there is to be great art. Its insistence on a sensuous embodiment is not grossness nor sensuality: it means rather formativeness, inspirational character in relation to human personality, which does not understand much truth until it appeals to the 'whole man.' It represents the logical, scientific and other non-æsthetic meanings in the most adequate form compatible with their giving successful and therefore pleasurable control of experience. The artistic insight is the most adequate embodiment of the intellectual, the practical and the moral in so far as these stand for control. It is when they are imposed as abstractions upon the art product that they are felt as irrelevant. This is the true mysticism of art: not that it glimpses meanings which are beyond science and philosophy, but that the meanings it does glimpse are such as may be brought home to man's affective-volitional as well as to his intellectual nature.

Where this control by the highest intellectual or moral ideal is absent, beauty itself suffers, just because the æsthetic moment

in such cases is not mediated to the furthest point compatible with inward reinforcement and repose. This is the platonic teaching — “To excite passions idly is to enervate the soul” (Santayana, *Reason in Art*, p. 176). “When moralists deprecate passion and contrast it with reason, they do so, if they are themselves rational, only because passion is so often ‘guilty,’ because it works havoc so often in the surrounding world and leaves, among other ruins, ‘a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed.’ Were there no danger of such after-effects within and without the sufferer, no passion would be reprehensible. Nature is innocent, and so are all her impulses and moods when taken in isolation; it is only on meeting that they blush” (p. 168). “And so when by yielding to a blind passion for beauty we derange theory and practice, we cut ourselves off from those beauties which alone could have satisfied our passion” (p. 186).

THERE IS A MEANING: BUT THAT MEANING IS ELUSIVE.

There must be a meaning, as Professor Fite maintains, but that meaning must be elusive (PSY. REV., March, 1901, p. 140). To say that there must be a meaning, signifies that some habit or habit-system is brought to consciousness in the form of imagery or apperception-systems which, on the whole, are familiar and agreeable to contemplate. But the mere presence of a familiar content which because of its familiarity tends to be agreeable, does not in itself constitute it an æsthetic experience. Too great familiarity without diversity or stimulation, results in monotony and automatism. There must be a meaning, but that meaning must be elusive or stimulating enough to function the habits as images within pleasurable limits. Lessing calls “for an incompletion of detail in the artist’s work, that the imagination may have room in which to work its expansive effects” (cf. Marshall, *Æsthetic Principles*, p. 115). “Those things in nature and humanity are most beautiful which most of all suggest what transcends themselves” (Knight, *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, II., p. 15). This is well illustrated in poetry: “In all its types—whether lyric, epic, dramatic, comic, elegaic, satire, or descriptive—poetry begins with a representation either of what once was, or of what now is; but, being a new

embodiment of reality, it invariably tends towards what is as yet unembodied, while it pursues the ideal through the maze, the imperfection, and the discords of the actual" (p. 110).

The adequacy of the form to the content, the insistence on a meaning, represents the factor of habit, pleasure, repose, in the æsthetic experience. The milk-maid's stool is beautiful not because of its adequacy as a stool, its meaning in itself, but because of its associations. A throne may be beautiful in addition because of the fine carving on it. A bench in the classroom or a common chair with no sentimental associations lacks the æsthetic quality just because of the too complete adequacy of the meaning, the lack of the element of elusiveness. In other words, the formal element in art, the sensuous and emotional element, is wholly dependent upon its relation to the concrete contentual element in producing the æsthetic moment.

The elusiveness represents the factor of relative tension, excitement, stimulation, diversity, variety, the relativity of the adequacy. The æsthetic quality of the milk-maid's stool is dependent upon the suggested associations. The elusiveness, the stimulating factor, in the case of the throne, is found in the rich decorations. The lack of elusiveness, the perfect obviousness of the meaning in the case of the common chair, accounts for its not entering the æsthetic sphere. The office of the imagination, as Alexander says, is to liberate the spirit from habitual and communal thinking" (*Poetry and the Individual*, p. 113). The ordinary photograph lacks this quality of elusiveness except to perhaps the few persons who know the person represented well enough to supply it vicariously; the *Mona Liza* and Whistler's portrait of his mother are a perennial delight.

THE ELUSIVENESS OF MODERN ART.

Elusiveness is everywhere essential to art. It is found in ancient as well as in modern æsthetic products. But there is elusiveness in modern art in a sense and of a kind unknown to earlier times. Along with the closer synthesis of man with nature which modern science has made possible has come the liberation of the imagination and the emancipation of the individual which have given us romanticism.

Greek drama depicted the completed act. Modern drama attempts to depict the activity in process, a line of action, the movement of the plot, the solution of the problem actually taking place before the eye—in terms of its psychological motivation. In a general sense, it may be said that the Greek artists were not artists but artisans, whose ideal was to reproduce certain fixed ideas of Hellenic civilization—Zeus, Minerva, Pallas Athene, etc. Modern art, on the contrary, is striving toward the production in sensuous form of the transcendent ideas of change, life, growth, development, evolution. We are inventing all sorts of devices for representing movement, activity, function. We think kinetoscopically. The aim of the Greek artist was the reproduction of ideas familiar to his audience. The modern artist boasts that he is not understood, that he represents an idea which transcends his audience. The content of the former is universal, typical, generic, but fixed, static, and, logically speaking, dead. The content of the latter is individual, moving, dynamic and functional. The Greeks represented their Gods as arrested in a state of immortal youth. The God of the modern is a sumptuous Interrogation-Point.

That is, in the case of the ancient artist, the solution is given *with* the problem; in the case of the modern artist the problem is given without the solution or *in process* of solution. The one is concerned with perfecting an already accepted form; the other is interested chiefly in the reformulation. Greek art was a closed circle; modern art is a spiral curve. In modern art we have problem after problem presented with, if any, only tentative solutions. This is the leading characteristic of most of the powerful modern novels. They suggest future vistas of possible solutions, working hypotheses only, rather than any ultimate interpretation or final evaluation. This is the inevitable result of the influence of the modern emphasis upon the psychical and personal and individual element in experience. Idealism and romanticism represent the influence of psychology upon art. Modern industry, science and philosophy, as well as its art, are becoming psychologized in this sense. Art is becoming more self-conscious in its method, with the result that it gives you a drift or an intent instead of a finished product. You catch the

artist's soul still struggling in the toils of his great passion rather than the post-reflective contemplation of it from the vantage of its triumph or failure.

On the other hand, just this elusiveness in an extreme form is the defect of modern art, where it is not controlled by a great insight. Most of our impressionistic art does not go beyond the statement of the problems with which our modern industry and science are engaged — a statement falling often into the realistic fallacy of seeking to simply transcribe the facts. It has not caught the spirit of the technique of modern science with its elaborate system of controlled hypothesizing and experimental gambling with concepts. Mystery, as someone has said, is proportionate, not to ignorance, but to knowledge. Fear may spring from ignorance, but growing knowledge deepens reverence and adoration. Science is transforming nature into a work of art, and in the method of science must be found, not only the meaning which is at the heart of all beauty, but also that elusiveness which gives it a propitious form. Who will write the epic of evolution, the lyric of the hyper-space, the drama of the subliminal uprush, the comedy of the Absolute, a sonnet to radioactivity, an elegy on sex? In what monumental work of art will we embody our ideals of democracy and the superman and the new woman?¹

¹ The MS. of this article was received October 20, 1908. — ED.