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ART AND INSTINCT

BY

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The
Herbert Spencer Lecture

DELIVERED AT OXFORD

23 MAY, 1927

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1927

Oxford University Press

London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen

New York Toronto Melbourne Capetown

Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai

Humphrey Milford Publisher to the UNIVERSITY

Printed in Great Britain

ART AND INSTINCT

I FEEL deeply the honour done me in entrusting me with this lectureship, the more that it commemorates the work of Herbert Spencer, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude.

I begin by referring to a book much studied in this place, the *Ethics* of Aristotle. Contrasting true courage with animal courage which proceeds from anger or pain, Aristotle says that true courage is inspired by desire for the noble or beautiful or good; and it is in keeping with his whole doctrine of virtue to say that virtue arises out of the natural passions, and exists when they are so qualified as to be directed upon the noble or, as he sometimes puts it, upon their proper objects for their own sake. The passions are thus the material which is fashioned and refined to virtue. But over and above these materials there is the noble, of which so far as I know he gives no further account. Any contemporary treatment of the subject may be expected to supply this account if possible.

Now in respect of art a similar question is raised acutely at the present time. It is the contrast between the ideas contained in the famous saying, 'poetry is a criticism of life', and the phrase 'art for art's sake' or 'poetry for poetry's sake', which last was the subject of a well-known lecture by Mr. A. C. Bradley. Is there or is there not a specific aesthetic emotion, or is the aesthetic attitude or feeling nothing but ordinary feelings or attitudes towards the subjects of art, in a certain condition of refinement and complication? Mr. Clive Bell¹ and Mr. Roger Fry² are upon the one side; Mr. Richards in his excellent *Principles of Literary Criticism*³ upon the other. And because it is well to have a balanced statement which avoids extremes, I will

¹ *Art*, London, 1914.

² *Vision and Design*, London, 1920; *Transformations*, London, 1926.

³ London, 1925, p. 16, chapter on 'The Phantom Aesthetic State'.

quote here the familiar passage of Mr. Bradley, which really avoids the difficulties of either extreme. 'What then', he asks, 'does the formula Poetry for Poetry's sake tell us about this experience? It says, as I understand it, these things. First, this experience is an end in itself, is worth having on its own account, has an intrinsic value. Next, its *poetic* value is this intrinsic worth alone. Poetry may have also an ulterior value as a means to culture or religion. . . . But its ulterior worth neither is nor can directly determine its poetic worth as a satisfying imaginative experience; and this is to be judged entirely from within. . . . For its nature [poetry's] is to be not a part, nor yet a copy of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous.'

Now I humbly think Mr. Bradley and Mr. Bell and Mr. Fry to be right; though I think Mr. Bell in particular goes too far. I believe with him that art both proceeds from a specific aesthetic excitement in the artist and produces an aesthetic excitement or emotion in the spectator or hearer. I understand his claim that true visual art, that is the painting of what he calls significant form, excites in the true appreciator the ecstasy he describes, although I have it not myself, for, like most of us, great poetry does arouse in me an ecstasy. But I question if this ecstasy transports us into an altogether different world from that in which natural objects and we ourselves live. Witness the whole of natural beauty, which, though I believe it owes its beauty to our unconsciously artistic vision of it,¹ is easily accessible to us all. In any case there is always a prejudice felt against those who seem to claim that they are hierophants of a peculiar mystery. If the claim for a peculiar aesthetic emotion is to be maintained, it must be traced to some impulse in human nature, and even if no further account can be given of it, we must at least trace its affiliation with some recognized impulse or instinct. We must be able to put our finger on the particular side of us to which art makes appeal. In the same way, it is not enough to say that in conduct we

¹ See on this subject 'Art and Nature' in *Bulletin of John Rylands Library*, Manchester, vol. xi, No. 2, July 1927.

aim at the noble and leave that impulse to be accepted, as Aristotle apparently did, without further account; nor to refer science to the passion for truth. There is an underlying instinct which in each case is the root of these human products, and we have to try to identify it in each case. I believe it can be done, easily in respect of truth and morality, much less easily in respect of art. That more difficult problem is what I shall endeavour to solve in this lecture.

In this endeavour to affiliate the artistic impulse with certain instinctive tendencies I can appeal for authority not only to Spencer himself, who derived art from the play-impulse, but to the example of Burke. That great man showed his originality in his earliest work by tracing back the sublime and the beautiful to the instincts first of self-preservation, and secondly of society including in particular the instinct of sex. Sublimity was aroused by dangerous and terrifying objects, which threatened existence; beauty by objects which appealed to our tenderness. So far as beauty is concerned he thus anticipated Darwin's attempt to establish a relation between the decorative appendages and colouring of animals and the purposes of mating. Burke knew well enough that the sense of the sublime is not the same thing as terror, nor the sense of beauty mere animal tenderness. He was not misled into that blind alley. Unfortunately he does not tell us wherein the difference lies. Herein lies his failure. His merit lies in the appeal to the instincts, though he missed identifying the really relevant instinct. The reason of his failure is that he began with beauty or sublimity in natural objects, and fell into one of the two errors which beset the inquirer into art. From beauty in nature he could not pass, and no one can, to beauty in art. We have to inquire first into the beauty of art in order to understand the beauty of nature.

In this appeal to instinct he contrasts with Hume, it is worth while to observe, in much the same way as in ethics Adam Smith contrasted with Hume. For Hume the moral sense (for he insisted that virtue is such because it pleases after a certain fashion) sought the foundation of virtue in

the pleasant consequences of good action; Adam Smith found the criterion of virtue in whether an action was in tune with the desires of persons in a society. He looked to the reasons why men act rather than to the effects of what they do. About beauty Hume has comparatively little to say; but he regards beauty as founded either in the usefulness of a thing, e.g. of a house to its possessor, or as in a beautiful animal or plant, in the proportion and adaptation of its parts so as to serve the purposes of the thing in question. He fell into the second of the errors I have mentioned, of looking for the nature of beauty in the characters of beautiful things rather than in the human impulses which beauty satisfies. And I do not say that Burke was free from this error likewise. Hume was a far greater philosopher than either Adam Smith or Burke; but in spite of his enormous influence on subsequent thought, both Burke in aesthetics and Adam Smith in ethics are closer to the thought of our own time. Kant, who was greatly influenced by Burke and immensely excelled him in the analysis of the psychological conditions of beauty, who indeed made by this analysis the first real step in aesthetical science, failed to recognize what Burke had seen, the ultimate instinctive basis of the aesthetic sense.

The thesis which I submit to you is that the aesthetic impulse and the aesthetic emotion which goes with that impulse and is part and parcel of it are an outgrowth from the instinct of constructiveness, and are that impulse or instinct when it has become first human, and next, contemplative. Accordingly I should describe or define the beautiful as that which satisfies the constructive instinct when it has reached the stage of contemplation. I know that the word instinct is used loosely and that there is dispute as to what impulses are instinctive. I am content to follow Mr. McDougall in treating constructiveness as an instinct. Illustrations of it are the dam-building of the beaver, the hive-making of the bee, the song of the nightingale, or the nest-building of the rook. These are animal chains of action which are really instinctive, though doubtless employed in the service of simpler and more funda-

mental instincts like that of preservation of life and the sex and family instincts. When they appear in man, they are so qualified and complicated by human prerogatives as scarcely to deserve any longer to be called instinctive. They are but human manifestations of what is rooted in an animal instinct. By saying that we have the aesthetic impulse and the aesthetic emotion or excitement when constructiveness becomes contemplative, I mean that we have it when the artificer uses the materials of his construction not for a practical purpose but for their own sakes. If the beaver, instead of building his dam from the urgency of his practical desire, could observe his materials so as to watch their effect in their mere form as materials, he would be an architect. If the male nightingale sang for the love of singing, for the sake of the mere sounds he was producing and the delight he takes in their recombination, he would be a musician. In fact he is merely a lover, or when he is not actually wooing he sings love songs from force of habit; or in play, delighting not so much in the song which he produces as in the exercise. I know that the wise thrush is said to sing the selfsame song twice over, for reasons which suggest that he is really an artist and wishes to make sure of his musical effect. But it is a poet who speaks, and he playfully. The cold truth is that the thrush is in earnest with his wooing, but being less modest than the famous Bellman he thinks it enough to say what he says twice over for it to be accepted as true.

Between animal constructiveness and artistic production there is an intermediate stage of handicraft or, in general, technology, in which constructiveness remains practical but is humanized for a purpose. No reason exists to suppose that the nest-building bird or hive-building bee has any idea in its mind of the work it means to produce; its actions follow in train by an instinctive ordinance which it brings with it. The instinct is plastic and the details of the train of action may be varied to suit special circumstances. Not finding shards to form a house in which to conceal itself, a crab may pick up bits of glass through which it can be seen. And recent inquiries seem to show that there are

actions amongst the higher mammals which, still falling short of purpose, still dictated by blind desire for food or other object, exhibit a kind of flash of insight into the construction of means by which the object will be secured. Such devices we humans practise ourselves, but they are still removed from proper handicraft. In general, in animal construction each act performed is a signal to the performance of the next, but that next action is prepared for by the organization of the instinct.

In distinctively human construction there is purpose of the end to be secured, and purpose arises only in a creature which possesses ideas and has memory and expectation, a creature which looks before and after. We can reflect on the next step to be taken, and how to weave acts together so as to attain our end; we are guided by our past experience of the behaviour of things. We can use our knowledge of levers and wheels to plan the construction of our engine. Even when we do not actually reflect about our procedure we can bring our acquired experience to bear upon the attainment of our purposed end as animals apparently cannot. Human construction becomes through memory and prevision a connected method, and we make plans of construction, putting our experiences together, so as, under the pressure of our purpose, to create novelties.

This human feature of construction is of particular interest because it is often called in a looser and more general usage constructiveness. When I speak of the constructive instinct and its human transformation, I am using the word in the sense of combining material objects, as the bird does in building a nest, or producing a physical object like a note, as the nightingale does when he sings. Constructiveness in the more general sense in which it might better be called synthesis or described by the adjective constructional is not confined to construction in the specific sense. The animals have construction in the specific sense, but in general have it not in the vaguer one.

Synthesis with its accompanying analysis or selection, the habit of systematizing our experiences, is the most obvious feature of science of all kinds. Now scientific im-

pulse, the impulse to true knowledge, is the outgrowth of an animal instinct and is its humanization through ideas and memory and imagination. That animal impulse is curiosity, and truth may properly be viewed as the satisfaction of humanized curiosity. The animals too are curious to examine things, but their curiosity is guided by sense and is limited to practical issues. A dog is inquisitive about certain classes of smells, but only because they are the forerunners or at least the indications of practical delights. Our curiosity when it becomes scientific ceases to be practical, though it may of course be connected with practice, and there is also technological curiosity intermediate between animal curiosity and scientific. Now scientific curiosity depends for its working out on a high degree of constructional synthesis; but it is not itself constructive in the specific sense. It views Nature as something to be understood, not as a field for the creation of fresh objects; though such fresh creations may be its incidental result and often its most impressive result, like wireless telegraphy.

I have dwelt on this point because it suggests that science may profitably be treated in its kinship with art. If we wish further to see how close the analogy of science and art is we may compare truth not with artistic but with natural beauty. For natural beauty is presented to us ready made for inspection or rather for discovery, and our hands or voices have had no part in fashioning it. If I am right in saying that Nature is beautiful only if we see her with the artistic eye, the delight in natural beauty lies very near to the delight in truth, where also Nature is taken as she is and analysed and reconstructed as it were, so as to produce the highly artificial product we call science, which is not Nature herself but our vision of her, though that vision follows her as faithfully as our powers allow, and our truth, if it is not Nature herself, is founded upon her. 'The difference between truth and natural beauty is that in science we divest ourselves of any personal interference; in beauty, even in natural beauty, our imaginations not only select and combine but add, seeing Nature differently as we are grave or gay, neglecting what does not suit our particular point of

view or interest, eking her out, as when we delight in a pure colour by added suggestions of contrast with impure ones, sometimes even adding our thoughts or fancies so as to be a part of what is there, as we say, in Nature. Witness the poet's gloss upon the wise thrush, which I have quoted. The lover of natural beauty adds his personality to Nature, however unconsciously; the man of science sets himself, by a supreme exercise of personality, to keep his personality out of, I was about to say, the picture.

Finally, to conclude my remarks on the intermediate stage of practical or technological construction or handicraft, it is because architecture is the most elementary and necessary art (I do not say the lowest art, for I decline the question of grades of art) that it unites most closely artistic and practical construction. A house which cannot be lived in is not beautiful, and a house may be built which is neither beautiful nor ugly but is merely useful and arouses no aesthetic emotion. The architect as craftsman is concerned with utility and can never forget it as artist.¹ But he is an artist not from his practical success but in so far as he constructs his house for its own sake, and satisfies himself as contemplative. All the crafts like pottery, weaving, engineering, become arts so far as they follow the same motive.

Constructiveness then becomes art when it ceases to be merely practical; and it is much less easy to describe the step which is then taken to contemplation than it is to distinguish human practical constructiveness from animal constructiveness. But we have an analogy or a precedent for it in the passage from our ordinary experience of things, by which we become aware of them through the senses or otherwise, into knowledge of them in the proper sense which is theoretical. In describing this transition I am inevitably repeating what I have said on other occasions. I can but plead the importance of the subject, and the more personal plea that as I have not secured attention to the matter, I have to go on until I do. Our ac-

¹ See an address by Mr. J. H. Worthington, *R.I.B.A. Journal*, vol. xxxiv, No. 7.

quaintance with things begins then with practice and is an incident of practice. For simplicity, I confine myself to physical things. They secure for themselves our consciousness of them because they act physically on our sense organs and elicit from us and our brains a physical response. A red patch acts upon our retina and we turn our eyes to it and perform other specialized responses. In responding we become aware of the red patch. We do not first see it and then respond; it compels us in consequence of the sense organism to which it appeals to respond or react, and so far as we react appropriately the object is before us or is revealed. The same account applies everywhere. I repeat an illustration I have used recently. A motor-car with blazing head-lights bears down upon me. I do not say, 'This is dangerous; I must get out of the way'. It acts upon my instinct of flight; I get out of the way, and then I say I have escaped that danger. I do not first see that a fruit is good to eat, but if I am hungry it induces me to eat, and in eating it I discover it to be edible, just as in running away from a dangerous object I discover it to be dangerous. The statement is of course over-simplified and takes no note of the effect of past experience in determining a particular response. Broadly it remains true that knowledge comes in the first instance through action upon objects which themselves by a physical and not a mental compulsion elicit from us that response. 'We do not first perceive and then act; we perceive in so far as we act. 'We do not first know and then do; we know in doing, and the knowledge is the revelation which comes from practice.

From this elementary practical experience of things we advance to theoretical experience of them, to speculation in the most general sense of that word. We reach this condition when the normal response is diverted into another path. Instead of acting upon the thing, we speak; this is the commonest method of the diversion of our response. An enemy presents himself to me; instead of striking him, I say, 'I hate you'. That is speculative or theoretical knowledge; still an affair of practice (for of course everything we do is practical in the widest sense), but not prac-

tice in the ordinary sense of practice, which means doing something to an object itself. Had Eve instead of eating the apple spoken merely and said it was an apple, she would have arrived at theory and we should not be bearing the burden of original sin. The diversion of the practical response may take other forms than speech. The object may suggest to me ideas and divert my mind to them; or I may merely note in it other qualities and divert my response to those. When I am on the point of striking my enemy, I may remember that he is good, or note that he is big. Always the normal response to the object apprehended is diverted into other channels, and then the apprehension ceases to be practical and becomes theoretical.

This account of theory may help us to understand how constructiveness becomes contemplative, for there are at once likeness and unlikeness, both of which I must indicate. Speech may form the starting-point, for speech is itself an act of construction. Construction differs from practice in this, that practice is a response directed upon the object towards which we respond, while construction is productive and is not directed upon the object which provokes the construction but upon something else. When I strike a person, I affect or alter him; when I curse him I do not alter *him*, the original object, I make a new object, the words of the curse. Speech is creative of fresh objects though they follow accepted patterns; but construction need not be creative of its actual material: the architect does not make his stones; what he makes, and this is production, is the arrangement and form of them. Constructiveness thus is always productive either of the materials themselves or of their transformation or of both. And in every case what it produces is something different from the thing which evokes the construction. The nightingale's mind is fixed upon his mate; his response is not mating but his song. Even the beaver or the bee makes something and does not merely respond. The bee's end is to store his honey, and the beaver's to secure his winter home. The bird's nest-building is incident to its care for its young, and so far as its mind can be said to be fixed upon any-

thing, it is the premonition of its young which makes it construct.

Now in so far as construction produces a new object, other than that which fired it, it brings to the creature's apprehension a new revelation. Having been constructed the work is there to be observed. The animal, however, is no further interested than in taking note of what it has produced; in the same way, though perhaps with warmer feeling, that it notes the other things that surround it. Even the craftsman, with all his reflectiveness and purpose, though he may watch the work in its progress, is guided still by his practical purpose; he observes in order to see if the machine is doing its work. His constructiveness is indeed human and has the prerogatives of his possession of ideas, but does not otherwise differ from the animal's. He observes his work, even observes his work theoretically, but with an eye bent on the purpose for which his construction is undertaken. How may he come, as an artist, to detach himself from this practical preoccupation, and follow lovingly the lines of his own invention, and possessed by that passionate contemplation perhaps even alter his machine here and there so as to achieve beauty?

Let us take the case then of speech and ask how speech becomes artistic, whether poetry or prose. Speech is creative, and that fact offers such foundation as there is for a doctrine that has acquired authority in our own time, that linguistics and aesthetics are the same subject. It misses the difference of aesthetic from ordinary speech. For speech of itself is a construction for practical purpose. Either it is the means of creating theory or speculative consideration of things, and then it has the practical purpose of description, as in science. Or else it is manifestly practical, because it is the indication of our needs. To say 'I am cold' means in general 'help me to get warm'. It is a winter's night and friends are gathered together, and one says it would be comfortable to have more fire. That is constructive practical speech, and it may require not only for scientific description, but even for practical needs,

much skill and niceness in the construction. Compare those words with familiar ones :

Dissolve frigus, ligna super foco
Large reponens.

'Thaw away the cold, piling generous logs upon the fire.' The subject is indeed practical, but the words are not practical speech ; they are used lovingly as words, though they express the same practical thought as before. They are not indeed striking as art ; but for a striking difference take an accurate description of spring and the appearance of the fields at that time, which would be speech practical, and compare it with

When daisies pied and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight.

There, at least in the last line, is enchantment, not from the thought alone but from the words.

But I have only illustrated and not explained. How do words get diverted from their practical use, and become enchanted ? How does the magic get in ? When physical objects, instead of being apprehended through practice, as originally they are, are apprehended theoretically, it was, we saw, because the normal response was diverted into another response and primarily into speech. But when speech itself, instead of being used as a practical means, becomes the end, there is no other response into which the speech response can be diverted. If there were, we should be contemplating the words theoretically, as indeed we do in the science of them. Now the very thing which the poet does not do is to contemplate his words theoretically. He makes an artistic and not a scientific use of them. Since then there is no other action to detach words from practice, except the action of poetic construction itself, what is it which effects the detachment ?

It is, I suggest, the constructive excitement itself which attaches the words to the artist and detaches them from their practical issues. The constructed object (the word), instead of leading the mind on to its practical effect, stimu-

lates or serves as a signal for the continuance of the constructive activity itself, and leads on to the next constructed object (word) in the connected work. Just as to pass from one thing to another in a train of ideas loosens the first thing from its practical urgency and makes it an object of theory, so the first element in a constructional whole may lead on, through the constructive process, to the next element, without regard for the practical outcome. Then we have art. In the constructive process the objects then are held or possessed by the constructor. The poet makes himself one with his words and so holds them to himself, and detaches them from the subject-matter which excited his constructive impulse. In practical speech or the use of speech for the practical means of description, there may be constructive passion, as any one may attest who recalls the effort of bare accurate description. But it is the subject described which interests him: his use of speech, his constructiveness, is a means to describing the subject, which remains outside him and he a looker on. It is the subject which excites his constructive passion and he has to use his constructions in order to satisfy the subject-matter. The poetic excitement of constructiveness seeks to satisfy the poet himself, at least to satisfy himself as well as be adequate to the subject-matter. And in this passionate constructive effort he blends himself with his materials, which are words, holds them to himself, and thus constructiveness in speech becomes contemplative.

It has been said by others, by Mr. Middleton Murry for instance, that poetry differs from prose in its greater passion; and it may be added that artistic prose, that is good prose, differs from ordinary speech in its being felt more deeply—anybody who tries to write as well as he can will note the rising tide of constructive excitement as he chooses his speech. But there is more in the artist's excitement than a greater intensity of passion. There is a difference in kind. The poet's specific passion is about words and finds expression in them. Two persons may be excited in equal intensity about the same subject-matter, but the specific excitement from which they work may be entirely

different and have different results. Spinoza thought with as much passion as Wordsworth upon the spirit which pervades Nature, probably with more, and with greater insight. But in the one the constructive excitement issued in poetic words, in the other it issued in science or philosophy.

(The constructive instinct then becomes artistic when it ceases to be practical; and it ceases to be practical when it is pursued for its own sake, and the constructed object, in our case the words, is used as the satisfaction of the constructive passion itself. The passion takes possession of its object and lifts it out of practical consideration. It is not play, for play is still the shadow of practice, and continues practice when the urgency of practice is removed. Spencer was mistaken, therefore, when he affiliated art with play. If one thing is more true of art than another it is that art is serious, not play but work, not mere exuberance but a vocation; and if it were not so there would be no room for art in serious life. It is the constructiveness of play from which art is descended and not the playfulness of it.

In order to mark the absorption of art in its product, of poetry, say, in words, I have overstressed the poet's pre-occupation with words, as if his attention was primarily directed to them. On the contrary the poet's attention is fixed upon his subject-matter, the person he loves, the flowers he describes, and this passion sets him constructing language, by the natural or instinctive action of his constructive habit. He sings spontaneously as the bird sings, and he is not occupied with words in the sense that he thinks out the words to express his ideas.¹ The greatest poems have their spontaneity written upon their faces. The poet's words are selected by his constructive passion, and reveal to himself or to his hearers the more intimate details of that passion as fixed upon the subject which inspires it. The words are used for their own sakes, not as external objects to be examined but as the means by which the constructive passion is assuaged. The words are part

¹ See on this point further *Art and the Material*, Manchester, 1925; and 'The Creative Process in the Artist's Mind', *Brit. Journ. of Psychology*, vol. xvii, pt. 4, Ap. 1927.

counterpart of the constructive passion of the poet. Only in this way does his passion form part of the poem.

There is another respect, however, in which the poet's construction of his material affects the product. It is a construction from his whole personality, which includes what is vaguely called imagination. The excitement in which the subject-matter of his poem throws him—the fields in spring, the beauty of a woman, his own material feelings of love (to be distinguished carefully from the passion of constructiveness by which he speaks his love)—this excitement spreads and evokes from his mind, from his experience of the past or his forecast of the future, ideas and impulses, which feed his constructive impulse and are embodied in the poem. Hence it is that the poem is never the mere language of ordinary speech, whatever Wordsworth has said to the contrary, but there is always a strangeness in it, whether by the employment of unusual words, or something unusual in the combination of them, or some suggestion of human or other interest which they do not bear in their common usage. Who ever spoke outside a poem of painting the meadows with flowers, and even if he did, who ever outside a poem spoke of painting them with delight? I content myself with quoting two passages from Wordsworth himself, used often by others in aesthetic discussion. The first is the line which Matthew Arnold so deservedly praised :

And never lifted up a single stone ;

which might indeed, taken in isolation from the context, be prose but is certainly art, for it introduces despair as practical speech could not. The second I borrow from Mr. Abercrombie :

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees :

and leave it without comment. Even in such passages we can see how the poet does not merely take words as he finds them, but gives the material by his art an import which it does not of itself possess. Poetry shares in this respect with other arts the illusory treatment of its material,

of words in the sense described. Without the meanings they convey the words of a poem would be mere sounds, and, though they may be so handled as to approach music, they are not as bare sounds poems. Words are sounds which carry meanings with them and the two cannot be parted. But the meanings belong in poetry to the essence of the word and the words are not mere symbols to indicate meanings as they are in practical or scientific speech. So understood, I trust the plea may be accepted as that of plain fact. If the business of a poem is merely to excite ideas, give me Spinoza rather than Wordsworth. When I want poetry I go to Wordsworth, as I go to Shakespeare, because the enchantment is in his significant words. Alas! Wordsworth himself has taken a different view.

In the next place, when I say that constructiveness in words becomes art, whether poetry or prose, because the speaker in his aesthetic passion detaches his words from practice by blending himself with the material in which he works, I mean no mysterious union of spirit and matter; I am only describing imperfectly a real occurrence. I mean two things. First, that words in a poem, say, (to confine myself to poetry, and bearing in mind that, as Wordsworth said, the difference is not between poetry and prose, but between art and science) are art only for one who says them, whether it be the artist who makes them or the hearer of them when they are made. When we hear, we are thrown back into the aesthetic or constructive passion from which the artist wrote, and at second hand reproduce the conditions of the poem's origin.

Secondly, there is no strange amalgam of material and passion, as if there were mind or passion in the words. The artist's passion enters into the poem by finding there material expression. It is a means to his creation, and that creation in turn serves us to recover the passion which is our means to apprehending the poem. The constructiveness issues in the poem itself, the choice and fashioning of the words, with all their qualities of sound and meaning in thought or picture. The structure of the material is the

counterpart of the constructive passion of the poet. Only in this way does his passion form part of the poem.

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and leave it without comment. Even in such passages we can see how the poet does not merely take words as he finds them, but gives the material by his art an import which it does not of itself possess. Poetry shares in this respect with other arts the illusory treatment of its material,

which is so much more easily recognized in sculpture, where the stone lives and the bronze breathes. But I add this for completeness' sake, and to indicate that the constructive impulse in artistic man does not merely use the physical properties of its materials, but introduces elements of meaning which their physical properties alone do not contain. He enters himself into the product because his materials are used, by artistic illusion, to mean more than they do in practical usage. Further remarks would take me far afield, and I fall back upon the song which paints the meadows with delight.

Poetry has been chosen, because it is only there that I can have the least pretension to form a judgement. I have the faith that what has been said of poetry will be found true of the other arts, with the necessary changes and qualifications, which will be without doubt considerable. The object has been to identify and describe the artistic, or better the aesthetic impulse, to indicate its instinctive basis, and how it exists when the constructive instinct becomes contemplative. To identify it does not affect in one iota the actual passion which is the form it takes in emotion. The ecstasy which may be felt in seeing a perfect picture or in reading or hearing a perfect poem remains ecstasy, no matter how cold reflection may describe it. And perhaps there is an advantage in recognizing that these precious feelings are after all human, and do not separate us from the common life. For though there are few poets or painters or musicians and few architects who are also artists, the rest of us may have our constructive impulses excited to enjoyment and we thus share in the artist's life. The gift is 'in widest commonalty spread', awaiting education. And it is something for the artist too to recognize that his gift has an instinctive root, and that artistic action, that is, contemplative construction of the materials he uses, is really one of the series of human instincts. In its artistic shape it is derived and secondary, but remains instinctive in its nature. The artistic construction is compelled in him by the excitement which certain subjects provoke, and he is at a certain remove, and

not so great a one, allied to his brother the nightingale and his humbler and dowdier brother the beaver. He sings and builds because he must.

So much in order to bate the pride of art, if thinking of its peculiar ecstasy it should exalt itself too high above nature. At the same time, if contemplative construction only exists through the blending of the artist or the spectator with the material, so that the material means what he makes it mean, it remains true that, as Mr. Bradley said of poetry, art transports us into a world of its own, 'independent, complete, autonomous'. It adds to the world a fresh reality, and that reality is not a part of the real world as commonly understood; for though the poem is a physical thing, and the picture still more plainly so, these are not artistic realities, except to the appreciating mind (we may now subjoin the constructive mind), which blends with them. And yet it remains a part of the world. It is our privilege to make new realities of our own construction, based on ordinary reality, but different, as we do when we make science or morals as well as when we make art. The very element of illusion which art employs when it gives its materials characters which as physical they do not possess, secures for the work artistic reality, and adds it to the real things of the world, which are called values.

Another conclusion follows which also is implied in Mr. Bradley's statement. When, turning from the aesthetic impulse and its emotion, we ask ourselves what corresponds in the work of art to the constructive act, we find materials and relation amongst the materials which is I suppose what is meant by form. Now in poetry at least the materials which are words have meanings, and the meanings are the thoughts and images of the subject-matter which enters into the poem—its subject-matter as the subject-matter is 'transformed' in the poem. And since the aesthetic impulse and emotion is conversant with the construction, it follows that the subject-matter before it enters into the poem does not determine the aesthetic value. To use the happy word of Mr. Fry, it is the transformation of the subject into a character suitable to the

constructive form which makes it an ingredient of the poem. As such it is, as the meaning of the words, part of the so-called 'content' of the poetic form. And while there can be no poem unless the words have meaning, the choice of subject-matter does not affect the aesthetic appreciation. The art of a poem whose substance is nothing, like Peele's exquisite dialogue between Paris and Oenone ('Fair and fair and twice so fair, &c.'), light as air, may be as great as the art of *Lycidas* or 'Like the baseless fabric of this vision'. No doubt the greater the subject, the more splendid the poem, but the subject as such is indifferent to the art. These are distinctions not of beauty but of what may be called perfection. It is the construction or form of the poem which makes its beauty, not its subject, except in so far as that subject is transformed into the content of the words.

Equally it follows, to turn back to the artist, that the aesthetic emotion is the constructive emotion. That the poet must have or he would be no artist. But he need not have in his mind the emotions which he portrays, unless indeed he is writing a lyric and his feelings are his subject-matter. The passions of the dramatic personages of a play the poet may or may not have in his own person; it is his insight into them which makes Shakespeare a great dramatist, not that he must have felt their feelings. Thus the aesthetic emotion is distinct from the emotions which enter into the artist's subject.

We are here returned to that statement of Aristotle to which I referred at the opening. The gist of Aristotle's view of virtue may be put in words which are not his, that the passions are the subject-matter which is transformed into virtue, and that in the end they are transformed by direction to the noble. Now the difference of virtue and the arts is that the material of virtue is the passions of the actors; the material of the artist is a physical medium, which the art fashions into a form, which as held to the artist's or the spectator's mind becomes an aesthetic experience. But the doctrine may be transferred from the one problem to the other. • The problem of good conduct

is to establish nobleness amongst the passions; the problem of the artist is to establish beauty in the form assumed by his materials. So far as he does so his work is beautiful and he has the aesthetic emotion. Merely to influence the passions of the spectator about the subject, and to work from the passions congenial to the subject-matter and not from the passion of construction, is to produce not art but illustration. In painting the distinction is easy enough to draw. In poetry, which is a so-called representative art, it is harder to draw, but there too, if sympathy with the subject as such, even if it be pity and fear in a tragedy, prevails over the delight in words and their construction and destroys the equipoise of sounds and their meanings, the result is not poetry but illustration or sentiment.

To extend these considerations from poetry to the other arts is beyond my scope. Painting in the past has been representative, though it has not been great art when it has descended, as it often has, to illustration. Now it is familiar knowledge that contemporary painting is passing through an experimental stage of new ideals; and a claim has even been preferred for abstract painting, which is said to be concerned with relations of space, as music with relations of time. No room if this were true would be left for subject-matter in any picture. I cannot raise this question at the end of a lecture, even if I were competent. It may be that there is painting which has for its object merely 'significant form', reducible to nothing but spatial relations and colour. But significant form is significant of something. And even music, the most abstract of the arts to which these innovators attempt to assimilate painting, according to the classic statement of Hanslick, has for its subject ideas of movement; and if this be true, it is hard to see how painting can avoid the question—form of what, or significant of what?

But these topics are beyond my time and my powers. My purpose has been the limited one of defending the existence of a true aesthetic emotion, and to draw a lesson from nightingales and beavers and bees.

Printed in England
At the OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
By John Johnson
Printer to the University

