

serves as "the mediator between Truth and Feeling, the Head and the Heart," thus ministering to that end in which the "mind becomes that on which it meditates," and "truth . . . changes by domestication into power," into active fulfillment.

## On the Principles of Genial Criticism concerning the Fine Arts<sup>1</sup>

### PRELIMINARY ESSAY

IT WILL not appear complimentary to liken the Editors of Newspapers, in one respect, to galley-slaves; but the likeness is not the less apt on that account, and a simile is not expected to go on all fours. When storms blow high in the political atmosphere, the events of the day fill the sails, and the writer may draw in his oars, and let his brain rest; but when calm weather returns, then comes too "the tug of toil," hard work and little speed. Yet he not only sympathizes with the public joy, as a man and a citizen, but will seek to derive some advantages even for his editorial functions, from the cessation of battles and revolutions.<sup>2</sup> He cannot indeed hope to excite the same keen and promiscuous sensation as when he had to announce events, which by the mere bond of interest brought home the movements of monarchs and empires to every individual's counting-house and fire-side; but he consoles himself by the reflec-

<sup>1</sup> *On the Principles of Genial Criticism*. These three essays, which Coleridge himself felt were "the best things" he had yet written and which probably comprise his most important single contribution to the general criticism of art, were published in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* (August and September, 1814). He kept no copy, and in later years spoke of his regret at losing "those essays on beauty, which I wrote for a Bristol newspaper." There is something a little grotesque in these suggestive essays appearing in such an unlikely place. And it is characteristically Coleridgean that he started to write them in order to draw public attention to Washington Allston, an American painter whom Coleridge knew and liked and whose paintings were being exhibited in Bristol; but as Coleridge warmed to his subject, he quickly—and fortunately—forgot his original purpose, and after inserting a remark on poor Allston near the close of the first essay, remembered to mention him briefly only twice thereafter.

<sup>2</sup> The essays were written during a lull in the Napoleonic Wars.

tion, that these troublesome times occasioned thousands to acquire a habit, and almost a necessity, of reading, which it now becomes his object to retain by the gradual substitution of a milder stimulant, which though less intense is more permanent, and by its greater divergency no less than duration, even more pleasureable.—And how can he hail and celebrate the return of peace more worthily or more appropriately, than by exerting his best faculties to direct the taste and affections of his readers to the noblest works of peace? The tranquillity of nations permits our patriotism to repose. We are now allowed to think and feel as men, for all that may confer honor on human nature; not ignorant, meantime, that the greatness of a nation is by no distant links connected with the celebrity of its individual citizens—that whatever raises our country in the eyes of the civilized world, will make that country dearer and more venerable to its inhabitants, and thence actually more powerful, and more worthy of love and veneration. Add too (what in a great commercial city will not be deemed trifling or inappertinent) the certain reaction of the Fine Arts on the more immediate utilities of life. The transfusion of the fairest forms of Greece and Rome into the articles of hourly domestic use by Mr. Wedgwood; the impulse given to our engravings by Boydell;<sup>3</sup> the superior beauty of our patterns in the cotton manufactory, of our furniture and musical instruments, hold as honorable a rank in our archives of trade, as in those of taste.

Regarded from these points of view, painting and statuary call on our attention with superior claims. All the fine arts are different species of

<sup>3</sup> John Boydell, who had died a few years before, published prints and engravings.

poetry.<sup>4</sup> The same spirit speaks to the mind through different senses by manifestations of itself, appropriate to each. They admit therefore of a natural division into poetry of language (poetry in the emphatic sense, because less subject to the accidents and limitations of time and space); poetry of the ear, or music; and poetry of the eye, which is again subdivided into plastic poetry, or statuary, and graphic poetry, or painting. The common essence of all consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty;<sup>5</sup> herein contra-distinguishing poetry from science, the immediate object and primary purpose of which is truth and possible utility. (The sciences indeed may and will give a high and pure pleasure; and the Fine Arts may lead to important truth, and be in various ways useful in the ordinary meaning of the word; but these are not the direct and characteristic ends, and we define things by their peculiar, not their common properties.)

Of the three sorts of poetry each possesses both exclusive and comparative advantages. The last (i.e. the plastic and graphic) is more permanent, and incomparably less dependent,<sup>6</sup> than the second, i.e. music; and though yielding in both these respects to the first, yet it regains its balance and equality of rank by the universality of its language. Michael Angelo and Raphael are for all beholders: Dante and Ariosto only for the readers of Italian. Hence though the title of these essays proposes, as their subject, the Fine Arts in general, which as far as the main principles are in question, will be realized in proportion to the writer's ability; yet the application and illustration of them will be confined to those of Painting and Statuary, and of these, chiefly to the former,

<sup>4</sup> Poetry in its broadest and original sense: imaginative creation.

<sup>5</sup> The key word here, as Coleridge later says (p. 366, below), is *immediate*. The *ultimate* aim of art, however, certainly involves truth. For genuine satisfaction can be secured and retained only through the awareness of truth or reality. And beauty is to be found in the heightened awareness of what is real and therefore significant; it is "the shorthand hieroglyphic of truth." It is in this sense that art excites emotion for the "*immediate* purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty."

<sup>6</sup> That is, music has to depend upon performers and instruments, and is not generally available without having them first as a medium.

Which, like a second and more lovely nature,  
Turns the blank canvas to a magic mirror;  
That makes the absent present, and to shadows  
Gives light, depth, substance, bloom, yea, thought  
and motion.<sup>7</sup>

To this disquisition two obstacles suggest themselves—that enough has been already written on the subject (this we may suppose an objection on the part of the reader) and the writer's own feeling concerning the grandeur and delicacy of the subject itself. As to the first, he would consider himself as having grossly failed in his duty to the public, if he had not carefully perused all the works on the Fine Arts known to him; and let it not be rashly attributed to self-conceit, if he dares avow his conviction that much remains to be done; a conviction indeed, which every author must entertain, who, whether from disqualifying ignorance or utter want of thought, does not act with the full consciousness of acting to no wise purpose. The works, that have hitherto appeared, have been either technical, and useful only to the Artist himself (if indeed useful at all) or employed in explaining by the laws of association the effects produced on the spectator by such and such impressions. In the latter, as in Alison, &c.,<sup>8</sup> much has been said well and truly; but the principle itself is too vague for practical guidance.—Association in philosophy is like the term stimulus in medicine; explaining everything, it explains nothing; and above all, leaves itself unexplained. It is an excellent charm to enable a man to talk *about* and *about* any thing he likes, and to make himself and his hearers as wise as before. Besides, the specific object of the present attempt is to enable the spectator to judge in the same spirit in which the Artist produced, or ought to have produced.

To the second objection, derived from the author's own feelings, he would find himself embarrassed in the attempt to answer, if the peculiar advantages of the subject itself did not aid him. His illustrations of his principles do

<sup>7</sup> Coleridge's play, *Remorse*, II, ii.

<sup>8</sup> Archibald Alison, in his *Essays on Taste* (1790), bases the imagination and all other mental functions on the association of ideas. See above, p. 273. Many of the problems of associationism, like those in modern psychology and sociology, were felt to be settled by the mere use of jargon ("like the term stimulus in medicine; explaining everything, it explains nothing").

not here depend on his own ingenuity—he writes for those, who can consult their own eyes and judgements. The various collections, as of Mr. Acraman (the father of the Fine Arts in this city\*), of Mr. Davis, Mr. Gibbons, &c.; to which many of our readers either will have had, or may procure, access; and the admirable works exhibiting now by Allston; whose great picture, with his Hebe, landscape, and sea-piece, would of themselves suffice to elucidate the fundamental doctrines of color, ideal form, and grouping; assist the reasoner in the same way as the diagrams aid the geometrician, but far more and more vividly. The writer therefore concludes this his preparatory Essay by two postulates, the only ones he deems necessary for his complete intelligibility: the first, that the reader would steadily look into his own mind to know whether the principles stated are ideally true; the second, to look at the works or parts of the works mentioned, as illustrating or exemplifying the principle, to judge whether or how far it has been realized.

#### ESSAY SECOND

In Mathematics the definitions, of necessity, precede not only the demonstrations, but likewise the postulates and axioms: they are the rock, which at once forms the foundation and supplies the materials of the edifice. Philosophy, on the contrary, concludes with the definition: it is the result, the compendium, the remembrancer of all the preceding facts and inferences. Whenever, therefore, it appears in the front, it ought to be considered as a faint outline, which answers all its intended purposes, if only it circumscribe the subject, and direct the reader's anticipation toward the one road, on which he is to travel.

Examined from this point of view, the definition of poetry, in the preliminary Essay, as the regulative idea of all the Fine Arts, appears to me after many experimental applications of it to general illustrations and to individual instances, liable to no just *logical* reversion, or complaint: "the excitement of emotion for the purpose of *immediate* pleasure, through the medium of beauty."—But like all previous statements in Philosophy (as distinguished from Mathematics) it has the inconvenience of pre-

\* Bristol.

suming conceptions which do not perhaps consciously or distinctly exist. Thus, the former part of my definition might appear equally applicable to any object of our animal appetites, till by after-reasonings the attention has been directed to the full force of the word "*immediate*";<sup>10</sup> and till the mind, by being led to refer discriminatively to its own experience, has become conscious that all objects of mere desire constitute an interest (i.e. *aliquid quod est inter hoc et aliud*, or that which is between the agent and his motive), and which is therefore valued only as the means to the end. To take a trivial but unexceptionable instance, the venison is agreeable because it gives pleasure; while the Apollo Belvedere is not beautiful because it pleases, but it pleases us because it is beautiful.<sup>11</sup> The term, pleasure, is unfortunately so comprehensive, as frequently to become equivocal: and yet it is hard to discover a substitute. *Complacency*, which would indeed better express the intellectual nature of the enjoyment essentially involved in the sense of the beautiful, yet seems to preclude all emotion: and *delight*, on the other hand, conveys a comparative *degree* of pleasureable emotion, and is therefore unfit for a *general* definition, the object of which is to abstract the

<sup>10</sup> See above, note 4.

<sup>11</sup> Though Coleridge confuses his statement by saying hastily that "the venison is agreeable because it gives pleasure," his general point here, to judge from other remarks about beauty, seems simply this: Pleasure is not itself a specific "emotion," or reaction, or a single quality or characteristic. Instead, it is a *result*, or by-product, that comes from many different *kinds* of experiences. There are many different kinds of pleasures, therefore. Some pleasures arise when an experience appeals to only a *limited* part of the mind, or to a limited reaction or sensation. For this and for other reasons, they may be quite limited in their range of satisfaction, as well as quickly over. Venison may give a pleasure of this sort, not because it is beautiful, but because it may appeal to the sense of taste—at least the taste of some people—during the time it is consumed, provided it not be eaten too frequently. Other pleasures, however, may arise when a more complex and extensive range of experience and awareness is brought into play. And these pleasures increase in quality and also become more permanent to the degree that more facets of the mind are opened out and brought into activity, and to the degree that experiences become enlightened, guided, given order, or are seen to have value or meaning. Beauty thus gives pleasure by presenting what is valuable and true in such a way as to secure effective emotional response; it "pleases us because it is beautiful."

*kind*. For this reason, we added the words "through the medium of beauty." But here the same difficulty recurs from the promiscuous use of the term, Beauty. Many years ago, the writer, in company with an accidental party of travellers, was gazing on a cataract of great height, breadth, and impetuosity, the summit of which appeared to blend with the sky and clouds, while the lower part was hidden by rocks and trees; and on his observing, that it was, in the strictest sense of the word, a sublime object, a lady present assented with warmth to the remark, adding—"Yes! and it is not only sublime, but beautiful and absolutely pretty."

And let not these distinctions be charged on the writer, as obscurity and needless subtlety; for it is in the nature of all disquisitions on matters of taste, that the reasoner must appeal for his very premises to facts of feeling and of inner sense, which all men do not possess, and which many, who do possess and even act upon them, yet have never reflectively adverted to, have never made them objects of a full and distinct consciousness. The geometrician refers to certain figures in space, and to the power of describing certain lines, which are intuitive to all men, as men; and therefore his demonstrations are throughout *compulsory*. The moralist and the philosophic critic lay claim to no *positive*, but only to a *conditional* necessity. It is not necessary, that A or B should judge *at all* concerning poetry; but *if* he does, in order to a just taste, such and such faculties *must have been* developed in his mind. If a man, upon questioning his own experience, can detect no difference in *kind* between the enjoyment derived from the eating of turtle, and that from the perception of a new truth; if in *his feelings* a taste for Milton is essentially the same as the taste of mutton, he may still be a sensible and a valuable member of society; but it would be desecration to argue with him on the Fine Arts; and should he himself dispute on them, or even publish a book (and such books *have been* perpetrated within the memory of man) we can answer him only by silence, or a courteous waiving of the subject. To tell a blind man, declaiming concerning light and color, "you should wait till you have got eyes to see with," would indeed be telling the truth, but at the same time be acting a useless as well as an inhuman part. An English critic, who as-

sumes and proceeds on the identity in kind of the pleasures derived from the palate and from the intellect, and who literally considers *taste* to mean one and the same thing, whether it be the taste of venison, or a taste for Virgil, and who, in strict consistence with his principles, passes sentence on Milton as a tiresome poet, because he finds nothing *amusing* in the Paradise Lost (i.e. damnat Musas, quia animum a musis non divertunt)<sup>12</sup>—this taste-meter to the fashionable world gives a ludicrous portrait of an African belle, and concludes with a triumphant exclamation, "such is the ideal of beauty in Dahoma!" Now it is curious, that a very intelligent traveller, describing the low state of the human mind in this very country, gives as an instance, that in their whole language they have no word for beauty, or the beautiful; but say either it is nice, or it is good; doubtless, says he, because this very sense is as yet dormant, and the idea of beauty as little developed in their minds, as in that of an infant.—I give the substance of the meaning, not the words; as I quote both writers from memory.

There are few mental exertions more instructive, or which are capable of being rendered more entertaining, than the attempt to establish and exemplify the distinct meaning of terms, often confounded in common use, and considered as mere synonyms. Such are the words, Agreeable, Beautiful, Picturesque, Grand, Sublime: and to attach a distinct and separate sense to each of these, is a previous step of indispensable necessity to a writer, who would reason intelligibly, either to himself or to his readers, concerning the works of poetic genius, and the sources and the nature of the pleasure derived from them. But more especially on the essential difference of the beautiful and the agreeable, rests fundamentally the whole question, which assuredly must possess no vulgar or feeble interest for all who regard the dignity of their own nature: whether the noblest productions of human genius (such as the Iliad, the works of Shakespeare and Milton, the Pantheon, Raphael's Gallery, and Michael Angelo's Sistine Chapel, the Venus de Medici and the Apollo Belvedere, involving, of course, the human forms that ap-

<sup>12</sup> "He condemns the Muses because they do not divert his mind from the arts."

proximate to them in actual life) delight us merely by chance, from accidents of local associations—in short, please us because they please us (in which case it would be impossible either to praise or to condemn any man's taste, however opposite to our own, and we could be no more justified in assigning a corruption or absence of just taste to a man, who should prefer Blackmore to Homer or Milton, or the *Castle Spectre* to Othello,<sup>13</sup> than to the same man for preferring a black-pudding to a sirloin of beef); or whether there exists in the constitution of the human soul a sense, and a regulative principle, which may indeed be stifled and latent in some, and be perverted and denaturalized in others, yet is nevertheless universal in a given state of intellectual and moral culture; which is independent of local and temporary circumstances, and dependent only on the degree in which the faculties of the mind are developed; and which, consequently, it is our duty to cultivate and improve, as soon as the sense of its actual existence dawns upon us.

The space allotted to these Essays obliges me to defer this attempt to the following week: and I will now conclude by requesting the candid reader not altogether to condemn this second Essay, without having considered, that the ground-works of an edifice cannot be as sightly as the superstructure, and that the philosopher, unlike the architect, must lay his foundations in sight; unlike the musician, must tune his instruments in the hearing of his audience. TASTE is the intermediate faculty which connects the active with the passive powers of our nature, the intellect with the senses; and its appointed function is to elevate the *images* of the latter, while it realizes the *ideas* of the former.<sup>14</sup> We must therefore have learned what is peculiar to each, before we can understand that "Third something," which is formed by a harmony of both.

#### ESSAY THIRD

PEDANTRY consists in the use of words unsuitable to the time, place, and company. The

<sup>13</sup> Sir Richard Blackmore, a minor poet of the early eighteenth-century, attempted to write heroic and philosophical poetry. *The Castle Spectre* was a drama by M. G. Lewis, better known for his lurid novel, *The Monk*.

<sup>14</sup> See above, p. 363.

language of the market would be as pedantic in the schools as that of the schools in the market. The mere man of the world, who insists that in a philosophic investigation of principles and general laws, no other terms should be used, than occur in common conversation, and with no greater definiteness, is at least as much a *pedant* as the man of learning, who, perhaps overrating the acquirements of his auditors, or deceived by his own familiarity with technical phrases, talks at the winetable with his eye fixed on his study or laboratory; even though, instead of desiring his wife to make the tea, he should bid her add to the usual quantum sufficit of *Thea Sinensis* the Oxyd of Hydrogen, saturated with *Calorique*. If (to use the old metaphor) both smell of the shop, yet the odour from the Russia-leather bindings of the good old *authentic-looking* folios and quartos is less annoying than the steams from the tavern or tallow-vat. Nay, though the pedantry should originate in vanity, yet a good-natured man would more easily tolerate the Fox-brush of ostentatious erudition ("the fable is somewhat musty") than the Sans-culotterie of a contemptuous ignorance, that assumes a merit from mutilation by a self-consoling grin at the pompous incumbrance of tails.

In a philosophic disquisition, besides the necessity of confining many words of ordinary use to one definite sense, the writer has to make his choice between two difficulties, whenever his purpose requires him to wean his reader's attention from the *degrees* of things, which alone form the dictionary of common life, to the *kind*, independent of *degree*: as when, for instance, a chemist discourses on the heat in ice, or on latent or fixed light. In this case, he must either use old words with new meanings, the plan adopted by Dr. Darwin in his *Zoonomia*,<sup>15</sup> or he must borrow from the schools, or himself coin a nomenclature exclusively appropriated to his subject, after the example of the French chemists, and indeed of all eminent natural philosophers and historians in all countries. There seems to me little ground for hesitation as to which of the two shall be preferred: it being

<sup>15</sup> In his *Zoönomia* (1794-96), Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the great naturalist, Charles Darwin, applied to biological instincts some of the principles of the doctrine of association or ideas, and developed a theory of evolution in accordance with them.

clear, that the former is a twofold exertion of mind in one and the same act. The reader is obliged, not only to recollect the new definition, but—which is incomparably more difficult and perplexing—to unlearn and keep out of view the old and habitual meaning: an evil, for which the *semblance* of eschewing pedantry is a very poor and inadequate compensation. I have, therefore, in two or three instances ventured on a disused or scholastic term, where without it I could not have avoided confusion or ambiguity. Thus, to express in one word what belongs to the senses or the recipient and more passive faculty of the soul, I have re-introduced the word *sensuous*, used, among many others of our elder writers, by Milton, in his exquisite definition of poetry, as “simple, sensuous, passionate”: because the term *sensual* is seldom used at present, except in a bad sense, and *sensitive* would convey a different meaning. Thus too I have restored the words, *intuition* and *intuitive*, to their original sense—“an intuition,” says Hooker, “that is, a direct and immediate beholding or presentation of an object to the mind through the senses or the imagination.”—Thus geometrical truths are all intuitive, or accompanied by an intuition. Nay, in order to express “*the many*,” as simply contra-distinguished from “*the one*,” I have hazarded the smile of the reader, by introducing to his acquaintance, from the forgotten terminology of the old schoolmen, the phrase, *multēity*, because I felt that I could not substitute *multitude*, without more or less connecting with it the notion of “a great many.” Thus the Philosopher of the later Platonic, or Alexandrine school, named the triangle the first-born of beauty, it being the first and simplest symbol of *multēity in unity*. These are, I believe, the only liberties of this kind which I have found it necessary to attempt in the present essay: partly, because its object will be attained sufficiently for my present purpose, by attaching a clear and distinct meaning to the different terms used by us, in our appreciation of works of art, and partly because I am about to put to the press a large volume on the *LOCOS*,<sup>16</sup> or the communicative

<sup>16</sup> One of the great works which Coleridge often promised but which, as Hazlitt said in his review of the *Biographia Literaria*, exist only as promises. According to a letter of Coleridge, written at this time, he even

intelligence in nature and in man, together with, and as preliminary to, a Commentary on the Gospel of St. John; and in this work I have labored to give real and adequate definitions of all the component faculties of our moral and intellectual being, exhibiting constructively the origin, development, and destined functions of each. And now with silent wishes that these explanatory pre-notice may be attributed to their true cause, a sense of respect for the understanding of my reflecting readers, I proceed to my promised and more amusing task, that of establishing, illustrating, and exemplifying the distinct powers of the different modes of pleasure excited by the works of nature or of human genius with their exponent and appropriate terms. “Harum indagatio subtilitatum etsi non est utilis ad machinas farinarias conficiendas, exuit animum tamen inscitiae rubigine, acuitque ad alia.”—*Scaliger, Exerc. 307, § 3.*<sup>17</sup>

AGREEABLE.—We use this word in two senses; in the first for whatever agrees with our nature, for that which is congruous with the primary constitution of our senses. Thus green is naturally agreeable to the eye. In this sense the word expresses, at least involves, a pre-established harmony between the organs and their appointed objects. In the second sense, we convey by the word *agreeable*, that the thing has by force of habit (thence called a second nature) been made to agree with us; or that it has become agreeable to us by its recalling to our minds some one or more things that were dear and pleasing to us; or lastly, on account of some after pleasure or advantage, of which it has been the constant cause or occasion. Thus by force of custom men *make* the taste of tobacco, which was at first hateful to the palate, agreeable to them; thus too, as our Shakspeare observes,

Things base and vile, holding no quality,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity—

the crutch that had supported a revered parent, after the first anguish of regret, becomes agreeable

states that the “large volume on the *LOCOS*” is in the process of being printed. Some fragments, which were apparently to be a part of it, survive, including a sizable manuscript on logic.

<sup>17</sup> “The investigation of this fine point, even though it is not useful for making food-producing machines, strips off the mold of ignorance from the mind, and sharpens it for other things.”

to the affectionate child; and I once knew a very sensible and accomplished Dutch gentleman, who, spite of his own sense of the ludicrous nature of the feeling, was more delighted by the first grand concert of frogs he heard in this country, than he had been by Catalina singing in the compositions of Cimarosa.<sup>18</sup> The last clause needs no illustrations, as it comprises all the objects that are agreeable to us, only because they are the means by which we gratify our smell, touch, palate, and mere bodily feeling.

The BEAUTIFUL, contemplated in its essentials, that is, in *kind* and not in *degree*, is that in which the *many*, still seen as many, becomes one. Take a familiar instance, one of a thousand. The frost on a window-pane has by accident crystallized into a striking resemblance of a tree or a seaweed. With what pleasure we trace the parts, and their relations to each other, and to the whole! Here is the stalk or trunk, and here the branches or sprays—sometimes even the buds or flowers. Nor will our pleasure be less, should the caprice of the crystallization represent some object disagreeable to us, provided only we can see or fancy the component parts each in relation to each, and all forming a whole. A lady would see an admirably painted tiger with pleasure, and at once pronounce it beautiful,—nay, an owl, a frog, or a toad, who would have shrieked or shuddered at the sight of the things themselves. So far is the Beautiful from depending wholly on association, that it is frequently produced by the mere removal of associations. Many a sincere convert to the beauty of various insects, as of the dragon-fly, the fangless snake, &c., has Natural History made, by exploding the terror or aversion that had been connected with them.

The most general definition of beauty, therefore, is—that I may fulfil my threat of plaguing my readers with hard words—Multiplicity in Unity. Now it will be always found, that whatever is the definition of the *kind*, independent of degree, becomes likewise the definition of the highest degree of that kind. An old coach-wheel lies in the coachmaker's yard, disfigured with tar and dirt (I purposely take the most trivial instances)—if I turn away my attention from these, and regard the *figure* abstractly, "still," I might say

<sup>18</sup> An Italian composer of the later eighteenth century.

to my companion, "there is beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit, but would feel it, had you never seen a wheel before. See how the rays proceed from the centre to the circumferences, and how many different images are distinctly comprehended at one glance, as forming one whole, and each part in some harmonious relation to each and to all." But imagine the polished golden wheel of the chariot of the Sun, as the poets have described it: then the figure, and the real thing so figured, exactly coincide. There is nothing heterogeneous, nothing to abstract from: by its perfect smoothness and circularity in width, each part is (if I may borrow a metaphor from a sister sense) as perfect a melody, as the whole is a complete harmony. This, we should say, is beautiful throughout. Of all "the many," which I actually see, each and all are really reconciled into unity: while the effulgence from the whole coincides with, and seems to represent, the effluence of delight from my own mind in the intuition of it.

It seems evident then, first, that beauty is harmony, and subsists only in composition, and secondly, that the first species of the Agreeable can alone be a component part of the beautiful, that namely which is naturally consonant with our senses by the pre-established harmony between nature and the human mind;<sup>19</sup> and thirdly, that even of this species, those objects only can be admitted (according to rule the first) which belong to the eye and ear, because they alone are susceptible of distinction of parts. Should an Englishman gazing on a mass of cloud rich with the rays of the rising sun exclaim, even without distinction of, or reference to its form, or its relation to other objects, how beautiful! I should have no quarrel with him. First, because by the law of association there is in all visual beholdings at least an indistinct subsumption of

<sup>19</sup> That is, (1) beauty does not characterize a single element but rather a harmonizing of *different* ones, and exists only "in composition"—when different elements are *arranged*, or *brought together*. (2) Beauty is agreeable. But not everything that is agreeable is beauty. What is agreeable is not beauty if, for example, it pleases *only* because it fits in with habits of association that were picked up through the accidents of environment. Nor is an agreeable object beautiful if it pleases us merely by reminding us of something of which we were or are fond (the crutch of a lame parent to whose memory one is devoted). Compare the discussion of "stock responses" by I. A. Richards, below, pp. 575-78.

form and relation: and, secondly, because even in the coincidence between the sight and the object there is an approximation to the reduction of the many into one.<sup>20</sup> But who, that heard a Frenchman call the flavor of a leg of mutton a beautiful taste, would not immediately recognize him for a Frenchman, even though there should be neither grimace or characteristic nasal twang? The result, then, of the whole is that the shapely (i.e. *formosus*) joined with the naturally agreeable, constitutes what, speaking accurately, we mean by the word beautiful (i.e. *pulcher*).

But we are conscious of faculties far superior to the highest impressions of sense; we have life and free-will.—What then will be the result, when the Beautiful, arising from regular form, is so modified by the perception of life and spontaneous action, as that the latter only shall be the object of our conscious perception, while the former merely acts, and yet does effectively act, on our feelings? With pride and pleasure I reply by referring my reader to the group in Mr. Allston's grand picture of the "Dead Man reviving from the touch of the bones of the Prophet Elisha," beginning with the slave at the head of the reviving body, then proceeding to the daughter clasping her swooning mother; to the mother, the wife of the reviving man; then to the soldier behind who supports her; to the two figures eagerly conversing: and lastly, to the exquisitely graceful girl who is bending downward, and whose hand nearly touches the thumb of the slave! You will find, what you had not

<sup>20</sup> Though the Englishman believes he is admiring only the *color* of the clouds, he could not do so unless the colored clouds were *limited* and marked off as a unit occupying a certain space (that is, had a shape, or form). Otherwise the whole sky and everything else would be the same color, in fact the same thing. Then, without anything to contrast it with, this color could not even be distinguished—unless it were seen suddenly, for a short time, and then contrasted with colors previously seen (and even in that case, there is a limitation or form in *time*, if not space, that marks off the perception of that color as a distinct unit). Secondly, the mere act of seeing represents a bringing together of diversity, a combining of more than one, into a unity. For there is the spectator, on the one hand, and on the other hand there is the object. The process of perceiving is impossible without both, and therefore involves a bringing together, or unification, of two different things (the spectator and the object) into one act (the act of perceiving).

suspected, that you have here before you a circular group. But by what variety of life, motion, and passion is all the stiffness, that would result from an obvious regular figure, swallowed up, and the figure of the group as much concealed by the action and passion, as the skeleton, which gives the form of the human body, is hidden by the flesh and its endless outlines!<sup>21</sup>

In Raphael's admirable Galatea (the print of which is doubtless familiar to most of my readers) the circle is perceived at first sight; but with what multiplicity of rays and chords within the area of the circular group, with what elevations and depressions of the circumference, with what an endless variety and sportive wildness in the component figure, and in the junctions of the figures, is the balance, the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE, and of the confining FORM! How entirely is the stiffness that would have resulted from the obvious regularity of the latter, *fused* and (if I may hazard so bold a metaphor) almost *volatilized* by the interpenetration and electrical flashes of the former.

But I shall recur to this consummate work for more specific illustrations hereafter: and have indeed in some measure offended already against the laws of method, by anticipating materials which rather belong to a more advanced stage of the disquisition. It is time to recapitulate, as briefly as possible, the arguments already advanced, and having summed up the result, to leave behind me this, the only portion of these essays, which, as far as the subject itself is concerned, will demand any *effort* of attention from a reflecting and intelligent reader. And let me be permitted to remind him, that the distinctions,

<sup>21</sup> The passage exemplifies Coleridge's frequent emphasis on "organic" form in art. As distinct from the sort of formalism that simply stamps its pattern or arrangement upon objects, distorting them to fit a preconceived shape or order, art, according to Coleridge, should draw out the form organically from the object or materials; the form has no real function or vital existence until it is given substance by the materials, and sustains and works through them. Form simply imposed on the object is "the death or imprisonment of the thing." (See "On Poesy or Art," below, p. 398.) Egyptian art, with its stiff pyramids and angular lines, would be an example of this, when contrasted with Greek art (Coleridge's "Fragment of an Essay on Beauty"). Compare the discussion by T. E. Hulme, below, pp. 562-64.



which it is my object to prove and elucidate, have not merely a foundation in nature and the noblest faculties of the human mind, but are likewise the very ground-work, nay, an indispensable condition, of all *rational* enquiry concerning the Arts. For it is self-evident, that whatever may be judged of differently by different persons, in the very same degree of moral and intellectual cultivation, extolled by one and condemned by another, without any error being assignable to either, can never be an object of general principles: and *vice versâ*, that whatever can be brought to the test of general principles presupposes a distinct origin from these pleasures and tastes, which, for the wisest purposes, are made to depend on local and transitory fashions, accidental associations, and the peculiarities of individual temperament: to all which the philosopher, equally with the well-bred man of the world, applies the old adage, *de gustibus non est disputandum*. Be it, however, observed that "de gustibus" is by no means the same as "de gustu," nor will it escape the scholar's recollection, that taste, in its metaphorical use, was first adopted by the Romans, and unknown to the less luxurious Greeks, who designated this faculty, sometimes by the word αἰσθησις, and sometimes by φιλοκαλία—"ἀνδρῶν τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοκαλώτατος γεγονώς—i.e. endowed by nature with the most exquisite taste of any man of our age," says Porphyry of his friend, Castricius. Still, this metaphor, borrowed from the pregustatores of the old Roman Banquets, is singularly happy and appropriate. In the palate, the perception of the object and its qualities is involved in the *sensation*, in the mental taste it is involved in the *sense*. We have a *sensation* of sweetness, in a healthy palate, from honey; a *sense* of beauty, in an uncorrupted taste, from the view of the rising or setting sun.

RECAPITULATION. *Principle the First*. That which has become, or which has been made agreeable to us, from causes not contained in its own nature, or in its original conformity to the human organs and faculties; that which is not pleasing for its own sake, but by connection or association with some other thing, separate or separable from it, is neither beautiful, nor capable of being a component part of Beauty: though it may greatly increase the sum of our pleasure, when it does not interfere with the

beauty of the object, nay, even when it detracts from it. A moss-rose, with a sprig of myrtle and jasmine, is not more *beautiful* from having been plucked from the garden, or presented to us by the hand of the woman we love, but is abundantly more delightful. The total pleasure received from one of Mr. Bird's finest pictures may, without any impeachment of our taste, be the greater from his having introduced into it the portrait of one of our friends, or from our pride in him as our townsman, or from our knowledge of his personal qualities; but the amiable artist would rightly consider it a coarse compliment, were it affirmed, that the *beauty* of the piece, or its merit as a work of genius, was the more perfect on this account. I am conscious that I look with a stronger and more pleasureable emotion at Mr. Allston's large landscape, in the spirit of Swiss scenery, from its having been the occasion of my first acquaintance with him in Rome. This may or may not be a compliment to *him*; but the true compliment to the picture was made by a lady of high rank and cultivated taste, who declared, in my hearing, that she never stood before that landscape without seeming to feel the breeze blow out of it upon her. But the most striking instance is afforded by the portrait of a departed or absent friend or parent; which is endeared to us, and more delightful, from some awkward position of the limbs, which had defied the contrivances of art to render it picturesque, but which was the characteristic habit of the original.

*Principle the Second*. That which is naturally agreeable and consonant to human nature, so that the exceptions may be attributed to disease or defect; that, the pleasure from which is contained in the immediate impression; cannot, indeed, with strict propriety, be called beautiful, exclusive of its relations, but one among the component parts of beauty, in whatever instance it is susceptible of existing as a part of a whole.<sup>22</sup> This, of course, excludes the mere objects of the

<sup>22</sup> That is, beauty is not a biological reaction; it cannot be found solely in a simple, isolated sensation, as in a single touch of anything, however pleasant. Edmund Burke, for example, in his noted essay, *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), had instanced "smoothness" as a major source of beauty. To this, a later critic, Richard Payne Knight, aptly replied that if one stroked a feeling-board, smoothly planed and polished for the purpose, any belief that it was beautiful would quickly pass.

taste, smell, and feeling, though the sensation from these, especially from the latter when organized into touch, may secretly, and without our consciousness, enrich and vivify the perceptions and images of the eye and ear; which alone are true organs of sense, their sensations in a healthy or uninjured state being too faint to be noticed by the mind. We may, indeed, in common conversation, call purple a beautiful color, or the tone of a single note on an excellent piano-forte a beautiful tone; but if we were questioned, we should agree that a rich or delightful color; a rich, or sweet, or clear tone; would have been more appropriate—and this with less hesitation in the latter instance than in the former, because the single tone is more manifestly of the nature of a *sensation*, while color is the medium which seems to blend sensation and perception, so as to hide, as it were, the former in the latter; the direct opposite of which takes place in the lower senses of feeling, smell, and taste. (In strictness, there is even in these an ascending scale. The smell is less sensual and more sentient than mere feeling, the taste than the smell, and the eye than the ear: but between the ear and the taste exists the chasm or break, which divides the beautiful and the elements of beauty from the merely agreeable.) When I reflect on the manner in which smoothness, richness of sound, &c., enter into the formation of the beautiful, I am induced to suspect that they act negatively rather than positively. Something there must be to realize the form, something in and by which the *forma informans* reveals itself: and these, less than any that could be substituted, and in the least possible degree, distract the attention, in the least possible degree obscure the idea, of which they (composed into outline and surface) are the symbol. An illustrative hint may be taken from a pure crystal, as compared with an opaque, semi-opaque or clouded mass, on the one hand, and with a perfectly transparent body, such as the air, on the other. The crystal is lost in the light, which yet it contains, embodies, and gives a shape to; but which passes shapeless through the air, and, in the ruder body, is either quenched or dissipated.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The preceding four sentences might be paraphrased as follows: Such qualities as smoothness, richness of tone, etc., which are agreeable in themselves, but are not beauty, can become a *part* of beauty. They do so, how-

*Principle the Third.* The safest definition, then, of Beauty, as well as the oldest, is that of Pythagoras: THE REDUCTION OF MANY TO ONE—or, as finely expressed by the sublime disciple of Ammonius, τὸ ἅμειρες ὄν, ἐν πολλοῖς φανταζόμενον,<sup>24</sup> of which the following may be offered as both paraphrase and corollary. *The sense of beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole: exciting an immediate and absolute complacency, without intervenience, therefore, of any interest, sensual or intellectual.* The BEAUTIFUL is thus at once distinguished both from the AGREEABLE, which is beneath it, and from the GOOD, which is above it: for both these have an interest necessarily attached to them: both act on the WILL, and excite a desire for the actual existence of the image or idea contemplated: while the sense of beauty rests gratified in the mere contemplation or intuition, regardless whether it be a fictitious Apollo, or a real Antinous.

The Mystics meant the same, when they define beauty as the subjection of matter to spirit so as to be transformed into a symbol, in and through which the spirit reveals itself; and declare *that the most beautiful, where the most obstacles to a full manifestation have been most perfectly overcome.* I would that the readers, for whom alone I write (*intelligibilia enim, non intellectum adfero*)<sup>25</sup> had Raphael's Galatea, or his School of Athens, before them! or that the Essay might be read by some imaginative student, warm from admiration of the King's College Chapel at Cambridge, or of the exterior and interior of York Cathedral! I deem the sneers of a host of petty critics, unalphabeted in the life and truth of things, and

ever, not by making any positive, substantial contribution, but by offering as little interference as possible to more basic elements—by fitting in, as a kind of lens or window through which the form can penetrate. Now the active, unifying form needs such concrete objects and their qualities through which to work and show itself. Otherwise it would be like light passing through air without shape. But these objects and qualities must be *congenial* to the form—as when a crystal is held up to light—and able to serve as its vessel or symbol. Otherwise, the form is simply obstructed or quenched, as when light meets an opaque body.

<sup>24</sup> "The undivided being, which is imagined issuing through multiplicity."

<sup>25</sup> "For I offer intelligible things, not the mind capable of understanding them."

as devoid of sound learning as of intuitive taste, well and wisely hazarded for the prospect of communicating the pleasure, which to such minds the following passage of Plotinus will not fail to give—Plotinus, a name venerable even to religion with the great Cosmus, Lorenzo de Medici, Ficinus, Politian, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michael Angelo, but now known only as a name to the majority even of our most learned Scholars!—Plotinus, difficult indeed, but under a rough and austere rind concealing fruit worthy of Paradise; and if obscure, "*at tenet umbra Deum!*" "Ὅταν οὖν καὶ ἡ αἰσθητικὴ τὸ ἐν σώμασιν εἶδος ἰδίῃ συνδησάμενον καὶ κρατῆσαν τῆς φύσεως τῆς ἐναντίας, καὶ μορφὴν ἐπ' ἄλλαις μορφαῖς ἐκπρεπῶς ἐποχομένην, συνελούσα ἀφρόον αὐτὸ τὸ πολλαχῇ ἀνινεργεῖ τε καὶ ἔδωκε τῷ ἔνδον σύμφωνον καὶ συναρμόττον καὶ φύλον."<sup>26</sup> A divine passage, faintly represented in the following lines, written many years ago by the writer, though without reference to, or recollection of, the above.

O lady! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does nature live!  
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!  
And would we aught behold of higher worth,  
Than that inanimate cold world allow'd  
To the poor, loveless, ever-anxious crowd:  
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth  
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud,  
Enveloping the earth!  
And from the soul itself must there be sent  
A sweet and powerful voice, of its own birth,  
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!  
O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me,  
What this strong music in the soul may be;  
What and wherein it doth subsist,  
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,  
This beautiful, and beauty-making power!  
Joy, O beloved! joy, that ne'er was given,  
Save to the pure and in their purest hour,  
Life of our life, the parent and the birth,  
Which, wedding nature to us, gives in dower  
A new heaven and new earth,

<sup>26</sup> "When the mind perceives the form intertwining itself through the concrete, and conquering the material reality opposed to it: then, after perceiving the dominating form, visibly emerging, the mind—collecting together the diverse materials into a harmonized union—bestows this form it has perceived back upon the object—a form quite in keeping with the character of the inner principle [actually there] in the object" (Plotinus, *Ennead*, I, 6).

Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—  
*This* is the strong voice, this the luminous cloud!

Our inmost selves rejoice:  
And thence flows all that glads our ear or sight,  
All melodies the echoes of that voice,  
All colors a suffusion from that light,  
And its celestial tint of yellow-green:  
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!  
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
That give away their motion to the stars;  
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,  
Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen;  
Yon crescent moon, that seems as if it grew  
In its own starless, cloudless lake of blue—  
I see them all, so excellently fair!  
*I see, not feel, how beautiful they are.*<sup>27</sup>

S. T. C. MS. Poem.

SCHOLIUM. We have sufficiently distinguished the beautiful from the agreeable, by the sure criterion, that, when we find an object agreeable, the *sensation* of pleasure always precedes the judgement, and is its determining cause. We *find* it agreeable. But when we declare an object beautiful, the contemplation or intuition of its beauty precedes the *feeling* of complacency, in order of nature at least: nay, in great depression of spirits may even exist without sensibly producing it.—

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear!  
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassion'd grief,  
That finds no natural outlet, no relief  
In word, or sigh, or tear!  
O dearest lady! in this heartless mood,  
To other thoughts by yon sweet throstle woo'd!  
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,  
Have I been gazing at the western sky.

Now the least reflection convinces us that our sensations, whether of pleasure or of pain, are the incommunicable parts of our nature; such as can be reduced to no universal rule; and in which therefore we have no right to expect that others should agree with us, or to blame them for disagreement. That the Greenlander prefers train oil<sup>28</sup> to olive oil, and even to wine, we explain at once by our knowledge of the climate and productions to which he has been habituated. Were the man as enlightened as Plato, his palate would still find that most agreeable to which it had been most accustomed. But when the Iro-

<sup>27</sup> These and the next quoted lines are from Coleridge's *Dejection: an Ode* (1802).

<sup>28</sup> Whale, not locomotive, oil.

quois Sachem, after having been led to the most perfect specimens of architecture in Paris, said that he saw nothing so beautiful as the cook's shops, we attribute this without hesitation to savagery of intellect, and infer with certainty that the sense of the beautiful was either altogether dormant in his mind, or at best very imperfect. The Beautiful, therefore, not originating in the sensations, must belong to the intellect: and therefore we *declare* an object beautiful, and feel an inward right to *expect* that others should coincide with us. But we feel no right to *demand* it: and this leads us to that, which hitherto we have barely touched upon, and which we shall now attempt to illustrate more fully, namely, to the distinction of the Beautiful from the Good.

Let us suppose Milton in company with some stern and prejudiced Puritan, contemplating the front of York Cathedral, and at length expressing his admiration of its beauty. We will suppose it too at that time of his life, when his religious opinions, feelings, and prejudices most nearly coincided with those of the rigid Anti-prelatists.—P. Beauty; I am sure, it is not the beauty of holiness. M. True; but yet it is beautiful.—P. It delights not me. What is it good for? Is it of any use but to be stared at?—M. Perhaps not! but still it is beautiful.—P. But call to mind the pride and wanton vanity of those cruel shavelings, that wasted the labor and substance of so many thousand poor creatures in the erection of this haughty pile.—M. I do. But still it is very beautiful.—P. Think how many score of places of worship, incomparably better suited both for prayer and preaching, and how many faithful ministers might have been maintained, to the blessing of tens of thousands, to them and their children's children, with the treasures lavished on this worthless mass of stone and cement.—M. Too true! but nevertheless it is *very* beautiful.—P. And it is not merely useless; but it feeds the pride of the prelates, and keeps alive the popish

and carnal spirit among the people.—M. Even so! and I presume not to question the wisdom, nor detract from the pious zeal, of the first Reformers of Scotland, who for these reasons destroyed so many fabrics, scarce inferior in beauty to this now before our eyes. But I did not call it *good*, nor have I told thee, brother! that if this were levelled with the ground, and existed only in the works of the modeller or engraver, that I should desire to reconstruct it. The *good* consists in the congruity of a thing with the laws of the reason and the nature of the will, and in its fitness to determine the latter to actualize the former: and it is always discursive. The Beautiful arises from the perceived harmony of an object, whether sight or sound, with the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgement and imagination: and it is always intuitive. As light to the eye, even such is beauty to the mind, which cannot but have complacency in whatever is perceived as pre-configured to its living faculties. Hence the Greeks called a beautiful object *καλόν* quasi *καλοῦν*, i.e. *calling on* the soul, which receives instantly, and welcomes it as something connatural. Πάλιν οὖν ἀναλαμβάνετε, λέγωμεν τί δῆτα ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν τοῖς σώμασι καλόν. Πρῶτον ἔστι μὲν γὰρ τι καὶ βολῆ τῆ πρώτῃ αἰσθητῶν γινόμενον, καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ ὡσπερ συνείσα λέγει, καὶ ἐπιγνοῦσα ἀποδέχεται, καὶ οὖλον συναρμόττεται. Πρὸς δὲ τὸ αἰσχρὸν προσβαλοῦσα ἀνίλεται, καὶ ἀρνεῖται καὶ ἀνανεοῦται ἐπ' αὐτοῦ οὐ συμφωνοῦσα, καὶ ἀλλοτριουμένη.<sup>29</sup>—PLOTIN: Ennead. I. Lib. 6.

<sup>29</sup> "To return, then: let us state what physical beauty [the beauty in objects] is. It is something perceived esthetically, in the first impression of it. And the soul, as if understanding it, responds to it, and is drawn, as it were, into harmony with it. On the other hand, in confronting the ugly, the soul shrinks back, refusing and rejecting it because of the lack of harmony with it, and a feeling of estrangement." Coleridge has no etymological basis for his interpretation of *καλόν* as a "calling on"; but the term is suggestive of his own conception of beauty.