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THE TWOFOLD SIGNIFICANCE OF "AESTHETIC VALUE"

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Aesthetic value is commonly discussed both as a principle of assessment for discriminating among works of art on a scale of aesthetic excellence and as a term of social approbation whereby concern for works of art and objects of natural beauty is dignified and evaluated in relation to the many other occupations and diversions open to modern man. In this paper I shall touch upon both these uses of the term and I shall endeavour to distinguish between them.

1. In contrast to Oriental ways of thinking, the most venerable as also the most persistent theory in the domain of Western aesthetics has been the one which maintains that the pleasure or satisfaction accruing from contact with aesthetic objects, including works of art, supplies both the criterion for assessing their relative aesthetic value and also the justification for the value which is ascribed to aesthetic contemplation in comparison with the many other activities and diversions which life has to offer. Among the ancient Greeks what we now call the fine arts were standardly referred to as "the pleasure-giving crafts." Since the language contained no separate word to distinguish the fine arts from other products of craftsmanship and industry, the term "pleasure-giving crafts" served the formal classificatory function of marking off those crafts whose products had no utilitarian purpose. But that this was not a mere *façon de parler* is indicated, for example, by the suggestion attributed to Socrates in the *Hippias Major* that "beauty is the pleasant which comes through the senses of hearing and sight." (1) And the philosopher Epicurus (341—270 B.C.) was quoted by Maximus of Tyre as saying: "If you mention the beautiful, you are speaking of pleasure; for hardly would the beautiful be beautiful if it were not pleasant." This attitude persisted. The common aim of the English eighteenth-century writers in the field which we now call "aesthetics"

was to elicit general principles of good taste from an investigation of what, in the words of Hume, "has been universally found to please in all countries and all ages." (2) And the continued dominance of a hedonistic outlook today is revealed by the widespread adoption of such terms as "pleasure," "enjoyment." "delight," "satisfaction," "gratification" etc. into the vocabulary of art appreciation. An extreme form of the pleasure-theory was put forward by J.O. Urmson in his paper "What makes a Situation Aesthetic?" (3), where he proposed as a paradigm of aesthetic experience the pleasure deriving from an elementary sensation such as the smell of a rose. A more carefully balanced form of hedonic theory was worked out by Monroe C. Beardsley who, following Kant, excluded sensuous pleasure, emotional response and the satisfaction of desire from the scope of aesthetic experience, representing its distinctive feature to be a special kind of enjoyment or gratification deriving from attention to the formal unity and/or regional qualities of a complex whole. (4)

There can be no doubt that theories of this type correspond to a very widely diffused and generally unquestioned attitude, at any rate in the West. But whether they represent pleasure as constitutive of beauty or, with Kant, as a symptom whereby beauty is to be assessed, hedonic theories are in the last resort inescapably subjective. What pleases me or pleases most people or pleases most people who share my cultural background will not necessarily please all people. And neither statistical averages nor majority calculations lead to verdicts with intersubjective validity. Concurrent with this subjective attitude, then, there has been one which finds aesthetic value in certain objectively discernible properties of things. The ancient Greeks had also their canons of symmetry, by which was meant commensurability in terms of a common module, and these canons were believed to be constitutive of beauty both in nature and in art. During the early and later Middle Ages attention was directed upon properties such as harmony and proportion, consistency, completeness and appropriateness, which were supposed to reflect the basic characteristics of the divine Creation, and these, apprehended by intuitive reason, were held to be superior to sensory appeal. At the Renaissance Greek ideas of symmetry were expanded in theories of the Divine Proportion or Golden Section, which have retained a marginal interest up to this day and may experience a revival in connection with new ideas of Computer Art (5). Belief in the interpersonal validity of aesthetic judgements when properly grounded

has remained firmly embedded despite inconsistency with concurrent hedonic assumptions. Hogarth, for example, thought that the beauty of visual art can be reduced to the character of line and that this depends upon the six features fitness, variety, uniformity, simplicity, intricacy and quantity or size. More recently the literary critic Cleanth Brooks enunciated the principle that a poem is to be judged "not by the truth or falsity as such of the idea which it incorporates, but rather by its character as drama — by its coherence, sensitivity, depth, richness and toughmindedness."

Theories which correlate beauty with objectively discernible properties such as these are not inherently subjective. When due allowances are made for errors in perception, the judgements to which they give rise are intersubjectively valid. But we still need to ask what it means to say that such and such a combination of objective properties is determinant of beauty or aesthetic value. Why just these properties and not others ? I am not interested here to discuss whether this or that list of objective features is "right," but to consider what it means to ask whether or not it is right, what it means to say that it is determinant of beauty.. When we have pointed out that a work displays this, that and the other objective features, what do we add when we say that therefore it is beautiful? Since Hutcheson, for example, it has been common form to suppose tht a judicious admixture of unity and diversity is a condition for the emergence of aesthetic value in a work of art. But this is not a self-evident or analytically true proposition. Nor do we mean to enunciate the tautological vacuity that a combination of unity and diersity, or any other conjunction of objective properties, is determinant of beauty because beauty is the name we give to such a combination. We are purporting to make a positive contribution to the understanding of aesthetic appreciation. Faced with this dilemma the usual recourse is to revert to the assertion that we call such things beautiful because attention to such objective features arouses aesthetic pleasure. To avoid this reversion to a hedonic position we must take our stand on the *value* we ascribe to the expanded experience which only such properties can sustain.

Attempts such as those of Beardsley to rescue aesthetic hedonism by stiuplating that aesthetic pleasure or gratification, the occasion of aesthetic value, is a special kind of pleasure deriving solely from attention to structure and form are not successful. One must accept, indeed, as Beardsley himself accepted, that pleasures cannot be differentiated introspectively by reference to subjective feeling-

tone, but only by reference to their sources. (6) But works of art patently contain very much besides their formal structure and we apprehend their structure only through and by way of the richness of their multifarious "content." The structure is no more nor less than a particular ordering of content. And it goes without saying that the content of works of art appeals to the most diverse interests, desires, attitudes and beliefs, all of which are potential sources of pleasure varying from person to person. Aesthetic value is by no means the only value served by works of art and aesthetic judgements are not the only judgements we apply to them. But the full appreciation of a work of art — what Roman Ingarden called its "concretisation" and I have called its actualisation — is an integrated activity whose total increment of pleasurability cannot except to a very limited extent be parcelled out amongst the various "sources" without disrupting the essential unity of the experience. Therefore the restriction of "aesthetic pleasure" to pleasure arising from attention to structure, and the injunction to assess aesthetic value in terms of pleasure deriving from this source alone, cannot be carried out in practice. No representational work can be fully appreciated by treating it as a non-iconic abstraction divorced from its representational content. Much of its aesthetic value is tied to the representation if representation there is. And even abstract paintings have textural, colouristic and other properties which, besides being elements in the structure, have pleasure-giving qualities of their own. Musical performances are characterised by good or bad tone, felicities of tempo, rhythmic modulations, etc., and even those people who claim to be able to enjoy and judge a musical composition from reading the score alone do so largely by imagining the actual sounds of performance. It is unrealistic to exclude such sources of pleasure altogether from aesthetic appreciation.

For reasons of this sort it is necessary to switch from a hedonic theory to a cognitive conception of appreciation such as that to which Kant pointed the way although he did not go so far as to abandon the hedonic criterion completely.

2. It has been argued that because of the multiplicity of the materials from which works of art are made — from pigments to sounds to words to bodily movements — and because of the great variety of the impacts which they make upon us, it is impossible to define "work of art" in a straightforward way by specifying necessary and sufficient conditions for an artifact to be properly clssified as art. In opposition to this is a persistent belief that

artifacts which can by common consent be properly called works of art have this in common that all are able under suitable conditions to evoke and sustain to a reasonably high degree the sort of perception which we call aesthetic experience or appreciation. This is the root of aesthetic value and if this is denied, "aesthetic value" becomes a vacuous term. Therefore to understand aesthetic value one must understand the nature of appreciation.

It isimportant to keep in mind that works of art are compared and assessed in terms of many other values besides the aesthetic, — for their insight into human nature, their effectiveness for religious or ideological indoctrination, their imaginative force, their market or amusement value, and many more. Not every assessment of a work of art is an aesthetic judgement. And not infrequently these other values seem to the consumer or the critic more important than the aesthetic. Different principles of assessment are often combined and confused together so that it is not always easy to distinguish aesthetic judgements from judgements based on other kinds of value. Aesthetic value depends, as has been said, on the power of a work to evoke, exercise and expand a particular mode of perception and to this we must now turn. I have described aesthetic percipience, or appreciation, quite fully elsewhere. Here the following features may be briefly recapitulated. (7)

(1) In ordinary life we "economise" among the unceasing welter of unregulated impressions which impinge upon our senses during waking hours, bringing to conscious awareness only such as are relevant to our practical interests — chiefly for object recognition and for the taking of decisions as to appropriate action — consigning the rest to a common limbo of the unobserved. We see that the traffic lights are green, but we do not notice the exact hue or shade of the green. We are aware of the twittering of birds, but we do not hear the pitch or rhythm of individual songs. In daily life our conscious perceptions are determined to a considerable extent by the practical interests which move us from time to time. In contrast to this, aesthetic appreciation demands the exercise of perception for its own sake, perception evenly distributed over the whole of a chosen but limited field where sensory qualities are brought into awareness according to their own intrinsic intensity, their similarities or contrasts, and the structural groupings that they exhibit. It is percipience to the utmost limits of completeness, object-determined, and does not know the sacrifices, blurrings and curtailments incidental to the impetuosities of practical involvement. To perceive

in this way, in defiance of the habits which life imposes upon us from earliest childhood, is a skill which must be fostered and learned, maintained alert by constant practice. It represents a form of sensibility which must be cultivated on the basis of inborn propensity.

(2) In ordinary life we are used to perceive small segments and units of things, putting the items together into meaningful wholes according to rules of understanding inculcated by practical experience. We see an edge and a shadow and call it a house, a ground-surface with diminishing texture and we are aware of recession. But in aesthetic attention percipience itself is expanded and enlarged to embrace ever more complex perceptual unities. Analysis and understanding are often useful as a propaedeutic to apprehending a complex artistic construct, but aesthetic perception apprehends the larger unity directly not discursively. This induces an enlargement and dilatation of perceptual activity, enhancing its intensity and vitality. As philosophy and mathematics exercise and extend the powers of reason, so in successful aesthetic contemplation the powers of percipience are exercised and expanded. Although Kant himself retained pleasure as his criterion of assessment, he was aware of this enhancement of intensity and scope in aesthetic cognition, using such terms of *Erlebung*, *Erleichterung* and *Erweiterung*. (8)

Aesthetic activity is the cultivation of that direct awareness of things which underlies all our cognitive contacts with the environment. As the impoverishment of direct percipience and its subordination to verbalized understanding is one of the perils of our time, so its enhancement does most for the enrichment of personality. Works of art are complex artifacts whose primary purpose and justification lies in their ability to stimulate and extend the powers of direct apprehension. They must have perceptual unity for otherwise their perception would be confined to small contained items to be unified and put together subsequently in discursive understanding, and the aesthetic purpose would be frustrated. They must have variety for otherwise interest could not be sustained and either alien thoughts and imaginings would obtrude or attention would lapse. Similarly other objective features that have been proposed must be tested against the ideal of enlarged and intensified percipience.

Seen from another point of view, aesthetic experience is a mode of percipience which at its perfection approaches the mental

concentration which is the key to mediation as practised in the East. The sense of self-awareness and the ordinary half-conscious bonds of attachement to the outside world are temporarily loosened and pealed away as absorption in the chosen object of attention intensifies to the point of near-identification. Oriental writers on art and aesthetics have emphasized this aspect of aesthetic experience above the ideals of representational skill and intellectual profundity which have dominated the interest of the West. In an essay on "The Aesthetic Import of the Black-Ink Painting and its Efficacy in the Age of Technology," for example, Professor Ki-soo Paik of Seoul National University writes that "the great problem of our time is to save and redeem the human person," and he continues: "Meditation shows us the road to the world of infinite freedom from restraint in the world of realities. To enter into the truer world of meditation, one needs to experience a 'small death.' Professor Imamichi wrote: 'Art is what brings a man a small death, where an ecstasy is experienced.' Such a death, of course, does not mean an actual death, but a spiritual deliverance from the physical bond. Just as a death means a separation of the soul from his body, so in a genuine, profound artistic experience, in a meditative state of mind, his soul is separated from his body to enable him to experience an ecstasy. It is an elevation of the soul towards the infinite which only art can afford to bless us with." (9)

The criterion for aesthetic assessment of works of art, that is for their aesthetic value as distinct from the many other values with which they may be endowed, is precisely their power in suitable circumstances to bring about and sustain this enhancement of percipience. Compared with this, degrees of individual pleasure are irrelevant, insignificant and no more than trivially important.

3. So far we have discussed aesthetic value in the sense of a measure for the comparative assessment of works of art and other aesthetic objects. The criterion for aesthetic judgement, as distinct from the many other values which works of art offer and for which they are also assessed, is to be found in the extent of their power to evoke and sustain disinterested perceptual concentration at a high level of intensity. We must now consider the basis for the value that is commonly attributed to the cultivation of the fine arts and of the special form of sensibility which is required in their appreciation. The two values are not the same, although they are often confused together and the term "aesthetic value" carries implications for both. As Frank Cioffi has said: "One of the questions a theory of art

should answer is why human beings have placed such a value on the arts... I doubt that an adequate characterisation of 'artwork' can dispense with the normative component in our conception of a work of art, i.e. of the notion of something to be valued and conserved." (10) We will now take up the question of the high value generally set upon the cultivation of the fine arts and aesthetic sensibility compared with the many other occupations and diversions that are open to mankind in modern societies.

We are at once aware of a paradox. In all advanced societies today the fine arts are a marginal concern, an indulgence or embellishment of life rather than a matter of serious moment. The finance for their support is the first to go in times of curtailment, their place in education is the first to suffer. The people who are interested enough to visit museums and galleries, who purchase works of art for other than investment motives, who seriously read the best literature, who attend theatres or concerts for reasons other than entertainment or social prestige, are a small minority of the whole population and even among them these pursuits are for the most part subservient to more pressing preoccupations and engrossments. There is truth as well as exaggeration in the statement of Charles Dyke: "For the society at large, the arts are utterly marginal. A tiny percentage of the population supports the arts with the aid of what they can extract from the public purse on grounds of nostalgia, guilty conscience, and snobbery. The overwhelming majority has no contact with, or interest in, the arts." (11) Concern for the preservation of aesthetic amenities outside the domain of the fine arts — landscape beauties, ancient edifices, etc. — is somewhat more broadly disseminated and may even become a matter of heated disputation, ranking with a sentimental interest in the preservation of wild life, etc. But even the minority in any country who cherish an aesthetic interest would usually admit that it is amatter of secondary consequence alongside the more important affairs of life. Nevertheless, and all this notwithstanding, in most developed societies today the cultivation and preservation of the arts are taken seriously and achievement in the fine arts is regarded as a major cultural value whose importance is admitted even by the many who themselves have no significant contact with them.

This is the paradox which the pleasure principle cannot solve. Works of art are restricted to the domains of sight and sound, the areas of sensation which permit complexity of structural organisation. But taste, touch and smell are all more conducive to

pleasure. Smell is the most evocative of the senses, taste the most closely geared to the satisfaction of desire and touch to sheer intensity and communicability of pleasure. Pleasure itself cannot provide a ground for preferring the less keen to the keener pleasure or for setting a higher value on the pleasures of a small minority than on those of the majority. We must look elsewhere for the ground of cultural value, which exercises so significant, though obscure, an influence on the ethos of modern societies. The explanation which I have put forward, and which I believe to be the only one which will hold water, is the following.

In the course of evolution humanity developed powers and capacities conducive to survival and to continued more comfortable living in a not too friendly world. Then as men in general, and some small privileged groups in some favoured societies, were gradually liberated to some extent from the all-engrossing pressure of physical needs, they were able to devote time and energy to the cultivation and improvement for their own sake of faculties which had been evolved in the first place in the struggle with the environment. The faculties were not new, but their partial liberation from the pressures of practical necessity liberated also impulses to exercise and perfect them for their own sake. These impulses are the motive-power of man's emergent "spiritual" needs and aspirations: the perpetual drive to exercise, extend and perfect beyond the bounds of utilitarian compulsion powers and endowments no longer completely subservient to material contraints. Conspicuous among these endowments are reason, from whose cultivation spring philosophy, logic, mathematics and theoretical science, and imagination and percipience, from which derive aesthetic sensibility and the fine arts. The creation and the appreciation of the arts are both the result and the means for the exercise of the latter endowments. Whence it follows that works of art are not merely "the reflection of an already formed reality," as Marxist aesthetics would have it, but a transformation of reality into a new creation specifically adapted for the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility. In the words of André Malraux: "La peinture tend bien moins à voir le monde qu'à en créer un autre.... Le monde de l'art n'est pas un monde idéalisé, c'est un autre monde.... Les grands artistes ne sont pas les transcripteurs du monde, ils en sont *les rivaux.*" (12)

The power to create great art is given to few. The interest and perseverance necessary to train sensibility and cultivate the difficult skill to appreciate what the few create belongs but to a small

minority of men. But the respect in which the arts are widely held, the homage that is accorded to them even by the majority who have no direct interest in them, is bulwarked by an obscure realisation, not consciously formulated, that their pursuit activates and matures a basic faculty of the human mind. As a human being without sensibility and percipience is held to be defective, so a society without art is sterile and obtuse.

The fine arts have an indispensable part to play for the enrichment, the integration and the wholeness of human personality. They are a specifically human achievement. It would be sad for society if their present tendency to impoverishment through forced originality turned to crankiness were allowed to continue or if the general consciousness of their cultural value were to disappear wholly into neglect.

4. The foregoing considerations are of more than merely academic interest and their reach extends beyond the sphere of pure philosophy. Mankind stands on the verge of a revolution which may well prove more radical, as it will certainly be more rapid, than the mastery of fire or the advance from food gathering and hunting to cattle breeding and agriculture, from a semi-nomadic existence to urban life. The new technology of automation in productive industry and microelectronic processing in the servicing trades heralds a more portentous step forward than that symbolised by the Industrial Revolution, bringing within realistic prospect the "affluent state" in which men are at last released from the necessity of working for the basic necessities of life. Automation enables production to be maintained with a hitherto unexampled reduction of man-hours. Its path will be stony and beset with difficulties as men's technological progress has far outstripped their capacity for social organisation. Its short-term effects must be expected to bring in their train enormous increases of unemployment with disruption of established social orders. For this reason it is understandably though short-sightedly opposed by working people through their Unions. (13) In the long term, however, automation would mean that mankind in general, and not merely the privileged few in each generation, would — like that "paradigm of affluent living," the domestic cat — become creatures of leisure, living as a favoured elite on the production, not of slaves, but of non-human machines. It is hard to believe that once advances of this magnitude have become a practical possibility, they will ultimately exceed men's ability to cope or that they can permanently be held in check. In the past

cultural achievement has depended on the creation of a leisured minority supported by slave or serf labour. In the affluent state the work will be done by robots and men will be leisured to a degree not hitherto seriously imagined.

The pressing problem will then be the occupation of leisure. It is a problem that is mentioned from time to time in connection with the increases of spare time which result from longer life, early retirement and reductions of working hours. But it has not been systematically faced. Indeed its nature and extent have been barely envisaged as it must arise in the affluent state towards which we are progressing in the near or more distant future. The social psychologist C. A. Mace once wrote: "The fact that life can be enjoyed, and is most enjoyed, by many living beings in the state of affluence (as defined) draws attention to the dramatic change that occurs in the working of the organic machinery at a certain stage of the evolutionary process. *This is the reversal of the means-end relation in behaviour.* In the state of nature the cat must kill to live. In a state of affluence it lives to kill. This happens with men. When men have no need to work for a living there are broadly only two things left to them to do. They can 'play' and they can cultivate the arts." (14) This formulation needs to be expanded. In a state of affluence there are indeed two possibilities: they are amusement and occupations felt to be worth while for their own sake. However valuable as a relaxation from the burden of work, as a way of life amusement palls and leaves life empty and meaningless. There remains the cultivation for their own sake of those distinctively human faculties which have been developed in the course of evolution for practical ends. Most prominent among these are intelligence and percipience and, as has already been suggested, their non-utilitarian cultivation lies at the root of our conception of cultural values. In the affluent state as pictured here one would indeed expect an enormous increase in the intellectual pursuits already practised for their own sake, that is for the satisfaction of curiosity and the expansion of intellectual acuity and grasp rather than for utilitarian purposes: mathematics and logic, metaphysics, linguistics and the theoretical sciences. But this seems not to fit the temperament of all men and as a major life interest will perhaps always appeal to a minority of men. There remains the cultivation of percipience and enhanced sensibility, culminating in the fine arts.

The analogy between art and play has a long and distinguished history. Friedrich Schiller held that human nature is compacted of

two major drives, the sensuous impulse *(Stofftrieb)* and the instinct for form *(Formtrieb)* which, when united in secure equipoise under the play impulse *(Spieltrieb)*, give rise to the aesthetic state, which transcends both and is the pinnacle of mankind's capacity. Thus he was led to the famous pronouncement : "Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and *he is only wholly Man when he is playing.*" Schiller did not reduce art to play in the ordinary sense, but derived his idea of "play" from an enlargement of Kant's theory of a harmonious interplay between the cognitive functions of imagination and understanding. (15) In a more pedestrian vein Herbert Spencer ranked art with play as the two activities which involve the expenditure of accumulated energy without contributing directly to the preservation of the individual or the maintenance of the species. They are, he thought, the luxuries of evolution. (16) His analysis of beauty based on the principle of economy was taken up by Grant Allen, leading him to the formula: "The aesthetically beautiful is that which affords the maximum of stimulation with the minimum of fatigue or waste." This Darwinian framework for aesthetics exercised an important influence, including Alexander Bain and James Sully in England, Jean-Marie Guyau in France, Karl Groos and Konrad Lange in Germany. (17) When one perpends the matter without prejudice today, it may be concluded that both art and play are by nature devoid of utilitarian function although both may indicentally serve practical purposes, art perhaps more often than play. Both demand the expenditure of energy surplus to the requirements of life. And here the resemblance would appear to end. Yet it is notoriously difficult to draw a hard and fast line between art and amusement. Drama is a recognised branch of literary art, but we also have amusement theatre, which appeals to many. In the practice of ancient Greece three classical dramas were regularly followed by a humorous satyric drama. Shakespeare intersperses comic episodes in his serious plays. Where in theatre does amusement end and the appreciation of art begin ? Dance is and has always been a popular diversion, yet prizes for elegance and beauty are awarded even for ballroom dancing. We may say that the art of dance culminates in the classical ballet and the Indian classical dance. But where is the line to be drawn between amusement and art in dance ? Music is among the most highly regarded of the fine arts. But Pop music is diversion, popular tunes are played for distraction in restaurants and lifts. In many studies, such for examp.. as E.H. Gobmrich's *Art and Illusion* (1960), the same principles of

representation are applied to advertisement art as to the greatest masterpieces of visual art. In practice amusement and appreciation appear to be inextricably mingled. Yet it is important to understand more clearly than hitherto the distinction between them if we are to propose the cultivation of the fine arts as a worthwhile occupation in the affluent state, an activity of intrinsic value, while rejecting amusement as a full-time life-style that could ultimately prove satisfactory.

Psychologists have been far from unanimous in the explanations they have offered for the ubiquity of play among men. William James held that the impulse to play is instinctual and that the strong appeal games have for us derives from their pretence that the circumstances appropriate for the activation of certain primitive instincts are present although we know that in fact they are not. "The impulse to play in certain ways is certainly instinctive.... All simple active games are attempts to gain the excitement yielded by certain primitive instincts, through feigning that the occasions for their exercise are there.... unless they were founded in automatic impulses, games would lose most of their zest." (18) Others, of whom William McDougall may be taken as typical, deny that there is an instinct to play, regarding it as no more than the release of surplus energy in various motor mechanisms. "Play is activity for its own sake, or, more properly, it is a purposeless activity, striving towards no goal." McDougall distinguishes games from mere play in that they are governed by rules and sustained by the motive of competition. "Of all motives that sustain games the competitive motive is the chief: we play the game to win; and the more strongly this motive operates and dominates, the less playful and the more serious is the game." And competitive behaviour, he thought, could "be attributed to the instinct of display or self-assertion." (19) To this one must add that team games also involve the practice of cooperation for a common goal. Games of chance, again, mediate the excitement of guessing the unpredictable.

We talk of amusement when we indulge in activities which make sufficient demand upon our attention to escape the discomfort of boredom or to afford temporary relaxation from the tension of uneasy or burdensome thoughts. For such reasons we visit an otherwise unrewarding cinema, read light fiction, join drinking parties, play tennis of squash. For games fall into the same cateogry. A man may indeed become wholly addicted to a game as to any other hobby such as stamp collecting or bird watching. But there is an air of

deliberate unreality, of conscious transitoriness and impermanence, about such pursuits, a lack of seriousness which renders them unsuitable as a life-style except for a minority of people surrounded and bulwarked by a society of men engaged in the more serious conduct of social life. As a substitute for work when that has become largely unnecessary in an affluent society, they are not viable. With amusement as a main end in life men become flabby, bored, deflated and disillusioned. In society as it is, amusement is a useful means of refreshment and relaxation. But there exists no intrinsic value in it, nothing which could give meaning to life. But man as we know him needs a sense of purpose, a *raison d'être*, a value which makes life worth living. Value is what is worth living for: and what is worth living for is what we mean by value. The necessity to work through millenia of evolutionary striving has produced a turn of mind which makes men incapable of satisfactory living without value. Without it depression and alienation set in. Perhaps centuries of affluent living — if men can achieve that without exhausting the biosphere upon which they depend — will gradually change all that. We can only speak for the human nature we know.

In contrast to the relaxation of tension characteristic of amusement behaviour, the refinement of aesthetic sensibility results from a more sedulous deployment of a basic human faculty and its development into a skill exercised for its own sake, as described in my book *The Art of Appreciation* (1970). It is a skill in the field of percipience, that faculty of direct apprehension which underlies all our cognitive contacts with the world in which we live. But whereas in ordinary life we consciously perceive only so far as is conducive to the practical purposes of object recognition, categorisation, discursive understanding, etc., in aesthetic appreciation we exclude extrinsic purposes and strive to render perception itself as complete as possible. The cultivation of this skill requires modification of our normal perceptual habits in two respects, which shall now be discussed in rather fuller detail. They are the heightening of sensory discrimination and the expansion of scope. (20)

(i) Aesthetic sensibility does not require greater sensual acuteness than the normal — the hawk is not more aesthetically gifted than man — but habits of enhanced discriminative attention. Normal men distinguish colours only up to a point. Brown is easily recognised, but rather few people bother to differentiate browns in the range of orange, red, yellow, green or even purple. Yet as may be seen from any good colour atlas (21), colours have three independently variable

dimensions: hue, saturation and brightness. (22) In addition to these dimensions colours have qualities such as surface or depth, metallic or matt, glow, sheen, lambency, etc., which are often linked to surface texture. It is a mark of virtuosity if an artist can depict such qualities as these by the use of pigments on canvas, as Ingres for example depicted silks and satins and flesh. In daily life we differentiate only enough for the practical purposes mentioned above. Greater discriminative ability is encouraged by such activities as the deliberate comparison and choice of materials for dress or interior decoration. But a degree of differentiation in all these dimensions and qualities, by habit rather than deliberate and conscious thought, is a necessary basis for art appreciation. Shapes have still more subtle and complex discriminable qualities. One should be automatically sensitive to the slight variations in a Ben Nicholson abstract from a perfect circle or square, to the delicate continuous variations and accords among all the contours of a Brancusi carving. Musical sounds have four independently variable dimensions — duration, pitch, loudness and timbre — while the harmonics add a sonorous richness that is not usually consciously heard. Movement itself displays not only such transpicuous characteristics as fast or slow, smooth or jerky, but a wealth of more subtle qualities which kinetic art has barely begun to exploit. In the art of dancing, of course, these are all-important. The power to switch one's habits of attention and to become aware of all such minutiae of sensory material simultaneously and automatically when exposed to works of art is a necessary preliminary condition, though a preliminary only, of appreciation.

(ii) The second and more important requirement for appreciation is the expansion of perception to embrace the direct apprehension of ever larger integrated sensory units or — as they used to be called — Gestalten. In aesthetic apprehension we are aware, not of detached sensory stimuli to be integrated throught theoretical understanding and categorisation, nor by discursive summation of their complicated relations and contrasts, but of integrated wholes directly perceived. The stock example of this is the melody. A melody is a sequence of intervals in the dimension of pitch. The intervals which constitute a melody can be described for understanding and transcribed in terms of the wave-lengths of sound. But a melody is not merely this: it is a unity of Gestalt which has a personality of its own. The *same* melody, recognisably the same, can be sounded at different levels of pitch, with different degrees of loudness, at different speeds and

on different instruments each with its characteristic timbre. From melodies perception can be expanded to take in a whole movement with variations and repeats, a whole concerto or symphony. The same principle applies to all the other arts. The perceived unity is not something put together from parts by discursive understanding, but a unity directly apprehended as a melody is apprehended. And the power of expanded percipience is a skill which must be long and patiently cultivated. When the skill has been acquired it is itself a criterion whether the artifact to which it is applied is truly a work of fine art.

The apprehension of artistic unities is closely bound up with sensibility for aesthetic and emotional qualities: aesthetic qualities such as grace, elegance, harmony, bombast, bathos, dramatic power, etc. and emotional qualities such as melancholy, jollity, tenderness, sadness, etc. The diversity of these qualities goes far beyond the ability of language to name — perhaps ultimately the qualities of every work are unique to itself — and for this reason fine art has often been lauded as a superior instrument for spiritual communication among men — a "language of the emotions." (23) As a corollary of this it may be observed that, just as a very slight change in the dimensions of a façade may destroy its aesthetic unity, so a slight change in any of the "dimensions" may produce a disproportionate modification of the aesthetic or emotional personality of a work of art. By an "ironing out of the rhythm" and a change of speed the lively English dance tune "Sellengers Round" became converted to a solemn hymn tune in J.S. Bach's "Valet will ich." In *The Power of Sound* Edmund Gurney showed how the fine chorale melody "Ein' feste Burg" from Bach's Cantata No. 80 could be converted by rhythmical distortion into a vulgar jig. (24) For an artifact to rank as a work of art it must have perceptual unity. And in appreciation there is no alternative or substitute for direct perception of the work as a unity distinguished by unique "emergent" — or, as they are also called, "regional" — qualities.

As distinct from amusement, which offers at most relaxation and comfort, the cultivation of the arts demands and inspires the enlargement and refinement of the powers of percipience, a basic endowment of the human mind. In a world devoid of religion such elevation of man's own nature towards an always elusive transcendence of perfection is ultimately the sole foundation for those cultural values which make human life seen worth while.

I want now to mention three departments of life where aesthetic

concern implodes most powerfully.

(i) Aesthetic feeling is most pervasive among men in what I have called the "ritualisation" of life. Men are everywhere accustomed to clothe the most banal as well as the most sublime of their activities in conventions and formalities which lend them an atmosphere of distinction and elevate them above the ordinary. Eating ceases to be a matter of crude fuelling when it is subjected to the formalities and elegances of good table manners. But if an art historian eats like an animal in his own home environment, you can be pretty sure that despite his trade he is lacking in aesthetic sensibility. The rituals of love-making have been a favourite theme of literature throughout the ages and a man who knows no ritual of courtship is dubbed an unfeeling boor. The ordinary rules of politeness in meeting and greeting and association of all sorts are a form of ritual. Religious worship, military pageants, festivities of every kind rely strongly upon ritual for their popular appeal and the first concern of most secret or restricted societies is to develop a ritual of their own. William James regards this ritualization as a sort of play into which aesthetic feelings enter. "There is another sort of human play," he says, "into which higher aesthetic feelings enter. I refer to that love of festivities, ceremonies, ordeals, etc., which seems to be universal in our species. The lowest savages have their dances, more or less formally conducted. The various religions have their solemn rites and exercises, and civil and military power symbolise their grandeur by processions and celebrations of divers sorts." (25). I prefer to regard the ritualisation of life as a manifestation of aesthetic sentiment rather than a form of play. Though the details differ, the compulsiveness of ritual is always there. Its justification is aesthetic, for there is no other.

(ii) Aesthetic perception is also present in our spontaneous appreciations of natural beauties. Sometimes we experience short interludes from observing the natural environment for the purposes of practical exploitation. We listen to the singing of the birds for its own sake, to the soughing of the wind in the trees, the rippling of the stream. Or we admire the blazing colours of a desert sunset, the magnificance of a mountain chasm or the peacefulness of spreading meadows. We may for the time become completely immersed in these experiences, which may perhaps lie at the root of the pantheistic feeling of oneness with nature.

(iii) The most important area for the cultivation and exercise of the skill for aesthetic appreciation is, of course, that of the fine

arts themselves. Despite all the difficulties of exact definition, we regard any artifact as a work of art which is eminently suitable to exercise, extend and amplify our powers of percipience, irrespective of whatever other values it may have. It is important that society should perfect the means of recognising those strange and unusual persons who are capable of producing such artifacts, establish methods of recognising and making them widely available when produced, and that it should promote a more general understanding of aesthetic appreciation and the reasons for its value to mankind.

If there is any truth in the considerations advanced in this paper, then it is incumbent on philosophers and aestheticians to clarify the nature of aesthetic appreciation not only from a narrow philosophical point of view but with the general advance of human society in prospect. It is a matter of major concern for the progress of humanity in general that aesthetic activity be no longer regarded as subordinate to putatively more pressing interests in education, finance and social organisation in all its forms. For this to become possible the reasons for it must be promulgated by philosophers by every means and on all possible occasions. It is an irony that philosophers, upon whom this obligation falls, usually belong to the intellectual type of men who are far from being the most susceptible to aesthetic understanding and feeling.

NOTES

[1] Referred to by Aristotle in *Topica*, 146a21.

[2] David Hume: "Of the Standard of Taste" (1741)

[3] *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. Suppelemtnary Vol. XXXI (1957). Reprinted in Joseph Margolis (ed.): *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (1962).

[4] Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Aesthetic Point of View," in *Metaphilosophy* 1 (1970). Reprinted in Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (eds.): *The Aesthetic Point of View* (1982). By "regional quality" Beardsley means what others have called an "emergent property," that is "a property, or characteristic, that belongs to a complex but not to any of its parts...." See *Aesthetics* (1981), p. 33.

[5] See my article "Symmetry as an Aesthetic Factor" in the journal *Computers and mathematics with applications* published by

Pergamon Press for Connecticut University.

[6] There is a useful discussion of aesthetic pleasure in W. Charlton: *Aesthetics* (1970).

[7] See e.g. *The Art of Appreciation* (1970).

[8] Kant's *Critique of Judgement* was an heroic attempt to reconcile the conflicting objective and hedonic traditions in aesthetics, doing justice both to the *de facto* diversity of tastes and to the fact that aesthetic judgements involve an implicit claim to interpersonal validity — "demand" the consent of others. These constituted the two poles of his antimony. He believed that certain things with pronounced "inner teleology" or "finality" — notably living organisms and works of art — are uniquely designed to favour our cognitive faculties, allowing a free interplay of imagination and understanding in their apprehension. (The exact meaning of this obscure formulation is still being discussed. Sufficient to say that his conception corresponded more or less closely with the modern idea of perception, which combines direct sensory apprehension with conceptual elements.) He was well aware of the expansion and intensification of percipience in aesthetic apprehension. But he still retained as his criterion the pleasure experienced from the free interplay of the cognitive faculties of imagination (in his sense of the word) and understanding. His attachment to the prevalent pleasure doctrine, together with his hope to establish feeling as an intermediary between pure and practical reason, prevented him from going all the way and making the enrichment and expansion of percipience both his criterion and the source of aesthetic value.

[9] In *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae*, Vol. 1, *Eco-Ethica*, (ed. Tomonobu Imamichi), p. 18. (1983)

[10] Frank Cioffi, "The Aesthetic and the Epistemic," in Hugh Cutler (ed.): *What is Art?* (1983), p. 202.

[11] See "The Praxis of Art and the Liberal Dream" in John Fisher (ed.): *"Essays on Aesthetics. Perspectives on the Work of Monroe C. Beardsley* (1983), p. 109.

[12] André Malraux: *Les Voix de Silence* (1951), pp. 270, 310, 459.

[13] Bruce. Nussbaum in *The World after Oil* (1983) believes that advances in high technology will eradicate entire industries and create an army of "deskilled" workers bypassed by the computer age. See also F. H. George: *After 1984* (1984) and D.A. Bell: *Em-*

ployment in the Age of Drastic Change (1984). Bell holds that the new automatic technology will destroy some 7.5 million jobs in Britain alone.

[14] C.A. Mace: "Psychology and Aesthetics" in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 2 No. 1., Jan., 1962.

[15] See *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. Elisabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (1967).

[16] See *The Principles of Psychology* (enlarged ed., 1872). Also essays on *Literary Style and Music* ("The Philosophy of Style" and "The Origin and Function of Music") reprinted in the Thinker's Library (1950).

[17] Grant Allen: *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877). Alexander Bain: *Mental and Moral Science* (1872) and *Education as a Science* (1879). James Sully: *The Human Mind* (1892). Jean-Marie Guyau: *L'art au point de vue sociologique* (6th ed., 1903). Karl Groos: *The Play of Animals* (1898) and *The Play of Man* (1901). Konrad Lange: *Das Wesen der Kunst* (1901). The idea of the play impulse was introduced into his aesthetics of music by Hugo Riemann in *Grundlinien der Musikästhetik* (1887). A discussion of the various play theories of art may be found in P.A. Lascaris: *L'éducation esthétique de l'enfant* (1928) and in A. Needham: *Le développement de l'esthétique sociologique en France et en Angleterre au XIXe siècle* (1926).

[18] William James: *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), Vol. 11, p. 427.

[19] William McDougall: *An Outline of Psychology* (1923), pp. 170—173.

[20] See my article "The Cultivation of Sensibility in Art Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1984.

[21] e.g. A. Kornerup & J.H. Wanscher (eds.): *Methuen Handbook of Colour.*

[22] Hue is the position of a colour patch on the spectrum of colour. Brightness is its relative position on a black-white scale. And saturation is the intensity of the relative colour in comparison with the black/white at the same position on the scale.

[23] e.g. René Huyghe: *Art and the Spirit of Man* (Eng. Trans., 1962).

[24] I owe these examples to Ralph Vaughan Williams: *The Making of Music* (1955).

[25] Ibid., p. 428.