Principles of Literary Criticism

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PREFACE

A BOOK is a machine to think with, but it need not, therefore, usurp the functions either of the bellows or the locomotive. This book might better be compared to a loom on which it is proposed to re-weave some ravelled parts of our civilisation. What is most important about it, the interconnection of its several points of view, might have been exhibited, though not with equal clarity, in a pamphlet or in a two-volume work. Few of the separate items are original. One does not expect novel cards when playing so traditional a game; it is the hand which matters. I have chosen to present it here on the smallest scale which would allow me to fit together the various positions adopted into a whole of some firmness. The elaborations and expansions which suggest themselves have been constantly cut short at the point at which I thought that the reader would be able to see for himself how they would continue. The danger of this procedure, which otherwise has great advantages both for him and for me, is that the different parts of a connected account such as this mutually illumine one another. The writer, who has, or should have, the whole position in his mind throughout, may overlook sources of obscurity for the reader, due to the serial form of the exposition. This I have endeavoured to prevent by means of numerous cross-references, forwards and backwards.

But some further explanation of the structure of the book is due to the reader. At sundry points —notably in Chapters VI, VII, and XI-XV—its

progress appears to be interrupted by lengthy excursions into theory of value, or into general psychology. These I would have omitted if it had seemed in any way possible to develop the argument of the rest strongly and clearly in their absence. Criticism, as I understand it, is the endeavour to discriminate between experiences and to evaluate them. We cannot do this without some understanding of the nature of experience, or without theories of valuation and communication. Such principles as apply in criticism must be taken from these more fundamental studies. All other critical principles are arbitrary, and the history of the subject is a record of their obstructive influence. The view of value implied throughout is one which must be held in some form by very many persons. Yet I have been unable to discover anywhere any statement of it to which I might satisfactorily refer the reader. I had to make a fairly full statement with applications and illustrations myself. And I had to put in the forefront of the book where, to the more exclusively literary reader, it will appear a dry and uninviting tract to be crossed for problematical advantages. The same remarks apply to the second theoretical expansion, the psychological chapters; they are to the value chapters, I fear, as a Sahara to a Gobi. No other choice seemed open if I did not wish my later, critical, sections to be misunderstood, than to include as a preliminary what amounts to a concise treatise on psychology. For nearly all the topics of psychology are raised at one point or another by criticism, but raised from an angle which ordinary text-books do not contemplate.

These two deserts passed, the rest of the book accords, I believe, much more closely with what may be expected of an essay in criticism, although the language in which some of the more obvious

remarks are couched may seem unnecessarily repellant. The explanation of much of the turgid uncouthness of its terminology is the desire to link even the commonplaces of criticism to a systematic exposition of psychology. The reader who appreciates the advantages so gained will be forgiving.

I have carefully remembered throughout that I am not writing for specialists alone. The omissions, particularly as to qualifications and reservations, which this fact entails, should in fairness to myself be mentioned.

My book, I fear, will seem to many sadly lacking in the condiments which have come to be expected in writings upon literature. Critics and even theorists in criticism currently assume that their first duty is to be moving, to excite in the mind emotions appropriate to their august subject-matter. This endeavour I have declined. I have used, I believe, few words which I could not define in the actual use which I have made of them, and necessarily such words have little or no emotive power. I have comforted myself with the reflection that there is perhaps something debilitated about a taste for speculation which requires a flavouring of the eternal and the ultimate or even of the literary spices, mystery and profundity. Mixed modes of writing which enlist the reader's feeling as well as his thinking are becoming dangerous to the modern consciousness with its increasing awareness of the distinction. Thought and feeling are able to mislead one another at present in ways which were hardly possible six centuries ago. We need a spell of purer science and purer poetry before the two can again be mixed, if indeed this will ever become once more desirable. In the Second Edition I added a note on Mr. Eliot's poetry which will elucidate what I mean here by purity, and some supplementary remarks upon Value; in the

Third, a few minor improvements have been made.

It should be borne in mind that the knowledge which the men of A.D. 3000 will possess, if all goes well, may make all our æsthetics, all our psychology, all our modern theory of value, look pitiful. Poor indeed would be the prospect if this were not so. The thought, "What shall we do with the powers, which we are so rapidly developing, and what will happen to us if we cannot learn to guide them in time?" already marks for many people the chief interest of existence. The controversies which the world has known in the past are as nothing to those which are ahead. I would wish this book to be regarded as a contribution towards these choices of the future.

Between the possession of ideas and their application there is a gulf. Every teacher winces when he remembers this. As an attempt to attack this difficulty, I am preparing a companion volume, *Practical Criticism*. Extremely good and extremely bad poems were put *unsigned* before a large and able audience. The comments they wrote at leisure give, as it were, a stereoscopic view of the poem and of possible opinion on it. This material when systematically analysed, provides, not only an interesting commentary upon the state of contemporary culture, but a new and powerful educational instrument.

I. A. R.

Cambridge, May, 1928.

CHAPTER I

The Chaos of Critical Theories

O monstrous! but one half-pennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!—*The First Part of King Henry the Fourth.*

The literature of Criticism is not small or negligible, and its chief figures, from Aristotle onwards, have often been among the first intellects of their age. Yet the modern student, surveying the field and noting the simplicity of the task attempted and the fragments of work achieved, may reasonably wonder what has been and is amiss. For the experiences with which criticism is concerned are exceptionally accessible, we have only to open the book, stand before the picture, have the music played, spread out the rug, pour out the wine, and the material upon which the critic works is presently before us. Even too abundantly, in too great fullness perhaps: "More warmth than Adam needs" the critic may complain, echoing Milton's complaint against the climate of the Garden of Eden; but he is fortunate not to be starved of matter like the investigator of psychoplasm. And the questions which the critic seeks to answer, intricate though they are, do not seem to be extraordinarily difficult. What gives the experience of reading a certain poem its value? How is this experience better than another? Why prefer this picture to that? In which ways should we listen to music so as to receive the most valuable moments? Why is one opinion about works of art not as good as

another? These are the fundamental questions which criticism is required to answer, together with such preliminary questions—What *is* a picture, a poem, a piece of music? How can experiences be compared? What is value?—as may be required in order to approach these questions.

But if we now turn to consider what are the results yielded by the best minds pondering these questions in the light of the eminently accessible experiences provided by the Arts, we discover an almost empty garner. A few conjectures, a supply of admonitions, many acute isolated observations, some brilliant guesses, much oratory and applied poetry, inexhaustible confusion, a sufficiency of dogma, no small stock of prejudices, whimsies and crotchets, a profusion of mysticism, a little genuine speculation, sundry stray inspirations, pregnant hints and random *aperçus;* of such as these, it may be said without exaggeration, is extant critical theory composed.

A few specimens of the most famous utterances of Aristotle, Longinus, Horace, Boileau, Dryden, Addison, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, and some more modern authors, will justify this assertion. "All men naturally receive pleasure from imitation." "Poetry is chiefly conversant about general truth." "It demands an enthusiasm allied to madness; transported out of ourselves we become what we imagine." "Beautiful words are the very and peculiar light of the mind." "Let the work be what you like, provided it has simplicity and unity." "De Gustibus. . . ." "Of writing well right thinking is the beginning and the fount." "We must never separate ourselves from Nature." "Delight is the chief, if not the only end; instruction can be admitted but in the second place." "The pleasures of Fancy are more conducive to health than those of the understanding." "The

spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling." "The best words in the best order." "The whole soul of man in activity." "Unity in variety." "The synthetic and magical power of the imagination." "The eye on the object." "The disimprisonment of the soul of fact." "The identification of content and form." "A criticism of Life." "Empathy favourable to our existence." "Significant form." "The expression of impressions," etc. etc.

Such are the pinnacles, the *apices* of critical theory, the heights gained in the past by the best thinkers in their attempt to reach explanations of the value of the arts. Some of them, many of them indeed, are profitable starting-points for reflection, but neither together, nor singly, nor in any combination do they give what is required. Above them and below them, around and about them can be found other things of value, of service for the appreciation of particular poems and works of art; comment, elucidation, appraisal, much that is fit occupation for the contemplative mind. But apart from hints such as have been cited, no explanations. The central question, What is the value of the arts, why are they worth the devotion of the keenest hours of the best minds, and what is their place in the system of human endeavours? is left almost untouched, although without some clear view it would seem that even the most judicious critic must often lose his sense of position.

But perhaps the literature of Criticism is the wrong place in which to expect such an inquiry. Philosophers, Moralists and Æstheticians are perhaps the competent authorities? There is certainly no lack of treatises upon the Good and the Beautiful, upon Value and upon the Æsthetic State, and the treasures of earnest endeavour lavished upon these topics have not been in vain. Those investigators

who have relied upon Reason, upon the Select Intuition and the Ineluctable Argument, who have sat down without the necessary facts to think the matter out, have at least thoroughly discredited a method which apart from their labours would hardly have been suspected of the barrenness it has shown. And those who, following Fechner, have turned instead to the collection and analysis of concrete, particular facts and to empirical research into æsthetics have supplied a host of details to psychology. In recent years especially, much useful information upon the processes which make up the appreciation of works of art has been skilfully elicited. But it is showing no ingratitude to these investigators if we point out certain defects of almost all experimental work on æsthetics, which make their results at best of only indirect service to our wider problems.

The most obvious of these concerns their inevitable choice of experiments. Only the simplest human activities are at present amenable to laboratory methods. Æstheticians have therefore been compelled to begin with as simple forms of 'æsthetic choice' as can be devised. In practice, line-lengths and elementary forms, single notes and phrases, single colours and simple collocations, nonsense syllables, metronomic beats, skeleton rhythms and metres and similar simplifications have alone been open to investigation. Such more complex objects as have been examined have yielded very uncertain results, for reasons which anyone who has ever *both* looked at a picture or read a poem *and* been inside a psychological laboratory or conversed with a representative psychologist will understand.

The generalisations to be drawn from these simple experiments are, if we do not expect too much, encouraging. Some light upon obscure processes, such as empathy, and upon the intervention

of muscular imagery and tendencies to action into the apprehension of shapes and of sequences of sounds which had been supposed to be apprehended by visual or auditory apparatus alone, some interesting facts about the plasticity of rhythm, some approach towards a classification of the different ways in which colours may be regarded, increased recognition of the complexity of even the simplest activities, these and similar results have been well worth the trouble expended. But more important has been the revelation of the great variety in the responses which even the simplest stimuli elicit. Even so unambiguous an object as a plain colour, it has been found, can arouse in different persons and in the same person at different times extremely different states of mind. From this result it may seem no illegitimate step to conclude that highly complex objects, such as pictures, will arouse a still greater variety of responses, a conclusion very awkward for any theory of criticism, since it would appear to decide adversely the preliminary question: "How may experiences be compared?" which any such theory must settle if the more fundamental questions of value are to be satisfactorily approached.

But just here a crucial point arises. There seems to be good reason to suppose that the more simple the object contemplated the more varied the responses will be which can be expected from it. For it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to contemplate a comparatively simple object by itself. Inevitably it is taken by the contemplator into some context, and made part of some larger whole, and under such experimental conditions as have yet been devised it seems not possible to guarantee the kind of context into which it is taken. A comparison with the case of words is instructive. A single word by itself, let us say 'night,' will raise almost as many

different thoughts and feelings as there are persons who hear it. The range of variety with a single word is very little restricted. But put it into a sentence and the variation is narrowed; put it into the context of a whole passage, and it is still further fixed; and let it occur in such an intricate whole as a poem and the responses of competent readers may have a similarity which only its occurrence in such a whole can secure. The point will arise for discussion when the problem of corroboration for critical judgments is dealt with later (cf. pp. 166, 178, 192). It had to be mentioned here in order to explain why the theory of criticism shows no great dependence upon experimental æsthetics, useful in many respects as these investigations are.

CHAPTER II

The Phantom Æsthetic State

None of his follies will he repent, none will he wish to repeat; no happier lot can be assigned to man.—*Wilhelm Meister.*

A more serious defect in æsthetics is the avoidance of considerations as to value. It is true that an ill-judged introduction of value considerations usually leads to disaster, as in Tolstoy's case. But the fact that some of the experiences to which the arts give rise are valuable and take the form they do because of their value is not irrelevant. Whether this fact is of service in analysis will naturally depend upon the theory of value adopted. But to leave it out of account altogether is to run the risk of missing the clue to the whole matter. And the clue has in fact been missed.

All modern æsthetics rests upon an assumption which has been strangely little discussed, the assumption that there is a distinct *kind* of mental activity present in what are called æsthetic experiences. Ever since "the first rational word concerning beauty"[1] was spoken by Kant, the attempt to define the 'judgment of taste' as concerning pleasure which is disinterested, universal, unintellectual, and not to be confused with the pleasures of sense or of ordinary emotions, in short to make it a thing *sui generis*, has continued. Thus arises the phantom problem of the æsthetic mode or æsthetic state, a legacy from the days of abstract

[1] Hegel's *dictum*, *History of Philosophy*, iii, 543.

investigation into the Good, the Beautiful and the True.

The temptation to align this tripartite division with a similar division into Will, Feeling and Thought was irresistible. "All the faculties of the Soul, or capacities, are reducible to three, which do not admit of any further derivation from a common ground: the *faculty of knowledge*, the *feeling of pleasure or displeasure*, and the *faculty of desire*"[1] said Kant. Legislative for each of these faculties stood Understanding, Judgment and Reason respectively. "Between the faculties of knowledge and desire stands the feeling of pleasure, just as judgment is intermediate between understanding and reason." And he went on to discuss æsthetics as appertaining to the province of judgment, the middle one of these three, the first and last having already occupied him in his two other Critiques of Pure and Practical Reason respectively. The effect was virtually to annex æsthetics to Idealism, in which fabric it has ever since continued to serve important purposes.

This accident of formal correspondence has had an influence upon speculation which would be ridiculous if it had not been so disastrous. It is difficult even now to get out of ruts which have been seen to lead nowhere. With the identification of the provinces of Truth and Thought no quarrel arises, and the Will and the Good are, as we shall see, intimately connected, but the attempts to fit Beauty into a neat pigeon-hole with Feeling have led to calamitous distortions. It is now generally abandoned,[2] although echoes of it can be heard everywhere in critical writings. The peculiar use of 'emotion' by reviewers, and the prevalence of the

[1] *Critique of Judgment*, transl. by Meredith, p. 15.
[2] Dr Bosanquet was one of the last adherents. See his *Three Lectures on Æsthetics.*

phrase 'æsthetic emotion' is one of them. In view, then, of the objections to Feeling, something else, some special mode of mental activity, had to be found, to which Beauty could belong. Hence arose the æsthetic mode. Truth was the object of the inquiring activity, of the Intellectual or Theoretical part of the mind, and the Good that of the willing, desiring, practical part; what part could be found for the Beautiful? Some activity that was neither inquisitive nor practical, that did not question and did not seek to use. The result was the æsthetic, the contemplative, activity which is still defined, in most treatments[1], by these negative conditions alone, as that mode of commerce with things which is neither intellectual inquiry into their nature, nor an attempt to make them satisfy our desire. The experiences which arise in contemplating objects of art were then discovered to be describable in some such terms, and system secured a temporary triumph.

It is true that many of these experiences do present peculiarities, both in the intellectual interest which is present and in the way in which the development of desires within them takes place, and these peculiarities—detachment, impersonality, serenity and so forth—are of great interest. They will have to be carefully examined in the sequel.

We shall find that two entirely different sets of characters are involved. They arise from quite different causes but are hard to distinguish introspectively. Taken as marking off a special province for inquiry they are most unsatisfactory. They would yield for our purposes, even if they were not so ambiguous, a diagonal or slant classification. Some of the experiences which most require to be considered would be left out and many which are without importance brought in. To choose the

[1] E.g. Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful.*

Æsthetic State as the starting-point for an inquiry into the values of the arts is in fact somewhat like choosing 'rectangular, and red in parts' as a definition of a picture. We should find ourselves ultimately discussing a different collection of things from those we intended to discuss.

But the problem remains—Is there any such thing as the æsthetic state, or any æsthetic character of experiences which is *sui generis?* Not many explicit arguments have ever been given for one. Vernon Lee, it is true, in *Beauty and Ugliness*, p. 10, argues that "a relation entirely *sui generis* between visible and audible forms and ourselves" can be deduced from the fact "that given proportions, shapes, patterns, compositions have a tendency to recur in art." How this can be done it is hard to divine. Arsenic tends to recur in murder cases, and tennis in the summer, but no characters or relations *sui generis* anywhere are thereby proved. Obviously you can only tell whether anything is like or unlike other things by examining it and them, and to notice that one case of it is like another case of it, is not helpful. It may be suspected that where the argument is so confused, the original question was not very clear.

The question is whether a certain kind of experience is or is not *like* other kinds of experience. Plainly it is a question as to degree of likeness. Be it granted at once, to clear the air, that there are all sorts of experiences involved in the values of the arts, and that attributions of Beauty spring from all sorts of causes. Is there among these one kind of experience as different from experiences which don't so occur as, say envy is from remembering, or as mathematical calculation is from eating cherries? And what degree of difference would make it specific? Put this way it is plainly not an easy question to answer. These differences,

none of them measurable, are of varying degree, and all are hard to estimate. Yet the vast majority of post-Kantian writers, and many before him, have unhesitatingly replied, "Yes! the æsthetic experience is peculiar and specific." And their grounds, when not merely verbal, have usually been those of direct inspection.

It requires some audacity to run counter to such a tradition, and I do not do so without reflection. Yet, after all, the matter is one of classification, and when so many other divisions in psychology are being questioned and re-organised, this also may be re-examined.

The case for a distinct æsthetic species of experience can take two forms. It may be held that there is some unique kind of mental element which enters into æsthetic experiences and into no others. Thus Mr Clive Bell used to maintain the existence of an unique emotion 'æsthetic emotion' as the *differentia.* But psychology has no place for such an entity. What other will be suggested? Empathy, for example, as Vernon Lee herself insists, enters into innumerable other experiences as well as into æsthetic experiences. I do not think any will be proposed.

Alternatively, the æsthetic experience may contain no unique constituent, and be of the usual stuff but with a special form. This is what it is commonly supposed to be. Now the special form as it is usually described—in terms of disinterestedness, detachment, distance, impersonality, subjective universality, and so forth—this form, I shall try to show later, is sometimes no more than a consequence of the incidence of the experience, a condition or an effect of communication. But sometimes a structure which can be described in the same terms is an essential feature of the experience, the feature in fact upon which its value

depends. In other words, at least two different sets of characters, due to different causes, are, in current usage, ambiguously covered by the term 'æsthetic.' It is very necessary to distinguish the sense in which merely putting something in a frame or writing it in verse gives it an 'æsthetic character,' from a sense in which value is implied. This confusion, together with other confusions,[1] has made the term nearly useless.

The æsthetic mode is generally supposed to be a peculiar way of regarding things which can be exercised, whether the resulting experiences are valuable, disvaluable or indifferent. It is intended to cover the experience of ugliness as well as that of beauty, and also intermediate experiences. What I wish to maintain is that there is no such mode, that the experience of ugliness has nothing in common with that of beauty, which both do not share with innumerable other experiences no one (except Croce; but this qualification is often required) would dream of calling æsthetic. But a narrower sense of æsthetic is also found in which it *is* confined to experiences of beauty and does imply value. And with regard to this, while admitting that such experiences can be distinguished, I shall be at pains to show that they are closely similar to many other experiences, that they differ chiefly in the connections between their constituents, and that they are only a further development, a finer organisation of ordinary experiences, and not in the least a new and different kind of thing. When we look at a picture, or read a poem, or listen to music, we are not doing something quite unlike what we were doing on our way to the Gallery or when we dressed in the morning. The fashion in which the experience is caused in us is

[1] E.g. Any choice for which the chooser cannot give his reasons tends in the laboratory to be called an 'æsthetic choice.'

different, and as a rule the experience is more complex and, if we are successful, more unified. But our activity is not of a fundamentally different kind. To assume that it is, puts difficulties in the way of describing and explaining it, which are unnecessary and which no one has yet succeeded in overcoming.

The point here raised, and particularly the distinction between the two quite different sets of characters, on the ground of which an experience may be described as æsthetic or impersonal and disinterested, will become clearer at a later stage.[1]

A further objection to the assumption of a peculiar æsthetic attitude is that it makes smooth the way for the idea of a peculiar æsthetic value, a pure art value. Postulate a peculiar kind of experience, æsthetic experience, and it is an easy step to the postulation of a peculiar unique value, different in kind and cut off from the other values of ordinary experiences. "To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions."[2] So runs a recent extreme statement of the Æsthetic Hypothesis, which has had much success. To quote another example less drastic but also carrying with it the implication that æsthetic experiences are *sui generis*, and their value not of the same kind as other values. "Its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but a world in itself independent, complete, autonomous."[3]

This view of the arts as providing a private heaven for æsthetes is, as will appear later, a

[1] Cf. Chapters X and XXXII, and Impersonality, *Index*.
[2] Clive Bell, *Art*, p. 25.
[3] A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 5.

great impediment to the investigation of their value. The effects upon the general attitudes of those who accept it uncritically are also often regrettable; while the effects upon literature and the arts have been noticeable, in a narrowing and restriction of the interests active, in preciousness, artificiality and spurious aloofness. Art envisaged as a mystic, ineffable virtue is a close relative of the 'æsthetic mood', and may easily be pernicious in its effects, through the habits of mind which, as an idea, it fosters, and to which, as a mystery, it appeals.

CHAPTER III

The Language of Criticism

. . . . I too have seen
My vision of the rainbow Aureoled face
Of her whom men name Beauty: proud, austere:
Divinely fugitive, that haunts the world. . . .
The Dominion of Dreams.

Whatever the disadvantages of modern æsthetics as a basis for a theory of Criticism, the great advance made upon prescientific speculation into the nature of Beauty must also be recognised. That paralysing apparition Beauty, the ineffable, ultimate, unanalysable, simple Idea, has at least been dismissed and with her have departed or will soon depart a flock of equally bogus entities. Poetry and inspiration together, it is true, still dignify respectable quarters with their presence.

"Poetry, like life, is one thing. . . . Essentially a continuous substance or energy, poetry is historically a connected movement, a series of successive integrated manifestations. Each poet, from Homer or the predecessors of Homer to our own day, has been, to some degree and at some point, the voice of the movement and energy of poetry; in him, poetry has for the moment become visible, audible, incarnate; and his extant poems are the record left of that partial and transitory incarnation. . . . The progress of poetry, with its vast power and exalted function, is immortal."[1]

[1] G. W. Mackail, *Lectures on Poetry.* Introduction.

A diligent search will still find many other Mystic Beings, for the most part of a less august nature, sheltering in verbal thickets. Construction, Design, Form, Rhythm, Expression . . . are more often than not mere *vacua* in discourse, for which a theory of criticism should provide explainable substitutes.

While current attitudes to language persist, this difficulty of the linguistic phantom must still continue. It has to be recognised that all our natural turns of speech are misleading, especially those we use in discussing works of art. We become so accustomed to them that even when we are aware that they are ellipses, it is easy to forget the fact. And it has been extremely difficult in many cases to discover that any ellipsis is present. We are accustomed to say that a picture is beautiful, instead of saying that it causes an experience in us which is valuable in certain ways.[1] The discovery that the remark, "This is beautiful", must be turned round and expanded in this way before it is anything but a mere noise signalling the fact that we approve of the picture, was a great and difficult achievement. Even to-day, such is the insidious power of grammatical forms, the belief that there is such a quality or attribute, namely Beauty, which attaches to the things which we rightly call beautiful,

[1] We can diagrammatically represent the delusion as follows. What actually occurs is that A, a work of art, causes E an effect *in us*, which has the character b; A *causes* E^b. We *speak* as though we perceived that A has the quality B (Beauty); we are perceiving A^B; and if we are not careful we think so too. No one of our recent revolutions in thought is more important than this progressive rediscovery of what we are talking about. It is being inevitably followed by wide changes in our attitudes to the world and to fellow-creatures. One current in this change is towards tolerance, another towards scepticism, a third towards far more secure founding of our motives of action. The startling philosophical changes in the general outlook sometimes predicted for Relativity (or for popular ideas about it when once they become widespread) appear likely, if they occur at all, to be engulfed by these more unobtrusive but more domestic changes

is probably inevitable for all reflective persons at a certain stage of their mental development.

Even among those who have escaped from this delusion and are well aware that we continually talk as though things possess qualities, when what we ought to say is that they cause effects in us of one kind or another, the fallacy of 'projecting' the effect and making it a quality of its cause tends to recur. When it does so it gives a peculiar obliquity to thought and although few competent persons are nowadays so deluded as actually to hold the mystical view that there is a quality Beauty which inheres or attaches to external objects, yet throughout all the discussion of works of art the drag exercised by language towards this view can be felt. It perceptibly increases the difficulty of innumerable problems and we shall have constantly to allow for it. Such terms as 'construction', 'form', 'balance', 'composition', 'design', 'unity', 'expression', for all the arts; as 'depth', 'movement', 'texture', 'solidity', in the criticism of painting; as 'rhythm', 'stress', 'plot', 'character', in literary criticism; as 'harmony', 'atmosphere', 'development', in music, are instances. All these terms are currently used as though they stood for qualities inherent in things outside the mind, as a painting, in the sense of an assemblage of pigments, is undoubtedly outside the mind. Even the difficulty of discovering, in the case of poetry, what thing other than print and paper is there for these alleged qualities to belong to, has not checked the tendency.

But indeed language has succeeded until recently in hiding from us almost all the things we talk about. Whether we are discussing music, poetry, painting, sculpture or architecture, we are forced to speak as though certain physical objects—vibrations of strings and of columns of air, marks printed on paper, canvasses and pigments, masses of marble,

fabrics of freestone, are what we are talking about. And yet the remarks we make as critics do not apply to such objects but to states of mind, to experiences.

A certain strangeness about this view is often felt but diminishes with reflection. If anyone says that 'The May Queen' is sentimental, it is not difficult to agree that he is referring to a state of mind. But if he declares that the masses in a Giotto exactly balance one another, this is less apparent, and, if he goes on to discuss time in music, form in visual art, plot in drama, the fact that he is all the while talking about mental happenings becomes concealed. The verbal apparatus comes between us and the things with which we are really dealing. Words which are useful, indeed invaluable, as handy stop-gaps and makeshifts in conversation, but which need elaborate expansions before they can be used with precision, are treated as simply as people's proper names. So it becomes natural to seek for the things these words appear to stand for, and thus arise innumerable subtle investigations, doomed *ab initio* as regards their main intent to failure.

We must be prepared then to translate, into phrases pedantic and uncouth, all the too simple utterances which the conversational decencies exact. We shall find later, in their peculiar emotive power, the main reason why, in spite of all manner of confusions and inconveniences, these current ways of speaking are retained. For emotive purposes they are indispensable, but for clarity, for the examination of what is actually happening, translations are equally a necessity.

Most critical remarks state in an abbreviated form that an object causes certain experiences, and as a rule the form of the statement is such as to

suggest that the object has been said to possess certain qualities. But often the critic goes further and affirms that the effect in his mind is due to special particular features of the object. In this case he is pointing out something about the object in addition to its effect upon him, and this fuller kind of criticism is what we desire. Before his insight can greatly benefit, however, a very clear demarcation between the object, with its features, and his experience, which is the effect of contemplating it, is necessary. The bulk of critical literature is unfortunately made up of examples of their confusion.

It will be convenient at this point to introduce two definitions. In a full critical statement which states not only that an experience is valuable in certain ways, but also that it is caused by certain features in a contemplated object, the part which describes the value of the experience we shall call the *critical* part. That which describes the object we shall call the *technical* part. Thus to say that we feel differently towards wooden crosses and stone crosses is a technical remark. And to say that metre is more suited to the tender passion than is prose would be, as it stands, a technical remark, but here it is evident that a critical part might easily be also present. All remarks as to the ways and means by which experiences arise or are brought about are technical, but critical remarks are about the values of experiences and the reasons for regarding them as valuable, or not valuable. We shall endeavour in what follows to show that critical remarks are merely a branch of psychological remarks, and that no special ethical or metaphysical ideas need be introduced to explain value.

The distinction between technical and critical remarks is of real importance. Confusion here is responsible for some most curious passages in the histories of the arts. A certain technique in certain

cases produces admirable results; the obvious features of this technique come to be regarded at first as sure signs of excellence, and later as the excellence itself. For a while nothing, however admirable, which does not show these superficial marks, gets fair consideration. Thomas Rymer's denigration of Shakespeare, Dr Johnson's view of Milton's pauses, the aftermath of the triumph of Pope, archaistic sculpture, the Greek poses in the compositions of David, the imitations of Cézanne, are famous instances; they could be multiplied indefinitely. The converse case is equally common. An obvious technical blemish in a special case is recognised. It may be too many S's in a particular line, or the irregularity and rimelessness of a 'Pindaric' Ode; henceforth any line superficially similar,

The lustre of the long co-volvulusses,

any unrhymed lyric, is regarded as defective.

This trick of judging the whole by the detail. instead of the other way about, of mistaking the means for the end, the technique for the value, is in fact much the most successful of the snares which waylay the critic. Only the teacher knows (and sometimes he is guilty himself) how great is the number of readers who think, for example, that a defective rime—bough's house, bush thrush, blood good—is sufficient ground for condemning a poem in the neglect of all other considerations. Such sticklers, like those with a scansion obsession (due as a rule to Exercises in Latin Verse), have little understanding of poetry. We pay attention to externals when we do not know what else to do with a poem.

CHAPTER IV

Communication and the Artist

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.—*The Defence of Poetry.*

The two pillars upon which a theory of criticism must rest are an account of value and an account of communication. We do not sufficiently realise how great a part of our experience takes the form it does, because we are social beings and accustomed to communication from infancy. That we acquire many of our ways of thinking and feeling from parents and others is, of course, a commonplace. But the effects of communication go much deeper than this. The very structure of our minds is largely determined by the fact that man has been engaged in communicating for so many hundreds of thousands of years, throughout the course of his human development and beyond even that. A large part of the distinctive features of the mind are due to its being an instrument for communication. An experience has to be formed, no doubt, before it is communicated, but it takes the form it does largely because it may have to be communicated. The emphasis which natural selection has put upon communicative ability is overwhelming.

There are very many problems of psychology, from those with which some of the exponents of *Gestalt theorie* are grappling to those by which psycho-analysts are bewildered, for which this

neglected, this almost overlooked aspect of the mind may provide a key, but it is pre-eminently in regard to the arts that it is of service. For the arts are the supreme form of the communicative activity. As we shall see, most of the difficult and obscure points about the structures of the arts, for example the priority of formal elements to content,[1] or the impersonality and detachment so much stressed by æstheticians, become easily intelligible as soon as we consider them from this angle. But a possible misunderstanding must be guarded against. Although it is as a communicator that it is most profitable to consider the artist, it is by no means true that he commonly looks upon himself in this light. In the course of his work he is not as a rule deliberately and consciously engaged in a communicative endeavour. When asked, he is more likely than not to reply that communication is an irrelevant or at best a minor issue, and that what he is making is something which is beautiful in itself, or satisfying to him personally, or something expressive, in a more or less vague sense, of his emotions, or of himself, something personal and individual. That other people are going to study it, and to receive experiences from it may seem to him a merely accidental, inessential circumstance. More modestly still, he may say that when he works he is merely amusing himself.

That the artist is not as a rule consciously concerned with communication, but with getting the work, the poem or play or statue or painting or whatever it is, 'right', apparently regardless of its communicative efficacy, is easily explained. To make the work 'embody', accord with, and represent the precise experience upon which its value depends is his major preoccupation, in difficult cases an overmastering preoccupation, and

[1] See Chapter XXIV.

the dissipation of attention which would be involved if he considered the communicative side as a separate issue would be fatal in most serious work. He cannot stop to consider how the public or even how especially well qualified sections of the public may like it or respond to it. He is wise, therefore, to keep all such considerations out of mind altogether. Those artists and poets who can be suspected of close separate attention to the communicative aspect tend (there are exceptions to this, of which Shakespeare might be one) to fall into a subordinate rank.

But this conscious neglect of communication does not in the least diminish the importance of the communicative aspect. It would only do so if we were prepared to admit that only our conscious activities matter. The very process of getting the work 'right' has itself, so far as the artist is normal,[1] immense communicative consequences. Apart from certain special cases, to be discussed later, it will, when 'right', have much greater communicative power than it would have had if 'wrong'. The degree to which it accords with the relevant experience of the artist is a measure of the degree to which it will arouse similar experiences in others.

But more narrowly the reluctance of the artist to consider communication as one of his main aims, and his denial that he is at all influenced in his work by a desire to affect other people, is no evidence that communication is not actually his principal object. On a simple view of psychology, which overlooked unconscious motives, it would be, but not on any view of human behaviour which is in the least adequate. When we find the artist constantly struggling towards impersonality, towards a structure for his work which excludes his private,

[1] This point will be discussed in Chapter XXIV.

eccentric, momentary idiosyncrasies, and using always as its basis those elements which are most uniform in their effects upon impulses; when we find private works of art, works which satisfy the artist,[1] but are incomprehensible to everybody else, so rare, and the publicity of the work so constantly and so intimately bound up with its appeal to the artist himself, it is difficult to believe that efficacy for communication is not a main part of the 'rightness'[2] which the artist may suppose to be something quite different.

How far desire actually to communicate, as distinguished from desire to produce something with communicative efficacy (however disguised), is an 'unconscious motive' in the artist is a question to which we need not hazard an answer. Doubtless individual artists vary enormously. To some the lure of 'immortality' of enduring fame, of a permanent place in the influences which govern the human mind, appears to be very strong. To others it is often negligible. The degree to which such notions are avowed certainly varies with current social and intellectual fashions. At present the appeal to posterity, the 'nurslings of immortality' attitude to works of art appears to be much out of favour. "How do we know what posterity will be like? They may be awful people!" a contemporary is likely to remark, thus confusing the issue. For the appeal is not to posterity merely as living at a certain date, but as especially qualified to judge, a qualification most posterities have lacked.

What concerns criticism is not the avowed or unavowed motives of the artist, however interesting

[1] Again the normality of the artist has to be considered.

[2] As will be seen, I am not going to identify 'beauty' with 'communicative efficacy'. This is a trap which it is easy to fall into. A number of the exoteric followers of Croce may be found in it, though not Croce himself.

these may be to psychology, but the fact that his procedure does, in the majority of instances, make the communicative efficacy of his work correspond with his own satisfaction and sense of its rightness. This may be due merely to his normality, or it may be due to unavowed motives. The first suggestion is the more plausible. In any case it is certain that no mere careful study of communicative possibilities, together with any desire to communicate, however intense, is ever sufficient without close natural correspondence between the poet's impulses and possible impulses in his reader. All supremely successful communication involves this correspondence, and no planning can take its place. Nor is the deliberate conscious attempt directed to communication so successful as the unconscious indirect method.

Thus the artist is entirely justified in his apparent neglect of the main purpose of his work. And when in what follows he is alluded to without qualification as being primarily concerned with communication, the reservations here made should be recalled.

Since the poet's unconscious motives have been alluded to, it may be well at this point to make a few additional remarks. Whatever psycho-analysts may aver, the mental processes of the poet are not a very profitable field for investigation. They offer far too happy a hunting-ground for uncontrollable conjecture. Much that goes to produce a poem is, of course, unconscious. Very likely the unconscious processes are more important than the conscious, but even if we knew far more than we do about how the mind works, the attempt to display the inner working of the artist's mind by the evidence of his work alone must be subject to the gravest dangers. And to judge by the published

work of Freud upon Leonardo da Vinci or of Jung upon Goethe (e.g. *The Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 305), psycho-analysts tend to be peculiarly inept as critics.

The difficulty is that nearly all speculations as to what went on in the artist's mind are unverifiable, even more unverifiable than the similar speculations as to the dreamer's mind. The most plausible explanations are apt to depend upon features whose actual causation is otherwise. I do not know whether anyone but Mr Graves has attempted to analyse *Kubla Khan*, a poem which by its mode of composition and by its subject suggests itself as well fitted for analysis. The reader acquainted with current methods of analysis can imagine the results of a thoroughgoing Freudian onslaught.

If he will then open *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, at line 223, and read onwards for sixty lines, he will encounter the actual sources of not a few of the images and phrases of the poem. In spite of—

> Southward through *Eden* went a River large,
> Nor changed his course, but through the shaggie hill
> Pass'd underneath ingulft . . .

in spite of—

> Rose a fresh Fountain, and with many a rill
> Waterd the Garden ; thence united fell
> Down the steep glade, and met the neather Flood . .

in spite of—

> Rowling on Orient Pearl and sands of Gold
> With mazie error under pendant shades
> Ran Nectar . . .

in spite of—

> Meanwhile murmuring waters fall
> Down the slope hills, disperst . . .

his doubts may still linger until he reaches

> Nor where *Abassin* Kings thir issue Guard,
> Mount Amara.

and one of the most cryptic points in Coleridge's poem, the Abyssinian maid, singing of Mount Abora, finds its simple explanation. The closing line of the poem perhaps hardly needs this kind of derivation.

From one source or another almost all the matter of *Kubla Khan* came to Coleridge in a similar fashion. I do not know whether this particular indebtedness has been remarked before, but *Purchas his Pilgrimage*, Bartram's *Travels in North and South Carolina*, and Maurice's *History of Hindostan* are well-known sources, some of them indicated by Coleridge himself.

This very representative instance of the unconscious working of a poet's mind may serve as a not inapposite warning against one kind at least of possible applications of psychology in criticism..

The extent to which the arts and their place in the whole scheme of human affairs have been misunderstood, by Critics, Moralists, Educators, Æstheticians . . . is somewhat difficult to explain. Often those who most misunderstood have been perfect in their taste and ability to respond, Ruskin for example. Those who both knew what to do with a work of art and also understood what they were doing, have been for the most part artists and little inclined for, or capable of, the rather special task of explaining. It may have seemed to them too obvious to need explanation. Those who have tried have as a rule been foiled by language. For the difficulty which has always prevented the arts from being explained as well as 'enjoyed' (to use an inadequate word in default of an adequate) is language.

> "Happy who can
> Appease this virtuous enemy of man!"

It was perhaps never so necessary as now that we should know why the arts are important and avoid inadequate answers. It will probably become increasingly more important in the future. Remarks such as these, it is true, are often uttered by enthusiastic persons, and are apt to be greeted with the same smile as the assertion that the future of England is bound up with Hunting. Yet their full substantiation will be found to involve issues which are nowhere lightly regarded.

The arts are our storehouse of recorded values. They spring from and perpetuate hours in the lives of exceptional people, when their control and command of experience is at its highest, hours when the varying possibilities of existence are most clearly seen and the different activities which may arise are most exquisitely reconciled, hours when habitual narrowness of interests or confused bewilderment are replaced by an intricately wrought composure. Both in the genesis of a work of art, in the creative moment, and in its aspect as a vehicle of communication, reasons can be found for giving to the arts a very important place in the theory of Value. They record the most important judgments we possess as to the values of experience. They form a body of evidence which, for lack of a serviceable psychology by which to interpret it, and through the desiccating influence of abstract Ethics, has been left almost untouched by professed students of value. An odd omission, for without the assistance of the arts we could compare very few of our experiences, and without such comparison we could hardly hope to agree as to which are to be preferred. Very simple experiences—a cold bath in an enamelled tin, or running for a train—may to some extent be compared without elaborate vehicles; and friends exceptionally well acquainted with one another may manage some rough com-

parisons in ordinary conversation. But subtle or recondite experiences are for most men incommunicable and indescribable, though social conventions or terror of the loneliness of the human situation may make us pretend the contrary. In the arts we find the record in the only form in which these things can be recorded of the experiences which have seemed worth having to the most sensitive and discriminating persons. Through the obscure perception of this fact the poet has been regarded as a seer and the artist as a priest, suffering from usurpations. The arts, if rightly approached, supply the best data available for deciding what experiences are more valuable than others. The qualifying clause is all-important however. Happily there is no lack of glaring examples to remind us of the difficulty of approaching them rightly.

CHAPTER V

The Critics' Concern with Value

What hinders? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed? Are you that liar?
And cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?
Gerard Hopkins.

Between the general inquiry into the nature of the good and the appreciation of particular works of art, there may seem to be a wide gap, and the discussion upon which we are about to embark may appear a roundabout way of approaching our subject. Morals have often been treated, especially in recent times, as a side-issue for criticism, from which the special concern of the critic must be carefully separated. His business, so it has been said, is with the work of art in itself, not with any consequences which lie outside it. These may be left, it has been supposed, to others for attention, to the clergy perhaps or to the police.

That these authorities are sadly incompetent is a minor disadvantage. Their blunderings are as a rule so ridiculous that the effects are brief. They often serve a useful purpose in calling attention to work which might be overlooked. What is more serious is that these indiscretions, vulgarities and absurdities encourage the view that morals have little or nothing to do with the arts, and the even more unfortunate opinion that the arts have no connection with morality. The ineptitudes of censors, their choice of censorable objects, ignoble

blasphemy, such as that which declared *Esther Waters* an impure book, displays of such intelligence as considered *Madame Bovary* an apology for adulterous wrong, innumerable comic, stupefying, enraging interferences fully explain this attitude, but they do not justify it.

The common avoidance of all discussion of the wider social and moral aspects of the arts by people of steady judgment and strong heads is a misfortune, for it leaves the field free for folly, and cramps the scope of good critics unduly. So loath have they been to be thought at large with the wild asses that they have virtually shut themselves up in a paddock. If the competent are to refrain because of the antics of the unqualified, an evil and a loss which are neither temporary nor trivial increase continually. It is as though medical men were all to retire because of the impudence of quacks. For the critic is as closely occupied with the health of the mind as the doctor with the health of the body. In a different way, it is true, and with a wider and subtler definition of health, by which the healthiest mind is that capable of securing the greatest amount of value.

The critic cannot possibly avoid using some ideas about value. His whole occupation is an application and exercise of his ideas on the subject, and an avoidance of moral preoccupations on his part can only be either an abdication or a rejection under the title of 'morality' of what he considers to be mistaken or dishonest ideas and methods. The term has a dubious odour, it has been handled by many objectionable as well as admirable people, and we may agree to avoid it. But the errors exemplified by censorship exploits are too common, and misconceptions as to the nature of value too easy to fall into and too widespread, for useful criticism to remain without a general theory and an explicit set of principles.

What is needed is a defensible position for those who believe that the arts are of value. Only a general theory of value which will show the place and function of the arts in the whole system of values will provide such a stronghold. At the same time we need weapons with which to repel and overthrow misconceptions. With the increase of population the problem presented by the gulf between what is preferred by the majority and what is accepted as excellent by the most qualified opinion has become infinitely more serious and appears likely to become threatening in the near future. For many reasons standards are much more in need of defence than they used to be. It is perhaps premature to envisage a collapse of values, a transvaluation by which popular taste replaces trained discrimination. Yet commercialism has done stranger things: we have not yet fathomed the more sinister potentialities of the cinema and the loud-speaker, and there is some evidence, uncertain and slight no doubt, that such things as 'best-sellers' (compare *Tarzan* with *She*), magazine verses, mantelpiece pottery, Academy pictures, Music Hall songs, County Council buildings, War Memorials . . . are decreasing in merit. Notable exceptions, in which the multitude are better advised than the experts, of course occur sometimes, but not often.

To bridge the gulf, to bring the level of popular appreciation nearer to the consensus of best qualified opinion, and to defend this opinion against damaging attacks (Tolstoy's is a typical example), a much clearer account than has yet been produced, of why this opinion is right, is essential. These attacks are dangerous, because they appeal to a natural instinct, hatred of 'superior persons'. The expert in matters of taste is in an awkward position when he differs from the majority. He is forced to say

in effect, "I am better than you. My taste is more refined, my nature more cultured, you will do well to become more like me than you are." It is not his fault that he has to be so arrogant. He may, and usually does, disguise the fact as far as possible, but his claim to be heard as an expert depends upon the truth of these assumptions. He ought then to be ready with reasons of a clear and convincing kind as to why his preferences are worth attention, and until these reasons are forthcoming, the accusations that he is a charlatan and a prig are embarrassing. He may indeed point to years of preoccupation with his subject, he may remark like the wiseacre Longinus, sixteen hundred years ago, "The judgment of literature is the final outcome of much endeavour," but with him are many Professors to prove that years of endeavour may lead to nothing very remarkable in the end.

To habilitate the critic, to defend accepted standards against Tolstoyan attacks, to narrow the interval between these standards and popular taste, to protect the arts against the crude moralities of Puritans and perverts, a general theory of value, which will not leave the statement "This is good, that bad," either vague or arbitrary, must be provided. There is no alternative open. Nor is it such an excursus from the inquiry into the nature of the arts as may be supposed. For if a well-grounded theory of value is a necessity for criticism, it is no less true that an understanding of what happens in the arts is needed for the theory. The two problems "What is good?" and "What are the arts?" reflect light upon one another. Neither in fact can be fully answered without the other. To the unravelling of the first we may now proceed.

CHAPTER XVI

The Analysis of a Poem

Toutes choses sont dites déjà, mais comme personne n'écoute
il faut toujours recommencer.—André Gide.

The qualifications of a good critic are three. He must be an adept at experiencing, without eccentricities, the state of mind relevant to the work of art he is judging. Secondly, he must be able to distinguish experiences from one another as regards their less superficial features. Thirdly, he must be a sound judge of values.

Upon all these matters psychology, even in its present conjectural state, has a direct bearing. The critic is, throughout, judging of experiences, of states of mind; but too often he is needlessly ignorant of the general psychological form of the experiences with which he is concerned. He has no clear ideas as to the elements present or as to their relative importance. Thus, an outline or schema of the mental events which make up the experience of 'looking at' a picture or 'reading' a poem, can be of great assistance. At the very least an understanding of the probable structures of these experiences can remove certain misconceptions which tend to make the opinions of individuals of less service to other individuals than need be.

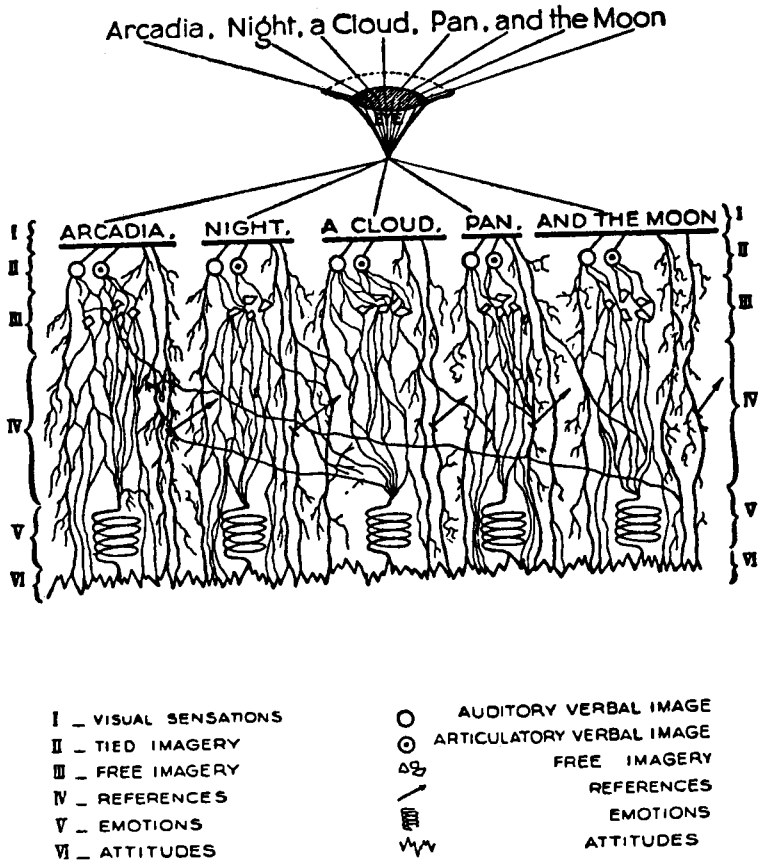
Two instances will show this. There are certain broad features in which all agree a poem of Swinburne is unlike a poem of Hardy. The use of words by the two poets is different. Their methods are dissimilar, and the proper approach for a reader differs correspondingly. An attempt to read them

in the same way is unfair to one of the poets, or to both, and leads inevitably to defects in criticism which a little reflection would remove. It is absurd to read Pope as though he were Shelley, but the essential differences cannot be clearly marked out unless such an outline of the general form of a poetic experience, as is here attempted, has been provided. The psychological means employed by these poets are demonstrably different. Whether the effects are also dissimilar is a further question for which the same kind of analysis is equally required.

This separation inside the poetic experience of certain parts which are means from certain other parts which are the ends upon which the poetic value of the experience depends, leads up to our other instance. It is unquestionable that the actual experiences, which even good critics undergo when reading, as we say, *the same poem*, differ very widely. In spite of certain conventions, which endeavour to conceal these inevitable discrepancies for social purposes, there can be no doubt that the experiences of readers in connection with particular poems are rarely similar. This is unavoidable. Some differences are, however, much more important than others. Provided the ends, in which the value of the poem lies, are attained, differences in the means need not prevent critics from agreement or from mutual service. Those discrepancies alone are fatal which affect the fundamental features of experiences, the features upon which their *value* depends. But enough is now known of the ways in which minds work for superficial and fundamental parts of experiences to be distinguished. One of the greatest living critics praises the line:

The fringed curtain of thine eyes advance,

for the 'ravishing beauty' of the visual images excited. This common mistake of exaggerating personal



accidents in the means by which a poem attains its end into the chief value of the poem is due to excessive trust in the commonplaces[1] of psychology.

In the analysis of the experience of reading a poem, a diagram, or hieroglyph, is convenient, provided that its limitations are clearly recognised. The spatial relations of the parts of the diagram, for instance, are not intended to stand for spatial relations between parts of what is represented; it is not a picture of the nervous system. Nor are temporal relations intended. Spatial metaphors, whether drawn as diagrams or merely imagined, are dangers only to the unwary. The essential service which pictures can give in abstract matters, namely, the simultaneous and compact representation of states of affairs which otherwise tend to remain indistinct and confused, is worth the slight risk of misunderstanding which they entail.

We may begin then with a diagrammatic representation of the events which take place when we read a poem. Other literary experiences will only differ from this in their greater simplicity.

The eye is depicted as reading a succession of printed words. As a result there follows a stream of reaction in which six distinct kinds of events may be distinguished.

I The visual sensations of the printed words.

II Images very closely associated with these sensations.

III Images relatively free.

IV References to, or 'thinkings of,' various things.

[1] The description of images belongs to the first steps in psychology, and it is often possible to judge the rank and standing of a psychologist by the degree of importance which he attaches to their peculiarities. On theoretical grounds it seems probable that they are luxury products (cf. *The Meaning of Meaning*, pp. 148-151) peculiarly connected with the reproduction of emotion. For a discussion of some experimental investigations into their utility, Spearman, *The Nature of Intelligence*, Ch. XII, may be consulted.

V Emotions.
VI Affective-volitional attitudes.

Each of these kinds of occurrences requires some brief description and explanation.

Upon the visual sensations of the printed words all the rest depends (in the case of a reader not previously acquainted with the poem); but with most readers they have in themselves no great importance. The individual shapes of the letters, their size and spacing, have only a minor effect upon the whole reaction. No doubt readers differ greatly in this respect; with some, familiarity plays a great part. They find it unpleasant and disturbing to read a poem in any but the edition in which they first became acquainted with it. But the majority of readers are less exigent. Provided that the print is clear and legible, and allows the habitual eye-movements of reading to be easily performed, the full response arises equally well from widely differing sensations. Those for whom this is true have, in the present state of economic organisation, a decided advantage over the more fastidious. This does not show that good printing is a negligible consideration; and the primary place of calligraphy in the Chinese arts is an indication to the contrary. It shows merely that printing belongs to another branch of the arts. In the poetic experience words take effect through their associated images, and through what we are, as a rule, content to call their meaning. What meaning is and how it enters into the experience we shall consider.

Tied Images.—Visual sensations of words do not commonly occur by themselves. They have certain regular companions so closely tied to them as to be only with difficulty disconnected. The chief of these are the auditory image—the sound of the words in the mind's ear—and the image of

articulation—the feel in the lips, mouth, and throat, of what the words would be like to speak.

Auditory images of words are among the most obvious of mental happenings. Any line of verse or prose slowly read, will, for most people, sound mutely in the imagination somewhat as it would if read aloud. But the degree of correspondence between the image-sounds, and the actual sounds that the reader would produce, varies enormously. Many people are able to imagine word-sounds with greater delicacy and discrimination than they can utter them. But the reverse case is also found. What importance then is to be attached to clear, rich and delicate sound imagery in silent reading? How far must people who differ in their capacity to produce such images differ in their total reactions to poems? And what are the advantages of reading aloud? Here we reach one of the practical problems of criticism for which this analysis is required. A discussion is best postponed until the whole analysis has been given. The principal confusion which prevents a clear understanding of the point at issue does, however, concern images and may be dealt with here. It is of great importance in connection with the topic of the following section.

The sensory qualities of images, their vivacity, clearness, fullness of detail and so on, do not bear any constant relation to their effects. Images differing in these respects may have closely similar consequences. Too much importance has always been attached to the sensory qualities of images. What gives an image efficacy is less its vividness as an image than its character as a mental event peculiarly connected with sensation. It is, in a way which no one yet knows how to explain, a relict of sensation and our intellectual and emotional response to it depends far more upon its

being, through this fact, a representative of a sensation, than upon its sensory resemblance to one. An image may lose almost all its sensory nature to the point of becoming scarcely an image at all, a mere skeleton, and yet represent a sensation quite as adequately as if it were flaring with hallucinatory vividity. In other words, what matters is not the sensory *resemblance* of an image to the sensation which is its prototype, but some other relation, at present hidden from us in the jungles of neurology. (Cf. Chapter XIV.)

Care then should be taken to avoid the natural tendency to suppose that the more clear and vivid an image the greater will be its efficacy. There are trustworthy people who, according to their accounts, never experience any imagery at all. If certain views commonly expressed about the arts are true, by which vivid imagery is an all-important part of the experience, then these people are incapable of art experiences, a conclusion which is contrary to the facts. The views in question are overlooking the fact that *something* takes the place of vivid images in these people, and that, provided the image-substitute is efficacious, their lack of mimetic imagery is of no consequence. The efficacy required must, of course, include control over emotional as well as intellectual reactions. Needless perhaps to add that with persons of the image-producing types an increase in delicacy and vivacity in their imagery will probably be accompanied by increased subtlety in effects. Thus it is not surprising that certain great poets and critics have been remarkable for the vigour of their imagery, and dependent upon it. No one would deny the usefulness of imagery to some people; the mistake is to suppose that it is indispensable to all.

Articulatory imagery is less noticeable; yet the

quality of silent speech is perhaps even more dependent upon these images than upon sound-images. Collocations of syllables which are awkward or unpleasant to utter are rarely delightful to the ear. As a rule the two sets of images are so intimately connected that it is difficult to decide which is the offender. In 'Heaven, which man's generation draws,' the sound doubtless is as harsh as the movements required are cramping to the lips.

The extent to which interference with one set of images will change the other may be well seen by a simple experiment. Most people, if they attempt a silent recitation while opening the mouth to its fullest stretch or holding the tongue firmly between the teeth, will notice curious transformations in the auditory images. How the experiment should be interpreted is uncertain, but it is of use in making the presence of both kinds of verbal imagery evident to those who may have overlooked them hitherto. Images of articulation should not, however, be confused with those minimal actual movements which for some people (for all, as behaviourists maintain) accompany the silent rehearsing of words.

These two forms of tied imagery might also be called verbal images, and supply the elements of what is called the 'formal structure' of poetry. They differ from those to which we now proceed in being images of words, not of things words stand for, and in their very close connection with the visual sensations of printed words.

Free Imagery. — Free images, or rather one form of these, visual images, pictures in the mind's eye, occupy a prominent place in the literature of criticism, to the neglect somewhat of other forms of imagery, since, as was remarked in a preceding chapter, for every possible kind

of sensation there is a corresponding possible image.

The assumption, natural before investigation, that all attentive and sensitive readers will experience the same images, vitiates most of the historical discussions from that of Longinus to that of Lessing. Even in the present day, when there is no excuse for such ignorance, the mistake still thrives, and an altogether too crude, too hasty, and too superficial form of criticism is allowed to pass unchallenged. It cannot be too clearly recognised that individuals differ not only in the type of imagery which they employ, but still more in the particular images which they produce. In their whole reactions to a poem, or to a single line of it, their free images are the point at which two readings are most likely to differ, and the fact that they differ may very well be quite immaterial. Fifty different readers will experience not one common picture but fifty different pictures. If the value of the poem derived from the value *qua* picture of the visual image excited then criticism might well despair. Those who would stress this part of the poetic reaction can have but crude views on pictures.

But if the value of the visual image in the experience is not pictorial, if the image is not to be judged as a picture, how is it to be judged? It is improbable that the many critics, some of them peculiarly well qualified in the visual arts, who have insisted upon the importance of imagery, have been entirely wasting their time. It ought to be possible to give an account of the place of free imagery in the whole poetic experience which will explain this insistence. What is required will be found if we turn our attention from the sensory qualities of the imagery to the more fundamental qualities upon which its efficacy in modifying the

rest of the experience depends. It has been urged above that images which are different in their sensory qualities may have the same effects. If this were not the case the absence of glaring differences between people of different image-types would be astonishing. But since images may represent sensations without resembling them, and represent them in the sense of replacing them, as far as effects in directing thought and arousing emotion go, differences in their mimetic capacity become of minor importance. As we have seen, it is natural for those whose imagery is vivid, to suppose that vivacity and clearness go together with power over thought and feeling. It is the power of an image over these that is as a rule being praised when an intelligent and sensitive critic appears merely to be praising the picture floating before his mind's eye. To judge the image as a picture is judged, would, as we have seen, be absurd; and what is sought in poetry by those painters and others whose interest in the world is primarily visual is not pictures but records of observation, or stimuli of emotion.

Thus, provided the images (or image-substitutes for the imageless) have the due effects, deficiencies in their sensory aspect do not matter. But the proviso is important. In all forms of imagery sensory deficiencies are for many people signs and accompaniments of defective efficacy, and the habit of reading so as to allow the fullest development to imagery in its sensory aspect is likely to encourage the full development of this more essential feature, its efficacy, if the freaks and accidents of the sensory side are not taken too seriously.

Some exceptions to this general recommendation will occur to the reader. Instances in plenty may be found in which a full development of the sensory aspect of images is damaging to their

effects. Meredith is a master of this peculiar kind of imagery:—

> Thus piteously Love closed what he begat
> The union of this ever diverse pair!
> These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
> Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.

The emotional as well as the intellectual effects of the various images here suggested are much impaired if we produce them vividly and distinctly.

Impulses and References.—We have now to consider those more fundamental effects upon which stress has been laid above as the true places of the values of the experience. It will be well at this point to reconsult the diagram. The vertical lines which run capriciously downwards from the visual sensations of the words, through their tied imagery and onward to the bottom of the diagram, are intended to represent, schematically, streams of impulses flowing through in the mind.

They start in the visual sensations, but the depiction of the tied imagery is intended to show how much of their further course is due to it. The placing of the free imagery in the third division is intended to suggest that while some free images may arise from visual words alone, they take their character in a large part as a consequence of the tied imagery. Thus the great importance of the tied imagery, of the formal elements, is emphasised in the diagram.

These impulses are the weft of the experience, the warp being the pre-existing systematic structure of the mind, that organised system of possible impulses. The metaphor is of course inexact, since weft and warp here are not independent. Where these impulses run, and how they develop, depends entirely upon the condition of the mind, and this depends upon the impulses which have previously been active in it. It will be seen then that impulses

—their direction, their strength, how they modify one another—are the essential and fundamental things in any experience. All else, whether intellectual or emotional, arises as a consequence of their activity. The thin trickle of stimulation which comes in through the eye finds an immense hierarchy of systems of tendencies poised in the most delicate stability. It is strong enough and rightly enough directed to disturb some of these without assistance. The literal sense of a word can be grasped on the prompting of the mere sight of it, without hearing it or mentally pronouncing it. But the effects of this stimulation are immensely increased and widened when it is reinforced by fresh stimulation from tied images, and it is through these that most of the emotional effects are produced. As the agitation proceeds new reinforcement comes with every fresh system which is excited. Thus, the paradoxical fact that so trifling an irritation as the sight of marks on paper is able to arouse the whole energies of the mind becomes explicable.

To turn now to references, the only mental happenings which are as closely connected with visual words as their tied images are those mysterious events which are usually called thoughts. Thus the arrow symbol in the hieroglyph should perhaps properly be placed near the visual impression of the word. The mere sight of any familiar word is normally followed by a thought of whatever the word may stand for. This thought is sometimes said to be the 'meaning', the literal or prose 'meaning' of the word. It is wise, however, to avoid the use of 'meaning' as a symbol altogether. The terms 'thought' and 'idea' are less subtle in their ambiguities, and when defined may perhaps be used without confusion.

What is essential in thought is its direction or reference to things. What is this direction or

reference? How does a thought come to be 'of' one thing rather than another? What is the link between a thought and what it is 'of'? The outline of one answer to these questions has been suggested in Chapter XI. A further account must here be attempted. Without a fairly clear, although, of course, incomplete view, it is impossible to avoid confusion and obscurity in discussing such topics as truth in art, the intellect-*versus*-emotion *imbroglio*, the scope of science, the nature of religion and many others with which criticism must deal.

The facts upon which speculations as to the relations between thoughts and the things which they are 'of' have been based, have as a rule been taken from introspection. But the facts which introspection yields are notoriously uncertain, and the special position of the observer may well preclude success. Introspection is competent, in some cases, to discover the relations between events which take place within the mind, but cannot by itself give information as to the relations of these events with the external world, and it is precisely this which we are inquiring into when we ask, What connection is there between a thought and that which it is a thought of? For an answer to this question we must look further.

There is no doubt that causal relations hold between events in the mind and events outside it. Sometimes these relations are fairly simple. The striking of a clock is the cause of our thinking of its striking. In such a case the external thing is linked with the thought 'of' it in a fairly direct fashion, and the view here taken is that to be a thought 'of' the striking is to be merely a thought caused in this fashion by the striking. A thought of the striking is nothing else and nothing more than a thought caused by it.

But most thoughts are 'of' things which are not present and not producing direct effects in the mind. This is so when we read. What is directly affecting the mind is words on paper, but the thoughts aroused are not thoughts 'of' the words, but of other things which the words *stand for*. How, then, can a causal theory of thinking explain the relation between these remote things and the thoughts which are 'of' them? To answer this we must look at the way in which we learn what words stand for. Without a process of learning we should only think of the words.

The process of learning to use words is not difficult to analyse. On a number of occasions the word is heard in connection with objects of a certain kind. Later the word is heard in the absence of any such object. In accordance with one of the few fundamental laws known about mental process, something then happens in the mind which is like what would happen if such an object were actually present and engaging the attention. The word has become a *sign* of an object of that kind. The word which formerly was a part of the cause of a certain effect in the mind is now followed by a similar effect in the absence of the rest of the previous cause, namely, an object of the kind in question. This kind of causation appears to be peculiar to living tissue. The relation now between the thought and what it is 'of' is more indirect, the thought is 'of' something which formerly was part cause, together with the sign, of similar thoughts. It is 'of' the missing part of the sign, or more strictly 'of' anything which would complete the sign as a cause.

Thoughts by this account are general, they are of anything *like* such and such things, except when the object thought of and the thought are connected by direct causal relations, as, for instance, when we

think of a word we are hearing. Only when these direct relations hold can we succeed in thinking simply of 'That'. We have to think instead of 'something of a kind'. By various means, however, we can contrive that there shall only be one thing of the kind, and so the need for particularity in our thoughts is satisfied. The commonest way in which we do this is by thoughts which make the kind spatial and temporal. A thought of 'mosquito' becomes a thought of 'mosquito there now' by combining a thought of 'thing of mosquito kind' with a thought of 'thing of there kind' and a thought of 'thing of now kind'. The awkwardness of these phrases, it may be mentioned, is irrelevant. Combined thoughts of this sort, we may notice, are capable of truth and falsity, whereas a simple thought—of 'whatever is now' for instance—can only be true. Whether a thought is true or false depends simply upon whether there is anything of the kind referred to, and there must be something now. It is by no means certain that there must be anything there always. And most probably no mosquito is where we thought it was then.

The natural generality and vagueness of all reference which is not made specific by the aid of space and time is of great importance for the understanding of the senses in which poetry may be said to be true. (Cf. Chapter XXXV.)

In the reading of poetry the thought due simply to the words, their *sense* it may be called, comes first; but other thoughts are not of less importance. These may be due to the auditory verbal imagery, and we have onomatopœia,[1] but this is rarely independent of the sense. More important are the further thoughts caused by the sense, the network of interpretation and conjecture which arises therefrom, with its opportunities for aberrations and misunderstanding. Poems, however, differ fundamentally in the extent to which such further interpretation is necessary. The mere sense without any further reflection is very often sufficient thought, in Swinburne, for instance, for the full response—

> There glowing ghosts of flowers
> Draw down, draw nigh;
> And wings of swift spent hours
> Take flight and fly;
> She sees by formless gleams
> She hears across cold streams
> Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Little beyond vague thoughts of the things the words stand for is here required. They do not have to be brought into intelligible connection with one another. On the other hand, Hardy would rarely reach his full effect through sound and sense alone—

> 'Who's in the next room?—who?
> I seemed to see
> Somebody in the dawning passing through
> Unknown to me.'
> 'Nay: you saw nought. He passed invisibly'.

Between these and even more extreme cases, every degree of variation in the relative importance of sound, sense, and further interpretation, between form and content in short, can be found. A temptation to which few do not succumb is to suppose that there is some 'proper relation' for these different parts of the experience, so that a poem whose parts are in this relation must thereby be a greater or better poem than another whose parts are differently disposed. This is another instance of the commonest of critical mistakes, the

[1] Two kinds of onomatopœia should be distinguished. In one the sound of the words (actual or imaginal) is like some natural sound (the buzzing of bees, galloping horses, and so forth). In the other it is not like any such sound but such as merely to call up free auditory images of the sounds in question. The second case is by far the more common.

confusion of means with ends, of technique with value. There is no more a 'proper place' for sound or for sense in poetry than there is one and only one 'proper shape' for an animal. A dog is not a defective kind of cat, nor is Swinburne a defective kind of Hardy. But this sort of criticism is extraordinarily prevalent. The objection to Swinburne on the ground of a lack of thought is a popular specimen.

Within certain types, needless to say, some structures are more likely to be successful than others. Given some definite kind of effect as the goal, or some definite structure already being used, a good deal can of course be said as to the most probable means, or as to what may or may not be added. Lyric cannot dispense with tied imagery, it is clear, nor can we neglect the character of this imagery in reading it. A prose composition has to be longer than a lyric to produce an equal definiteness of developed effect. Poems in which there is much turmoil of emotion are likely to be strongly rhythmical and to be in metre, as we shall see when we come to discuss rhythm and metre. Drama can hardly dispense with a great deal of conjecture and further interpretation which in most forms of the novel is replaced by analysis and explanation, and in narrative poetry is commonly omitted altogether; and so on.

But no general prescription that in great poetry there *must* always be this or that,—deep thought, superb sound or vivid imagery—is more than a piece of ignorant dogmatism. Poetry may be almost devoid even of mere sense, let alone thought, or *almost* without sensory (or formal) structure, and yet reach the point than which no poem goes further. The second case, however, is very rare. Almost always, what seems structureless proves to

have still a loose and tenuous (it may be an intermittent) structure. But we can for example shift the words about very often in Walt Whitman without loss, even when he is almost at his best.

It is difficult to represent diagrammatically what takes place in thought in any satisfactory fashion. The impulse coming in from the visual stimulus of the printed word must be imagined as reaching some system in the brain in which effects take place not due merely to this present stimulus, but also to past occasions on which it has been combined with other stimulations. These effects are thoughts; and they in their groupings act as signs for yet other thoughts. The little arrows are intended to symbolise these references to things outside the mind.

Emotions, and Attitudes.

Feeling or emotion is not, we have insisted above, another and a rival mode of apprehending nature. So far as a feeling or an emotion does refer to anything, it refers in the way described, through its origin. Feelings, in fact, are commonly signs, and the differences between those who 'see' things by intuition, or 'feel' them, and those who reason them out, is commonly only a difference between users of signs and users of symbols. Both signs and symbols are means by which our past experience assists our present responses. The advantages of symbols, due to the ease with which they are controlled and communicated, their public nature, as it were, are obvious. Their disadvantages as compared with such relatively private signs as emotions or organic sensations are perhaps less evident. Words, when used symbolically or scientifically, not figuratively and emotively, are only capable of directing thought to a comparatively few features of the more common situations. But feeling is sometimes a more subtle way of referring,

more dangerous also, because more difficult to corroborate and to control, and more liable to confusion. There is no inherent superiority, however, in feeling as opposed to thought, there is merely a difference in applicability; nor is there any opposition or clash between them except for those who are mistaken either in their thinking or in their feeling, or in both. How such mistakes arise will be discussed in Chapter XXXIV.

As regards emotions and attitudes little need be added to what has already been said. Emotions are primarily signs of attitudes and owe their great prominence in the theory of art to this. For it is the attitudes evoked which are the all-important part of any experience. Upon the texture and form of the attitudes involved its value depends. It is not the intensity of the conscious experience, its thrill, its pleasure or its poignancy which gives it value, but the organisation of its impulses for freedom and fullness of life. There are plenty of ecstatic instants which are valueless; the character of consciousness at any moment is no certain sign of the excellence of the impulses from which it arises. It is the most convenient sign that is available, but it is very ambiguous and may be very misleading. A more reliable but less accessible set of signs can be found in the readiness for this or that kind of behaviour in which we find ourselves after the experience. Too great insistence upon the quality of the momentary *consciousness* which the arts occasion has in recent times been a prevalent critical blunder. The Epilogue to Pater's *Renaissance* is the *locus classicus*. The after-effects, the permanent modifications in the structure of the mind, which works of art can produce, have been overlooked. No one is ever quite the same again after any experience; his possibilities have altered in some degree. And among all the agents by

which "the widening of the sphere of human sensibility" may be brought about, the arts are the most powerful, since it is through them that men may most co-operate and in these experiences that the mind most easily and with least interference organises itself.