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# *STUDIES IN AESTHETICS*

By

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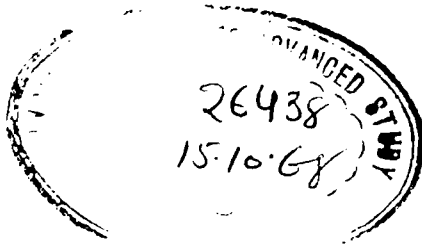


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I offer your own gift.

.....On your tray of offering,  
Then shall be fulfilled in the end  
Life's last value,  
Life's last journey,  
Life's last invitation.....

*31st December, 1964*

ASHABARI CHAUDHURY







Dr. P. J. CHAUDHURY as a Visiting Fellow in the  
Cornell University, U.S.A., 1959-60.

## FOREWORD

What is an aesthetic experience? It poses a question which is extremely difficult to answer. It is not possible to give a clear and simple answer to it as aesthetic experience does not partake of the nature of our workaday experience of life. When we experience a sensation, we acquire some knowledge of the objective world. When we are offended by somebody we feel angry which is an experience of emotions. Aesthetic experience does not appear to be like either of them. Yet in a way it encompasses elements of both. Ordinarily, we associate it with what is called an art object like say, poetry, music, painting, dance, drama etc. These are objects not meant to be cognised merely or to rouse our emotions although it must be conceded that their appreciation involves association with both cognition and emotion.

Let us take a concrete example. What do we do when we read a poem, say composed by Wordsworth or Rabindranath Tagore? At the first instance, we have to read the poem and try to comprehend it. This involves functioning of the cognitive faculty. We find that by a skilful use of fancy and imagination dressed up in choice versified language, the poet has given expression to an emotion deeply felt by him. So this poem is not so much directly interested in communicating to the readers any knowledge of the objective world as to express the emotion felt by the poet. It is not, however, a case where the emotion described in the poem infects the mind of the reader. For example, if the theme of the particular poem being read, is grief or joy, the reader comprehends it, but does not in consequence, himself feel the pangs of grief or the thrills of joy. What happens is something unique. The comprehension of the theme triggers off a kind of experience in the mind of the reader, which is something quite different from the emotion the theme conveys. It is something akin to emotion but more refined. It is a feeling of extreme exhilaration and wellbeing resulting from the detached appreciation of the beauty inherent in the poem. It transcends both feelings of pleasure and pain alike and in fact, it may as well be triggered off by a painful theme as by a pleasant theme.

The Indian aestheticians use the term *ānanda* to signify this and they even go so far as to say that it can claim parity with the *ānanda* felt by the creative principle working in the universe.

It is apparent, therefore, that the aesthetic experience is a very complicated experience. It has many facets which are subtle and, therefore, difficult to comprehend. It will help our understanding of the problem of Aesthetics if we try to make a comprehensive analysis of its constituent elements.

Aesthetic experience evidently involves participation of two parties. On the one side, is the artist who creates art objects by the application of his imagination and skill. On the other side, there is the connoisseur who appreciates it. On his part also a certain amount of sympathy and sensitivity is an essential prerequisite for the right type of appreciation to trigger off the aesthetic experience proper. It is the end product of an understanding co-operation between the two partners. The Indian aesthetician was very conscious of this aspect of aesthetic experience. Bharata in his *Nāṭyasāstra* gives a clear analysis of this by pointing out that what the artist creates is the *bhāva* with a specific dominant emotional content and what the connoisseur cognises is the *rasa* which is the subjective comprehension of this emotion which in its turn gives rise to the aesthetic experience proper.

On the artist's side the creative aspect of art is very much in evidence. He gets an inspiration and tries to translate it into an object of art. Whatever medium he chooses, his imagination plays a major role in his creative effort. In this matter however, he borrows liberally from nature. He does not quite reproduce nature but imitates it. There is thus an element of mimicry involved in art. This aspect has been brought to relief by Western Aesthetics. Again, what he creates with the aid of his imagination and fancy and skill is something which is unique and forms a class by itself. What the artist creates cannot be labelled with a class name, because it cannot be duplicated ; its uniqueness is marked out by everyone of its component parts and their peculiar combination. This aspect of an object of art impressed Rabindranath Tagore deeply. That is why he called fine arts the language of personality.

On the side of the connoisseur, his appreciation is not of a passive kind, but involves an active participation to culminate in the final sense of joy and exhilaration. He should be able to cultivate a spirit of detachment and yet be sympathetic to the artist's efforts. Detachment is called for to create the proper atmosphere for full appreciation. Sympathy is called for to help the artist to enter in his own personality to be able himself to imaginatively experience what the artist wants to convey to him. This is what is technically called empathy. In this matter the person who appreciates has also to play an active role by allowing himself to be deluded to believe what the artist fictitiously creates. The aesthetic experience is thus very much the product of an active co-operative effort between two partners.

The above analysis will make it clear that the aesthetic experience is a highly complicated affair. It has many facets which are at once subtle and elusive. No wonder, therefore, that it has attracted the attention of world's great thinkers who have contributed towards building up a theory of Aesthetics. From Aristotle to Croce in the West, from Bharatamuni to Rabindranath Tagore in India there is a long line of thinkers who have dealt with the different aspect of this complicated experience. Yet it appears that the last word has not yet been said on it. We very much miss a theory which comprehends all its different aspects in a systematised unity.

On this background, it is refreshing to find that Dr. Prabas Jiban Chaudhury carried on extensive studies on this difficult field and with some amount of success. The fruits of his labour have been collected together in this volume in form of essays dealing with different aspects of the aesthetic problem. They will show that these studies are both extensive as well as intensive in character. They cover a wide variety of subjects and also involve studies on the subtler aspects of the aesthetic experience. To his pleasant surprise, the reader will find that he speaks with competence and rare insight. This is partly explained by the fact that his versatile mind had acquired mastery over disciplines which are widely divergent in character. This is also explained by the fact that he was equally at home in both the Western and the Indian school of Aesthetics. He is so sure of his ground that he even ventures to suggest a theory of his own to explain

the aesthetic experience in which he defines art as conscious self-delusion. It is a pity that so much talent and so much promise was nipt in the bud by the tragic and untimely death of this great scholar. How one wishes that he had been alive to-day to write the preface of his own book.

This brings us to a touching aspect of this publication. It was principally due to the efforts of the widow of the author, Shrimati Ashabari Chaudhury, that this book sees the light of the day. She not only collected the materials but also placed them at the disposal of this University for publication with singular devotion. She herself painted the design for the jacket to enrich the quality of the publication. We consider it to be a privilege to be able to publish this notable contribution to knowledge in a difficult subject.

*31st December, 1964*

HIRANMAY BANERJEE

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## SCIENCE, ART AND RELIGION

THE TENDENCY of modern civilization that started with Renaissance in Europe and with Europeanism in Asia, is to substitute science and art for religion, in the name of humanity and culture. So to-day if anyone anywhere spends his spare time in the thought of God and his salvation in the hope of self-improvement, he is branded old-fashioned and not sufficiently human and cultured. In medieval Europe and in Asia only a century ago cultivation of religion was held as a mark of culture in a person. The scientist was then considered to be a sort of clever guy, a kin of the magician, who might be useful for many purposes, but in no way to be venerated as a man of culture and ranked with a priest or a man of piety. The scientist, in order to gain respect for his profession, had to pretend, particularly in India, that his knowledge of the empirical world was derived directly from God Himself, its author, through meditation, and so far as some of them sincerely believed in this intuitive method of science and deceived themselves, they offered much nonsense in the name of science. Medieval science, such as physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology and medicine, was confused in its very methodology, it was partly empirical and mostly speculative. This was because the notion of culture or sense of value that ruled this age treated all mental preoccupations with worldly matters as unworthy.

Excellence and nobility of intellect rested for the medieval man in the pursuit of religion that answers man's ultimate and most vital questions—those concerning the origin and nature of his soul, his much resented suffering, and death and salvation. In other words, the medieval man was essentially metaphysical while his modern successor is naturalistic. This is again seen in the manner the arts were held by him. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the architect and the dancer were all admired as persons skilled in their crafts, but not respected as cultured beings of proved intellectual excellence. They were just clever, not nobly wise. Then they, particularly in India, to secure prestige for their occupation, had to fabricate all sorts of myths regarding the divine origin and the purificatory function of art which was said to be inspired and not invented. The arts were recommended by the artists as a kind of ritual and were largely religious in burden ; yet we find in almost all the established religions of the world a deep-seated suspicion against them. This is because essentially art is concerned with the surface of things, the appearances, particularly with human life and passions which the religious man considers fit to be suppressed or passed by rather than dwelt upon. The theory of catharsis in the sense of religious purification of the passions through undergoing them in artistic contemplation, such as in a tragedy, is only a clever apology for art in the eyes of a priest who does not admit any pseudo-religion. However, the arts, like science, steadily grew in spite of the opposition

offered by religion. And with the birth of modern spirit that overthrew the control of a religious order—which it considered to be a superstitious encrustation upon life that stopped life's clear flow and suffocated it—and recognised the positive and sensible aspects of the world and man's life, these disciplines won the highest place in human culture. So much so that culture came to be equated with the cultivation of the sciences and the arts while religion was speedily pushed into the background. The modern man of culture is supposed to be cured of religion and treat it as an anthropological phenomenon that appears in mankind at a certain stage of its evolution and is naturally superseded by science and the arts. Science satisfies man's intellectual curiosity about the world and gives him enough aids to live here and enjoy life, and so removes the cause for superstitious beliefs, hopes and fears. On the other hand, the arts provide him with a broad field to exercise the imaginative and emotive sides of his nature, thus occupying explicitly as a shadow-world the place of religious myths which were confused with objective truth.

Our contention here will be that this tendency in modern civilization, wherever found, is not a sign of health, and that though the sciences and the arts are valuable for man and contribute to his culture, yet this value is not absolute but relative, and such culture is not a self-sufficient end, but a means to a higher one. The absolute value and the highest culture rest in man's religious attainments, and though neither science nor art can, in its essential

nature and function, directly help man in his religious enterprise, each does help in an indirect manner. Moreover, when reflected upon as a mental discipline each leads one to religion. So that they, far from being possible substitutes for religion, represent for us, first, relative goods that point to an absolute one which they serve indirectly, and secondly, human phenomena, a critical study of which opens our mind to the essential truths of religion.

Let us examine science first and see how far we can substantiate our contention above with regard to the legitimate place of this discipline in human culture. Through science man seeks to order or organise his sensible experience so that he may be more at home in this otherwise strange and haphazard world. This knowledge of some order in nature in the form of various natural laws, acquired through patient observation and experimentation, gives him some power over her. He can now, instead of passively looking on nature and receiving from her whatever she offers him, both good and bad things, at her sweet will, act upon her with his knowledge and harness her to his purposes. Thus he learnt to produce fire and use it, learnt agriculture, animal husbandry, metallurgy, medicine and the other sciences which have revolutionised his life upon earth. This knowledge and its applications in life are increasing with an accelerating speed so that we are all conscious of the role of science in our present age which may be called a scientific one. Now, the culture of the age cannot

escape the influence of this discipline that has done and is doing so much for man. Science in fact has attained such prestige in our cultural life that we no longer consider any other branch of knowledge worth pursuing in its old form. We are approaching them scientifically and reducing them to science and we reject whatever is not so approachable or reducible as so much useless superstition. Thus while Newton called his physics "natural philosophy" because of the prestige of philosophy then, to-day a large section of thinkers call philosophy "science of language and of methodology of the sciences", and whatever in philosophy is not science, such as metaphysics and the idealistic logic, is rejected as mere moonshine and verbal quibble. The tendency of the modern mind is to make philosophy scientific. History as a scientific description and correlation of events is recommended, and all such history as seeks to evaluate the past is read as literature. Economics, Politics, Sociology and Ethics are all purified of their evaluative elements and studied as social sciences. These elements in any enquiry are described as subjective admixtures which may be studied separatively as objects of psychological interest. This is how science has captured our culture to-day. It recognises no discipline worthy of being its rival, for it collects all non-scientific ones in one basket and places them by the arts which it considers to be no knowledge but so many ways of imaginative recreation signifying nothing. The arts, to the scientific-minded modern man, belong to the category of games and

amusements which serve a biological purpose in so far as they offer us relaxation and good cheer, but in their essential nature they tell us nothing and so, cannot be compared to science. However, the modern man gives by the side of science a place to the arts and also to the non-scientific portions of other branches of knowledge, as manifestations of human imagination and skill, though not of his understanding which is his superior and more useful faculty.

Thus the religion of science reigns supreme in our culture and it condescendingly allows a place to the arts by its side. But it allows none to religion which it condemns as superstitious and reduces to a complex of certain psychological phenomena appearing in the primitive man and disappearing with the new social set-up and knowledge of science. For superstitions breed in the soil of ignorance, and knowledge is its best cure. But now, we ask, is this evaluation of religion just? Religion that expresses man's inherent sense of insufficiency as a worldly creature and a felt affinity with a transcendental all-sufficient author of all things, cannot be simply declared superstitious on the ground that it is not sense-verifiable. For, this criterion of truth used in science cannot be urged against religion which speaks of a different region of experience. To say that there is only one region of experience, *viz.*, the sensible, is to dogmatise, for science that deals with the sensible is not logically competent to speak anything, positive or negative, about the existence of the non-sensible. To decide the issue

by its own criterion of reality, that whatever is observable and relatable with other observed things is real, is clearly begging the question and indulging in tautology. "Nothing is real that is scientifically unverifiable" is but equivalent to "What is scientifically unverifiable is scientifically unverifiable", for reality is implicitly defined as what is scientifically verifiable by the methodological postulate of science. Thus the criticism of religion, or for that matter, of metaphysics, which also affirms certain nonsensible realities, by science is thoroughly illicit and impertinent. Its methodological postulate that what is amenable to scientific investigation is real is a mandatory principle that has no authority beyond science. It expresses a resolution to deal only with the sensible and manifests a preference for the more obviously determinable, publicly demonstrable and bio-socially useful aspect of our experience. But where is the guarantee that the experiences marked by these characteristics are exclusively real? Must an experience be unreal because it is not obvious, public and bio-socially useful? We, for our part, do not see any necessary connection between these characteristics and reality. So we have no ground to join science in discrediting religion as false superstition.

To seek to explain it away as a psychological complex is again a questionable move. It is said that the primitive man without knowledge about nature felt himself to be at the mercy of her powers which he conceived as spirits through his animistic imagination found so common in children and

primitive people. But what if we say that this feeling of insufficiency and the animism on the part of man is not incidental but fundamental and cannot be cured by science and mature thinking? Science can remedy but a negligible fraction of our sense of insufficiency which is basic to us as finite creatures, for our bio-physical well-being is a small part of our total well-being which is ideal and mainly spiritual and so falls beyond science. Can science even pretend to offer us that 'peace that passeth understanding', or that 'kingdom of heaven' that is said to be within us, and which once realised, one never returns here to feel one's mortal coils about oneself? Can science offer salvation? Science does not understand but mocks at such notions. With regard to our animism, what if we affirm that we have to understand nature in terms of spirits or a spirit like our own? Even as a scientific hypothesis this way works as well as, if not better than, the materialistic one. The remarkable harmony and coherence in the natural phenomena, the growth, self-regulation and self-reproduction shown in organic nature and the fact of our own minds appearing and flourishing in the bosom of nature, induce one to conceive of an intelligent spirit in nature. The charge of anthropomorphism against any idealistic interpretation may readily be repulsed by a counter-charge of mechanomorphism against the mechanistic one, and this conflict only shows that man is the measure of all things, for he is the interpreter and he draws his interpretative notions from his own consciousness. The idea of dead

matter and mechanism is no less interpretative and drawn from his mind than the idea of a spirit. So this enquiry into the question of the origin and nature of the interpretative notions will not lead the speculative philosopher anywhere towards a solution of the issue between idealism and materialism, he has only to see which notion is more helpful in comprehending all the relevant facts.

This hypothesis of an intelligent spirit, however, is certified by direct intuition of so many poets and prophets. Of course, a toughminded scientist will not consider their evidence and will rank them with children and primitives, but, as we have already argued, this procedure is dogmatic. For, on what ground does he reject intuition as a way of knowledge and make sense-perception the sole touch-stone of reality? In case he insists on the dogma and refuses to call anything real that is not sense-verifiable, he is merely proposing a linguistic reform. This proposal we cannot accept as it arbitrarily restricts the use of the word "real" which, by common usage, describes whatever is not fictitious but known as given to us, no matter whether it is sense-perceived or not. Thus the natural laws, the spatiotemporal relations and the logical constants are real though not sense-perceived, and so are the metaphysical entities and principles real. They are given in intuition to a select number of highly gifted persons who have special talents for discovering these truths and who also cultivate their talents. It is nonsensical to demand as much social corroboration for these truths as we find for sensible objects, because

human beings at present may not have developed intuitive powers as equally as they have done their perceptive ones. If we keep this in mind, we find that we have sufficient corroboration so far with regard to these abstract truths to assure us of their being given objects and not projections of individual minds. Quite a large number of men and women of diverse origin, occupation and culture, all over the world and in all ages, have affirmed certain basic metaphysical truths which are the foundations of religion, and certain very simple and sensible procedures are prescribed by them for developing the appropriate faculty for this kind of truth. These procedures, such as practice of concentration, purity of body and mind and non-attachment, invariably bear fruit as numerous students of Indian *Yoga* all over the world testify. In the face of all this, one cannot reasonably reject the case for religion and think of explaining it away as a psychological phenomenon. The Freudian explanation of religion, the anthropological theory of ancestor-worship and that of totems and taboos are all at best clever conjectures regarding how man may have expressed in the past, and may express even now in some measure, his first vague intimations of a religious character through certain of his psychological complexes with which one must not mix up religious consciousness as such. The latter is not a blind affection that one undergoes but an order of knowledge, like perceptual consciousness that connects the mind with an aspect of reality. To cry down religious consciousness as a subjective affection would be as arbitrary as to

do the same with regard to perception and thought which too are psychological phenomena in one sense. Any form of knowledge is certainly ours, and so, in this respect, it is mental, but inasmuch as it refers to and reveals a content independent of us, it is to be distinguished from blind affection. This distinction is normally made in the case of perception and thinking but not so in the case of religious or metaphysical intuitions.

We have so far seen how science cannot usurp the place of religion in our culture. We will now see at a glance how science, though it cannot help religion directly, can do so indirectly, and then, how a reflection upon this discipline may lead one to the essential standpoint of religion. That science cannot help religion directly is obvious from an inspection of the very nature of this discipline which takes for reality this sensible world and seeks to discover the laws that govern it. It is realistic in its attitude to the world, and also pragmatic, as its chief concern seems to be with the use it can make of nature. This is not the religious attitude in which one treats the world as a semi-real veil covering a spirit which half conceals itself by and half manifests through it, and one, therefore, while considering the world as essentially useless, enjoys it as a garment of the spirit. So, how can science help religion directly? But science can indirectly do so by relieving us of many distractions such as those connected with our health, security and necessary comforts of life. Thus it depends on how we make use of science and, so, on the cooperation of many factors.

We note in this context that one big factor in this right use of science, directly for humanity, and indirectly for religion, is some initial religiosity in us, for without any disinterested love for our fellow-beings or without some idealism, the sweet fruits of science cannot be made available to all, and it will create much confusion and misery in human society, cause more evil than good. This aspect of the matter is especially significant for us in our present world-situation when science is full of immense possibilities, both of destruction and betterment of humanity.

Science can help religion, though indirectly again, if it is so reflected upon by us that we bring out its implications which, as we shall presently see, are substantially religious in character. Through science the human mind finds laws in natural phenomena and these laws imply a unity and uniformity in nature. Moreover, certain principles of thought, like causality, co-existence, substantiality and quality, appear to be presuppositions of our knowledge of nature rather than products of this knowledge. Thus, for instance, science does not and cannot prove causality but presupposes it and this makes possible its investigation of particular causal laws and, so, science itself. These *a priori* principles or categories, spontaneously brought forth by the mind, which seems to contain or prescribe them, are applied to sense-matter in scientific knowledge. This means that the mind has an underground connection with sensuous phenomena which do not accidentally accede to the mind's laws. Now this situation and

the observed unity and uniformity in nature lead one to imagine her to be a manifestation of a universal spirit that is also the foundation of individual minds which are imperceptibly operated upon by this spirit. This implication of science is not different from the religious truth that God is the author of the world that we know of and also of our knowing minds. The individual minds are assumed by God who experiences through them a world He shadows forth in His creative urge. He, as individual selves, takes the world for reality and passively suffers the various passions excited by it, but, in His own intimate nature, He remains behind these assumed selves. He is aware of the world as His own making and enjoys the passions in the manner we do our own artistic contemplation. In fact, this creative activity of God may be understood as not unlike our own imaginative activity through which, having projected a world outside, with all the marks of reality and all relevance to our natural emotions, we yet feel we enjoy it subtly and secretly from behind, as though in complete possession of our freedom. Indeed, it is this free enjoyment that provides the motive for such imaginative activity. Thus may we, after the Vedantic seers, state the metaphysical aspect of our common religious knowledge which simply tells us that God is behind nature and our knowing minds and that this world and the minds are not wholly real but 'half conceal and half reveal' a reality that is God Himself. Religion tells us that we are all sons of God and the kingdom of heaven is within us and the world is to

be disinterestedly enjoyed rather than selfishly and blindly attached to and suffered. This religious knowledge, got first as verbal knowledge and taken on faith from the scriptures and saints, and then verified through contemplation and direct intuition, is thus clarified by a true metaphysics which cannot go against the utterances inspired by the universal and essential religious consciousness of man.

We have established our point with regard to science and its correct place in human culture. Religious knowledge is surely the highest element of our culture truly conceived, for this makes us aware of the basis of everything, the core and life of this world we know. Science, thus, is but a part of culture, and moreover, a part that, though necessary and valuable, is not the best and though it has a distinct nature and function and is not a mere auxiliary or accessory to religion, may yet be a help to the latter. A true and comprehensive culture will employ science not only for what it is directly and specifically meant for but also for helping religious consciousness. Science in this favourable situation will join other cultural factors that initiate, clarify and support this consciousness.

We now pass on to art and see how far what we have said regarding the place of science in culture also applies to it. In art man seeks to enjoy his various emotions, both joyous and sad. In real life he does not experience all these emotions and when he does, he cannot enjoy them in a proper sense. He is merely moved by them, he suffers

them blindly and passively. In art these emotions do not merely move him but enlighten him also, he experiences the movement of his feelings and so, is not really moved but only in a make-believe or play-acting manner. This complex status of a passion that is undergone with the full awareness of its being so undergone, characterises artistic sympathy and enjoyment in which, thus, there is an active and enlightened contemplation of emotions associated with joy. This joy is not the ordinary joy that we experience in life when we undergo some pleasurable emotion, it is aesthetic joy that one invariably experiences when one contemplates in the aesthetic attitude any emotion whatsoever, be it pleasurable or not in the ordinary sense. Thus it is that we are said to enjoy a tragedy or sad music and paintings depicting horror and squalor. We enjoy these in an extraordinary sense and perhaps better than we do the pleasurable emotions, for pleasure dulls our aesthetic or imaginative sensibilities while pain stimulates them. However that may be, we can now see what art means for us and our culture. Unlike the followers of the modern cult of science, the artists and the art-lovers are not, as a rule, so dogmatic and presumptuous as to claim that art represents the sole cultural activity of men. Though most of them have an unreasonable contempt for science which they enjoy debunking, they leave religion alone and some of the greatest of them have connected art with religion. However, art, as dealing with our emotional life and offering us an understanding of it, cannot directly help

religion which bids us control and overcome emotions, for they do not let our mind rest and we cannot realise our identity with God unless we contemplate on Him with a quiet mind. But art, so far as it helps us to understand our emotions, may be an indirect aid to our religious discipline. Here again we find, as we found in the case of science, that an initial religious attitude is a factor, amongst others, which may cause us to employ art in a manner so as to derive from it the best advantage for our culture. The artists, like the scientists, should be religiously enlightened, to start with, and, so also should the society that feeds on the arts and learns and uses science. Only then can there be some hope for our present unbalanced and chaotic culture. Religious consciousness must at least be at the side of, if it does not wholly inspire, our scientific and artistic efforts, and it must also be present in us in some form in our moments of enjoyment of the fruits of these efforts.

A quick enquiry into the nature of art will reveal, as it did in the case of science, that religious truths are at the basis of this mental discipline. The artist depicts the human emotions mostly suggesting them by depicting certain natural objects that are usually associated with them. This makes for the universality or communicability of art. Thus, for instance, he will depict love through human characters placed in a particular situation where speech and gesture as well as the natural environment combine to evoke the type of feeling that we associate with love. He may also note that a complex emotion

like love, pathos or horror, is depicted through other subsidiary emotions which serve to suggest this chief emotion. Thus love may be depicted through yearning, unrest, jealousy, anger, disgust, etc. In every great instance of art there is depicted a complex emotion which dominates it and becomes its chief meaning. Thus a Shakespeare tragedy has one dominant note to sound to which others are subservient; there is one pervading emotional mood which is never lost but ever heightened by suitable variations and contrasts. Now this feature of art, first, points to some unity and uniformity of our emotional nature, and secondly, our power of aesthetic or imaginative sympathy which is essential for our experience of the emotions depicted in art. This leads us to think of our common human spirit which is by nature playfully imaginative, a lover of experience for its own sake. So, may we not speculate that there is one spirit in all of us which enjoys creating this world, associating with objects several emotions and experiencing them in the form of individual human subjects while enjoying them subtly from behind as we do in art? This is what a critical reflection on science also shows us. Therefore, like science, art also may serve our religious discipline, provided certain other factors join to operate upon it, and an initial religious faith, if not full knowledge, is an important factor. This faith will induce us to reflect on art in a manner we have done and will lead us on to the truths of religion in a speculative manner. The speculative or hypothetical form of knowledge may then be confirmed

by a direct intuition for which, amongst other things, meditation and purity of mind are essential, as urged by religion. Thus may religion and art help one another as may religion and science. And thus may man evolve a true and comprehensive culture where religion, in its essential form, purified of its accidents, will have a central position. This culture will allow art and science their distinctive and rightful places though they will no longer be allowed to drift but gently guided to help indirectly the efflorescence of the religious consciousness of man.

## AESTHETICAL METAPHYSICS

WE HAVE metaphysical aesthetics as well as aesthetical metaphysics which shows that we sometimes allow our idea of reality, reached intellectually, to dictate our interpretation of beauty and then, sometimes allow our experience of beauty to rule our understanding of reality. The traditional aesthetics of the West illustrates the former situation while a good section of Indian metaphysics does the latter one. We shall first substantiate this statement in this paper and then seek to put in some order aesthetical metaphysics, the basic ideas of which are found in the philosophical literature of India.

Beauty as an aspect of intellectual truth, an intelligible form shining through some sensuous medium, and aesthetic activity as a kind of thesis (cognition), and not aesthesis (sensation), is the creed of the scholastics which has its foundations in Plato and Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> Plato's distinction between merely sensuous beauty or charm, which feeds and waters the passionate or appetitive nature of men destroying the rational one<sup>2</sup> and is a "soft slippery thing,"<sup>3</sup> and his notion of intellectual beauty is well-known.<sup>4</sup> Catharsis spoken of by Plato and Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy : *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (1946). Also Jacques Maritain : *Art and Scholasticism* (1946).

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, 606-07.

<sup>3</sup> *Lysis*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> See *Timaetus*, 80B, where he says that a musical compo-

as the function of art can well be interpreted as ecstasy through which the passions are undergone in a spirit of sacrifice so as not only to be relieved of them temporally as waste products but also actively to contemplate them as presented in appropriate forms, and thus, to be purified of them more or less permanently.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle's theory of imitation means really imitation of an *idea* of nature and, so, of the appropriate or the philosophical truth which nature embodies. Art, thus, seeks to express the truth underlying a natural object and not to copy it.<sup>6</sup> There is a vital distinction between the 'subject' of art and its content. Plato, while he denounced art as imitation, and took imitation as the slavish copy of natural objects, denounced only what he held to be false art. That he had a notion of a true art is proved by his praise of such art as depicted the true or ideal being instead of the actual and the apparent one, that is, the universals instead of the particulars.<sup>7</sup> Certainly, this truth or universal form cannot be an actually given object to be copied out but an idea to be visualised and expressed through

sition affords sensuous pleasure to the ignorant and intellectual one to the intelligent. See also *Phaedrus*, 244D and *Ion*, 354-55 where he says that it is God who inspires the artist.

<sup>5</sup> Coomaraswamy : *Op. cit.*, Chap. I.

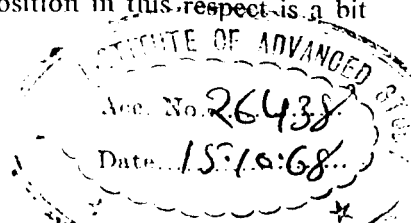
<sup>6</sup> Aristotle's *Poetics* (Bywater's Translation), Chap. 9. The poet is "to describe not the thing that has happened, but the kind of thing that might happen, *i.e.*, what is possible as being probable or necessary... Hence poetry is more philosophic and of graver import than history." Also "The beautiful is the appropriate" (*Topics*).

<sup>7</sup> *Republic*, 472, 484, 597-98.

the medium of some recognisable matter. This happens in representative art where natural objects serve as subjects for the artist to express some ideal content which, according to Plato, is an intellectual idea or philosophical truth. In non-representational arts, such as abstract drawings and music, no such recognisable subject-matter is used and some idea is expressed more or less directly. These arts are still called imitations because they depict appropriate rhythms or forms of our emotive nature. These forms are the truths of our emotions to be apprehended intellectually and given to the senses. As no recognisable matter intervenes between the idea and its imitation and the artistic activity is purely imitative of the idea and not of any natural object or appearance, this form of art is held as purer and higher than the representative one. Schopenhauer, we know, regarded music to be the highest form of art for this, according to him, was reality itself while other forms represented reality in various manners. All this goes to show how one's intellectual metaphysics rules one's aesthetics.

The opposite situation, one's aesthetical experience ruling one's metaphysics, may be shown from much of Indian thought. Indian aesthetics has been in the main unaffected by any intellectual metaphysics. Aesthetic contemplation has been at the outset regarded as distinct from theoretic understanding and beauty distinct from intellectual truth. While Plato and the Scholastics<sup>8</sup> hold artistic activity

<sup>8</sup> We exclude Aristotle as his position in this respect is a bit different.



to be a feast of reason, the Indian aestheticians take it as a feast of feeling. Of course a clear difference is made between a feeling as excited by an object and suffered in a passive manner and one actively enjoyed when one freely feels for or sympathises with some depicted feeling suffered by no real person. Yet the latter kind of feeling is not confused with a cognition of feeling such as might be obtainable in some intellectual activity, normal or supernormal.<sup>9</sup> We have to feel the love or sorrow depicted in art as we would have felt it in reality, only in aesthetic enjoyment of it we have a consciousness of our feeling as freely undergone. In sympathising with the feeling of our friends or relatives we have yet some compulsion and passivity, but in aesthetic enjoyment there is not even this compulsion. This consciousness of freedom and this "psychical distancing"<sup>10</sup> does make a difference in the flavour of the feeling, but it certainly cannot petrify it into an object of cognition or crystallise it into a neat concept. The feeling is the support and feeder of the aesthetic enjoyment which is feeling *par excellence* and not knowing. Those who stress

<sup>9</sup> In Indian philosophy, particularly in the Yoga school, feelings are thought to be cognised and so transcended. But the Indian aestheticians do not regard this knowledge of feelings to be the object of artistic contemplation. See, e.g., *Mammata : Kavyaprakasa* (a work of 11th century) 4.28, and commentary thereon where he says he summarises Avinavagupta's (a 10th century famous Indian thinker) views.

<sup>10</sup> Author's paper, "Psychical distance in Indian Aesthetics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Dec., 1948.

the transcendent aspect of feelings in aesthetic enjoyment and, so, underline the qualifying words of the phrases "objectification of feelings" and "disinterested contemplation of emotions," which are commonly used to describe artistic attitude, forget that the feelings so objectified or contemplated must be undergone in order that they may be so treated. If the treatment kills the feeling, then artistic enjoyment collapses.<sup>11</sup>

Now this Indian theory of art is based on a direct experience of art and not on any intellectual predilection about it of metaphysical origin. It is more a psychology of artistic experience than a philosophy of beauty. Beauty is apt to be held, as in the Western tradition, as a metaphysical object and, so, readily identified with truth and reality following the principle of parsimony. Indian aestheticians do not consider beauty as an objective reality so much. They deal with the perception of the beautiful which is an enjoyed characteristic like taste or flavour<sup>12</sup> rather than as substantive entity. Instead of interpreting beauty in terms of

<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth recognised this when he wrote of poetry : "It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity, the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity disappears and an emotion kindled, so that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself actually exist before the mind." *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1800). The intellectual aestheticians generally quote the first clause and omit the rest.

<sup>12</sup> *Rasa*, the key-term in Indian aesthetics, signifying aesthetic relish, literally means taste or flavour.

some intellectual idea of truth and reality and our aesthetic perception in terms of the cognitive faculties,<sup>13</sup> some Indian philosophers tend to interpret ultimate truth and reality in terms of beauty as a subjective relish and cognition as an element in aesthetic perception or feeling. One Vedic seer speaks of the Supreme Reality as essentially of the nature of aesthetic relish (*rasa*)<sup>14</sup> and to know it is to realise or feel it. That is, it is given in unitive knowledge and not in one characterised by subject-object duality<sup>15</sup> which is, however, knowledge properly so called. Another Vedic seer speaks of God's creating the world like an art-object and of artists as imitating God in their artistic activity which is, therefore, a kind of worship to God and a means to self-realisation.<sup>16</sup> Some aestheticians have described artistic enjoyment as similar to the beatitude that accompanies one's experience of Reality itself.<sup>17</sup> Creation itself is regarded by some

<sup>13</sup> See e.g., Leibniz-Wolff theory of aesthetic perception as a confused conception. Though Kant criticised this theory, he, nevertheless, held aesthetic perception to be a free play of understanding and imagination and 'cognition in general' though not a conceptual one. He considered emotion to be a posterior and a consecutive fact in aesthetic perception and not its constituent or ground. See *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, §9.

<sup>14</sup> *Taittiriya*, VII.

<sup>15</sup> We are reminded of the criticism of dualistic knowledge by Bradley and Bergson. The former spoke of reality being knowable in the manner of love and the latter in the manner of aesthetic sympathy.

<sup>16</sup> *Aitareya*.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., one describes it as *Parabrahmasvadascaiva*, literally

Vedic seers as a shadowing forth of the world which has no reality co-ordinate with the creator.<sup>18</sup> The concept of *maya*, which is the pivot of Vedantic metaphysics, can have meaning only in an aesthetic sense, and *lila*, which literally means play and is the Indian answer to the question 'why does God create?', has been conceived after imaginative recreation or artistic contemplation. It is well-known in theology that God, being perfect, cannot have any real thing to serve, any real want from which he might be suffering, nor can He lapse from perfection and suffer any real change. All this imperfect world of change and multiplicity, therefore, has to be considered as illusory, shadowed forth by God for His imaginative recreation which is but a sign of His joy and abundance. We, in so far as we are artistically active, imitate Him and taste the divine joy.

Now, though aesthetical ideas abound in Indian philosophy which views reality predominantly as an experience rather than as an object among objects, yet no attempt has been made to elaborate an aesthetical metaphysics. Intellectual prepossessions could not be thoroughly got over with the result that there are many knots and inconsistencies even in an aesthetically orientated philosophy. For instance, the relation between the Absolute, conceived

meaning similar to the relish of the Absolute Reality (or God). *Dhvanyaloka Locana* (2.4), a 10th century work by Avinavagupta.

<sup>18</sup> See Sankara's commentary on *Brihadaranyaka*, I. 4. 3. and 4. 3. 7.

as a Self, and the individual selves has not been clarified. But we may smoothen out some of these rough ends and put aesthetical metaphysics in a better light. This type of metaphysics differs from an intellectual one in that while the latter holds our scientific knowledge to be the pattern for knowledge of reality itself, the former holds our aesthetic experience to be such pattern. There is nothing to decide between the two approaches except perhaps our temperament. For metaphysics cannot be directly verified in ordinary experience and it must be judged by its internal consistency and *a priori* plausibility.

To put our aesthetical metaphysics in order, then, we have to recognise reality as an experience such as we have in art, the objects experienced having no independent reality apart from the experience. An aesthetically enjoyed object is not felt as independent of the experience, it appears as a sign for some feeling which is freely undergone and so enjoyed, as we have shown before. When we do not enjoy something in this manner but only know it and use it we are affected by feelings which we cannot freely contemplate and then the object appears to be independent of the experience.<sup>19</sup> An unenjoyed but merely known and felt object, which is sought to

<sup>19</sup> This is the realistic-pragmatic attitude to objects in which they excite feelings which we suffer passively instead of enjoying self-consciously. This is the intellectual or cognitive attitude which, as has been shown by Bergson, is really pragmatic. As I. A. Richards has pointed out, feelings have a cognitive aspect, (*Principles of Literary Criticism* p. 98.), so that it is a single attitude which may be

be enjoyed but proves refractory, appears ugly. Now the objects of the world are generally known (intellectually), used and felt (passively suffered) and so taken for independent realities in our ordinary mental attitude that may be termed realistic. But in our aesthetic attitude towards them, they become parts of ourselves, each suffused with a particular feeling which is now freely enjoyed for its own sake.

The objects now appear as symbols of the feelings they arouse in our realistic attitude, meaning these feelings instead of exciting them. We speak of dark clouds as meaning sombreness, rose—youth and passion, white doves—purity, gentleness and divine love, spires—aspirations, and so on. Poets delineate feelings with the help of these objects which serve them as images, so that in the aesthetic mood we dissolve and appropriate this world with the solute of aesthetic emotion which wells up as soon as we regard the primary feelings excited in us by the world as objects to be enjoyed for their own sake and not undergone passively or used to serve some practical purpose. (The pleasurable feelings inform us of the desirability and the painful ones of the undesirability of things.) Whatever is not so appropriated in the aesthetic mood appears ugly. But nothing really remains ultimately unappropriated. What appears at one stage of aesthetic mood as ugly is but difficulty in the appreciation of its beauty. The

shortly indicated as the realistic one as distinguished from the aesthetic.

difficulty is due to many reasons, such as, too much or too little complication or magnitude, obvious unpleasantness or danger to life. This difficulty is overcome in a higher stage of aesthetic contemplation when what was ugly becomes sublimely beautiful. Now this stage of subjectivity, in which natural objects appear to be objects of art, symbolising or expressing feelings, which are enjoyed (and not suffered as excited feelings) is one akin to the experience of the Absolute Self or God. God's experience of the world is an aesthetic one, the whole universe is created by Him as a piece of art to be enjoyed for its own sake. He is then a grade of subjectivity and we approach Him qualitatively as we succeed in developing an aesthetic attitude to the world, overcoming our usual bio-physico-intellectual one to the same. We approximate the Absolute mind qualitatively as our experience of the world becomes more inclusive and unified.

One important point to recognise here is that personality, mind or self-hood, whether of God or man, is never an object or thing which God creates and enjoys and man ordinarily knows and suffers. It is nothing, and if by mind we mean some objective mental or spiritual stuff, it is also no-mind as the Zen Buddhist puts it. My self or my mind is never known as a meant object but only as a subject, symbolised by "I", who apprehends objects. So God is no entity to be known by us but a grade of subjectivity. And since grades of subjectivity are a fact, we being, sometimes in the dream or illusory states, sometimes in the intellectual-realistic one and some-

times in the aesthetic one, can very well imagine God to be a grade of subjectivity immanent in our subjectivity. Since God is no thing, the problem how we can be parts of Him cannot be insuperable. And this will also make it easier for us to think how we can have a realistic attitude to the world. For then we are in the lower level of subjectivity just as in our dream and illusions we are in a level lower to our ordinary realistic one and take for reality, suffer and use objects that are illusory from the empirical standpoint. We are in our ordinary realistic attitude to God as our dream-selves to our waking self. We may be said to relish aesthetically our fantasies, enjoy actively the feelings suffered there. Even in our dreams we may be said to enjoy, unselfconsciously, the feelings we suffer there. So it may be said that even in our main realistic attitude, when our feelings of joy or sorrow are not freely enjoyed but passively suffered, we may be still unselfconsciously so enjoying them. Using this rather paradoxical idea of unselfconscious enjoyment we may say that God is ever enjoying His creation which has been created for this purpose, in different degrees of unselfconsciousness and less when we view things realistically. And since we do not have a perfect vision of the whole universe as a thing of beauty, God or the Absolute Self, immanent in us, has to be regarded as overwhelmingly unselfconscious, becoming more or less conscious through our aesthetic activity directed to the contemplation of the world.

This is a sketch of an aesthetic metaphysics,

which, as presented here, leaves many a question unanswered. But we must not extend the scope of the present endeavour beyond a bare indication of a possibility of such a metaphysics as our chief interest here is aesthetics and not metaphysics. We have merely shown how the Indian aesthetical categories, *rasa*, meaning active enjoyment of feelings, and *lila*, meaning imaginative recreation, may be the basis of an aesthetically orientated metaphysics in which the ultimate reality might be considered as the Supreme Self shadowing forth this universe and enjoying it through us, partly selfconsciously but predominantly unselfconsciously. This Supreme Self or God may thus be conceived as immanent in us and realisable by us and not a transcendent being which poses many difficult problems. It goes without saying that this kind of metaphysical speculation, though it has many affinities with some speculations in the West, has its own difficulties. But to discuss these or to support the scheme offered here would take us outside the scope of this introductory essay.

ARTISTIC OBJECT AND ENJOYMENT  
AN ESSAY IN A CO-ORDINATED THEORY OF ART

1. *Object and Method of enquiry—also its scope and validity.*

The aesthetic theories defining the specific nature of the object as well as of the enjoyment of art are many. There are the major theories of making, symbolising and expression, also the minor ones of pleasure, play and irony. There are also certain antithetical notions about art such as that it is imitative and creative, affective and intellectual, personal and impersonal, interested and disinterested, deliberate and inspired. Our object here is to propose a theory which is *prima facie* a plausible one and which, moreover, comprehends and reconciles the partial truths of other theories and notions about art, and, so, attains reasonableness. It is a theory that has been only partly sensed by some Western and Indian aestheticians and have not gained acceptance in modern thought. We wish to offer it here in an independent manner leaving out its historical affiliations for later discussions.

Certain logical questions respecting this matter of proposing a theory or definition of art must first be disposed of. It must be pointed out that a theory or a definition is the result of a free decision and as such it is a verbal recommendation which one is free to accept or reject. Those who believe with

the Greeks and the modern British thinker Alexander that art is making, will accept neither the physical performances on the trapeze nor the mental ones in an idle brain as art but, will consider a well-made boat or a hut to be such. But there are persons who believe art to be a matter of performing a delicate task of balancing of opposite forces, and while some of them will restrict art to such performances done in imagination, while it holds an illusion critically balanced against disillusionment, others will extend it to the circus and the cricket ground. They will not call a boat or a hut art. The expressionists, headed by Croce, will not admit any such natural product, not even a painting taken as a physical object or work of art, into their conception of art which will reject all but the ideal and immediate mental images expressing one's personal emotive attitudes. But this view will not explain why art is universal or communicable, and so a symbolist aesthetician will define art as the discovery of generic signs of certain common attitudes of man and employment of them as symbols to communicate those attitudes to others. A work of art, then, embodies a generic sign for some attitude, for instance, a tall oak for strength and fortitude. But this theory does justice to the communicable and universal nature of art at the cost of its concrete individuality and living immediacy. The theories of pleasure and play too respectively stress only one element of art and fail, on the one hand, to distinguish art from many other activities which one may not call artistic and, on the other, reject many

activities, as extra-artistic which one may consider essential to art. From the above illustrations we wish to deduce two things : (1) In one respect it is up to the theorist to define art in any way he chooses and so to include or reject any number of activities in or from his concept of art. Our theory, therefore, is offered here and should be taken by our readers as a proposal to use the term 'art' in a certain way and, so, as a criterion by which to judge what is good or bad art and what is neither. It is thus a linguistic prescription disguised as a description and as such it is closed to rational criticism and open only to one's approval or disapproval. (2) This, however, is only one side of the matter of concept formation in aesthetics. We have also to see how far a particular definition of art can be employed in practice to justify and comprehend the most closely and universally held ideas about art. Otherwise, our definition will be merely verbal, a mere logical sport without any theoretical import. A definition or theory is made to help our relating of facts and, so, understanding of them. So far as it is not an idle logical game but has a factual reference, we have a means of justifying it and of judging its cognitive value. So we can claim merit for our own theory if we can show that it is *prima facie* true and it comprehends the truthful elements of other theories and notions about art which impress us and account for the vitality of those theories and notions. These truthful elements which have won universal acceptance are but what really define art, and our theory will be true to the extent it can

incorporate in it these elements as natural consequences of this theory. But there will remain an element of free decision after all in this or any theorisation. For what are the more universally accepted notions of art in a society are by no means wholly agreed upon, and there are different notions in different societies. Again, even if we agree upon a list of more accepted notions in a particular society or culture for which only art is defined, we may still find a few such notions not compatible with the rest and, so, with our theory, which, therefore, cannot be wholly descriptive or representative but is partly prescriptive or normative. It will not merely tell others what they, as members of a particular society, do mean by art but also what they ought to mean by and value as art. Our theorising here is thus ambivalent in its nature and purpose. It seeks to bring together certain generally held notions about art under a common head and thus to describe what we mean by art, and yet it will correct many such notions and reject others and thus will posit an evaluative criterion of art for free acceptance or rejection by readers. It seeks to inform as well as reform readers with respect to their notion of art.

Another question of logic has to be clarified. An art-object is defined here in terms of a subtle interplay and critical balance between the principles of illusion and reality obtainable in imaginative experience. Artistic enjoyment is defined as that associated with this activity. Now taking the present character of nature and our mind for granted, we find that certain circumstances are required to fulfil

these critical conditions and so to realise art-experience. These circumstances may be viewed as natural consequences of our theory of art and, so, as accessories and integral to art. The variety of enjoyment associated with these circumstances may also be similarly related to the essential artistic enjoyment which is thus sustained and enriched by these auxiliaries, in the same manner as a dominant emotion like love is sustained and enriched by subsidiaries like longing, unrest, jealousy, delight, sadness, etc.. The essential characters respectively of art-object and artistic enjoyment are then each supported by certain more specific characters which too enter into the definition of these categories. We will find that balance of opposites, expression and symbolising of emotive attitudes, imaging forth of content and conception of unifying forms, are all needed for the full realisation of art. We may, therefore, speak of these processes as natural consequences and ingredients of artistic activity, and of the products of these processes as consequences of the art-object as originally defined by us. We may similarly speak of the various enjoyments associated with these circumstances in relation to the essence of art-enjoyment as we have defined it. Now the consequence mentioned here is not logical but natural and the necessity or rationality ruling the relations amongst the various circumstances mentioned here, and so this analysis itself, are not strict. If these were logical and strict the variety of circumstances and enjoyments spoken of would be tautological reductions of the starting definition of art and so

our analysis would be trivial and unexciting. Yet our imputation of necessity to the relations of the various elements is not just nominal and our present enquiry just a report of how these elements happen to hang on each other for us at this moment. We, by a critical study of constant relations of certain uniformly observed elements of nature, both non-human and human, are seeking to evolve a real (as against a verbal) definition of art in terms of these elements so that what appears to us to be but tentative, may if our analysis proves correct and is adopted by others, and if nature meanwhile does not change her ways, be a certainty and our theory and definitions will have the felt necessity and inevitability of a logical deduction. One may then speak of art as meaning the things we mention here as involved in it, just as one speaks of a triangle meaning that its three angles together make two right angles. Knowledge is always aspiring after reducing the contingency of the given to the necessity of thought and so is observing with patience the regularities of nature and defining its concepts to represent nature more faithfully or truly. But this is just an ideal serving as a regulative principle or directive of reason and it cannot be fully realised. For, otherwise, nature would be reduced to the corpse of a deductive system and the pursuit of knowledge would come to a stop. So we must recognise in any cognitive venture, such as the present one, the irony or tension of opposites, of the rational and contingent factors in knowledge. Our endeavour must meet only partial success and our conclusions must be

essentially tentative. Perfect failure in our cognitive venture represents one kind of collapse of the vital tension between progressive nature and perfectionist reason while perfect success does another. Both the extremes are undesirable. And, if we are pardoned a metaphysical argument here, they cannot be possible. For human reason being continuous with nature, from which it is said to have evolved, must have some natural insight into the latter which, however, must be reason-like and so essentially spontaneous in nature and not as ordered as reason uncritically anticipates. Thus we may clear our mind of certain possible misunderstandings regarding our method and terminology and also of both scepticism and dogma with respect to the general scope and validity of such an enquiry as this.

## 2. *Our theory of art as conscious self-delusion.*

The theory we propose is that of artificial illusion, deliberate self-delusion or feigning. The object of art is a dream or illusory object with this important difference that we are aware that it is so and yet we, instead of rejecting it, maintain it. We, in other words, take an object to be real in a pretended manner knowing it to be illusory. The artist who creates an art-object knows it to be created, yet takes it as if it is given to him, while the spectator who reproduces in his mind the same object through a contemplation of the naturalistic expression or symbolic representation of it in a work of art takes it as if it is a directly given or real object. Artistic enjoyment

consists primarily and distinctively in this imaginative activity. This view of art is not far-fetched and abstract but has, we believe, a *prima facie* simplicity, plausibility and appeal to our mind besides its comprehensiveness as a theory, and therefore, its possible truth. That we take a natural delight in things irrespective of whether they are good or bad, pleasurable or painful, and thus contemplate them for their own sake or, more correctly, for the sake of the experiential quality and variety they provide us, is wellknown. A child is so hungry for experience that, not satisfied with what he perceives by means of his eager and restless senses about him, he imagines things and incidents to please himself. With only a very meagre aid to this imagination in the form of a stick or a piece of thread or a toy-cart, and even without these, he can create for his pleasure a series of incidents full of colour, life and excitement. Art represents only a little more sophisticated, formal and conscious activity and enjoyment than this original one. Art takes its origin from man's awareness of the power of his imagination, that presents him with such pleasures as reality cannot, and from his conscious cultivation of and delight in this power. Art is thus not as natural or original as some think : for instance, those who believe with Aristotle that it expresses our natural desire for imitation and knowledge, or those who consider it a means to gratify our emotional needs, or again, those who view it as a mere continuation of our childhood play. Yet it is not for that reason as artificial, complex and formal as some construe it : for instance, Kant,

who thought it to be the product of a subtle interplay of imagination and understanding occurring somewhere in the dark background of our mind. One can well appreciate, we believe, what is meant by the exercise of and delight in one's imaginative activity itself primarily and in its products only secondarily or consequentially. There is nothing very profound about it. Art is the result of this self-reflective attention of the mind to its own imaginative capacity and of cultivation of it for the peculiar pleasure it affords us. It is like one's becoming aware of the functions and pleasures of our palate and attending, primarily to this as the end and to the food-stuff as means. One then eats and drinks for the pleasure of one's palate instead of getting this pleasure as a natural consequence of eating and drinking which is done normally in an unreflective or impulsive manner to satisfy an organic want and a desire for food and drink that arise from this want. The epicure makes pleasure from his food and drink, not these things themselves, the object of his desire. Hence there is a qualitative change in his enjoyment from that of a normal man who also enjoys his cups and dishes.

3. *Reconciliation of imitation with invention in art : some other results.*

Now having defined our conception of art, let us pass on to some of the conditions that must be fulfilled to realise art-experience. Since we know but one world to be real, the world of our artistic creation

or illusion must derive its elements or contents from the former. In other words, imagination must work on the materials supplied by nature and the object of art must resemble some piece of nature. Otherwise, conscious delusion or artistic illusion is not possible, as what has to be taken for reality must resemble the only reality we know. But this resemblance must not be so close, or the copy of nature in art so servile, that *either* one is really taken in by the presentation *or*, if this is checked by certain other extra-artistic reasons such as the frame of a painting or the stage of a play that fences off the art-world from reality, one is impressed more by the imitative skill of the artist and put in a cognitive and verificatory mood. In either case one will not have the sense of the illusory world willingly entertained by imagination and taken as if it is real. Hence we can understand from the standpoint of our theory the generally admitted requirement in art of a proper degree, neither too much nor too little, of verisimilitude. We can understand, in other words, the dynamic tension and reconciliation between two opposites, imitation and invention, in art, and so appreciate the mastery of the artist over this ironical situation which, if not controlled with sustained skill, would end in aesthetic failure or ugliness. We can thus include in our theory and reconcile by its means the conflict between two opposite notions about art, those of imitation and invention. The appreciation of the balance of opposites and the artistic skill it involves is regarded by some, those of the ironical school, to be the essential aesthetic value.

We, however, admit it as a necessary adjunct to what we think to be essential aesthetic value, *viz.*, the enjoyment of illusion as such.

Our theory also explains the general insistence on a proper frame of mind with which one is to approach art. One must neither be so realistic or unimaginative as to be unable to co-operate with the artist and enter into the latter's dream-world with "willing suspension of disbelief", nor must one be so dreamy and forgetful of the total situation as to be deceived by the artist's presentations. In other words, one should not tell himself, while seeing Iago on the stage, that he is but the gentleman actor Mr. X doing his part, nor should he be so worked up as to throw whatever he finds handy at the devil of the play. Thus our theory reconciles two antithetical notions about art *viz.*, that it is disinterested and that it is interested. This theory also generally accounts for, and can be used to determine the right amount in specific cases of such extra-aesthetic objects which mark off the work of art from its natural surroundings and thus ward off naturalistic responses on the part of the appreciator. We mean objects like the frames of a painting and those used in a play such as the stage, auditorium, decorations, make-up and dress. The painter and the dramatist want the beholders to take the artistic subject-matter as an illusory object and not as reality. They use certain extra-aesthetic means along with certain aesthetic ones to induce imaginative sympathy in the appreciator without which he cannot have the illusion of reality, but they also see to it that

he does not forget that it is after all an illusion and so miss the essential aesthetic pleasure which arises out of a critical state of balance between illusion and reality when an illusion is deliberately cherished as if it is real. So they use both aesthetic and extra-aesthetic means to make the art-world appear as a make-believe one. The aesthetic means to induce imaginative sympathy in the appreciator is a vivid depiction of reality in art and the extra-aesthetic means is the placing of the work of art in such surroundings and with such accompaniments as invite the appreciator to lend his attention and belief. Paintings cannot be appreciated if placed in a busy street corner nor poetry when read in a large gathering ; we require a right atmosphere for these. The background music and the atmosphere of the auditorium have similar relation to the play. The aesthetic means to counteract the effects of the above means to induce belief in the art-object is invention of novel things and situations and some artificiality in the manner of presentation ; the non-aesthetic means for this purpose has already been noted. We thus see that art is the battleground of opposites where belief and disbelief or sense of reality and of illusion are both sought to be created by various means and which, instead of neutralising one another, oscillate in the mind and are thus said to be held in dynamic balance. This aspect of art<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edward Bullough : "Psychical distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle": *British Journal of Psychology*, June, 1912.

was noticed by Bullough who held that the art object must be neither under-distanced nor over-distanced.

4. *Reconciliation of comprehensiveness with free selectivity.*

We have so far seen how our theory can comprehend under a single concept the partial truths of the theories of imitation, invention and irony and also explain in the light of this concept certain accepted principles of aesthetic practice and appreciation. We now pass on to consider certain other features of art as they follow from this key-concept of ours. Since the content of art must be derived from nature, we have to specify the manner in which this derivation must be done. The manner must be such that the aesthetic enjoyment as understood in our theory may be maximum. Since the imaginative pleasure or the enjoyment of an illusion increases with the richness and variety of the illusory object contemplated, the content of art must be as rich and various as nature itself. All the features of nature including life must, therefore, be in principle included in art which has no special subject-matter of its own. The features to be included are limited by the limits of technique of the particular art-form and by the limit of toleration of a particular artwork, the latter limit depending upon the total aesthetic situation and the general psychology of conscious illusion or feigning. To illustrate the first kind of limitation to naturalism in art, we may

mention the exclusion of sounds and actions in painting and of visible forms in poetry and music. though it may be noticed how even these are sought to be represented in a faint and indirect manner by way of suggestion. We seem to see movement and hear sounds in some paintings and we have poems that are said to be vivid or graphic and music that calls up vague forms in the mind such as a sky clearing up or the lengthening shadows of evening. To illustrate the second kind of limitation to naturalism, we may mention the suppression of details in a horror or pathetic scene in a novel or drama. These scenes, if depicted without moderation, would be explosive in the sense that the reader or the spectator would not be able to maintain the intricate dynamic balance between the sense of illusion and that of reality which is required, according to our theory, for aesthetic enjoyment. The production and maintenance of this balanced attitude depends to a large degree on the specific situation in a particular art-work. A scene of horror or pathos may explode and so irritate, instead of pleasing us, by appearing to be forced and unreal if it occurs in a short and simple piece and stands more or less alone, without any adequate balancing by other passions. But such a scene may be quite minutely depicted without loss of its aesthetic appeal in a drama of Shakespeare or a novel of Dickens, because of the large canvas we have there and the consequent sense that this horror or pathos is one of the many passions, both agreeable and disagreeable, that characterise human nature and life.

Thus realism in a short canvas or isolated parts is a kind of idealism or artificiality which is rejected as unreal by the reader or spectator who may admit the same realism if it is not so selective but more extensively applied and so offers him a fair sample of the complex of passions we have in life. Now since the art-world will have to be, for technical reasons, raised on a selection of materials from nature and need never be a duplicate, we require for enhancing the aesthetic enjoyment a fair or representative selection. The art-world must be the world in miniature. It must neither be so partial or biased in its selection of materials as to appear unreal nor be so comprehensive as to appear as a piece of world-history. Hence both comprehensiveness with respect to nature and the abstraction or free selective character of an ideal representation are in dynamic equilibrium in a piece of art.

We have so far noted two pairs of such opposites being balanced in art : the one, imitation and inventiveness ; the other, comprehensiveness and free selectivity. The two pairs must be distinguished from one another. A news report versus an idle fairy-story represents the former opposition, while James Joyce's *Ulysses* versus any tale of uninterrupted pathos, horror or heroism represents the latter. Each of these performances just mentioned fails as effective and mature art, because of the lack therein of tension between opposites and of the sense of difficulty overcome with masterful skill. But this is only a criterion of good art and not an artistic

value in itself. It is a criterion because it is involved in the meaning or definition of art as conscious illusionism. The enjoyment of this conflict and reconciliation of the opposites and of the artist's mastery in this fine sport is only incidental to the chief and distinctive enjoyment of art derived from the circumstance of an illusion being consciously entertained, as if it is real. Such an enjoyment as incidental or consequential is found in many other activities, such as circus performances like those on the trapeze. The theory of irony or tension would include all these activities under art.

5. *Social universality and communicability of art.*

Our theory of art, on the other hand, appears to be committed to admitting anybody's fantasies as art. For the fantasy-thinker enjoys them as illusions consciously taken for reality. But this is repugnant to our commonsense notion of art as some universally shareable experience and the art-object as some stable, or as in music, repeatable, external object. Can we not make room in our theory for this concept of art? If we do not and declare the commonsense concept of art to be a prejudice, then our own theory will be condemned by commonsense as idle, a verbal game with the word "art" signifying nothing of what one commonly recognises as art. We cannot afford to break with commonsense altogether and prescribe a private use for the word "art". We can, however, admit the objective idea of art into our theory as integral

to it. One's private fantasies may be artistic so far as they are illusions taken as real, but they are not very enjoyable because of the sense of privacy and incommunicability associated with them. Communicability and shareability are elements in the sense of reality and one's fantasies being known as subjective are not accepted as real to that extent as a fully shareable art-experience is. Thus the social aspect of art is included in our theory that defines reality as what is commonly found in nature and interpersonally shareable and acceptable. The illusory world of art is entertained as if it is real because, first of its naturalness as we noticed before, and second, of its communicability to and acceptability by other minds. Tolstoy<sup>2</sup> emphasised this social aspect and socialising function of art. The symbolists noticed the universal meaning aspect of art-experience which corrects and is complementary to the individual existential aspect of it stressed by the expressive theory. The conscious illusion theory finds room for both these theories and thus enriches itself by the partial truths they respectively embody. It does this by simply recognising that the art-experience is a particular individual experience in which generic images and meanings or intelligible forms are embedded and by virtue of which it is associated with a sense of shareability and objectivity, and, so, of greater stability and

2. Edward Bullough : *What is art?* (translated by A. Maude, World's Classics, Oxford) (Chap. 15) : Also Rabindranath Tagore (*Sahitya*, 1341 B.S., P. 60.)

reality. This enhances the enjoyment of the experience, for the more real the individual illusion can be supposed to be by virtue of its naturalness and wide acceptability, the richer will be the sense of conscious illusionism or creativity. Here again we notice a tension, *viz.*, the one between the form and the content of art. The otherwise individual and chaotic content of art-experience must be held together by formal unity or meaning-structure that is seen embedded in good art-experience and that distinguishes a subjective feeling-mass, which is hardly artistic, from an intelligible whole of shareable experience which is essentially artistic. The successful artist does not rest content with the specific images, quick and vivid in their presentational immediacy, but seeks to discover some generic signs, meanings and values with which this experience may be shot through and by virtue of which it may be considered as a shareable and intelligible aesthetic experience. The generic signs, meanings and values are mostly the product of the artist's racial and cultural background and so, the limit to universality of his art is set by the limits of uniformity found in the human race and culture, which show a marked degree of divergence, and also by the limits of his own self-socialisation. Again, the more intelligent and conscious the artist is and, so, aware of the generic factors of experience which have their roots in his social life, the more deliberately he seeks to imagine a specific content or aesthetic surface to embody these factors. In any case, the generic factors or universal references are intimately

fused with or merged in the specific content which appears to be a unique and immediate experience and yet suffused with a meaning reference and a claim to universality.

In this lies the peculiar power of the artist, the capacity to image forth significant images or intelligible contents. He differs from the scientist in this that the latter's generic signs and meanings are more abstract and give mediate knowledge of objects under certain physical conditions, while those of the former are more concrete and give immediate knowledge, of course, mainly of emotive values or feeling-patterns associated with concrete objects and human situations. Thus art reconciles the opposition of specific chaotic content and generic ordering form, in other words, isolationist and textualist tendencies, just as it reconciles other opposites mentioned before. An unequal tug-of-war between these two opposites will lead to aesthetic collapse. Too much concentration on the generic or meaning pole of the experience will reduce art to science or iconology, while a similar one-sided emphasis on its specific or intuitive pole will result in such individualistic and bizarre effects as some modern experiments in art amply illustrate. In either circumstance the illusory world raised in imagination will lack the semblance of reality, for reality is concrete universal or unique actuality touched with ideal meanings or references and, so, shareable in common or objective ; it will not, therefore, provide aesthetic enjoyment, the secret of which lies in the paradoxical contemplation of

an imaginary construct known as an illusion and yet, instead of being corrected, supposed to be real. The play of opposites is at the very heart of our concept of art. The art-world is an obvious illusion but with a semblance of reality and, so, it must have the essential content and quality of reality in such an optimum measure that neither its illusoriness is disturbed by too much resemblance to reality nor its assumed mask of reality blown off by too little of this resemblance. In the former two cases of conflict and resolution of opposites in art we have noticed the critical balancing of the resemblance of the art-world to reality against deviation from it, while in the present case we notice similar balancing in this feigned world of the specific against the universal factors of experience after what is found in reality about us. This enhances the imputed reality of this feigned world which otherwise, as we noticed, becomes either private and isolated or general but abstract, and so helps converting this world into an aesthetic object with its distinctive pleasure-value. There is no danger, however, that this contribution to the reality-sense of the art-world by the harmony of the two factors of experience, generic and specific, might in any way assume such a magnitude as to be detrimental to the fine balance of the sense of illusion against that of reality with regard to this world and so disrupt it. For, as may be readily appreciated, this contribution has its own maximum value, that is, it cannot increase the sense of reality of the art-world beyond a certain circumscribed

limit, while its absence would certainly snap this reality-sense and reduce the world either to chaotic subjective images and feelings or to abstract generalised science or iconology. This rather asymmetrical relation of art to the balance of the specific and generic factors of experience is due to the fact that this balance is a formal feature of reality and the resemblance that the art-world bears to reality when this balance is obtained at its maximum is only formal, not material. Resemblance in form or structure will naturally have only a limited positive effect, though an unlimited negative one, on the illusory world, for while perfect structural resemblance will not materially enhance the sense of reality of this world beyond a certain limit, its total absence will severely injure this sense. So this balancing of the specific and generic features of experience is more a negative condition of artistic success than a positive one. It is like the action of 'trace' minerals such as manganese and cobalt in our body ; total absence is fatal but an intake of them in very small quantities helps to improve one's health ; in larger quantities they have no positive effect on the body which eliminates their surplus.

6. *The problem of aesthetic sympathy and detachment and of the artist's personality.*

We have thus shown how an intelligible form and social universality of art-experience is integral to our concept of art. We have also noticed how this concept includes the partial and complementary

truths of expressionism and symbolism. Art-experience is an immediate imaginative expression of the feelings and attitudes or value-intuitions of the artist, and yet it is interpenetrated by generic signs and meanings by means of which it becomes a communicable social experience. Expressionism errs in overlooking this latter character of art while symbolism errs in ignoring the necessary role of the specific aesthetic surface of the art-experience and the quick non-mediated way by which it refers to universal meanings through the generic signs that lie embedded in it. Thus art is both individual and universal, and both immediate intuition and some implicit intellectuality are involved in its creation and appreciation. Our common experience certifies these balanced views regarding art and our theory has only proved its soundness and freedom from arbitrariness by admitting them and subsuming them under a higher principle so as to treat them as consequences of the theory. Another consequence of our theory is also upheld by common observation. The attitudes of the artist expressed in good art are purified of their blind subjective involvement and appear more lucid, tranquil and objective, while the beholder of art enjoys them as objects of contemplation instead of suffering them as natural or personal emotions. Yet this contemplation of emotions is not as abstract and impersonal as is found in the study of psychology ; there is an element in it of the specific feel of the emotional quality, an individual relish of it. These two moments in art-experience are well recognised and respectively called aesthetic

disinterestedness or distance and aesthetic sympathy. That somehow the two opposites are reconciled in art-experience is felt by all impartial observers and only an abstract theorist emphasises one of these at the cost of the other. Edward Bullough observed long ago (1912) that the emotions expressed in art should neither be under-distanced nor over-distanced. We can understand this situation in terms of our theory if we consider this to be the consequence of what we have seen to be integral to our concept of art, *viz.*, the balance of the specific content against the generic form of art. For, as may be readily admitted, the specific content of art, the aesthetic surface, excites our raw feelings, while the generic form, the intelligible depth-meaning, stir up our reflection and work for aesthetic distance. Thus, as observed by many aesthetic thinkers, in art, form overcomes and controls the chaos of content and intellect the excitement.

But most of these thinkers, like Hegel, Schiller, and Croce, put a little more emphasis on the formal and intelligible aspect than on the other and see in art an annihilation of content and mitigation of passions, while a few, like Plato, Tolstoy, Gentile and the existentialists, in various manners and degrees make the opposite mistake. The concept of art that follows from our basic theory is the dynamic and critical balance between the two contrasting movements. Thus our theory, while claiming to be about art as we generally know it, is also about art as we ought to know it. Like any serious theory or definition it is both descriptive and normative in

nature. A serious theory or definition must not be about a thing known only to the theorist, nor can it possibly satisfy all the different conflicting notions that men hold of the thing defined or theorised about. It must steer a middle course and seek to show, as far as possible, the notions conflicting with it to be but the result of some one-sided stress on some aspect of truth. With regard to our concept of art that it is a dynamic balance of the two opposite factors, form-intelligence and content-excitement, we claim that it is readily acceptable to a large majority of unprejudiced observers, and we account for the divergence of a class of people from us on this point by their ethical prejudice against sense-matter and excitement, which leads them to consider only those instances of art as standard where this element is superseded by its opposite. Thus the rationalists and purists saw in art the triumph of order and intelligence over chaotic sense-material and passion. But then, some purists, for instance, Plato, do not see this intellectual element in most art, partly because they include in art the obviously exciting stuff where this element is absent and which we reject as bad art, and partly because they fail to discern this intellectual element in most art where it operates very subtly. So they condemn art most unjustly as an exciter of passions. Plato recommended only severely expurgated editions of Homer and only such subject-matter and styles in arts as are conducive to moral perfection. But we find his proposals, if acted upon, would result in bad art or at best bathos because of the lack therein of

tension between stimulation and repose. Such a collapse of tension and consequential flatness characterise those instances of art where the moment of immediacy and excitement associated with the content is not allowed to contend in a drawn battle with its adversary but is easily overcome by the latter or, as in didactic poetry or philosophical discourses in verse, is not presented at all and the adversary enjoys a quiet walk-over.

Now, there is a third group of people who also do not perceive this balanced tension or reconciliation of opposite moments in art and who are also moralists. But they differ from the two groups mentioned above in this that they find the element of immediacy and feeling associated with the content of art to be immensely good for moral and social health. The modern existentialist thinkers on art also support art precisely for that character for which the rationalists condemn it. From our standpoint we regard this ideal of art as idiosyncratic and art-work, to the extent it illustrates this ideal, such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Mrs. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* or some of the novels of Sartre, as inartistic. The more these authors concentrate on the moment of aesthetic surface and immediacy and neglect the universal forms or intellectual structures, the more do their works become individualistic and chaotic. Lacking the binding force of the intelligible form, they explode and spread out as it were, and since the intelligible form is intimately connected with the universality or communicability

of art in a society with particular culture and framework of conventional signs and ideas, these works become subjective. They may be very moving indeed to the author and his coterie ; to others they appear to be dull and bizarre. This is particularly observed with regard to the products of schools of art like symbolism, cubism, dadaism, surrealism and the like. An artist, we believe, must have a minimum sense of form and sociality in order that his work may attain communicability without which it is a mute and worthless piece. When Tolstoy praised art for its emotional quality, because the beholders while they share the particular emotions embodied in the art-work feel a kind of unity running through them, he had in his mind a kind of art that has a pervasive appeal and an artist who is intellectually and temperamentally one of his society. Art can unite peoples of a race or society through a concentration on feelings only when the common language of feelings belonging to that race or society informs it, or in other words, when it expresses through the generic signs and symbols of the particular peoples their commonly shared feelings. Great art, like that of Shakespeare or Tolstoy himself, really unites almost all civilised mankind through the emotional attitudes expressed in it and not merely those of a particular race or culture. This happens partly because of the highly comprehensive and representative character of the personalities of the authors concerned who, while expressing what they felt most strongly, also express the universal dispositions of man. This they can do chiefly

because of their intellectual knowledge and social sympathy, by means of which they can distinguish what is purely individual, from what is of universal significance in feelings and attitudes and their associated objects, incidents and ideas. This is how we resolve the issue between personality and impersonality in art. The artist is partly natural and partly assumes deliberately a social mind, though at the same time he manages to strike a personal and sincere note in his work, which must not appear to be either indifferent or artificial. The artist appears to be an individual presenting his own attitude to us, but we accept him as one of us and find in his work an expression of our own minds. Artistic individuality and originality consist not in eccentricity but in this social character by virtue of which art becomes an individual expression of the social mind. So art, even when considered as an expression of feelings, must have some intelligible form and social reference. We, however, believe that good art is defined neither by the contextualist moment of form alone nor by the isolationist moment of content alone but by a critically maintained dynamic tension between the two.<sup>3</sup> The important views of art that conflict with ours are thus accounted for and judged from our standpoint. They are shown to be results of prejudiced and incomplete observation of the partial truths they severally embody and depend on, for their popu-

<sup>3</sup> M. Rader "Isolationist and Contextualist Aesthetics: Conflict and Resolution", (*Journal of Philosophy*, July 17, 1947).

larity. They are included and mutually reconciled as aspects of a higher and more comprehensive truth.

7. *The ironical theory of art and our theory.*

Whatever we have said above may seem to go in favour of the ironical theory of art that conceives the dynamic tension and balance of opposites as evidence of the mastery of the artist and as the end of good art. But we have already explained why this tension and balance are required in art and how the enjoyment of these features and the masterful skill are only incidental to the chief enjoyment of art, which consists in consciously treating an illusory world as if it is real and so delighting in the sense of creativity involved in this activity. Enjoyment of a mere skill cannot amount to an artistic delight which appears *prima facie* to be richer and more profound. Moreover, the delight of art is not so abstract as the appreciation of a balancing skill, however, subtle and delicate the latter might be, for it includes a pleasure taken in the emotions depicted in it. These emotions, as we have seen before, though not suffered blindly, like natural and personal ones, with loss of critical reflection on them, are yet not for that reason treated as cognitive objects. They are neither under-distanced nor over-distanced and are intelligently relished. Art is not as disinterested as it is often thought to be. Tolstoy and others who believe in an affective theory of art are partly right in their insight and contention.

This intelligent relish of the emotional qualities of art is a consequence of our original concept of art. For an illusion cannot be held as real unless it has a flavour of the real and the real world we know is dyed with feelings and emotions we feel in its presence just as it is with colour we sense in it. (The real world affects us with pleasure and pain, love and hatred, fear and courage, and so many other feelings and attitudes, and we have all these depicted in art which presents a semblance of reality. Of course they suffer a formal change in the process of transportation. In art they are awakened in the mind by the indirect process of suggestion, the objects and incidents usually and respectively associated with them in the world are depicted to suggest them to the mind. There is thus an objectification and deindividuation of feelings in art, they are dislodged at once from the natural objects that arouse them and the minds which feel them and so float in the art-world as ideal contents. This results in aesthetic distance of the feelings and this is required for the maintenance of the overall illusory character of the art-world.) But the other side of this complex situation must not be overlooked. The feelings and emotions, and also the objects and incidents suggesting them, are recognised as belonging originally to the real world and they are relished with intelligent awareness about them, and this helps us to imagine the illusory art-world as if it is real. Since, as we believe, aesthetic enjoyment essentially arises from this latter activity which is supported by the relish of feelings and emotions depicted in

art, this relish is an element of the aesthetic enjoyment. The latter, therefore, is not as abstract as an appreciation of a skill. The art-object and the art-enjoyment respectively contain an element of skill and of pleasure taken in the latter, but they are not essentially aesthetic characters, so that an excessive attention to this aspect of art either by the author or by the appreciator would be inartistic by our standards. We believe this is also the verdict of the majority of artists and art-critics and so our definition or standard of art is not arbitrary. Art is obviously not natural but an expression of human ingenuity, as our basic concept of it in terms of conscious illusionism would suggest, yet it is not so much a matter of mere form or technique as of an awareness of the real world, a sense of life with its rich variety and wonder. For the illusion deliberately entertained in art is the illusion of the real world and life. Though the original and essential artistic enjoyment consists in the imaginative delight that the very process of conscious illusionism or elaborate feigning offers the mind, nonetheless an interest in the world and human life is a natural corollary and a substantial accompaniment of this enjoyment which is enriched and diversified by it as is the principal note in a harp by its overtones. The appreciation of the balancing feat in art is one of the many overtones and not even a very major one. The ironical theory, therefore, confuses a minor element of the total aesthetic object and enjoyment with a principal one.

8. *Art as making, follows from our theory.*

We have thus seen how our theory comprehends the partial truths of several other theories and concepts about art and corrects their mistakes. We will now see how it does the same with respect to the concept of art as making. Since it makes art a symbolic expression or significant form with a social appeal, it follows that it must not only be an internal or ideal expression but also an external or physical one. So naturalistic expression or fixing the mental images in a medium to make them available to other minds is a natural accompaniment of the original artistic impulse, which is to have an illusion in such a way that it may be enjoyed as real. The artist wants to share his essential enjoyment with others and the beholder too wants to do the same. This communicativeness of art helps the semblance of reality that the illusion must have in art-experience as we noticed before, and it mixes with this essential aesthetic value another, which may be called sociability. But to realise these two values or interests, the artist is led to a further activity and enjoyment peculiar to it, *viz.*, that related to the making of a physical object. The Greeks and the British philosopher Alexander (and in fact all classical and neo-classical thinkers) have put too much emphasis on this making or constructive side of art which they think is central to aesthetic activity, while Croce goes to the other extreme and makes it an extra-aesthetic activity subsequent to

the artistic one proper.<sup>4</sup> But as Bosanquet<sup>5</sup> and many others have observed, the process of embodiment of the psychical art-object in a physical medium is integral to artistic work, which is thus richer and more inclusive than mere imaging forth of the art-object in the mind. This making of an object has its own peculiar joy, which is naturally associated with the pleasure of internal expression and symbolisation. Thus the art-object is a 'concrete significant form' as one aesthete calls it.<sup>6</sup> The medium offers a challenge to the artist who tames and exploits it, so to say, and the particular properties of the medium used affect to some extent the process of artistic imagination. The perceiver reconstructs in imagination much of the maker's original constructive processes and enjoys through sympathy the latter's peculiar enjoyment associated with this activity. However, Alexander goes too far when he declares aesthetic impulse to be an outgrowth of man's instinct for constructiveness. He we believe, confuses what is a natural accompaniment of art-impulse with the original impulse itself and what is an emotional variant or ingredient of art with the constant and dominant emotional quality or key-note of art. Croce, on the other hand, in disregarding the external and constructive aspect of art in favour of its internal expressive side, has failed not only to do justice to a natural ingre-

<sup>4</sup> Croce, *Aesthetics* (trans. by D. Ainslie, 1909), pp. 5-6, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, "Croce's Aesthetic", *Mind*, XXXII, pp. 214-15.

<sup>6</sup> M. C. Nahm "Structure and the Judgment of Art: *Journal of Philosophy*, (Dec. 2, 1948).

cient of art but also to account for the universality of art as it is realised in practice. He has spoken of some 'physical beauty' or "stimulus" and of "reproduction" of artist's experiences through it to account for this universality which he accepts as a fact. One has to recognise the concrete work of art as an embodiment of the intelligible forms and as signs for the facts which normally in actual life excite certain emotional attitudes and which, therefore, function as signals for these attitudes. The individual or existential character of the artwork expresses the individual aesthetic surface of the internal art-object while the forms embodied in it express the universal intelligible aspect or moment of it. Thus a comprehensive view of art, such as we seek here to build up, includes the various apparently conflicting and exclusive views like those of expression, symbolisation and making.

9. *The theories of play and pleasure are comprehended by our theory.*

Let us now see how our theory may assimilate the elements of truth that are in two other prevalent theories of art, *viz.*, those of play and pleasure. The play theory, variously conceived by Schiller, Spencer and others, emphasises the aspect of dissociation of the aesthetic activity from our immediate practical needs and purposes and highlights the peculiar enjoyment in it that is free from any bio-social interest. The play theory, as developed by

Konrad Lange<sup>7</sup>, comes apparently close to our own as it makes oscillation between our desire to sustain an illusion and the opposite one to break it up, the core of art and the spring of aesthetic pleasure. We admit that artistic dissociation is a peculiar feature of art and that the essence of aesthetic enjoyment comes from the play of imagination that holds an illusion in a critical state of balance against disillusionment. But we have also noticed how, in order that the illusion may be so maintained, it has to be judiciously built up with materials from reality, so that it may have a semblance of reality without appearing at the same time to be a part of reality. This subtle relation of art with reality or this peculiar transformation of nature into art has been ignored by the play-theorists who have, therefore, failed to account for many other commonly accepted features of art, such as its aspects of communicability, expression, symbolisation and making. We have found these features explainable as natural consequences of the original aesthetic activity, which is a play of imagination, and so have included them in our total conception of art built up by the essential or core idea of imaginative play and its natural ingredients. But the play theory, by virtue of its one-sided emphasis on some particular character of art, misses these other features and consequently becomes abstract and untrue. It does not see that play is not interested in the making of a perma-

7. Konrad Lange, the German aesthetician Earl of Listowel's *A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics* (1933).

ment object and communicating by its means some experiential content, that expresses the artist's mind to other minds through some socially accepted signs embodied in the object. But art is interested in this and we have seen how this interest is linked up with the essential interest of art, *viz.*, an imaginative play consisting in balancing of an elaborate illusion against the forces of disillusionment.

Similarly defective is the pleasure theory of art that finds art as essentially affording "the maximum of stimulation with the minimum of fatigue or waste" (Grant Allen) and accounts for the social appeal of art in terms of the universal pleasurable objects that art depicts and excites in us with the greatest economy of means. It makes an element of art an all-important principle and finds itself unable to include as even its corollaries, some undeniable notions about art, such as that it is essentially distinct from other pleasurable activities like feasting or religious ecstasy, that it may be painful as a tragedy ordinarily appears to be, that it expresses and relieves one's inner feelings and emotions and is interested in the communication of some experiences to others and also in the making of a physical object. The pleasure of imaginative play, we think, is essential to art and is its chief end, while some other kinds of pleasure, including that ordinary sensible kind of the pleasure-theorist, are but natural consequences that follow from the original impulse for imaginative play and constitute the full aesthetic experience.

This rich and final experience is dominated by

its key-note, the imaginative play with illusion and reality, while the other elements serve it as necessary corollaries do a theorem in geometry or ministers and their secretaries do a king in a monarchical system of government. They are subordinate but are required by the principal for bringing out its full significance or effect and so they, together with their mainspring, make a concrete whole. The latter is the given reality we start with and analyse into its elements. The art-object and art-enjoyment are thus seen to be the result of a particular principle, *viz.*, the imaginative activity engaged in balancing an illusion against disillusionment, and we have sought the full meaning of this key principle through a number of other principles which serve it in constituting full-fledged aesthetic experience. An analysis of this experience will detect these various principles and relate them to a main generating principle in terms of which, then, art is initially defined. The correctness and value of this analysis will be judged firstly by the internal consistency and cohesion of elements it marks out and relates through the key-principle it posits at the outset and, secondly, by the truth or general acceptability of these elements. So if we have succeeded here in bringing together a good number of commonly admitted elements of art under a common principle, which may itself be recognisable as at least a plausible one, our analysis or theory may be deemed useful and our labours fruitful. The business of an art-theorist is not to propose quite a novel and exclusive meaning of art, for that would create nothing but confusion in the

minds of most readers who want to understand more clearly what they mean by art. The theorist should, therefore, keep in his mind the essential and universal meaning and instances of art and then analyse the concept to bring out its various elements and their relations. The theory will be thus descriptive in the main and prescriptive, so far as it will assert a certain concept of art to be universally acceptable and reject notions conflicting with this concept in various degrees as either falsehoods or half-truths. We have sought to offer here a theory which we believe, best expresses the universal notion about art and may serve as a useful criterion for judging aesthetic values of art-works.

10. *Metaphysical consequence of our theory of art.*

There is a tradition both in the East and in the West of raising metaphysical structures on the basis of an aesthetical theory. Metaphysics is after all a projection of thought, whether explicit or implicit, on the analogy of some phenomenal experience, which is said to illustrate the transcendent reality. This reality is either dogmatically claimed to be independently and directly knowable or merely postulated as an analogical construct. An aesthetical theory, empirically arrived at through an analysis of art-experience, may serve as a key-idea for a suitable metaphysics. In the West, the Christian idea of God as a free creator of the world out of nothing has its implicit and psychological, if not explicitly rational, origin in the notion of an artist

being endowed with imagination, an originating faculty, by means of which he calls up images, ideas, feelings and emotional attitudes just as he pleases. In Indian philosophy too God is conceived as one who creates this world out of his love of sport (लीला) and enjoys it aesthetically. The rational speculation of the theistic metaphysicists, however, in both the realms of thought, has proceeded in the reverse direction. God as a free creator is conceived axiomatically and the artist analogically as one gifted with divine power, sovereign imagination or inspiration. In the West it is Plato<sup>8</sup> who may be said to be the originator of this metaphysical analogy. His cosmic demiurge, however, is a little different from the later Christian God, for while the former shapes things out of pre-existing materials (the archetypes) in a deterministic manner, the latter creates miraculously out of nothing. So his idea of mimesis or making of art-objects is deterministic while the corresponding Christian idea<sup>9</sup> is free. The Indian concept is very like the latter one.<sup>10</sup> We see that these rationally conceived aesthetical theories of art-production are metaphysically oriented while, as we believe, the theistic metaphysics itself, which seems to inspire these theories on the conscious level, has its hidden roots in the percep-

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *The Sophist*, 235, 59.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* (1946), pp. 5, 49.

<sup>10</sup> Sukranitisara (IV 170-71) A. K. Coomaraswamy: *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (1946) Chap. X. Rabindranath Tagore *Panchabhuta* (1st edition), p. 171.

tion of the aesthetic situation, that is, of the artist's imaginative power, and is, therefore, aesthetically oriented.

We will now sketch the barest outline of a metaphysic on the analogy of our aesthetical theory presented in the foregoing pages. We conceive the ultimate reality as a cosmic spirit which is artistic in nature and so delights in projecting in imagination a world of systematic sensible objects and taking it as real. Emotional attitudes are associated with the objects which become signals of them and they are undergone by this cosmic spirit, as if they are excited in it by external objects. Now the two moments of the artistic process or conscious illusionism observed before have to be distinguished by us and the cosmic spirit must be conceived as keeping a dynamic balance between them, for this is the principal feature of aesthetic activity and the mainspring of aesthetic delight, the other things being consequential and subordinate to it. So the spirit must be maintaining in critical and active balance its awareness of the world with the emotional influences as but its own making against the imputed reality of them. It is a subtle process of self-deception or feigning with two opposing moments, one realistic and another illusionistic. Now to realise this balanced aesthetic effect, the cosmic spirit creates in imagination individual minds, such as human minds (besides which there are animal minds and possibly many other types of minds in other realms) which take the world to be real and are really affected by it. The spirit creates them with the same

purpose as the novelist or the dramatist does fictitious characters. The world is perceived through their senses and various feelings and emotions are felt through their hearts; in other words, the cosmic spirit enjoys the world vicariously through his sentient creatures. In this manner of approach to sensible and emotional qualities the cosmic spirit achieves, on the one hand, sympathetic identification with the characters and so the realistic moment of the aesthetic attitude, and, on the other, the sense that all these qualities are but seemingly and not really sensed and felt, for the characters are but the creatures of its own imagination. This is the way one might philosophically conceive the creation of the world and individual minds and understand why there are all sorts of apparently incompatible things here like light and darkness, joy and pain, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. The cosmic mind enjoys all these from behind the individual minds and so there is nothing really painful, evil or ugly in its aesthetic experience which is all joyous and beautiful.<sup>11</sup>

This divine and beatific vision of the world may be somewhat faintly realised even by an individual mind if he believes in this metaphysics, which is essentially theistic, and disciplines his life and thought accordingly. He has to treat this world as a stage and his own life as a fictitious role in the cosmic drama, and so he must not take anything in the world and its ways seriously but enjoy them dis-

<sup>11</sup> *Brihadaranyaka* III, 7 ; *Katha*, I, iii, 3-4.

interestedly as one does the art-world. He must also imagine how the one cosmic mind links up the other minds with his as the dramatist's mind does all characters which are his spiritual off-springs, so to say. So he must give up all narrow self-interest and separatism. Thus this aesthetical metaphysic has its moral and religious sides. It admits our observed moral and religious tendencies and explains them in terms of some affinity of our minds with their divine author, who is, therefore not wholly transcendent to the former. The divine origin of our mind is the basis of our higher and nobler aspirations and achievements in art, philosophy, science and morals, in each of which discipline we go beyond our immediate bio-physical interests in search of some universal principle or vision. We have often intuitions too of our immortal creator whom we serve by our humble wordly life. He enjoys from behind us our joys and sufferings, hopes and fears and all the other passions that move and shake us. Thus the aesthetically oriented metaphysics of ours explains, and is confirmed by, many of the intuitions of the mystical sort that many of us have in our rare lucid moments, when we seem to see through our cloud of sensations and emotions their substratum, our mind, and their original cause, the cosmic spirit, and their purpose, the aesthetic enjoyment of them. In our aesthetical pursuit we get a foretaste of this divine ecstasy most naturally. So art, as we conceive it is explained by our metaphysics. This is understandable for metaphysics is modelled on the experience of art. Over and above.

our aesthetical metaphysics also explains our other activities and findings in other fields of culture noted above such as science, philosophy, morality and religion, in each of which we critically reflect upon some portion of obvious experience in order to trace its origin and deeper significance. These disciplines are the result of an implicit process of inwardising of the human mind that turns its gaze from outward to within in search of its higher self.<sup>12</sup> The ultimate questions of each of these disciplines can receive their respective answers only when man realises his real self, the cosmic spirit that created the world for its aesthetic pleasure. The scientific, philosophical, moral and religious enquiries lead us onwards to the seat of the cosmic spirit or God who is the author of all we experience and so holds the key to every mystery of this world.

We see then that the marvellous regularity and order of the world may well be considered as due to the creative urge of the cosmic spirit that must have systematic experience in order to enjoy an illusion of reality. Individual minds are created to witness the world in various perspectives, both spatio-temporal and mental, and suffer it variously, in order that this illusion of reality may be achieved. For, as explained before, the individual minds are created so as to take the world for reality and the cosmic spirit both enjoys through them this sense of reality and balances it against disillusionment caused by its awareness of the fictitious nature

<sup>12</sup> *Katha Upanishad* II, iv, I,

of these minds and their experiences. This is the main metaphysical theory we build on the similitude of our aesthetical findings. It has possibly gaps and loose ends like any other metaphysical scheme, but it is valuable in offering us a picture, howsoever faint and sketchy, of the ultimate order of being and, so, in guiding to some extent our enquiries in science and philosophy and cultural activities like morality and religion, none of which can proceed with without some *a priori* notions or directions. Some metaphysical framework of ideas is indispensable for us in these intellectual and spiritual search-works, and the best we can do about it is to construct it on the analogy of some key-idea found successful in some area of experience. We must hold it as a methodological postulate or a tentative principle and go on employing it and testing its worth. The present aesthetically oriented metaphysics is offered in that spirit and we trust it will prove a useful conceptual framework for systematising our experience and findings in various fields of our life and study.

*Post-Script :*

I must express my gratitude to my revered teacher Prof. Taraknath Sen for his kind perusal of this paper. He points out that the concept of art as conscious feigning is a commonplace of Renaissance and neo-classical criticism. He is reminded of Plato's description, in *The Sophist*, of the painting of a house as "a dream of a house for those who are awake." My reply to this is that my theory is

not original in conception, and perhaps no theory of art that claims to be true can be original in that sense, but it may be original in execution in that I have elaborated and developed it, in order that it may include many rival theories as partial truths. Another observation about my theory he makes is that it may be included under the theory of the interpenetration of opposites set forth by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (Chap. 14). The ironical theory of art, which we have criticised here, "minus its rather misleading nomenclature and minus its version of the aesthetic pleasure", might as well serve for our central theory. For after all the interplay of illusion and reality is a kind of interplay of opposites. I beg to submit that this other theory is too general a principle to make any significant difference to the ordinary artistic situation. To the question how we may interpret a good philosophical poem like, say, Wordsworth's, "The World is too much with us" or "Tintern Abbey", which no theorist will like to exclude from standard examples of good art, I reply that the statement in each poem may be treated as a monologue and, so, the situation described or the message delivered be judged as connected with an illusory world. Our failure to do this leads to a cognitive response and judgments of truth and falsity, which mar the aesthetic relish of these poems. The world-picture presented by such a philosophical poem is entertained as real while knowing at the same time that it is a picture drawn by a poet who is regarded as a dramatic character rather than a philosopher. Hence there is an essen-

tial irony or tension in such a poem which would otherwise fall flat or produce bathos and cease to be poetical.

## THE PROBLEM OF ARTISTIC TRUTH

In what sense can a piece of art be said to be true and how far the qualification is aesthetically relevant is the question we seek to answer here. The answer will depend naturally on the view of art one adopts, and our view is that art is an imaginative experience (accompanied by a delight of an extra-ordinary kind) of some sentiment or feeling, which is not passively and blindly suffered but actively enjoyed with enlightenment. It is in a sense knowledge by acquaintance of some emotional quality where the emotion is at once felt and known. This experience of a sentiment is the meaning of the piece of art and this meaning is uniquely determined by the elements of art so that it cannot be expressed by any other manner. We may have only rough analogues of it if we try to reproduce it by other means. Thus, such suggestive phrases as 'gorgeous gloom', 'exquisite melancholy' 'explosive passion', and others used to describe certain moods expressed in poetry or drama, do but indicate the moods which have their unique being in the body of their respective artistic pieces. The imaginative experience of art is an organic whole of parts. The parts, for instance in poetry, words, their meanings and sounds and the thoughts and accessory feelings and sensations produced by the meanings,—all mean, point to and exist for some dominant or overwhelming or transcendent sentiment. This ordered

action of the parts brings out the final product which transcends the parts and is yet immanent in them. It is 'in and above' the parts. Expression or objectification of feelings, recognised to be the function of art, involves this dynamic process. This is essentially the view held by classical Indian aesthetics.

Now if art builds up a unique experience, which is "a world by itself, independent, complete and autonomous",<sup>1</sup> it cannot have any reference outside, any 'other' which it has to represent or copy. The artistic experience is significant; no doubt, it has a certain meaning by virtue of its relation of parts to the whole, and of end to the means, and by virtue of some intrinsic moving power of this end which is a mood, but there is no significance or meaning beyond the experience. So the question of truth cannot arise. Works of art do not mean other things to which they might be true. But there is causal connection between art-experience and other things which is mistaken for meaning, and so the question of truth is raised. Art-experience often recalls from memory similar experience undergone before, or it leads to a prediction and subsequent verification of similar experiences in future. But this complex relation of resemblance between art-experience and some other experience causally linked up with it, is not the relation of meaning. The artistic experience does not mean the other experience resembling it, and so, it can neither be

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Bradley : *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, (1923) p. 5.

true nor false to this experience outside art. And such resemblance has no artistic relevancy, though it does act on life. Art, particularly of the realistic type, sharpens and enriches our perception of nature (including human nature) ; we know more of our surroundings in a very real sense. But this conditioning of our mode of apprehension is a life-value, not an artistic one. It has nothing to do with the appreciation of the unique and immediate experience that art provides us.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the matter of artistic truth may be very simply settled. Once we have a firm grasp of what art really means we shall have no difficulty with the question of its truth or falsity. Art being a matter of unique autonomous experience, cannot mean anything beyond it and so cannot be true to anything. Only a judgment in the form of a proposition means something beyond it and is true or false with regard to the object meant. A very realistic painting may not give persons to whom it is presented any insight into the natural objects depicted therein, unless the proposition (that it resembles or is true to the object) is stated.<sup>3</sup> The vehicle of insight is the proposition which alone is true or false ; the painting affords only a selfcomplete experience. For Croce the question of artistic truth is meaningless "because the distinction of truth and

<sup>2</sup> B. C. Heyle. "Artistic Truth Reconsidered", *Jn. of Aesthetics*, Vol. VIII, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> K. B. Price, "Is there Artistic Truth"? *Jn. of Philosophy*, XLVI, p. 288.

falsehood must concern a judgment or statement about reality and cannot apply to the mere presence of an image, to a mere subject without a predicate, of which nothing is asserted and which, therefore, does not enter into judgment".<sup>4</sup> Sir Philip Sidney observed long ago, "Now; for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth".<sup>5</sup> "The notion of truth applies only to propositions and not to states of affairs" remarks a modern thinker<sup>6</sup> following a text-book of logic.<sup>7</sup> But as we shall see presently, this thinker does not apply this principle to the question of artistic truth thoroughly. Had he done so he would have seen that art-experience being a state of affairs and not a proposition cannot be in any sense true or false. The sense in which he (John Hospers) recommends the application of the qualification 'truth' to art is that it is truth to experience and not truth about anything. A proposition states a truth about something beyond it, but art is true to things we encounter in experience. Thus Becky Sharp (a character in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*) is true to life, she is an instance of a type we have experienced, and by presenting her Thackeray has given us an insight into the universal type or essence which is exhibited in other instances. The resemblance between Becky Sharp and other ins-

<sup>4</sup> Croce : *Breviary of Aesthetics* Tr. by E. F. Carrit in his *Philosophies of Beauty* (1931).

<sup>5</sup> *An Apology for Poetry*.

<sup>6</sup> John Hospers: *Meaning and Truth in Arts* (1948) p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen and Nagel: *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific method* (1934) p. 27.

tances of the same type is her truth to experience.<sup>8</sup> But this relation of resemblance which is the basis of this truth to experience is not meaning. As has been pointed out before, art does not mean that which it resembles ; it could do that by explicitly stating that it does so mean. But art does not contain such propositions. Thackeray cannot put down in the narrative itself that Becky Sharp resembles many women in actual life. Thus works of art may be true to things without giving us any insight into them, or they may be false to things without misleading us in anyway. Art-world is an autonomous world complete in itself. The reason why we have an illusion that art may be true to actual world is that after contemplating the art-world we think of the actual one, and are led by certain resemblances to propose a proposition like this, "it is true to life", and then proceed to verify this proposition for truth. Art has no proposition and so is neither true nor false, Our proposition-making falls outside the aesthetic activity. The idea of truth or falsity does not appear so long as we are within the art-world. Hospers's 'truth-to' is but a modified version of 'truth about' and the latter is obviously not a character of art. Art is an experience or intuitive knowledge or awareness, and as such cannot consist of statements of facts which may be true or false.

This seems to be undoubted, at least in the case of non-literary arts where propositions are

<sup>8</sup> See Hospers, *op. cit.*, 162-66.

unthinkable. For propositions are made of words with certain conventional rules of reference (semantic rules) and certain rules of ordering (syntactical rules). But doubt is sometimes cast on the belief that propositions can be made of words only.<sup>9</sup> Music and painting can express propositions. There are natural relations between artistic representations and things represented, which relations may serve for semantic rules, and there are conventional rules of order in arts according to which these representations (like words) may be arranged. But that proposition is idle. As a critic has ably shown,<sup>10</sup> the natural relations between an artistic representation and its reference outside art are not reliable, for the same element may stand for what it resembles, for what it causes and is caused by, and for what it is associated with. A certain posture may stand for so many different things. Conventional definitions are required for clarity and not natural ones, and the former have been so far devised with regard to words only. Natural symbols do not work unambiguously. Besides, the rules of order in art do not help to bring meanings out of these natural symbols, so that meaningful propositions cannot be made in non-literary arts, which, therefore, have no character like truth or falsity.

But meaningful propositions may be present in literary arts and they are present in much of the

<sup>9</sup> T. M. Greene : *The Arts and Art-criticism* (1948) p. 425.

<sup>10</sup> K. B. Price : *op. cit.* pp. 289-90.

finest poetry of the world such as that of Lucretius, Dante, Milton, Donne and Browning. These poets are thinkers and the imaginative experience they want to communicate is closely dependent on certain theoretical beliefs they entertained. Thus Browning's "*Rabbi Ben Ezra*" cannot create for us any imaginative experience unless we believe like him in certain characters of reality, such as the existence and immortality of the soul, God's hand in our making and essential reasonableness and goodness in the scheme of things. We can hardly have the aesthetic relish from Donne's *Divine Poems* unless we believe in resurrection. These poems contain propositions about the world which cannot escape being either true or false. So, should we conclude that literary works of this type are either true or false? Our answer is No. For this simple reason that the propositions (involving judgments about the world) contained in such pieces are but parts in an organic whole which has a meaning and significance transcending the parts and determining their meaning and quality. The thought contained in a poem is there as an accessory to some dominant mood for which the poem exists, the thought may be intellectually either true or false but the poem as a whole is neither. The poem as a final product of many elements in it, chiefly accessory thought and feelings, is a unified whole of emotive experience which may be gained by a provisional belief in the thoughts, and which is not at all dependent on our permanent belief got through intellectual verification of the thought. Thus the thought in a literary work

is no thought proper as met in science or philosophy, it is a kind of intuition,<sup>11</sup> and is not judged by the standards of logic for truth or falsity but is simply believed in under the influence of the dominant mood expressed by the work as a whole. Rhyme and rhythm help in detaching the mind from its ordinary realistic and intellectual tendencies. Now the thought in a poem is so readily accepted that it is obvious that the reality to which it refers is not something rigid beyond the art-world, something strictly rational, but it is the flexible art-world itself, an imaginative analogue of the actual world. The world where resurrection is true, is not really the world we actually inhabit with our intellects in the order of logic, but it is a provisionally accepted world-picture. The mind follows the utterance of the artist, as if under some hypnotic influence it is ready to feel and believe. The poem acts as a charm on the mind. Coleridge speaks of "willing suspension of disbelief" on the part of the reader of poetry, but as Richards points out,<sup>12</sup> it is not willing or conscious ; the question of intellectual belief or disbelief does not arise at all while we are reading well. If it does arise, through some fault, either ours or the poet's, we have ceased to be reading poetry and have become engaged in quite a different type of activity. Conscious verification of the statements in poetry is done only at the cost of the poem ; such intellectual interest in art breaks up its

<sup>11</sup> Croce : *Aesthetics* Chap. 1. 2.

<sup>12</sup> I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (1929) p. 277.

unified experience and murders beauty. Richards has distinguished emotive beliefs required in art from intellectual ones<sup>13</sup> to explain assent we readily give to meaningful propositions in poetry. The question of truth or falsity with regard to such propositions, we have seen, does not arise, so that the artistic work, which is a new whole made out of such accepted propositions and other elements, cannot be said to be true. We may reject the propositions (in our intellectual attitude) and yet appreciate the art. The doctrines and factual matters employed in some literary works (which are said to be philosophical or realistic) are there only like plot or myth in other types of writing ; they serve to bring out the dominant mood. This view has been advocated by many a Western thinker, e g. I. A. Richards, John Middleton-Murry, D. G. James and Lascelles Abercrombie.<sup>14</sup> We see that it can be very simply deduced from the theory of art we have adopted, the one which is essentially Indian. A thought in art serves as an accessory to the main emotive experience of art and as such has no independent status and, so, is accepted for the sake of the dominant experience.

Now it may so happen, as it often does, that in some literary piece a thought, instead of being subservient to some dominant emotive experience, itself dominates. The artist has a thesis to submit, some message to communicate. In that case the in-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* pp. 273-76.

<sup>14</sup> Hospers, *op. cit.* p. 216

tellectual interest in the thought must be aroused and it will be verified and judged true or false, so that the work will be either true or false. But in that case, it ceases to be a piece of art, it is but science or philosophy in a literary garb. Whether a piece of writing is a work of art or non-art is determined by the total effect and the intent of the work. If some emotive experience is the end, the writing is art, if, on the other hand, some intellectual thesis is intended, it is non-art. So we conclude that art, where some emotive experience dominates the parts containing thoughts and feelings, cannot be either true or false.

A cognate question is raised like this : It is admitted that the intellectual truth of a thought, contained in a piece of art, has no relevance for art as such; for the vigorous intellectual interest is suspended in an aesthetic attitude; but is all intellectual activity totally suspended? Is not the mind active and interpretative in aesthetic contemplation, where meanings of words and complex sentences have to be followed, allusions and suggestions to be quickly seized, and the subtle relation of means and ends and of parts and the whole to be appreciated? And in that intellectually alert condition, is not some kind of incipient verification of propositional statements in a literary piece at work? This verificatory work, it is admitted, cannot be carried out explicitly with full intellectual interest without breaking up the aesthetic attitude and destroying the artistic experience, but it may be carried out silently within the aesthetic experi-

ence.<sup>15</sup> Our answer to such a suggestion is this. We admit that the intellect is not totally at rest in an aesthetic attitude, particularly in poetic contemplation, where words have their subtle shades of meaning and which interact in a variety of ways leading to new meanings and suggestions. The intellect may in such a state of non-logical activity mark the agreement or disagreement of certain assertions (made in a poem) with our intellectual beliefs. And in the case of agreement there will naturally be some satisfaction, while in the opposite case some dissatisfaction. But this satisfaction or otherwise can in no sense be aesthetic. The intellectual joy and the aesthetic one are not of the same kind. Aesthetic joy is a kind of beatitude arising from our enjoyment, with enlightenment and poise of some dominant mood or sentiment ; its taste is of an extra-ordinary kind. Incipient verification and consciousness of agreement or disagreement are thus admitted as possible within artistic contemplation, but their aesthetic relevance is denied.

The broad conclusion emerges from our discussion that art is not to be qualified by truth or falsity. Some parts of it may, while intellectually (and, so, non-aesthetically) regarded, yield truth or falsehood, but such cognitive elements have no aesthetic relevancy. They may have bearing on our life and personality and thus have practical efficacy. But art has no meaning apart from the experience which it offers us and, so, it corresponds to nothing

<sup>15</sup> J. L. Jarret "Verification in the Reading of Poetry", *Jn. of Phil.* XLVI, pp. 435-44.

and is true or false to nothing. Yet when Keats and Rabindranath equate beauty with truth they cannot be wholly at fault. They mean by truth anything known immediately and intuitively and accepted as valuable in itself. "What imagination seizes as beauty is truth" (Keats) means what is a unified whole of intimate experience is a true experience. It is a piece of knowledge or presentation which is not true by its being known again as true to some other presentation, but it is known only once as intrinsically satisfying and self-sufficient. Truth here means but truth of realization, and if art can afford this, it is true. It is true, if it is successfully expressed and so recreated in the mind of the beholder or the reader. Truth of art is thus, unlike cognitive truth, not thoroughly objective in character. For the conditions of realization of an experience include the realizing mind (its range of experience and temperament) as much as the mind of the artist and the universality of the experience communicated and the means of communication.

Aristotle makes the end of art reside in a pleasurable emotion felt by the subject. Art attains its complete being only within the mind of the person for whom it is created. But the subjective emotion felt by a person is deeply grounded in human nature and so it has a sort of objective validity. Aristotle distinguishes the right sort of audience from the weaker sort ; a tragedy may end with happiness for the latter.<sup>16</sup> Thus though the truth of art is

<sup>16</sup> S. H. Butcher : *Aristotle's Theory of poetry and Fine Arts* (1907) pp. 210-15.

subjective, because art is an immediate experience of an experiencing mind (as the Indian aestheticians have held),<sup>17</sup> it has its roots in the universal nature of man, his basic drives and sentiments. Hence it has some objectivity. In Indian aesthetics the basic sentiments depicted in art (called *sthayibhavas*) are held to be rooted in the fundamental instincts and emotions of man (*vasanas* or *vrttis*), and the judgment of taste, though essentially subjective, derives some objectivity from the consensus of the sympathetic observers (*sahridayas*)<sup>18</sup> Thus though truth as a character of art in the sense of truth of experience is but a redundant term, it yet suggests and claims that the experience so realized is not a stray or arbitrary one but something intrinsically significant and fundamentally human. The mind in aesthetic contemplation, while tasting the beauty of experience, is conscious of the intrinsic value and significance of this experience, and this consciousness certainly deepens the aesthetic flavour. The source of this consciousness is the psychical substratum (*vasanaloka*) common in man, the generic instincts of humanity. The sense of objectivity, necessity or universality which is pre-cognitive, is associated with (and is a factor in) value-consciousness in aesthetic contemplation. Truth, in any sense whatsoever, is nothing if it is absolutely subjective and has no pretensions to objectivity, so that while some great thinkers (*e.g.* Keats and Rabindranath)

<sup>17</sup> Abhinavagupta: *Locana* 1. 4. Also *Bharata Natyashastra* 6. 34 ; 6. 35.

<sup>18</sup> Abhinavagupta: *Locana* 1. 1 and 1. 4.

speak of artistic truth, they wish thereby to suggest the objective validity of art experience which is otherwise, by its very nature, subjective.

The intuition of universality in a particular experience, of some generic traits in a specific presentation, is dimly present in aesthetic contemplation, and it is in this sense only and not in any logical one that art has universality and truth. Thus there is some intelligible element (not strictly cognitive) in art-experience which is not pure emotion. (Richards<sup>19</sup> and Abhinavagupta<sup>20</sup> have recognised this). Kant has spoken of subjective necessity involved in aesthetic judgment<sup>21</sup> and also of 'commonsense' (in the sense of a common principle of feeling), and sociability. His love of formalism prevented him from seeing that these characters are not associated merely with an 'empirical interest' in the beautiful, but that they are somehow elements in the aesthetic experience. Art expresses sociability and implies a common human nature. Works of art are specific variants of generic values, they possess 'depth-meanings' or 'root-values' of universal scope below their sensuous surface and immediacy of specific values.<sup>22</sup> Whitehead says, "The habit of art is the habit of enjoying vivid values."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Principles of Literary criticism* (1926) p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> *Abhinavabharati* 6.34 "Rasana cha bodha-rupa eva."

(Aesthetic experience is certainly intelligible also).

<sup>21</sup> Kant: Critique of Aesthetic Judgment (Meredith's *Tvana*), § 20, 40 and 41.

<sup>22</sup> M. Rader, "Isolationist and contextualist aesthetics," *Jn. of Phil.* XLIV No. 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Science and Modern World*, (1926) p. 287.

The survival of great poems "is the evidence that they express deep intuitions of mankind penetrating into concrete fact."<sup>24</sup> These deep intuitions of mankind are intuitions of human values, but they are present in the aesthetic consciousness not in a clear and cognitive form by way of concepts. Though themselves indistinct, they yet distinctly flavour the aesthetic experience which gets through them the character of greatness, truth and universality. Art always directs us through suggestions to *something* felt to be *somehow* enormously important for us but inexpressible and only vaguely discerned.<sup>25</sup> It is because of this something and only as indicative of it, that we speak of a work of art as true. Otherwise Richards is right in saying that to remark "How true" while reading some work is to misuse it and to waste time.<sup>26</sup>

24. *Adventures of Ideas*, part I, chap. 2.

25. Helen Wodehouse: "Poetry and Truth", *Philosophy*, VIII p. 452.

26. *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 272.

Note :—Besides the transcending "something" that is the end of an artistic piece and that lends the latter its character of truth, there is another factor in art which contributes to the same character. This is the relation of parts to the whole, the fine adaptation of means and ends, what Kant might be describing as "purposiveness without a purpose". This is a formal factor, but the mind while realising its significance is aware of its deeper roots in the universal mental continuum of men. The significance is derived from the mind's innate love of teleological activity or purposive hunt, of actualisation of an ideal end. Truth of art, from this aspect, will mean effective or true functioning of parts towards the emergence of the whole.

# WHAT HAPPENS IN THE THEATRE?

## AN ANALYSIS OF DRAMATIC ATTITUDE

As THE curtain rises we see an actor, say, Mr. Harris, in the garb of a king, say, Caesar. If we are not in a proper mood of dramatic appreciation, we may feel amused by this spectacle. And if he, by his dress and appearance and acting abilities, imitates Caesar very closely we may probably enjoy his clever mimicry. But this is not enjoying the play as such. When we are in a proper aesthetic mood we do not see Mr. Harris mimicing Caesar, but take him for Caesar. In fact we go to the theatre with a mind to take some actors not in their respective characteristics but in their roles. We are prepared to exercise our imagination and will to believe. But this also implies that we are not taken in by the appearances on the stage, for we knowingly take an appearance for its object. We do not believe that there is Caesar before us for we are aware of our part in the so-called 'seeing' him there. We have a make-believe Caesar which is neither just Mr. Harris mimicing Caesar nor real Caesar. If by any chance we could believe that he is real Caesar, we would be puzzled to see him on a twentieth century stage. If we forgot the stage and time and other numerous situations conflicting with our belief in a real Caesar and behaved as if we were children or dreaming, we would not get the proper pleasure from the play. For we would then be

affected by the objects depicted in the play in a naturalistic manner, that is to say, we would react to them in a practical and realistic way. Our natural sympathies and antipathies would be roused to the detriment of aesthetic calm detachment and, so, to the proper enjoyment of the play. We are generally agreed upon the nature of effect that is proper for drama to produce upon us and, so, we prepare our mind for this. We are neither so unimaginative in the theatre as to think that it is only Mr. Harris over there mimicing Caesar, nor so fanciful and self-forgetting as to think that Caesar himself is there. The producers also help us to take this middle course. They attempt some verisimilitude through a good representation of characters and backgrounds, yet they do not aim at complete verisimilitude to create perfect illusion. There is much deliberate artificiality in the plot, acting, make-up, dress and scenes, so that a play is never presented as a slice out of real life. A play is a representation, not a replica, of life with the purpose of offering the audience a contemplative enjoyment of certain emotional attitudes. This being generally agreed upon, the producers and the audience cooperate to satisfy the various conditions of realising this goal, some of which relate to the play as it is presented and others to the mental equipment and attitude of the audience.

In the proper aesthetic situation, then, involving the fulfilment of many mental and extra-mental conditions, Mr. Harris, while he tends to create the illusion of Caesar by his dress, make-up and able

acting, also reminds us by his actual presence that it is but a make-believe Caesar. We have, therefore, no Caesar before us but a representation of him. Mr. Harris is now a sign for Caesar, and as such he is no longer Mr. Harris, the man as he is known to his friends and acquaintances. (Mrs. Harris, for this reason, cannot really appreciate the play; she sees her husband and not a make-believe Caesar. But we, who are not so much attached to Mr. Harris, do not experience this difficulty.) So Mr. Harris loses his individuality while the hypothetical Caesar of our possible complete illusory state loses his semblance of reality. So he is unreal in the sense that he has no character of his own. (This situation struck, Plato with moral indignation for he believed in the integrity of personality and profession. But he overlooked that the actor only seems to us in our aesthetic mood to lose his individual character. He is quite self-conscious while he acts his part in the play and never really identifies himself with the character he represents. Complete identification is impossible and it is not helpful for art). Thus for us, in the proper aesthetic mood, Mr. Harris is left with his bare existence while Caesar with his essence. This essence of Caesar is superimposed on the existence of Mr. Harris to constitute the make-believe Caesar in our mind.

The make-believe Caesar, then, is no real Caesar for us in the proper aesthetic mood. It is Mr. Harris who is existing before us but he becomes a sign for Caesar and withdraws his own essence to make place for Caesar. The Caesar we behold

is thus an essential Caesar in borrowed existence. In other words, we have the Caesarian character *illustrated* before us. The typical character-complexes of Caesar by which we know him to-day are universal essences or ideal contents, and those which were uniquely instantiated or embodied in the historical Caesar are apprehended as illustrated or depicted in the medium of Mr. Harris. (The dramatist may, however, introduce a slightly different Caesar or, for that matter, any unhistorical character, in which case we imagine such a person to be historical, that is, to be real, and now his essence illustrated on the stage.) We have then a make-believe or illustrated Caesar before us while there may be many others elsewhere. The historical Caesar of our imagination of which these illustrations are produced, becomes in our mind, by virtue of illustrations, an essential Caesar. An object, as it is represented in drama and apprehended in a make-believe manner, becomes a generalised essence of it in our mind. It is then like a meant object and as such a generic one. Though we ostensibly mean a particular object by a proper name or such expressions as "That cow," or "The tree in the yard," while pointing to any object on the stage, we have actually a generic object before us with a faith that this was instantiated at some time and place. Mr. Harris too ostensibly stands for the historical Caesar, but we are aware of an essential or generic Caesar or Caesarian character that at one time was instantiated but subsequently existing as a subsistent reality in the collective mind of humanity and repre-

sented in various modes. A real and particular object can be known only by direct acquaintance and, so, indicated ostensively or by pointing to it.

Now this represented and generic Caesar explains why we are not affected in a naturalistic manner in our proper aesthetic mood. The emotional attitude that the real king and his doings might naturally arouse in us are now replaced by emotions similar to them in content, but quite different in form. A real snake arouses fear in us but a rubber snake, when known as such and beheld with the object of experiencing the fear, pleases us with the fear which is then contemplatively enjoyed rather than suffered. The real snake is the cause of fear while the rubber one becomes an illustration of the ideal essence of a snake and, so, induces a fear that is not really passively undergone, but actively assumed in order to taste its quality. The pity and fear that Aristotle speaks of as characteristic tragic emotions are not aroused in a natural manner by actual incidents, but evoked in an artificial manner by incidents as depicted on the stage, and so they produce the 'proper pleasure' of a tragedy. The secret or catharsis lies in the psychical distancing that involves the de-individuation of the persons, things and incidents as depicted in a play. There, dislodged at once from their particular grounds and natural historical context, they float as ideal contents superimposed on existents acting as signs for them. The emotions they occasion in the mind are neither real nor particular, but certain essential contents that are associated with them in the cultural

continuum of man and that are apprehended in their abstract character. Thus apprehended they are illustrated in the mind, not instantiated. An emotion aroused by natural objects is not apprehended as a representation of the universal essence of it, but one occasioned by a make-believe object is so apprehended. (Of course, nature or life itself may be viewed in an aesthetic attitude as an art-object and then one can enjoy one's worst emotions, what, for instance, Shakespeare's Othello and Hamlet seem to do at their ends by a process of self-dramatisation. But our aesthetic mood is ordinarily operative in connection with objects of human art rather than of God or Nature). So we can understand how we can take delight in the tragic emotions of pity and fear as they are depicted in a tragedy.

Thus, we are in an idealised atmosphere while in a proper aesthetic mood. The representations on the stage become signs for certain persons or things which appear as make-believe objects with their essential characters holding reality for us. These characters being associated in our mind with certain emotional attitudes, the latter are also indirectly signified by the representations. But, again, because of the peculiar manner of production, no actual emotion is suffered by us, but only idealised contents of them are apprehended. We, therefore, take an appreciative interest in them instead of undergoing them blindly and passively. However, they are not apprehended as psychologists know them for we have a more concrete representation of them than mere words denoting them. They are, in a

play, evoked by their usual casual antecedents, only they (the latter) are present in their essential forms and not existentially, and that is why the emotions are not actual ones. But actual emotions are only felt and not appreciated, and so too are the merely cognised ones. To enjoy emotions one has to apprehend them through make-believe representations of them in the mind, and these are naturally induced by representations of the objects casually associated with them in the mind because of this association in nature. Of course, for all this idealisations to be possible the dramatist, the producers and the audience must have a fairly wide common core of life-experiences, beliefs and emotional dispositions. But once this condition is achieved in a society it is possible for a cultured audience to react to dramatic representations in the above manner more or less uniformly, and so there will be no serious difficulty in communication and appreciation of drama.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We believe the analysis offered here is in the spirit of Indian aesthetics. It helps to understand some of the basic ideas, aims and attitudes of the Indian aestheticians. For general support of our belief the reader is referred to the essays "Psychical distance in Indian Aesthetics," "The Theory of Rasa" and "Catharsis in the light of Indian Aesthetics" by the author published in the *Journal of Aesthetics on Art Criticism*. (Dec. 1947, Dec. 1952 and Dec. 1956 respectively).

# THE AESTHETIC THEORY OF KEATS

## INTRODUCTORY

The object of this enquiry is to isolate an aesthetic theory from the writings of Keats and to examine it in the light of current ideas on the subject. The value of such a study will be mainly positive ; we shall be able to hold in abstraction a conception of beauty which a creative genius concretely worked out and adhered to in his artistic life and which, therefore, has the sanction of actuality, holding an authority higher than that of the 'theories of aesthetics' of the philosophers who may not have the full living experience of beauty, accomplished or in the making. And Keats was a poet of considerable power and excellence. He has been regarded as a 'pure poet'<sup>1</sup> after Chaucer and Shakespeare.

The main problems of aesthetics which have been dealt with in this essay are indicated as follows :-

1. Beauty and other values :
  - (a) Beauty and Truth.
  - (b) Beauty and Goodness.
2. Beauty of Nature and of Art.
3. The Nature of Beauty : Form or Content.
4. The Nature of Beauty : Real or Illusory.
5. The Function of Art : art and life.
6. The Poetic genius :
  - (a) Rational or Intuitive.
  - (b) Personal or Impersonal.

<sup>1</sup> See note (1) on "Concept of pure poetry".

A study of Keats reveals the basis for a healthy and commonsense aesthetic theory. The stones have been there; I have attempted to lay them in some kind of intellectual order.

Though the present study is mainly philosophical, it could not altogether steer clear of literary controversies about Keats. Naturally; for its materials are after all the poems and letters of Keats, and there exists considerable difference of emphasis and opinion in interpreting much of Keats's writings. The present writer has no bias or blind enthusiasm for the poet. He has differed where necessary, from the views even of those literary critics who have helped him most in making out what Keats means or attempts, which is not always easy to ascertain.

The value of this essay should be judged by its consistency and the wholeness of the aesthetic theory isolated from Keats's writings and not by any particular view established or refuted. Such views have a value with reference to the whole system and not apart from it. Yet there are two very common opinions<sup>2</sup> (held by quite a number of literary critics) which could not be accepted here. They are :—

1. That Keats regarded Beauty and Truth as identical ; there is no truth which is not also beautiful.
2. That for Keats rational philosophy is inca-

<sup>2</sup> See Note (2) on "Beauty is Truth" and also note (3) on "Concept of Philosophy in Keats" where the views of many well-known critics have been quoted.

pable of arriving at truth which being beauty, must be apprehended by intuition ; so philosophy should be romantic, in fact, it should be like poetry ; not intellect but imagination can give us truth.

An objection may be raised that it is not right to give such serious attention to a poet's writings on the process of poetic creation. A poet is no philosopher, and he is apt to be more imaginative than analytical. This objection is not without a general truth, but in the specific example before us, that of Keats, it does not appear to be enough of an objection. Keats has given evidence of much intellectual power ; he was no dreamer, and we are repeatedly struck by the sanity and accuracy of his self-analysis. As one of his critics<sup>3</sup> holds, Keats's judgments on his own character and on the processes of his own mind are 'calm and sane' and have a power of penetrating analysis, quite uncommon.

So if a poet who combines in himself an imaginative genius for artistic perceptions with an intellect sharp enough to catch the very workings of the imagination in the process of creation, we can expect from a study of himself that is likely to be of value to the aesthetic philosopher as well. That is the *raison d'être* of this brief study.\*

<sup>3</sup> Ridley: *Keats' Craftsmanship* (p. 2).

\* All citations in this essay from Keats's letters are from H. B. Forman's edition (1931), and those from Keats's verse are from H. B. Forman's edition (1931).

## BEAUTY AND TRUTH

That Keats identified beauty with truth is a commonplace of criticism. The critics<sup>4</sup> have accepted this identification as the final and deliberate view of Keats on the two values, and they have tried to justify it in various ways. But the dissenters have by no means been rare. One of them, Bradley, casts doubt on the wisdom of Keats in making such an identification—

“I should observe perhaps that if Keats’s position as formulated above is accepted, the question still remains whether a truth which is also beauty, or a beauty which is also truth, can be found by man ; and if so, whether it can in strictness be called by either of these names.” (*On the Letters of Keats*).

That precisely, is the problem we should face instead of taking the rhetorical trope of Keats, ‘Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty’ at its face value and declaring it a gem of wisdom. As a poet Keats had every right to make such confusion of values (or, should we say fusion?). But he knew better. And, as will be shown here, he had another and more correct notion of truth, which is philosophical, and which he wished to, but never quite did identify with beauty. Beauty is given in intuition, while truth, in its proper sense, is reached through conceptual thinking ; however concrete these concepts may be, they cannot embrace (*i.e.* subsume)

<sup>4</sup> See Note (2) on ‘Beauty is Truth’ for the views of Arnold, Bradley, Middleton Murry, Saito, Finney and Ridley.

actually in the mind their manifold instances which they involve, and so the experience of truth is not of the same kind as experience of beauty, even if both be regarded as 'harmony'; in other words, if our conception of truth be coherence and that of beauty a harmonious vision of reality, we can identify beauty and truth only by stretching both to a breaking point, the accepted sense of these values. It will be like the meeting of parallel lines at infinity which remains a puzzle for school boys. We do not gain anything by such fusions, for it is like saying that all is one or that all distinction is deception and vanish in sleep.

But let us first turn to the occasions when Keats seems to identify beauty with truth. Here are the more important of these utterances:

1. "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty" that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. (Ode on a Grecian Urn).
2. "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the heart's affections of the truth of Imagination—what imagination seizes as beauty must be Truth—whether it existed before or not....."

.....I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning—and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections? However it may be, O for a Life of sensations rather

than of Thoughts ! It is a 'Vision in the form of Youth ! a shadow of reality to come'<sup>5</sup>.....

3. "I never can feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its Beauty."<sup>6</sup>

What these statements reveal is a parallelism between Beauty and Truth, a parallelism which, it is no wonder, has been exaggerated into an identity by a poetic mind which was in the main sensuous. Truth, arrived through reasoning and not concretely or imaginatively apprehended, remains abstract and external,—that is the point which Keats stresses in these passages. The general is formed out of the particulars, the abstract from the concrete, but the sense of their origin should not be lost in the mind of the philosopher, and so his knowledge should not be abstract. So far Keats is sound. But, if he is also suggesting that truth can be arrived at by vision only, that no logical concepts are involved in it, he is only poetising, and his statements are not to be regarded as revealing a philosophical truth.

We shall soon see in what way he expressed his notion of truth in other passages. But before doing that the passages just quoted above may be first dealt with severally.

Quotation (1) is a rhetorical statement; it reveals a poetic truth and should not serve as a philosophical maxim. Keats could not have meant it to be one. Truth in this passage means a poetical apprehension

<sup>5</sup> L. No. 29: To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817.

<sup>6</sup> L. No. 93: To George & Georgiana Keats, Nov. 1818.

of reality or realisation in a harmonious way of the truths of life. In such a sense it is like beauty and ceases to be intellectual. The one common attribute in the two values that is grasped by the mind of Keats is the harmony or consistency, and on the basis of this he has identified the two. But, in a moment of poetic fervour, he has given an excessive importance to this common attribute. The statement, "Beauty is Truth", is therefore rhetorical, an exaggeration of a similarity into an identity.<sup>7</sup> In Quotation (2) Keats does not really mean that conceptual knowledge is false and misleading; we should not overlook the words "Yet it must be" and "However it may be." He only feels that for certainty one has to imagine that which is known, realise the full meaning of the concepts involved in the thought process. Reacting against a vicious intellectualism that moves in abstractions, Keats naturally exaggerates a little the importance of direct knowledge or intuition, so much so that he almost pits intuitive knowledge against conceptual knowledge. But he knew that true knowledge relies as much on concepts as on percepts. It is not right to stress a few selected

<sup>7</sup> Ruskin also felt somewhat like this. "I am at a loss to know how so untenable a position could ever been advanced: but it may perhaps have arisen from some confusion of beauty of art with the beauty of nature, and from an illogical expansion of the very certain truth that nothing is beautiful in art which professing to be an imitation or statement is not as such in some sort true." (Quoted in H. N. Dey's Notes on Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*).

passages from his writings to prove a thesis ; rather we should first assume that he possessed a normal view of knowledge and then look for other passages written in a different mood. Quotation (3) means that when a truth is realised, there is a sense of harmony in it, it is a harmony of the mind with the object known : this harmony gives it a semblance of beauty. Thus the appearance of beauty in a known object is a sign of the knowledge being true. But if we deduce from it that 'Beauty is truth', the deduction will be illogical;<sup>8</sup> for all that is beautiful may not be truth : truth involves concepts, whereas a thing may be beautiful and be merely a percept.

That Keats had also a notion of truth as metaphysical and more valuable than the experience of beauty will be seen from the following:

4. "O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake  
 Would all their colours from the sunset take :  
 From something of material sublime  
 Rather than shadow our own souls' day-time  
 In the dark void of night. For in the world  
 We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurled  
 On the Admiral-staff—and so philosophize  
 I dare not yet ! Oh, never will the prize,  
 High reason, and the love of good and ill,  
 Be my award ! Things cannot to the will  
 Be settled, but they tease us out of thought."<sup>9</sup>

He feels the difficulty of arriving at a harmonious

<sup>8</sup> The term 'Beauty' should not be distributed as it is not so distributed in the major premise.

<sup>9</sup> L. No. 55: To Reynolds, 25 March 1818.

philosophic view of the world ; it is as yet beyond his powers; and so he says a few lines after,

“It is a flaw

In happiness to see beyond our bourn—

It forces us in summer skies to mourn

It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.”

Thus perception of beauty is simple and satisfying.<sup>10</sup> But the aspiration for a comprehensive view of the world is also felt by the poet; but he rejects it because it is almost impossible to master, and it may, he fears, interfere with his simpler poetic enjoyment of things for their own sakes.

Thus, there are two things to be distinguished; one, Truth—which is a contemplation of reality as it is, one harmonious whole for which contemplation, ‘high reason’, is necessary; and there is the other thing, Beauty, which can be enjoyed by a mind which is satisfied with the momentary and the fragmentary presentations and does not aspire after a comprehensive view of reality, which view by its very nature cannot but be more conceptual than sensuous. A concept can comprehend within a short compass a manifold of sensuous instances and is thus indispensable for the philosopher who wants to grasp the whole in his mind.

<sup>10</sup> Later it was not so simple and satisfying for Keats, yet it was not beyond his powers of assimilation. He understood difficult beauty, *e.g.* the beauty born of pain, as in Moneta’s face (*The Second Hyperion*. II, 256-63). But this difficult beauty was not for him philosophy as Bradley seems to tell us. See note (3) on “Concept of philosophy in Keats.”

5. 'O fret not after knowledge—I have none  
And yet my song comes native with warmth  
O fret not after knowledge—I have none  
And yet the Evening listens."<sup>11</sup>

Here also he shows the conflict in his mind, which he forcibly resolves by saying that Beauty gives him easy enjoyment, and so knowledge, hard to get, may be spared. But he writes in prose, after this: "Now I am sensible—all this is mere sophistication (however it may neighbour to any truth) to excuse my indolence...<sup>11</sup>" The essential distinction is not absent in his mind. He is conscious of the joy of beauty, also of the joy of truth, and the two are not quite the same; though alike in many respects they also differ from each other in many points,— "It spoils the singing of a Nightingale."

Let us consider another statement of Keats :

6. "Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine: the commonest man shows a grace in his quarrel. By a superior being our reasonings may take the same tone—though erroneous, they may be fine. This is the very thing in which consists poetry, and if so, it is not so fine a thing as philosophy—for the same reason that an eagle is not as fine a thing as truth."<sup>12</sup>

The meaning of this letter should be clear to a careful reader. Keats is speaking about the instinc-

<sup>11</sup> L. No. 45: To Reynolds, 19 Feb. 1818.

<sup>12</sup> L. No. 114: To George & Georgiana Keats, 19 March 1819.

tive knowledge of a man who observes a stoat and also of a superior being who may observe man. This knowledge is spontaneous, easy and not 'consecutive reasoning'. But it may be erroneous in spite of its fineness. Keats, therefore, says quite reasonably that poetry which consists in such instinctive attitudes is inferior to philosophy which proceeds by reasoning. To a poet a street fight is also enjoyable, for the poet contemplates things as detached from all questions of ethics or metaphysics, the thing in itself, enjoyed for its own sake. But, for that reason, a poet is not better than a philosopher who can judge things according to their place in the scheme of things in general. Then Keats quotes from Milton :—

"How charming is Divine Philosophy  
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose  
But musical as is Apollo's lute."

Keats, the poet liked philosophy quite as much if not more than poetry. He says :

7. "I am convinced more and more everyday that (excepting the human friend Philosopher) a fine writer is the most genuine Being in the world."<sup>13</sup> 'Excepting the human friend philosopher', shows that he had better respect for the philosopher.

Now about the interpretation of the letter to George (Quotation 6). Bradley does not say any thing, for he cannot make out a consistent meaning out of it; but Murry comes to the rescue. According to him philosophy for Keats is 'compre-

<sup>13</sup> L. No. 133: To Bailey, 14 Aug. 1819.

hension of the mystery of life' and not metaphysical speculation, and the passage means "that one kind of poetry is not so fine as another kind of poetry, one kind of poet is not so fine as another kind of poet."<sup>14</sup>

Poetry is finer according as it is the instinctive attitude of the more complete and comprehensive being. Murry writes, "The process of poetic comprehension moves from the perception of harmony to the perception of harmony, and these successive harmonies are its truths."<sup>15</sup> But this is the attitude of a critic who delights in sweeping away all distinctions in a whirlwind of mysticism. Murry accepts this charge and asserts that rational thinking assumes reality as rational, poetic thinking assumes it to be harmonious. So in deciding between the two we can but appeal to the "ultimate satisfaction"<sup>16</sup> which they bring us. Now all this justification<sup>17</sup> in a high mystical tone is, it seems, unnecessary, for Keats himself would not require it. Keats is quite clear in his mind that poetic apprehension does not care for truth and error, which philosophy does, and though poetry is fine,

<sup>14</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, P. 135.

<sup>17</sup> Finney interprets this passage like this. "He knew that the impulses of the stoat are instinctive but he did not believe that his own reasonings were instinctive. He did not mean, therefore, that poetry is not so fine a thing as philosophy". (*Evolution of Keats' Poetry*, Vol. II, p. 582). This goes against commonsense and few will accept it.

philosophy is finer. Murry quite overlooks the words 'though erroneous' in the letter, and so he can keep to an interpretation which does violence to the poet as well as to our commonsense. Bradley, with a similar view of what Keats meant by 'philosophy', might also have given a distorted interpretation of the passage to suit his own purpose, but he is too honest and cautious a critic for that. Murry simplifies his task by leaving out of account the implication of "though erroneous" and of "excepting the human friend philosopher" in the two letters. In spite of the rich suggestiveness of many of Murry's remarks, he has a 'palpable design' on us, and he has not interpreted Keats with an open mind.

Keats felt his lack of knowledge of philosophy as much as he was conscious of his poetic faculty. He writes—

8. ".....shall learn Greek and very like Italian—and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a year's time the best metaphysical road I can take. For although I take poetry to be Chief, yet there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among Books and thoughts on Books—I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare and as I have lately upon Milton."<sup>18</sup>

9. "...there is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study and thought. I will pursue it and to that end purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some years

<sup>18</sup> L. No. 60: To Reynolds, 27 April 1818.

between an exquisite sense of luxuriousness and a love for Philosophy—were I calculated for the former I should be glad—but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter.”<sup>19</sup>

The ‘exquisite sense of luxuriousness’ has been taken to mean a lower and sensuous kind of beauty and ‘philosophy’ as higher kind of beauty both by Bradley and Murry.<sup>20</sup> It is argued that Keats was gradually feeling his way towards a higher kind of beauty which is harmony in discord, beauty conquering all ugliness and suffering. So, for him, true philosophy was this comprehension of the good and bad in one, and this is true beauty. Now, there is no doubt about the fact that Keats was moving towards a higher conception of poetry, poetry whose subject might be life itself with all its joys and sorrows, ‘the agonies, the strife of human hearts’. Poetry should come nearer life and thus to its real sources, that is, a faith which led him towards increasingly greater objectivity and concreteness in poetry and which he expressed when he wrote to Taylor<sup>21</sup> that his greatest ambition was to write a few plays. But this richer conception of poetry in his mind should not be reduced to a conception of poetry as the highest truth and poetry as displacing philosophy. Poetry or beauty is always a vision, truth or philosophy is always a thought;

<sup>19</sup> L. No. 59: To John Taylor, 24 April 1818.

<sup>20</sup> Bradley, *Letters of Keats*, Oxford Lectures, p. 235. Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, pp. 60-61. See Note (3) ‘Concept of Philosophy in Keats.’

<sup>21</sup> L. No. 156: To Taylor, 17 Nov. 1819.

we cannot, except by a confusion in our mind, identify the two. Poetry may be philosophical and philosophy poetical, but they do not lose their essential identities. The critics<sup>22</sup> who believe in such a fusion of values read Keats's statements with an incomplete mind or a mind already prejudiced; they impute to Keats a philosophy of beauty which he would himself refuse to be saddled with.

That Keats was against mere logic—chopping and barren reasoning is an accepted fact. Every true philosopher would respect Keats for that. But it is unwise to interpret Keats's writings against such 'intellectualism' as altogether dismissing philosophy as a worthy pursuit or rational truth as a human value. He was against ready-made theories, fixed notions, in a word, dogmatism in philosophy against which Kant, for instance, stood. But that does not mean that he would like to turn philosophy into poetry, rational truth into beauty : much less turn them from their position of eminence among human pursuits.

Let us examine Keats's own statements about and against intellectualism:

10. "The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare or all thoughts, not a select party. The genius is not scarce in population. All the stubborn arguers you meet with are of the same brood. They never begin upon a subject they have not pre-resolved on.....

<sup>22</sup> Arnold, Bradley, Middleton Murry etc. : See Note (2).

Dilke will never come at truth as long as he lives; because he is always trying at it. He is a Godwin methodist.”<sup>23</sup>

11. “I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, vanity and bigotry. Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher.”<sup>24</sup>

These two passages advise a philosopher to keep an open mind. It is too much to say that Keats meant a true philosopher to be a relativist in his theory of knowledge like a poet for whom all is truth and all is falsehood.

Keats declares ‘negative capability’ a positive virtue in a poet; it is to be in ultimate doubts, uncertainties and mysteries. But he does not say that the poet is superior to a philosopher or that the poet can justly be a substitute for him. There is, it is true, one letter of his which may go against the above view and which Murry has made much of. It is this :

12. “Now my dear fellow, I must once for all tell you that I have not one Idea of the truth of any of my speculations—I shall never be a Reasoner because I care not to be in the right, when returned from bickering and in a proper philosophical temper.”<sup>25</sup> Obviously it means that in a proper philosophical temper one does not care for any definite conclusions, all are equally true. Murry concludes that for Keats true philosophy is this ‘Negative

<sup>23</sup> L. No. 147: To George & Georgiana Keats, 21 Sept. 1819.

<sup>24</sup> L. No. 47: To George & Georgiana Keats, 21 Dec. 1818.

<sup>25</sup> L. No. 50: To Bailey, 13 March 1818.

capability'.<sup>26</sup> But the conclusion is drastic. In the passage quoted, Keats is speaking mostly about his own attitude which is poetic and, therefore, indifferent to the question of truth or falsehood. He is also strongly reacting against the 'stubborn arguer', the dry reasoners, and in his moody annoyance, he asserts that his own attitude of complete indifference to the question of truth or falsehood is truly philosophical, while that of the dogmatic arguers is not. We should be cautious in interpreting him far too literally here, for his tone itself is perturbed and not, as is usual with him, lucid. What he is probably driving at is that truth is not fixed and ready-made; the proper theory of truth and error should be one of coherence, but not of intuition or self-evidence. In fact, when Keats is in his 'proper philosophical' mood he tends towards a proper philosophical theory in epistemology.

So we can concede this much that Keats was for a reformation of philosophy, but not that he wanted it to be transformed into poetry. For, as shown earlier, the distinction was not blurred in his mind. Indeed, he was painfully conscious of it.

Again, Keats asserts that philosophy is not philosophy unless it is experienced. That is a sound assertion, but here 'experienced' does not mean seen, felt and heard as particulars are experienced; it really means that the philosophical concepts should not be abstract and wholly detached from their percepts. They should be concrete and their

<sup>26</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 58.

connection with the sensuous particulars should not be lost sight of. This is a convincing philosophy.<sup>27</sup> In fact he was against 'vicious intellectualism' and against pseudo-concepts if his meaning is to be expressed in modern terms. Of course, he did not know the full implication of his utterances, but to-day we can appreciate them and feel how the poet's mind was working in a right direction.

The utterances in question are :

13. (Speaking of Wordsworth) "In regard to his genius alone we find what he says true as far as we have experienced and we can judge no further but by larger experience—for axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses. We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the author. Until we are sick we understand not; in fine, as Byron says, 'Knowledge is sorrow'—and I go on to say that 'Sorrow is wisdom'—and further for aught we can know for certainty "Wisdom is folly."<sup>28</sup>

14. "Nothing can become real till it is experienced—even a proverb is no proverb to you, till your life has illustrated it."<sup>29</sup> This is but sound observation; the materials on which thinking works, is experience, concrete presentation, so that to

<sup>27</sup> It is a psychological as well as an epistemological theory which is gaining ground recently. See *Nature of Thought* by Brand Blanshard.

<sup>28</sup> L. No. 61: To Reynolds, 3 May 1818.

<sup>29</sup> L. No. 114: To George & Georgiana Keats, 19 March 1819.

arrive at truth, the philosopher himself should observe life and the world ; his knowledge will thus be intimate and his convictions sure. This does not mean that philosophy should give up reasoning and be content only with the sensuous manifold given to us. We can arrive at no truth by such means. The truth which we may reach through such unreflecting submission of the mind to the heart, which Murry holds so high<sup>30</sup> is poetic truth which is but beauty born of disinterested contemplation of a thing or situation for its own sake. It is this poetic truth<sup>31</sup> of which Keats speaks when he says that 'what imagination seizes as Beauty is Truth', and of which he speaks again thus :

15. (Speaking about the speech of Endymion towards the end of Book I of *Endymion*) "The whole thing must I think have appeared to you, who are a consecutive Man, as a thing almost of mere Words—but I assure you that when I wrote it, it was a regular stepping of the Imagination towards Truth."<sup>32</sup>

16. "Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth,.....Adam's dream will do here."<sup>33</sup>

Truth of imagination is beauty and has a kind

<sup>30</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 139.

<sup>31</sup> Bergson makes it identical with philosophical truth ; for him philosophy should base itself on intuition ; reality is to be intuited as it escapes intellect. But Keats's view is not this.

<sup>32</sup> L. No. 39 to Taylor, 30 Jan. 1818.

<sup>33</sup> L. No. 29: To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817.

of reality which satisfies the mind. Keats amply recognises this and so he claims a high status for poetry. But this truth of imagination is not truth of philosophy which needs imagination plus reasoning or conceptual thinking. Keats is a poet and feels that he will never master philosophy and so has to content himself with his poetry which he no doubt, esteems very highly. Yet he does not confuse the two values. Poetry is fine for him but philosophy finer;<sup>34</sup> though poetry is the chief thing he wants, being a poet, yet he wants 'something else'.<sup>35</sup> "What is it but knowledge for which even a course of study in metaphysics is necessary? A fine writer is the most genuine being, excepting the human friend philosopher."<sup>36</sup> Again,

17. "I know nothing, I have read nothing and I mean to follow Solomon's directions of 'Get Wisdom, Get understanding, I find cavalier days are gone by.'<sup>37</sup>

18. "I am earnest as far as I can see. Though at this present I have great dispositions to write I feel everyday more and more content to read. Books are becoming more interesting and valuable to me."<sup>38</sup>

19. "Some think I have lost that poetic ardour and fire 'tis said I once had—the fact perhaps I have : but instead of that I hope I shall substitute

<sup>34</sup> See quotation (6).

<sup>35</sup> See quotation (8).

<sup>36</sup> See quotation (7).

<sup>37</sup> L. No. 59: To Taylor, 24 April 1818.

<sup>38</sup> L. No. 149: To Haydon, 3 Oct. 1819.

a more thoughtful and quiet power. I am more frequently, now, contented to read and think—but now and then haunted with ambitious thoughts.”<sup>39</sup>

20. “I am three and twenty, with little knowledge and middling intellect. It is true that in the height of my enthusiasm I have been cheated into some fine passages, but that is not the thing.”<sup>40</sup>

The above quotations give us the impression that Keats was conscious of the worth of knowledge which demands besides experience of the world, reading and thinking, and which knowledge is distinct from the sort of knowledge one gets through poetic vision. It is unconvincing and it is sophistication on the part of Murry when he says that Keats means by knowledge poetic knowledge and not knowledge of a philosopher.<sup>41</sup> As has been shown before, Keats believed that truth must be founded on experience, but he did not and needed not to believe that only unreflecting intuitive apprehension of the world’s phenomena would give the highest truth (which is, in fact, Beauty), and that metaphysical truth is of no importance. The poet and the philosopher were distinct for him and the philosopher superior (in certain respects) to a poet (he says ‘finer’).

Against those who think<sup>42</sup> that knowledge for

<sup>39</sup> L. No. 143: To Woodhouse, 21 Sept. 1819.

<sup>40</sup> L. No. 107: To Haydon, 8 March 1819.

<sup>41</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 62.

<sup>42</sup> K. B. Roy, *Keats’s Conception of Poetic Vocation*, p. 21.

Keats meant experience gained through personal suffering we can hold the following letter<sup>43</sup> :

21. "An extreme knowledge is needful to thinking people—it takes away the heat and fever; and helps by widening speculation to ease the 'Burden of the Mystery'—a thing I begin to understand a little,.....although it is impossible to know how far that knowledge will console us from the death of a friend or the ills 'that flesh is heir to.'<sup>44</sup>

This shows that Keats distinguishes between knowledge that requires (besides experience) thinking process and knowledge that is mere experience gained through suffering. For the former he wants to take the best metaphysical road<sup>45</sup> under the guidance of Hazlitt, the latter, he thinks, is necessary for the former; "until we are sick we understand not".<sup>46</sup> There is no confusion in Keats's mind between knowledge proper and knowledge that is but 'wise passiveness'<sup>47</sup> which grows with experience of sorrow.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus we have seen that when Keats declared 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty', he only meant that these are alike in being harmonious and delightful to the soul, also that Beauty deepens as we move

<sup>43</sup> K. B. Roy uses the same letter to prove his case.

<sup>44</sup> To Reynolds, 3 May 1818.

<sup>45</sup> See quotation (8).

<sup>46</sup> See quotation (13). Here Keats wants to stress the importance of experience.

<sup>47</sup> Keats speaks of it as state when the mind is 'passive and receptive' (To Reynolds, 19 Feb. 1818).

from one comprehensive vision to a more comprehensive one, and so does Truth which is not static. But he was not forgetful of the essential distinction between Beauty and Truth, that while the former is a disinterested and spontaneous perception of harmony, the latter is a conception of harmony developed through generalising from perceptions and is interested in so far as it claims reality. Beauty is scarcely conscious of a distinction between reality and unreality, the experience of beauty is immediately satisfying and unreflecting. Croce<sup>48</sup> would say that the aesthetic activity is spontaneous and simple and it is different from the logical activity of the spirit which is conscious of reality-unreality; and which works through concepts. Or Alexander<sup>49</sup> might say that Beauty is more subjective, Truth objective. Keats might not have known all the implications of his statements but it is not likely that he would have greatly differed from the views of Croce or Alexander.

### BEAUTY AND GOODNESS

Here too we have to guard against a temptation to identify too rashly and comfortably the two values—beauty and goodness. It is very satisfying for us to say that “Beauty is the highest Good” and to wonder at the loftiness of the view. But

<sup>48</sup> See his *Aesthetic*,

<sup>49</sup> See his “*Space, Time and Deity*”, Vol. II, and “*Beauty and other forms of value*.”

such loftiness is gained at the cost of clear thinking. For Keats, as for any one of us, there was much in common between the two values. The highest good would be achieved by being 'disinterested', and the disinterested spontaneous contemplation of the world creates essential beauty. Also, Keats thought of doing good to the world through his writings, so that poetry (or beauty) could be a means to good. So far there is no difficulty. But the difficulty arises as soon as we try to picture Keats as one who was nothing if not a poet and a lover of beauty and who thought Beauty was all truth and all good. Keats had enough common sense, and what is clear from his thoughtful writings, enough philosophical aptitude. He could not confuse things so easily. And he did not. Let us remind ourselves of the quotation No. (16) again. Keats says that a quarrel in the street is a thing to be hated, but a poet may enjoy it, for he will find a display of energies there. This attitude is born of the disinterested contemplation of a thing for its own sake; it is spontaneous and does not concern itself with ethical issues. This is poetry, and so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy. Philosophy concerns itself with the ethical question also. That is, it seems, pretty clear. (For Keats, the philosopher is more or less a moral philosopher as he does not make much distinction between metaphysics and ethics). Speaking of the poetic character, Keats says that it has no self, no character, it enjoys the light and the shade, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the mean and the elevated:

22. "It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon Poet."<sup>50</sup>

It is obvious that 'the virtuous philosopher' is not held in contempt. He is simply differentiated from the chameleon poet and even esteemed. For,

23. "I am convinced more and more every day that (excepting the human friend philosopher) a fine writer is the most genuine Being in the world."<sup>51</sup>

24. "I am convinced more and more day by day that fine writing is, next to fine doing, the top thing in the world."<sup>52</sup>

Good can be done through poetry but that does not mean that poetry is the only good or that poetry (Art and Beauty) and Good are the same thing. This is seen in the following passages :

25. "I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world—some do it with their society, some with their wit, some with their benevolence, some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good humour on all they meet and in thousand ways all equally dutiful to the command of Great Nature—there is but one way for me—the road lies through application, study and thought"<sup>53</sup>.

Keats was a pure poet and pursued the principle of Beauty all his life, but he was conscious of the philosopher, moral and metaphysical, as distinct

<sup>50</sup> L. No. 88: To Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818.

<sup>51</sup> L. No. 133: To Bailey, 24 Aug. 1819. See quotation (7).

<sup>52</sup> L. No. 136: To Reynolds, 25 Aug. 1819.

<sup>53</sup> L. No. 59: To Taylor, 24 April 1818.

from him. It is also true to say that he held the philosopher in high respect ; the other values, Truth and Goodness, shone clear and distinct in his mind beside the glowing vision he had of Beauty, that 'vast idea'. He did not and would not suffer them to be fused into one, though he knew that they were close kin of each other and perhaps but three aspects of Reality itself.

### BEAUTY : OF NATURE AND OF ART

So far we have assumed that for Keats poetry, or art in general, is the same as Beauty. We shall now see the justness of that assumption, and further, we shall find out in what respect nature is related to art.

Keats describes in a letter a fine northern scene and continues:

26. "I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever for the abstract endeavour of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into ethereal existence for the relish of one's fellows."<sup>54</sup>

This shows that by writing poetry he will be creating beauty, and nature is also beautiful. But the artistic beauty will have an ethereal existence whereas nature is phenomenal and concrete. The difference between natural and artistic beauty is in the mode of their existence or the medium of

<sup>54</sup> L. No. 67: To Thomas Keats, 26 June 1818.

expression; essentially both are beautiful. It seems that he sometimes holds artistic beauty to be higher than natural, for in one letter he thinks that the Sun, the Earth and its contents are materials to form "greater things—that is to say ethereal things."<sup>55</sup> Thus artistic beauty existing on a different plane of existence is finer than natural beauty, because it is free from the touch of actuality, raised to a higher intensity. We may, in our own words, express this difference as one of pitch; a heightening or sublimating of the natural materials of beauty takes place. Probably Keats had this in mind when he wrote "to form greater things" in that letter.

But this nature is not only physical nature, it is also human nature which can be 'grand material' for art.

27. "Scenery is fine, but human nature finer."<sup>56</sup> In 'Sleep and Poetry' he had expressed the view that it is a development of poetic power when a poet passes from the poetry of nature to the poetry of human nature:

28. "And can I ever bid these joys farewell?  
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,  
Where I may find the agonies, the strife  
Of human hearts."

Again, Moneta, in 'Hyperion—a dream', tells the poet how real is human life :

<sup>55</sup> L. No. 15: To Haydon: 11 May 1817 (See quotation No. 45).

<sup>56</sup> L. No. 50 : To Bailey, 13 March 1818.

29. "None can usurp these heights, returned the shade,  
 But those to whom the miseries of the world  
 Are miseries and will not let them rest."

He himself was moving towards the centre of life itself, those "heights". He was repelled by the vulgar public, but his love of beauty led him towards human affairs which provided him with rich materials to be transformed into artistic beauty. We can trace this dual attitude as follows:

30. "I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the Public or to anything in existence, but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the memory of great Men.....I never wrote one single line of Poetry with the least shadow of Public Thought."<sup>57</sup>

31. "The faint conceptions I have of poems to come brings the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs—that the solitary indifference I feel for applause even from the finest spirits will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will. I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the Beautiful even if my night's labours be burnt every morning, and no eye ever shine upon them."<sup>58</sup>

The conflict is most prominent in the above letter; the public that lacks poetic taste and so neglects a poet's writings is detested by the poet. Yet the

<sup>57</sup> L. No. 57 : To Reynolds, 9 April 1818.

<sup>58</sup> L. No. 88 : To Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818.

poet loves man, for it is the story of human heart that interests him as a poet, human nature is the grand material he works on to produce beauty. The following letter speaks of his love for men and women:

32. "As the marvellous is the most enticing, and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers, I have been endeavouring to persuade myself to untether Fancy and let her manage for herself. I and myself cannot agree about this at all. Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst men and women. I would rather read Chaucer than Arioste".

"I mean they would nerve me up to writing a few fine plays—my greatest ambition when I do feel ambitious."<sup>59</sup> Thus Keats was feeling his way to human poetry. This phase is characterised by Murry as Keats's return to Shakespeare.<sup>60</sup>

So we can say that Keats held nature, physical and human, as exhibiting the principle of beauty, and regarded it as a material to be further treated by an artistic genius for the creation of beauty again, which is 'ethereal' and finer. That nature gives the inspiration to the poet is expressed by Keats in an early poem :<sup>61</sup>

33. "O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight  
Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers  
.....

<sup>59</sup> L. No. 156 : To Taylor, 17 Nov. 1819.

<sup>60</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 200.

<sup>61</sup> *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill.*

For what has made the Sage or poet write  
But the fair paradise of Nature's light."

To the question—which beauty is higher, natural or artistic, we have seen that Keats held the artistic to be higher. It is natural that he thought so for we find him recommending 'intensity' and 'fine excess' in a work of art; art concentrates the principle of beauty found in nature, lifts it to a higher pitch.

34. "The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate for their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth."<sup>62</sup>

35. "I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity."<sup>63</sup>

36. ".....you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore."<sup>64</sup>

Thus what the artist does is but to gather the things of beauty round him in nature and life and to bring them to a rich focus. If Keats were to follow his thought in this direction, he would have reached a conclusion of the kind that artistic beauty is richer than natural beauty though, *in esse*, they are not different.

## NATURE OF BEAUTY: FORM OR CONTENT

Form alone or content alone has no reality which is always form-content. Beauty is 'significant form'

<sup>62</sup> L. No. 30 : To George and Thomas Keats, 28 Dec. 1817.

<sup>63</sup> L. No. 48 : To Taylor, 27 Feb. 1818.

<sup>64</sup> L. No. 216 : To Shelley, Aug. 1820.

as Clive Bell happily terms it. The quarrel between form and content is now a matter of history, and aesthetic thinkers are recognising the need of viewing beauty as neither a matter of form alone nor one of content (or significance) alone. Among modern thinkers it was Croce who established this view strongly in his aesthetic theory, and it is now recognised as a sound view by such thinkers as Bosanquet<sup>65</sup> and A. C. Bradley<sup>66</sup> who have written against the error of separating the two factors—form and content. Much argument was needed for this, since the view that beauty is a matter of form had been voiced by many a great philosopher of the past,<sup>67</sup> Aristotle and Kant among them. (Hegel,<sup>67a</sup> though he said that form and content must harmonise in a work of art, always held them so distinct that it is not wrong to say that he separated them. For him the content of art is reality itself and this takes up a form appropriate to it. Hegel's theory of art is a theory of significance or content.)

Keats has been treated as a 'pure poet'<sup>68</sup> by Dr. Bridges and A. C. Bradley. Later, Murry takes

<sup>65</sup> *Three Lectures on Aesthetics*.

<sup>66</sup> *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 1st lecture.

<sup>67</sup> See Bosanquet's *History of Aesthetics*.

"Beauty is a matter of size and order (Aristotle). See *Poetics* p. 40. (Bywater's Translation). "Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object so far as this is perceived without any representation of a purpose." (Kant) See *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, p. 17.

<sup>67a</sup> See I. Knox on Hegel in his *Aesthetic Theory of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer*, p. 95.

<sup>68</sup> See Note (1) on *The concept of pure poetry*.

up the tune and plays it to his heart's content. But Keats's own writings do not afford much evidence for taking such a view of the matter. It is not always comforting to be told again and again that Keats is with Shakespeare, that he moved towards 'pure poetry' which is form-content in one. There is, of course, a feeling in all of us who read Keats's poetry that he is a pure poet and has no socio-ethical designs or philosophical preoccupations. But, as will be shown,<sup>69</sup> we cannot be very sure on this point. Keats's mind was feeling its way to a sound theory of aesthetics and naturally there was the conflict of opposites going on in him. The conflicts could not get time enough for a final resolution and they did not in all cases even come to a conscious plane. As a matter of fact, Keats was not conscious of this problem of aesthetics in such clear terms as we have it now, the problem of form and content. But that may be a gain for us in some respect; we can get to know what a creative genius instinctively felt about the problem, which is more valuable in a way than an abstract study of it by a philosopher. When we reason we may wholly go wrong, while when we feel a thing we may not arrive at clear formulations, yet we may be nearing the truth.

Let us examine a statement of Keats which is frequently quoted and discussed.

37. "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be

<sup>69</sup> See also Chap. 7 on Function of Art.

truth—whether it existed before or not,—for I have the same idea of all the passions as of Love: they are all, in their Sublime, creative of essential Beauty.”<sup>70</sup>

The plain meaning of all this is that Beauty is nothing but our experiences<sup>71</sup> of life raised to a higher and finer plane of existence by intensity. This is Sublimation for Keats. In our consciousness of beauty we are extraordinarily aware of our experiences: there is a heightening of self-consciousness. This condition is not different from the condition of enjoying an experience for its own sake, for the latter too is but a technique of heightening the experience. Keats does not stand for detachment in the sense of Kant, which is an anaemic conception and which sees beauty only in the form ignoring the concrete content or life-experience. Keats wants ‘intensity’ and ‘fine excess’ which comes from a kind of disinterestedness towards any intellectual or moral issues connected with the experience. This may be called transmutation of life by art, but we should not overlook the fact that the content, too, is of no inconsiderable importance. Keats wanted in Art (or Beauty) ‘passions sublimated’, ‘intensity’, ‘fine excess’ and also ‘unobtrusiveness’; he wanted the poet to have ‘Negative Capability’ which Shakespeare possessed enormously, and felt that the poet by all these means creates ‘higher things’—‘ethereal things’.

<sup>70</sup> L. No. 29 : To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817.

<sup>71</sup> That is whatever we sense, feel and think in the course of living without contemplating them disinterestedly or without being conscious of their beauty.

We have to keep all these in our mind and develop a coherent notion of beauty with regard to the question of its form and content.

38. ".....and at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after facts and reason..... This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration."<sup>72</sup>

This speaks in favour of the view that the lover of beauty is no philosopher, his joy is in the instinctive enjoyment of a content which is detached from the rest of the world in the sense that the question of its reality-unreality or of its good and evil does not arise at all.

(We may mention here in passing that this passage does not mean that the 'reaching after fact'—the business of philosophy, is irritable in itself. No. Art and philosophy for Keats are distinct, having their respective worth; what he dislikes is the mixing up of the two. Poetry should be free from any philosophical preoccupation).

39. "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket. Poetry should be

<sup>72</sup> L. No. 30: To George & Thomas Keats, 28 Dec. 1817.





sense, it is more in the ancient sense of 'catharsis'. Keats is purging his bitter experiences of life through poetry. Keats's disinterestedness is his 'Negative Capability' which means capacity to identify oneself with different characters or of experiencing all kinds of life and life's passions. So he was no 'ivory tower' poet, he loved teeming life with all its rawness, pain and confusion. Among artists he loved Shakespeare most, read *King Lear*, tasted 'the bitter sweet of this Shakespearian fruit' and felt himself 'more at home among men and women'. So he could not be a formalist however abstractly or esoterically we may interpret his 'principles of Beauty in all things' and his 'mighty abstract idea of Beauty'. Art is a matter of content for him, the subject is important, he moves from romance to drama consciously, from dreams to life's actuality.

Form for Keats, it may be suggested, was the natural dress which the content evolves. If Keats were to hear our controversy about form and content he might reply, "Take care of the content, the form will come of itself". The very process which transmutes a raw experience of life into a content for beauty, the process of isolation and concentration, gives also a form to it. Beauty is form-content at once.

The subject need not be pursued any further, for, as we have indicated at the start, we have no very solid ground under our feet. All that we can say is that Keats fixed his gaze on the content and did not very much bother about form which came of

itself as a fit garment for the content. Form for its own sake was never a problem to him.<sup>79</sup>

### NATURE OF BEAUTY : REAL OR ILLUSORY

If beauty consists in lifting up of experience into a sphere of greater intensity, does this process give more reality to the experience or take away some of its reality? That is to say, does the transmutation of life in art give us a product more real than the original material itself or not? Keats, we have seen, speaks of Beauty as Truth itself, but we have endeavoured to establish the view that in such statements Keats refers to poetic truth and not to truth as we know it in general. The value of each kind of truth is recognised by him; sometimes he holds poetic truth higher and sometimes intellectual truth.<sup>80</sup> What is derivable from Keats's speculation on these two values is that both beauty and truth are true in certain respects, both are satisfying and valuable to us.

44. "I am sometimes so very sceptical as to think Poetry itself a mere Jack O' lantern to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance. As tradesmen say everything is worth what it will fetch, so probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer—being in itself nothing"<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> He gave up Miltonic verse he had adopted for *Hyperion*, for he found that it was artful. Like Aristotle in *Rhetoric* he condemned style in itself.

<sup>80</sup> For example, he says 'poetry is not so fine a thing as philosophy.'

<sup>81</sup> L. No. 50: To Bailey, 13 March 1818.

So all mental pursuits are real in a sense. Beauty is also true though it is imagination instead of reasoning which is mainly needed here.

45. "Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth.....O for a life of Sensations rather of Thought : It is a vision in the form of youth, "a shadow of reality to come".<sup>82</sup>

So the vision which Beauty affords is like a view of a country in moonlight ; as the day dawns we find that what we saw was true, true yet in a different way, 'a shadow of reality to come'.

46. "I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity—it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance."<sup>83</sup> Thus the experience of life is to be heightened in poetry, experience-stuff is the basic substance of poetry. Keats speaks of the material universe as supplying the material for poetry :

47. ".....the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth, and its contents, as materials to form greater things—that is to say ethereal things—but here I am talking like a mad man—greater things than our Creator himself made !"<sup>84</sup>

The material on which poetry works, which becomes its content, is the same on which philosophy works. The difference is in the method of treatment of this

<sup>82</sup> L. No. 29: To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817.

<sup>83</sup> L. No. 48: To Taylor ; 27 Feb. 1818.

<sup>84</sup> L. No. 15: To Hadon: 11 May 1817.

material by the Imagination and by the Intellect, one producing beauty, the other truth, but both having a reality. Imagination isolates the raw material from its sundry connections with the rest of the world and holds it in a bright focus of attention, while intellect relates it to the rest of the world and tries to view it as a complex of relations in a comprehensive scheme of things. We may say, a little crudely no doubt, that Beauty is a matter of isolation and concentration and Truth a matter of relation and harmonisation. Thus viewed the two values have the same reality for us. In fact, we do not know what is the raw stuff to begin with, we know only of the products of the Imagination and the Intellect. It is only for the sake of a distinction in our thought that we separate the datum from the product, but we cannot vouch for the reality of the datum itself. So it is necessary for us to recognise the equal status of Beauty and Truth. Keats did not really differ from this view. He said of course, that Poetry is not so fine as Philosophy<sup>85</sup> and that sensation (*i.e.*, intuition) gives a shadow of reality to come,<sup>86</sup> but he did not question the reality of beauty ; in other statements he held Beauty high upto Truth, as for example, 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty', and "What Imagination seizes Beauty is Truth".<sup>87</sup> Ridley holds that for Keats Beauty is most real, ".....the most real

<sup>85</sup> See quotation 6.

<sup>86</sup> See quotation 45.

<sup>87</sup> See quotation 2.

things, and the stuff of which great poetry is made, are the creations of the Imagination working upon things of the sense."<sup>88</sup> This view does not convince us. Keats distinguished the poet from the dreamer knowing that true poetry has a kind of reality though it is not the same reality as the reality of the sensible world which a conceptual knowledge harmonises in the process of knowing it. He implicitly believed in orders of reality or planes of existence, but did not mark one as higher than the other. If at all he made any difference in degree, he probably placed Truth higher, but that view depends on our interpreting correctly his meaning of 'finer' in quotation (6) ; 'finer' may mean subtler or it may mean simply more appealing. It is doubtful if Keats meant by it that philosophy gives us a higher reality than what poetry gives. He could not make such graduation for he would then have to judge the reality of beauty by an intellectual standard; the reality of feeling or imagination can but be asserted (not proved rationally) and placed by the side of the reality of thinking; we cannot get them together before thought to compare them. At least Keats, being fully conscious of the distinction between Thought and Sensation, could not do this. Keats did not like Shelley, hold the mental to have more reality than the material or the sensible. For Shelley, the poet looks at natural objects only as phenomena, the noumena are the ideas in his mind.

48. "Nor heed nor see, what things they be  
But from these create he can

<sup>88</sup> *Keats's Craftsmanship*, p. 10.

Forms more real than living man  
Nurslings of immortality.”<sup>80</sup>

Keats, too, occasionally recognises that the mind can be a world in itself.

49. “The soul is a world of itself, and has enough to do in its own home”.<sup>90</sup>

50. “Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel—the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with a few points to tip with this fine Web of his Soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his luxury.”<sup>91</sup>

It may seem that Keats is for esoteric poetry. But such is not the case. For, in the same letter he expounds this view, he connects it with a philosophy of idleness, admiring Jove who sits all life more than Mercury who flies, and he ends by saying “Now I am sensible all this is a mere sophistication (however it may neighbour to any truth) to excuse my indolence”. Keats wrote this letter in a mood of indolence and it seemed a pleasant idea to sit idle and produce creative works as the spider creates its web. But such works will have a symbolical meaning clear only to the writer. Keats wrote this

<sup>80</sup> *Prometheus Unbound*. Act I. ii.

<sup>90</sup> L. No. 36: To Raynolds, 28 Aug. 1819.

<sup>91</sup> L. No. 45: To Raynolds, 19 Feb. 1818.

letter in February 1818, and we know how he moved towards a concrete theory of beauty and art, how he came to love Chaucer and Shakespeare more and more and feel 'more at home amongst men and women'. Thus he could not be a Platonic idealist like Shelley and had no mystical predisposition, so that our conclusion that for Keats Beauty and Truth had equal reality though not exactly of the same kind can be taken as being fairly sound. Beauty was for him no illusion nor was it for him as the sun or the moon or a proposition in geometry. Beauty is real in so far as it has a being as any other thing, but its mode of existence is a little different from that of others. We cannot take a story for reality and criticise it as we criticise a real event with realistic interest. Nor should we go to the other extreme and regard a story as a mere fanciful creation unworthy of our serious attention. For Keats imagination was like Adam's dream, Adam awoke and found it true. Reality is seen in two modes: Beauty and Truth are Reality in two modes: what is Reality in itself, we cannot know, as we cannot the Substance in itself of Spinoza (for whom the modes were Mind and Matter).

The above view of Keats's conception of Beauty with regard to the problem of beauty as real or illusory squares with the view expressed above where Beauty and Truth are considered in their mutual relation.

## FUNCTION OF ART : ART AND LIFE

As A. C. Bradley puts it, art and life have an 'underground connection'. We can make out from what we have so far known about Keats in this study that he held a view not much differing from that of Bradley which is a sound commonsense one. Speculation on aesthetics sometimes becomes so abstract and sophisticated that we lose sight of the plain facts of the case, for example, the fact that beauty exists in life and for life; and we may lose ourselves in abstraction and want art to approach the condition of music or pure patterns. Keats was nothing if not concrete with a sound commonsense; his romanticism was the full-blooded romanticism of the Elizabethan poets. He never fell into the clutches of a mystical manner of thinking and did not separate art from life. Nor did he confuse the two. He believed that he could do good to the society even in his poetical capacity, that he must do good. Poets are no idlers, no dreamers, there is no glory to be gained by saying that the poet is above all questions of good and evil and is free of social responsibilities. Keats was conscious of his responsibilities as a poet.

51. "I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world—some do it with their society—some with their wit, some with their benevolence—some with the sort of power of conferring pleasure and good humour on all they meet and in a thousand ways all equally dutiful to the command of Great Nature—there is but one

way for me—the road lies through application, study and thought.”<sup>92</sup>

As interpreted before, Keats here wants some real knowledge of life through study and thought besides observation. But his object is not here to become a moral philosopher in the strict sense of the term, though he speaks of philosophy as being more attractive for him. He wants to compose poetry of a more serious kind which will concern itself with life's problems, not directly, of course, but indirectly. He does not want poetry to have ‘designs upon us’, but he bids farewell to romance and welcomes human poetry and holds Shakespeare highest among the poets. He says that he writes for the sake of Beauty which is the object of his pursuit all his life, but he also writes that ‘wonders are no wonders’ for him and he feels ‘more at home amongst men and women’. He grants that he may have lost some poetic ardour as his friends tell him, but he has gained a more ‘thoughtful and quiet power’.<sup>93</sup> We can thus see that Keats was moving towards thought and experience of life, recognising Truth and Goodness more and more, besides his own Beauty. So we can speak of Keats as one who increasingly realised the underground connection between art and life and between art and truth. Saito rightly pointed out, “Though Keats has been set aside as a poetic voluptuary and no more, there was in him, on the

<sup>92</sup> L. No. 59: To Taylor, 24 April 1818.

<sup>93</sup> See quotations nos. 19 & 32.

contrary, a vein of humanitarian idealist".<sup>94</sup> 'Fine writing, next to fine doing, is the top thing in the world'.<sup>95</sup> The poet in *Hyperion: A Dream* is honoured by Moneta but she holds the fine doers who 'feel the giant agony of the world' higher than the poets. Keats regards fine doers with greater respect than the fine writers. Fine writers also do good and their worth is to be tested by the amount of good done. This is a very healthy notion of art and the artist given by Keats.

While criticising the fallen poets in *Sleep and Poetry* Keats accuses them of

52. "forgetting the great end  
Of Poesy, that it should be a friend  
To soothe the cares, and lift the thought of  
man."

In *Hyperion: A Dream*, the poet and the dreamer are distinguished

'The one pours out a balm upon the world,  
The other vexes it.'

Again,

"Sure a poet is a sage  
A humanist, physician to all men."

Poetry or art is no useless product of the human mind, no mere pastime, it has a positive value and grounds for existence; it is effectual:

"A drainless shower  
Of light is poesy : 'tis the supreme of power  
'Tis might half-slumbering on its own right  
arm."

<sup>94</sup> *Keats's View of Poetry*, p. 64.

<sup>95</sup> L. No. 136: To Roynolds, 25 Aug. 1819. See also quotation 24.

Thus it is an instrument of good to this world. It is not divorced from life. When he criticised Wordsworth's poetry for its philosophical doctrines, Keats wrote "poetry should not have any palpable design upon us". The word 'palpable' is significant. Poetry may have, and perhaps cannot but have a design, but the design should not be apparent or obvious. The instruction should be assimilated by the poetic imagination, the total effect should be of beauty. Keats was not for any facile compromise of the sort that Sydney or Dryden was tempted to make in such a phrase as 'delightful teaching'; poetry as poetry should be pure, but it is exactly pure poetry which will work for human good.

Thus we can sum up by saying that for Keats art should be human and concrete, yet pure, and this art in its purity has the power to do good. There is no need for mixing up the two values—Beauty and Goodness; we need but recognise the subtle underground connection between them. The connection is through the essential integrity of Reality whose different facets are Beauty, Truth and Goodness. The connection cannot be traced for that reason, for there are no ways, no distinctions in that Reality itself; the connection has to be merely felt and accepted.

### POETIC GENIUS: RATIONAL OR INTUITIVE ?

It is not wholly true to say that Keats believed like Shelley in inspiration. It would be truer to say Keats thought highly of the poetic genius and

poetry and he could not think how a rational mode of searching after truth can lead us to the perception of harmony, which perception is a 'sensation' for him while the perception of truth is 'thought'. He says, "O for a life of sensations rather than of Thought."<sup>96</sup>

Let us first see with what awe and veneration he regarded poetry :

53. "The last two days however I have felt more confident—I have asked myself so often why I should be a Poet more than other Men—seeing how great a thing it is, how great things are to be gained by it, what a thing to be in the mouth of Fame—that at last the Idea has grown so monstrously beyond my power of attainment that the other day I nearly consented with myself to drop into a Phaeton—yet it is a disgrace to fail even in a huge attempt, and at this moment I drive the thought from me !"<sup>97</sup>

54. "Truth is I have been in such a state of mind as to read over my lines and hate them, I am one that 'gathers Samphire, dreadful trade'—the cliff of Poesy towers above me."<sup>98</sup>

55. "Though no great minist'ring reason sorts  
Out the dark mysteries of human souls  
To clear conceiving; yet there ever rolls  
A vast idea before me; thence too I've seen  
The end and aim of Poesy.

<sup>96</sup> To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817. See quotation (45).

<sup>97</sup> L. No. 13: To Leigh Hunt, 10 May 1817.

<sup>98</sup> L. No. 14: To Haydon, 10 May 1817.

An ocean dim sprinkled with many an isle,  
 Spreads before me. How much toil !  
 How many days ! What desperate turmoil!  
 Ere I can have explored its wideness,  
 Ah, what a task ! upon my bended knees,  
 I could unsay those—no, impossible !  
 Impossible !” (*Sleep and Poetry*)

Thus poetry was a vast idea before him, it was too great for his conceiving even, not to speak of his mastering it. In circumstances he could not but snatch at the easy key to the problem of creation of poetry by a human spirit which is limited: the key is ‘Inspiration’. A poet must then be inspired by God Himself; or poetic truth may present itself in a concrete form to the mind of the poet; Beauty may let herself be caught by the poet at her own sweet will.

56. “Thank God ! I do begin arduously where I leave off, notwithstanding occasional depressions; and I hope for the support of a high Power while I claim this little eminence, and especially in my years of more momentous Labour. I remember you saying that you have notions of a good Genius presiding over you. I have of late had the same thought, for things which (I) do half at Random are afterwards confirmed by my Judgement in a dozen features of Propriety. Is it too daring to fancy Shakespeare this Presider ?”<sup>99</sup>

Thus there is no use searching after poetry, you

<sup>99</sup> L. No. 14: To Haydon, 10 May 1817.

have it in you or not, some higher Power is working behind the mind of the poet.

57. ".....but it is easier to think what poetry should be than to write it—and this leads me on to another axiom. That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves of a tree, it had better not come at all."<sup>100</sup>

In *Sleep and Poetry* he thinks of writing—

58. "Many a verse from so *strange influence*  
That we must ever wonder how, and whence  
It came."

Also, in the Sonnet *When I have fears that I may cease to be*, Keats writes—

"And think that I may never live to trace  
Their shadows, with the magic hand of  
chance".

But we should not be blinded by the 'strange influence' and 'magic hand of chance'. As was said at the start, Keats was not like Shelley, a believer wholly in inspiration. Let us see.

59. "You will be glad to hear that within these last three weeks I have written 1000 lines—which are the third Book of my poem.<sup>101</sup> My ideas with respect to it I assure you are very low—and I would write the subject thoroughly again—but I am tired of it and think the time would be better spent in writing a new Romance on which I have my eye for next Summer—Rome was not built in a Day—

<sup>100</sup> L. No. 48: To Taylor, 27 Feb. 1818.

<sup>101</sup> *Endymion*.

and all the good I expect from my employment this Summer is the fact of Experience which I hope to gather in my next poem."<sup>102</sup>

This requires some commenting, especially when we know that Keats rewrote his *Hyperion* and that he justified his "kisses four" in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* by saying that "we must temper the Imagination with Judgement".<sup>102A</sup> Again, he writes of *Endymion* :

60. "I have written independently without Judgement. I may write independently with Judgement hereafter. The Genius of poetry must work out its own salvation in a man."<sup>103</sup> Thus genius itself wants some judgement and it seeks and finds it (in a true poet) for its own full being and function. Along with this we should always bear in mind that Keats was all the time moving towards thought and experience of life; he felt that these are necessary for poetry to be real.

61. "I am three and twenty, with little knowledge and middling intellect. It is true that in the height of enthusiasm I have been cheated into some fine passages; but that is not the thing."<sup>101</sup>

His conception of poetry was great and poetry to be great not only needs inspiration but much thought and experience of life. He did not want to be a 'versifying pet lamb'.

<sup>102</sup> L. No. 22: To Haydon, 28 Sept. 1817.

<sup>102A</sup> Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, April 1819.

<sup>103</sup> L. No. 85: To J. A. Hessey, 9 Oct. 1818.

<sup>101</sup> L. No. 107: To Haydon, 8 March 1819.

62. "I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying Pet Lamb."<sup>105</sup>

His opinion of his own poem *Isabella* shows how he viewed poetry:

63. "There is too much inexperience of life and simplicity of knowledge in it—which might do very well after one's death—but not while one is alive. 'Isabella' is what I should call were I a reviewer, 'A weak-sided poem with an amusing sober sadness about it.' There is no objection of this kind to 'Lamia'—a good deal to 'St. Agnes Eve'—only not so glaring."<sup>106</sup>

Keats was a conscious poet; he thought on the nature of poetry, chose his words deliberately and tried to produce effects. His poetry shows workmanship, and it is not like the poetry of Shelley who wrote inspiredly. To Keats poetry came, of course, as naturally as the leaves of a tree, but this naturalness is the naturalness of thought and deliberation. It is not laboured, yet it is not as simple as the babbling of a child. His *Odes* show how poetry may incorporate with thought yet remain poetry.

So we conclude that though Keats believed in a way in inspiration as the source of poetry, he did not go to any extremes and implicitly recognised a rational order in the otherwise mysterious process of poetic creation.

<sup>105</sup> L. No. 119: To Miss Jeffrey, 9 June 1819.

<sup>106</sup> L. No. 143: To Woodhouse, 21 Sept. 1819.

POETIC GENIUS  
PERSONAL OR IMPERSONAL?

On the question of the personality of a poet Keats's opinion is definite. A poet has no personality in the sense that he can identify himself with any personality and so believe in any truth of nature or morals for the time being. He has no philosophical doctrine of his own, no ready-made theory and precepts. He is open-minded.

64. "Men of Genius are Great as certain ethereal chemicals operating on the Mass of natural intellect—but they have not any individuality, any determined Character—I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self,—Men of power."<sup>107</sup>

65. "And at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."<sup>108</sup>

66. "We hate poetry that has design upon us  
.....Poetry should be great and unobtrusive."<sup>109</sup>

67: "As to the Poetic Character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member ; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical Sublime, which is a thing *per se* and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is

<sup>107</sup> L. No. 29: To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817.

<sup>108</sup> L. No. 30: To George & Thomas Keats, 28 Dec. 1817.

<sup>109</sup> L. No. 41: To Reynolds, 3 Feb. 1818.

everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade ; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous Philosopher, delights the cameleon Poet.... A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence ; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for and filling some other Body.”<sup>110</sup>

Thus Keats’s conception of the poet may be very like that of a catalytic agent; he helps thoughts and emotions to fuse and blend and to form a new product but he himself remains in the end unchanged and so dissociated from the product. This impersonality of the poet has been much advocated by T. S. Eliot ;<sup>111</sup> the analogy of the catalytic agent is his. This quality is dramatic, and we know how Keats was moving towards the drama, his greatest ambition in life.<sup>112</sup> This view of the poetic genius has the support of other aesthetic philosophers. Hegel<sup>113</sup> showed that the artist realises his artistic nature best by submitting completely to his subject and losing himself in it. Croce also voices his opinion which is almost a sentiment with him ; aesthetic activity is the simplest of all the other activities of the spirit, logical and practical ; so the artist, as artist, is not concerned with any question

<sup>110</sup> L. No. 88: To Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818.

<sup>111</sup> See *Tradition and Individual Talent*.

<sup>112</sup> See quotation (32).

<sup>113</sup> *Philosophy of Fine Arts*, Vol. I.

of truth or falsehood, good or bad, he simply expresses and thus creates beauty.

We should note, incidentally, that Keats's 'Negative Capability' (as Murry has rightly pointed out) has a positive side.<sup>114</sup> It means detachment from any particular thought, emotion or character but attachment to everything ; it asserts that the poet has an 'extraordinary organic sensibility' and can identify himself with all kinds of objects. Keats loved to be a 'Cameleon Poet', he had the extraordinary capacity and intensity of imagination to identify himself with objects external to him.

68. "No sooner am I alone than Shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my spirit the office which is equivalent to a King's body-guard—the 'Tragedy with Sceptered' pall, comes sweeping by'. According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches, or with Theorcritus in the Vales of Sicily."<sup>115</sup>

This losing in other characters is also his pleasant escape from the dull world—

69. "I scarcely remember counting upon my happiness—I look not for it if it be not in the present hour—nothing startles me beyond the Moment. The Setting Sun will always set me to rights—or if a Sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel."<sup>116</sup> And we know how he identifies himself with the nightin-

<sup>114</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 48.

<sup>115</sup> L. No. 89: To George & Georgiana Keats, Oct. 1818.

<sup>116</sup> L. No. 29: To Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817.

gale of his ode, and when he is reminded of this identification as made only in imagination, he says :

70. "Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self  
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf."<sup>117</sup>

The 'sole self' is too narrow for his experiencing of life. Thus the very thing which the 'virtuous philosopher', Plato, forbade<sup>118</sup> viz., impersonation, Keats takes up as a boon to humanity and a source of power for a poet. This lack of personality in a poet does not make him insincere; he fully feels for the moment what he writes; only that he can at two moments feel two contradictory things, he has equal artistic sympathy with Iago and Imogen. This impersonality involves the 'myriad-mindedness' of which Raleigh<sup>119</sup> speaks in connexion with Shakespeare. Of course, the poet then cannot have a consistent philosophy, but that is not wanted ; what is wanted is that he should present us with harmonious wholes of experience, for the time being fully alive and believed in, and so claiming belief from us. Poetic truth is different from truth of philosophy, (as shown earlier) and so we can say that a poet may give us all kinds of thoughts and emotions inconsistent in themselves, yet he is sincere if the presentations given at a time 'feel right', that is, if they produce in us a 'willing suspension of

<sup>117</sup> *Ode to A Nightingale.*

<sup>118</sup> Republic, Book III, p. 394-397.

<sup>119</sup> See his *Shakespeare.*

disbelief' as Coleridge thought poetry ought to create. So we must recognise that sincerity and impersonality in a poet are not incompatible. .

For Keats, we have thus seen, a poet should be impersonal (yet not insincere) and his poetry unobtrusive.

## CONCLUSION

We have traced the broad lines of an aesthetic theory which Keats might have held. The interest of this study and its value lie precisely in the fact that Keats, though he did not lack thinking powers, had not stuffed his mind with 'theories of Beauty and Art'. He did not have Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Plotinus or St. Aquinas before his mind when he spoke about beauty. He was an independent seeker after the truth about Beauty, and his search was, moreover, not mere speculation. The problem of beauty and art was very immediate and important to him, and his nature was such that he would not take anything for truth which he himself did not realise in his own life-experience. Essentially he was a thoughtful man, as his letters show, and he had a considerable power of reasoning. From such a man, who was also a creative artist, we can get much truth, some deep observations, but no sophistication or false abstractions. We do not, frankly, believe Shelley in his aesthetic protestations, for we know that he had caught up the glow of idealism from Plato. Ideas and abstractions were real to him, and so he might, like Hegel, plunge into abs-

tractions and take us up into a rarefied atmosphere where only an angel can fly; we gasp for breath while reading his *Defence* and trying to gather his thoughts on the subject. Keats could himself write a 'theory of aesthetics'; if he did he would not have given us as sound a theory as, we believe, he has given us unconsciously. In his delightful letters there is a rich ore of aesthetics, and nowhere is it dross, for all through he is sincere, concrete, and modest. We have only to be sincere and modest like the poet himself, and also perfectly open-minded, to reach the heart of his unconscious doctrine. The task is by no means an easy one, for though a metallurgist, while he extracts some metal, he has no temptation to add some foreign metal from his own pocket to the molten mass; a literary or philosophic critic is always susceptible to reading himself into other people's theories, particularly when it is a question of salvaging or interpreting. He tends to receive what he has given. His work is not wholly disinterested; he has a vague idea, from the start, of the person he is going to work on, and this idea gets body as his work proceeds. In fact, this idea, which may be a prejudice, is the motive force and the principle of unity in his work. This difficulty is most prominent when one is interpreting a poet, for his word-values are sometimes different from those of an ordinary man or of logical thinkers. In such circumstances much preliminary honesty and caution are needed. To begin with, the interpreter should have sympathy and delicate sensibility and no intellectual preoccupation. Fortunately such

competent critics are not altogether wanting. A. C. Bradely is one. The same cannot be said of Murry in his interesting essay. Murry's work on Keats is in many ways an achievement, but he has not tempered his enthusiasm with judgment; he has become mystical and 'high and mighty' and his manner reminds us of Shelley's *Defence*. He has a delicate perception and imagination which enable him to reconstruct Keats's poetic personality to a great extent. But how far this reconstruction is true and objective, it is difficult to say. His light confuses no less than it illumines.

For this brief study of Keats, we claim no special merit; there may be in it the defects which are found in such a work of interpretation and examination. We have tried to be objective and to keep to the view that beauty is in life and for life. Yet, without some broad and rudimentary view of beauty, one cannot go on for long with such a subject: complete objectivity is a myth. Interpretation and revaluation is a matter of selective emphasis on the writings of the author; this selection and emphasis are mostly guided, even without the critic's knowing it, by his original idea of the thesis he has already formed at the very start, so that very often the critic gets back what he himself has put into the work he deals with.

We have seen two main things in this study: first, that Keats touched upon almost all the important problems in aesthetics; secondly, the views he held are not eccentric, such as a poet might be expected to hold, but are sound and reasonable which a philosopher might be proud to propound; the only

difference between Keats and a philosopher being this, that Keats did not make many points explicit and left others as mere assertions, unsupported by proper arguments to stand on. Our task has been to collect these assertions together and make out their implications, to connect them together and to build up, as far as possible, a consistent aesthetic theory. We have seen how easy and even tempting it is to brand a poet as an anti-intellectual which Keats was not. Indeed, he quite appreciated the intellectual process of truth-seeking and had a clear conception of truth as philosophical as distinct from truth as poetic, thought as distinct from intuition, reason from imagination. It is his critics who have confused these values, Keats did not.

To sum up, 'Keats distinguished Beauty from Truth and Goodness, yet he did not isolate Beauty from the sphere of the other values. He was a worshipper of Beauty all his life but he recognised with devotion Truth and Goodness. He felt that his worship of Beauty would somehow get for him the grace of Truth and Goodness. He was a clear thinker and would not like to confuse things and could not be led away by uncritical identities. He saw the identities as well as the differences. Had he lived longer and studied metaphysics, as he once proposed to, he would have either discovered the 'concrete universal' himself or supported Hegel in his own way. Knowledge is real when it comes in concepts, but these concepts must be concrete. Beauty is the intuition of a thing-in-itself and it heightens consciousness. There is more of the con-

crete stuff in the vision of beauty, and more of abstraction in the knowledge of truth; but the distinction is not to be exaggerated into a perpetual separation, the basic material is the same. Art is no imitation of nature, yet it is not wholly cut off from it; it is a transmutation of nature, a reproduction of nature from a higher and intenser plane of observation. Therefore, art is no illusion yet not true in the same sense as nature is true; there is no difference in degree in the two realities of art and of nature, but only of kind. As regards form and content of art, Keats's attention was fixed more on the content than on the form which might come by itself if the content is properly treated for artistic excellence. This art can be pure, free from any socio-ethical designs or intellectual reaching after truth; yet it can be effective in doing good, it is no mere indulgence or useless entertainment. The poet depends on intuition for his poetry but he has also to think hard, he has to seek inspiration as well as knowledge. As to his personality he should have none (as a poet, of course); he should have wide sympathies, to enable him to identify himself with varieties of persons, thoughts and emotions without any bias for some particular ones of these, and so remaining always free, above his creations, "in maiden meditation fancy-free".

Keats gives us a living aesthetic of flesh and blood. If not as definite and clear-cut as a skeleton, it is more real and satisfying.

Keats has been called a 'pure poet' by Bridges, Bradley and Murry. We should first note what

they actually mean by such an epithet and how far they are correct in so describing Keats, and how far the kind of poetry advocated by Keats may be called 'pure'. Murry quotes<sup>120</sup> from Bridges's essay on Keats the following definition of pure poetry and regards it as the best. It is "the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point, so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the aesthetic imagination at the moment when it is most expectant and exacting, and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth."

We may say that when expression answers perfectly to the intuition or form to the content, so that there is one whole form-content or intuition-expression, poetry is pure. It then becomes a unique thing, enjoying a place of its own and not to be confused with philosophy, ethics or history. Its delight is of its own kind, not the delight of knowledge or of sermons. This seems to be the meaning of Bridges. Bradley's definition of pure poetry seems to be an explication of the meaning underlying Bridges' statement. Bradley writes—

"In pure poetry it is otherwise. Pure poetry is not the decoration of preconceived and clearly defined matter ; it springs from the creative impulse of a vague imaginative mass pressing for development and definition. If the poet already knew exactly what he meant to say, why should he write the poem ?"<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> *Keats & Shakespeare*, p. 10.

<sup>121</sup> 'Poetry for Poetry's sake,' *Oxford Lectures*, p. 23.

“When poetry answers to its idea and is purely or almost purely poetic, we find the identity of form and content.”<sup>122</sup>

Bradley says also<sup>123</sup> that the satisfaction given by poetry is of unique nature, different from that given by philosophy or religion. What we gather from Bridges and Bradley is that the particular form or expression is important for poetry; the content in itself may be at the start philosophical or religious, revealing some truth, but as soon as this is perfectly expressed, *i.e.*, gets a perfect form in language (and for that the content is to be intuited by the imagination as a whole), it becomes poetry, pure and simple, enjoying a status of its own, satisfying a need of a special kind and not of the kinds which philosophy or religion satisfy. Croce would say that while our spirit is only intuiting and no logical activity is involved, we are merely expressing ourselves; form and content are identical then, it is intuition-expression, and it is pure art.

This description of pure poetry is understandable and Keats's view of fine poetry was that it should be 'pure' poetry. For this he recommended 'Negative Capability' *i.e.*, impersonality in a poet; 'poetry should be great and unobtrusive' and should have no 'palpable design upon us'. Yet, as we have seen earlier Keats concentrated on content and did not conceive of poetry as a compound of content and form; he conceived it as content lifted into a

<sup>122</sup> 'Poetry for Poetry's sake', *Oxford Lectures*, p. 22.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

fine ethereal atmosphere by intensity of imagination and feeling on the part of the poet. When a content is contemplated intensely, expression comes to fit it, and so form evolves and coalesces with the content; we get a new whole, an intuition-expression, this is 'pure poetry'. So Keats reached very near this concept of 'pure poetry'.

Murry gives us a comprehensive, though not very comprehensible, concept of 'pure poetry'. He says that a pure poet is one who has seen the maximum of human life and so has known a final human truth which he expresses in his poetry.

"........ the pure poet is the highest of all poets, not because he turns his face away from life to devote himself to some abstract and ideal perfection, but precisely because, he, more than any other kind of poet, submits himself steadily, persistently and unflinchingly to life. .... Because of this, the pure poet is the complete man".<sup>124</sup>

"Just as I believe there is a final human truth which men can attain, and that the pure poet expresses this truth; so also I believe that there is an actual human completeness which men can attain, and that the pure poet attains this completeness more fully than others".<sup>125</sup>

Now how to be a complete man? Murry's answer is that we should submit our mind to the heart, *i.e.*, our conscious knowledge to unconscious knowledge, and thus we can have soul-know-

<sup>124</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 11.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

ledge<sup>126</sup> which is also God-knowledge. "This is the re-living in the nature of a pure poet of that strange happening which is known to mystical experience as the simultaneous knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of God."<sup>127</sup> And Murry says that we instinctively feel that Chaucer, Shakespeare and Keats were such complete men and so, pure poets. All this is clearly unintelligible to most of us who have not had any mystical experience in our life. If Murry simply meant by this that a pure poet has much experience of this world and human life, that he has contemplated deeply on it, felt its joys and sorrows in an extraordinary degree, and has been able to comprehend the whole imaginatively and express it harmoniously, we might understand him and something of his concept of a pure poet. But Murry means something not so simple for us. He anticipates this difficulty of ours and writes that there are two orders of mind: "one for whom such things as these are mysterious and unintelligible, and another for whom they are mysterious and simple. And it may be that the gulf is for ever fixed between them".<sup>128</sup> Belonging, as we do, to the first order we cannot cross the gulf, so we cannot understand properly Murry's 'pure' poet. Keats was for knowledge and experience of life and wanted the heart to be the mind's Bible and mysteriously wrote that by so submitting the mind to the heart one's soul is

<sup>126</sup> *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 139.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140.

generated,<sup>129</sup> but he was not conscious of Murry's conscious knowledge and unconscious knowledge. His philosophy in that journal letter should not be made much of, as it was but a poet's imagination; his aesthetical assertions may be taken seriously, for he was a poet and lover of Beauty, but what he wrote in a metaphysical mood (and that too in one letter only) may be read with interest and treated as poetry. At any rate the connection between this metaphysics and the concept of a pure poet is very remote; Murry has related the two letters<sup>130</sup> ingenuously and built up a high conception of a pure poet, but we do not understand his conception and doubt if Keats held it. We have a notion that Keats was a great poet and a sound thinker in his own line of interest; he was no dark prophet.

There is another notion of 'pure poetry' which Keats did not think of. It is that poetry should 'approach the conditions of music' as Pater might say. In it is the form of an art which is stressed, the symbol loved and adored, its content or the rational framework is largely neglected. Music was held as the highest kind of art by Schopenhauer for he wanted art to provide a refuge from the world, the pure form opening up a realm of eternal passivity. Some modern poets<sup>131</sup> also hold that poetry need not be tied to a rational content, that

<sup>129</sup> Journal Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, 14th Feb. to 3 May, 1819.

<sup>130</sup> This journal letter and the 'indolent' letter.

<sup>131</sup> *E.g.*, The symbolists and the surrealists.

it should work on us like music: the sound values and symbols are important, not the meaning. This is a theory which rationalises much of the obscure individualistic experiments of recent times. We have seen that Keats held fast to the concrete content of poetry, both as a poet and as a critic. We should not make him out a formalist or a symbolist. His notion of 'pure poetry' was different.

Almost all the writers on Keats represent Keats as holding that philosophy should be anti-intellectual and romantic, its basis should be intuition, not reason. Our view is different as expressed before. Here we quote from some of the well known critics.

Bradley holds that for Keats intellectual philosophy is but a means to arrive at true beauty which is a complex thing not very simple, and which is truth.

"And then he is tempted to see in thought only that vexatious questioning that 'spoils the singing of the nightingale', and to forget that it is necessary for the fuller and more difficult kind of beauty." (*Oxford Lectures*, p. 234).

For Keats, Bradley says, mere thoughts and reasonings are "no more than a means, though a necessary means, to an end, which end is Beauty, that beauty which is also truth. This alone is the poet's end, and, therefore, law".

Bradley confuses the two aspects of Keats; his aspiration to be a pure poet,—a dramatist, and also his passing zeal for philosophy. Keats never confused these and he realised that philosophy was a stiffer thing for him and poetry 'not so fine a thing

as philosophy'. Thoughts and reasonings can help one to reach a conception of 'the fuller and more difficult kind of beauty', but what is essential is more of experience of life with its pain and confusion ; simple beauty wants touches of ugliness to be harmoniously fused with it (by imagination), then it becomes 'difficult' beauty or sublimity.

However, Bradley thinks that for Keats intellect counted for something though only as a humble help to intuition. Middleton Murry does not allow even this much and opposes intellect with intuition.

"The knowledge he seeks cannot be gained by intellectual determination and clenched teeth ; like poetry it has to come as naturally as the leaves to a tree, . . . . It is the knowledge not of the philosopher, but of the poet."<sup>132</sup>

"We must remember always that philosophy for Keats is intuitive, and knowledge is organic. . . . . This knowledge is essentially self-engendered . . . . . and this dark saying may be added that it is a thing which cannot be uttered directly, but only by the language of metaphor and parable, which is poetry."

"Follow the instinct, says Keats, and you will reach intuition, and by intuition you will reach the final goal, essential Beauty, which is essential Truth".

"True philosophy is precisely that Negative

<sup>132</sup> Quotations from Murry are all from his book *Keats and Shakespeare*.

Capability that was so supremely manifested in Shakespeare”.

We have seen earlier that Keats wanted philosophy to be undogmatic, its enquiry free and open, its province unlimited<sup>133</sup> (there should not be any limitation of data), and it should also be real in the sense that the concepts should not be wholly abstract, ‘bloodless’ categories without connection with their concrete instances. But he did not want philosophy to be poetry, a matter of imagination or inspiration.

Finney also represents Keats as an anti-intellectualist :

“He had learned that his reason could not construct, by means of knowledge, a satisfactory system of philosophy. He believed, however, that his imagination could make use of knowledge in the creation of beautiful ideal worlds.”<sup>134</sup>

Finney holds that what Keats called philosophy was but negatively capable poetry.

“The contrast which he drew again and again in this period is not a contrast between instinctive poetry and pure or abstract philosophy but a contrast between instinctive or egotistic poetry and negatively capable poetry”.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>133</sup> See quotation in an earlier Chapter : “without putting a side numerous objections”.

<sup>134</sup> *Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, Vol. II, p. 582.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, p. 582.

## THE THEORY OF RASA

*Rasa* literally means taste or savour, and, as used to denote the essence of poetry,<sup>1</sup> it signifies the peculiar experience that poetry affords us. The *rasa* school stresses this experiential or subjective side of poetic meaning.<sup>2</sup> This seems rather pointless, for ultimately everything is an experience, such as a colour, taste, or emotion, and can be known as it is in itself only through direct acquaintance. Yet we have classes of similar experiences, each class being represented by a general idea of it (and by a word), and we have a descriptive knowledge of it in terms of phenomena which are found to be its natural correlates or determinants. Thus, for instance, we know what is sound directly by hearing it ; indirectly or descriptively in terms of vibrations

<sup>1</sup> The doctrine that *rasa* is the essence of poetry starts from Bharata (first century A.D.). "No composition can proceed without *rasa*." said he, in his famous work on dramaturgy, *Natyashastra*. Abhinavagupta (10th century), the most important thinker in Indian aesthetics, held this doctrine : "There is no poetry without *rasa*." (*Dhanyaloka Locana*, 2. 3. This book will be referred to as D.L.). Again, "The meaning of poetry is *rasa* ; what is principally looked for is meaning." (*Abhinavabharati*, 7. 1) Visvanath (4th C.A.D.) wrote, "A composition touched with *rasa* is poetry." (*Sahityadarpana*, 1.3)

<sup>2</sup> Bharata, *op. cit.* 6.35 ; "*Rasa* is realization of one's own consciousness as colored by emotions." Again, "*Rasa* and emotion cannot be expressed directly through words, their essence being immediate experience ; so they can only be suggested by words." (D.L. 1.4). "*Rasa* is identical with the taste of one's own blissful self." Visvanath, *op. cit.*, 3.35.

in the sounding body and air which we may know directly. This is all right so long as we do not confuse the descriptive knowledge with the direct one, do not regard sound as "nothing but" vibrations. The *rasa* school holds the essence of poetry to be a quality distinct from its determinants which are more commonly known characters, such as natural situations, human actions and emotions. (*Rasa* itself is not an emotion, as we shall see presently.) Thus poetry is not essentially an imitation of nature (which includes life and emotions) though nature is depicted in it. To check the naturalistic fallacy in poetics the *rasa* school emphasized the experiential aspect of poetic value, the qualitatively new product that must be directly experienced in order not to confuse it with an aggregate of its natural constituents. *Rasa* is regarded as extraordinary or unworldly, the pleasure which accompanies it as transcendental.<sup>3</sup>

Remembering that the essence of poetry is a distinct quality by itself which can only be known as it is through direct acquaintance, we can proceed to acquire a descriptive knowledge about it by studying its natural correlates. (*Rasa* is realized when an emotion is awakened in the mind in such a manner that it has none of its usual conative tendencies and is experienced in an impersonal, contemplative mood. An emotion in this peculiar manner is caused by representations in art of those objects

<sup>3</sup> It is said to be "like the relish of the ultimate reality", (*parabrahmāsvādsachiva*) D.L. 2.4. Also "as the twin of this relish of *Brahmā*" (*Sahityadarpana*, 3.35).

which excite it in nature, such as natural situations, persons of known characters, their actions and physical expressions of emotions (e.g., trembling, smiling, scowling, etc.). These representations, through words in case of poetry and through both words and concrete presentations in case of drama, are generalized and so, idealized aspects of objects masquerading as particulars. They are significant neither cognitively nor conatively, for they belong to a different world. The representations have only emotive significance and the emotions appearing through their medium are not suffered in the ordinary blind and passive manner but enjoyed actively with lucid self-awareness and knowledge of them.<sup>4</sup> The secret of this extraordinary mode of experiencing emotions lies in the dissolution of the practical and egoistic side of our self in the poetic attitude and the consequent appearance of the universal contemplative self. Emotions are latent in the self in their generalized form as dispositions connected with their general, not particular, associations.

So, when generalized objects and situations are presented in poetry they awaken the generalized emotions which are felt in an impersonal and contemplative manner. They do not relate specifically to any individual person or any object. However, all this depends upon the dissolution of the practical self, and this in its turn depends upon many factors, some relating to the poetry which is to be appreciated, others to the nature

<sup>4</sup> Mammata, *op. cit.*, 4.28, where he summarizes Avinavagupta's view of the matter.

of the appreciator's mind. Thus if there is too much of naturalism (*i.e.*, topicality or verisimilitude) and too little of impersonality, the autobiographical elements, including the author's own dispositions and opinions, being manifest, there will be naturalistic responses. Again if the reader is too much of a matter-of-fact person seeking information ('news'), instruction, or sensation from poetry, his practical realistic attitude cannot wholly be suspended even by good poetry full of idealization. To counteract and cure the naturalistic attitude in the reader poetry employs, besides idealization, such devices as line and stanza structure, rhythm, and rhyme, while drama utilises music, stage decorations, and other effects.

*Rasa* is realised when, because of the factors related above, the self loses its egoistic, pragmatic aspect and assumes an impersonal contemplative attitude, which is said to be one of its higher modes of being.<sup>5</sup> *Rasa*, thus, is a realisation of the impersonal contemplative aspect of the self which is usually veiled in life by the appetitive part of it. As the contemplative self is free from all craving, striving and external necessity, it is blissful. This bliss is of a different quality from the pleasure we derive in life from satisfaction of some need or passion. Now it may be noted that *rasa* as realisation of one's contemplative and blissful self is essentially one. But this realisation is associated in poetry with an experience by this self of some emotion

<sup>5</sup> Abhinavabharati, 6.34.

in its generalised form, so that this self is self-aware and self-enjoying through awareness and enjoyment of an emotion which colours it. *Rasa* is, therefore, said to be many and a poem is said to impart a particular kind of *rasa*, e.g., of love, fear, bravery, etc., depending upon the emotion predominant in it.

This is in outline the *rasa* theory of poetry. One further point is to be noted. Emotions awakened in poetry are of two classes, one consisting of those that more or less dominate a poem, others of those that are transient and subservient to them.<sup>6</sup> Thus the pervading emotion in a poem may be love, while longing, jealousy, stupefaction, anxiety, joy, sadness, anger, pity, and some others may function as transient accessories, all suggesting and sustaining love. In a good poem the different emotions and their accessories are so organized that there is mutual reinforcement, balance, and harmony, a perfect adjustment of means to their ends and of parts to the whole. The emotions that may more aptly serve as dominants in poetry are those that are more elemental and powerful in man, his permanent dispositions, such as love, pity, fear, and wonder. These emotions manifest themselves through a multiplicity of subsidiary and transient emotions and are, therefore, expressible in poetry through them. While these transient emotions appear and disappear in a poem in quick succession, a certain dominant emotion suggested

<sup>6</sup> Bharata, *op. cit.*, 7.11-7.43.

by them remains steady like a pervading emotional atmosphere. The chief and over-all *rasa* of the poem is derived from a contemplation of this dominant emotion, and this *rasa* is obviously richer and profounder than the *rasa* as derived from contemplation of a lighter or simpler emotion having a few accessories or none at all. Thus it is that a long composition depicting a major emotion through a variety of accessories is richer in poetic worth than a short one which can adequately express only a few accessories and, so, only a relatively simpler dominant emotion. Even if it attempts a major emotion such as love or pity, it cannot do as much justice to it as can a long composition. Now, self-awareness which is one aspect of *rasa* (the other being awareness of an emotion) is proportionally richer and profounder, the more basic or elemental is the emotion contemplated and the more adequate or thorough is this contemplation. For, the deeper will be the penetration through the thick layer of practical, egoistic disposition to the essential contemplative core of the self. Great poetry breaks our blind egoistic shell to reveal the universal enlightened self within.

Let us now see briefly if the main points of this *rasa* theory can be understood in the light of our generally held ideas about poetry. That poetry is an expression of emotions and that emotions are objectified and disinterestedly contemplated is widely believed. Aristotle<sup>7</sup> seems to have held a similar

<sup>7</sup> S. H. Butcher : *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*, p. 254,

view which we find also in Hegel,<sup>8</sup> Croce,<sup>9</sup> and Bosanquet.<sup>10</sup> That poetry affords a higher kind of emotional delight is also commonly accepted, but that this delight is the joy of self-revelation or of the truth of the higher contemplative and universal spirit in us is peculiarly Indian, though some affinities with the Scholastic theory of art can be seen. The Scholastics attribute poetic delight to the perception of some intelligible (non-conceptual) form in the emotions which is in harmony with the intelligent principle in the mind.<sup>11</sup> However, it appears that the Scholastic theory stresses the form of the emotion presented in poetry, its order, proportion, and harmony, which makes it intelligible (otherwise it is a confused agitation); while the *rasa* theory points to the peculiar, self-contained nature of the emotion as divested of its conative tendencies and felt for its own sake. In both the theories the mind in poetic appreciation is regarded as revealing its quiet contemplative character which is essentially joyful. Hence the extraordinary kind of joy experienced in poetry. The insulation of emotions as enjoyed in poetry from their ordinary practical manifestations and enjoyment of them in a disinterested manner made possible by many factors inside and outside the poem (as described before) is another notion in *rasa* theory which is

<sup>8</sup> *Philosophy of Fine Arts, Introduction.*

<sup>9</sup> *Aesthetics, Chapter II.*

<sup>10</sup> *Three Lectures on Aesthetics* (1915), Chap. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Maritain : *Art and Scholasticism* (1946), p. 51.

more or less recognised in the theory of "Psychical distance."

A further notion of some importance is the distinction in poetry between two classes of emotions, the so-called permanent or dominant and the transient. These differ in nature and function. No clear conception of this distinction is met in contemporary poetics. Aristotle may have held a distinction of this nature. He, according to Butcher, meant by character "the permanent dispositions of the mind which reveal a certain condition of the will" and by emotion "the more transient emotions, the passing moods of feelings."<sup>12</sup> Now since both character and emotion are represented in poetry and character is depicted through the emotions besides thoughts and actions, it is probable that Aristotle thought the more permanent dispositions defining character to be expressible through the transient moods. C. K. Ogden perceives that certain feelings, such as doubt and belief, are emotions that do not leave behind any permanent disposition in the mind; they are dependent upon some other emotions and also give rise to them.<sup>13</sup> This is an approximation to the idea that certain elemental emotions are expressible in art through certain subsidiary ones because in nature the latter spring from the former, being their manifestations. The importance in poetics of this distinction between two classes of emotions is obvious and many literary critics make this distinc-

<sup>12</sup> Butcher, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> Ogden C. K., *A. B. C. of Psychology* (1941), pp. 205-7.

tion without clearly knowing it, in their concrete expository or critical work. A. C. Bradley speaks of "sadness, mystery and waste" as the predominant notes in a Shakespeare tragedy.<sup>14</sup> Certainly these notes are struck up by a number of minor notes.

In conclusion we may remark that the *rasa* theory offers many useful keys to the understanding of poetry. Though a good many of these have their Western parallels and have proved their worth, some have no such parallels. The latter ought to be studied with an open mind in the light of modern psychology. Such a work will prove very helpful towards a comprehensive theory of poetry.

<sup>14</sup> *Oxford Lectures in poetry* (1905), p. 23.

## CATHARSIS IN THE LIGHT OF INDIAN AESTHETICS

The concept of Catharsis in Western aesthetics arose out of speculations on Aristotle's remark in his *Poetics* that in a tragedy there should be, among other things, "incidents arousing pity and fear ; wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions."<sup>1</sup> The word "catharsis" was used in his times in a therapeutic sense of purgation and also in a religious one of purification, but it appears from the use Aristotle made of it, of course, metaphorically, in *Poetics* and elsewhere<sup>2</sup>, that he meant by it purgation. Tragedy, then, by rousing these emotions in the mind of the audience purges the latter of them. And since they were considered to be unwholesome either in themselves or because they tended to be present in excess (and all excess is bad), tragedy in purging them exercises a kind of psycho-therapeutic action on the audience. This is the kind of interpretation of catharsis given by such eminent thinkers as Milton,<sup>3</sup> Butcher,<sup>4</sup> Bosanquet,<sup>5</sup> Gomperz,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bywater's translation : *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry* (1920), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Politics* (1342 a).

<sup>3</sup> Preface to *Samson Agonistes*.

<sup>4</sup> S. H. Butcher : *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts* (1931).

<sup>5</sup> *History of Aesthetics* (1922), p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> *Greek Thinkers* (1901-5) Vol. 5, p. 406.

L. Abercrombie<sup>7</sup> and F. L. Lucas.<sup>8</sup> Now Aristotle, if he means this sort of thing by catharsis, does not give us a convincing theory of the function of tragedy. For supposing we share his view regarding emotions of pity and fear that they, as our dispositions, should be kept to a minimum for health, we do not feel how tragedy helps us in this direction. Tragedy, we feel, instead of reducing one's disposition to feel these emotions, augments it. In fact, Plato charges the tragic poet for making men sentimental and, so, unmanly.<sup>9</sup> Then we see that men do not go to the theatre with emotions pent-up in their hearts to get relieved of them, rather they are affected with emotions there, so that if tragedy cures them then it cures a disease which it itself causes. Now supposing that a person sometimes has an accumulation of pent-up emotions of pity and terror in his soul, we may grant that tragedy helps him to release his emotional burden and, so affords him a pleasurable relief. But this is just a temporary relief and no permanent cure of his emotional disposition. Rather we see that actual situations in life, in rousing a certain emotion, usually weaken the disposition for it by their frequency ; the mind becoming less sensitive to the emotion often undergone in life. The opposite happens in the case of

<sup>7</sup> *Loc. cit.*, "Aristotle regarded the function of Tragedy as something medical ; the pity and fear of tragedy were the doses by which the tragic poet homeopathically purged his audience into emotional health."

<sup>8</sup> *Tragedy in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics* (1927), Chap. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Republic*, Book X, pp. 605-7.

emotions enjoyed in tragedy. The theatre-goer develops a taste for and sensitivity toward the emotions depicted on the stage, so that what may have started as just a useful means of relief from an emotional burden gathered up naturally in the mind, may end as a stimulant for the same thing, and, because of this virtue, a charming addiction. The theatre-goer is thus caught in a vicious circle, like one given to drinking. Wine stimulates the body and mind but produces as an after-effect a depression which calls for wine again, and, so, one tends to increase the dosage. What starts as a slave ends as a master. Thus the weakness of the theory that tragedy is a curative of tragic emotions of pity and fear is manifest.

It may be argued that the cure is effected in a different manner. It is not a homeopathic cure of pity and fear by their like, but an allopathic one, by opposites, and this is what Aristotle too must have meant, for this was the Hippocratic principle of cure followed in his time<sup>10</sup>, so that catharsis is effected in tragedy through a mutual mitigation of tragic emotions, pity and fear which are opposites. But we consider this view of catharsis to be neither acceptable nor what Aristotle may have meant. Though it may be in keeping with the medical theory of cure which he most probably held along with his contemporaries, it does not fit in with his view of tragic effect which is one of emotional exaltation

<sup>10</sup> Hippocrates : *Ancient Medicine* (Loeb's Classical Library), Chs. XIII and XVI.

rather than of quiescence. The "proper pleasure"<sup>11</sup> of tragedy arises out of a concentrated dose of the tragic emotions which, it seems, reinforce each other instead of cancelling. It is only a weak audience that wants some kind of mitigation of the emotional intensity proper to tragedy.<sup>12</sup> If pity and fear neutralized one another in tragedy like, say, laughter and sympathy, there would be bathos in place of pathos and at least Aristotle would not call it a tragedy. We know the sort of tragedies that Aristotle had before his mind while he wrote *Poetics*. Indian aestheticians forbid the co-location of such opposite emotions in a drama that cancel one another in effect.<sup>13</sup> But apart from this, there is the important point that pity and fear, which are for Aristotle the tragic emotions, are not so opposite as to cancel one another. Aristotle, too, does not consider them as opposites.<sup>14</sup> So, catharsis, considered after the analogy of allopathic cure, does not accord with other things Aristotle said about tragedy and, so, is not what he might have accepted. Nor does it accord with facts and so, is unacceptable to us. One's dispositions for pity and fear may be imagined to be somehow checked by by one's experience of mutual cancellation of these

<sup>11</sup> Bywater, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 79, 95.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52. "It belongs rather to comedy, where the bitterest enemies in a piece walk off good friends at the end, with no slaying of any one by any one."

<sup>13</sup> Mammata : *Kāvya prakāśa* (11th c. A.D.), VII, pp. 63-65.

<sup>14</sup> *Rhetoric* (1386) band (1383 a) where he says that the proper antithesis of pity is indignation while that of fear is boldness.

passions, but tragedy cannot be said to afford this curative experience. Tragedy seeks to depict, instead of mutual cancellation of emotions of opposite qualities, which it avoids, mutual reinforcement of like or concordant emotions and resolution of unlike or discordant ones, both conditions leading to a heightening of emotional effect.. Thus tragedy, instead of mitigating the emotions, piles one upon another to build up a rich and vigorous emotional mood that dominates the play and functions as its ultimate meaning. Something of this nature is described by Richards as the essence of tragic effect.<sup>15</sup>

Now one might argue that this aspect of tragedy can yield us a meaning of catharsis, again in a therapeutic sense, and so, is possibly acceptable to Aristotle. Pity and fear do not cancel one another in tragedy but they fuse into a finer and richer emotion by the tragic intensity so that the audience learns to sublimate them in its nature. But this is not an adequate view though Aristotle might be pleased to hear of it. For tragedy, according to this view, can cure only pity and fear, but not emotionalism. Plato's charge against tragedy that it weakens the rational side of our nature by encouraging the sentimental one is not fully met by this theory. It may, however, be said in favour of this theory that the dominant emotional attitude struck up by tragedy has an aspect of balance and harmony

<sup>15</sup> A. Richards : *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1930), pp. 245-46.

which produces by virtue of its form a repose in the midst of tumult.<sup>16</sup> But still this is not enough of an answer to the original charge. One can readily see that the diverse emotions depicted in a play combine only to heighten the total emotional effect, so that the richer is the organizational or formal element involved in the combining process, the intenser will be the final effect. Emotional intensity will mount up, and the repose due to contemplation of the formal element cannot be a match for it.

We conclude from above that any account of catharsis given on the line of allopathic principle of therapy falls short of its objective which is the cure of emotional disposition. The homeopathic account, too, we saw, failed. The essential function of a tragedy is not a cure of emotion whether it be imagined to be effected by its like or unlike. It is not a cure in the ordinary sense in which one understands the term and we used it in the above discussion. For, we found that tragedy offers us an emotional attitude of great intensity and richness. The dominant emotional note struck up by a good tragic piece contains many auxiliary minor notes which combine to produce it—an emotion of high amplitude and quality. Examples of such dominant notes may be found in Greek tragedies where pity, fear and a sense of mysterious fatality fuse into one pervading emotion without name, or again in Shakespeare tragedies where, as A. C. Bradley

<sup>16</sup> Richards also speaks of this repose produced by the balance and reconciliation of feelings. (*Loc. cit.*)

points out, the predominant note is that of "sadness, mystery and waste."<sup>17</sup>

So catharsis cannot mean for us a cure of tragic emotions in the ordinary sense. It appears as if the therapeutic sense of the term has to be altogether sacrificed. Yet this would empty Aristotle's observation in *Poetics* about the function of tragedy of all meaning and, then, on our part too, we cannot see what sense and defence we can make of tragedy if it does not have any beneficial action on the audience. As to the first difficulty we can very well imagine that Aristotle used the medical term "catharsis," to specify the characteristic function of tragedy, in a metaphorical sense, investing it with a new meaning, yet retaining some of the old meaning of the term as it is usual in such a case. The reaction of the tragedy on the mind must have appeared to Aristotle to be analogous to the cathartic effect of certain medicines on the body. The observation in *Politics*<sup>18</sup> that enthusiastic music soothes the mind of a person suffering from an excess of enthusiasm and works a kind of catharsis is also to the point. As to our difficulty of specifying the function of tragedy, apart from the speculation about what might have been Aristotle's solution of it, we can recognize the awkward situation that if we do not indicate any beneficial action of tragedy on the audience we virtually condemn it and all our fine analysis of this type of art is sheer waste of time and mental energy. And if we admit some bene-

<sup>17</sup> *Shakespeare Tragedy* (1905), p. 23,

<sup>18</sup> *Politics*, 1342 A.

ficial action of tragedy, how can we describe it but on the analogy of medicinal cure and toning ?

So the therapeutic significance of catharsis must be somehow retained. But how ? It is here that the traditional Indian aesthetical theory of *rasa* can help us. This will help us to tide over both the difficulties mentioned above, namely, the historical one of settling what Aristotle might have meant by *catharsis*, and the philosophical one of finding for ourselves what human good tragedy can possibly effect. As to the first suggestion we can say, very generally, that the solution offered by classical Indian aestheticians would be acceptable to Aristotle. For the solution, as we shall presently see, rests on two points, one an intellectualistic attitude towards emotions, seeking to purify them of the passivity and blindness attached to them as they affect us in life, another the principle of suggestion which is indicated as the secret of this kind of purification that emotions undergo in drama. And while Aristotle manifestly shared the particular view of emotions, he was not unaware of the cause of transformation in tragedy of raw emotions into something fine and serene. This we shall see at the end of the essay. With regard to the second task, mentioned above, of determining for ourselves the specific influence of tragedy on humanity, we may simply observe that we wholly subscribe to the answer given to the question by Indian aesthetics. We believe that the essential insight of the ancients holds good even today, the two thousand years of thought on the subject; especially that taken by the

modern psychologists, have not disproved this essential insight but have only proved its worth. We will, however, not endeavor to demonstrate this here.

Turning to the Indian speculation on the subject, then, the first thing that strikes us is the influence upon it of the traditional medicinal theory of Charaka and Susruta. Bharata, the father of Indian aesthetics, whose work *Natyashastra* (Dramaturgy) was taken as the only authoritative text on the subject by others, uses many key-terms to describe the characteristic tragic effects that are found in the works of these medical authorities. It is natural to suppose that Bharata, like Aristotle, used these terms metaphorically, and so, investing them with new meaning yet retained something of the old. Now the key-term used by Bharata, and following him all the rest of Indian aestheticians, to describe the character of tragic effect is *rasa* and this is originally a physiological term and figures in the medicinal literature (called *ayurveda*) of India. It means the physical quality of taste and also any one of these six tastes, *viz.*, sweet, acid, salt, bitter, astringent and insipid. These six kinds of tastes severally characterize the six bodily humours which are known by their tastes.<sup>19</sup> All this is found in Hippocrates also who enumerates those very six physical qualities of taste (Greek *reos*) as characterizing six bodily humours.<sup>20</sup> Bharata also follows this in his dramaturgy where he defines *rasa*

<sup>19</sup> *Charaka-Sanghitā, Sutra-Sthanam*, 26.12, and *Susruta-Sanghitā, Sutra-Sthanam*, 14.2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ancient Medicine*, Chs. XIV and XVIII.

by the quality of taste, as it is done in the medical literature of his time, attributing to it the same meaning.<sup>21</sup> Bharata also says at first that there are six *rasas* or principal emotions in a drama, but afterwards that there are eight.<sup>22</sup> Now when the medical ideas of his time influenced him so much, it is safe to surmise that the idea of cure will colour his view of the function of tragedy.<sup>23</sup> Then Bharata could not, and he did not, as many of his terms show, pass by the Yoga of Patanjali which was no less a cultural influence of the time than the medical science, and this taught men how to purify the mind of all disquietude and bring it back to its inherent state of freedom and bliss. As a result of these two influences upon him, one a science of cure of the body and another of the mind, we find in Bharata and, so, in Indian aesthetics in general which he fathered, the concept of tragic effect as a sort of cure and a tonic for the mind. The medical analogy plays a definite though subtle role in the theory of *rasa* or aesthetic delight first formulated by Bharata and developed by his followers, chiefly Abhinavagupta.

Bharata lays down the principle of generation of *rasa* or aesthetic delight in drama thus: *rasa* is nothing but the relish of a principal or elemental human emotion, like love, pity, fear, heroism and mystery, which forms the pervasive dominant note of a dramatic piece. This taste of the dominant

<sup>21</sup> *Nāṭyashāstra*, 6.31 ; *Charaka-Sanghitā*, S.S. (1.33) ; *Susruta-Sanghitā*, S.S. (42.3).

<sup>22</sup> Bharata, *op. cit.*, 6.31 and 6.38.

<sup>23</sup> *Charaka*, *op. cit.*, S.S. 1.30-31.

emotion is made available by means of a number of minor and transitory emotions depicted in the piece by means of representations of characters, their physical manifestations of feelings and their surroundings or background.<sup>24</sup> Now as interpreted by Abhinavagupta,<sup>25</sup> *rasa* is at once an emotional exaltation and a state of serenity. For such an emotion resides in the mind of the audience as a powerful and permanent disposition and is brought out or manifested by the play in a peculiar manner. The emotion is stirred up by certain other emotions which serve as accessories to it and which, though less elemental or powerful in human nature than the latter and much less enduring in the play, support this principal emotion which dominates the atmosphere of the play as a steady and pervading atmosphere. Thus, for instance, the emotion of love that dominates the atmosphere of *Romeo and Juliet* does so through the auxiliary and transient emotions, like longing, rashness, anxiety, sadness, joy, self-pity, stupefaction and bewilderment, suggesting and sustaining the chief emotion. Now the chief emotion, as thus awakened in the mind of the audience, has a different quality or flavour from that aroused in life. Here the emotion is brought out by suggestion and resides in an ideal place as forms or essences of their specific contents or instances in actuality. The ordinary emotion (*bhava*) is said to

<sup>24</sup> Bharata, *op. cit.*, 6.31-33.

<sup>25</sup> See A. B. (*op. cit.*) VI, 34 and D. L. (*op. cit.*) 1,4-5. Also see *Kāvyaaprakāsa* (*op. cit.*) 4.28, where the view of Abhinava gupta on *rasa* is ably summarized.

be transformed into an extraordinary mood (*rasa*) which is but aesthetic delight embodied in the particular emotion or, viewed in a different manner, it is but the original emotion transfigured by aesthetic delight. The change that is brought about in the emotion, as it is ordinarily undergone in life, by dramatic presentation of it, is that the emotion is not felt as a personal psychological affection but an inter-personal ideal object of contemplation.

We may understand this distinction made by Abhinavagupta and others between an emotion as an ordinary psychological content (*bhava*) and as an extraordinary object of aesthetic contemplation (*rasa*) by the analogous distinction made in logic between an idea as a psychological content and as an ideal one. Idea as a psychological content or as it is actually represented by some image in the mind functions as a symbol meaning the idea or thought which has a logical being.<sup>26</sup> When we think of a chair we have an image of it which is derived from our previous perception of different chairs on different occasions, but this image is found charged with meaning. The image is particular, changing with time for a particular person and differing with different persons, but the thought of the chair is an identical reference beyond this subjective occurrence. The emotions actually suffered in life may be compared to images that sometimes float in the mind without meaning anything as it happens

<sup>26</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic* (1883), Ch. I. Bradley has not made any distinction between a sign and a symbol here.

when we do not think but merely entertain images. We do not know then *what* we are imaging, but may later remember them and then interpret them as meaning such and such objects. But we did not mean anything then. Emotions suffered in actuality may also be compared to sensations without interpretations put upon them by thought which transforms them into percepts. In some absent-minded state of our mind we merely look at something without knowing what we are looking at, that is we look but do not see anything. We may later remember the sensations and *then* know what we were looking at. But, again, this knowledge is the result of an after-thought.

Emotions, then, as suffered in life, are like uninterpreted images and sensations, uninformed by thought. They are, therefore, blindly and passively undergone. But as enjoyed in drama they are contemplated upon and their meanings are revealed to the mind which, therefore, while experiencing them in a way, escapes them in a significant sense. The audience undergoes the emotions depicted on the stage in a way, they weep and laugh as they do in life, but these they feel not as real but symbolical, charged with meanings. This is the secret of aesthetic delight. The secret is the intellectual operation involved in aesthetic experience where the emotions are evoked in the mind through suggestion. The mind concerns itself with the intelligible essence or meaning of the emotion. For, this is alone the object intended or meaning signified by drama where everything that figures,—the characters, their speech-

es, actions and other physical manifestations like smiles and tears, and their background—is representative and symbolical in nature, referring beyond them to some meaning which is necessarily some generic essence.

This aspect of the matter is significant and has been discussed in Indian aesthetics where it is called “the generalizing process” in artistic representation.<sup>27</sup> The representations in drama are all particulars in one sense yet general in another and more important sense. They are signs representing certain general objects. Thus a tree on the stage is just an image of a tree standing for any one of the class of trees. And so is a character, say a young lady sitting under the tree, and so are her tears. They are all essentially ideal and not real. They are merely particular and real for one who is not aware that what is going on before him is a play. A little child may have this view and we can also deliberately choose to adopt it for a while. However, we usually approach good drama with a proper contemplative mood. To help this and to check naturalistic tendencies, drama employs certain means, such as frequent orchestral music, particularly before the opening scene, gorgeous stage decorations and rich make-up and dress. These are aids to “psychical distancing” which is a necessary condition of artistic appreciation and joy and Indian aesthetics recognizes this fully.<sup>28</sup> So we see that the representations in

<sup>27</sup> A. B. 6.34. <sup>28</sup> *Kāvya-prakāśa* IV, 28. It is called *Sādhāranī-karana*.

<sup>28</sup> *Abhinava Bharati*, 6.34.

drama stand for general meanings which are more or less identical for all. Now the emotions these generalized meanings will suggest, by virtue of their association with the latter in the mind, are naturally generalized and ideal (as against particular and real) ones. So is the dominant emotion called up and sustained by them. The emotions evoked in a play are de-individuated, dislodged at once from the specific objects they characterize in reality (and by which they are aroused in life) and from the particular subjects who suffer them. They are apprehended in the aesthetic attitude in an impersonal manner as logical entities are done in the cognitive one, and the question of their abode and of their relation to the particular minds on the one hand and the objects on the other are for the metaphysician to tackle. We, as aestheticians may only note how feelings and emotions can be contemplated as generic essences and, how therefore, they can serve to delight and unify the audience that in enjoying them enjoys but its own spontaneity of consciousness and the essential sameness of the latter in all persons. Drama thus liberates man from the passivity of blind feelings and also from his self-isolation and gives him a taste of his essential self that is active and lucid in knowledge and is social.

An aspect of dramatic effect may now be brought out. As has been already alluded to before, there is an element of organization of the minor and transitory emotions that strike up one principal emotion, rich and intense, which dominates the drama. Richards seizes upon this aspect of the tragedy and

accounts for tragic repose in terms of it<sup>29</sup>. We have to mark two kinds of combination of emotions in a play. One is the mutual reinforcement of like emotions, for instance, those of longing, anxiety, despair and lassitude combining to suggest separated love. Another is the resolution of two apparently unlike emotions into one, for instance, of pity and terror as in a Greek tragedy, into a higher one for which we have no name. Again the resolution of infatuation and disgust or of tenderness and rage into some highly complex and intense kind of love may be cited. Certain devices are mentioned in Indian aesthetics for resolving two contrary emotions which otherwise produce bathos.<sup>30</sup> We know how effectively Shakespeare resolved tragic emotions with comic ones to produce an emotional quality of a higher order. The Grave-digger's scene in *Hamlet* or the Clown-scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* is not a mere comic relief ; it heightens the tragic effect. Now we may note that besides these two kinds of combination operating in the sphere of emotions, there are also combinations of incidents and characters all contributing directly or indirectly to the evocation of the chief emotion of the piece. There is thus a fine organization and also adjustment of means to ends which elements work upon the mind of the audience producing therein an amount of balance and repose.

Now we may collect the threads of our discussion and hasten to our conclusion. Catharsis may have

<sup>29</sup> Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-6

<sup>30</sup> Mammata, *op. cit.*, VII, pp. 63-65.

a very general and tenuous therapeutic sense in aesthetics meaning the balance and purification of the mind. We have found that the ruling idea of illness and cure current in the traditional Greek and Indian medicine as well as in Yoga may have some application in understanding of the tragic effect in particular. We have just seen that drama may produce balance and harmony in one's mind by virtue of these qualities being present in it. But more important is the fact that a good drama, while evoking a certain emotion, elemental in human nature, through certain other less elemental ones that appear and disappear in quick succession in the drama to awaken and sustain the chief one, affords a lucid insight into the latter. There is a consequent serenity characteristic of contemplative enjoyment of an intelligible object. The generic essence of the emotion is realised while what is undergone functions as a symbol, at once actual and ideal, like a spoken word or an image that intends an object. This happens because the dramatic representations themselves have a dual nature, they are specific and actual yet representative of generic and ideal objects which they mean. The audience concentrates on these meanings, and, so, following the suggestions of the drama realises the emotions in their generic intelligible aspect. This predominantly intellectual and impersonal attitude is helped by certain external factors of drama like music and decorations.

We may now add two points to bring out the full significance of the above findings. First, the

contemplative attitude in art has a certain resemblance to the intellectual apprehension in science and philosophy. In both there is impersonality or freedom from involvement in the object contemplated and seized while the opposite quality characterises a feeling and doing. Yet there is some difference between them. For while the object is contemplated in art, some principal emotion in its generic form is realised as a self-contained and self-subsistent one, and so, the mind rests on it; the object is apprehended in purely theoretic disciplines is ever referring beyond itself to other objects to which it has to be related in thought in order to know it fully. The ratiocinative or discursive mind does not come to any rest anywhere, but is involved in an infinite regress. It is roving, so the characteristic serene delight afforded by artistic appreciation is not found in the theoretic activity. Moreover, the disinterestedness of the scientist and the philosopher is not so complete or genuine as that of the artist or the beholder of art. For the former is said to know nature in order to use and master it, the theoretic activity being provisional and subservient to the practical one. The scientist knows nature to control her, while the philosopher knows in order to know and realise his highest good. But the artist has no such ulterior motive, he seeks to enjoy emotions depicted in art for their own sakes. And this leads us to the second point. ✓The contemplative enjoyment of an emotion gives one an insight into the ✓generic form of the emotion and one's mind then sheds away, as we saw, its naturalistic attitude.

That is, the mind in aesthetic experience escapes its everyday disposition to take a personal and practical interest in the world. And, now following the Indian aestheticians, we may observe that the mind in this mood realises its essential nature.

“Rasa is realisation of one’s own consciousness as coloured by emotions,” says Bharata.<sup>31</sup> The self degenerates as man takes too much real interest in the world and gets involved in it. The mind then loses its native joy and freedom. The remedy is art where the mind is made self-aware and free from any objective necessity. The mind then gets a temporary relief from its tension and outward pressure. This experience is blissful and acts as a restorative for it which emerges out with an exalted serenity and self-knowledge. This is the cathartic action of drama and this accounts for the “proper pleasure” spoken of by Aristotle and the “extraordinary charm” by Abhinavagupta.<sup>32</sup>

Catharsis, then, consists essentially in bringing the mind of the audience back to its own inherent state of freedom and clarity from its blind involvement in the world. This is a purificatory action of art as the mind is purified of its egotistic-pragmatic attachment to the world. These impurities veil the mind from its essential nature which is contemplative, joyous and free. Besides this purificatory action, catharsis also includes a minor element, namely, the feeling of balance and harmony that art pro-

<sup>31</sup> Bharata, *op. cit.*, 6.35.

<sup>32</sup> *Dhanyaloka Lochana*, 3.33.

duces in the mind by virtue of these qualities found in it in a marked degree.

Now a few remarks as to the acceptability of such a view to Aristotle. So far as the element of balance and harmony in catharsis is concerned, Aristotle could have no objection to it, for he recognises these factors as marks of health and as well as of a good tragedy. Measure or proper proportion was a ruling idea in Greek medicine and so was it in Greek ethics and aesthetics. We remember Aristotle's principle of the golden mean which implies balance and proportion. With regard to aesthetics we know that for Aristotle "the chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness" by which mathematics is particularly marked.<sup>33</sup> The beautiful is for him the "appropriate."<sup>34</sup> Considering the other and chief element in catharsis, the purification of the mind of its over-much involvement in the world, we see that Aristotle also regarded emotions to be self-regarding in life and poetry as purifying the egotistic elements in them, transforming them into something pure and tranquil.<sup>35</sup> Thus he might have accepted a kind of disinterested contemplation of emotions for their own sakes and a consequent freedom of the mind from its egotistic or practical impulses as characterising poetry. That emotions in life cloud our judgment was a traditional notion

<sup>33</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1078a, 32ff.

<sup>34</sup> *Topics*, 102, a, 6. Also "Beauty is a matter of size and order," (*Poetics*, Bywater, *op. cit.*, p. 40).

<sup>35</sup> S. H. Butcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-268.

in Greek philosophy and Aristotle shared it.<sup>36</sup> Reason is for him the essential part of the soul, the only part that does not die in it, and the emotions have to be judicially enjoyed and strictly kept under the control of reason. So, if pure intellectual attitude of the mind marks its most elevated and noble state, aesthetic activity that reveals the appropriate form or generic essence of emotions lifts the mind from the bondage and clouding effect of the emotions and brings it back to its health. As to the doubt whether Aristotle would accept the fact that tragedy reveals the forms of the emotions to the mind and so, provides a lucid intellectual feast rather than a blind emotional one, this may be got round if we consider these points. First, he held that tragedy, being an art, aims at beauty which to him is the appropriate or the essential form of a thing, and since tragedy for him depicts the tragic emotions of pity and fear, it must evoke them so as to reveal their essential forms or truths. Secondly, he regards tragedy to be an imitation like music, but then it is clear that, like the latter, it does not imitate anything but the forms of things, and so, if it imitates "an action" that is serious and complete in itself,<sup>37</sup> it only represents the essential idea or truth of human life in one of its aspects of doing and undergoing. Naturally this will involve imitation of pity and fear also in the same sense. Thirdly, he explains the peculiar delight we all have in imitation, in an intel-

<sup>36</sup> *Rhetoric* (2.1), where he defines emotions like pity, fear, jealousy etc., as what alter our judgment.

<sup>37</sup> Bywater, *op. cit.* p. 35.

lectual manner, by saying that we love to learn something. Can this be not applicable to tragic delight in the sense that we love to learn about pity and fear in tragedy?<sup>38</sup>

Thus though Aristotle had no idea of this sort of psycho-therapeutic purification, and the word "catharsis" meant for him some sort of religious purification (besides medicinal purgation), yet we can see that he would have no objection to our view of the function of tragedy and to our meaning of that endlessly suggestive and ambiguous word he used to describe it.

In fact Aristotle might understand the Indian theory in his own words thus. The human reason apprehends the essence or forms of things which are potentially in it, and in this consists the proper function and delight of man. The forms of the complex emotions like those of music<sup>39</sup> are not apparent to ordinary minds but a poet seizing them presents them through an artificial medium, and in this consists making (*poesis*) and imitation (*mimesis*). Tragedy imitates the appropriate idea of that aspect of life which is marked by pity and fear and represents it through plot, characters, and their thoughts and feelings. The representation is ideal as it is an imaginary whole, complete in itself with internal order, an autonomous world in itself. Thus it is that poetry is most philosophical<sup>40</sup> and its function is to reveal to man's reason the forms of

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Politics* (1340a, 12ff.).

<sup>40</sup> Bywater, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

emotions which colour and mark different aspects of his life. And since reason is the noblest portion of man's soul and knowledge his highest good attended with the purest joy, tragedy that leads his mind to see into the forms of such important aspects of life as marked by pity and terror, is surely like a medicine to his soul. It clears the mind of its cloud of ignorance, error, and prejudice which are the results of the vegetative, sensitive, and the affective parts of his soul. It quickens the essential soul-life of the audience and brings it to its ideal state of being toward which its nature is to proceed, (as all things tend to realise their appropriate forms), and thus acting as a curative and a tonic. This is tragic catharsis.

We conclude this rather speculative venture in comparative aesthetics with this remark that the Indian theory of *rasa* as well as Aristotle's theory of catharsis, the latter as reconstructed here to resemble the former, are intellectualistic in one sense, yet not in another. For though they hold up before our eyes the elements of disinterested knowledge involved in the peculiar tragic delight and give in its terms an account of the function of drama somewhat analogous to that of a purificatory and tonic medicine, yet, as shown before, they also stress the immediate taste of emotions. Dramatic experience on this traditional theory is as much a matter of emotional exaltation as of intellectual penetration into the emotions enjoyed. Another point to note is that this latter element does not involve any such abstractive and consecutive

reasoning process, and any such (either remote or proximate) pragmatic interest, as characterise scientific knowledge which is generally known as typically intellectual. The traditional philosophy we are dealing with had an intuitive theory of knowledge which fits well with the description of the aesthetic experience as a kind of knowledge. But, ● again, we must remember that this philosophy described this experience also in terms of emotional exaltation. One feels an emotion intensely, yet one does it, not as in life, but only to be intensely aware of it. We must not stress one element at the cost of the other and thus lose the wisdom of the ancients.

# INDIAN POETICS

The purpose of this essay is to introduce Indian poetics to western readers by way of first, selecting certain general problems in poetics and finding their treatment in Indian poetics and also indicating some parallels in Western thought, and secondly, noticing certain features peculiar to Indian poetics.

## A. GENERAL PROBLEMS IN POETICS AND THEIR TREATMENT IN INDIAN POETICS.

### I. *Definition of literature :*

(i) The Sanskrit word for literature is *Sahitya*, which etymologically means co-ordination, balance, concord and contact. Following one of these several meanings, literature is defined by one school of Indian poetics as the art where the words and sense meet on equal terms and enhance their mutual beauty and worth. They are compared by Kuntaka (10th century A.D. Kashmirian) to two close friends one having powers and virtues equal to the other. This manner of looking at literature and recognising the value of the medium which is language, along with the sense expressed, may be significant in our times when most poets and critics, following Mallarme, want the words of poetry to be abstract beauties in themselves, sound-values that may be allowed to play upon the reader's consciousness. Poetry must not say anything, show anything beyond itself. This is an extreme reaction to emphasis on the sense of a poem at the cost of its language and so, to the

notion, that poetry cannot lose much by either paraphrasing or translation.

Now with regard to this theory of poetry some other school of thinkers, known as that of suggestion (*dvani*) headed by Anandabardhan (of Kashmir, 9th century A.D.) and Abhinavagupta (Kashmir, 10th century A.D.) point out that it is not the literal, direct and referential meaning that poetry properly expresses, but it is a suggested, indirect and emotive meaning, and hence, though the words of a poem must be given their due importance, with regard to the literal sense they denote, yet both the words and their direct meaning form but a medium for the emotive and indirect meaning to expressing itself. In good poetry, this suggested mean dominates over the words and their literal sense. The latter are compared to a woman's body while the former to her grace or beauty which is a subtler manifestation and a profounder meaning of womanhood.<sup>1</sup> (We may compare with this concept of poetry A.C. Bradley's notion of it as a unity of sound and sense, the latter he calls 'resonant meaning' as it is suggested and yet it is not anything apart from the poem itself.<sup>2</sup>)

(ii) There is another sense of the word *Sahitya* ascribed by Abhinavagupta when he describes poetry as a overflowing of some emotion of a poet's heart into the hearts of his readers or hearers. Thus there is a communication of feeling and contact of

<sup>1</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana* I, 4-5, II, 4.

<sup>2</sup> His *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (1909), pp. 13-15, 26.

hearts. In the case of some actual emotion suffered by a human being or an animal, it is conveyed to other hearts by the poet who thus establishes a contact between the suffering being and his readers or listeners through his own self. One may compare with this view Wordsworth's description of poetry as the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.'

Now Abhinavagupta speaks also of the unision of hearts of the audience in a play and considers this fact to be essential for aesthetic delight which is contemplative and universal.<sup>3</sup> We are here reminded of our poet of modern India, Rabindranath Tagore<sup>4</sup> and also of Tolstoy<sup>5</sup> who spoke of art as freeing us of our separation and isolation from one another. We are particularly reminded of Kant<sup>6</sup> who defined taste as a "faculty of forming a priori estimate of the communicability of the feelings," and saw that this universal communicability of feelings signifies a social interest for us and supplies a reason why we demand from everyone a feeling for judgment of taste as a moral duty. Kant speaks also of 'humanity' and 'social interest,' signifying 'universal feeling of sympathy' and faculty for the universal communication of one's 'inmost self.' All this leads up to the concept of a 'common sense.' But this social interest in communication is empirical for Kant and it 'supervenes' instead of

<sup>3</sup> *Abhinava Bharati* p. 280.

<sup>4</sup> *Panchabhut* (1st ed.) p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> *What is art* (1896, trans. A. Mande), Chap. V.

<sup>6</sup> *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* (Trans. Meridith, (1911).

determining, the judgment of taste. So he would perhaps reject the definition of art in terms of sociability.

De Witt H. Parker defines art as social, depending upon types of objects that may be presented in the experience of any one or upon the patterns of sense and meanings that are potentially universal. Part of our enjoyment of art depends on our feeling of shareability of art ; the knowledge that others are enjoying it<sup>7</sup>.

But we think this is an extra-aesthetic enjoyment and so, not an essential or defining characteristic of art.

(iv) Poetry has been defined in terms of an extraordinary kind of delightful mental state, called *rasa*.<sup>8</sup> This is a state that arises out of contemplation of emotion evoked by a poem through suggestive means, through the depiction of appropriate characters and situations and through rhetorical devices. The emotion is then objectified and enjoyed as an ideal content or a generic essence. Now, since suggestion, instead of direct description of emotions is the mode of expression to be adopted in poetry to produce its proper pleasure or *rasa*, sometimes suggestion (*dvani*) has been declared to be the soul of poetry.<sup>9</sup> Abhinavagupta, however, rightly saw that it was not any and every sort of suggestion that produces poetry proper, but only that sort which

<sup>7</sup> "Nature of Art" reprinted in *Problems of Aesthetics* by M. Weitz (1959, Macmillans).

<sup>8</sup> Bharata, *Natyasastra* 6.34. 1

<sup>9</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana* I. 5,

yields *rasa* or the characteristic aesthetic delight.<sup>10</sup> Some aestheticians held figures of speech to be essential mark of poetry, some more generally, indirectness of speech, while others held appropriateness in the use of words to be the mark. But the theory of *rasa*, as developed by Abhinavagupta out of the germinal ideas of Bharata and in the light of the theory of suggestion first advanced by Anandabardhan, superseded these earlier notions of poetry and showed that the figures and indirectness of speech and appropriateness have for their end the production of *rasa* or aesthetic delight, which, therefore, is the supreme mark of poetry.<sup>11</sup>

## II. *The nature of aesthetic delight :*

Poetic delight, *rasa*, arises out of our expression and contemplation of some emotion latent in our common human nature through the imaginative watching of certain characters, their thoughts, actions and physical manifestations of their feelings, and their surroundings, all of which suggest or evoke by association the emotion.

The following characteristics are to be noted :

(i) Poetic enjoyment is at once an emotional exaltation and a state of serenity. It is not a matter of passive emotional indulgence though it concerns emotions primarily and there is some sympathetic participation in the emotion depicted in the poem. It is more an expression and contemplation of the emotion which, so expressed and con-

<sup>10</sup> *Dhyanaloka-Lochana* I, 4, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Abhinava Bharati* II, 5.

templated, colours or variegates the aesthetic mood, *rasa*, that poetry brings about. The *rasa* is not any emotion but an emotion transfigured into an extraordinary mood.

This mood is characterised by (a) Intense absorption or density, (b) Realisation of one's consciousness or pure self along with the particular emotion contemplated<sup>12</sup>, (c) Intense delight of an extraordinary kind, akin to ecstasy of a mystical sort which is not variegated with emotion, from an extra-sensory introspective knowledge of an emotion available to the *yogis*, and also from any ordinary discursive knowledge.

We may compare the above with its Western analogues. Aristotle probably meant by *catharsis* of pity and fear in a tragedy purification of the egotistic element of these emotions and transforming them into something pure and tranquil, as one of his interpreters, S. H. Butcher tells us.<sup>13</sup> One may as well say that Aristotle meant by *catharsis* of these tragic emotions a clear contemplative insight into the essential nature of these emotions which thereafter cannot overcome the person concerned. The beauty of a thing is for Aristotle, its appropriate or essential nature and since a tragedy is to reflect a serious and complete action as well as pity and fear, we may say that it reveals to the audience the essential nature or form of life and these emotions. This would bring Aristotle very near Abhinavagupta.

<sup>12</sup> *Natyasastra*, 6.35, 4.

<sup>13</sup> "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (1931) pp. 254-68.

But one point of difference between them is that while the Indian thinker, speaking of the origin and nature of aesthetic delight, points to our self-consciousness which is realised in poetic appreciation, Aristotle is thinking either of the relief from the blinding passions or of a lucid contemplation of them, neither of which mental acts explains the characteristic delight we derive from poetry and drama.

Hegel and Croce spoke of mitigation and objectification of emotions in aesthetic enjoyment,<sup>14</sup> but minimised the element of sympathetic participation in the emotions ; they made aesthetic appreciation much like an intellectual process. I. A. Richards stresses the emotional exaltation we have in poetry. Though he speaks of the balance and organisation of emotions which lead to a tragic repose, he is no formalist and intellectualist in aesthetics and, certainly, he has no faith in the transcension of emotions in aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>15</sup>

(ii) The contemplative enjoyment of an emotion is made possible by the depiction in language (in case of poetry) and dramatic representation (in dramatic performances) of characters and their physical manifestations of feelings and their surroundings which suggest the emotions. The rhetorical means used in poetry also suggest emotions which must not be described.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Hegel : *op. cit.*, (Introduction).

Croce : *Aesthetics* (1901, Trans. Ainslie), Chap II.

<sup>15</sup> *Principles of Literary Criticism* (193) pp. 51, 59, 98, 132, 246.

<sup>16</sup> Mammata (11 C. A.D.) *Kavyaprakasa* VII, 60-62. Also Alexander Smith, "The Philosophy of Poetry", (Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1835), p. 528.

(iii) One general condition for the poetic enjoyments is 'universalisation' of the objects depicted in the poem, the objects being characters, their actions and their surroundings as well as the emotions suggested by them ; the mind of the poet and the minds of the reader too undergo a process of universalisation to be explained below. The process involves the following :<sup>17</sup>

(a) Regarding the objects : they are depicted in their generality as generic essences or ideal contents, not as actual and concrete things which arouse specific, intellectual and practical responses.

(b) Regarding the mind of the poet : all self-interest or eccentricity or individual predilection is shed away ; the mind gets disinterested, yet not indifferent to objects, rather it is absorbed in them. Consciousness in aesthetic contemplation becomes socialised. (Compare Keats speaking of 'negative capability',<sup>18</sup> Hegel of effacement of all idiosyncrasy<sup>19</sup> and T. S. Eliot of impersonality.<sup>20</sup>)

(c) Regarding the readers : The mind of the poet in the generalised state is identified with the able reader who, by virtue of his sympathetic imagination receives the aesthetic consciousness, *rasa*, that is born in the mind of the poet.<sup>21</sup> The reader must

<sup>17</sup> *Abhinava Bharati* pp. 280-81, 2935, 346, *Dhanyaloka* p. 86.

The process of universalisation is called in Sanskrit, '*Sadhara-nikarana*'.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, 28 Dec., 1817, and to Woodhouse 27 Oct., 1817 (B. Forman Edition, 1931).

<sup>19</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 396.

<sup>20</sup> *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1932)

<sup>21</sup> *Abhinava Bharati* p. 295

be sympathetic and feel at one with the author,<sup>22</sup> his mind should be like a polished mirror that can reflect the universally communicable objects depicted by the poet,<sup>23</sup> yet his sympathy must be disinterested in so far as he will treat every object as ideal (and not actual). For this attitude to develop, he must have a previous training in poetic appreciation and the author should help him by providing such elements in drama as spectacles, costumes, fine music and dance, which tend to make them forget their private obsessions and attitudes. In poetry the poet provides rhyme, metre and figures of speech to help this process of universalisation.<sup>24</sup>

We may compare this view with Edward Bullough's notion of 'psychical distance',<sup>25</sup> which means an interest in the objects and emotions depicted in the poem such that it is 'filtered', 'cleared of practical, concrete nature of appeal.' So the objects and the emotions are objectified, which then do not excite feelings. Bullough, however, does not bring out the logical implication of this psychical distancing, which, if he did, might lead him to the Indian concept of universalisation.

(iv) Metaphysical implications of the theory of rasa:

(a) Two grades of consciousness or personality are presupposed by the theory of rasa—(1) individual and practical (2) universal and contemplative yet

<sup>22</sup> *Abhinaba Bharati*, II, p. 339.

<sup>23</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana* p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Abhinaba Bharati*, pp. 281-82.

<sup>25</sup> "Psychical Distance as a factor in art and aesthetic principle" *British Jn. of Psychology* V (1912) pp. 87-98.

sensitive to all things and enjoying them aesthetically. This is *Saiva-siddhanta* metaphysics. [ For *Vedanta* the higher self (in the liberated state in life) is indifferent, while for *Sankhya*, neither joy nor sorrow of whatever sort is a quality of consciousness which is pure intelligence. ] Aesthetic experience is different from that of the mystics and *yogis*, it is called the twin of the taste of the Divine, not identical with it.<sup>26</sup> It is more tender and variegated, not dry and undifferentiated.<sup>27</sup>

(b) The subsistence of emotions like pity, fear, love etc., depicted in poetry and drama, presupposes ideal contents or universal essences, dislodged at once from the individual minds that ordinarily suffer them, and things which they appear to characterise, floating in a world of its own. As such they are objects of aesthetic contemplation and delight.

Compare Meinong's view of subsistence of emotions and abstract entities. Philip Leon too holds emotions in art to be objects apprehended and not feeling projected on the external world.<sup>28</sup> The empathy theory of Lipp and Volkelt speaks of our feeling into outer things or externalising our feelings, but Philip Leon criticises this subjectivist theory and is nearer the *rasa* theory.

(c) The disposition in man for some basic emotions depicted in art is admitted, a disposition being

<sup>26</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana*, p. 190.

<sup>27</sup> *Abhinava Bharati*, pp. 286, 291 ; DL, pp. 51, 81.

<sup>28</sup> "Suggestion from Aesthetics for metaphysics of Quality"  
*Mind.*, N. S. 129.

the result of our experiences in innumerable past lives in varied modes which leave their traces in our consciousness. Presence of this disposition explains why everyone of us can appreciate the basic emotions depicted in art though everyone may not have experienced in this life these emotions. Communication of emotions means the eliciting of latent emotions in the reader's or beholder's mind.<sup>29</sup>

### *III. Value of Poetry : Poetry and morality :*

(i) Poetry is valuable in itself. It is for the relish of one's own consciousness of a particular grade along with the emotions contemplated.

(ii) No moral question is raised when every emotion such as infatuation, hideousness, envy, cruelty, intoxication, deceitfulness is enumerated and described in treatises on poetics and admitted with other emotions as fit objects for depiction in poetry and drama. No rule like that of poetic justice is prescribed. The erotic emotion is described as the best for poetry because of its more universal and richer appeal.

(iii) Abhinabagupta clearly points out that poetry does not instruct like moral, religious and historical works ; it gives us delight and it instructs only in the sense that it enriches our aesthetic sensibility.<sup>30</sup>

*Aitareya Upanishad* says, "The works of art spring from the refinement of the self and the devotee of the arts refines his self by them". We can speak of arts helping one to be more inward-looking and

<sup>29</sup> *Abhinaba Bharati*, pp. 284-85, 281 ; DL. p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana*, pp. 40, 190, 336.

more aware of the emotions which then can overpower him less. The arts may also indirectly teach one to regard the world dispassionately as a passing show. This is our view of the functions of art ; the world itself including our life with its joys and sorrows may be regarded as a piece of art to be enjoyed with disinterested and contemplative attitude of the mind.

We may compare such views with Aristotle's notion of poetry which is quite a moral. In his view, pity and fear and other emotions that may shock a moralist may be depicted ; only purposeless depiction of immorality is disapproved. Yet he may be thinking of a socio-moral value of tragedy when he spoke of catharsis, which may be interpreted as a process leading us to a knowledge of the tragic emotions, teaching us indirectly how to feel them properly on appropriate occasions in right measure.<sup>31</sup> Kant made art autonomous and non-moral, nevertheless, he spoke of art being a symbol of morality and found in this moral feeling the basis of the universality and necessity of aesthetic judgment.<sup>32</sup> For the sake of contrast we may mention Tolstoy<sup>33</sup> who recommended for art simple feelings of the common man and also religious feelings and denounced spleen, pride, voluptuousness etc., for they belong exclusively to the idle rich. Tagore<sup>34</sup> too disapproves low passions being depic-

<sup>31</sup> Humphry House ; *Aristotle's Poetics* (1956), pp. 104-10.

<sup>32</sup> *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, op. cit., pp. 223-27.

<sup>33</sup> *What is art*, op. cit., Chap. 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Sahityer Pathe* (1343 B.S.) p. 173.

ted in art, for he holds that art should reveal the truth about mankind, and this truth lies in what man aspires to be, not in what man at the moment actually is. Man will overcome in time his lower passions, pass them for his nobler ones.

## B. SOME SPECIAL FEATURES IN INDIAN POETICS

### I. *The theory of suggestion :*

That poetry works by suggestion has been noted by Shelley, A. C. Bradley and I. A. Richards, but the Indian aestheticians have studied at length the way this suggestion works. The words and sentences of a poem have a referential or direct meaning through which the emotive meaning expresses itself and overshadows the former.<sup>35</sup> Good poetry does not influence us emotionally like music that does not say anything. It presents a referential meaning as well as an emotive attitude emanating from the latter with sufficient uniformity and distinctness (of course, only for a cultural group that has an adequate knowledge of the language and experiences of life). So the emotive attitudes thus suggested or evoked may be called emotive meanings. There is another way of suggesting the emotive meanings ; in this the rhetorical constructions of words and sentences, instead of describing certain characters, their behaviour and surroundings, suggest some emotions.

The excellence of a poem is judged by the richness of suggestion employed in it to express the dominant

<sup>35</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana* III, 42-53.

emotional attitude. Thus, for instance, consider the two quotations from Shakespeare :

“But look, the morn in russet mantle clad  
Walks over the dew of yon high eastern hill”, and  
“Unarm Eros, our long day’s task is done,  
And we are for the dark.”

In the first the suggested emotion is subordinate to the descriptive meaning which is but embellished by it, but in the second the suggested emotion dominates the descriptive meaning that suggests it. So the second is a better poetical piece. In a long poem there may be more complex emotive meaning<sup>36</sup> which will be suggested by many meanings subordinate to it, e.g., in a Shakespearean tragedy the chief complex meaning may be said to be ‘sadness, mystery and waste’ (as A. C. Bradley points out<sup>37</sup>) which is rung out of many subordinate notes. This leads us to the question of differentiation between two kinds of emotions depicted in poetry, one that usually dominate and others that suggest and sustain them as auxiliaries.

## II. *Permanent and transitory emotions :*

Emotions awakened in poetry are of two classes : one class dominates a poem while the other is transient and is subservient to them.<sup>38</sup> Thus the pervading emotion or the prevailing mood in a poem, such as *Romeo-Juliet*, may be love which is served by such transitory emotions as longing, rashness,

<sup>36</sup> *Dhanyaloka-Lochana* III, 112.

<sup>37</sup> *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1903) p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Natyasastra* op. cit., 7, 11-17, 43 ; AB pp. 283-85.

anxiety, sadness, joy, self-pity, stupefaction etc. which suggest and sustain the chief emotion. Fear, indolence, cruelty and disgust are said by Bharata, the Father of the Indian poetics, to be incompatible with love. There should be only one principal emotion in a composition, others subservient to it.

Now the emotions that may be employed to strike the dominant note of a poem are the more elemental, powerful and pervasive in human nature, such as, love, pity, fear and wonder. Each of these manifests itself through a number of less elemental and powerful emotions which appear and disappear in quick succession in the poem. The question then is, how many emotions are there to function as permanent ones in poetry and drama and whether the number is flexible or fixed ; further, whether an emotion like weariness, anxiety or envy which is indicated as a subordinate one, may be made to function as a permanent one in a poem. Abhinabagupta is very rigid in these matters ; he enumerates nine emotions that can function as permanent ones and does not admit any other. He lays down that only these, when depicted by appropriate suggestive means and through their proper auxiliary emotions can produce *rasa* or aesthetic delight.<sup>39</sup>

But later aestheticians added some other emotions in the list of permanent ones. Though there is some difference in actual classification of emotions into two classes, the general principle

<sup>39</sup> *Abhinava Bharati*. 7.2

that in a poem one emotion should dominate over others that will serve it and that some emotions are naturally more suited to function as dominant ones while others as auxiliaries is admitted. That such a classification has a basis in actual poetical works as well as in human psychology seems to be pretty clear, though Western critics have not explicitly marked this aspect of poetics. Aristotle speaks of depiction of character by which he means permanent disposition, through thoughts, action and feelings. We may here guess that Aristotle might be implicitly thinking of the feelings which are naturally transitory in a play and serve to manifest and sustain the more permanent emotional mood that characterises the disposition or character of the hero or the heroine.

## A SKETCH OF A THEORY OF POETRY

Poetry is distinguished by a delight of an extraordinary kind as its immediate end.

. *Longinus on the Sublime* speaks of this peculiar delight as transport and sublime joy (see Saintsbury's translation in his *Loci Critici*). Wordsworth, Coleridge and others call it pleasure, but they confuse this æsthetic pleasure with ordinary pleasure which has undesirable association with sensuous enjoyments, luxury and amusement which have so offended moralists like Tolstoy and Coomaraswamy. The word pleasure, moreover, excludes the relish of tragic emotions and so, some have replaced it by æsthetic enjoyment. Any way, the delight from art must be distinguished from other kinds of delight.

Poetry is defined in terms of its end because the latter is peculiar to poetry (of course, as a matter of fact, in common with the other fine arts). An extraordinary delight is the differentia of poetry (or fine art) distinguishing it from other products of human skill or activity, scientific and industrial works and handicrafts. Poetry is distinguished from other fine arts which have this delight as their common end by way of the means to the end, that is, the medium for achieving the end. This medium for poetry is words, spoken or written ; and as noted before, in this poetry is not distinguishable from drama and other literary arts. This distinction is not philosophically important, and as held by Shelley, it is superficial or 'vulgar.'

Poetry is not defined in terms of beauty, for this concept has many associations and is itself to be defined. The peculiar delight (*rasa*) is a well-defined character on which we more or less agree as it is a distinguishable felt quality. It may be defined as the peculiar joy we experience while contemplating a feeling. Such a contemplation is not philosophical introspection but a spontaneous objectification of a feeling made possible by the suggestions in poetry. Though discursive reason is not operative in this contemplation, it is not an extra-intellectual process, rather conscious and unconscious intellectuality are involved in it. Now beauty may be defined in terms of this extra-ordinary delight, *rasa*. The beautiful is that which produces this delight in the beholder.

This extra-ordinary delight (called *rasa* in Sanskrit poetics) distinguishes poetry from all other kinds of writing (excepting drama, novel and short-story which as literary arts have much in common with poetry).

This delight is different from the delight in knowledge of truth (as derived from scientific and philosophical literature), from the delight in goodness (as found in moral and religious literature), and from the delight in feelings and sensations such as love, conquest, enjoyment of worldly goods, utilitarian satisfaction, etc., (as found either in life or in realistic literature which copies life).

In poetry, however, this characteristic delight is often found blended more or less with other kinds of delight, for instance, in moral, religious or

philosophical poetry. In much modern aesthetical literature the functional value of art is recognised as a part of its aesthetic value and so, propaganda poetry is recognised as art proper. The distinction between the useful and the fine arts is regarded by some as false and misleading. (e.g., Anatole France and John Dewey). We admit that the fine and the useful are more or less interwoven in art-objects which are seldom either purely aesthetic (*i.e.*, contemplative) or purely useful ; but we wish to point out and insist on the clear distinction between the aesthetic value (consisting of *rasa*), and non-aesthetic values (intellectual, moral, utilitarian etc.).

Such poetry is as valuable literature, no doubt, as “pure” poetry, yet a poem is a poem by virtue of its characteristic delight (*rasa*) and not because of its delight in general.

This extra-ordinary delight, *rasa*, characterising poetry, is delight in expression of sentiments which includes feelings, emotions and moods.

That poetry expresses sentiments is well recognised. Wordsworth<sup>1</sup> and Rabindranath Tagore<sup>2</sup> have stressed the essentially human character of

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth (*Essay supplementary to Preface*, 1815).

<sup>2</sup> Tagore Writes : “The World outside us, when it enters into our consciousness, becomes quite another kind of world. Though its form, colours, sounds and the rest remain as they are, they become tinged with our approval and disapproval, our wonder and fear, our pleasure and pain ; and thus variegated with the manifold qualities of our feelings, this world is wrought into one that is intimately our own.....But having taken its birth, this living world would fain be saved from dissolution, and so it longs to be given objective permanence. Hence, through the ages man’s urge for literary

poetry. Even in bare descriptive poems the poet suggests human sentiments : the world is seen through a film of feelings and emotions.

Expression of sentiments, when successful, always produces a characteristic delight.

Wordsworth<sup>3</sup> speaks of it as 'an overbalance of pleasure' and Shelley<sup>4</sup> also recognises this. Sentiments when not expressed but actually felt in life, that is, suffered, are either pleasurable or painful, and the pleasure and the pain are different in taste from those experienced when the sentiments are expressed. Then they are actively contemplated and are touched and transformed by a characteristic delight. (How this happens we shall see later.)

Expression of a sentiment uniquely determines the particular shade of it, though the class (of sentiment) is vaguely felt before expression is completed, and roughly classified under and denoted by a certain term, such as, pity, wonder, love, reverential fear etc.. Every expressed sentiment is a finished product and cannot be rendered into other words. So rendered, it loses its original character and turns into a different thing. Thus the form and content of poetic expression, that is, its means and its end, expression and meaning, are indissolubly fused together.

expression". (*Function of Literature*, Visva-Bharati Quarterly, May 1935).

<sup>3</sup> "The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure" (*Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, 1800).

<sup>4</sup> "Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure" (*Defence of poetry*).

In this, poetry differs from other kinds of composition where the subject-matter may be rendered into other words without any loss to it, where expression is separable from and secondary to the matter expressed.

Expression in poetry is immediately or apparently of some object or event (imaginary or real), thought or specific feelings, or a combination of them, but it is ultimately of some dominant sentiment or transcendent mood over and above them. Poetic expression has thus grades or layers of meanings, each higher one transcending yet growing out of the lower.

*Illustration* : Wordsworth's *Yew Trees* describes objects, his *Nutting* some event, but each expresses ultimately some sentiment uniquely determined by it and only vaguely hinted at by such words as love and awe towards nature. Wordsworth's *Ode to the Intimation of Immortality*, Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* or one of Donne's argumentative pieces expresses a thought, but beyond the thought and growing out of it is an unmistakable sentiment, an emotional attitude, which may be roughly indicated by certain terms which cannot reproduce it.

Again the immediate specific feelings expressed by a dramatic piece (e.g., Owen's *Strange Meeting* or Tennyson's *Maud* or one of Browning's monologues) express further meanings they have, overtones of meaning so to say, and this meaning is nothing but a particular sentiment uniquely determined by the expression itself.

As just noted, expression of a sentiment

uniquely determines the sentiment which cannot be stated in other words and which exists only in a vague and general form before the expression. Each poem builds up and defines a particular sentiment though we, for rough classification, group poems according to the sentiment depicted, love, heroism, patriotism, love of nature, devotion to God, etc.

Because of this fact no sentiment can be exhausted by poets and rendered stale or obsolete. Poets will find new expressions of love and heroism, pity and terror, and other dominant human emotions, and will offer fresh and vital poetry just because a new expression means a new sentiment though belonging, for rational purposes, to some old pigeon-hole labelled love, heroism etc. (This point has been recognised by Aristotle<sup>5</sup>, Tolstoy<sup>6</sup>, Tagore<sup>7</sup>, and Ananda-Var-dhan<sup>8</sup>)

A sentiment is expressed through suggestion which is an indirect mode of expression.

Sentiments are not concepts and so, cannot be properly represented by words. Nothing concrete is represented by such words as love, pity, terror, awe, etc. Each of these only conveys some broad and vague idea of a general sentiment which has many varieties and mutual differences. Even such more specific words as reverential love, intellectual love, passion, affection etc., cannot comprehend

<sup>5</sup> *Poetics*, p. 53. Bywater's Trans.

<sup>6</sup> *What is Art* (1896) chap. 17. (Trans. A. Maude)

<sup>7</sup> *Sahitya* (1341 B.S.), p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> *Dhvanyaloka* IV 10.

the individual character of a sentiment which can only be felt and conveyed through suggestion.

*Illustration :* Browning's *Incident of the French Camp*. An event is depicted. Napoleon and one of his soldiers are described and their meeting related. Through these the soldier's heroism and loyalty and Napoleon's love for his soldier are suggested which could not be conveyed by such abstract concepts as love, loyalty and heroism. "The chief's eye flashed" when he heard that Ratisbon had been conquered, "but presently softened itself, as sheathes a film the mother-eagle's eye when her bruised eaglet breathes." The description of Napoleon's eyes suggests his love and pity for his soldier, the changes in the eye are bodily consequences represented by words while the feelings causing them can be suggested through association. Again, the heroism and loyalty of the soldier is suggested through his behaviour : his "breast was all but shot in two," yet he rode all the way to his chief who saw his wound and said, "you are wounded?", "touched to the quick" the soldier replied, "I am killed Sire? And his chief beside, smiling the boy fell dead."

There are different modes of suggestion : (a) The characters, Napoleon and the soldier, call up certain associated sentiments. The former are called *ālam-bana bibhāvanas* in Sanskrit poetics, meaning supporting objects on which are built up the sentiments. (b) The natural background, the war-field, the little mound on which Napoleon is standing and the distant walls of Ratisbon—these suggest certain sentiments. These are exciting causes (*uddipana*

*vibhāvas*). In love poems, moon-lit nights, birds chirping, trees murmuring in soft winds, etc., are exciting causes. (c) The bodily features, gestures and postures, etc., suggest the sentiments which cause them. These are called *Anubhāvas*, consequential objects. In love poems tears lowering of the eyes in shyness, blushing etc., are *anubhāvas*. (d) Certain feelings appear and pass away in quick succession, which also suggest and nourish the dominant sentiment of a poem. These are called *vyabhichāris* or accessories. Thus Napoleon's anxious thought about the battle at Ratisbon, his sudden joy at hearing the news of victory and his pity on seeing the soldier's wound,—all suggest and nourish his love of conquest and love for his soldiers. The soldier's smiling face, his animated announcement of victory and his proud reply suggest his loyalty and heroism. In love poems such feelings as doubt, despair, jealousy, passion, suffering, etc., serve as accessories. These more or less simple feelings serve as means of expression for the more complex, richer and ineffable feeling which is the dominant sentiment or prevailing mood of a poem. (e) Sometimes a thought or an argument suggests a sentiment. Thus in Browning's *Last Ride Together* the hero's thoughts suggest his sentiment towards life and love. They suggest the high philosophical attitude of his mind which is led to contemplation by failure in love. Ultimately, the thoughts reinforce the sentiment of love. So are the thoughts in *Evelyn Hope* and in Donne's argumentative poems, e.g., *Good-Morrow* and *Ecstasy*. Portia's speech on mercy is a thought that vitalises the

sentiment of mercy ; and Keats's thought, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" consolidates the sentiment of the poem of which it is no moral tag but an organic consummative part. (f) Metaphors, similes and other rhetorical means suggest a sentiment. Thus the simile of the eagle's eye when her bruised eaglet breathes is a powerful one to suggest pity and despair. Similarly, death is suggested by poets through such expressions as untying of a knot or extinguishing of a lamp. In metaphors and similes the objects associated with or charged with some emotional content are described to suggest the latter. In other rhetorical means a certain unusual combination of words suggests a feeling. For instance, "I live on the Ganges" suggests that I live very close to the holy river to enjoy the coolness, purity and sacredness associated with it. "Come here if you are in love with death," suggests "Do not come here, for then you will be killed." "The sun has not turned my hair grey" suggests "I have much experience, for I am aged." In each of these indirect modes of expression there is a sentiment predominating over the plain statement. In the last expression it is the pride of age and experience.

The modes of suggestion are thus seen to be modes of indirection. This indirection is necessary, for the sentiments, the objects of expression, cannot be directly expressed. Such words as pity, love, righteous indignation or reverential fear only vaguely indicate a sentiment. In poetry, where sentiments are to be expressed, the objects that are capable of suggesting the sentiments by association and also

capable of being directly expressed are so expressed. Through these the sentiments are indirectly expressed. This indirect mode of expression is suggestion. In a rhetorical expression, the direct meaning is felt to be not intended because of the unusual structure, and the indirect meaning is the intended and the real one. Along with this meaning is suggested a sentiment which is the ultimate object of expression. An indirect mode of expression arises from and reveals an emotional attitude.

The expression and the sentiment expressed are not separate, the means and the end form a concrete whole though they are distinguished by analytical thought. The sentiment exists only while the expression exists, *i.e.*, when a poem is read or heard. The sentiment does not exist either before or after the poem. What is present in such a circumstance is a vague feeling, a mere shadow of the sentiment concretised in the poem. The poem or the expression is the sentiment which is not a thing apart from the former.

Sentiments expressed through suggestion are impersonal and universal in character ; they are felt not as particular sentiments touching the reader or anybody in particular, but as universal ideal contents. As such they do not involve any personal attachment; in other words, they are not passively suffered but actively enjoyed. This enjoyment is aesthetic delight or *rasa*.

Therefore, sentiments of terror, pain and pity as depicted in a tragedy are enjoyed for their own sakes. They then do not produce that disagreeable feeling

which they do when they are experienced in actual life. Again, the pleasurable sentiments of love, conquest etc., when depicted in poetry, are touched with a tranquillity and serenity in art.

All this is due to 'psychical distancing' effected through the process of suggestion and universalisation or de-personalisation of the sentiments involved in suggestion. The excitants, supports, consequents and the accessories are all generalised and so the resultant sentiment is also a general one, a universal ideal content. Therefore, it cannot affect us in the manner a particular (or actual) sentiment does. In other words, a sentiment expressed becomes an object of active contemplation, while one experienced in actuality is blindly suffered. The characteristic extraordinary delight (*rasa*) from poetry is associated with spontaneous contemplation of the universal form of a sentiment inhering in a poem. The mind then adopts an impersonal knowing or contemplative attitude while it is narrowly individualistic and pragmatic when actually moved by a sentiment in life.

As stated before, the sentiment is a function (in a mathematical sense) of expression in the poem and so poetic contemplation does not mean pondering over some sentiment abstracted from the poem ; it means reading, hearing or reciting from memory the poem and following suggested meanings, participation in the generalised sentiments ultimately suggested by the poem. The poem is the real object of contemplation, not any abstract from it. This has been well recognised by A. C.

Bradley who calls suggested content 'resonant meaning.'

Though the words of the poem through their fixed meanings and association determine the suggested sentiment uniquely, poetic contemplation works not as understanding, synthesising the manifold of sensations under concepts in a rigid and mechanical manner. Rather this contemplation is, as Kant held, a free interplay of perception and understanding, and no concept proper of a sentiment is formed while the latter is apprehended as the final meaning of a poem. This final meaning, the end product of a poem is a felt truth about a sentiment and is a generic essence of it. As it is suggested by the poem, it transcends the latter though determined by it. This immanent-transcendent aspect of a suggested meaning in a poem has been recognised by A. C. Bradley.

The universality of a poem depends on the extent of generality of the expressed sentiments. The poet expresses the sentiments as his own but he represents in himself more or less the universal humanity. The universal appeal of a poet's poetry, therefore, depends on the extent of his curbing his personal peculiarities, and on his identification of himself with the collective mind of men. The poet's self is a social self. (Tagore speaks of it as a "universal self" and "large individuality,"<sup>9</sup> Keats as "no self"<sup>10</sup>, and T. S. Eliot advocates a poet's "self-sacrifice"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> His *Sahityer Pathe* (1343 B.S.), pp. 168-9.

<sup>10</sup> His letter to Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1817.

<sup>11</sup> His *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1932).

Thus such poetry as expresses the most basic human sentiments such as love, affection, jealousy, pity, terror, patriotism, world-weariness and religiosity, are most extensively appreciated. To express any one of them adequately a poet has to express many necessary feelings (which suggest it), besides depicting certain appropriate consequents, excitants and thoughts. Thus to express pity, for instance, one has to express pain, depression, recollection, stupefaction, self-reproach etc. Tolstoy recommends poets to represent the simple feelings of common life accessible to every one (such as pity, cheerfulness, merriment and tranquillity) and also religious feelings. But he denounces such feelings as pride, spleen, voluptuousness etc. for, he says, they are exclusively of the idle rich.<sup>12</sup> (Tagore too is against the depiction of lower passions in literature ; he advocates literature which expresses the ideals of man, and not the actualities which man has to transcend in the course of his evolution.)<sup>13</sup> Both Tolstoy and Tagore had some moralistic bias from which the classical Indian aestheticians were quite free.

As said above, no sentiment is exhausted and a poet has infinite scope for originality. For there are as many shades of sentiments under a common head (say, pity) as there are ways of expressing it. Thus it is that poems of love, though so numerous in any language, never appear stale or obsolete. Each new

<sup>12</sup> *What is Art? op. cit.*, chap. 16.

<sup>13</sup> His *Sahityer Pathe* p. 173.

love-poem, if it is a successful expression, is a fresh sentiment, unique and inimitable. It presents a new aspect of love.

The greatness of a poem depends on its universality and on the richness of the sentiment expressed.

The most basic sentiments are most universal and they are the richest, as each of them involves as its accessories many subordinate and less basic feelings. Thus a poem expressing love is rich with such sentiments as passion and disgust, loyalty and suspicion, exultation and pathos, severity and anxiety, hope and despair and many more accessory feelings which appear and vanish to suggest and nourish the chief sentiment (or permanent mood), *i.e.*, love. Thus it is that an epic poem or a drama of love and war is regarded as a greater poem than a lyric expressing some simpler sentiment, like filial love, bravery or hope. A lyric on love, even if it be perfect in itself, is not so great as a drama of love (like say, *Romeo and Juliet*) where the sentiment of love is expressed more richly and fully. Again, in an epic or a drama there are introduced many basic sentiments which harmonise with and support each other. In this manner we can see that a poem is great according as it has harmoniously and richly expressed a larger number of more basic sentiments with their accessories. (This view has also been put forward by Lascellas Abercrombie.).<sup>14</sup>

The means of expressing a sentiment cannot be judged apart from the sentiment. If the sentiments

<sup>14</sup> "Idea of Great Poetry", (1925).

in a poem are rich it means they have been adequately expressed and the language has been appropriate to the sentiments. The sentiments could not have been judged at all had the expression failed. This follows from the oneness of form and content of poetry.

Rhyme, metre and other poetical means are necessary and organic parts of a poem if they help to suggest the sentiments expressed in the poem and if not, they are artificial and external charms which interfere with, instead of reinforcing, the dominant sentiment of the poem.

Viewed in this light, rhyme and rhythm would be found to be unnecessary jingle in many poems and the free verse of much of our modern poetry would be justified. Tagore, a master of metrical composition wrote poems in prose too, not because of weariness of metre but because metre would not suit the sentiments expressed in these pieces.

It goes without saying that not rhyme and metre but the extraordinary delight (*rasa*) resulting from expression of sentiments is the factor deciding whether a piece of writing is poetry or not. The distinction between prose and poetry is vulgar as Shelley held.<sup>15</sup>

Poetry is mental, yet not subjective, but inter-subjective or objective. Its locus is the mental continuum of collective man or, in other words, human culture. The words used in poetry and their meanings and suggestions all belong to human

<sup>15</sup> His *Defence of Poetry*.

culture-group. Communication is possible because of this.

Any poem which employs strange expressions whose meanings and suggestions hold only for the poet or a small circle of his and which expresses sentiments not shared by the public, is no poem but a psychological curio. For it lacks communication and fails to afford the characteristic aesthetic delight which is a consequence of expression of sentiments. Expression fails if it does not express to others ; a poem is written for others as Tagore points out.<sup>16</sup>

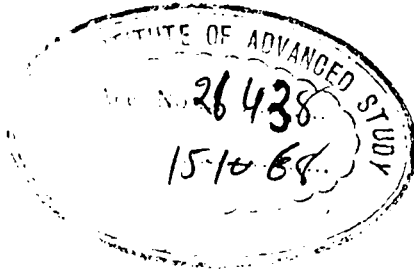
Again, any reaction to a poem, which is peculiar or idiosyncratic (due to the predominance of some individual complex) is not a true appreciation of the poem. A poem is a communication of a universal sentiment from a poet who approaches the universal human self of a reader who also is assumed to be a normal member of the human society and so, a fair representative of universal humanity. Self-expression in a poet and individual appreciation in a critic both involve self-socialisation, and poetry is a social product.

It is needless to point out that the objectivity and universality of poetry is relative to human mind. They change with the language and sentiments of a society. Words which once conveyed a world of sweet associations may at another time be deemed vulgar, and a sentiment (*e.g.*, of conquest and heroism in war) once held noble, may be abandoned as barbarous. For these changes much of old poetry becomes obscure and even disagreeable.

<sup>16</sup> His *Sahitya* (1341 B.S.), p. 7.

Poetry is valuable in itself as it affords its peculiar delight. Yet, by giving man insight into sentiments and enlarging his powers of contemplation and sympathies, it proves itself of value to morality which needs for right action, clear-seeing and imaginative sympathy. (Shelley wrote,<sup>17</sup> "The great secret of morals is love ; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person not our own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination ; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.")

<sup>17</sup> See *loc. cit.*





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