

Theory of the fine arts : an introductory lecture delivered in the classical theatre of King's College, London, May 24th, 1844 / by William Dyce.

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THEORY OF THE FINE ARTS.

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AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

DELIVERED IN

THE CLASSICAL THEATRE OF

KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON,

MAY 24TH, 1844.

BY

WILLIAM DYCE, M.A.

PROFESSOR OF THE THEORY OF THE FINE ARTS TO THE COLLEGE.



LONDON:

JAMES BURNS, 17 PORTMAN STREET,

PORTMAN SQUARE.

1844.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ANTHROPOLOGY

OF THE
HUMAN RACE

BY
J. H. H. H.

THE
HISTORY OF THE

1881

AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN,

I SHALL, perhaps, run the risk of exposing myself to some ridicule, when I address to you, under the customary title of "Introductory Lecture," a few observations which can hardly be said, at least during the present term, to form the introduction to any thing. Circumstances, however, with the detail of which you need not be troubled, having prevented me from completing the preparation of discourses which I had hoped to have delivered at this time, I have thought it best to announce in person their postponement to next or the following term; in the first place, to gratify my own anxious wish of making, at least, a commencement in the fulfilment of the duties which have, now for a considerable period, been assigned to me; and, in the second place, be-

cause an opportunity will thus be afforded, beforehand, of explaining to you, in some degree, the nature of the inquiries which fall within my province in the instructions of the college.

Of course it will be understood that I refer here not to the practical instructions in ornamental design now being given by me to students in the architectural department, but to lectures on the theory of the Fine Arts for students in the department of general literature—in respect to which, I am quite sensible that some apology is needed for the length of time which has elapsed since I ought to have appeared before you in my present capacity. But whatever reasons of a private and personal kind may have existed, the real cause of delay has lain in the difficulty of determining how to make a beginning,—a difficulty which every one must have experienced who addresses himself to the elucidation of a new subject-matter of inquiry, or, at least, of one which is new in respect to those who are likely to be his companions in the investigation.

It was on this latter consideration, indeed,

that the difficulty mainly hinged. The theory of art, or, as it is termed, the *science of æsthetics*, although forming for the last thirty or forty years a deeply studied branch of metaphysics on the continent, particularly in Germany, is to us in this country scarcely yet familiar by name. Comparatively few persons are aware even of the meaning of the term, or have any distinct conception of the sort of inquiry to which it is applied. Most people among us, indeed, judging by current opinion and prejudice, are accustomed to believe, or to take for granted without consideration, that the Fine Arts, at the best, involve only certain questions of taste, about which there is no disputing; and that if they have any relation to science at all, it is for the most part extremely vague, undefinable, and unsatisfactory.

It was plain, therefore, that the matter could only be taken up at its very elements. Before it could be entered upon at all, the ground had to be broken, prejudices had to be removed, traditional mistakes corrected, ill-formed but current opinions, or rather opinionative habits,

combated—the primary labour, in short, was to lay some foundation for the future structure ; and this labour involved discussion and inquiry over a field so extensive, that it seemed to be almost a hopeless undertaking on my part ; while on the other hand, there was great reason to doubt whether, considering the nature of the inquiry, many persons would take sufficient interest in it to carry them on with any degree of zeal in the pursuit.

Undeterred, nevertheless, by such a view of the case, or rather, perhaps, not being fully aware of the force of the disadvantages under which I laboured until an experiment had been made, I proceeded to some length in the preparation of materials for discussion on preliminary questions. I inquired, first, whether there could be a science of the Fine Arts ; and, secondly, if there could be, in what it consisted. The former of these heads comprehended, first, an analysis of the various kinds of art considered in their origin, their means and modes of operation, and their immediate purpose ; secondly, a detailed account of the manner in which the

several arts stand related to physical and moral science, with the view of determining, on the one hand, the difference between the fine arts and the mechanical, and of defining the probable character of æsthetics as a science; and thirdly, an inquiry into the end of Fine Art, properly so called, in order to solve the problem whether that end be such as to afford the certain conclusions in which science consists.

This ground being gone over, we should have been in a condition to consider, in greater detail, the scientific conclusions to which the arts lead us, to digest and classify these conclusions, and lastly, to apply them as universal canons of criticism.

Hitherto we should have dealt with what may be termed the general or common principles of the Fine Arts; it would now have been in place to consider each of the arts by itself, and to trace the operation of general principles, modified by particular causes — such as, the limited imitative powers of the several arts, or the circumstances under which their powers have been developed in various countries and at different

epochs of their history ; and hence, under this branch of the subject, we should have dealt with the specific history of art, and with its secondary, special, and, what may be termed, its practical principles.

After, however, having made some progress in elucidation of the subject, according to the order and method just now described, I found it necessary to abandon the plan,—and this, for the two reasons already adverted to. In the first place, the lectures must have swelled to an inordinate length ; and secondly, that part of the subject which possessed the greatest interest for those who were likely to become my audience, could only be reached through matter which, however necessary to be gone through at some time, would at the commencement have proved tedious, dry, and unattractive ; and I should have been very sorry that the arts,—which, whatever estimate we may form of them in their relation to scientific inquiry, must be admitted to possess peculiar attractions, and to afford high, and, in many respects, unalloyed gratification,—should have been brought before

you in an aspect which might, in any degree, appear to be forbidding.

To avoid this, therefore, I have reversed the order which it was proposed to adopt, and so commence with the history of the arts, and a concomitant inquiry into their relative, special, and practical principles. From this, as a starting point, I hope, as time and occasion shall serve, to proceed upwards through the various sections of the more abstract investigation of general principles which has been sketched out.

You will perceive, however, that in undertaking to treat of the *history of art*, some classification becomes indispensable. The history of all the arts, among all nations who have practised them, and at all periods, would be too unwieldy a subject to manage otherwise than very generally and superficially. To do it any justice—to treat it with any advantage in relation to the purpose for which we should bring it under review, it must be broken up into partitions; and this, I think, may be done in three ways. First, we might take the arts of certain given times in the history of the civilised world;

secondly, we might take the arts of particular countries; or thirdly, we might take any particular development of the arts, whether among one or more nations, that has been due to the influence of some assignable cause or predisposing and ruling motive. Of course each of these partitions again admits of subdivision into the history of the several arts,—as of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, &c.

Of these three methods, the last seems to me to be the most advantageous. The fact that there have existed such predisposing causes of the particular form which the arts have assumed, is as certain as that the arts themselves have assumed such a form; and hence, though, in one aspect, these causes constitute a principle of development, and therefore may be said to come under the theory of art, they are, at the same time, so obvious in point of fact, that, in assuming their existence, we are not commencing with any hypothesis for the sake of giving a tangible connexion and precise bearing to our inquiries. When I affirm that religion has operated as a predisposing and ruling cause of the special de-

velopment of the arts, I am not starting a theory to account for that special development, but stating a fact, which, like other facts, admits of proof. It is a fact, however, which, operating as a cause, serves to bring under an intelligible heading, and enables us to classify, the greater part of the history of art.

Now, of the only three great systems of art which have arisen, two undoubtedly derived their character from religion. Perhaps the third, in some respects, did so too ; but this is less certain. These three systems are, the *Egyptian*, the *Pagan Greek*, and the *Christian* : the first more or less including in it the arts of oriental antiquity ; the second comprehending the whole of ancient classical art ; and the third, the art of more modern times, so far as it has been exclusively Christian. The Egyptian art was essentially symbolical in its purpose. Although it employed for that purpose representations of a great variety of natural objects, yet exactness and truth of imitation were only carried far enough to indicate the reality, and that with a view to express ideas of which the objects were the representa-

tives. The figures in Egyptian paintings, as an acute writer* has observed, were *ideographic signs*, rather than figures to be considered as representing the objects of which they were the resemblances. And hence Egyptian art, as a whole, is excluded from the domain of the Fine Arts properly so called.

The Greek system, on the other hand, was strictly imitative, and in such sort that it carried the exact representation of individual objects to the highest degree of perfection of which they were susceptible ; and thus what we term the *ideal* in Greek art was nothing more than the *reality* itself, under its most embellished form. The aim of this kind of art being to render, with as near an approach to perfection as was possible, the forms of animate nature, it is obvious that physical beauty must have been, as indeed it was, an element so essential that every particular was subordinate to it, whether in the choice of subjects or in the manner of their execution. All was intended to elevate and deify nature ;

* M. Raoul-Rochette, " sur les Types imitatifs de l'Art du Christianisme."

every thing therefore that could suggest thoughts of imperfection, meanness, or feebleness, unless in the way of caricature, was carefully excluded ; while the positive or negative qualities that tend to inspire us with ideas of resistless physical power, unchanging perfection, beauty, or dignity, were as carefully had regard to. And although the art of the Greeks was not altogether devoid of moral expression, yet, in general, they seem to have admitted the operation and effects of the passions as an element in art only so far as was consistent and compatible with the physical perfection which, under the guidance of their religious system, the arts of the Greeks were in the main intended to develop.

The third great system of art, namely, the Christian, so far agrees with the classical, that it takes nature for its guide and its model ; but it exercises itself on types altogether different, and has for its drift to interest the moral sentiments, rather than to charm or flatter the senses. As in the Greek art certain types of human perfection were invented and worshipped, so also in Christian art there arose an imitative system in

which were embodied, under peculiar types, the faith, sentiments, and aspirations of our divine religion ; but there was this grand difference between the two, that whereas in the one the types were all more or less of a kind to exalt and glorify human nature, in the other they were based more or less on the griefs, the feebleness, the imperfections of humanity. In few words, Christianity effected in the domain of art a revolution precisely analogous to that which it brought about in the social and moral world ; it introduced a new standard of perfection in art, made that standard spiritual rather than physical, and taught artists to aspire after a kind of excellence which it is no figure of speech to say would have been looked upon by the Greeks as foolishness. What, for example, could the Athenians of the time of Phidias have thought of the emaciated, haggard, mean, and sorrowful pictures of saints drawn by the best artists of the Christian school ? Must they not have felt that their idol, human nature, was outraged and brought into contempt by such representations ? Must they not have hated them as mortifying to

their pride, or despised them as unworthy of their regard? Yet such is the positive, marked, and antagonistic difference between classical and Christian art. The one has its Jove, its Hercules, its Mars, its Venus, its Graces,—the representatives of majesty, physical power, warlike courage, love, and kindness; the other its Christ, its Apostles and Doctors, its army of Martyrs, its Virgin Mother, its Graces, its Virtues. But though its Christ be majestic, he is in the form of a servant; though the power of its Apostles was resistless, yet “the weapons of their warfare were not carnal;” though its army of Martyrs be courageous, their courage lay in endurance; though its Virgin Mother be beautiful and pure, yet “a sword pierced through her heart;” though some of its Graces and Virtues were esteemed among the Greeks, yet, if we take them as a company, they are in reality the complex type of self-abnegation. In brief, through the whole system of Christian art there is somewhat of a forbidding, mortified, and humbled exterior, derived from the character of the religion in which it originates, by which it is distinguished from the attractive

and (not to use the word in its bad sense) the *sensual* qualities of the classical school.*

You will perceive, therefore, that this fact of the dependence of the two great systems of Fine Art on religion, enables us to make with clearness and facility such a partition of the history of the arts as I have assumed to be advantageous. Taking up the religious system of the Greeks, we may pursue its development in art down to the period of its extinction among the Romans, some centuries after the commencement of the Christian era; and so, on the other hand, without entering on much of the collateral history of Pagan art, we may trace the progress of the arts, under the influence of Christianity, up to their source, while Pagan art was still in some degree flourishing. The only question was, which of these to commence with; and I hope that, considering the attention with which some departments of Christian archæology are now coming to be regarded, you will easily justify my

* It is due to M. Raoul-Rochette to state, that the foregoing description of the three great systems of art is little more than a translation from a portion of his work.

determination to begin with the subject in which my auditors were likely to be the most interested, and which might, in the present state of things, tend practically to the most beneficial results.

In considering, then, the history of Christian art, I propose to divide it into five epochs or schools, which I term respectively the *Christian-Pagan*, the *Barbaric*, the *Ascetic*, the *Pagan-Christian*, and the *Sensual*. I do not, of course, pretend that these names are very accurate; but they express real characteristics of the kinds and states of art to which I have applied them, and are sufficiently correct for our purpose.

I will briefly explain the application of these terms. The arts began to assume their new form, under the influence of Christianity, while classical art was yet flourishing, although debased; that is to say, almost immediately after the commencement of the Christian era. For a considerable period, as might be expected, the early Christian artists made use of the then current style or manner, and their works only differed from those of Pagan artists of equal merit, in the use to which the current style was ap-

plied, and in the subjects represented. This age, or epoch, reaching as low as the sixth century, I therefore term the *Christian-Pagan*, since it was Christian in its intention, while its form remained in a great degree Pagan.

The second age, which I have called *Barbaric*, commences with the extinction of Pagan art, and the rise of a positively new and characteristic style, which is known by various names, corresponding with the countries where it flourished,—such as Byzantine, Lombard, Rhenish, Saxon, or Norman. This epoch terminates in Italy with the revival of the arts towards the end of the thirteenth century, and with us and more northern nations perhaps a little earlier,—about the period of the introduction of the pointed style of architecture.

The third or *Ascetic* period,—and which I so term, as in the case of the *Barbaric*, from its intrinsic character,—is that during which Christian art reached its highest point of excellence. It brings us down to the revival of Pagan taste, towards the end of the fifteenth century in Italy, and with us somewhat later, when the school

arose which I term Pagan-Christian, because it presents a kind of antithesis to the earliest form of Christian art;—in the one, Christian ideas having been superinduced on the debased forms of paganism; in the other, the forms of paganism having been revived and superinduced on a debased condition of Christian sentiment.

And, lastly, the school which has been termed by Italian critics that of the *Naturalisti*, or followers of nature, and which I denominate the *Sensual*, as opposed to the *Ascetic*, arose about the middle of the seventeenth century, and is distinguished by neglect of the ancient and approved types of sacred persons and things, and the substitution of a comparatively vulgar and unspiritual imitation of nature.

I hope, then, during the next or the following term to undertake the illustration of the first of these ages of Christian art; and I am sure it will be found to be a subject of much greater interest than it is generally supposed or known to be. It would be out of place here to enter on the grounds from whence its interest is derived;

but it is surely a striking fact that, during ages of persecution, when the first followers of the Cross were obliged to conduct the rites of religion in secret in the excavations under the ancient city of Rome, they should have had the leisure, or even the desire, to give vent to their sentiments and aspirations in forms of art. There were here none of the temptations (if the word be allowed) which the ease of the monastic clergy and their command of wealth in the after peaceful condition of the Church, brought with them, to employ that ease and wealth in adding splendour to the ritual. The majority of the early Roman Christians belonged to the lowest, the poorest, and most despised classes of the community; the specimens of art which they have left us are of the most inferior description, and shew unquestionable evidence of poverty and want of artistic and literary education; yet, notwithstanding these disadvantages, without any inducement of an extrinsic kind that can be discovered, they did introduce the practice of the arts in subservience to Christianity,—they then first inserted that artistic leaven which in process

of time "leavened the whole lump." The pictures and other remains of the catacombs of Rome undoubtedly exhibit in germ most of the peculiarities of Christian art; and, on that account, a careful consideration of them, and a discussion of the various questions which they suggest, will form the best groundwork for an intelligent study of the arts of subsequent epochs.

Having explained thus much of the course which I propose to adopt in the first instance, I will, before concluding, recur for a little to matters adverted to at the commencement of these observations. The remarks I am now going to make will, I fear, justify my statement, that the business of clearing the ground for inquiry into the theory of art is not a very entertaining one. Nevertheless, there are some mistakes current which it is desirable to remove at the very outset; I trust, therefore, you will give me a favourable hearing for a few moments.

When I spoke of a science of the Fine Arts, what was the notion suggested by the term? If the question, whether there could be any such science, were proposed to the majority of edu-

cated persons, what answer should we receive? I suppose it would amount to this: that there is a science of music, and, perhaps, also of architecture; but that for the rest, it is uncertain how the case stands.

Now, this answer is doubly erroneous. In the first place, it is not true that there is a science of music,—such as it is currently supposed to be,—in any other sense than there is a science of painting, architecture, or sculpture; and in the second place, the science of Fine Art, if there be such a science, must have for its object, not those branches of physical or mathematical science which are employed in a secondary way by artists in the production of their works, but that which constitutes the essence of Fine Art, viz., beauty, character, action, passion, sentiment. So that, in truth, the science is based on the very characteristic of art which, at first, may seem to exclude it from the domain of science altogether.

Some of you, perhaps, who are accustomed to the current notion, that music is both a science and an art, will have been startled by

my calling its accuracy in question. If, you will say, music has not some superior prerogative, why does it occupy a place in the platform of university-education? * Why do its professors obtain degrees which place them on a par with members of the learned professions? Does not this proceed on the supposition that music has something more dignified, more scientific about it than other fine arts?

It is quite true that by the ancient Greeks and by the writers of the middle ages, music was termed a science; but their reasons for doing so would in these days be reckoned very questionable. So little had the ancient science to do with the practice of the art, that, if we may believe Aristoxenus, the only author among the Greeks who wrote as a practical musician, the doctrines of the theorists were not only useless in practice, but had no more relation to music, as an art, than they had to gram-

* It is very probable that music, in the first instance, obtained a place among university-studies from the necessity there was of affording a competent knowledge of the art to the clergy.

mar, rhetoric, astronomy, poetry, painting, or architecture. The science, in fact, bore the name of music, because the principles of which it consisted were derived, or rather were supposed to be derived, from the consonance and dissonance of musical sounds; but the principles themselves were believed to be of universal application, and in that view constituted, so far as they went, the theory of all the arts; and Dr. Burney, indeed, confesses that if music were formerly reckoned to be a science, it was on grounds which, if they are not now-a-days altogether exploded, are at least totally distinct from those on which it is now supposed to rest its claims. The present science, which deals with the laws of the vibrations of sonorous bodies, the transmission and reflection of sound, the generation of the common chord by a single sound, and other subjects included under acoustics and harmonics, did not come into being until music as an art may be said to have arrived at perfection. The present system of harmony and counterpoint had been discovered and acted upon by musicians two centuries at least before the

physical laws on which it is based were demonstrated scientifically.

But if the science of music be such as I have described, then there is a science of painting of an equally abstruse character. What shall we say, for example, of optics, of the laws of the production of colours, of the transmission and reflection of light, of perspective and the casting of shadows,—all of which the painter, by mere necessity, is forced to comply with? If the relation of the art of music to one branch of physics gives it the rank of a science,—if it may lay claim to that branch as its peculiar science,—much more may architecture, which works by the aid of so many of the physical sciences, lay claim to a similar privilege.

The truth is, that every imitative art, since it addresses itself to us through the senses, necessarily employs sensible means and materials of imitation, which, belonging to some part of the natural world, are included, according to their kind, in some branch or other of physics. And this is true whether the imitation be accomplished by the use of natural powers or mate-

rials, or by a fictitious resemblance. In music, the material employed is sound; not a figment or a symbol agreed upon to signify sound—not an imitation of sound, but sound itself; which is moulded to the will and fancy of the composer. So also the architect employs in his art materials provided by nature, and subject to the laws which govern the various productions of nature employed for architectural uses.

The painter, on the other hand, does not set his palette with the real hues of the rainbow. When he pictures to us the character of a hero, or paints some scene of nature, he does not present us with a living man in the character of the hero (for this is the business of dramatic art); nor does he make up his landscape of real rocks, or trees, or water, but with fictitious resemblances of these. Yet in these figments he is as truly bound by the laws of the appearance of those realities, of which they are the copy (and very much to the same extent) as the musician is by the natural laws and properties of sound.

In short, the whole object of physical science, or, in other words, the whole of sensible nature,

is included in the domain of imitative art, either as the subjects, the objects, or the materials, of imitation : every fine art, therefore, has certain physical sciences collateral to it, on the abstractions of which it builds, more or less, according to its nature and purpose. But the drift of the art itself is something totally distinct from that of the physical science to which it is related ; and it is not more absurd to say that physiology or anatomy constitute the science of poetry or dramatic art than that acoustics and harmonics are the science of music ; optics, of painting ; mechanics, or other branches of physical science, that of architecture. If any of the Fine Arts, indeed, deserves to be regarded in the double character of an art and a science (using the terms in the customary sense), it is architecture ; but the reason of this is very plain ;—it is both a *fine art* and a *mechanical* one. Part of its work, like every mechanical contrivance, is regulated strictly by physical laws, and is thus closely related, both in theory and practice, to several branches of physics ; but those branches do not constitute the theory of architecture as a fine

art; for in this aspect it presupposes the physical conditions of construction as a substratum on which the taste is to be exercised.

In proposing, therefore, to inquire whether the Fine Arts might be the basis of a science, the question was not whether these arts, as dealing with the material and the sensible, were on that account related to one or more of the physical sciences, but whether, in those operations and results of art that depend on the mind and imagination of the artist, it were possible to discover the demonstrable certainties of a science.

I do not know if I have made myself quite understood, but my meaning is this: that although artists adhere, with greater or less strictness, according to the nature of their art, to certain physical conditions which, in the hands of the natural philosopher, assume the form of science, yet their adherence is a result of the pursuit of something else which presupposes the conditions. The painter, for instance, cannot avoid adhering to natural arrangements of colour, natural phenomena of light and shade,

natural effects of perspective, if he would succeed in rendering his picture of any object a true one; yet mere truth of representation is not the purpose of his art, but something ulterior. So also the architect is compelled to construct his building with such regard to the quality of his materials, and to natural principles of stability, that it shall not fall to pieces; but in either case these are mere necessities, conditions, stepping-stones, to something else, in which the essence of his art consists, and which, though it presupposes these conditions and necessities, is neither absolutely presupposed nor implied by them. It follows, therefore, that the physical sciences involved in these conditions do not constitute the science of Fine Art. If I am desirous of representing a beautiful horse, I can only succeed by preserving all the characteristics of the animal, so far at least as these are necessary to my immediate purpose; but there is no degree of physiological knowledge, no anatomical science, that will avail one jot towards informing me what that is in which the difference between beauty and the want of it

consists. Anatomy may shew me an organic defect—that is, it may explain the cause of some specific and individual deformity; but the question with artists is not respecting beauty and deformity, but respecting the greater or less degrees and kinds of beauty which are compatible with perfect organisation. The great majority of mankind are perfectly well constituted, so far as the mere structure and functions of our nature are concerned; but this is not tantamount to saying that all are equally beautiful.

I do not, of course, mean to affirm that there is no beauty in mere structure, nor that the element of beauty is not to be found even in the abstractions of physical science, for this is undoubtedly the case; but then it is, in the first place, only one species of beauty, and that the lowest; and, in the second place, in relation to our present point, principles of beauty are evolved by the natural philosopher just as principles of physical science are evolved by artists, viz., involuntarily, accidentally, or in the way of concomitance. The purpose for which the

scientific man pulls nature to pieces, anatomises her, examines every element in her structure, is not to shew how beautiful she is, but he does so in some respects, nevertheless; or, at least, he has been making experiments and collecting facts which the *æsthetic* philosopher may turn to that account. The artist, on the other hand, who looks at nature only in her completeness, and has for his drift to render her more perfect, although he makes no attempt to resolve her into her elements, yet since his effort to bring nature, as a whole, into harmonious and exact operation, presupposes the existence of her constituent parts, so practically he almost always anticipates the discoveries of the science which deals with them in the abstract. But these anticipations, of which many instances might be adduced, have never been made scientifically. The musicians whose counterpoint implied the physical law respecting the production of the common chord, and anticipated its discovery, were not philosophers but artists. They hit upon a law of nature, not by experiment and reasoning on the physical properties of sound,

but by their perception of beauty. This brought with it, by implication, the operation of certain necessary laws of sound; yet it no more follows that the physical properties of sound will explain to us either the cause or the nature of beauty in musical composition, than that the physical properties of light and colour, or the study of anatomy and physiology, will give us any insight into the causes and nature of the beauty exhibited in the works of painters. In short, as I have observed, artists work under certain conditions, which the object of their art presupposes; but we cannot reverse the case: we cannot say that the conditions presuppose the object of their art, which is beauty.

Perhaps it may be thought that in thus removing the Fine Arts out of the province of physical science, I have been doing disparagement to them, and have been depriving them of the little ground on which, except as matter of amusement, they are thought worthy of regard by scientific men. But, in the first place, if their regard proceeds on the assumption that the Fine Arts, as such, work by principles of

physical science at all, it is given on mistaken grounds. As productions of handicraft, there is no doubt that, so far as they come under the description of liberal art, to that extent works of fine art are empirical, both in the mode of producing and the thing produced. There is no question that the labours of artists originate in, and are addressed to, certain perceptions, sentiments, susceptibilities of pain or pleasure. Certain characteristics of the objects that surround us produce in artists sentiments of pleasure, or the like; and these characteristics they reproduce in the form of art for the purpose of obtaining our sympathy. How they reproduce them, artists cannot tell. They do it by impulse, by the pleasure the work gives them, by a kind of appetite for that which they perceive in nature, by taste, by genius, by habit, by some operation and judgment of the mind on the objects around us,—by any thing, in short, but physical science. Whatever place, therefore, the Fine Arts hold in our esteem, it cannot depend on the degree to which they involve principles of physics.

But, in the second place, does it lower the character of any class of works to make them depend immediately on the mind? Surely not. Does it follow that principles of science may not be discovered because the actions or works which involve them are not mechanical or necessary? If so, there could be no science of morals. Though it be admitted that artists work by impulse, does it follow that there is no law by which their impulses are in the main regulated? Although I concede that the works thus produced, taken singly, exhibit approximations only to science, it will not follow that on the whole the results are not scientific; that is, as certain as the object of the science can be. So far, in truth, from saying any thing to the disparagement of the Fine Arts, I have been doing my best to rescue them from the influence of a degrading opinion, that would make them only or chiefly worthy of regard in proportion as they depend immediately on physical principles. The very fact that we are not able to determine whether beauty be a quality external to us, or, at least, that both the object and

the percipient are necessary to the existence of beauty, and that it hence may be thought to arise from some congruity and harmony between the constitution of our minds and the objects of sense, gives to the Fine Arts, which have for their drift the expression of beauty, a character of spirituality that elevates them above the cold and inanimate sphere of physical science. They occupy a higher place, because their efforts tend to develop the most intimate relation that subsists between our minds and the system of things which is external to us. They contemplate nature, not objectively as a thing to be put in the alembic and curiously scrutinised, which, however, possesses no living, real interest for the individual himself as a part of nature, but subjectively, that is, in relation to ourselves, our sentiments, our perceptions of the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, the congruous and incongruous, the desirable and the undesirable. They look upon external nature, in short, as it is to us the cause of pain or pleasure, love or dislike.

You will perceive, then, that if I remove

the Fine Arts and their science out of the domain of physics, it is only to elevate them into the higher province of the science of mind. Their science, in fact, constitutes a section of the science of morals; and if its elevation to this higher sphere deprives it of the kind of certainty which belongs to the demonstrations of physics and mathematics, all that can be said is, that it shares the difficulty which invests every question of a moral nature. We are not able to determine the exact relation subsisting between our conscience of right and wrong and that judgment termed *æsthetic*, by which we perceive beauty and the want of it in external things; but this much is certain, that both are dependent on the relative and original constitution of our minds; and the operation and results of both have this peculiar characteristic, that while the actions or works which proceed from them are more or less imperfect and indeterminate, they are sufficiently perfect and determinate to lead us to determinate conclusions.

I will not, however, detain you any longer with these observations, which I fear must have

proved rather dry and uninteresting ; but I have been very desirous of correcting a mistake into which it is likely that students of the architectural department may have been led, and, at the same time, of giving some little insight into the kind of inquiry which is included in my province.

THE END.

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