

COMPARATIVE ÆSTHETICS.

I.

THE Science of Æsthetics is essentially a double science. Art, it is true, is its sole subject of investigation; and it combines in the study of art intellectual instruments the most heterogeneous: metaphysical abstraction and historical research, criticism the most individual and speculation the most general, induction the most servile and deduction the most soaring; but whatever the method of investigation, the science of æsthetics must examine art from one of two totally distinct points of view. The æsthetician may study art now from the one point of view, now from the other; the two branches of the science may cross and recross and act and react inextricably, but two branches they are, and must, from the inherent nature of art, ever remain. For art is at the same time two very different things: it is the product of a given mental condition, and it is the producer of another mental condition; and it must be studied either in reference to its origin or in reference to its effects. We may start from the mental condition of the artist, and trace the elaboration of the work; or we may start from the mental condition of the spectator, and trace his impressions back to the work; we may consider the work of art either as the result and termination of one set of phenomena or as the cause and beginning of another set of phenomena. The work of art is the centre of æsthetical study, and æsthetical study may journey backwards to its origin, or forwards to its effect; but though the two branches are equally in the domain of æsthetics, they are diverging, and can be explored only separately and in succession. We cannot ascertain the genesis of a work of art by analyzing the impressions left on our mind by that work in its completeness, nor can we ascertain the intrinsic value of a work of art by analyzing the conditions which gave it birth; we cannot decide questions of criticism by historical research, and we cannot solve historical problems by critical decisions.

Thus it is that the science of Æsthetics, despite its absolute unity of general object, really consists of two sciences, allied, because they both start from the same point, namely, the work of art, but divergent, because the one goes back from the work to the causes which produced it, and the other goes forward from the work to the effects which it produces. The one branch of æsthetics views art as one of the great products of the intellect, as a mental phenomenon, like religion and social institutions, to be examined and explained by the light of history, philology and geography, ethnography and psychology. The other branch of æsthetics views art as the producer of certain mental conditions, and discusses the legitimacy and value of these various effects. The first of the two æsthetical sciences explains the origin of art, but refuses to discuss the value and effect of art when once elaborated; the second of the two æsthetical sciences refuses to take into consideration the manner in which the art has been produced, it recognizes it only as already existing, and will discuss only its value and effects. The two æsthetical sciences are as different from each other as are the history of morals from ethics, or political economy from the history of commerce. They call alternately upon the attention of the æsthetician; they are for ever mistaken for one another; they are continually set to solve each other's problems; their affinity and their divergence are an unceasing source of æsthetical error: each appears in turn as the sole explanation of artistic phenomena; and while one æsthetician, accustomed like Mr. Ruskin to the mere analysis of the work of art and its effects, will build up a totally false theory of artistic genesis, another æsthetician, like M. Taine, incapable of doing more than study the origin and development of art, will lay down an absolutely erroneous system of artistic judgment. Let us therefore distinguish the two sciences usually amalgamated under the name of Æsthetics separately and in succession; let us give each its proper mission and devote to each its special means of investigation; above all and before everything else, let us know which is which, and which is the one wherewith we are busied or of which we are talking. The nomenclature of science is necessarily at once too limited and too general; we cannot condense into a single word the infinitely numerous and intricate distinctions and resemblances between one science and another; we cannot make a single word convey a complicated meaning which requires pages of explanation; we must suggest either too much or too little; we must be satisfied, therefore, if the name which we give to a science be not absolutely arbitrary, if it suggest something of its real nature. It is bearing in mind this insurmountable difficulty, and persuaded of the futility of seeking for absolute precision of nomenclature, that we suggest as respective designations for the two distinct, but ever confounded, branches of Æsthetics the respective names of—*Absolute Æsthetics* and *Comparative Æsthetics*.

Absolute Æsthetics is that science which, starting from the work of art as an already existing entity, refuses to investigate into its origin, and devotes itself to determining its value, aims, and effects. We call

it *absolute* because it isolates art from all cognate products of the intellect, like religion or social institutions, because it knows of art only as art, as an absolute and complete entity; we call it absolute also because it can isolate not only art in general, but one art in particular, and not only one art in particular, but one work of art as an individual, in order to study its value and effects; because it can not only determine the value and effect of art without reference to any other mental productions, but because it can study the nature, laws, and aims of music as if painting did not exist, and of architecture as if there were no such thing as music; nay, because it can study the effect of a single picture, statue, or piece of music, as if no other picture, statue, or piece of music existed; we call it absolute because it deals solely with the relations between the work of art and the mind which perceives it.

Comparative *Æsthetics* is that science which, regarding the work of art as a product and manifestation of certain mental conditions, refuses to consider its value and effects, and devotes itself to tracing its origin and development. We call it *comparative* because, considering art as a manifestation of certain conditions, it compares its genesis and elaboration with the genesis and elaboration of cognate mental productions, such as religious and political institutions; we call it comparative also because, investigating, into the genesis of one art, it is forced to have recourse to comparison with the genesis of another art; because in its study of the production of a single form of one art it must compare that form with the other forms of the same art, nay, because it cannot explain the existence of even an individual picture, statue, or piece of music, without referring to other pictures, statues, or pieces of music; we call it comparative because it deals with the relations between one individual work of art and another individual work, between one phase of an art and another phase, between one art and another art, and finally between art in general and the psychological, geographical, and historical conditions which have produced it.

Absolute *Æsthetics* is mainly critical; Comparative *Æsthetics* is mainly historical. Absolute *Æsthetics* teaches us how to classify the various phases and works of art with reference to their effect on the mind which perceives them; Comparative *Æsthetics* teaches us how to classify the various phases and works of art with reference to their relations, direct and collateral, both to each other and to their common origin. Which of the two sciences should precede the other? To us there appears no possible solution to this question; the one science cannot proceed from the other, since, starting from the same point, they lead in divergent directions. They are distinct; but because they are distinct, they for ever act and react upon each other. They cannot solve each other's problems, but the one can, so to speak, shed its light upon the investigations of the other. A right apprehension of the genesis of art does not in any way imply a correct appreciation of the mission of art; nor does a correct appreciation of the mission of art

imply a correct apprehension of the genesis of art ; on the contrary, the two are often in contradiction, because one science is set to explain phenomena belonging to the jurisdiction of the other ; but a mistake in comparative æsthetics will often lead to a mistake in absolute æsthetics, and *vice versâ*. We must distinguish between the two sciences and their respective mission ; but we must be prepared to find that their work is closely allied, and that a problem of absolute æsthetics will often suggest and involve a question of comparative æsthetics, and a problem of comparative æsthetics will often suggest and involve a question of absolute æsthetics.

The following study is a rough outline of a system of Comparative Æsthetics ; it deals with the evolution and classification of artistic form ; but in so doing it may incidentally require the solution of a question of absolute æsthetics ; in dealing with the evolution and classification of artistic form, we may need to define the nature of artistic form ; but the nature and aim of art is not the real subject of our inquiry. Our problem is one not of absolute æsthetics, but of comparative æsthetics, and the problem is :—What are the necessary relations between art and civilization, between one art and another, between one phase of art's existence and another, and between the various works of art belonging to a single phase ; in short, what is the genesis and evolution of art ?

The first great fact of Comparative Æsthetics,—a fact dimly perceived by Winckelmann and Lessing, the precursors of the yet unborn science, broadly stated by its first systematic expounder Hegel ; and clearly demonstrated by its most recent investigator, Taine,—the fact which is the key to all the problems of the science, is that the artist is only the proximate agent in the production of the work of art. The artist is merely the specially gifted individual who severs and hands to us at a given moment in its existence the precious fruit of the tree of art. Art is not contained in him, he is outside art ; the plant of art has developed during centuries and centuries ; the lifetime of an individual is too short to watch its bud turning to flower or its flower to fruit ; layers of generations of men hide its roots ; we must seek through stratified civilizations for their beginnings ; the germ is hidden—where, we may vaguely guess, but we cannot see. For the work of art which we see or hear is not even that wherein the life of the art has been contained : the work of art is only the concretely existing but lifeless portrait of the living, ever shifting and changing mental conception which is the artistic form. The artistic form has no physical existence : it is a phantom, but in this phantom is the real life of the art. For an art has but a purely mental life ; its birth, its growth, and its decay take place not in the hewn stone or painted canvas, but in the mind of the artist, of the artist's brethren and predecessors, of whole nations for generations and generations ; the visible or audible individual work which remains to us is merely the portrait of the abstract artistic form at a given moment of its existence. The work of art is fixed and

enduring ; the artistic form is shifting and fleeting ; the artistic form in its living reality can be perceived only by the artistic generation of a given time, as the living reality of a human being can be seen only by his contemporaries ; the artistic form is seen in constant change by the artistic generation in whose mind it exists, even as the individual man is seen in constant change by his contemporaries ; if posterity would know what that individual man was like at a given moment, it can do so only by seeing his portrait painted at that given moment ; even if still alive, he is no longer the same : to have an idea of the once famous beauty, we must look at this picture painted, irrevocably finished, fifty years since ; the old broken woman who stands by our side was once that beauty, but she has changed and the picture has endured. Thus it is with the artistic form : it was a living mental existence, living, consequently also developing, changing, and probably also dying ; what we can see or hear is merely its image in one of its phases. Raphael, painting his Galatea, was preserving the likeness of the artistic form of his day exactly in the same way that he was preserving the likeness of Julius II. when painting his portrait. The form in the Galatea seems as finite as does the action in the sitting, meditating Julius ; yet even as the sitting Julius did in the reality, rise, go his way, act and die, so the living artistic form would change, and in process of time die also.

The artistic life, the genesis, the evolution of art must therefore be sought not in the finite, unchangeable, separate works of art, but in the artistic form, in the mental combination of lines, colours, or sounds of which the concrete works of art are but the visible and lifeless image. The individual artist creates the portrait, but does not create the reality : the artistic form lives in his mind, and in his mind undergoes definite alterations in a definite direction, as inevitable as the expansion of a bud into a flower or the expansion of a flower into a fruit ; changes which by the necessity of its constitution must be in one special direction, but which are modified in detail by the accidental peculiarities of the individual artist and his surroundings, as the necessary and inevitable general changes in a plant are modified in detail by the accidental peculiarities of its individual surroundings. To this individual artist and his fellows the artistic form has been transmitted by his predecessors at a given stage of development, and by him it must be transmitted at another given stage of development to his successors : whatever the modifications due to the individual mind by which it has been contained, the artistic form must needs develop, and its stages of development must needs follow upon one another, in a given order. The work of art then does not owe its main peculiarities to the artist who gives it a concrete, visible, or audible existence : the works of all his contemporaries, however different their individual nature, resemble it in all its main characteristics ; the pressure of the individual nature upon the artistic form which has lived in it through a phase of his existence, is either scarcely perceptible or perceptible only in very minor distinctions, which

in no way disturb the great general features possessed by it in common with all the other works produced at the same time. Whatever the individual difference between the works of artists of the same generation, they disappear from view when we bring into comparison the works even of the immediately preceding or succeeding generation; the differences between Phidias and Polyclete are lost when we compare both Phidias and Polyclete with Praxiteles and Lysippus; the differences between Orcagna and Memmi are lost when we compare both with Masaccio and Uccello; the differences between Handel and Marcello are lost when we compare both with Gluck and Jommelli; the sculptors of the year 400 B.C. are all more like each other than they are like the artists of the year 350 B.C.; the painters of the year 1370 are all more like each other than they are like the painters of 1420; nay, the composers of the year 1720 are more like each other, be they Venetian or Saxon, than they are like the composers of the year 1760.

If, therefore, as we have seen, the work of art does not owe its main characteristics to the individual artist by whom it is produced, where must we look for the real cause of those main characteristics which, despite the difference in detail due to individual endowment, unite all the works of one period by a bond of resemblance? The answer to this question, given us unwittingly already by Winckelmann, clearly indicated by Hegel, and distinctly formulated by Taine, is: The main characteristics of any given art at any given moment are referable to the social and intellectual conditions of the nation and period to which that art belongs—social and intellectual conditions absolutely represented in the art, and which can themselves be referred to ethnological and geographical causes. This answer, dimly perceived as soon as the science of comparative æsthetics began to exist, grown more definite with every growth of our knowledge, and now accepted as satisfactory even by the most reluctant minds, contains a very large share of truth—truth, indeed, proportionate to the degree of mental satisfaction derivable from it. But the satisfaction is not complete, and the truth is not entire: the explanation explains a great deal, but it does not explain all; and if we try to make it explain more than it can, we are compelled to fabricate false theories and to arrange falsified facts. Thus the principal expounder of this theory, M. Taine, having said that art is the expression, the typical image of a given condition of civilization,—that is to say, of a mode of living, feeling, and thinking which is at the apex of its homogeneous character,—and having found that the Middle Ages were morbid and mystic, and the eighteenth century languid and sentimental, has been forced to declare that mediæval architecture is morbid, and that eighteenth-century music is sentimental, which is distinctly false in both cases. Again, having declared that if the civilization dissolve, if heterogeneous tendencies arise and impair its unity, the art typical of that civilization must also dissolve, M. Taine concludes that the sudden dissolution of Italian art

in the sixteenth century was due to the sudden dissolution of the Italian social organization of the Renaissance. The dissolution of both did indeed take place simultaneously, but the connection between the two phenomena was not that of cause and effect, but of similar cause producing a similar effect. The social organism of the Renaissance may have died at the same time as the artistic organism; but why? Because they had been born and had grown together. We can even conceive, by some slight accident, such as the longer life of one or two individuals, that the final political catastrophe of Italy might have been delayed by a few years—say from 1530 to 1550; but in no way can we conceive the decay in Italian art delayed thereby till 1550. Had the political and social condition endured twenty years longer, the artistic could not have endured. A few more strokes of the pencil and the brush must necessarily convert the Michael Angelo of the Sibyls and Prophets into the Michael Angelo of the Last Judgment; the Titian of the Assumption into the Titian of the Peter Martyr; nay, must change Raphael into Giulio Romano. The art having attained to a certain phase in its existence, must necessarily pass on to another point; no man, no political event, can delay its movements—there is no Joshua for this sun. The nature of the individual civilization at a given moment, though it can explain much which cannot be explained by the nature of the individual artist, cannot yet explain the broadest characteristics of a given work of art, the characteristics of maturity or immaturity or decay in its form. We must seek for a greater force than the pressure even of a whole civilization upon the artistic form which lives within it through one of its periods of existence, even as it lives through a more limited phase of life in the mind of the individual artist. Where shall we seek for that which neither the nature of the artist nor the nature of the civilization is able to explain? Where, unless in the nature of the art itself?

Both Hegel and Taine consider art as a something without any life, any constitution, or necessities of its own—as a sort of intellectual fluid which has no shape of its own, but assumes the shape of the vessel, of the civilization wherein it is contained; break that vessel and the fluid escapes, is lost to view, or seeks another prison and another shape. But art is not this shapeless, lawless fluid: it is an organic physico-mental entity, whose forms depend not upon coercion from without, but upon growth from within. Art is an entity with a definite nature and definite necessities of movement and change; it is organic; it is a sort of intellectual plant. The civilization by which it is surrounded is not a vessel which imprisons and shapes; the civilization is simply the soil in which the seed is cast, and the climate in which the seed quickens; for the art, like the plant, has an organism of its own, which the soil and climate may affect and modify but cannot change. The nature of the soil and the state of the atmosphere may determine whether a plant shall be green or yellow, tall or short, sweet or sour; but it cannot bring about a change in the development

of the plant; it cannot make the berry precede the blossom, for the berry is contained in the blossom, and cannot form till the blossom shall have dissolved. Civilization, which is to art what soil and climate is to a plant, may explain the reason why the art belongs to one variety rather than to another, but it cannot explain why the art should be of one class rather than another; it no more suffices to determine why painting should flourish at one moment and sculpture at another, than does the quality of the earth and the peculiarity of the temperature determine why a larch should grow in one place and a palm in another. The larch and the palm cannot grow in the same spot, and painting cannot flourish in the same civilization as sculpture; but the absolute existence of either plant, or of either art, does not depend upon the soil and climate; it depends upon the accidental presence in that peculiar soil and climate of something which will be favourably affected by its peculiarities, and which can develop under their influence. That something, without which soil and climate remain ineffectual, is the seed; upon its nature depends whether the bleak hillside shall produce a palm-shoot which will be nipped by the first breath of wind, or whether among its rocks and snow patches shall arise a larch which every gale will foster into a stronger life; and the nature of that individual seed will depend upon the nature of generations of dead plants from which it is descended. The civilization of Greece explains the peculiarity and superiority of Greek sculpture, but the civilization of Greece will not account for the existence of sculpture in that peculiarly favourable moment. The historic climate and soil of Hellas could nurture sculpture better than any other art, but it could not have nurtured it if the germ of sculpture had not been generated in the disintegration of the architecture of Asia. The sculptural elements contained in the carved mouldings and storied walls of India and Assyria would not have developed into the statues of Phidias and Polyclete, save under the influence of Greek civilization; they lay sterilised and rotting in Asia itself, because Asiatic civilization was unfavourable to them: but without these sculptural germs, born of the disintegrating architecture of Asia, the sight of all the naked athletes of Greece would probably never have produced the *Ilissus* and the *Theseus*. In the same way, if the elements of painting, perspective, action, background, and even light and shade and colour, had not been necessarily generated in the corruption of sculpture, the civilization of mediæval Italy, so essentially favourable to painting, would never have produced it; those pictorial elements would not have developed had they been cast into a different civilization, as they were cast, but without fruit, into the Arabian civilization; but although the democratic and industrious habits, the mystic religion, and the violent life of mediæval Italy and Flanders were required to develop the pictorial art germ, the frescos of Giotto and the panels of Van Eyck would neither have existed if the debased

sculptors of falling Rome had not violated every sculptural law in their abominable pictorially-conceived statues and bas-reliefs. For the germs of the one art are set free in the corruption and disintegration of its predecessor; as soon as the old art has lost all vitality and homogeneousness, and the civilization favourable to its existence has dissolved, these germs develop, fostered by a new civilization, into a new art organism, which grows, matures, decays, corrupts, and in its disintegration sets free the art seed once more in a modified form; and, dying, gives birth to a cognate but different art. Thus the legitimate efforts of a new art will follow upon the impotent cravings of an old art: what architecture tried vainly to do because it could no longer do its own work, is done by sculpture; what sculpture hankered after when it was morbid, is the healthy employment of painting; what was attempted by painting in its death delirium, is accomplished by music in its mature strength. Earlier antiquity will produce architecture which contains the embryo of sculpture and painting in the mouldings of its columns and the designs of its walls; later antiquity will produce sculpture; the Middle Ages will produce sculptural architecture; the Renaissance will produce painting; the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will produce music; and the various forms of literature will follow each other in the same manner.

The main peculiarities of a work of art have thus been traced, first, to the peculiar endowment of the individual artist; then, to the peculiar character of the civilization in which his art flourishes; then, to the peculiar nature of the art germ which happens to have developed in that civilization. Thus, for instance, the characteristics of the Heliodorus fresco are referable, first, to the fact that the painter was Raphael; secondly, that the civilization was that of the Renaissance; thirdly, that the art bequeathed by antiquity to the Renaissance was painting. The art germ is the furthest point to which we have yet reached. But the art germ will not explain its own nature; the fact that the germ of a given art is set free by the disintegration of another art will not explain why there should be any art germ at all, why any art should develop, mature, or disintegrate. This art germ itself, growing, maturing, decaying, dying, and reviving in a new shape, is produced by something else, and its necessities of change by evolution are but the reaction of the laws which regulate the movement of this something else which produces it. That which produces the art germ are certain inherent faculties of the mind, and the power which regulates the changes of the art germ is the force of the necessary relations between these mental faculties and the physical objects upon which they are exercised.

The artistic faculties of the mind, the cravings and activities which produce the earliest art germ are separate and distinct. They are neither the logical faculties, nor the moral faculties, nor the animal faculties perceptive of the merely sensuous qualities of things. They take cognisance of the nerve impressions of the lower senses, they perceive and create concatenations of ideas like the reasoning faculties,

and they approve and reprobate like the moral faculties; but the isolated nerve impressions do not appeal to them, and the logical and moral ideas find in them no response; they perceive the sensuous impressions only when they are united into form; they perceive and create concatenations only of ideas of form, they approve and reprobate only forms. They have a perfectly distinct nature and mission; they deal solely and exclusively with that which the logical and moral faculties do not perceive, and that which the sensual faculties convey only in its constituent elements: they deal with form. The mere senses cannot take cognisance of this field of activity, the logical faculties cannot understand it, and the moral cannot judge of it. The visual sense perceives the whiteness, the darkness, the red, the blue, and the yellow of the picture; the logical sense perceives the subject of the picture; the moral sense perceives the tendency of the subject of the picture; but only the artistic sense perceives the picture itself, that is to say, the combination of colours and lines—the *form*. The artistic sense judges of form, and is its exclusive judge: no other faculty has a right to question its decisions, because no other faculty can understand its reasons; the logical faculty, which perceives abstract ideas, has no more the power of understanding why the artistic faculty finds one form beautiful and another ugly, than the sensual faculty, which perceives sweet, sour, hard, soft, blue, or red, has the power of understanding why the moral faculty finds one action good and the other bad. The artistic faculty has a different mental apparatus from that of the logical, the moral, or the sensual faculty; these different faculties can no more explain or replace each other than the sense of hearing can explain or replace the sense of sight in the perception of a colour. This artistic faculty has a definite nature, and consequently definite laws of action and reaction. In its perceptions and creations it must follow a definite course, for in the mental as in the physical world movement succeeds movement according to unvarying necessity. The contact with certain material qualities must take place in a given manner to produce a given effect. The nature of the material in which the abstract artistic forms conceived in one mind are rendered appreciable in their elements to the senses and in their totality to the artistic faculty of another mind; the nature of this material, the fact of its being colour or sound, carvable stone or flat canvas, nay, marble or bronze, sound of stringed instrument or sound of wind instrument, must react upon the abstract artistic form and alter it; the *modus operandi* of the fingers or of the throat will react upon the *modus operandi* of the mind. The degree to which any particular characteristic has been dwelt upon by the artistic creative force at one moment will determine the degree to which that characteristic will be dwelt upon in the succeeding moment. The combination of lines or notes or colours of yesterday will necessitate the combination of lines or notes or colours of to-day, and that of to-day will necessitate that of to-morrow. The already-achieved will

determine that which will be attempted. The pattern cut in the stone by the earliest Gothic workman must bear a certain relation of lines and lights and shades to the pattern left by his predecessor, the latest Lombard mason; the second Gothic stonecutter must carve a pattern more delicate than that left by the first; the third must carve a pattern yet more subtle; the single individual must alter every time he creates; the generation of artists must alter still more; every new stroke with the chisel means a change in form, and thus the broad and simple Lombard mouldings become, gradually, rich Gothic traceries; and the rich early Gothic traceries turn into delicate Flamboyant lacework, and the lacework turns into cobweb, until the artist of the fifteenth century, feeling that a further chip with his chisel will shiver the whole fabric into atoms, stops, imitates the already existing shapes, puts together the details of different styles, or studies pseudo-Grecian art from Vitruvius—and Gothic architecture ceases to be a living art. The laws which forced the changes of mediæval architecture necessitated also the changes of the music of the eighteenth century: Bach, Handel, and Marcello concluded their songs with only two or three weighty notes; Pergolesi and Leo, following upon them, added one or two unessential notes, protracting the cadence and making its forms smaller, even as an additional line or dot complicates and renders less massive the forms of a stone tracery; Gluck and Jommelli lengthened the cadence still more by the introduction of some delicate little turn or subtle high note, until at length Mozart and Cimarosa prepared their cadence for seven or eight bars, and spread it, fretted with minute vocal ornaments, over five or six. Why must forms sculptured, or painted, or sung, necessarily change by repetition, and change from simple to complicated, from massive to delicate, from sublime to graceful? The only answer appears to be, because such are the laws regulating the action of the artistic faculties. Can the scalpel show us why the pressure upon a given nerve will contract a given muscle? Can the analytic reason tell us why the perception of a given premise necessitates the admission of a given conclusion? The physiologist and the psychologist may explain the connection between the various phenomena of their respective sciences, but they cannot give us the explanation of that connection; they can demonstrate the action of laws, but they cannot explain their necessity. The comparative æsthetician can do no more in his own field: he can explain effects; he can only affirm causes. Just as the muscular movements follow necessarily upon the nervous impressions, and the logical deductions follow upon the logical perceptions, so also the artistic forms succeed each other by the action of laws as unvarying and as mysterious as those which regulate the movements of the body and the movements of the reason. We have traced the necessary peculiarities of a work of art, first, to the special endowment of the individual artist; next, to the special character of an individual art civilization; then, to the special character of the individual art germ; and, lastly, to the special nature of the artistic faculties and

of their laws : further we cannot go. From the individual artist we have been led through a system of causation, from a minor and more particular cause to a larger and more general—the circles of necessity dilating in proportion as they get further from the central speck, the individual artist, and becoming at last invisible as they merge into the mysterious waves and currents and eddies of the infinite.

The evolution of art in general, and of the various arts in particular, depends, therefore : first, upon certain necessary successions of mental movements, by which one conception is now inevitably produced by another, and one craving gives rise to another craving ; and, secondly, upon certain necessary relations of action and reaction between the mental conceptions and the physical materials in which they seek for embodiment. The first cause, namely, the necessary succession of intellectual movements, explains the phenomena of life common to all the arts,—phenomena of unperceived generation, of unconscious growth, of conscious development, of maturity, and of decay ; the second cause, namely, the necessary relations of action and reaction between the mental conceptions and the physical material, explains the phenomena of special nature which distinguish the various arts from each other, which make painting different from sculpture, and music different from painting ; and, lastly, the two causes together, the necessary succession of intellectual movements, and the necessary relations between the mental conception and the physical material, join in explaining the evolution of individual form in each art. The final and complete elaboration of forms interesting through their symbolical meaning explains the commencement of the elaboration of forms valuable for their intrinsic beauty ; the fact that art could go no further in mere suggestion than it did under the Giottesques, explains the fact that art began to seek for absolute realization under their successors of the fifteenth century ; from the achieved we must pass on to the unattempted : so much for the necessary succession of intellectual movements. The difference of material, on the other hand, explains the difference between the various arts : the fact that sculpture deals with masses of carvable but tintless stone, while painting deals with colours laid on to a flat surface, explains why sculpture must be satisfied with isolated figures, moderate gesture, placid expression, and perfection of naked limb and simple drapery ; while painting can venture upon complicated groups, vehement action and pathos, hiding or redeeming—by means of its effects of grouping, of light and shade, and of colour—individual imperfection of form, such as would be unendurable in sculpture ; the difference of material, therefore, explains why the artists of the Renaissance, perfect as painters, were caricaturists as sculptors ; even as the Greeks, superb as sculptors, were second-rate and insipid as painters : for the habit of dealing with the physical material of the one art necessarily influenced unfavourably the manner of handling that of the other art. So much for the necessary relations between the mental conception and the physical material. The two causes together, the necessary succession of intellectual movements

and the necessary relations between the mental conception and the physical material, explain the evolution of forms in each and all the arts. For the necessary succession of mental movements explains why, when music had reached under Palestrina its perfection as a mere woof of many-voiced harmony, the successors of Palestrina, being unable to go any further in this branch of work, gave their attention to the development of the single-voice parts ; and the necessary relation between the mental conception and the physical material explains why, whereas the aggregate of voices could interest by merely forming, dissolving, and re-forming various harmonic combinations, the single voice could interest only by forming various melodies and rhythmic combinations. Thus the two causes together explain why the many-voiced music of Palestrina attained to harmonic perfection, but why only after that perfection had been attained melody and rhythm began to develop, owing to the attention of musicians being given to the workings of the single voice. Having, therefore, ascertained that, quite apart from the influence of the individual artist, of the individual civilization, and of the individual art germ which happens to be in process of development at any given time, there is, owing to the inherent constitution of the artistic faculties, a definite and necessary sequence, first of the various arts in their relation with each other, and secondly, of the forms of each art taken by itself ; we may now examine into the nature of that necessary sequence of art upon art, and of form upon form.

II.

Hegel, who perceived most of the main truths of Comparative *Æsthetics*, but saw them warped and confused through an atmosphere of metaphysical mysticism, has left us a most important classification of the various arts ; a classification which in its truth must always remain the basis for every subsequent classification, and which in its error has fatally influenced, not only comparative, but absolute *æsthetics*. Hegel classifies all art into three great categories, to which he assigns respectively the names of *symbolic*, *classic*, and *romantic*. Symbolic art is, if we condense Hegel's cloudy metaphysical explanation into a comprehensible concrete expression, such art as appeals only partially to the purely artistic faculties, not from choice, but because these artistic faculties are yet incompletely developed, and because their particular object, form, is still in rudimentary condition ; and which art appeals also to faculties distinct from the purely artistic, such as the logical or moral faculties, giving thereby to this rudimentary form a more or less conventional religious, historical, or scientific meaning. This symbolic art is rudimentary, unconscious of its powers or aims ; the artistic faculties gradually come into activity by the side of the intellectual and moral ; artistic form is gradually elaborated by men seeking for a significance of idea which is not in the domain of art itself. Little by little the conventionally significant becomes artistically valuable ; the symbol turns into a form, the fetish into a statue, the hieroglyphic into a picture ; the

hieratic craftsman becomes an artist, and men seek in art no longer significance of suggestion but beauty of realization. Art has passed gradually, out of the *symbolic* into the *classic* phase.

Classic art is the art which appeals mainly and directly to the artistic faculties, because in the gradual dissolution of symbolic art these artistic faculties have developed and have imperiously claimed their sole object, form; while, on the other hand, the technical skill has accumulated sufficiently during the symbolic phase to obtain this form, which is the sole object of the artistic faculties. Classic art being able to appeal exclusively to the artistic faculties, appeals but little to the other intellectual faculties which have lorded it during the symbolic period; it consents to please them only incidentally and when the artistic faculties are satisfied; conventional significance, allegorical interest, logical value, or religious craving have no rights over classic art; when convenient it satisfies them, when inconvenient it does not; but whatever it may do to please them is absolutely subordinate to its production of mere form as such. Moreover, as the artistic faculties which take cognizance of form cannot perceive in it any value of significance or suggestion such as that which appeals to the other faculties, and perceive in it only certain relations to themselves, which render it either pleasing or displeasing, art in the classic phase, addressing solely the purely artistic faculties, and being unable to please them by logical fitness or ethical purpose which they cannot perceive, strives after that absolute quality which is to the artistic faculties what fitness is to the reason or ethical propriety to the moral faculty—beauty. Art in the classic phase therefore is art which appeals directly and solely to the artistic faculties; art which creates only form, and whose highest aim is the perfection of that form. Classic art means art for the sake of form, and form for the sake of beauty. It is art which works exclusively by means of, and for the benefit of, the artistic faculties; art which neither calls in the assistance of other faculties to help in their work, nor which cheats them in order to give other faculties a part of their reward; it is art which can be appreciated by the unaided artistic faculties, because it presents neither ideas, nor allegories, nor examples, but forms, and which can satisfy only the artistic faculties, because its highest object is what only they can appreciate—the beautiful. But gradually the artistic faculties diminish in their unaided activity, and the other faculties stealthily reappear to help in the work and share the profits. Beauty of form becomes after a time impossible because form as such has attained its greatest development; the artistic faculties can no longer be fully satisfied, and their activity cannot engross the mind; the other faculties claim a share once more. Art has gradually passed out of the *classic* stage into the *romantic* stage.

Romantic art is an art which appeals only partially to the purely artistic faculties, not because, as in the time of symbolic art, the artistic faculties are still only partially developed, and their legitimate object, form, is as yet rudimentary; but because the artistic faculties are no

longer in their complete vigour, and their object, form, is no longer in its organic strength. Romantic art, therefore, is an art which works for the artistic faculties, but works also for other faculties; which is interested in form, but not engrossed in it; which seeks for beauty, but seeks also for something beyond beauty; which, addressing itself not only to the artistic, but also to the logical and ethical faculties, will not shrink from presenting the first with creations which appeal exclusively to the second; and it is art which, appealing to faculties which do not perceive beauty and perceive logical fitness and ethical propriety, will often sacrifice beauty to one of these two; and will satisfy the artistic faculties to the exclusion of the logical or ethical, or the logical or ethical to the detriment of the artistic. Romantic art, therefore, seeks now form, now significance; it creates beauty and destroys it; it is a dissatisfied and unsatisfactory art, which appeals to many cravings and satisfies none of them. Romantic art differs from symbolic art, inasmuch as symbolic art is perfectly unconscious and progressive, and romantic art is intensely self-conscious and retrograde. For in symbolic art the artistic faculties are developing and gradually becoming independent of all obstacles, form is gradually being elaborated where it was not sought for, and beauty becomes possible as the craving for it develops; in romantic art on the contrary, the artistic faculties are becoming warped and hampered, form is gradually sacrificed where it was originally sought after, and beauty becomes impossible as the desire for it dwindles away under the pressure of irrelevant cravings. Symbolic art becomes daily less symbolical and more classic; romantic art becomes daily less classic and more romantic: the last moment of symbolic art is not to be distinguished from the first moment of classic, and the first of romantic is not to be distinguished from the last of classic. Such is the Hegelian classification of art, when stripped of its metaphysical expressions. Symbolic art, as Hegel himself epitomizes, seeks vainly for perfect form (*jene vollendete Einheit der innern Bedeutung und äusseren Gestalt*), which is successfully attained to by classic art, but which romantic art, in its excessive development of the purely intellectual element, oversteps and misses.

We next come to Hegel's application of his system of classification, to his practical division of all art into *symbolic*, *classic*, and *romantic*; and here Hegel's classification, admirably true in the abstract, becomes entirely false in the concrete. What is symbolic art? What is classic art? What is romantic art? Show them to us; point out the type of each; give us a real exmple. Hegel answers:—If you want to see symbolic art, look at architecture; if you would see classic art, look at sculpture; if you would see romantic art, look at painting, music, and poetry, the one more completely romantic than the other. Thus Hegel asserts that architecture is inherently and essentially symbolic, sculpture inherently and essentially classic, while painting, music and, poetry are inherently and essentially romantic; separating, in this manner, the one art from the other, giving it totally different aims, and reducing archi-

tecture, inasmuch as it is symbolic, and painting, music, and poetry, inasmuch as they are romantic, to a degree of imperfection compared with the happy classic art of sculpture, which alone is permitted to attain the legitimate aim of art, missed by the other arts in groping about for more or less impossible effects,—in consideration of which unsuccessful Hegel gives them a certain spiritual dignity by way of compensation. And why this extraordinary inequality of position between the various arts? Why should the one be permanently classic, while the others are hopelessly symbolic and romantic? Because, as far as Hegel explained the matter to himself, architecture, dealing with brute masses of stone and with geometrical forms, could not attain to the central point between spirit and matter monopolised by sculpture, which deals with a physical body indeed, but with a physical body—namely, the human one—which happens to be inhabited by a soul, and with organic forms which happen to be related with spiritual conditions; while painting, forced to create an intangible world on its flat surface; music, exchanging the more corporeal elements of stone or colour for the more abstract element of sound; and poetry, rejecting all concrete material, and dealing only with the idea or recollection of things, all tended towards the enfranchisement of mind from matter, and towards the breaking of that reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) between the concrete and the abstract requisite for perfect form. Having hit upon this application of his abstract artistic classification, Hegel shut his eyes to the fact that an artistic conception, born of the intellect and perceived by the intellect, does not lose its abstract value by being embodied in a substance which, like stone, is more tangible than paint; that the absolute value of form to the artistic faculties is wholly apart from any perception of that form being mineral and merely geometrical, or vegetable and merely organic, or human and consequently accidentally connected with human intellect and emotion; that the artistic faculties perceive in form only beauty or ugliness, and that these qualities are independent of the fact of the form being that of a crystal, of a leaf, or of a human head. He shut his eyes, also, to the fact that poetry deals quite as much with the material world as any other art, and that a tree is equally a tree, or a dog a dog, whether it be presented tangibly to our material eyes or intangibly to our recollection. Hegel also overlooked the fact that all the arts have at one time or another attained to absolute perfection of form; that Greek architecture and mediæval architecture, Renaissance painting and eighteenth-century music, have each left us forms as complete and as completely satisfying to the purely artistic faculties as those of sculpture; while sculpture, on the other hand, has at certain periods produced extremely unsatisfactory forms. Hegel, therefore, evades the difficulty, shows us only Egyptian and Indian architecture, which is, indeed, symbolic, Greek sculpture, which is certainly classic, and mystic or realistic painting and sentimental suggestive music, which are undeniably romantic; but he does not let us know that there is other architecture besides the Egyptian and Indian, other sculpture besides the

Greek, other painting besides the mystic and realistic, other music besides the sentimental and suggestive. If he did, the false application of his true system of classification would become manifest, and we should see that no art has aims differing essentially from the aims of another art, that no one art is more inherently symbolic, or classic, or romantic than any other; but that every art has been, by turns, symbolic, classic, and romantic.

And here we find the right application of Hegel's classification of art: the application not to the various arts compared with each other, but to the various stages of development of each and all the arts. There is undoubtedly—and the admission is all-important—such a thing as symbolic art, such a thing as classic art, such a thing as romantic art, and Hegel has been correct in his definition of each. But symbolic art is not architecture, classic art is not sculpture, romantic art is not painting or music. Symbolic art is immature art, classic art is mature art, romantic art is overblown and decaying art; the three classes represent respectively, not the inherent nature of one art, but the condition of every art at a given moment of its existence. Symbolic art is art which, being due to but undeveloped artistic cravings and undeveloped artistic skill, subordinates form, which cannot yet be created or even desired for the sake of mere beauty, to some interest foreign to art, and dependent upon logical or ethical ideas or imaginative cravings; classic art is art which, being due to mature artistic feelings and mature artistic skill, desires and creates only form as such, and form valuable only for intrinsic beauty, not for extrinsic associations; romantic art is art which, being due to cloyed artistic feeling and decaying artistic skill, can neither create mere form for the sake of its beauty nor be interested in such already created beautiful form without some extraneous and artificial stimulant of association, logical or ethical meaning, or imaginative suggestion. These three stages are stages in the life of every art; for every art, while undeveloped, is unconscious of its mission, and covers its timid groupings beneath some non-artistic motive; every art when mature, is conscious that its aim is perfection of form and is capable of obtaining it; and every art, when in decay, is dissatisfied and impotent, turning restlessly from one thing to another, longing for the impossible and despising the possible. Thus architecture was symbolic in the early Oriental civilization, classic in Greece, and romantic in Roman and Byzantine days; sculpture was symbolic in Egypt, classic in Hellenic antiquity, and romantic in the mediæval revival and ever since; painting was symbolic under the Giottesques, classic in the Renaissance, romantic ever since; and music was symbolic up to the seventeenth century, classic during the seventeenth and eighteenth, and romantic ever since. For the early Asiatic builder, the Egyptian sculptor, the Giottesque painter, and the mediæval musician were all equally groping unconsciously after artistic forms which were not their main object, and attempting to make artistic form the vehicle for thought or feeling: the Indian temple, the Egyptian colossus, the

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Giottesque fresco, the mediæval musical composition, are all more or less a hieroglyphic, a form created with the view, not of being merely seen or heard, but of being deciphered and read like so many written words. The Greek architect, the Greek sculptor, the Renaissance painter, and the musician of the eighteenth century, are all consciously striving after beauty of form and nothing else; the Parthenon, the Ilissus, the St. Cecilia or the Handelian oratorio, are, when we view them coolly, and without bringing to them associations which they do not spontaneously awaken, merely so many beautiful combinations of lines, colours, and sounds; and the proof of this is that classic artists, like Titian in his cheerful, voluptuous Magdalen, Raphael in his drapery models of the Burning of the Borgo, or like Handel with his solemn anthem-singing heroines of Ariosto, and Mozart with his cheerful, tripping Roman regicides, often spurn every consideration beyond the absolute form, by producing paintings or compositions which are of a character entirely at variance with that of the subject to which they are conventionally linked; and classic art is often as imperfect in logical or imaginative idea as it is perfect in visible or audible form. On the other hand, the Renaissance sculptor, the modern painter, or the musician of our own day, are all equally romantic; for each, whether he be forcing marble to writhe or gasp in unsculptural and ghastly throes, like Michael Angelo; or whether he be Murillo making his saints and virgins reel and grimace in ecstasy; or Rembrandt shedding a romantic twilight over old-clothesmen and fishwives; or Verdi tearing to tatters his musical phrases in screeching emotion, or Wagner dissolving them in vague suggestion of lakes, and mists, and moonbeams,—the romantic artist, of whatever time and of whatever art he be, sculptor, painter, or musician, realistic, dramatic, poetic, or eclectic, is for ever striving to awaken the interest of cloyed faculties in imperfect forms by the aid of some stimulant extraneous to art. The romantic stage in the existence of an art is the stage of decay—decay scarcely perceptible, or partially arrested, or unmistakably rapid, but decay of one sort or another; for romantic art is the dissolution of art into its constituent elements, the return to imperfect and irrelevant aims and means: in it art reverts gradually to the chaos in which it still was during the symbolic period, and out of which it arose in the classic.

The three phases of artistic life merge into each other very irregularly and imperceptibly; the almost classic art may yet retain certain symbolic tendencies, as in the mystic Umbrian and Bolognese painters of the early Renaissance; the decaying art, fully romantic in spirit, may yet employ broken-up classical forms, as in much of the music of our own day. The classic spirit, being the very essence of all art, will partially maintain itself for an incredibly long time in the midst of romanticism; indeed, when all classic tradition is lost, even romantic art becomes impossible, for romantic art is a negation—it creates no artistic form, and purely romantic art would simply cease altogether to be art, even as purely symbolic art would not yet be art at all, but

merely a form of activity out of which art might later be evolved ; for where there is not yet, or has already ceased to be, any interest in form as such, or any desire for beauty, art cannot be said to exist. The duration of the symbolic and the romantic stages is almost immeasurable, and the various phases in each stage almost innumerable ; for symbolic art is lost in the very remotest past, and romantic art seems to spread interminably into the future ; and the abortive attempts of the immature art are as various and numberless as the abortive attempts of the art which is decaying. But the classic stage is extremely short, and its phases are extremely few, because classic art is art which is in a condition of balance which cannot long be maintained ; because it necessitates an activity of the purely artistic and an abeyance of the unartistic faculties which cannot possibly last ; and, finally, because, while the wrong roads, in art as in all else, are infinite in number and in ramifications, the right roads are very few and very limited. While, therefore, symbolic and romantic art may pass through as many different phases as there are possible combinations and compromises between the artistic and the non-artistic, between pure form and extraneous interest, classic art is limited to the very few phases of development of pure form as such, to the very few varieties possible in perfection. But classic art has its phases and varieties, and there is no more fatal mistake than that which circumscribes classic art within a single one of its legitimate phases, and gives over the others to symbolic or romantic art. There are not many kinds of perfection, not many moments of maturity, but there are more than one, and we must beware of letting ourselves be persuaded, by personal preference for one of them, to reject the others as belonging to immaturity or to incipient decay. Praxiteles, despite the prejudice of recent archaeologists, is as legitimate as Phidias ; Michael Angelo is as great a painter as Titian, though he rejected the very foundation of Titian's art ; Mozart is as untouched by decay as Handel, although he is less simple ; and Handel is as mature as Mozart, although he is less complicated. The differences between the various phases of classic art are all reconcilable : in one case there is simpler form, in the other more complex ; there is beauty of linear form and beauty of colour form ; beauty severe and strong and beauty delicate and sweet ; but in all these varieties form as such is the main interest of the artist, and beauty is his highest aim : as long as no foreign interests interfere with the purely artistic workings, art is mature, legitimate, and classic, whatever varieties it may contain within itself.

These varieties of classic art depend, like the large generic differences of symbolic, classic, and romantic, mainly upon the laws of the necessary succession of intellectual movements and of the necessary relations between the mental conception and the physical material ; and they are further influenced by the character of the civilization and of the individual artist. These various phases of classic art, which have been wholly overlooked by æstheticians, are, except in the case of one art which is specially affected by a dual nature, invariably successive,

and follow upon one another with the same strict necessity as do the three great stages in the whole existence of art. We may call them, in reference to the moral character with which they accidentally correspond, by the names—conventional, like those of Hegel's great classification—of heroic art, dramatic art, and idyllic art. We might, perhaps, have called them, like the Greek orders of architecture which in a way exemplify them, Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian; but it is more important to connect these various phases in all classic art—sculpture, painting, and music—with the three great phases through which spontaneously produced national poetry passes in its maturity. It is not that any art in one phase consciously assumes the heroic character, that in another it strives after dramatic effect, and that in the third it seeks for an idyllic ideal; for if there were any such conscious efforts after character, art would not be in the classic stage, since in the classic stage there is no effort to direct its perfectly spontaneous development, and no interest save in the form, quite apart from anything it may suggest or express. Art is successively what we may define as heroic, dramatic, and idyllic, merely because the necessary phases in its development accidentally correspond in character of form with the character of heroic, dramatic, and idyllic poetry. For in proportion as certain peculiarities of form are necessarily evolved, the art is either simple, strong, and broad; flexible and delicate; or complicated, light, and bright: and the simple strong, and broad forms, whether sculptural, pictorial, or musical, are the physical equivalent of the strong, masculine, and solemn intellectual character of heroic poetry which they consequently suggest to the mind; while the delicate and flexible forms are the physical equivalent of the more flexible, tender, and broken-up character of dramatic poetry; and the light and cheerful forms are the physical equivalent of the light and cheerful character of idyllic poetry. The connection of ideas is entirely independent of volition on the part of the artist. He does not paint or compose heroic forms because he has set his mind upon an heroic subject; nor does he paint or compose idyllic forms because he has set his mind upon an idyllic subject. The heroic form may chance to coincide with the heroic subject, or the idyllic form with the idyllic subject, or the heroic form may be forced into arbitrary connection with the idyllic subject, or *vice versa*. For the form, heroic, dramatic, or idyllic, necessarily exists at a given moment, as the product of a previous and the precursor of a subsequent form; and the artist can no more model, paint, or compose forms which do not belong to his particular phase of classic art, than he can conceive his works in the classic manner when art is yet symbolic, or in the romantic manner when art is still classic.

We have said that the three special phases of classic art, heroic, dramatic, and idyllic, follow upon each other with the same regularity as the generic stages of symbolic, classic, and romantic art; and that this regularity is due to the necessary relations between successive intellectual movements, and to the necessary relations between the

intellectual conception and the physical material. The explanation of these necessary relations is perhaps unattainable; suffice it that their results can be studied and referred to law; with the reason and power of this law we have no concern. The evolution of form in the classic stage, except in the one art of which we shall treat separately, is successive, and invariably moves from the heroic through the dramatic to the idyllic; after which last phase classic art begins insensibly to become over-blown and decaying, and the romantic subsidiary elements of non-artistic interest entirely re-fashion the art which gradually loses vitality. The heroic phase is the first, because when art first attains to classic maturity, the creative force is in its greatest vigour: what it does it does at a blow, simply, plainly, without seeking for refinement, because it is the first comer, and the simple, the evident, the plain is yet unachieved; gradually, as creation follows creation, the force loses its first vigour, it no longer does its work at one blow, because the work that can be done at one blow is already achieved; it begins to seek for refinement because the plain, the evident, the simple has already been done; the second phase is reached, and the second phase must seek for that which has been left undone by the first; gradually the possibility of simple work diminishes: the simplest had been done in the first phase, the less simple has been done in the second, there remains to be done in the third only the complicated, until at length the mind, fatigued and losing its artistic activity, slackens in the creation of new form, and calls in non-artistic interest to help it in arranging and altering the already existing form, or in developing the still vital parts of the art by the force of non-artistic desires. By this time, art has gradually fallen into the romantic condition. Thus the phenomenon of the three phases of classic art is explained by the relations between successive mental actions, and by the necessity of doing the more complicated when the simple has already been done. But the phenomenon due mainly to the large intellectual necessity of change, is further explained by the relations between intellectual conception and physical means. When art first attains to classic maturity, it possesses only that amount of physical resources, such as perspective and anatomy in painting and rhythm and orchestration in music, implied by the fact of its having passed out of the symbolic stage; if it possessed more, it would have earlier entered into the classic stage. This amount of physical resources possessed by art on its first becoming classically mature, suffices only for the creation of those large, simple, and strong forms which are the natural product of the creative power in its first vigour and with no classic past behind it; gradually these physical resources are augmented, and as they augment they become capable of embodying the conceptions of the creative power in the second phase, and become too great for the conceptions of the creative power of the first stage; thus they steadily increase until they are on a level with the conceptions belonging to the third stage of classic art; after which they develop beyond the

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limits of purely artistic form, and become subservient, in the romantic stage, to the production of more or less non-artistic effects. Thus the relations between the intellectual conception and the physical material concur with the necessity of intellectual change in pushing form from heroic simplicity to dramatic subtlety, from dramatic subtlety to idyllic lightness, and finally entirely out of the domain of classic art. Thus, after the simple, calm, and stern sculpture of Phidias and Polyclete, with its clearly indicated hair, its short and solid proportions, its moderate gesture and unconcerned expression, we get, by the propelling double force of intellectual change and developing physical power, to the more flexible sculpture of Scopas and Myron, with its more realized hair, its slenderer proportions, its bolder gesture and more marked expression; and finally to the graceful sculpture of Praxiteles, with its complicated delicate hair, its feminine slightness and roundness of form, its often playful and voluptuous gesture and expression. From the art which could give us an Olympian Zeus, an Athena, an Amazon, we have got first to the art which can give us a Hermes, a Niobe, a Discobolus; then to the art which can give us an Eros, a Dionysios, a Satyr; after that comes the art dramatic, realistic, or eclectic, of the Laocoon, the Gladiator, the Antinous; and then, after the architectural sculpture of the Middle Ages, we meet the art again, led by Michael Angelo into the tragic, half-beautiful monstrosity of early romanticism.

We have already had occasion to notice the evolution of mediæval architecture after its triumphant exit out of symbolic immaturity; we have seen how, from the solid roundness of the Romanesque, it passed on to the delicate simplicity of Early Gothic, and then to the dangerous splendours of the Early Flamboyant; how the necessity for intellectual change and the ever increasing technical skill forced on the art through the three phases of the classic stage, until at last the mind could only impair its conceptions, and the hand shatter its works, and architecture, in languid antique imitation, passed into the romantic stage which, with the help of every sort of extraneous interest, was to produce the waving barocco, the ghastly Grecian, and the mongrel eclectic style.

The evolution of classic art can also be studied with great minuteness in music, which Hegel condemned to hopeless romanticism, but which in reality displays in its maturity a devotion to mere beauty as such, and an indifference to all else, as great at least as that of painting and even of sculpture in their classic stage; perhaps because, like architecture, it is an art of abstract and non-imitative form. When at the beginning of the eighteenth century music issued completely out of the long dissolving symbolic stage, it had under Handel, Bach, Marcello and their contemporaries that same robust and simple grandeur which we meet in the sculpture of Phidias and of Polyclete: it was, in opera, oratorio, mass, or cantata, essentially heroic: large, solid, weighty in form, grand, but emotionless, or expressing only superb vigour. The composers of this earliest purely classic school could create form with the simplest strokes: complication of effect, beyond the harmonic com-

bination which has no relation to the simplicity of the form, but merely unites four or five large forms into one larger, they knew not. Their physical resources and technical means were very limited; their effect was produced merely by the voice parts, whether single in an air or superposed in a fugue; rhythm and orchestration, as distinct musical powers, they did not know; the melody sustained itself, needing neither a rhythm that would carry it along, nor an accompaniment which would fill it up: the airs of Handel, with their violin and bass running accompaniment, belong to the same category of art as the prophets and patriarchs of Michael Angelo, without background or colour or light and shade, alone in heroic strength. Gradually this extreme largeness of musical form, and this extreme simplicity of musical means, became impossible: the forms became less weighty and broad, the rhythm became slightly more marked, the accompaniments more varied and richer, until from the heroic music of Handel, Bach, and Marcello, we get to the dramatic music of Gluck and Jommelli, with its exquisite tenderness of form, its delicate accompaniments of strings lightly interspersed with wind instruments, and its perfect pathos of expression. After that the form becomes smaller, more broken up; the orchestra is enriched, rhythm is developed, everything becomes tender, graceful, brilliant, absolutely devoid of heroic strength, rarely susceptible of serious emotion, and giving us, instead of the robust and placid heroes of Handel, or the pathetic and exquisite impersonations of Gluck, the soft and light, the brilliant and graceful idyllic figures of Haydn, of Paisiello, of Cimarosa, and of Mozart; those charming creations, whose seriousness never goes beyond the delicate elegiac melancholy of the Eros of Praxiteles, or the soft dreaminess of Giorgione's piping shepherd. After this, the third and idyllic phase of classic music, the art slowly begins to merge into the romantic stage; at first hiding beneath an inherited nobility of form the new spirit of romanticism, a spirit which is tragic meditation in Beethoven, sensuous gaiety in Rossini, and contemplative melancholy in Weber and Schubert; which grows rapidly, and soon, in its straining after the suggestive and the emotional, discomposes the old traditional form, and creates strange mixtures of beauty and ugliness, of dignity and vulgarity, such as is the music of our own day. But even now we are not very far advanced in musical romanticism; the tradition of form does still exist, and the only part of music which the romantic tendency has completely destroyed is the art of singing, which by its peculiarly delicate nature could scarcely survive the purely classic period.*

We have said that in one of the great arts the three phases of the classic stage do not succeed each other, but exist at the same moment. This anomalous art is painting. In it we find the heroic, the dramatic, and the idyllic existing at the same time, exemplified by Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian, and connected by the infinite varieties of artistic

* The evolution of form in classic music has been treated by the writer of the present paper, at greater length than was possible here, in "Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy," lately published.

style between them. In painting, the difference is one not of time but of place. How explain this apparent exception to the law of evolution which we have traced in the classic stage of architecture, of sculpture, and of music? Simply by the fact that the difference of form between the heroic, the dramatic, and the idyllic phases of Classic art are largely due, as we have seen, to the difference in the material part of the art, which forces a corresponding difference in the intellectual conception; and that whereas in all the other arts this difference is due to accretion and friction,—to the action of time in enlarging certain physical means and in diminishing certain others,—in painting this difference is due to a constitutional difference of organization, to circumstances of place and race, which are uninfluenced by time. It is the greater or less amount of manipulative dexterity which, quite as much and more than the necessary difference of mental creative force, makes the difference between the sculpture of Phidias and the sculpture of Praxiteles, between the architecture of the thirteenth and the architecture of the fifteenth centuries; the chisel of the later artist cannot create forms as large as the chisel, weightier and bolder, of the earlier artist; it is the greater or less amount of rhythmic and instrumental development which, quite as much as the difference in the creative force, makes the difference between the music of Handel and the music of Mozart: Mozart, with his rhythm and his orchestra, can no more compose the “Messiah” than Handel, with his merely harmonic superposition of parts and his merely negative accompaniments, can compose “Don Giovanni:” the mind conceives form in accordance with the physical resources at its command. Now the material resource which in painting corresponds to the manipulative power of the sculptor and architect and to the rhythm and instrumentation of the musician, the more or less of which necessitates the production of forms more or less heroic, dramatic, or idyllic, is colour. Where colour exists only as a brown or grey shading, as in the most rigid Tuscans, more particularly Signorelli and Michael Angelo, the irresistible result is largeness and boldness of line, preference for the monochrome human body, contempt for landscape and accessories, and indifference to light and shade, the sum of which is pictorial form corresponding æsthetically to the sculptural form of the school of Phidias, to the architectural form of Early Gothic, and to the musical form of Handel and his contemporaries—form broad, strong, unimpassioned: in a word, heroic. Where, on the other hand, colour exists as a power in itself, as one-half of the art, as with the Umbrians, Lombards, and Umbro-Tuscans, the result is inevitably greater softness and subtlety of line, pleasure in drapery and vegetation, and interest in light and shade; the sum of which is pictorial form corresponding æsthetically with the sculptural form of the school of Scopas, with the architectural form of Middle Gothic, and with the musical form of Gluck and his contemporaries—form flexible, harmonious, delicate, and capable (in music, sculpture, and painting) of pathetic effect: in a word, dramatic. But where colour exists as the very basis of the art, as among the

Venetians, the inevitable result is vague and voluptuous massive lines, preference of splendid brocade stuff to ordinary drapery, indifference to muscular development, delight in the smooth, soft flesh of the body, and in landscape and every sort of coloured accessory, the sum of which is pictorial form corresponding æsthetically with the sculptural form of the school of Praxiteles, with the architectural form of florid Gothic, and with the musical form of Mozart and his contemporaries—form rich, soft, cheerful, incapable of pathetic effect; in a word, idyllic. Now, while the difference of physical material on which this difference of form depends is due, in sculpture, architecture, and music, to accumulation of action, to the additional deftness manifested in sculpture and architecture, induced by constant practice, and to the gradual development of rhythm and orchestra by continuous addition to the rudiments of both, to an evolution such as is necessarily the effect of time, the greater or less importance of colour, which is the corresponding factor in the difference of pictorial form, is not in the least dependent upon the accumulation of effort: it is dependent upon inherent mental constitution, itself due to difference of race and soil. There is as strong a development of the element of pure colour in the still Giottesque Muranese paintings of the early fifteenth century as in Tintoretto; there is as clear a drawing in Giotto as in Michael Angelo. Linear form and coloured form are two separate things; colour art is conceived in a different way and by different faculties from linear art. The greater complication of late Gothic traceries, the greater fulness of accompaniment of late classic music, does not presuppose any radical difference of mentality, such as that between a draughtsman and a colourist. Rhythm develops, orchestra develops, but colour is inborn and depends upon climate and race. We might fancy the classic stage of any art save painting—say music during the eighteenth century—as typified by one artist of immensely long life; whose style would undergo gradual modification: in 1720 he would be Handel, with his absence of rhythm and orchestra, his massive, weighty forms; in 1760 he would be Gluck, with his more developed orchestra and suppler vocal forms; in 1799, having developed rhythm and learned to combine instruments, he would be Mozart, with his delicate, graceful forms and rich orchestration. But in painting, the difference between the heroic, the dramatic, and the idyllic is explained neither by accretion nor by friction; it is explained by the different skies, and hills, and race of Tuscany, of Umbria, and of Venetia. Michael Angelo, the intellectual offspring of the draughtsman Signorelli, lived to be ninety, but he lived only to be a draughtsman, less æsthetically perfect but not less technically astounding and absolutely one-sided than in his early manhood; Titian, descended through the Bellinis from the old Muranese colourists, also lived nearly a century, but never lived to be less a pure colour-artist than his earliest mediæval ancestor. Colour cannot be evolved out of linear form, nor linear form out of colour; and it is the amount of colour, the more or less of it, which decides whether a painter belongs to the heroic or the idyllic phase of classic art. Bellini in 1470 has

already the æsthetical equivalents of Praxiteles and of Mozart; Michael Angelo as a painter still has the æsthetical equivalents of Phidias and of Handel in 1550. Hence it is that in painting the three phases, heroic, dramatic, and idyllic, co-existed respectively in contemporary Florentine, Umbrian, and Venetian painters; and hence also it is that painting, once arrived at maturity, instead of remaining classic in the hands of three, four, or five generations of artists, representing the three phases and their transitions into each other, suddenly fell from the purely classic to the romantic, from Raphael to Giulio Romano, from Titian to Tintoret; nay, strangest of all, from the perfect form of Michael Angelo's ceiling of the Sixtine Chapel, to the grotesque horrors of Michael Angelo's Last Judgment.

The romantic phase once fully entered, the evolution of art continues to be perfectly organically regular only as long as there still remains some material resource, such as manipulative dexterity, light and shade, or orchestration, which has not yet been brought to its greatest possible development; but as soon as the material resources are completely developed, the art ceases to change from any internal necessity of growth, and begins to change in accordance with some force of fashion or tendency distinct from itself. For as long as there is development of the material resources, as in the later Venetians, the Flemish and Spanish painters, as in the Flamboyant corrupt Gothic and the music of our own century, there is organic life, although it be life ebbing out in the overblossom of decay; and the growing material resources inevitably necessitate a definite change in the form; the art is still living, though fast approaching its end. But when this development of the physical means has ceased, there is no longer any organic necessity in the art: the forms are dead forms, and they may be altered, arranged, and rearranged by the critical or archæological spirit; the real art no longer grows, it merely undergoes inorganic treatment; anything can be done with the forms, because they are dead; anything except make them live. Thus, music has completely emerged out of the classic stage at a period still too recent to permit, as yet, of any eclectic revival or any critical rearrangement of classic forms; the musical form of Beethoven, of Rossini, of Weber, of Schumann, nay even of Verdi and of Wagner, is still organic, and necessitated by the further development of principles of rhythm and orchestration which had attained to only partial maturity in the classic time, their greatest development being indeed incompatible with classic perfection of form. But in painting, with the exception of the legitimate modern development of landscape as a self-independent art, the full development of all the material factors took place long ago, in the days of Rubens and Velasquez, and the art is now so completely inorganic that, as we see exemplified by the French sculpturesque school of David, by the pseudo-medieval of Overbeck, the pseudo-Flemish and Spanish of modern France, and the present revival of early Renaissance style in our own country, pictorial forms are completely uninfluenced by inner growth,

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and undergo change under the pressure of the critical and literary currents of the day.

In short, while the symbolic stage of art is by its nature synthetic, tending regularly towards the classical equilibrium between the mental conception and the physical means, and gradually subjecting art to the all-engrossing interest in form belonging to the classic phase; the romantic stage, on the other hand, is absolutely disintegrative, destroying the classical equilibrium, developing the means beyond their just limits, and gradually substituting a non-artistic aim for the classical desire for mere beauty of form; until at length the art, no longer vital, becomes entirely subject to laws of development belonging to other mental products, and artistic form is, as it were, dragged in the footsteps of literary and scientific movement.

Thus we have attempted, in accordance with our definition of that half of the science of *Æsthetics* which we have called Comparative, to show the laws which regulate the genesis and evolution of art. We have seen that the artist is but the individual example of a necessary condition of art; that the civilization of an artistic period cherishes and modifies, but does not produce or direct, the art of that period, which is born of certain inevitable tendencies in human nature, and which grows in accordance with certain necessary phenomena of mental change, and action, and reaction: we have seen that the Hegelian classification of art into symbolic, classic, and romantic is correct in its definition of each of these conditions, but erroneous in limiting this definition to the essential nature of any one art: we have seen that no art is radically either symbolic, classic, or romantic, but that every art is by turns, and according to its degree of development, symbolic, classic, and romantic: we have seen also the evolution of art in its classic stage, as it passes through the three phases which we have conventionally designated as heroic, dramatic, and idyllic. In the course of this study we have had occasion to show, almost at every step, that the general nature of all the arts is the same, because they are all due to the same mental cravings; that the general evolution of all the arts has been absolutely homogeneous, and that all special differences in the nature and evolution of the various arts, compared with each other, are due to the differences in the physical means which they respectively employ. We have thus, in our rough outline of a system of Comparative *Æsthetics*, attempted to bring the genesis and evolution of art into the domain of positive science, by showing them to be referable to unvarying law. It belongs to the other great branch of the science—to Absolute *Æsthetics*—to bring within the domain of law the more complex phenomena of the effects on the mind, and of the consequent absolute value of those various arts, and stages and phases of art, the mere evolution of which constitutes the legitimate field of study of Comparative *Æsthetics*.

VERNON LEE.