Ernest Fenollosa, "The Nature of Fine Art"

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There are two possible paths by which we may draw near, not indeed to a definition, but to an approximate notion of the nature of art; one, an empirical line of reasoning, starting from the facts of art-history -- and production, and feeling about for the principle which works through them; the other a deductive process, starting from the given notion of man as a perfectible spiritual being, and reasoning to the proper function of art in the total scheme of those ideals at which his better nature aims. If it should turn out that these two lines of approach, the *a posteriori* and the *a priori* arguments, meet at a common centre, our conclusion would have the strongest warrant of probability possible to our present faculties. Let us make a trial of these two roads.

The argument from experience, if we could carry it out to the end, would consist in a careful comparison of all the admitted forms of fine art, for the purpose of discovering that inner truth of practical principle which is common to them all, and in virtue of which we give them a common name.

If poetry, and music, and painting, are indeed in some clear sense all to be called fine arts, it means that their common fundamental nature, that which distinguishes them from all else, that which makes them art, lies as a deeper principle underneath those qualities by which they specifically differ. Just as a pine tree and an apple tree and oak tree are first of all trees, living and growing according to a single set of principles, and varying only in their most superficial qualities; -- so the art of painting, if it be a fine art along with music and poetry, is first of all an art, and this common artistic nature must govern its specific pictorial attributes. A valid inductive argument would then consist of three parts: first, an elimination of those qualities which belong equally to art and to things which are not art; second, an elimination of those qualities which spring solely from specific differences between the arts; third, the conscious identification of the remaining attributes as the practical principle which does, in our actual experience, give to all the forms of fine art what we feel to be their distinctive character.

Before we can know what art is, we have first to know what art is not. This is elimination, and my first proposition under this head is that art does not consist in its usefulness. This may seem an obvious truth, yet it is one liable to certain misconceptions. We distinguish the fine arts in so many words from the useful arts, but it does not follow that the fine arts are not also useful. Writers err on both sides of this line. Some contrast art with use, and so claim for her some kind of transcendental value, cut off from solid social needs. Others lay so much stress on the services of art to society and religion, that use is well nigh made the test of its excellence.

The truth is that while the uses of art are real, use is a quality which belongs equally to art and to not-art; and, therefore, cannot enter into the distinctive notion of the former. Or, we can state the principle in this way: in the useful arts it is their use alone which constitutes their excellence; while in the fine arts it is their excellence chiefly which constitutes their use. Therefore, the use of fine art is a peculiar kind of use, *an art-use*, which, so far from explaining, requires itself to be explained by the nature of art. Even in the decorative arts, where use has to be so carefully considered, it does not enter into art as a positive factor, but only imposes on art negative limits.

My second proposition is that art does not consist in the quality of *skill*. It seems a pity to have to demonstrate this, but so much of the language of criticism is absorbed in describing merely technical perfections, it is so tempting to professionals to rank one another on the bases of pure proficiency, (so many in an audience think far more of Paderewski's fingers than they do of Chopin's music) that it is well to eliminate this source of error at the outset. What is skill? The perfect adaptation of means to to ends. What gives it its value? The end for which it is a means.

May there not then be as many kinds of skill as there are species of ends? Is the skill involved in picking the combination lock of a safe equally admirable with Titian's mastery of the technique of color? Why not, if it is equally skill? Because art is a peculiar and far nobler end, which specially consecrates all honest effort in her direction. Who cannot see that skill, which belongs equally to art and to not-art, cannot enter into the principle of the former; rather that skill, an uncolored means to ends, derives its peculiar hue or *art-skill* from the nature of the art which controls and defines it? No critic who does not understand what the aim of art is in itself, can properly estimate any exhibition of skill. And any system of art-education, which, ignorant of the independent and primary nature of art, still professes to turn out pupils proficient in superficial technique, is like the blind leading the blind.

My third proposition is that art does not consist in the quality of giving pleasure. This is a statement which may astonish some. It seems to be agreed by those more liberal critics of art who condemn the purely imitative standard, that, in the absence of an objective definition, beauty has got to be constituted by the subjective excellence of pleasure. Nothing is more common than the supposition that a fine picture or a fine piece of music derives its fineness from the degree of pleasure which it gives. That depends upon who gets the pleasure.

Do we not all differ in our estimate of pleasure? There are people who prefer a street organ to a symphony orchestra. If you agree to defer to the pleasure of the connoisseur, who is the connoisseur but a man distinguished from his fellows by his knowledge of art? It is not his pleasure which defines the art; but the *art in him* which gives warrant to the testimony of his pleasure. It is not a question of whether we *are* pleased, but whether we *ought* to be pleased; whether we take the pleasure in the right thing.

Pleasure is as various in its quality as the object which excites it. Who reckons the pleasure of eating a good dinner as the equivalent of the pleasure derived from a noble deed? Even in their admiration for the paintings in our galleries, people

derive pleasure from a host of different motives. One man takes delight in a painting for the skill which he observes. This is the motive with which a cobbler contemplates a well-made pair of boots. Another takes pleasure in the religious significance and uses of the picture. This is the same motive which leads him to treat the family Bible with respect. Another enjoys a landscape for its association with the scenes of his childhood. This is the same motive which interests him in the sports of his youthful son, or in reading over an old love letter. A basket of fruit by a Dutch artists looks to some good enough to eat. But are these various motives of pleasure, all and equally, purely art motives? May not all these be felt, and yet not one gleam of appreciation be present for the truly artistic qualities of the picture? Are not these several species of pleasure something common to both art and to not-art? Can they then in the least define that peculiar kind of pleasure which arises from the contemplation of a pure aesthetic quality? Nay, must not this peculiar pleasure, which we may call *art-pleasure*, so far from defining the nature of art, itself logically require that nature for its own definition.

I have now given you several examples of the first kind of elimination, that which excludes qualities common to both art and to not-art. Let us now pass on to illustrations of the second kind of elimination, that which excludes qualities belonging to one or two arts alone, but not to all the leading and universally recognized forms of fine art. Many of these are obvious at first-sight, others require elucidation. For example, music is a fine art, not because a science of acoustics exists, and you can mathematically measure relative wave-lengths, and construct a mechanical theory of harmonic combinations. These external qualities of sound define the limits within which music works; they negatively mark music off from the sphere of painting, sculpture, and architecture. But they do not give the least hint of the positive construction of pure musical beauties. They are as capable of being used in a dull, pedantic and unlovely manner as of being quickened by the magic of genius. What defines for you the difference between a street melody, and a song by Schubert? Do not both equally obey the laws of acoustics? It is not, then, the raw material of music which measures degrees of excellence in its aesthetic use, but something as yet unexplained in the manner and character of that use.

So I might go on to show that the artistic quality of a painting, though it be a form of purely visual art, is not in the least defined by anything in the science of optics. The visibility of ugly forms is explained in the same way as the visibility of the beautiful? So no mathematical theory of curvature can draw for you anything but a dead line. How can it tell you why one system of curves is inspiring and divine, and another is stupid and mechanical, why a third is saucey and blasphemous. You might as well try to manufacture poetry with a treatise on metre, or construct pictorial compositions on the basis of mathematical rules. The bare knowledge that blue and orange, according to some, or blue and yellow, according to others, are complementary colors, tells us nothing of the creative beauties of a thousand subtle shades and tints of blue and orange, without names, upon whose infinite, fresh, and individual combinations, all supreme work in color depends. It is not the raw material of visible line and color which explains to us the nature of art in painting. These are only negative limits which demarcate it from music. We still require some unexplained and positive manner of its use.

My sixth proposition might be this: the values of discursive thought are not essential to the nature of art. How could I prove this? From the fact that they have no existence in instrumental music. This is quite opposed to European theories, which have prevailed down to the middle of the present century. The superior quality of an artist was supposed by old writers to lie in his intellectual attainments. Poetry was taken as the type of the arts, and painting in the sixteenth century was assimilated to poetry. What the painter thought about things was supposed to lend dignity to his art. It may surprise you to hear that down nearly to the end of the last century, people supposed the words of musical songs to be the essential aesthetic element in them. Addison wrote that the sounds of violins were only a superficial accompaniment to the words, and that purely instrumental music was as silly as a mere jingle of words without sense. He condemned it as something merely sensuous. But to-day we can see that this old distinction does not cover the ground. What are love and reverence? Are they pure thoughts, or are they pure sensuous feelings?

Neither. They are full of nobleness, and spirit and content, and so allied to thought, but, on the other hand, they are full of color, warmth, and will, and so, direct presentative, like sense perceptions. The same is true of the artistic faculty in music or in poetry. It is not the pure content for [of?] thought which distinguishes poetry, but the quality of passion by which this material is fused. So it is not low, sensuous delight through the ear which characterizes music, but this woven into worthy fabric by some highest [higher?] function of the soul.

But I must save my strength for the seventh proposition, which will need all the elucidation I can bring to bear on it. It is this, that the nature of fine art, *even in the art of painting*, is not in the least constituted by realistic representation, has primarily nothing to do with studying or copying the mere facts of external nature. If I am right, the whole modern cry for ultra-realism is a piteous mistake. If I am right, nineteen-twentieths of all art criticism which talks about deception, and naturalness, and faithfulness, is little better than twaddle. If I am right, nineteen-twentieths of all our art practices, studying anatomy and perspective, the painful copying of models, the servile imitation of externals, the slowly acquired power to put in shadows and round up forms by reflected lights, is, unless directed toward some end beyond all this, little better than waste of time. If I am right, it means that the prevailing tendency of art study in our public schools to train the imitative rather than the creative power of children, is gradually crushing out of our race the puny faculty of art appreciation which, in spite of unfavorable conditions, we have inherited.

Then, how do I know that I am right? How do I know that I am right, even if the whole world be against me? Because accurate representation holds no place whatever in the sister art of music. If music, indeed, be an art, then that which is common to both music and painting, not representation, must primarily constitute both these arts. To answer, "yes, but music is a non-represenative art, while painting is a representative art, you know," is but to echo the contradiction; to conceal logical chaos behind a flimsy fabric of names. This would be exactly like dividing all trees into two classes -- trees and pine trees. All other trees which are not pine trees, might, we will allow, be characterized by the universal nature of tree; but the

peculiar class, pine trees, is not to be characterized by the universal nature of tree, but by the specific nature of pine. How absurd this would be! A pine is a pine, no doubt, but it is first of all a tree; and its generic qualities as a tree are more fundamental in its nature than the specific qualities which by addition, make it a pine. So representative art may, indeed, be representative; but it is first of all *art*, and the generic qualities which make it art are more fundamental in its nature than the specific qualities which, by addition, make it representative. Representation at most can only be a secondary and derivative quality; not the essence of art, but one of the special kinds of raw material to which art can be applied, which it is the business of some art to absorb. Not all representation is art. Representation without the generic aesthetic quality is no art at all. It follows then that *art-representation,* so far from defining the art of painting, needs itself to be defined by the art of painting.

So far we have been dealing with the two kinds of elimination. We have excluded from our primary notion of fine art many qualities which it holds in common with other things, and many qualities which belong only to one or two of these arts. It is now for us to complete our inductive argument by proceeding to the identification of what remains in the several arts. Is there, then, in all the leading forms of fine art, some identifiable and identical attribute which does, as a fact, lie at the base of their several aesthetic excellences? There is.

Let us, in the first place, regard the character of poetry. Here, thoughts are the very matter with which we deal; and yet, all attempt at literal and faithful description of actual phenomena would become the most intolerable prose. Can a dry, scientific text-book be a more valuable aesthetic production than a whole library of poems? "All poetry is lies," said once to me in disgust a mathematical classmate at Harvard, and an English critic, lamenting the degeneracy of literature in our day, once headed his article, "The Decay of the Art of Lying." He chose this title deliberately to call attention to the fact that the very essential excellence of the art of poetry is just that in which it differs from plain, accurate, scientific statement. When Shelly cries to the skylark, "Bird thou never wert!" the ornithologist may confidently assure him that he is mistaken. We have no poetical art unless the fact has been transfigured by the creative mind of man, and clothed with beautiful form, imagery, and sentiment. And all this form, imagery, and sentiment, this massing of the facts transfigured by the harmony of the word, comes up before us in a great poem like the individual idea, new, fresh, inspiring, distinct from all else, creative in us of a new spiritual phase. It is not, like the discursive idea of the understanding, an abstract statement concerning things; it is a concrete idea forged out of thought, and feeling, and imagination, and symbolism, and mastery of language, and harmony of rhythm by the creative speaking passion.

It is an idea which exists nowhere, but in that magical literary combination, as if it were a fairy form which has no substantial body but the invocating will of the enchanter.

How, then, is it in music? Where did the divine theme of the andante of the Fifth Symphony come from? Was it related in any way to a fact of nature, or to a discursive thought? Did a bird in the air or the wind sing it? Did Beethoven faithfully search for it in some external wilderness, for fear that he might deceive mankind with the idle play of his fancy? And if it be not an external fact, but the baseless imagination of a poor, fallible man, why do not *we* condemn it as unnatural, subjective, mannered, conventional? It is because we have come, by several generations of proper training, to see that in music the very melodic and harmonic inter-relation of the sounds produces a pure, spiritual idea in terms of sound -- a new and beautiful individual, clear, separate, distinct from all else in the universe, and yet utterly unrelated to the ideas of analytic thought.

In architecture it is the same. Where in nature do we find the model of a fine building? The lines of construction, the proportions of the members, the masses of the openings, all these say something to us, indeed, but they tell us no story about anything beyond themselves. They compose for us a pure and stately harmony -- a music less subtle and fleeting than the witcheries of sound, an idea as far removed from mere sense as it is from mere intellect; they create something new and significant, but which has no existence except in that one individual combination.

Why, then, if all the leading arts -- poetry, music, and architecture -- agree in rejecting ordinary thoughts and representations as the tests of excellence, why should the poor kindred art of painting be pitched upon as the one fit subject to smother with the weight of this fallacy? Why, if all the other arts be constituted, as we have seen, by their power to express a pure non-ratiocinative idea in terms of specific form, of individual sense-perception, why do we not recognize the same patent fact in the art of painting -- that the lines, and the masses of dark and light, and the colours, may and do have a harmonic charm all of their own in their own right, a beauty and infinity of pure visual idea, as absolute and independent as the sound-idea in music? It is because, as a race, we are more ignorant of the nature of good painting. We are ignorant of the very language of art. We have debauched our aesthetic faculty by intemperate draughts at the bar of realism. We do not recognize the spiritual significance of a beautiful line when we see it; any more than a . . . savage could recognize the aesthetic significance of a violin concerto. We ask stupidly, as he might, "What does it mean?" We are dead to the infinity, and nobility, and individuality of the idea which it carries in itself. It is these great, purely *musical* qualities of line, dark and light, and color, which distinguish and ennoble the work of the great masters of all time. You may despise line-ideas if you like, as Addison despised the sound of violins; but there they stand as the demonstrably basic elements of all great art, which outlast time and defy misrepresentation.

Beauty of line does not mean some pretty, superficial, careless ornamentation, nor any prescribed conformity to mathematical laws of curvature; nothing small, mean, negative, or general. It embodies rather, like great music, something new, individual, self-complete, ennobling, o'ermastering, presenting its own law to itself. That such a line-organism *may* represent natural fact, no more interferes with its purely aesthetic nature, than a poet's basis of thought interferes with his metrical and imaginative expression.

Here then, at last, by identification, we find an attribute that is common to all the leading fine arts, an ideal quality of which we may look to the harmonic nature of music as the type. In music, and architecture, and poetry its dominance is

unquestioned. These either depart from the standard of natural expression or utterly ignore it. But what does constitute their aesthetic nature is something which painting also has in common with themselves -- a unique beauty in the form of a fresh and self-defined individual idea, a formal beauty which inheres in the manner of expression, and not in the eternal thing which is expressed. Therefore, I say that just as primarily a pine is a tree, so painting primarily is the creation of a pure idea in terms of beautiful line, dark and light, and color. The representative function of a painting may or may not exist, without modifying its character. But, if it does exist, then it must be distinctly regarded as a secondary consideration in this sense, that it is bound, by its very duty to art, to conform to the primary laws of pictorial expression.

Let us now turn our eyes in quite a different direction, and see with what conclusion the deductive argument furnishes us. If any one has conscientious scruples against deductive arguments, I advise him to skip the following page.

The deductive argument starts from premises which science can neither prove, touch, nor criticise. It has the same warrant as our idea of God, or our idea of love. It is substantially the same whether it be found in Plato, or in modern German philosophy, or in the speculation of Buddhism. Its premises are that man is a spiritual being, that he is a being perfectible through slow evolutionary stages, that there is some supreme plane of spiritual exaltation with which he is in partial communication, and that one of the lines of this communication is the natural revelation to man of three separate transcendental ideals, which he ever keeps before himself as guiding stars in his efforts to advance. These three supreme ideals we know as Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. I call them ideals because they place before us a conception of an intelligible kind of perfection, each in its own line so infinite, so far removed, as to be in their fulness unattainable, and yet ever urging man forward by an irresistible authority to attain them. I call them supreme, because this authority of theirs is underived. It is no product of science or of our reasoning faculties; on the contrary, all rational effort of our faculties is by them controlled. The only problem for us here is to see clearly how these ideals are related to one another.

The intellectual ideal, or truth, sets before us the conception of a possible completion and perfection of the whole sum of knowledge. What we think we know, what we perceive, may be more or less false; but we do not doubt that somewhere an organic universe of absolute truth exists, from which the value of our partial cognition is to be judged. We conceive of the world as of many isolated facts or statements, phenomena to be known, particular units to be ranked together, truly according to some transcendent nature brooding over them, some universal law or fundamental constitution which science is ever trying to approximate more and more closely. Error can exist only in relation to truth. If I say, "I may be deceived," I thereby point truth as a transcendental datum. We cannot escape it by saying that perhaps the whole distinction between truth and error, including both its terms, is pure illusion; in the very words of our thinking it *illusion*, we twice over point truth as that which alone gives sanity to our remark. You may ask me what I mean by truth, and I may, perhaps, tell you, but I tell you, too, that you cannot help asking the question whether my meaning of truth is the true one. Truth looks in the lowest abyss of your skepticism. It is the abstract, immediate universality which governs all particulars. Christ said, "I am the truth."

But now if this cognitive ideal be the only one employed by man, it leads of itself to one-sidedness, and to selfishness. It cannot round out the full sum of our possible spiritual perfections to know only the truth itself. We have got to *will* it. The world is not merely a conglomerate mass of atoms arranged under universal laws; it is an evolutionary series of particulars, each one of which may stand nearer to the ultimate outcome of perfection than that which went before. We have not discharged our duty to the spiritual nature of things until we have striven with all our might to make this possible approach real. The purely cognitive faculty implies no intense struggle to improve the world. The ethical value of schemes is to it nothing beyond their mechanical force. Christ, for it, is an interesting phenomenon, not a Redeemer. Moreover, evil to it is as much a positive phenomenon as good, and equally interesting.

The ethical ideal, therefore, Goodness, is not something derived from truth; but a fresh and independent ideal with spiritual function of its own. In it, we have held up to us an ultimate standard, by which the value for wills of all human acts must be measured. This standard, however we may define it, is what is meant by the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, the ultimate attainment by man of his complete spiritual birthright, but at the end of an infinite and painful process of effort and of growth. All acts which we do either tend toward advancing the coming of this end or the delaying. It, then, is an *ideal,* though concrete in itself, yet far away from us, at the end of an infinite chain of time; a universal which governs its particulars by throwing back through them, link by link, as natural means to ends, the magnetic throb of its command. It is like a piercing star at the end of a long road down which we march in serried ranks, like soldiers with set teeth to their martyrdom. Christ said: "I am the way."

But even this ethical idea, if taken abstractly, in itself leads to narrowness and inadequacy. It views the universe today as something essentially valueless and self-contradictory. It lives only in the future. It regards the inertia of nature as holding man back from the spiritual goal; therefore should we despise and conquer her. It leads to Puritanism and asceticism. It refuses to see any worth but that of its far away universal. All beauty and delight, values which seem to crop up from the world of particularity about us, it looks upon with suspicion as temptations of the devil. It refuses to bear fruit till the infinitely removed day of judgement. It thinks to reach a great sum by stringing together chains of zeros. But is not this conception of spiritual value, equally with that of Truth, an abstraction? Does it not equally deny the evolutionary nature of spirit? Can there be an infinite gap from nothing to everything? Is it not probable that the growing spirituality of man, at every stage of its advance, must realize some measure of the perfect spiritual realities at which it aims, here and now in the world of the finite, the promise of rare spring flowers peeping up through the crusts of cosmic snows? The universe is bound to the ideal, not by abstract differences, but by flesh and blood ties. Spirit is not a shadowy name nor an unreachable limit. God is creating the world today. The very life of the spirit is absorbed in the process of its growth. The world is real, and divine, and *beautiful*. Christ said: "I am the *life*."

The aesthetical ideal, beauty, is then not derived from truth and goodness, but a third independent ideal which, in a certain sense, reaps the benefits of the other two. No doubt beauty, too, can be made an abstract category, and abused in its isolation. It is possible for man to revel in pictures, poetry, music, and fine living, and close his eyes to wars and the warning of the stoics, and to the cold investigations of philosophy and science. If he become the slave of his imagination, to the exclusion of his intellect and his will, he can doubtless fall into the kind of selfish intoxication, which quite undoes spirituality, and eats the life out of society. But that is not following the ideal as I have defined it. It is not to exclude truth and goodness, but to supplement them. It is to force forward no fruit which exhausts the soil. Its maxim is to realise as much of the spiritual end now as is compatible with realizing more in the future.

Truth is like the uncorruptable judge, who presides over our tribunals; goodness the martial heroes who wage stern war in the national defense. But beauty is like the spirit of woman, who glorifies and consecrates our homes. We cannot live without the sword and the surgeon's knife. Goodness, stoicism, is doubtless one pole about which the spiritual reality tends to consecrate itself. But the polar force is not reduced to absolute zero at any point of the mass; and, therefore there must be some spiritual good realizable value in itself, not merely as a means to an ultimate end. Such concrete value is beauty. Truth is an abstract universal, which overshadows its particulars; goodness an abstract universal, which shoots back orders of fire through its particulars; but beauty is a concrete universal which lies completely embodied in the substance of its particulars. It is the ideal of incarnation. Not the spirit above matter, or beyond matter, but living here and now in matter. Whether it be in the unstudied grace and truthfulness of a child, or in the robes of flame with which evening wraps herself, or in the savage carving fundamental angles on his paddle, or in Michel Angelo precipitating the Sons of God into the colors of plaster, it is everywhere the spirit of universal, living and acting concretely in the heart of the particular. In certain of its abstract forms we call it art; and, indeed, if we perceive that the arts in truth overlap one another, until all are swallowed up into the most comprehensive art of living, we may conceive the sphere of art to become co-extensive with the sphere of beauty.

Here now, through my deductive argument, I have come to a conclusion which harmonizes well with the results of the inductive. By an empirical comparison of the several fine arts, I found that their most fundamental attributes was their power to express a pure, individual, non-ratiocinative idea in peculiar combinations of sensuous terms. Musical ideas were its types, groups harmonic and organic; forms light, and evanescent as ether, but distinct as the smile of your friend. By a comparison of the three transcendent spiritual ideals, I have found that art is the power to sheathe the universal and perfect in the fabric of the particular and the transitory. But the universal in the particular is the individual, a thing which contains in itself values which reach far out beyond itself; and the perfect in which, of its kind and so incarnated, we can find no flaw; a rounded inter-related system of harmony in which there is no discord, which actually glows, there, before my face, in a common utensil for my table; is this not the same as the disembodied idea of pure musical form? Our thought is enriched by the identification, for we see now that the artistic idea is not something strange and uncanny, but the natural way in which God likes to have flowers grow. Let us remember then when we sit down to paint, that we are not parrots, about to screech, but consecrated beings, who have been admitted to the laboratory of creation, privileged to see the depth of some forest made gay by unfolding spirals of stems, the soft song that bursts the prison of buds, and the prismatic tintings of a thousands shy petals.

But here, on my own ground, steps before me John Ruskin, and cries: "Halt!" He waves before my eyes his original and famous religious argument for realism. He cries in my face, "Every one of those tender blades of grass being fashioned by God's own hand, how dare you commit blasphemy in art of modifying, or idealizing, or unfaithfully neglecting a single detail?" But I am not afraid of him. I shall answer: "And did God create only the material world, and not also the human soul?" Are we not most truly his sons when we exercise our prerogative of creative imagination?" Shall we damn a Greek poet because he dares to create a new esthetic form which God has never used? Why should we make this antithesis between God and nature on the one side, and man alone on the other? Why should I make a new idol of externality to bow down to? When I hear a beautiful poem about trees, or see a beautiful painting of a tree, is it possible that my delight should arise from the bare thought that the material reality actually exists somewhere in this world. I cannot see why a sensitive man should have his soul raised to a white heat over such a common-place consideration.

When I admire the lovely painting of a snow landscape, does its beauty consist in my recognition of this fact, that snow falls, and do I enthusiastically contemplate thermometers and dewpoints, and the laws of crystallization and diffraction? And when I view the great painting or statue of a saint, a deity, or a national hero, does my blood tingle and my soul thrill, merely at this great fact that the artist has learned something about muscles from his anatomical studies? No one need talk to me about idealization, as if it meant the torturing of noble thoughts or subjects to be other than they are. The idea in art does not primarily conceive subjects at all, but the pure form or language of their expression. Even in subjects the abstract material fact is never the primary truth of nature, but the truth of art, the truth which makes true and noble music pure and noble, is the inner harmony and beauty of a pure idea within whose perfect sphere what is true in subject and what is beautiful in form have been melted together, and become as one.

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Part II

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