1. The simple word 'art' is most usually associated with those arts which we distinguish as 'plastic' or 'visual', but properly speaking it should include the


arts of literature and music. There are certain characteristics common to all the arts, and though in these notes we are concerned only with the plastic arts, a definition of what is common to all the arts is the best starting point of our enquiry.

It was Schopenhauer who first said that all arts aspire to the condition of music; that remark has often been repeated, and has been the cause of a good deal of misunderstanding, but it does express an important truth. Schopenhauer was thinking of the abstract qualities of music; in music, and almost in music alone, it is possible for the artist to appeal to his audience directly, without the intervention of a medium of communication in common use for other purposes. The architect must express himself in buildings which have some utilitarian purpose. The poet must use words which are bandied about in the daily give-and-take of conversation. The painter usually expresses himself by the representation of the visible world. Only the composer of music is perfectly free to create a work of art out of his own consciousness, and with no other aim than to please. But all artists have this same intention, the desire to please; and art is most simply and most usually defined as an attempt to create pleasing forms. Such forms satisfy our sense of beauty and the sense of beauty is satisfied when we are able to appreciate a unity or harmony of formal relations among our sense-perceptions.

2. Any general theory of art must begin with this supposition: that man responds to the shape and surface and mass of things present to his senses, and that certain arrangements in the proportion of the shape and surface and mass of things result in a pleasurable sensation, whilst the lack of such arrangement leads to indifference or even to positive discomfort and revulsion. The sense of pleasurable relations is the sense of beauty; the opposite sense is the sense of ugliness. It is possible, of course, that some people are quite unaware of proportions in the physical aspect of things. Just as some people are colour-blind, so others may be blind to shape and surface, and mass. But just as people who are colour-blind are comparatively
rare, so there is every reason to believe that people wholly unaware of the other visible properties of objects are equally rare. They are more likely to be undeveloped.

3. There are at least a dozen current definitions of beauty, but the merely physical one I have already given (beauty is a unity of formal relations among our sense-perceptions) is the only essential one, and from this basis we can build up a theory of art which is as inclusive as any theory of art need be. But it is perhaps important to emphasize at the outset the extreme relativity of this term beauty. The only alternative is to say that art has no necessary connection with beauty—a perfectly logical position to hold if we confine the term to that concept of beauty established by the Greeks and continued by the classical tradition in Europe. My own preference is to regard the sense of beauty as a very fluctuating phenomenon, with manifestations in the course of history that are very uncertain and often very baffling. Art should include all such manifestations, and the test of a serious student of art is that, whatever his own sense of beauty, lie is willing to admit into the realm of art the genuine manifestations of that sense in other people at other periods. For him, Primitive, Classical and Gothic are of equal interest, and he is not so much concerned to assess the relative merits of such periodical manifestations of the sense of beauty as to distinguish between the genuine and false of all periods.

4. Most of our misconceptions of art arise from a lack of consistency in the use of the words art and beauty. It might be said that we are only consistent in our misuse of them. We always assume that all that is beautiful is art, or that all art is beautiful, that what is not beautiful is not art, and that ugliness is the negation of art. This identification of art and beauty is at the bottom of all our difficulties in the appreciation of art, and even in people who are acutely sensitive to aesthetic impressions in general, this assumption acts like an unconscious censor in particular cases when art is not beauty. For art is not necessarily beauty: that cannot be said too often or too blatantly. Whether we look at the problem historically (considering what art has been in past ages) or sociologically (considering what art actually is in its present-day manifestations all over the world) we find that art often has been or often is a thing of no beauty.
5. Beauty, as I have already said, is generally and most simply defined as that which gives pleasure; and thus people are driven into admitting that eating and smelling and other physical sensations can be regarded as arts. Though this theory can quickly be reduced to absurdity, a whole school of aesthetics is founded on it, and until lately this school was even the predominant one. It has now been superseded in the main by a theory of aesthetics derived from Benedetto Croce, and though Croce's theory has met with a flood of criticism, its general tenet, that art is perfectly defined when simply defined as intuition, has proved to be much more illuminating than any previous theory. The difficulty has been to apply a theory depending on such vague terms as 'intuition' and 'lyricism'. But the point to note immediately is, that this elaborate and inclusive theory of the arts gets on very well without the word 'beauty'.

6. The concept of beauty is, indeed, of limited historical significance. It arose in ancient Greece and was the offspring of a particular philosophy of life. That philosophy was anthropomorphic in kind; it exalted all human values and saw in the gods nothing but man writ large. Art, as well as religion, was an idealization of nature, and especially of man as the culminating point of the process of nature. Typical examples of classical art are the Apollo Belvedere or the Aphrodite of Melos - perfect or ideal types of humanity, perfectly formed, perfectly proportioned, noble and serene; in one word, beautiful. This type of beauty was inherited by Rome, and revived at the Renaissance. We still live in the tradition of the Renaissance, and for us beauty is inevitably associated with the idealization of a type of humanity evolved by an ancient people in a far land, remote from the actual conditions of our daily life. Perhaps as an ideal it is as good as any other; but we ought to realize that it is only one of several possible ideals. It differs from the Byzantine ideal, which was divine rather than human, intellectual and anti-vital, abstract. It differs from the Primitive ideal, which was perhaps no ideal at all, but rather a propitiation, an expression of fear in the face of a mysterious and implacable world. It differs also from the Oriental ideal, which is abstract.
too, non-human, metaphysical, yet instinctive rather than intellectual. But our habits of thought are so dependent on our outfit of words, that we try, often enough in vain, to force this one word 'beauty' into the service of all these ideals as expressed in art. If we are honest with ourselves, we are bound to feel guilty sooner or later of verbal distortion. A Greek Aphrodite, a Byzantine Madonna and a savage idol from New Guinea or the Ivory Coast cannot one and all belong to this classical concept of beauty. The last one at least, if words are to have any precise meaning, we must confess to be unbeautiful, or ugly. And yet, whether beautiful or ugly, all these objects may be legitimately described as works of art.

7. Art, we must admit, is not the expression in plastic form of any one particular ideal. It is the expression of any ideal that the artist can realize in plastic form. And though I think that every work of art has some principle of form or coherent structure, I would not stress this element in any obvious sense, because the more one studies the structure of works of art which live in virtue of their direct and instinctive appeal, the more difficult it becomes to reduce them to simple and explicable formulae. That 'there is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion' was evident even to a Renaissance moralist.

8. However we define the sense of beauty, we must immediately qualify it as theoretical; the abstract sense of beauty is merely the elementary basis of the artistic activity. The exponents of this activity are living men and their activity is subject to all the cross-currents of life. There are three stages: first, the mere perception of material qualities - colours, sounds, gestures, and many more complex and undefined physical reactions; second, the arrangement of such perceptions into pleasing shapes and patterns. The aesthetic sense may be said to end with these two processes, but there may be a third stage which comes when such an arrangement of perceptions is made to correspond with a previously existing state of emotion or feeling. Then we say that the emotion or feeling is given expression. In this sense it is true to say with Benedetto Croce that 'art is expression'. According to Croce expression is the basic creative act in all the arts. The work of art comes into existence with the act of incarnation - that is to say, at the moment the artist finds the words (or other media) to express his emotion or 'state of mind'. Emotion and expression are then an organic unity that cannot be separated.

Croce does not make a clear distinction between expression that has the formal qualities we call beautiful and expression that has the informal qualities we call ugly. A formless or informal expression may or may not deserve to be called a work of art. It may produce effects of terror or horror which are powerful and even sublime and then, as Longinus was the first to claim, we are in the presence of a work of art. Croce dismisses all such 'modification of the beautiful' as aesthetic pseudoconcepts, and indeed they may be so incoherent that they express nothing but chaos and dark nothingness.

9. The permanent element in mankind that corresponds to the element of form in art is man's aesthetic sensibility. Sensibility as such we may assume static. What is variable is the interpretation which man gives to the forms of art, which are said to be 'expressive' when they correspond to his immediate feelings. But the same forms may have a different expressive value, not only for different people, but also for different periods of civilization. Expression is a very ambiguous word. It is used to denote natural emotional reactions, but the very discipline or restraint by which the artist achieves form is itself a mode of expression.
Form, though it can be analysed into intellectual terms like measure, balance, rhythm and harmony, is really intuitive in origin; it is not in the actual practice of artists an intellectual product. It is rather emotion directed and defined, and when we describe art as ‘the will to form’ we are not imagining an exclusively intellectual activity, but rather an exclusively intuitive one. For this reason I do not think we can say that Primitive art is lower in the scale of beauty than Greek art, because although it may represent an earlier stage of civilization, it may express an equal or even a finer instinct for form. The art of ‘a period is a standard only so long as we learn to distinguish between the elements of form, which are universal, and the elements of expression, which are temporal. Still less can we say that inform Giotto is inferior to Michelangelo. He may be less complicated, but form is not valued for its degree of complexity. Frankly, I do not know how we are to judge form except by the same instinct that creates it.

10. Since the early days of Greek philosophy men have tried to find in art a geometrical law, for if art (which they identify with beauty) is harmony, and harmony is the due observance of proportions, it seems reasonable to assume that these proportions are fixed. The geometrical proportion known as the Golden Section has for centuries been regarded as such a key to the mysteries of art, and so universal is its application, not only in art but also in nature, that it has at times been treated with religious veneration. More than one writer in the sixteenth century related its three parts to the Trinity. It is formulated in two propositions of Euclid: Book II, proposition 11 (‘To cut a given straight line so that the rectangle contained by the whole and one of the segments is equal to the square in the remaining segment’), and Book VI, proposition 30 (‘To cut a given finite line in extreme and mean ratio’). The usual formula is: to cut a finite line so that

the shorter part is to the longer part as the longer part is to the whole. The resulting section is roughly in the proportion of 5 to 8 (or 8 to 13, 13 to 21, and so on), but never exactly so: it is always what is known in mathematics as an irrational, and this has added not a little to its mystical reputation. There is a considerable literature on the subject, and from about the middle of the last century it begins to be treated with great seriousness. A German writer, Zeising, tried to prove that the Golden Section is the key to all morphology, both in nature and in art; and Gustav Theodor Fechner, the founder of experimental aesthetics, whose principal works were published in the 'seventies, made it one of the foremost objects of his research. Since then, practically every work on aesthetics includes some consideration of the problem.

An extremist like Zeising claimed that the section prevailed everywhere in works of art, but subsequent investigation has not upheld his claim. We can assume either that the good artist consciously applies the section in the structure of his work, or that he inevitably comes to it by his instinctive sense of form. Use is often made of the Golden Section to secure the right proportion between length and breadth in the rectangles made by windows and doors, by picture-frames and by the page of a book or a journal. It is said that every part of a well-made violin obeys the same law. The pyramids of Egypt have been explained by it, and the Gothic cathedral is easily interpreted in its proportions: the relation of the length of transept to nave, of column to arch, of spire to tower, and so on. The proportion is also used very frequently in pictorial art: the relation of the space above the skyline to the space below, of foreground to background, and equally of various lateral divisions, follows the Golden Section. The paintings of Piero della Francesca are extreme examples of geometric organization (see Figures 1 & 17).

11. Not only the Golden Section, but other geometrical ratios, such as the square of the width of a rectangle within the rectangle are employed in almost endless combination to secure a perfect harmony. It is the relative endlessness of such combinations which precludes any mechanistic explanation of the total harmony of a work of art; for although the counters in the game are rigid, it requires instinct and sensibility to use them for a fine effect. I would also like to suggest an hypothesis based on the analogy of poetry. It is well known that a perfectly regular metre in verse is so monotonous as to become intolerable. Poets have therefore taken liberties with their measure; feet are reversed within the metre, and the whole rhythm may be counterpointed. The result is incomparably more beautiful. In the same way, in the plastic arts certain geometrical proportions, which are the proportions inherent in the structure of the world, may be the regular measure from which art departs in subtle degrees. The extent of that departure, like the poet's variation of his rhythm and metre, is determined not by laws, but by the instinct or sensibility of the artist. I feel that such an hypothesis is confirmed rather than contradicted by an analysis like that of the Greek vase undertaken by Mr. Jay Hambidge (Dynamic Symmetry, Oxford University Press, 1920), by far the most successful and exact geometrical analysis of an art that I know. Greek vases do conform to exact geometric laws, and that is why their perfection is so cold and lifeless. There is often more vitality and more joy in an unsophisticated peasant pot. The Japanese, indeed, often deliberately mar the perfect shape which evolves naturally on the potter's wheel, because they feel that true beauty is not so regular.
12. Distortion may mean a departure from regular geometrical harmony, or, more generally, it implies a disregard for the proportions given in the natural world.

Distortion of some kind, we may therefore say, is present in a very general and perhaps paradoxical way in all art. Even classical Greek sculpture was distorted in the interests of the ideal. The line of brow and nose was never in reality so straight, the face so oval, the breasts so round, as they are represented in, say, the Aphrodite of Melos. Indeed, it is difficult to find any work of art before the Italian Renaissance which does not depart in some way or other from actuality. In the sixteenth century, largely from a misunderstanding of the purpose of classical art, a representational literalness did become common. But it did not last for long: the seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries for one reason or another forsook the Renaissance conception of art, and it was only in the nineteenth century, that age of sham revivals, that literal representation once more became normal.

There are, however, various degrees of distortion and no one, it will be said, objects to the idealization of reality. It is only when nature is outraged that the spectator must protest. The line of brow and nose can be made straight, but the leg must not be twisted into an impossible shape. It is a question of degree, but it is arguable that the degree makes all the difference. But where can we draw a line? If we leave Greek art and consider early Celtic or Chinese art, we shall find that the distortion has proceeded so far that the representational motive has been entirely lost, and we are left with noth-

8. Dragon of carved jade. Chinese (Chou dynasty); 12th to 3rd century B.C. Rutherston Collection.

ing but a geometrical pattern. In Byzantine art we find that the desire to give symbolic representation to an idea has deprived all human figures of their humanity. Christ on the Virgin's lap is not a child, but a miniature representation of the glory, majesty and dignity of Christ the man. In Gothic art everything is made to contribute to the cathedral's single effort to express the transcendent nature of religious feeling; the idealism of Greek art is blended with the symbolism of Byzantine art; the result is not representational. In Chinese art, in Persian art, in Oriental art generally, motives are used, not realistically, but sensuously-that is to say, they merely contribute to the general rhythm and vitality of the artist's pattern.

All these departures from exact imitation are purposive. They are dictated either by the artist's will to form, his desire for a balanced or unified pattern or mass; or they are dictated by his desire to make a symbol for his inner feelings. But not everything in a work of art must necessarily be attributed to the artist. Few works of art are so impressive as the Byzantine churches at Ravenna; but their appeal to us is partly the work of time. The impression we receive is partly historical, partly religious, partly environmental, and to that extent must not be credited to the power of the artist.

13. The spontaneous motives that lead an artist (and the artist in all of us) to express himself in formal patterns are obscure, though no doubt they can be explained physiologically. The instinct that leads us to put unnecessary buttons on our clothes, to match our socks and ties or hats and coats, that makes us put the clock in the middle of the mantelpiece and the parsley round the cold mutton, is the primitive and uneducated stirrings of the instinct that makes the artist arrange his motives in a pattern. The carver of the Chinese horse illustrated in Figure 66 might without much trouble have made his horse more realistic; but he was not interested in the anatomy of the horse, for the horse had suggested to him a certain pattern of curved masses, and the twist of the neck, the curls of the mane, the curves of the haunches and legs
had to be distorted in the interests of this pattern. The result was not very much like a horse - in fact, this horse is often mistaken for a lion but it is a very impressive work of art.

The Chinese horse happens to belong to the greatest period of Chinese art; it must be all right, the sceptic is willing to admit. But when it comes to a modern work of art, to a painting like ‘Le Repos du Modele’ by Henri Matisse (Figure 58), then for some reason a deep sense of hostility is aroused. The principle involved, however, is exactly the same. Matisse is not interested in the model as a living being; nor in the scene for the sake of its architectural properties; but these things have suggested a pattern, and the pattern achieved is not only a legitimate work of art, but also an intuitive apprehension of the subject far more vivid than any imitative representation could make it.

Pattern alone does not constitute a work of art. Provisionally we may say that although a work of art always involves a pattern of some kind, all patterns are not necessarily works of art. Such a statement needs some definition of its terms. A 'work of art' generally implies a certain degree of complexity; we refuse the term to a simple geometrical design of circles and triangles, and even to the intricate but accomplished design of a machine-made carpet, although such patterns may be well-balanced or symmetrical.

14. What we really expect in a work of art is a certain personal element - we expect the artist to have, if not a distinguished mind, at least a distinguished sensibility. We expect him to reveal something to us that is original - a unique and private vision of the world. It is this expectation which, blinding the plain man to all other considerations, leads to a confirmed misunderstanding of the nature of art. Such a man becomes so intent on


The meaning or message of a picture that he forgets that sensibility is a passive function of the human frame, and that the objects received in sensibility have their objective existence. The artist is mainly concerned with the affirmation of this objective existence. When he passes from
sensibility to moral indignation or extra sensuous states of any kind, then the work of art to that extent becomes impure. This means that a work of art is fairly adequately defined as pattern informed by sensibility.

15. Perhaps the word ‘pattern’ ought to be defined a little more concisely. In its ordinary use – the pattern of a piece of cloth, for example – it implies the distribution of line and colour in certain definite repetitions. Pattern implies some degree of regularity within a limited frame of reference – in a picture, this is quite literally the picture frame. Beyond this simple conception of pattern we get increasing degrees of complexity, the first of which is symmetry; instead of repeating a design in parallel series, the design is reversed or counter-changed. The method was perhaps evolved from certain technical conveniences in the process of weaving. Instead of repetition, we find symmetrical balance, as in the motive of confronted animals so common in Oriental art. The next complexity was to abandon symmetrical balance in favour of distributed balance. The work of art has an imaginary point of reference (analogous to a centre of gravity) and around this point the lines, surfaces and masses are distributed in such a way that they rest in perfect equilibrium. The structural aim of all these modes is harmony, and harmony is the satisfaction of our sense of beauty.

16. Form will be defined later (see 26d), but there is really nothing mysterious in the term. The dictionary gives the meaning as ‘shape, arrangement of parts, visible aspect’, and the form of a work of art is nothing more than its shape, the arrangement of its parts, its visible aspect. There is form as soon as there is shape, as soon as there are two or more parts gathered together to make an arrangement. But of course it is implied, when we speak of the form of a work of art, that it is in some way special form, form that affects us in some way. Form does not imply regularity, or symmetry, or any kind of fixed proportion. We speak of the form of an athlete and we mean very much the same when we speak of the form of a work of art. An athlete is in good form when he carries no superfluous flesh; when his muscles are strong, his carriage good, his movements economical. We might say exactly the same of a statue or a picture.

17. The example I will take is a colour print (Figure 10) by the great Japanese artist, Katsushika Hokusai (1760 to 1849). Besides assuming that the picture is a good one, we must assume that the person who is going to look at it is in a right state of mind. All that is necessary is that he should have a perfectly open mind. He must not be expecting to see a particular kind of picture, or even a picture as such. He just walks round a corner, thinking of nothing in particular, and comes to a standstill before this object. What happens outwardly is then very much a matter of nationality, and of sex. But we will take the problem in its most obscure manifestation, and suppose that our spectator is an average Englishman. A trained observer, carefully hidden behind a screen, might notice a dila-
tion in his eyes, even an intake of his breath, perhaps a grunt. He would be held there, perhaps thirty seconds, perhaps five minutes; then he would go on his way, and later would perhaps write a letter in which the shock of joy he had so passively received would be finally dissipated in a flow of extravagant superlatives.

18. Many theories have been invented to explain the workings of the mind in such a situation, but most of them err, in my opinion, by overlooking the instantaneousity of the event. I do not believe that a person of real sensibility ever stands before a picture and, after a long process of analysis, pronounces himself pleased. We either like at first sight, or not at all. Naturally there are occasions when for some reason or another it is not possible to receive an instantaneous impression: the work of art cannot always be isolated. Many works of art - for example, the exterior of a Gothic cathedral - are a complex structure of many separate works of art, and only rarely a unity in conception or execution. But that is the only qualification that need be made. We say that a work of art 'moves' us, and this expression is accurate. The process that takes place in the onlooker is emotional: it is accompanied by all the involuntary reflexes which a psychologist would
associate with an emotion. But as Spinoza was perhaps the first to point out (in the Fifth Part of his *Ethics, Proposition III*), an emotion ceases to be an emotion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it. Of the theories that accept the instantaneous nature of aesthetic appreciation, the most successful is the theory of Einfühlung. The literature of this theory is immense, but it was given its classical expression by Theodor Lipps, one of the greatest of all writers on aesthetics. The word 'Einfühlung' has been translated as 'empathy', on the analogy of 'sympathy', and just as 'sympathy' means feeling with, so 'empathy' means feeling into. When we feel sympathy for the afflicted we reenact in ourselves the feelings of others; when we contemplate a work of art, we project ourselves into the form of the work of art, and our feelings are determined by what we find there, by the dimensions we occupy. This experience is not necessarily confined to our observation of works of art; naturally we can 'feel ourselves into' any object we observe, but when generalized like this, there is little or no distinction between empathy and sympathy. If we look at this Japanese print, our attention might be taken by the men in the boats, and we should then feel sympathy for them in their danger; but contemplating the print as a work of art, our feelings are absorbed by the sweep of the enormous wave. We enter into its upwelling movement, we feel the tension between its heave and the force of gravity, and as the crest breaks into foam, we feel that we ourselves are stretching angry claws against the alien objects beneath us.

19. The work of art is in some sense a liberation of the personality; normally our feelings are inhibited and repressed. We contemplate a work of art, and immediately there is a release; and not only a release - sympathy is a release of feelings - but also a heightening, a tautening, a sublimation. Here is the essential difference between art and sentimentality: sentimentality is a release, but also a loosening, a relaxing of the emotions; art is a release, but also a bracing. Art is the economy of feeling; it is emotion cultivating good form.

20. It is sometimes objected to the theory of Einfühlung that it applies only to formal art - that it does not cover our aesthetic reactions to colour, for example. We are moved by the blue of the Italian sky, or the glow of a sunset, but these objects have no form into which our feelings can enter. But can we call such objects works of art? Are they not merely

phenomena to which we react sensuously? Juxtapose two or more colours, and immediately a formal relationship is created. All art is the development of formal relations, and where there is form there can be empathy. But whether, when we look at a picture, we always 'empathize' - that is another question. I began with assuming that we look at the picture with a perfectly free mind, but that is a rare condition - as rare as that purity of heart which is the condition of seeing God.

21. So much for our individual reactions to the form of a work of art. But, of course, form is not necessarily all there is in a work of art, nor do we always react in this isolated personal way. A Gothic church was not built solely for the purpose of giving our sensibilities an uplift; it was many things besides - a hall for singing, an arena for ritual, a picture-house for illiterate people. It was all these things at one and the same time. And to go back to the Hokusai print; this can also be considered in the sympathetic sense I mentioned - as simply a picture of an immense wave overwhelming two boatloads of people. These aspects make up the content of the picture, and are best considered in an extreme development of the organic tradition. What we mean by 'content' may be best shown first by considering certain types of art that are quite devoid of it.

22. Pottery is at once the simplest and the most difficult of all arts. It is the simplest because it is the most elemental; it is the most difficult because it is the most abstract. Historically it is among the first of the arts. 'File earliest vessels were shaped by hand from crude clay dug out of the earth, and such vessels were dried in the sun and wind. Even at that stage, before man could write, before he had a literature or even a religion, he had this art, and the vessels then made can still move us by their expressive form. When fire was discovered, and man learned to make his pots hard and durable; and when the wheel was invented, and the potter could add rhythm and uprising movement to his concepts of form, then all the essentials of this most abstract art were present. The art evolved from its humble origins until, in the fifth century before Christ, it became the representative art of the most sensitive and intellectual race that the world has ever known. A Greek vase is the type of all classical harmony. Then eastward another great civilization made pottery its best loved and most typical art, and even carried the art to rarer refinements than the Greeks had attained. A Greek vase is static harmony, but the Chinese vase, when once it has freed itself from the imposed influences of other cultures and other techniques; achieves dynamic harmony; it is not only a relation of numbers, but also a living movement. Not a crystal but a flower.

The perfect types of pottery, represented in the art of Greece and China, have their approximations in other lands: in Peru and Mexico, in mediaeval England and Spain, in Italy of the Renaissance, in eighteenth-century Germany-in fact, the art is so fundamental, so bound up with the elementary needs of civilization, that a national ethos must find its expression in this medium. Judge the art of a country, judge the fineness of its sensibility, by its pottery; it is a sure touchstone. Pottery is pure art; it is art freed from any imitative intention. Sculpture, to which it is most nearly related, had from the first an imitative intention, and is perhaps to that extent less free for the expression of the will to form than pottery; pottery is plastic art in its most abstract essence.

23. We must not be afraid of this word 'abstract'. All art is primarily abstract. For what is aesthetic experience, deprived of its incidental trappings and associations, but a response of the body and mind of man to invented or isolated harmonies? Art is an escape from chaos. It
is movement ordained by numbers; it is mass confined in measure; it is the indetermination of matter seeking the rhythm of life.

24. For a perfect contrast to such ‘abstract’ art, we might take a work of the most humanistic phase of European art, such as the marble relief portrait of a youth by an Italian sculptor of the early sixteenth century (Figure 12). Ruskin once claimed that ‘the best pictures that exist of the great schools are all portraits, or groups of portraits often of very simple and in nowise noble persons… Their real strength is tried to the utmost, and as far as I know, it is never elsewhere brought out so thoroughly as in painting one man or woman, and the soul that was in them…Whatever is truly great in either Greek or Christian art, is also restrictedly human…’ Historically, the portrait, as Ruskin realized, is characteristic of certain periods we call humanistic. In such periods man is the measure of all things, and all things are made to contribute to his awareness of his own vitality. Art is a tribute to man’s own humanity. Such, no doubt, is the real basis of the popularity of portrait painting. This theory is not invalidated by the fact that painters often choose to paint their ugliest brethren; for to depart from the real to represent an ideal is to defeat the narcissistic impulse, which always exacts a faithful image.

The rise of the portrait corresponds fairly exactly with the rise of the novel. Portraits of Dante and others have been identified in the fresco ascribed to Giotto in the chapel of the Bargello, in Florence, which may be as late as 1337; Boccaccio wrote his first tale in 1339, and his Decameron nine years later. And just as at first the portrait in painting was a flat profile, so the character

in the early Italian novel was somewhat restricted in depth. One must not work the comparison too far: the novel, indeed, did not attain the psychological subtlety and precision already evident in portrait painting by the end of the fifteenth century until much later—perhaps not until the seventeenth century. But the general interest in character, common to both painting and the novel, was a continuous and rapid development from the early Renaissance, and still persists.

We might draw a close parallel between Frith's 'Derby Day' and a novel like *The Pickwick Papers*. There is the same absence of formal values, the same concentration on human characters, the same sentimental kind of interest.

A good portrait in the humanistic sense may therefore be defined as a faithful portrayal of the character of an individual. The interest is psychological—that is to say, we make no moral judgments about the character of the individual portrayed. We are satisfied if the artist has realized the personality of his subject in its uniqueness, and by his dexterity and skill represented his knowledge and understanding in his plastic medium. Now it ought to be obvious that the 'thrill' we get from such a performance is not necessarily aesthetic. We are not concerned with an abstract quality of beauty, but with the recognition of something which we might even call scientific truth. The artist in such a case is merely a psychologist using paints, and many great portrait painters are of this kind. Many portraits, however, are admittedly great works of art, so that we have to ask ourselves finally what is it that distinguishes a portrait which is a psychological document from a portrait which is a work of art? One might answer: simply the aesthetic values, meaning the formal relations of space and colour.
that constitute the structural organization of all works of art. In that sense a portrait might be accepted at its face value as a still-life, and we should be under no necessity to distinguish between the features of Hals's 'Laughing Cavalier' and the lovely lace ruff that adorns him. But actually we do make such a distinction, and it is something quite apart from the psychological interest I have already mentioned. It might be called the philosophical interest. In the best portraits the painter or the sculptor passes beyond the individual character of his sitter to certain universal implications. I can best illustrate my meaning by another literary analogy. The characters of Shakespeare's great plays are not merely individual characters, for all their realism and fidelity to life, but also prototypes of the passions and aspirations of humanity in general. From the heroes of Shakespeare's plays we derive not merely the sensuous impression of vitality, but also a sense of sublimity, which is the imaginative reaction from the sensuous impression.

25. We may conclude, therefore, that besides purely formal values, such as we find in a pot, there may be psychological values - the values arising out of our common human sympathies and interests, and even those arising out of our subconscious life; and beyond these,
philosophical values which arise out of the range and depth of the artist's genius. These are perhaps rather vague words-at least, this word genius. But to put the statement in simpler words, we may say, that other things being equal-technical efficiency, economic opportunity, psychological insight-that artist will be the greatest whose intelligence is widest-a man who sees and feels, not only the object immediately before him, but sees this object in its universal implications sees the one in the many, the many in the one. But it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the plastic arts are visual arts, operating through the eyes, expressing and conveying a state of feeling. If we have ideas to express, the proper medium is language. The artist is impervious to ideas at his peril, but his business is not with the presentation of such ideas, but with the communication of his emotional reaction to them.