

AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE
AND THE HUMANITIES

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*MODERN IDEAS OF AESTHETIC
EXPERIENCE IN THE READING
OF WORLD LITERATURE*

FRANCIS SHOEMAKER



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FOREWORD

SO FAR no one has ventured the phrase "global aesthetics." Teachers of the Humanities are generally too sensitive to the overworking of words (one of their chief quarrels with the professional educators) to expose themselves to such parodies as the "globaloney" of the clever congresswoman from Connecticut. Yet something very like global aesthetics has come to characterize our modern Humanities programs and other comprehensive literature and arts programs in the past two decades, as Dr. Shoemaker demonstrates in this book. And on this correspondence with other vigorous currents of thought today stands our chief hope for the future of the Humanities at a time when war has brought considerable fear for that future. Call it an increasing sense of "cosmic design" or what you will, it points to a revolutionary shift in our ideas about the significance of aesthetic impulses and aesthetic experience in our lives. In scope and emphasis it is very different from the green carnation aestheticism which has made aesthetics popularly suspect in America since the end of the nineteenth century.

Popular intuition of such ideas is evident in such current phrases and titles as "modern design," "Design for Living," "Design for Power," "The Shape of Things to Come," and for good and ill, "New World Order." In them the alert ear catches a common growing concern for a shaping and ordering of life that will be emotionally satisfying as well as technically efficient and socially significant. In short, they express an aesthetic impulse—the aesthetic impulse which we recognize in our quest for functional art, whether in automobiles or city planning maps, and which on a grander scale charges our new air-minded visions, world ideologies, great works of art, and vast designs of science, as Einstein has pointed out.

Dr. Shoemaker has set out in this book to explore this modern sense of the aesthetic impulse and aesthetic experience as it has run through modern Humanities and World Literature courses, and as it has been increasingly advanced by psychologists and anthropologists as well as by philosophers of literature and the arts. He has had particular reason for stressing psychologists and anthropologists. One of the major problems in the modern Humanities—and in aesthetics and in democracy—is the relation of the individual to the culture. When Dr. Shoemaker was commissioned by his college in Colorado several years ago to look into current developments in the teaching of World Literature and Humanities courses and to recommend lines of development for his own college, he started with the fact that students in the West characteristically approach literature and life in man-to-man fashion, more intent on individual values than on broad social patterns. A course in World Literature should give both, but should start where the students are. This suggested an initial study of ideas of the *self* and individual aesthetic experience (the psychological aspects) emphasized in some modern courses, and then a correlative study of society and social aesthetics (the anthropological aspects) conspicuous in others. These practical concerns are evident in the general patterning of Dr. Shoemaker's materials as well as in the particular consequences for his college course indicated in the last section.

Anyone who has attempted to deal with the key ideas of the evolving Humanities will recognize the problems Dr. Shoemaker has faced in shaping his materials. For sharpness of outline and conclusiveness, one would like a neat assembling of comparable ideas of psychologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and teachers of art and literature in successive chapters on "Design in Art and Life," "Confusion, Conflict, and Aesthetic Resolution," "Self-Expression and Self-Realization" and "The Harmonizing of Values." But this pattern would almost certainly give an impression of agreements, indebtednesses, and other connections where such inference would hardly be justified, and would discount contextual differences of

considerable importance—as in the variable use of the recurrent expression “Great Books.” A book so arranged should someday be written by an historian of ideas, when present developments in the Humanities have completed their cycle. Today it has seemed best not to try to pin them down too sharply, but to present the ideas of each spokesman in turn, suggest resemblances which the reader can check for himself, and summarize and exemplify in closing sections.

Similarly, ease of reading would have been increased in some sections if Dr. Shoemaker had simplified the thought and expression of the more complex thinkers and writers. Yet to have done so would hardly have given the pattern and texture of the originals. Where writers have been sharp and lucid themselves they tend to remain sharp and lucid in condensed accounts. Where they are complex and densely packed in the originals the effect of density is likely to remain or be increased in condensed analysis.

Another kind of problem has been presented by recurrent ideas from traditional philosophical aesthetics. Many ideas from modern psychological and anthropological aesthetics have their counterparts, cognates, and even sources in philosophical aesthetics. Yet many teachers of literature and the arts have lost touch with philosophical aesthetics. Some precautionary review therefore seems necessary. But obviously no adequate general introduction to philosophical aesthetics can be presented in a specialized book like this. What Dr. Shoemaker has provided is a highly condensed review of the related ideas on *aesthetic experience, self, expressive language, and values of art* in the writings of representative philosophers—the points most relevant to modern discussion—so annotated that the interested reader can go directly to texts of those philosophers. Unfortunately, most histories of aesthetics have not been so organized as to make for ready comparisons on these points with the ideas of modern psychologists and anthropologists. Here and in the section on college programs Dr. Shoemaker has had in mind the use of his book as a reference handbook, comparable to its predecessor *The Revival of the Humanities in American Education* by Patricia Beesley.

A final problem in a book largely concerned with a study of increasing agreement in ideas in the Humanities is the appropriate weighting of disagreements. Dr. Shoemaker has given considerable space to the views of Robert M. Hutchins, Mortimer J. Adler, and the so called Neo-Scholastic group at St. John's College. Unlike most teachers identified with the Humanities and World Literature programs in American colleges and high schools, they have turned back to the techniques of the Middle Ages for a comprehensive harmonization of the confusions of our time, giving little explicit attention to the large body of findings of modern psychology and anthropology. To avoid an effect of bias in the discussion of the views of this group is difficult if not impossible, since the group itself has started from a contentious position that most teachers of literature are on the wrong track, and as a result the group has been sharply attacked by various leaders in the modern Humanities whose views are presented here. Since the group thrives on argument, its purpose has probably been served more by opposition than by agreement. But with inherited Quaker conscience as well as scholarly conscience Dr. Shoemaker would warn against bias and the appearance of bias. Most teachers of the Humanities will pay tribute to the group for the service it has done in publicizing the Great Books, and for challenging other teachers of the Humanities to examine and define their own positions. Between the extremes of their position and that of the large number of modernists in the Humanities, there are, of course, all shades of conservatism and experimentalism, as the reader will be aware in comparing the various spokesmen and courses.

When Dr. Shoemaker returns from his service abroad as a field director of the American Red Cross, he proposes to publish the illustrative materials which he, his colleagues, and his students have worked out on the Greek, Medieval, Romantic and modern Naturalistic epochs, to accompany the selected materials on the Renaissance included here. They will be modified and extended by such notable new critical scholarship as Oscar James Campbell's "What

Is the Matter with Hamlet?" in the *Yale Review* for the winter 1943. Other teachers are at work on comparable materials. We have little doubt that this work will go on, along with our other essential work in meeting the challenges of war and of the peace to follow. Our modern Humanities courses grew out of the stock-taking of World War I, as Patricia Beesley makes clear in *The Revival of the Humanities in American Education* (1940). They gained force in the depression following the crash of 1929. They have gained further force and focus as we have had to arm ourselves against men and ideologies which threaten human freedom and the great designs of democratic life the world over.

To make plain these values and designs is the main concern of teachers of the modern Humanities, as books like Barzun's *Of Human Freedom*, Edman's *Fountainheads of Freedom*, Mumford's *Faith for Living* and, with some lingering questions about the modernity, Hutchins' *Education for Freedom*, emphatically show. The teaching of meteorology, mathematics and science by teachers of English, foreign languages, philosophy, history, and the arts is by no means a bad preparation for the broadened scientific humanism which our times appear to demand. And the broadened concept of human communication which should grow out of the comprehensive concern for observing, reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the Army and Navy college English courses—if we have imagination to see what they may lead to in the humanistic study of all media and all arts of communication in the making of world community—should hold hope for those who have feared the worst.

LENNOX GREY

Teachers College
Columbia University
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To Lennox Grey I am chiefly indebted for the essential guidance in attitudes and scholarship which have made this research possible. Professor Grey recognized the related interests of a half dozen college teachers of English enrolled in Teachers College in 1938, and suggested the comprehensive outlines of coöperative studies in the humanities which began auspiciously with Patricia Beesley's *The Revival of the Humanities in American Education* in 1940. Through the four years of research, compilation, and exemplification of the ideas incorporated here in classes in World Literature at Colorado State College of Education, he has been stimulating, exacting, and patient.

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INTRODUCTION

REASONS for greatly increased reading of world literature are obvious as America fights its second world war in twenty-five years. Spokesmen of all sorts, academic, artistic, scientific, and political, are urging it as a means of preparation for our world responsibilities. Reasons for approaching world literature with modern expanding ideas of aesthetic experience are less clear, perhaps, yet they too are being urged by many spokesmen who see a common aesthetic drive in the work of Einstein and a Steinbeck—and a devastating perversion of that drive in the “frustration and aggression” of an Austrian artist-paperhanger.

For certain men we know that the cosmic designs of science and the embracing patterns of the social studies have brought as profound an aesthetic response as that more commonly associated with any of the modes of expression in the arts and humanities. Sir James Jeans, English cosmologist, prefaces *The Stars in Their Courses* with reference to astronomy as “the most poetical of the sciences.”¹ J. B. S. Haldane, English biologist, writes under the indicative title, “Science and Theology as Art Forms.” Albert Einstein, in *The World as I See It*, writes of the significance to himself of his General Theory of Relativity:

Man tries to make for himself in the fashion that suits him best a simplified and intelligible picture of the world; he then tries to some extent to substitute this cosmos of his for the world of experience, and thus to overcome it. This is what the painter, the poet, the speculative philosopher and the natural scientist do, each in his own fashion. He makes this cosmos and its construction the pivot of his emotional life, in order to find in this way the peace and security which he cannot find in the narrow whirlpool of personal experience.²

John Steinbeck, American novelist, writes similarly in *The Sea of Cortez* that “the impulse which drives a man to poetry will send

another man to tide pools and force him to try to report on what he finds there.”³ And the power of feeling that goes into modern political and social ideologies is one of the most moving facts of our day.

Such merging of scientific and humanistic concerns is a sign of the change which has come over our ideas of aesthetic experience, since the aestheticism of the 1890's brought aesthetics into bad repute. It presents a responsibility to modern educational scholarship which is met in some measure by the new programs of “Scientific Humanism” in the great technical schools, to find a pragmatic unity between the universal but impersonal knowledge of science and the imaginative, individualized values of art.⁴ While the formative impulse is common to every human endeavor, for various reasons men continue to feel that it is in the fine arts and literature that the aesthetic experience is most appropriately studied.⁵ But it must come under disciplined observation if the particular contribution of the arts to a man's conscious knowledge of human freedom is to be fully developed. To the extent that scientists concern themselves with aesthetic experience, and that teachers of literature and the arts concern themselves with science—to that extent we see a *rapprochement* among the arts and sciences for the world view we need.

Since 1928, as Patricia Beesley points out in *The Revival of the Humanities in American Education*,⁶ approximately fifty American colleges and universities have introduced broad Humanities courses (in parallel with broad courses in the Natural Sciences and Social Sciences) where none existed before. This considerable number of courses bearing the name Humanities—wherein the Renaissance term *litterae humaniores* has been extended to include all the arts and the critical disciplines of history and philosophy—signifies a more than casual concern with man's quest for “more human values” through which the individual achieves and demonstrates the dignity of self. In varying patterns emphasis is placed now on literature, now on music or art, or on philosophy, history, and, in one or two instances besides those provided by Catholic schools, on religion. In

most of these Humanities courses and programs, World Literature is the *constant*—in fact, in many instances the chief unifying factor.

To many young Americans of pre-war days, and probably to most teachers, "World Literature" has called up a picture of arm-filling anthologies of extracts from the poetry and prose of ancient Greece and Rome, medieval Italy, Renaissance England, and so down to the modern world of Whitman, Wolfe, and Mann. To many a student, we know, the binding of the book seemed the chief unifying factor in the collection and in the course where it was used, despite all the guidance the editor and teacher might give. In the past fifteen years, in many colleges and a few high schools, we have reached out ambitiously for the great books entire—thanks in part, no doubt, to our glimpses in previous anthologies. Yet whether our world literature is in one book, or in a hundred great books, the problem of the unifying factor remains, and the extent to which it provides for both breadth and unity, pattern and focus.

Questions of breadth and unity are relative, as we realize in comparing the concepts of "English" ⁷ and of "Comparative Literature" ⁸ and the later though more restricting moral-religious credos of the "New Humanist" movement led by More and Babbitt. In recent years in American colleges and high schools the scope of English has become increasingly American and increasingly international, so that with the declining challenge of differentiation from the classics the English concept has lost something of its original sharpness of focus. And with the growing consciousness of the contemporary social scene English has been variously concerned with social problems and the fringes of scientific knowledge, sometimes to the point of forgetfulness of its own distinctive purposes. To meet the critical demands of broadening subject matter, some of the disciplines of psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and human ecology have been added by individual teachers here and there to the biographical, historical, and comparative methods already in use. In *An Experience Curriculum* (1935) and *A Correlated Curriculum* (1936) the National Council of Teachers of English sought clearer patterns and

methods, comparable to those emerging in the Humanities and the Great Books programs, to provide social and aesthetic experiences for students.

Teachers who have been following the development of "Great Books," "World Literature," and "Humanities" programs in recent years are broadly aware of various contending and complementary ideas for achieving both breadth and focus—among them the application of certain critical disciplines (for instance, the grammar-rhetoric-logic of St. Thomas Aquinas) to the great books generally, or the focusing on certain persistent principles in human art, or the tracing of evolving culture epochs. Each has its spokesmen. Each presumably has its merits and calls for study on the part of teachers of literature. Each must be subject today, and in days ahead, to certain conditions of time, social temper, and expert knowledge that may obstruct or favor it.

The present study is not bent on advocating any one of these three. It is concerned rather with certain modern ideas of aesthetic experience which appear to be running in some measure through all the courses, and which hold some promise of uniting the best features of a number of them as they mark out the symbols, values, and designs for living prized by various peoples. Roughly and with qualifications, we may say that the concepts of stages of cultural evolution are providing a broad *external frame* for the Humanities, while the expanding ideas of aesthetic experience are providing unifying *internal method*—even as the "Great Books" idea of John Erskine's Columbia Honors Course has provided external frame for the Hutchins-Adler-Barr-Buchanan program at St. John's College, while a revival of the grammar, rhetoric, and logic of St. Thomas has provided its internal discipline. Between the external frame of many modern Humanities courses and the St. John's Great Books course there is often no great difference; but between the modern analogical logic and feeling for design implied in modern ideas of aesthetic experience and the medieval syllogistic logic and dialectic of St. John's there is a profound difference. These similarities and differences indicate certain common interests and cleavages of interests

within the loosely designated "Humanities" which must be kept constantly in mind, made the subject of constant reminders.

The modern ideas of aesthetic experience are very different from the "aestheticism" of the late nineteenth century; for chief among the sources of these ideas, apparently, are modern anthropology and psychology, which have been drawn on widely by workers in the fields of comparative literature, philosophical aesthetics, and others concerned with the criticism of arts and letters in broad context.⁹ The several schools of psychology are dealing with the various modes of expression and development of self. Modern anthropology is concerned with language as the reservoir of human experience and with the arts generally as symbols of culture effecting the integration of self in the community through a patterned presentation of human values. From these sources have grown the expanding ideas of aesthetic experience in the arts as the creative-critical process originating in the artist's interaction with his environment and ending in the observer's reflective commitment upon the presentation of values in the work of art. It is with some of the main features of these broader anthropological and psychological interpretations and the alterations which they have brought about in traditional aesthetic approach to literature that we are concerned. We will deal chiefly with the direct bearing of these ideas of aesthetic experience on the study of world literature as expression of human values, and with the currency which these ideas have gained among modern teachers of various schools of thought.

Spokesmanship for the Modern Humanities

We find many writers in the field of literature who are contributing to the enlarged concept of aesthetic experience. That this study may be integral with the advances thus far made in bringing modern aesthetics to bear upon the study and teaching of literature, it is important that we establish points of reference with these spokesmen at the start. In so far as they may be expressive channels for ideas, it is important that we also trace their prime sources.

Spokesmanship includes the representative National Council of

Teachers of English, vitally concerned, as *A Correlated Curriculum* states, with the effective patterning of "the scientific, esthetic, philosophical, and ethical branches of the curriculum";¹⁰ the Committee of Twenty-Four, whose "Aims of the Teaching of Literature" seeks to clarify the peculiar responsibility of literature in supporting "those values of individual enrichment without which the democratic state cannot long endure";¹¹ and the Progressive Education Association, whose point of view is that of John Dewey and whose aesthetic is made explicit in Dewey's *Art as Experience*, and Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration*, in which Miss Rosenblatt explores the place of literature in helping each individual to achieve "some philosophy, some inner center from which to view in perspective the shifting society about him."¹²

In addition to these three liberal arts groups, numerous individuals have raised influential voices in concern for the nature and value of the aesthetic experience as it is exemplified in the modern Humanities. Professor Theodore Meyer Greene, of Princeton University, in *The Meaning of the Humanities* and in *The Arts and the Art of Criticism* shows the range of the modern idea of aesthetic experience from a philosopher's point of view. It is "both aesthetic creation and recreation—processes which resemble one another but which are clearly distinguishable."¹³ Exploring the poetic qualities of philosophy and the points of convergence between the arts and philosophy, Professor Irwin Edman, of Columbia University, writes in *Arts and the Man* that "a world view, a metaphysics, a way of life, like a poem or painting, is an aesthetic response and, where it attains organic unity in principle or in mood, provokes an aesthetic response."¹⁴ Professor Jacques Barzun, of Columbia University, emphasizing the historian's and anthropologist's concern for art in its social context, shows in *Of Human Freedom* that "culture must be free if men's bodies are to be free."¹⁵ Professor I. A. Richards, of Harvard University, from the psychologist's and from the semantist's points of view, emphasizes the harmonizing function of art and especially literature in orderly living for, as he states in his *Principles*

of *Literary Criticism*, "No life can be excellent in which the elementary responses are disorganized and confused." ¹⁶

A third phase of spokesmanship springs from the contemporary revival of "neo-scholasticism," with its emphasis upon the efficacy of the medieval liberal arts to meet "our political preoccupation . . . coupled with experimental science," as the Catalogue of St. John's College states.¹⁷ This group-spokesmanship centers in President Robert Maynard Hutchins and Professor Mortimer J. Adler of the University of Chicago, and President Stringfellow Barr and Dean Scott Buchanan of St. John's College, Annapolis.

It is not our purpose in this study to make an eclectic patchwork of the ideas of these spokesmen, since their approach in some instances is fundamentally irreconcilable. The purpose is rather to discover: (1) what ideas these spokesmen hold in common; (2) the sources of these ideas; (3) what the chief roots of conflict among them are; (4) and by discovering further what other ideas have been gaining currency most rapidly in Humanities courses in operation to see and project the kind of design for studying literature that is emerging in recognizable form after the last half century of trial and error.

It is proposed in Part I of this study to consider first, and briefly, the relation of ideas of self, aesthetic experience, and values, in the history of philosophical aesthetics, as part of the background for the current literary aesthetics of teachers today; second, to consider outstanding contributions of psychology to our modern concepts of aesthetic experience, and to our concepts of values; and third, to consider major relevant contributions of anthropology. Part II will take up a systematic analysis of the proposals of the various spokesmen immediately concerned with the teaching of the humanities. Part III will give specific consideration to expressed aims and practices in Humanities and World Literature courses as they bear on aesthetic experience, and particularly to the evidence of common increasing and converging practices. Part IV will seek a systematic formulation of these practices and of trends in current scholarly criticism.

It will exemplify the resulting critique in an inspection of *Hamlet* as a representative symbol of Renaissance culture, one of the five most notable epochs in World Literature.

PART I

IDEAS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE UNDERLYING MODERN WORLD LITERATURE AND HUMANITIES COURSES

1. *IDEAS FROM PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS AND THE TRADITION OF LITERARY CRITICISM: A BRIEF REVIEW*

THE WIDESPREAD BREAK with classical education in America two generations ago meant for many teachers of literature a break also with the long tradition of philosophical criticism and philosophical aesthetics. This was true not only with the classical critics, including Plato and Aristotle, but with the long line of philosophers of literature who have followed in their train, whether in conformity, divergence, or protest—St. Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Mill, Nietzsche, James, Croce, Santayana, even Dewey as aesthetician. Critical ideas have filtered through Sidney, Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, and the nineteenth century critics, to be sure, or more often through the handbooks where semi-anonymous ideas of “the unities,” “purgation,” “tragic flaw,” “the sublime,” “objective and subjective,” “enduring literary types,” “sublimation,” provide a remarkable composite. But the old lines of communication were broken and tangled, and only partially restored by the introduction of courses in the History of Criticism in the colleges.

One important consequence has been the receptivity of teachers to ideas about aesthetics from other fields than philosophy to fill the void we intuitively recognize. Current concern with social pattern in literature, with the designs of psychoanalysis and Marxism, with the regional aesthetics of John Crowe Ransom, and with the studies in symbolic action by Kenneth Burke, suggest the range of fields to which teachers have turned.

Modern courses in World Literature and Humanities, or their counterparts under other names, are among the agents that have pointed the need for reordering and synthesizing our ideas on aesthetic matters. In these courses the revival of concern with traditional philosophical aesthetics has been attended by the introduction of ideas of aesthetic experience from other sources, chiefly psychology and anthropology, to illuminate the *individual* and *cultural* aspects of the humanities. Doubtless a feeling of the need for doing this has contributed to the introduction of Humanities programs in the first place—so that philosophy, history, literature and the arts may be reconsidered in their interrelationships. This reconsideration has led to greatly expanded conceptions of aesthetic experience from those prevailing two generations ago. It has led, on the one hand, to such formulations as Dewey's aesthetic presented in *Art as Experience*, and, on the other hand, to a "rediscovery" of the remarkable syntheses of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, which have engrossed the minds of Hutchins and Adler and their associates in their quest for certainty in the midst of current confusion.

In the present section it is not our purpose to undertake a technical review of the great tradition of aesthetic criticism. It is our purpose, rather, to mark in brief review for teachers of literature, and hence in relatively non-technical presentation, the key positions on ideas of self, aesthetic experience, and values of major "classical" philosophers and critics who have contributed to our ideas of aesthetics, aesthetic experience and human values—focusing on these chiefly—so that we may have some systematic pattern for estimating the changes introduced by psychological and anthropological aesthetics, and of appraising the various combinations of the old and the new in the ideas of current spokesmen for aesthetic experience. Attention will be directed first to philosophers, and second to some of the "classic" literary figures in English letters who have represented aesthetic criticism to modern teachers.

Philosophical Aesthetics

The philosophical designs of the twenty-five centuries since Plato

lend themselves to the traditionally convenient "idealistic" and "empirical"¹ groupings, in which (since William James) inquiring college students have been schooled in introductory philosophy courses. While this bold statement of the main lines in these philosophical designs does violence to their qualifying technical detail, even as a line drawing of either painting or sculpture gives only a rough idea of the whole, it is to the main lines that we must cleave here.

Among the idealistic philosophers we find Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer, Santayana, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas. Among the influential empirical philosophers we find John Stuart Mill, and Nietzsche, Croce, James, and Dewey.

The designs of these philosophers are expressions of value—value placed upon life and specific aspects of life. All have treated the value of art and the values achievable in or through the aesthetic experience which it involves. Among them we see not only two great contrasted positions, but three main roads from which philosophers have approached values in aesthetic experience. One is *Rationalism*, conventionally identified with the idealistic philosophers, which places the highest human values in the portrayal of the ideal ultimate perfection. The second is *Hedonism*, associated of course with the name of Epicurus but entering more directly into English and American thought through John Stuart Mill, which finds value in the arts as they provide immediate sensations of pleasure. The third appears in the value theory variously identified with the names of William James and John Dewey—*Pragmatism*, *Radical Empiricism*, *Instrumentalism*, and *Cultural Naturalism*—which attributes the highest value to the development of the self through sympathetic and responsible interaction with society.² This last position, which draws most largely on modern science, places a premium upon the "more human" values of intellect, curiosity, imagination, sympathy, and intuition by which a man develops his *self* to include a large measure of the interests of others, and through which he works to fulfill his individual potentialities and recognize his own dignity and worth. These words, "individual potentialities," "dignity," and

"worth" are being explored very insistently in discussions of contemporary education from all points of view, and especially in the modern humanities.

Idealistic philosophers.—"Back to Plato and Aristotle" is a familiar way of bracketing the two primary sources of much of Western criticism and aesthetics. It obscures a major difference between them—the broad cultural context, for instance, in which Plato considers works of art, and the sharply narrowed Aristotelian consideration of works in themselves or as species—but it is faithful to their kinship as idealistic philosophers.

For Plato (427-347 B.C.) Ideas alone are *real*; perfection rests in Ideas which are independent of man's mind or the limitations of observable matter. The perfection of the self rests in the clear, intellectual perception of each archetypal Idea, which produces the aesthetic experience.⁸ Such perception is based on language, for it proceeds from acquaintance with the *name* of the given object and the *definition*, to the *image* and the *knowledge* of its function, and so to complete but incommunicable *understanding* in the soul.⁴ The highest perception of beauty is the severely disciplined emotional experience of the philosopher⁵ who, through Reason (in contrast to the poet's pleasurable but dangerously undisciplined emotional perception of imitations of the Ideal world)⁶ comes to know in the symmetry and truth of the Ideal world the essential Form of Good.⁷

For Aristotle (384-32 B.C.) the most profound development of the self is the feeling of harmony which conduces to the supreme human good, happiness. The highest perception of beauty lies in the instinctive imitation of human action in art⁸ which, as "a more philosophical and higher thing than history,"⁹ presents in an ordered form¹⁰ from the beginning through the middle to the end, a form of action which could or which ought to prevail.¹¹ This is most effectively accomplished through metaphorical language which, as the greatest attribute of poetic diction, is "a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars."¹² In so far as the constricting emotions of pity and fear are in the work of art represented in their proper relationship

to human existence,¹⁸ the observer of the work of art experiences the essential feeling of harmony which accompanies action in accordance with the moral and intellectual virtues.¹⁴

Following the lead of Plato and Aristotle with their respective concern for perfection of Ideas and of species, idealistic philosophies of successive epochs have placed highest in their scale of values the purity of Reason and Imagination, for these are the values by which man establishes his goal, cuts through confusing imitations, and comes to Perfection.

St. Thomas Aquinas combined elements of classical idealism with Christian idealism in the *Summa Theologica* (1265) to form the medieval theocentric aesthetic.¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas believed that all things, men, and angels, tend toward their Ideal Forms which started with the Word of God and exist in His mind.¹⁶ The artist approaches the limits of his self in the perception of the beauty of each Ideal Form enveloped in its material object.¹⁷ The only adequate critics for his representation of Forms are those in whom the highest value, the faculty of reason, nears the perfection of Divine Mind—philosophers, saints or angels.¹⁸ Like Aristotle, the medieval linguist or grammarian distinguished between the functions and excellences of language when used in relation to different purposes.¹⁹ The use of language by the poet stresses those qualities of language which are exemplified in poetic images, in his attempt to overcome what Maritain calls “the difficulties man experiences when he wants to tell himself and make himself really *see* the commonest things with the help of the imagery of language.”²⁰

For Spinoza, as the *Ethic* (1675) states, self-realization arises in the possession of “adequate ideas,”²¹ which raises man to the state “of human liberty”—as opposed to his state “of human bondage” when false or “inadequate ideas” conduce to action without deliberation as opposed to the rational consideration of alternatives prior to action. An individual experiences beauty, which marks the process of self-realization, whenever the imagination recognizes order where previously unrelated objects had presented a state of confusion.²² In so far as words are “signs of things as existing in the imagination”

rather than in the understanding, he tells us in *Improvement of the Understanding*, the aesthetic ordering of ideas depends upon strict uses of language.²³ Clearly related values amplifying and growing from the feeling of human freedom, and artistic teaching²⁴ which releases the imagination to move man toward responsible social action,²⁵ increase consciousness of self—the essence of man and the source of his religious experience.²⁶

In *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (1790) Kant holds that the full development of self rests in a man's recognizing his moral responsibility for self-improvement.²⁷ Two kinds of experience in the presence of the beauty of art created by genius conduce to this state: the aesthetic or the sublime. If aesthetic, the beautiful (as the symbol of the moral ideal of man) is recognized through subjective judgment of the degree to which the ideal is approximated;²⁸ if sublime, the observer recognizes the superiority over brute force which his human reason and spirituality provide. Because the highest form of aesthetic or sublime experience develops from the combination of *intuitions* and *concepts* involving respectively figurative and objective uses of language,²⁹ the cultivation of imagination, sympathy, and spirit as well as the cultivation of understanding is imperative.

Hegel's *The Philosophy of Fine Art* (1823) presents a hierarchy of three degrees of self-realization: man's urge to reshape the materials of his environment; man's ideas of love, law, and property which integrate human communities; man's idea of his individualized capacity to know God and Truth through the creation of beauty.³⁰ These phases of self-realization are symbolized in their respective art forms: symbolic,³¹ characterized by architecture; classical,³² characterized by sculpture; and romantic,³³ characterized by painting, music, and poetry, of which poetry is the highest form, for it alone can deal solely with ideas. Implicitly, these art forms provide symbols of scientific, social, and individual values.

To Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Idea* (1819) selfhood is attained in a man's conscious knowledge of his own worth and ability.³⁴ The artist's achievement of this self-knowledge is his aes-

thetic experience arising from his will-less contemplation of the Ideal forms underlying the visible forms of nature, which he perceives through a superabundance of knowledge beyond the necessities of the "will to live."³⁵ When the artist records his experience in language, which alone is capable of representing all the objects and relationships in man's world, it is communicable to other members of human society who, in will-less contemplation of the work of art, come to understand more fully the values of love, law, science, and religion.³⁶

For Santayana in *Reason in Art* (1924) the height of self-realization is achieved in the feeling of happiness which accompanies the conception of the rational conduct of life.³⁷ Beauty is "objectified happiness," created when the artist, granted leisure,³⁸ gives expressive form to his insight into the perfectability of the world and man.³⁹ Through an instinctual Sense of Beauty other individuals find self and happiness as they perceive in the form of the artist's work (in literature the sensuous harmony of words, the verse form, the grammar, and the plot)⁴⁰ a symbol of the genuine harmony of the aesthetic, moral, and philosophic values of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth.⁴¹

Empirical philosophers.—Empiricism to many Americans means the "tough-mindedness" by which William James characterized the individuals who did not "shrink from practical action to take refuge in an unshakable higher realm of fixed and antecedent Reality."⁴² It is very old, however, and moderns like I. A. Richards have found stimulating precedents in philosophies as old as that of Mencius,⁴³ fourth-century B.C. Chinese sage, part of whose thought on the psychological aspects of language has entered the philosophic background of Richards' spokesmanship for the Humanities. Though science has prompted many of the modern developments in empiricism, there are numerous other currents.

Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), one of the fountain-heads of modern empirical thought, states that "notions of personal identity" or self arise from knowledge of the unity and continuity of experience provided in language by the human qualities of mem-

ory, curiosity, imagination, and sympathy.⁴⁴ Contributing a major current of relativism, Hume affirms the interrelationship of individual and social values,⁴⁵ a theory which finds aesthetic application in Mill.

John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic* (1843), building upon Hume, presents the highest development of the self as the application of intelligence to the rational conduct of society.⁴⁶ In both experiential and intuitional knowledge the core of thought is the feeling which engenders it, and language is "one of the principal instruments" by which it is carried on.⁴⁷ The aesthetic experience of the artist is the process by which he attains a unity of feeling as the overflow of emotion occasioned by intuition is harmonized in his work of art.⁴⁸ Re-experiencing through language the feeling of the artist contributes to the observer's intuitional⁴⁹ knowledge and makes for happiness through motivating coöperative social actions.⁵⁰

For Nietzsche, as for Hume, the supreme development of the self is the understanding and acceptance of the totality of life; these, he tells us in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), call upon two art impulses, the Dionysian and the Apollonian, which together satisfy the human desire for form or balance.⁵¹ Following the Dionysian impulse, man plunges exuberantly into the chaotic activities of living, loses his identity, and perceives that the essence of human life must always be misery and suffering.⁵² So far, Nietzsche is like his fellow-German, Schopenhauer.⁵³ But rather than accept abnegation in the face of suffering, Nietzsche finds the formative Apollonian impulse entering to create Beauty through imagination most highly disciplined by the combined expressive media of music and language.⁵⁴ In this highest exemplification of the Will to Power the artist gains dominion over self and fellows through his creation of an individualized symbol of the universal. In this aesthetic experience he attains the highest degree of individual dignity,⁵⁵ in which the self is considered as a work of art, harmonizing and rising above, but not denying, the world's misery in a "tragic" perspective.⁵⁶ Central values are not moral but aesthetic.⁵⁷

In *The Essence of Aesthetic* (1921), the introspective psychology