Introduction

Every work of art is the child of its age and, in many cases, the mother of our emotions. It follows that each period of culture produces an art of its own which can never be repeated. Efforts to revive the art-principles of the past will at best produce an art that is still-born. It is impossible for us to live and feel, as did the ancient Greeks. In the same way those who strive to follow the Greek methods in sculpture achieve only a similarity of form, the work remaining soulless for all time. Such imitation is mere aping. Externally the monkey completely resembles a human being; he will sit holding a book in front of his nose, and turn over the pages with a thoughtful aspect, but his actions have for him no real meaning.

There is, however, in art another kind of external similarity which is founded on a fundamental truth. When there is a similarity of inner tendency in the whole moral and spiritual atmosphere, a similarity of ideals, at first closely pursued but later lost to sight, a similarity in the inner feeling of any one period to that of another, the logical result will be a revival of the external forms which served to express those inner feelings in an earlier age. An example of this today is our sympathy, our spiritual relationship, with the Primitives. Like ourselves, these artists sought to express in their work only internal truths, renouncing in consequence all consideration of external form.

This all-important spark of inner life today is at present only a spark. Our minds, which are even now only just awakening after years of materialism, are infected with the despair of unbelief, of lack of purpose and ideal. The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip. Only a feeble light glimmers like a tiny star in a vast gulf of darkness. This feeble light is but a presentiment, and the soul, when it sees it, trembles in doubt whether the light is not a dream, and the gulf of darkness reality. This doubt, and the still harsh tyranny of the materialistic philosophy, divide our soul sharply from that of the Primitives. Our soul rings cracked when we seek to play upon it, as does a costly vase, long buried in the earth, which is found to have a flaw when it is dug up once more. For this reason, the Primitive phase, through which we are now passing, with its temporary similarity of form, can only be of short duration.

These two possible resemblances between the art forms of today and those of the past will be at once recognized as diametrically opposed to one another. The first, being purely external, has no future. The second, being internal, contains the seed of the future within itself. After the period of materialist effort, which held the soul in check until it was shaken off as evil, the soul is emerging, purged by trials and sufferings. Shapeless emotions such as fear, joy, grief, etc., which belonged to this time of effort, will no longer greatly attract the artist. He will endeavor to awake subtler emotions, as yet unnamed. Living himself a complicated and comparatively subtle life, his work will give to those observers capable of feeling them lofty emotions beyond the reach of words.

The observer of today, however, is seldom capable of feeling such emotions. He seeks in a work of art a mere imitation of nature which can serve some definite purpose (for example a portrait in the ordinary sense) or a presentment of nature according to a certain convention ("impressionist" painting), or some inner feeling expressed in terms of natural form (as we say—a picture with Stimmung). All those varieties of picture, when they are really art, fulfill their purpose and feed the spirit. Though this applies to the first case, it applies more strongly to the
third, where the spectator does feel a corresponding thrill in himself. Such harmony or even
counter of emotion cannot be superficial or worthless; indeed the *Stimmung* of a picture can
deepen and purify that of the spectator. Such works of art at least preserve the soul from
coarseness; they "key it up," so to speak, to a certain height, as a tuning-key the strings of a
musical instrument. But purification, and extension in duration and size of this sympathy of soul,
remains one-sided, and the possibilities of the influence of art are not exerted to their utmost.

Imagine a building divided into many rooms. The building may be large or small. Every wall
of every room is covered with pictures of various sizes; perhaps they number many thousands.
They represent in color bits of nature—animals in sunlight or shadow, drinking, standing in
water, lying on the grass; near to, a Crucifixion by a painter who does not believe in Christ;
flowers; human figures sitting, standing, walking; often they are naked; many naked women,
seen foreshortened from behind; apples and silver dishes; portrait of Councilor So and So;
sunset; lady in red; flying duck; portrait of Lady X; flying geese; lady in white; calves in shadow
flecked with brilliant yellow sunlight; portrait of Prince Y; lady in green. All this is carefully
printed in a book—name of artist—name of picture. People with these books in their hands go
from wall to wall, turning over pages, reading the names. Then they go away, neither richer nor
poorer than when they came, and are absorbed at once in their business, which has nothing to do
with art. Why did they come? In each picture is a whole lifetime imprisoned, a whole lifetime of
fears, doubts, hopes, and joys.

Whither is this lifetime tending? What is the message of the competent artist? "To send light
into the darkness of men's hearts—such is the duty of the artist," said Schumann. "An artist is a
man who can draw and paint everything," said Tolstoy.

Of these two definitions of the artist's activity we must choose the second, if we think of the
exhibition just described. On one canvas is a huddle of objects painted with varying degrees of
skill, virtuosity and vigor, harshly or smoothly. To harmonize the whole is the task of art. With
cold eyes and indifferent mind the spectators regard the work. Connoisseurs admire the "skill"
(as one admires a tightrope walker), enjoy the "quality of painting" (as one enjoys a pasty). But
hungry souls go hungry away.

The vulgar herd stroll through the rooms and pronounce the pictures "nice" or "splendid."
Those who could speak have said nothing, those who could hear have heard nothing. This
condition of art is called "art for art's sake." This neglect of inner meanings, which is the life of
colors, this vain squandering of artistic power is called "art for art's sake."

The artist seeks for material reward for his dexterity, his power of vision and experience. His
purpose becomes the satisfaction of vanity and greed. In place of the steady co-operation of
artists is a scramble for good things. There are complaints of excessive competition, of over-
production. Hatred, partisanship, cliques, jealousy, intrigues are the natural consequences of this
aimless, materialist art.

The onlooker turns away from the artist who has higher ideals and who cannot see his life
purpose in an art without aims.

Sympathy is the education of the spectator from the point of view of the artist. It has been
said above that art is the child of its age. Such an art can only create an artistic feeling which is
already clearly felt. This art, which has no power for the future, which is only a child of the age
and cannot become a mother of the future, is a barren art. She is transitory and to all intent dies
the moment the atmosphere alters which nourished her.

The other art, that which is capable of educating further, springs equally from contemporary
feeling, but is at the same time not only echo and mirror of it, but also has a deep and powerful prophetic strength.

The spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which she is one of the mightiest elements, is a complicated but definite and easily definable movement forwards and upwards. This movement is the movement of experience. It may take different forms, but it holds at bottom to the same inner thought and purpose.

Veiled in obscurity are the causes of this need to move ever upwards and forwards, by sweat of the brow, through sufferings and fears. When one stage has been accomplished, and many evil stones cleared from the road, some unseen and wicked hand scatters new obstacles in the way, so that the path often seems blocked and totally obliterated. But there never fails to come to the rescue some human being, like ourselves in everything except that he has in him a secret power of vision.

He sees and points the way. The power to do this he would sometimes fain lay aside, for it is a bitter cross to bear. But he cannot do so. Scorned and hated, he drags after him over the stones the heavy chariot of a divided humanity, ever forwards and upwards.

Often, many years after his body has vanished from the earth, men try by every means to recreate this body in marble, iron, bronze, or stone, on an enormous scale. As if there were any intrinsic value in the bodily existence of such divine martyrs and servants of humanity, who despised the flesh and, lived only for the spirit! But at least such setting up of marble is a proof that a great number of men have reached the point where once the being they would now honor, stood alone.

The Psychological Working of Color

To let the eye stray over a palette, splashed with many colors, produces a dual result. In the first place one receives a purely physical impression, one of pleasure and contentment at the varied and beautiful colors. The eye is either warmed or else soothed and cooled. But these physical sensations can only be of short duration. They are merely superficial and leave no lasting impression, for the soul is unaffected. But although the effect of the colors is forgotten when the eye is turned away, the superficial impression of varied color may be the starting point of a whole chain of related sensations.

On the average man only the impressions caused by very familiar objects, will be purely superficial. A first encounter with any new phenomenon exercises immediately an impression on the soul. This is the experience of the child discovering the world, to whom every object is new. He sees a light, wishes to take hold of it, burns his finger and feels henceforward a proper respect for flame. But later he learns that light has a friendly as well as an unfriendly side, that it drives away the darkness, makes the day longer, is essential to warmth, cooking, play-acting. From the mass of these discoveries is composed a knowledge of light, which is indelibly fixed in his mind. The strong, intensive interest disappears and the various properties of flame are balanced against each other. In this way the whole world becomes gradually disenchanted. It is realized that trees give shade, that horses run fast and motor-cars still faster, that dogs bite, that the figure seen in a mirror is not a real human being.

As the man develops, the circle of these experiences caused by different beings and objects, grows ever wider. They acquire an inner meaning and eventually a spiritual harmony. It is the same with color, which makes only a momentary and superficial impression on a soul but slightly developed in sensitiveness. But even this superficial impression varies in quality. The
eye is strongly attracted by light, clear colors, and still more strongly attracted by those colors which are warm as well as clear; vermilion has the charm of flame, which has always attracted human beings. Keen lemon-yellow hurts the eye in time as a prolonged and shrill trumpet-note the ear, and the gazer turns away to seek relief in blue or green.

But to a more sensitive soul the effect of colors is deeper and intensely moving. And so we come to the second main result of looking at colors: their psychic effect. They produce a corresponding spiritual vibration, and it is only as a step towards this spiritual vibration that the elementary physical impression is of importance.

Whether the psychic effect of color is a direct one, as these last few lines imply, or whether it is the outcome of association, is perhaps open to question. The soul being one with the body, the former may well experience a psychic shock, caused by association acting on the latter. For example, red may cause a sensation analogous to that caused by flame, because red is the color of flame. A warm red will prove exciting, another shade of red will cause pain or disgust through association with running blood. In these cases color awakens a corresponding physical sensation, which undoubtedly works upon the soul.

If this were always the case, it would be easy to define by association the effects of color upon other senses than that of sight. One might say that keen yellow looks sour, because it recalls the taste of a lemon.

But such definitions are not universally possible. There are many examples of color working which refuse to be so classified. A Dresden doctor relates of one of his patients, whom he designates as an "exceptionally sensitive person," that he could not eat a certain sauce without tasting "blue," i.e. without experiencing a feeling of seeing a blue color. It would be possible to suggest, by way of explanation of this, that in highly sensitive people, the way to the soul is so direct and the soul itself so impressionable, that any impression of taste communicates itself immediately to the soul, and thence to the other organs of sense (in this case, the eyes). This would imply an echo or reverberation, such as occurs sometimes in musical instruments which, without being touched, sound in harmony with some other instrument struck at the moment.

But not only with taste has sight been known to work in harmony. Many colors have been described as rough or sticky, others as smooth and uniform, so that one feels inclined to stroke them (e.g., dark ultramarine, chromic oxide green, and rose madder). Equally the distinction between warm and cold colors belongs to this connection. Some colors appear soft (rose madder), others hard (cobalt green, blue-green oxide), so that even fresh from the tube they seem to be dry.

The expression "scented colors" is frequently met with. And finally the sound of colors is so definite that it would be hard to find anyone who would try to express bright yellow in the bass notes, or dark lake in the treble. The explanation by association will not suffice us in many, and the most important cases. Those who have heard of chromotherapy will know that colored light can exercise very definite influences on the whole body. Attempts have been made with different colors in the treatment of various nervous ailments. They have shown that red light stimulates and excites the heart, while blue light can cause temporary paralysis. But when the experiments come to be tried on animals and even plants, the association theory falls to the ground. So one is bound to admit that the question is at present unexplored, but that color can exercise enormous influence over the body as a physical organism.

No more sufficient, in the psychic sphere, is the theory of association. Generally speaking, color is a power which directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the
hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.

*It is evident therefore that color harmony must rest only on a corresponding vibration in the human soul; and this is one of the guiding principles of the inner need.*