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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

VOL. LII.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W. 1.)

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1920.

621ST ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL
WESTMINSTER, S.W., ON MONDAY, MAY 31ST, 1920,
AT 4.30 P.M.

ALFRED T. SCHOFIELD, ESQ., M.D., IN THE CHAIR.

The CHAIRMAN called on Lieut-Col. Mackinlay, acting for Mr. W. Hoste (absent in Dublin) to read the Minutes of the previous meeting; they were read, confirmed and signed.

The following elections were announced:—Miss E. L. Curteis and Miss Florence E. King as Associates, and the Right Rev. Dr. M. S. O'Rorke, Bishop of Accra, as Foreign Corresponding Member.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced the Rev. S. A. McDowall, B.D., and called upon him to read his paper on "The Meaning of the *Æsthetic Impulse*."

THE MEANING OF THE ÆSTHETIC IMPULSE. By the
Rev. STEWART A. MCDOWALL, M.A., B.D.

I BELIEVE that I am guilty of no exaggeration in saying that we owe to the genius of Benedetto Croce the first really competent theory of *Æsthetic* and of the nature and place of the Beautiful. No doubt there are still difficulties which he has not fully elucidated; no doubt there are many points in his whole philosophical system that are open to objection. Among these I should give the first place to his rejection of the idea of God as generally conceived in religious philosophy. Nevertheless, he has advanced the cause of thought in a degree given to few philosophers in the whole history of speculation; and, most important of all for our present purpose, we find for the first time in his system a place accorded to Beauty that is consonant with her actual importance in the life of every man and woman. Moreover, his theory of *Æsthetic* is destined, I am convinced, to play no unimportant part in the reconstruction of the philosophy of Christianity which is already well under way. My purpose this evening is to try to indicate one or two of the ways in which it may influence this reconstruction, and to offer a few suggestions of a practical nature which seem to arise out of the ideas which I shall try to put forward.

As what I want to say to you will be based on Croce's theory,

I fear that I must preface it with a very brief account of that part of his work which I am going to use, in case some here have not had the opportunity of studying it. I can only ask those who know it at first hand to let their thoughts wander pleasantly during a summary which must necessarily be jejune, but which will, I hope, be short !

Of course, if the fine arts seem to a man to be utterly distinct, with nothing in common but a background of emotion, Croce's theory, and all that I am going to say this evening, must seem simply a meaningless attempt to express something that does not exist. But if, as Croce urges, each art aims at presenting, through the practise of its own conventions, aspects of truth which are suitable to that special medium, an honest attempt to find and define the common factor of all arts may lead to knowledge of real value. It is not really possible to give a short and clear summary that will do justice to the most interesting and elusive of modern philosophies ; but the main position in regard to æsthetic is fairly simple, and it marks a real advance in this problem of finding a common factor in the arts, as well as giving an adequate place to æsthetic in philosophy.

We may begin by explaining what Croce means by an intuition, what he means by the *a priori* synthesis, and what part the relation of the double degree plays in his system.

When you perceive an object, already you are using two mental processes which cannot in fact be separated, or exist the one without the other. In the first place there is simple awareness of a reality. You objectify an impression without arguing as to its reality at all, or relating it to yourself or anything else. You merely characterize the thing and are aware of it as concrete and individual. This is the pure intuition. It has no admixture of intellectual process. Its salient character is, that it is made and expressed by the mind, and is indeed identical with this expression. You cannot separate the intuition from its expression. Moreover it is æsthetic in nature. Its character is identical with the character of the mind-process which makes the vision of the artist and the poet.

But at once this intuition is generalized and related. The process of generalization is the formation of the concept, and is characteristic of the logical or intellectual activity. Moreover, the pure concept is universal, and expressive, belonging to all individuals ; concrete, and therefore real. Pseudo-concepts, which fail either in universality, expressiveness or concreteness,

do exist, and are of great value, but this value belongs not to the theoretical, but to the practical activity. "Evolution" is a pure concept, "Chair" a pseudo-concept. For our purpose it is not necessary to elaborate this point.

What does interest us is the relation between the two theoretical activities of the spirit—Intuition and Concept. They are "Moments in the unity of a single process." Neither takes a prior place. "We cannot think without universalizing, and we cannot have an intuition without thinking." In other words, they are related in a synthesis that is *a priori*. This means that the intellectual activity which relates and generalizes the intuitions or presentations does not depend on them, but is as much a condition of experience as are the presentations themselves. Each of the two things, the intuition and the concept, is essential to knowledge; the concept is empty of content without the intuition, but you cannot have an intuition without thinking it. The two form an indivisible, organic unity; neither is able to exist without the other. You cannot think without universalizing, not intuit without thinking. This is really the logical *a priori* synthesis discovered by Kant. But Croce proceeds to use it in a wider sense, as we shall see.

These two elements, then, the intuitional and the conceptual, together constitute the whole theoretic activity of knowing.

Now the first of these elements, the intuition, is expression of a reality to the self. It is essentially æsthetic, for Æsthetic is the science of expressive activity. In forming an intuition, and expressing it, we compass Beauty, for Beauty is expression.

But there is another side to the activity of spirit. Thinking and doing, willing and acting, go hand in hand.

The practical activity begins as Economic, directed towards particular ends. There is individual action; but there is also action universalized: directed to general ends: and this action is Ethical. Utility passes over into goodness: there is no good action which is not in some way useful, there is no useful action which is not in some way good.

Here again, then, we have two inseparable activities, related, as are the theoretic activities, as a first and second degree, yet each involving the other. The relation is identical with that of the *a priori* syntheses, and the term may be extended to cover this relation also.

Finally, the two sides of the activity of the spirit, the theoretic and the practical, are themselves related in this same double

degree by a relation of syntheses that we may again term *a priori*. The theoretic activity cannot exist apart from the practical nor the practical apart from the theoretic. The relation is again the same as that which obtains for the relation of the elements constituting each pair of the four "Moments," and for the pairs themselves in their relation to each other. The *a priori* synthesis is extended to cover all these relations.

Croce's great contribution to the theory of Beauty then lies in his proof that Beauty is not judgment, but expression—the expression of the intuition which is our first contact with Reality—and that Æsthetic is the science of expressive activity. Given this first movement of the spirit, the other modes of approach to Reality follow, or rather are involved.

It must, however, be borne in mind that Croce draws an absolutely definite line between the expression, which belongs to the theoretic activity, and the technical embodiment of that expression in art, which belongs to the domain of the Practical. A work of art affords us simply the stimulus which enables us to recreate the artist's expression; and it is the expression, not the work of art, that is beautiful. The Beautiful is a distinct concept; the Ugly is ugly in so far as it fails in distinctness, through failure to express.

Such, in brief, is the portion of Croce's philosophy with which we are concerned. The rest it is needless for us to follow out. The chief point that remains is his identification of Philosophy with History—the *thought* about the presentation of Reality (Philosophy) with that presentation itself as an unfolding of immanent life (History). This identification really follows from the relation of the double degree between the theoretic and the practical. In thinking past history you bring it into the present as a practical issue; and you introduce the logical element in thinking it, but you could not do so if there were not an intuitive element in it intrinsically. Philosophy is historically conditioned: without philosophy there could be no history. With this argument, whose affinities with the philosophy of Bergson are obvious, Croce rounds off his system, completing his demonstration that the only Reality is living Spirit immanent and unfolding.

Now, I cannot help feeling that Croce's theory of Æsthetic is true, as far as it goes. When one comes across a thought that is true, however new it be, as soon as one has digested it it seems as old as the hills, and takes on the quality of obviousness.

I think that this is really a pretty good test of the value of a discovery in the realm of thought. And in my opinion Croce's theory satisfies the test.

Nevertheless, when I think of his philosophy as a whole I find that it brings me unerringly to a threshold and then stops dead, saying that there is no threshold really, nor anything beyond. Croce himself tells me (I am using the first personal pronoun quite impersonally, by the way!) that this is because I confuse mystery, which is the infinity of evolution, with history: that life is without a summit. But still I am not satisfied. He tells me that I still need a God only because I persistently hug this false philosophy of History. And still I am not satisfied with a pantheistic monism. I do want a God, and I further want to find out why he does not. I think it was Poe who pointed out that if you are hunting for place-names on a map, the ones you cannot find are those in the largest print! At last it dawns on me that in his system there is no room for the peculiar quality of personality—that individual, permanent capacity for fellowship which lies at the root of love, redeeming it from hopeless transience. I accept his account of the interlacing theoretic and practical activities of life; I accept his æsthetic intuition as the first contact with reality, its expressions and its subsequent logical development; I accept his statement of the dependence of the practical activities on these, and his division of the practical activities themselves into the primary economic one and the consequent ethical; but still, I am I, and I love. To me the fundamental relation with Reality is a personal one; nay, the fundamental reality *is* personal relation. This, I believe, must represent the criticism of each of us as we soak ourselves in the wonderful work of Croce. And fortunately, as far as my poor judgment goes, we can hold this view, and yet scrap nothing of value in Croce's philosophy. Let us but add to Croce's definition of Beauty as the expression of our intuition of Reality, the words "of relationship": let us but extend his shortened definition that "Beauty is the expression of an intuition" into "Beauty is the expression of an intuition of relationship," and we have all we need.

Obviously, before we begin to apply the thought contained in this definition of Beauty we must first, and very briefly, justify its choice.

Now, when we are faced with something that is insistently beautiful, its immediate effect upon us is to produce a sense

of yearning desire, and this means that we feel something to be lacking to us. Moreover, the yearning is creative; those of us who can do so pour out our creative effort in music, in painting, in poetry; those of us who have less power of artistic expression in an objective medium turn back to our daily work with a feeling of inspiration. We have at least been witnesses of a Transfiguration, and something of its holiness abides with us, giving new meaning to our tasks.

Nevertheless, the immediate effect of our vision *was* dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction of a peculiar type. There is only one thing that resembles it at all, and that does so completely. This thing is unrequited love. Now in unrequited love we are receiving all and giving nothing. All the beauty, all the grace, all the charm of the loved person is given to us in unstinted measure, for the gift cannot be withheld. But the object of our love will have nothing from us. We cannot give again. The relation is not reciprocal: hence our pain. I am aware that this idea that we are receiving and not giving is precisely the opposite of that usually entertained, but nevertheless I am convinced that a very few moments' thought will show that it is the true account of what happens.

Now when we see a beautiful thing precisely the same thing happens. We are receiving: we cannot give. The reciprocal relation which personality demands is absent. Hence the dissatisfaction. But we have seen that it issues in a desire to create. Why? Surely because we feel that we must give something in return for what we have received. A vision has been vouchsafed to us, and we must see to it that others gain something from what we have learned, because, as Croce has shown, what we have learned is Reality. Here again we are up against the demand of personality for relation with other personalities. Relationship, always relationship, is craved. But the only relationship that satisfies is the relationship of reciprocal love. Love is the ultimate reality for personal beings. In love, giving and receiving are balanced equally. But between Beauty and Love there is a close relation.

So far I have only said again very briefly what I have already tried to say elsewhere. Before we pass on to some applications of this view, let me run over again the points that are fundamental to it.

Our first contact with Reality is by an intuition. This intuition we have to express clearly to ourselves, and in expressing it we

perform the æsthetic act, and the expression itself is Beauty. We may gain our contact with Reality through nature itself, or through another more penetrating mind that has perpetuated its vision through the technical medium of words, music or picture. Whichever way our intuition comes, it means a gift, for which we can give no return. Because it means this, we are dissatisfied, and our dissatisfaction endeavours to remedy itself by giving a gift to the world. In some way, small or great, we create. But we never achieve the same sense of rest and satisfaction that love gives us—the love that is equal between the friends. A pain like that of unreturned love remains.

Now let us approach our problem of the meaning of the æsthetic impulse from another angle.

God is Love. If there be a God at all (and in a brief lecture like this one cannot stop to discuss the many arguments, even purely intellectual ones, that make it probable), He must be Love. Nothing else will serve to explain the gradual emergence of love as the prime quality of personal being. If God be Love, He must know Himself as Love—that is, as a relation between Persons. This is one of the fundamentals that the doctrine of the Trinity is trying to express. If, then, we can imagine a God like that: a God before creation; a God whose love is satisfied for ever in this mutual internal relation—and I do not think we can, for a reason I will try to explain immediately—He would know all Reality in knowing Himself as the perfect relation of Love. He would be the Absolute—and *He would contradict his own Nature as Love.*

A Love that was content with its own perfect self-experience would have self as its object: Love would be simply selfishness raised to its highest power. I do not think you can escape this conclusion by emphasizing the doctrine of the Trinity as desiderating Three Persons, unless you deny the One God. Tritheism might get over the difficulty; Monotheism, even Trinitarian Monotheism cannot. If this be so, we are left with only one alternative—that God must eternally be Creative. The Perfect Experience, such as God's must be, can only be love if it be shared; for this sharing, with its implication of self-abnegation in giving the necessary opportunity of winning freedom to the creatures it calls into being, gives just the self-surrender that is essential to Love. I do not know that we can get much further than this, nor am I certain that it is capable of statement in the terms of a purely intellectual metaphysic.

But it does seem to me to touch a chord in us that is only put into vibration by true things. If this be so, must we then give up the idea of the Absolute Unity, and say that Reality is God plus the finite particulars He creates? If we must, I for one am prepared to do so; but I am not convinced of the necessity. It lands us in Pluralism, and though I believe Pluralism contains a great truth, undiluted it seems to lead straight to disaster for some things that are of vital importance. But if the ultimate destiny of the created spirit is complete union with God and complete sharing of His Perfect Experience, while yet it retains its self-identity, the Absolute being this perfect experience of Love or intercommunion which is God's Experience of Himself, I am not at all sure that we do not gain the advantages, yet escape the troubles of Pluralism, except in the time-process of development or becoming (where there is no real difficulty), while yet securing the ultimate Unity which is the aim of all philosophies of the Absolute. To discuss this would take us too far, even if I were competent to do it, but it was necessary to mention the point, because what I am trying to say about the meaning of the æsthetic impulse has its roots in the conception that God is Love, and that Love is necessarily externally creative. From these two premises we will now go on.

Love, then, cannot be satisfied without sharing, not for its own sake, but for the sake of those it can potentially create to share its joy. Hence arises, as far as we can humanly judge, its characteristic of external expression through creation, involving, as it does, self-abnegation, because to grant to others freedom, is to limit your own by giving up your powers of control where they are concerned. Only on the basis of such freedom can love grow in the creature.

Now comes the important point. God's creation must thus express a relation, but, till love of God is born in that creation, the relation is not reciprocal. It is God's expression of His knowledge of Reality, which is Love, but that Reality is not wholly and everywhere actualized. In fact, the creation is not yet absolutely Real. It is, however, beautiful. It exactly fulfils our definition of Beauty as the expression of an intuition (or immediate knowledge) of relation. But it will only receive its ultimate justification in love.

If we have argued justly, we come then to this conclusion: that the creation of God is designed for His purpose of entering

into relation with others and is based on the Reality which is Love; and that it must therefore be beautiful. Does not this give us the clue to the place of Beauty in Life? Does it not furnish us with a guide to the practical applications of Æsthetic? Should not the creations of men of every kind be consciously, as they are already unconsciously, designed for the purpose of entering into relation with others, while at the same time the final, Godward meaning of that relation is kept deep in the heart's understanding?

Somewhere in this region, I venture to say, lies the true Æsthetic. The Beauty we create expresses our intuition of Reality for ourselves, that we may enter into relation with God, and for others it acts externally to make them see our vision, and to draw them too into that same relation. I would exclude no technical mode of external expression from the scope and the demands of this conception, be it religious picture or ballet, concerto or model dwelling. Each gives our intuition to other men, and makes them see what we saw. If we saw low things, through our eyes they will see them too. Sometimes to see low things is desirable, for without understanding them we might understand little. So long as we do not pretend that they are high things it will be all right. But if we lose touch with truth, making low things high, and high things low, we shall produce something ugly, and do a good deal of harm to taste, and therefore to its practical application in morals, and moreover by lying about beauty we shall blind both ourselves and others to beauty and to truth and to goodness. For these three are very closely linked, and you cannot define any of them but in terms of one of the others. Anyway, it is safer as a rule to see and express the higher things in so far as we can. But the first need of all is artistic honesty that has clear intuitions and gives its whole heart and soul to their expression.

I do not mean in any way to suggest that Art should be trammelled by moral considerations. The attempt to impose such a censorship is bound to bring both Art and Morals into disrepute, if for no other reason, because the practical application of moral imperatives in any given time and place is so much at the mercy of social conventions masquerading as the real thing. But there is a more fundamental reason than that. Art, Reason, and Morals each attempt to get into touch with Reality, but each has its proper method of approach. Each is based on the expression of an intuition, and so far depends upon

the æsthetic activity for its very existence; but each has its own sphere of activity. Art has its economic and its ethical side, as any practical activity must, but it is primarily concerned with the technical embodiment of the intuition itself, the intuition being subjected to little logical development. It is nearest to the intuition. Reason is concerned with theoretical deductions and inductions from the intuition, through logical processes. Morals are concerned with the higher forms of the practical activity, through conduct, but they are ultimately dependent on the theoretic activity. All alike deal with Reality; each in fact involves the others in some degree, though artificially capable of isolation from them in argument, yet none is susceptible of definition but in terms of one of the others, in the last resort—as how should it be, since Reality *has* these three aspects—the Good, the True, the Beautiful—when men's minds turn upon it. Yet Reality is not comprehended in any one of these three terms. It is True, it is Good, it is Beautiful; but it is these because it is the Relation we call Love.

All we can demand of Art, whatever form it take, is then, that it shall be true to itself—and that means, express its intuitions truly, remembering that it is in touch with Reality, and is therefore concerned with relationship.

Let me again sum up what we have been saying, in order that, assuming that we have not been altogether astray from the true path, we may see the meaning of the æsthetic impulse more clearly, and perhaps suggest to ourselves some practical consequences. The conclusion we have really come to is rather an odd one. It is this. A thing may be beautiful, and equally it may be true, and good, while yet it is not wholly Real. Now this actually comes straight out of our statement that God is Love, for love is essentially a reciprocal relation. But we have said that Beauty is the expression—and that means that is the work, so far, of the percipient—that Beauty is the expression of our intuition of a relation which is not reciprocal. Beauty is first of all the index of God's creative activity, which itself is the necessary consequence of the fact that He is Love. Further, I think that we may say that His creation is beautiful for Him, pre-eminently, since it is the expressive activity of His love which is Reality, but is not yet itself Love, since it is not conscious of Him. To us this objective creation—selves and things—is, or gradually becomes, beautiful as we come to see in it a reality only to be explained in terms of relationship,

and still more as we come to see behind this one-sided relation the reciprocal relation of Love. And this we do through looking behind the appearance which at first seemed to us to *be* reality, to the fundamental Reality which is the Nature of God.

Thus the cosmos, which is the expression of God's self-limitation for the sake of vindicating His love—Himself—is for Him beautiful, and for us. It becomes the symbol of Creation's meaning, the Sacrament of Personal Being. Beautiful, it is also true, in spite of its being but appearance, for it is Appearance essential to the Reality behind it. Beautiful and True, it is also Good, for it is rooted and grounded in Love, and Goodness is the Appearance of Love under conditions of Limitation—only, belonging to the practical aspect. But if you fail to see and search out, and see further, the beauty of the cosmos, just so far you fail to achieve the understanding of Love that is possible to you. And this is just as important an aspect of the cosmos as its truth or its goodness. We are ready enough to blame the man who refuses to see truth or goodness, but we are rather apt to think it does not matter if he fails to see beauty. If our argument is just, however, he will fail even more to understand Reality, and that means the Nature of God, if he does not find beauty than if he does not find truth or goodness. Press this point home a little farther, and you find that you cannot get a real understanding of beauty except in terms of either truth or goodness—in actual fact, of both. This leads us to conclude that a man may approach an understanding of Reality along any one of these three roads, and whichever one he follows he will in the end have to reckon with the others consciously, as he has already unconsciously been doing, and will come to know that he will have to, because Reality under the conditions of its own self-vindication as Love through self-limitation, is at once Good, True, and Beautiful. But it also leads us to the conclusion that men are much more likely to arrive at a true understanding if they are shown that all three roads are equally sure to lead them to that Reality, and if their convergence is pointed out. I would urge the importance of this, because so few men have either the ability or the opportunity to follow any one of the roads right to the end, and the majority will be left in doubt as to what that end really is. Most of us have to be content with following first one and then another a little way, and we do quarrel so dreadfully about which is the best one! It really would help us a lot to

be shown that the roads are convergent. Then, even if we could not go the whole way along one or other, we could at least plot a diagram of the bits we and our friends had traversed, and then take a ruler and produce the lines, and find out that in all probability they did meet in one point—unless one of them turned off suddenly, which is not likely.

I started this lecture by saying that I would try to indicate one or two of the ways in which this modified form of Croce's theory of Beauty might influence the reconstruction of the philosophy of Christianity, and to offer one or two practical suggestions. Let me end by attempting to fulfil these promises. The first topic is implicit in all that we have been saying. If it be true that our first contact with Reality is in its essence æsthetic; if it be true that it is only on the basis of æsthetic expression that we can rear our edifice of thought, and that our practical activities are dependent on these and interact with them; and if it be further true that our intuition is an intuition of relation, and the Reality really is reciprocal personal relation, or Love; then the religion of the God of Love must take account of these things. If Love is true to itself, it seems likely that it must eternally be creative, and that its creation must be always full of beauty, because it expresses Love's knowledge of itself as the ultimate Reality, and as personal. Personal Love can only create reciprocal relationships, if it is to be satisfied, and such relationships must be free. Therefore it must limit itself, to give this freedom. The creation is beautiful, but it is only beautiful—is only a one-sided relation—as the necessary preliminary to becoming Love, which is a two-sided relation, in which Beauty is completed in something yet more perfect.

These thoughts must be included in our conception of God and of His Activity. They must equally be included in our conception of man, who also loves, who also creates, who is so identical in his personality with God that he is potentially capable of entering into the perfect union with Him, losing all but his self-identity in that completed bond of Love. Moreover, we must admit that a life devoted to the understanding of beauty may lead to God as surely as a life devoted to the understanding of truth or even of goodness. For the search for understanding of beauty needs as utter sincerity as the others, as strenuous a discipline, as fastidious a rejection of the unworthy. Even as you cannot define one or other of these three without finding

yourself involved in terms of another of them, so you cannot practise one without practising another. Croce points out that the theoretic and the practical activities are not in fact separable.

Now for a brief word of practical suggestion—which cannot be separated from the theoretical. The importance of educating the sense of the beautiful becomes even more obvious than before. Men *must* learn to understand the beauty that is all around them. Because most of us are not artists we must make use of the eyes of those who have had more of the æsthetic intuition than we have, and who have given permanence to their intuition through technique. It is fundamental to Croce's view that when we look at a picture, listen to a symphony, read a book or poem, we are really re-creating for ourselves the artist's intuition. He has made it easy for us to do this because he has eliminated, selected, emphasized, in order to give his intuition full play, free from distracting complexities that bewilder the untrained mind. We must, therefore, teach men to see beauty first, and then try to make them understand what beauty is, and why we find a thing beautiful because it has a meaning to us. An attitude of contempt for the beautiful is as irreligious as one of contempt for the good or the true.

The Beautiful should play a large part in our religious teaching. If Croce is right in saying that ugliness is failure to express an intuition, what a torrent of ugliness must flow from our pulpits! But one could forgive mere failure to express, perhaps, if there was an attempt to express anything at all there in the way of teaching about the nexus between beauty and truth and goodness, and the Love in which they are made one. I firmly believe we shall never get the average man who has a real but undeveloped æsthetic and logical and moral faculty, and who cannot go very far along the one or other road for lack of power or opportunity, to understand much about the Christian idea of God without some teaching about beauty and truth as well as goodness. At present he does get so deadly sick of being told to be good. But if he learns something about God as the Supreme Artist, and why it is sensible to call Him so; if he begins to understand that, just as you follow the intuition of an artist in his pictures, so you can follow the intuition of God—His knowledge of Reality as Love, in *His* creation; then he is likely to take a good deal more interest in religion in general, and in the teaching of Christianity in particular. Specially will he realize that as the

lover is always first an artist, so the Perfect Lover must be first the Perfect Artist. But you must practise what you preach ! If the views I have been putting forward are right in any degree, it follows that real ugliness must be fought as fiercely as real sin—the sin for which it is in so large a measure responsible. For ugliness becomes the failure to realize what Godhead and manhood mean ; it is rooted and grounded in the failure to possess and to present a clear intuition of Reality ; just as sin is, in its own more directly practical manner.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. SCHOFIELD said he congratulated the Institute, the Philosophical Society of Great Britain, on the rare pleasure of having heard a truly philosophic paper ; one, moreover, that has treated a fascinating subject with great discrimination and delicacy of touch. The lecturer clearly felt that his subject was somewhat under a cloud, and to my mind the whole of philosophy shares this position. The aftermath of a great war was hardly a favourable atmosphere for this study, and Mr. McDowall is to be congratulated on the detachment of mind that could give us such a paper at such a trying time.

He rightly points out on page 219 that the rejection of the idea of God is open to objection. Surely it is much more than this. Any system of Ethics or Æsthetics without God is essentially unsound ; is absolutely equivalent to building a house without windows—there is no light in it.

On page 220, where it is stated that “ pure intuition is not an intellectual process ” I must point out that pure intuition is a faculty of the unconscious mind, and that though the process may not be called intellectual, it certainly is mental.

Might not, on page 222, the “ expression ” and “ technical embodiments ” be termed more simply the “ mental and material expressions ” ?

Does not the closing of page 223 and beginning of page 224 express beautifully “ St. Paul’s thought on Mars’ Hill,” “ if haply they might feel after Him and find Him ” ?

Lower down we read, “ We receive : we cannot give ” ; but we do give, if we know the Giver, and the sacrifice of praise is our gift.

The argument in the middle of page 225 strikes me at least as dubious. It seems an attempt with our logical two-foot rule to

measure the Infinite—a process which in Divine things constantly fails us, or lands us in error.

On the other hand, the sentence on page 226, “to grant to others freedom, is to limit your own,” seems a profound truth.

On page 228 we get the Good, the True and the Beautiful, which is surely Love, and therefore God. I have often pointed out that while to see man we are equipped with two eyes, to see God we have three—the eye of the conscience or moral sense which sees the Good; the mind or intellect which sees the True; and the heart or Æsthetic sense which sees the Beautiful.

There is no doubt that the narrative shows that the devil in Eden destroyed this triple vision: for men’s condition became such that “There was no fear of God before their eyes.” The Good vanished. The wisdom of God was foolishness unto them. The True was denied, and they saw no beauty that they should desire Him. The Æsthetic disappeared.

If not straying too far from the paper, I should like to say that I regard Christianity as an operation for cataract, as indeed, it is said by Christ to be “the recovery of sight to the blind,” and by St. Paul “to open the eyes of the blind.” When the triple spiritual vision of the three abstract senses is restored by Christ, the man “walks in the fear of the Lord all the day long”—he sees the Good; he cries, “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God”—thus seeing the True; and “He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely,” thus once more perceiving the Beautiful—the Æsthetic.

By Reality on page 229, I take it the author means God.

The foot of page 230 must be read *cum grano salis*.

Man as man, blinded by sin, can only fulfil what is there said through the new birth, and the “*must be born again*” is an essential postulate to a true vision of the Beautiful. To see this is of the first importance.

On page 231, in the middle, while agreeing on the value of Beauty, we must be very careful not to worship the Beautiful as such. The object of our worship is not “the holiness of Beauty,” but the Lord is to be worshipped in “the *beauty of holiness*,” which is a very different thing; and it is well to mark that the beauty of the worship does not consist in its accessories, but in its holiness. There is no doubt the lecturer is right when he tells us that God teaches beauty

and truth, as well as goodness ; the Good, True, and Beautiful can do no less ! The last page seems to me to take us rather to the æsthetic services of Dr. Percy Dearmer, than to enforce the wonderful meaning of the phrase I have quoted of "the beauty of holiness"—surely a far higher concept of the Æsthetic ! Once more I should like to thank the learned author for his most inspiring paper.

Lieut.-Colonel MACKINLAY said :—I wish to associate myself with the Chairman in his admiration of the beauty of the diction of this paper. There are many things to discuss in it. I have only space to mention a few.

(1) I combat the statement (page 219) that the reconstruction of the philosophy of Christianity is already well under weigh. I read that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever (Heb. xiii, 8). In this world of change He changes not, and He keeps His own, who are warned against the perilous teachings which are coming (2 Tim. iii, 1).

(2) Our author firmly believes (page 231) that the average man won't understand much about the Christian idea of God without some teaching about Beauty and Truth. But, according to Scripture, God has chosen the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong (1 Cor. i, 27).

(3) Our author makes much of Beauty. Now Beauty is good, but it is not useful for every purpose. My thoughts go to the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the one clothed in beautiful garments, the other full of ugly sores. But the destiny of each depended on something quite apart from this Beauty or this ugliness !

(4) (Page 227) I consider that art *should* be trammelled by moral considerations, and that it is not desirable to see low or degrading things in order simply to understand (2 Cor. vi, 17). The Ancient Greeks excelled in Art, but their moral condition was very low, and the pure Gospel was needed by them quite as much as by barbarians.

(5) One cannot help comparing the drift of this paper with the address of the Christian philosopher St. Paul to the heathen at Athens.

To-day we have Beauty extolled, man's wisdom made much of, things likely and unlikely dwelt upon (page 230) and personal opinion advanced (page 231), God's revelation of Jesus Christ ignored, and the climax reached on the last page in the statement that ugliness must be fought as fiercely as sin !

St. Paul dwelt on the ignorance of cultivated men in spiritual matters ; making little of the products of art and of man's device, he urged the need for repentance, he spoke of coming judgment for sin, and he dwelt on the *fact* of the Resurrection.

Which is the soundest position to take ?

Our lecturer deserves our thanks for his investigations, chiefly, I think, for the warnings which he gives us against that philosophy on which his paper is based, which (page 219) rejects the idea of God.

The Rev. J. J. B. COLES, M.A., said : What is the value of the teaching of this modern philosopher to a well-instructed Christian to whom Christ is "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption" ?

"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and to be complete in Him both here and hereafter is to be in a glorious position of privilege which no human philosophy can in any way add to or transcend.

Let us test the supposed value of the teaching of creative evolution.

In Gen. i we have God's progressive and evolutionary creative action set forth.

In Gen. ii—God's special creative and direct action in connection with Love and Beauty.

Five hundred years before Christ, Heraclitus of Ephesus recognized this evolutionary method and saw that "All was in motion" (*παντα ρει*).

A thousand years before Christ, in a wise and scholarly Commentary on the Pentateuch, we read, "If these things (in Nature) are beautiful, how much more beautiful must the Author of all Beauty be?"

Bergson and Croce, in their creative evolutionary and æsthetic teachings, have not sufficient knowledge of God or of Christ to be of any use in such times as the present.

No reconstruction of the philosophy of Christianity which in any way attempts to minimize the glory of the Person of Christ and His propitiatory sacrifice can possibly have any attraction for one who knows that in the Person and work of the Son of God all the deepest problems relating to God, Man and the Universe have their only true solution.

At the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford the Dean of St. Paul's asked the question, whether since the Great War and all its

horrors we can pride ourselves so much as formerly on our moral and æsthetic progress.

Possibly the "Lord of Love" of the Theosophists takes a still more gloomy view of the near prospect of his being received on earth, now that the storm raised by "the Four Winds of Heaven" is still raging—and so he must be content with the rôle of an Angel of Light, and postpone yet awhile any further attempt to pose as an Angel of Love.

God is Spirit, and God is Light, and God is Love—these are essential and absolute attributes of the Holy Trinity.

Mr. W. E. LESLIE said :—The term "expression" is fundamental to Croce's theory, but it is not adequately defined. In ordinary usage it implies an agent, a medium or vehicle, and a percipient. Mr. McDowall speaks of the mind as an agent expressing something to the self. The psychological unreality of this distinction is emphasized when we are told that the act of expression and the thing expressed are identical. Is not Croce's "expression" simply the vivid image produced by the contemplation of a simple object, or the prolonged concentration of the attention upon the details of a more complicated object. An artist can portray a face upon which he gazes long in the same way that a boy scout can describe the contents of a shop window which he has studied. "Internal meditation" does not affect the process.

Beauty is said to be the act of expression (= awareness) of an object. Ugliness being indistinct expression (= awareness). It follows that all clear perceptions are beautiful, even if the object or idea contemplated be vile. Does this not divorce Beauty and Goodness? To escape from the difficulty by defining reality as personal relation, or love, is to explain evil by ignoring it.

At the bottom of page 223 we have several allusions to beautiful things or persons. Is not this inconsistent? If beauty is a purely personal subjective act, how can external creation be beautiful? Even if the universe is "a relation that is not reciprocal" we cannot intuit it as such.

On page 224 the loved object gives us of his or her beauty, "for the gift cannot be withheld." In the same way we cannot withhold the gift of our beauty, whether it is accepted or not. Does a mother give her babe nothing beyond its simple physical requirements?

Our conception of the relations eternally subsisting between the

Persons of the Trinity is so imperfect that it is rash to assert that their mutual internal relation of love is selfishness raised to its highest power. Yet it is on this assumption that the proposition "Love is necessarily externally creative," which is vital to Mr. McDowall's thesis, is based.

Remarks communicated by Mr. W. HOSTE (Hon. Sec. to the Council of the Victoria Institute):—Plato, somewhere in the *Phædrus*, foretells for those who on earth have philosophized much on the Beautiful, a rebate of seven thousand years of a sort of purgatorial existence, out of the ten thousand to be endured by more ordinary folk, before they get their wings. I suppose as the result of this paper there is a prospect of an earlier sprouting of wings for any present to-day, who may nourish platonic ideals. Such will be grateful, but I am afraid the majority, though recognizing the literary charm of the paper, will be disposed rather to be critical.

On page 221 "Evolution" is surely a singularly unfortunate illustration of a "pure concept"; defined on page 220 as something "universal and expressive, belonging to all individuals; concrete, and therefore real." Evolution is certainly a "comfortable word," as the late Lord Salisbury remarked on a famous occasion, but means half-a-dozen different things, according to the school discussing it, and is even denied altogether as a true concept by not a few. I should have thought the solid "chair" on which the Evolutionist discusses his theory, the more "concrete" of the two.

The reader of the paper makes Beauty one of the, I will not say rival, but alternative routes, which lead to God. It and Goodness and Truth will all meet some day in a point. But is "beauty" really "beauty" if it has never met with goodness and truth? Can it stand alone? Can you divorce it from "moral considerations"? "Handsome is that handsome does," is not bad philosophy. The Phrynes, the Cleopatras, the Salomes of ancient and modern times to whom the accident of physical beauty is not denied, leave "foot-prints on the sands of time," but do such lead to God? On page 227, the lecturer "would exclude no technical mode of external expression." The "ballet" to him is a means of grace. The producers of modern "revue" would not go as far as that; though I am sure they would all agree with him on page 227 that "art ought not to be trammelled by moral considerations," *i.e.*, that the censor is a nuisance.

On the other hand, our Lord Himself, whose "face," we read, was "more marred than any man's," and of whom the prophet wrote, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him," is disqualified by the showing of an exaggerated cult of the external from being what we believe and know He is, the True Way to God.

One more point in closing. On page 225 it is asserted that if God is to find an adequate object for His love, He must eternally be Creative, otherwise His love could only be selfishness raised to its highest power. This strikes one as very hazardous. It makes God as dependent on His creation for unselfishness as it is on Him for consistence. Matter must then be eternal, otherwise there would have been an eternity of selfish love in the being of God. This challenges His Self-sufficiency and contradicts both Holy Scripture and Christian philosophy. Were Creation a necessity to the *benesse* of God, how could it be "a free act of His wisdom and Almighty power," and where do we find a hint in the Scripture that it was anything else? Such passages as Prov. viii speak of a time in a past Eternity when Wisdom personified was possessed by God, in the beginning, before His works of old. Not even a finite being can find an adequate object short of the infinite. This is agreeable to the famous dictum of Augustine. And Prof. Orr asks pertinently in his *Side Lights on Christian Doctrine*, page 46, "Is it not true of every one of us . . . that our souls can only find their complete rest in the Infinite God, in an Infinite love? . . . How, then, is God, the Infinite One, Himself to find an object for His Fatherly love, commensurate with His infinitude, in our finite souls?" Creation could never be the sufficient object of His love. That the Eternal Son in the bosom of the Father alone could be.

The Rev. H. J. R. MARSTON, M.A., writes:—I am grateful for my first introduction to Croce, who till to-day has been for me but a name. I admire the range and acuteness of his thinking, and feel, with the lecturer, that one who goes so far, might well go further on the road to God. At the same time, we need not limit our appreciation of his thought because he stops too soon, and we can follow the lead given in the lecture with advantage and without fear of doing violence to the starting point itself.

The definition of Beauty as æsthetic expression—which means, I suppose, perception put into form—is perhaps inadequate, for when a

realist in painting depicts a dungheap, or a realist in poetry describes a leper, the resultant is not beautiful.

Again, I should wish to have spoken at some length, had time allowed, on the fallacy so popular with certain fanatics of the brush and the pen, that *ars propter artem*, art for art's sake, is a kind of eleventh commandment not to be disputed. Now, I am sure that it is fallacious.

Life is a unity, no part of it can elude the grasp of the whole. The artist is not free from restraints, any more than is the politician or the doctor, or the farmer.

If the farmer were to say, "A dirty ditch is no eyesore to me, I shall not clear my ditches," he would be promptly and properly visited with penalties. If a doctor were to say, "I shall experiment on my patients without regard to health, decency or suffering," he would be properly punished. What holds good of them, holds also of the artist. He may not delineate any and every object with impunity for art is only a section of life, and may not violate the whole.

I heartily endorse the lecturer's denunciation of ugliness, especially of ugliness in Church, and would have no ugly tunes nor robes nor ornaments used in the houses of God.

The Rev. J. E. H. THOMSON, M.A., D.D., writes :—Although in my early student days I devoted myself very much to the study of, Æsthetics on its theoretic side, my studies in more recent years have rendered it impossible for me to keep abreast with recent philosophy on that subject, consequently I am ignorant of the theories of Croce. As I understand the views of the Italian philosopher as expounded by Mr. McDowall, I in the main agree with them. The Æsthetic Impulse purified and sublimated becomes Love, and love of the highest, of God. In short, the sense of Beauty is ultimately the intuition of God; and Art is the expression of this in the terms of emotion. The history of art confirms this. The earliest poetry was embodied in hymns to Deity, the earliest music, in the rhythmic tones in which they were chanted; the earliest sculpture exercised itself in carving statues of the gods to be worshipped, the earliest architecture erected buildings in which these statues were enshrined, the earliest paintings adorned the courts of these temples. While all this is so, there is an antinomy which Mr. McDowall has not faced.

The evidence of history appears to prove indubitably that the more worship was improved æsthetically the less earnest and spiritual

it became. When our Lord preached and the Apostles followed Him there was no æsthetic adornments either in the discourses or in the accompaniments of them. Paul desired not to preach the Gospel with the wisdom of words, and certainly the private houses in which the believers assembled in those days had no special ornamentation. Yet it was then that devotion was deepest and zeal loftiest. As the Church prospered and the discourses became rhetorical and the meeting places of the Saints became architecturally decorated, real devotion declined. When the Empire became Christian as the outward adornments of worship became more conspicuous the decay of real devotion became more obvious. Indeed, so much so was this the case that in reaction monasticism arose, which has the aspect, at all events, of a worship of ugliness. To live in hovels, to dress in skins or rags, to remain unwashed, became the evidences of superior sanctity. This process went on ; external worship became splendid, the monks living in monasteries became luxurious ; then arose the preaching friars who discarded all outward adornments. The Friars followed the monks in making splendid churches and monasteries. At the revival of letters there was a revival of æsthetics and a degradation of piety, indeed of simple morality. The reaction came in the Reformation. To a certain extent, indeed, the reaction against the predominance of the æsthetic in worship caused the counter-reformation under Ignatius Loyola.

While heathen religions might consecrate immorality and murder, the religion of Jesus, like Judaism from which it sprang, regards sexual purity and righteousness as *sine quibus non* in its followers. Though one would not wish to press this unduly, artists have had in all ages a reputation of being somewhat free in regard to morality. At the same time we cannot believe that the unsavory reputation of the Quartier Latin is wholly undeserved. The autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini reveals his attitude, and that of the whole artistic world of his day, to ordinary morality. In regard to poetry, Burns and Byron occur to one at once. But taking individuals in this way may be regarded as scarcely fair. There is another way of looking at the matter. In his *Logic*, John Stuart Mill, as one of his "Canons of Method," mentions that of "Concomitant Variations"; when two phenomena vary in the same way we can deduce that they are causally connected. Do we find, then, that the study of Beauty in a community or in an age coincides with a deepened spirituality,

a higher sense of honesty and purity? Is it not the case that it is precisely the reverse? Take Athens under the hegemony of Pericles; the prevalence of nameless vice, and general venality is notorious. Take Rome, under the "Twelve Cæsars"; are not things even worse? There was the same nameless vice, the same venality, with the addition of organized murder in the proscriptions. Papal Rome of the time of the Renaissance is no better. Yet in all these periods art flourished in a way far surpassing anything in the ages preceding or succeeding these periods. Do not these facts suggest a limitation of our hopes from the teaching of Beauty? While in complete sympathy with the views of the Rev. Mr. McDowall, I wish he had recognized and resolved this antinomy.

Prof. H. LANGHORNE ORCHARD, proposing a vote of thanks to the Author for an interesting and very thoughtful paper, said that it contained much with which they found themselves in agreement. The facts that the greatest of realities is God; that God is Love—Infinite Love; that Truth, Goodness, Beauty, are aspects of Him, and approaches whereby we may draw nigh; that, Love fulfilling in personal relationship reciprocal and responsive, the bounden obligation and high privilege of our duty to God bid us respond earnestly to the Love which for our salvation withheld not His own Son; these facts command our belief as fundamental to Christian philosophy.

But our agreement does not extent to Croce's curiously unsatisfactory definition of Beauty as the expression by and to self of the intuition which is our first contact with reality. What does he mean by "Reality"? On page 222 of the paper we are told that the only reality is living spirit. Is not matter a *real* thing? Are not deformity, disease, pain, death, as well as their opposites, *real*? Is not ugliness real, and different from an imperfect expression of the æsthetic intuition? If "Reality" is in Croce's view a synonym for living Spirit, why does he exclude from his philosophy the idea of God, who is Spirit, Light, Love and is the great Reality, as is beautifully insisted on in the paper we have been hearing.

The learned author of the paper has, in my judgment, immensely improved upon Croce's system; has indeed improved it almost out of recognition. Yet a good definition of Beauty is lacking.

Premising that harmony is helpful co-operation of parts of a whole unto the good of each part and of the whole, I would define

Beauty as the effect or expression of harmony. And the perception of the beautiful as perception of harmony expressed between two responsive or communing harmonies—the one in the beautiful object, the other in the mind of the personal percipient.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

To answer the foregoing discussion in detail would involve writing a paper far longer than the original one, I fear. Some of the criticisms show an imperfect apprehension of Croce's meaning, due doubtless to the inadequacy of my brief summary—*e.g.*, *intuition* is an activity of spirit: so is intellection; yet pure intuition is not an intellectual process, but the basis upon which the intellect works (page 232). Beauty is not a purely subjective act, but demands a Reality which is intuited (page 236). Intuition is not the same as perception, since intuition is awareness of Reality, perception awareness of appearance (page 236). No idealist would say that matter was *real*, in the philosophical sense of the word, though doubtless it does denote the existence of an underlying Reality. But itself is probably purely derivative, being dependent on mind for its very existence (page 241)—the objection to "evolution" being cited as a pure concept is due to confusion between *evolution* and *theories of evolution* (page 237)—and so on.

But I take it that the chief objections lie in other regions—those of religion and morals. In this regard I should like to point out that to say that "the reconstruction of the philosophy of Christianity is well under way" is very different from saying that "the reconstruction of Christianity is well under weigh"—a thing which I did not, and could not, say (page 234).

The really fundamental point is whether art should be trammelled by moral considerations or no; and in regard to this I find a very real misunderstanding of the view I have tried to put forward, as is shown by the references to "revue," and other things. It must be remembered that morality and religion are very different things. No doubt the categorical imperative of Ethics ultimately belongs to the realm of religion, but the content of a given ethical code is determined largely by circumstances of time and place. It is the imposition of such a code upon the activities of art to which I raise objection. An artist may have a vision and do work which

he knows is *good*, and yet the code of his time and place may insist that it is evil. It is this condemnation which raises the feeling of rebellious protest in the artist, and it is for the removal of this constraint for which I plead. No one would condemn the representations of a pornographic mind more unsparingly than myself ; but in my paper I spoke quite clearly of an art that was true to itself and to its vision of Reality. If an artist can say that what he represents is true and good, we have no right to condemn his work ; setting our vision above his ; judging, and refusing to be judged ourselves.

The omission of much that could have been said, and the inclusion of much that could have been said differently, was due to the scope of the paper. One started from a philosophical standpoint, and moved towards a theistic one. Fundamentally this last is Christian, I believe ; but had one reversed the line of argument its form might have been very different, though it would have led, I am firmly convinced, to the same conclusion. I trust these notes may remove some misconceptions : in excuse of their hurried nature I can only plead a press of work. May I, in conclusion, thank you for a very patient hearing and for your kind words about my paper ?