Ruskin's theory of truth in art

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RUSKIN'S THEORY OF TRUTH IN ART

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RUSKIN'S THEORY OF TRUTH IN ART

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Art is Divided
into Two Groups

Ruskin, in his various lectures and essays on the subject of art, divides the arts into two groups, plastic and graphic. Among the plastic or architectural arts, he includes those arts which have to do with making a useful thing. It may be the shaping of a jar, the making of a watch or a steam engine, or it may be the building of a bridge or the erection of a great cathedral; whatever the product may be, it is made for a practical purpose. Among the graphic arts are included those arts which strive to create a likeness of something. The likeness may be made by the cutting of a cameo, the carving of a statue, or the painting of a picture. In one group, use is the distinguishing characteristic; in the other, likeness is the distinguishing characteristic.

The Elements of Architectural Arts

Ruskin considers that in each of these two groups there are three essential elements. These elements in plastic art are skill, beauty, and use, of which use is the most vital. No architectural art, he contends, has an excuse for being unless it serves some purpose in the world. Its very origin lies in industrial use. The most primitive people had a plastic art of their own when they first made plates from which to eat and cups from which to drink; they aimed first at the useful. Early,
though, in our civilization men attempted the decoration of these articles. This tendency toward the creation of beauty has continued down to the present day; but with the corrupt life that our modern civilization is leading, there has come a tendency to lose sight of the usefulness of an object in an attempt to make it beautiful. It comes, then, to be an art without a purpose—an art that is untruthful because it pretends to be what it is not. Use is the essential, and beauty but its concomitant.

In graphic art the three essential elements are skill, beauty and truth, and in this group, truth is the vital element. But what is truth in art? Ruskin considers it to be the expression of those qualities which are the outgrowth of a high spiritual life; it is, therefore, the outgrowth of right thinking and right living. So important did Ruskin consider the relation of truth to graphic art that he wrote the five volumes of *Modern Painters* in order to set forth his ideas on the subject. It was for this purpose, too, that he wrote the essay on *Pre Raphaelitism*, *The Lamp of Truth* in the Seven Lamps of Architecture, parts of *The Stones of Venice*, the *Laws of Fasole*, the *Lectures on Architecture*, and the *Lectures on Art*. In fact, in almost everything that he wrote on art the subject of truth plays an important part.

Naturally there are different degrees of truth in art. The lowest form is imitation. Many people still think that the first and great aim of art is imitation—the exact reproduction of nature. Such was the idea of the Dutch school whose work is well...

(*Modern Painters* III, Ch. I, Par. 5)
represented by Holbein's "George Gisze". In this picture there is what Ruskin calls gross realism—a picture which accurately depicts the minutest details. There are clearly reproduced the details of clothing, the exact pattern of the table cloth, the clear glass vase, the quill pens, the ink well, the scales, the seals—in short all the details of a Dutch merchant's office. As Reynolds tells us, these Dutch painters excel in this sort of mechanical imitation in which the slowest intellect is always sure to succeed best. Their painting is historical. It represents the lowest form of truth.

But Ruskin does not reject imitation altogether. It has its place, and an important place, in the training of art students and in the work of artists; for it furnishes a basis upon which all artists can work with profit. If our minor artists would occupy themselves with imitating those objects which are of historical or scientific interest a great work would be done, because there would be preserved for the future what might otherwise be destroyed. It may be the representation of a tree, a peasant in characteristic attire, or a cathedral doorway; whatever the subject, there is truth in such work because it is done for a purpose. Many artists can do nothing more valuable than this, for if they try to produce beautiful pictures, "raspberry pieces" or "winter scenes", their work is poor. Their lives are wasted because they have worked without the stimulus of real thought. The world is no better off for their efforts, where it might have been benefited if they had set about to paint what was of scientific or historical interest.

Ruskin says that only that picture is great which is painted in love of a reality. But he does not mean a reality of ( * Laws of Fesole Ch. VII )
of detail; he means a reality of spirit. For in Modern Painters one reads: "Imitation can only be of something material, but truth has reference to statements both of the qualities of material things, and of emotions, impressions and thoughts. There is a moral as well as a material truth— a truth of impression as well as of form, of thought as well as of matter. He acknowledges that exact reproduction is a fundamental consideration in art, but he insists that it should not be a first consideration, for, "as soon as the artist forgets his function of praise in that of imitation, his art is lost. His business is to give, by any means; however imperfect, the idea of a beautiful thing; not by any means, however perfect, the realization of an ugly one."

A further argument against imitation is the fact that its aim is to deceive. Now in proportion to the knowledge and keen perception of the spectator, deceptive imitation becomes difficult or impossible. Surely, then, it is a mistake to connect with art anything which tries to stupefy the mind. When an idea of Truth comes to the mind, mental action is occupied only with the character of the fact; it disregards entirely the signs or symbols by which the notion of it has been conveyed. But when an idea of imitation comes to the mind, the mental action occupies itself in discovering that what has been suggested to it is not what it appears to be. It amuses itself, not from the contemplation of a truth, but from the discovery of a falsehood.

Photography is imitation, and as such has its place in mechanical work— in reproducing certain designs and recording

( *M.* Part. I Sec I, Ch. V)

**Laws of Fesole Ch. I

*** Ruskin's Art Teaching by Collingwood, page 57

**** Modern Painters I, Part I, Sec. I, Ch. II)
certain facts. It is a mistake, however, to consider it in any sense real art, because it is not interpretive. "But", you will say, "is photography true to fact?" Ruskin answers that it is not true, though it may seem to be. In interior photography, for instance, perspective is never right. Neither does any photograph accurately represent nature, because the lowering of tone makes it impossible to get the effect of landscape. But disregard these things and still photography falls short of human art because it fails to convey human thought and human passion. There is nothing more to a photograph than the pose suggests. There are no means of conveying the individuality which makes a truly distinctive work of art. There are lacking those qualities which are more valuable than mere physical attributes, reverence, sincerity, love, affection, patience, admiration, devotion. Photography is mechanical invention; it is not wrought directly by the human mind acting in accordance with the human soul, and therefore it can never find response in the spirits of men.

Higher Art is more than Imitation

In all that he wrote depreciating realism in art and in photography, Ruskin's central thought is that art is more than imitation. Three distinct qualities enter into art to lift it above imitation and raise it to its highest level. These are mind or thought, imagination, and emotion.

Mind Raises Art above Imitation

Thought should be a fundamental consideration in art. In fact, there can be no great art without great thought back of it. The instant that the increasing refinement or finish of a picture begins to be paid for by the loss of the

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(* Lectures on Art Par. 172 *)
(** Modern Painters I, Part. I, Sec I, Ch.II, Par. 7 *)
faintest shadow of an idea, that instant all refinement or finish is an exoescence or a deformity. Moreover, if thought is to assert the right things, it must bear a direct relationship to truth; it must arise out of a knowledge of truth.

If we accept the statement that thought enters into all great art, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect. There are three sources of pleasure in art; first the pleasures taken in perceiving simple resemblance to nature; secondly, the pleasures taken in perceiving the beauty of things to be painted; lastly, those pleasures taken in perceiving the meanings and relations of these things. This last consideration which involves thought, also involves the other two considerations, and so mind may be said to play a fundamental part in the appreciation of art.

In modern art, Ruskin insists thought is not so much emphasized as it should be. In medieval art, thought was the first thing, execution the second; in modern art, however, execution is the first thing and thought the second. Raphael ranked fancy with thought and faith, and accordingly stressed execution rather than thought, and beauty rather than veracity. The medieval principles, Ruskin says, led up to Raphael and the modern principles lead down from him.

It was on this point that Ruskin rested his arguments in favor of the Pre Raphaelite school. The conventionality of art since the time of Raphael was exceedingly distasteful to him, and he spurned the beauty whose attractiveness had tempted men to forget or despise the more noble quality of sincerity. Such beauty violated

(*) Modern Painters III, Ch. I
(**) Pre Raphaelitism 127
(***) Pre Raphaelitism P. 132
all laws of great art as he looked at it. Conventionality was gradually driving out thought and making mere form the chief end of all art. Since in this deterioration Ruskin saw the destruction of all great art, he devoted the effort of the best years of his life to bringing about a change which would put art back upon the unconventional, thinking basis which had been the foundation of the greatest art of all ages. The men whose work was the immediate outgrowth of this Pre Raphaelite movement went to the very extremes of unconventionality. Burne Jones, for example, in his "Tower of Brass" treated the classic subject with which he was dealing in the medieval spirit to which he inclined by habit and association. Rossetti in his "Annunciation" made the Virgin the exact representation of a modern English girl. In this they were following the principles laid down by Ruskin when he said, "True art should represent men rather than angels and saints." To Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites this was the way to arrive at truth, and the way to truth was, above all others, the right way. They considered truth the final court of appeal in which they (artists) might all be examined. According to the dignity of the truths he can represent or feel is the power of the painter.

But in this insistence on truth, Ruskin never confused the qualities which apply to art with those which apply to science. "Science examines the structure, art the aspect of things; both seek the truth, but truth of different kinds, and differently viewed. A geologist painting mountains must paint them either as a geologist or as an artist; nobody expects him to be both at once." From this

(* Burne Jones edited by T. Leman Hare)
(** Lectures on Art Par. 58)
(*** Modern Painters I Part II, Sec. I, Ch. I--Ch. II Par. 6)
(**** Ruskin's Art Teaching by Collingwood)
(****** Modern Painters IV, p. 400)
then, it is evident that the artist must see different things from what the scientist sees, and that he must do more than see, he must feel and think. He must see and feel and think the most important truths. We have said that both science and art to be valuable must be true; they must also deal with what is noble; but art, more especially, seeks for beauty in truth. As long as Ruskin lived he never ceased to defend the Pre Raphaelites and their search after truth. "Pre Raphaelitism," he declared, "has but one principle, that of absolute uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only."

It is comparatively easy to see how thought and truth stand related. It may be harder to show the relationship between imagination and truth. Some people consider imagination to be mere fiction—a false representation which is absolutely incompatible with truth. But imagination, as we consider it, only imagines or conceives the truth. It is a voluntary summoning of conceptions of things that are not present; and the real pleasure of the imagination lies in the fact that we know those conceptions are not and could not be present even though they may appear to be. In the process of true imagination, "two ideas are chosen out of an infinite mass, which are separately wrong, which together shall be right, and of whose unity, therefore, the idea must be formed at the instant they are seized, as it is only in unity that either are good. Now this idea would be wonderful enough if it were concerned with two ideas only. But a powerfully imaginative mind seizing and combines at the same instant, not only two, but all the important ideas of its poem or picture and while it works with any one of them, it is at the same instant working with and modifying

(* Ruskin's Art Teaching by Collingwood 112, Stones of Venice III, ch.2 *)
(** Lamp of Truth III (** Modern Painters III, Ch. II **)*)
all in their relations to it, never losing sight of their bearings on each other.

The imaginative artist, then, can take his stream from one part of the Alps, his cliff from another, his tree from another, and, if he is consistent, he can combine them in such a way that his picture is more effective than any exact reproduction that he might make. The imagination will do away with all that is unnecessary or unpleasant; it will seize out of the many threads of different feeling which nature has suffered to become entangled, one only, and where that seems thin and likely to break, it will spin it stouter, and in doing this, it never knots, but weaves in the new thread so that all its work looks as pure and true as nature itself. Its test is that it looks always as if it had been gathered straight from nature, whereas the unimaginative shows its joints and knots and is visibly composition. By this principle of selection, Ruskin does not mean to imply that nature is not imaginative. Far from it. He does say, however, that her imagination is not always of high subject. There are few natural scenes, he insists, whose harmonies could not be improved, either by discarding some discordant element or by the addition of some sympathetic element.

Some think that imagination cannot be connected with truth "because," they contend, "it deceives." But when the imagination deceives it becomes madness. "It is a noble faculty as long as it confesses its own ideality, but when it ceases to confess this it is insanity. All the difference lies in there being no deception—in short, in there being truth. If it is imagination of the wrong sort, it contributes more harm than could possibly come from a total lack of imagination, because it is violating all principles of truth.

Lack of imagination usually means monotony. The unimaginative painter tries to relieve this monotony by using contrasts in light
and shade, or other differences which have to be forced. Yet even
with these differences his work will show a sameness that is tiresome.
But in imaginative work all the parts are imperfect, and because there
is so much imperfection, the imagination is never likely to repeat it­
self. No matter what it receives or how it receives, the imagination
so arranges that all things appear in their place, perfect and useful,
so that "every fragment that we give to it is instantly turned to some
brilliant use and made the nucleus of a new group of glory."

To see the difference between the unimaginative and the
imaginative picture, consider Gasper Poussin's "Sacrifice of Isaac"
and Turner's "Cephalus and Proous". In the first, there is a painted
monotony in the forms of the mass of foliage on the right and of the
clouds in the center. Altogether the spirit of the picture is solemn
and unbroken. But in Cephalus and Proous, so vigorous an imagination
as Turner's produces an effect, at once pleasing and powerful. No one
part can be left out of this picture without spoiling the effect of the
whole. Cover the two trunks on the right and the central mass by itself
is ugly. Cover the central mass and the two trees on the right lose their
effectiveness. Each part is necessary to the picture simply because all
parts have been collected with reference to the whole. In all such
imaginative work, there is an intense simplicity that is satisfying, a
perfect harmony that is pleasing, and an absolute truth that is inspiring.
We are placed face to face with fact; but there is, in and beyond this
reality, a touch of the supernatural which elevates and uplifts. The
finest truth which man is capable of perceiving so brightens and illuminates
the imagination that it contributes to art a power that is at once exalt-
ing and ennobling.

( * Modern Painters III, Ch. II, Par. 14-15 )
( ** modern Painters III, Part II, Sec. II, Ch. II, Par. 18 )
( *** Modern Painters III, Part II, Sec. II, Ch. II, Par. 20 )
Emotion is the third quality and the essential quality of truth in art. "In proportion to the rightness of the cause and the purity of the emotion, is the possibility of fine art." In fact, emotion is the distinguishing feature between mediocre art and high art. A picture may be technically good; it may be pleasing to the eye because its composition is good; but if it lacks emotion, all the good technique it may possess will not raise it to the ranks of high art. If, on the other hand, a picture interprets emotion of the highest type, be the structure ever so faulty, it may take its place among the great paintings of the world. Such, for example, is Raphael's "Madonna of the Chair". The thigh of the child is out of all proportion to the rest of the picture. Yet the high emotional quality, the love and affection and innocence, make amends for even so great a deficiency and render the picture one of the masterpieces of art.

But just as discrimination must be exercised in the application of the imagination, so it must be exercised in the application of emotion to art; as the imagination must imagine true things, so the feelings that play a part in the composition of great art must be feelings rising out of a contemplation of truth. Shakespeare was a great writer because he put into play feelings which had a truthful source–feelings which belonged to the men about him; and because they belonged to the men about him, they belonged to all men and have appealed to all men of all times. So Fra Angelico was a great artist because he put into the art the truest and highest emotions, those emotions which have a universal appeal–simplicity, love, faith, and devotion. They appeal to us in the twentieth century, just as they appealed to Fra Angelico's contemporaries in the fifteenth century. Because he "painted honestly and completely from the men about him he painted the human nature" which (Modern Painters III, Ch. VII)
is constant throughout the centuries.

We have said that emotions must be noble. They must be fine enough to exalt every person who can appreciate the finer and higher feelings. And true nobility in the picture cannot be produced unless the artist is a noble man experiencing noble emotions. Reynolds, for example, was a great portrait painter because he conveys through his portraits the joy and the sorrow and the affection which he himself experienced. Turner was a great landscape painter because he had the "landscape instinct", which is totally inconsistent with all evil passion—hatred, anxiety, envy, and moroseness. There can be no appreciation of natural landscape when all the fineness of the senses is blotted out by vain discontents, mean pleasures, and vulgar selfishness. Consider with Ruskin the evil effects of one passion, pity. "When you next go abroad, observe and consider the meaning of the sculptures and paintings, which of every rank in art, and in every chapel and cathedral, and by every mountain path, recall the hours and represent the agonies of the passion of Christ: and try to form some estimate of the efforts that have been made by the four arts of eloquence, music, painting, and sculpture, since the twelfth century, to wring out of the hearts of women the last drops of pity that could be excited for this mere physical agony. Then try to conceive the quantity of time and of excited and thrilling emotion, which has been wasted by the tender and delicate women of Christendom, during these last six hundred years, in picturing to themselves the bodily pain, of One Person: and then try to estimate what might have been the bitter result for the righteousness and felicity mankind if these same women had been taught to measure with their pitiful thoughts the tortures of battle fields or the slowly consuming plagues of death in the starving children". Here is an example of the
mis-use of the emotions which works toward the deterioration of art and the debasing of human lives. In such cases truth is submerged by ignoble emotions. But when noble emotions are at work, truth is made dominant.

Mind, imagination, and emotion, therefore, when they are directed toward truth, raise art to its highest level. What, then, is the highest truth? "The highest truth attainable by any man," says Ruskin, "is what he believes to be the word of God". And what is the force which impels these three qualities toward the high goal of truth? That force is a belief in God. A belief in God lies at the very foundation of art. It was this belief in God and the constant and continued effort to glorify the Deity that made medieval art so much more truthful, and so much more inspiring, than anything that modern art has created. In early times, art was employed solely for the display of religious facts. The very existence of art was due to the fact that the artists were trying to get religious subjects before the people; they were showing forth the praise of the Creator. In other words, they were seeking new truths for the sake of truth. But most of our modern artists, instead of employing art for the display of religious facts, have employed religious facts for the display of art. They seek new truths, not for truth's sake but for pride's; and "truth which is sought for display may be just as harmful as truth which is spoken in malice." There has been an unhealthy change from medieval to modern art, simply because "modern art has built to no God."

Building our art to the Deity does not necessarily mean that the range of subjects must be restricted to religion. If the purpose be high and noble, then the Deity will be glorified whether

(* Modern Painters III, Ch. IV, Par. 11, 13 )
(** Pre Raphaelitism 122 )
the picture represents a small child or a county road. Ruskin was
influenced in this belief by J. D. Harding, from whom he took lessons.
Harding was a sincerely religious man, who believed that landscape is a
sort religious art, showing forth the praise of the Creator. "Love of
nature", Ruskin said, is an indication of faith in God. It becomes the
channel of certain sacred truths, which by no other means can be con­
veyed." Again, in the first volume of Modern Painters, he expresses
the same thought. "The Truth of nature is a part of the Truth of God;
to him who does not search it out darkness, as to him who does, infinity."

The three elements which have just been considered are
fundamental, but there is another quality which involves these three
elements, and which is an important factor in great art. That quality
is beauty. But beauty is too often over valued. It is too often made
the chief aim of art. With the transition from medieval to modern art,
there has come a tendency to make beauty the aim of all art, at the sacri­
ifice of truth. "When art lost all purpose of moral teaching it as natural­ly
took beauty for its first object and Truth for its second..............
The old artists endeavored to express the real facts of the subject or
event, this being their chief business. The question they first asked
themselves was always, how would this thing or that actually have oc­
curred or what would this person or that have done under the circumstances?
And then having formed their conception, they work it out with only a
secondary regard to grace and beauty. A modern painter invariably
thinks of the grace and beauty of his work, and unites afterward, a
much truth as he can with its conventional graces." The beauty these
men aim at is spurious because its attractiveness has tempted them to
forget or to despise the more noble quality of sincerity. Watteau

(* Ruskin’s Art Teaching by Collingwood, P. 6, Par. 3. ** Modern Painters
III, Ch. XVI. *** Modern Painters I, Part II, Sec. 1, Ch. II.
**** Pre Raphaelitism P. 123. ***** Pre Raphaelitism P. 123. )
could paint pictures which had exquisite charm because he could so gracefully combine the most delicate tints and harmonize them with the intensest shades. In his "Fete Champetre", women who are "adorable, dainty, and fragrant as a flower" are clothed in gowns of the loveliest pinks and blues, the effect of which is enhanced by the soft, deep greens and browns of the trees in the background. But with all this charm of color there is lacking the spiritual element which conveys truth. The picture expresses no great thought, it does not call forth the imagination; it appeals to none of the higher emotions. Watteau was seeking beauty alone; and because he did not associate it with anything higher than mere form and color, he failed to produce a truly beautiful painting.

With all Ruskin's preaching, however, against the over-emphasis of beauty, he does not consider that beauty is out of harmony with truth. As a matter of fact, he considers that it bears a harmonious relationship with truth, for he says that "the most important truths are those which tell the secret of beauty........ The great school of art introduces in the conception of its subject as much beauty as is possible, consistently with Truth." Truth and beauty are separable, but it is wrong to separate them; they are to be sought together in order of their worthiness; that is to say, truth first, beauty afterwards. High art differs from low art in possessing excess of beauty in addition to its Truth, not in possessing excess beauty inconsistent with Truth."

The man who makes a beautiful drinking cup is working with a sincere purpose; he is trying to create something useful. Whatever beauty he may add is justified because he had made the

(* Watteau Edited by T. Leman Hare. **Modern Painters I, P. 49 )
(*** Modern Painters III, Ch. III, Par. 12 )
nobler aim the first aim. The beauty that he creates comes as a natural outgrowth of a noble purpose. So it is in painting. The artist who has a noble purpose unconsciously creates beauty. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, when he painted the Mona Lisa, was striving to tell a great truth by typifying the highest womanhood. With this noble purpose, real beauty was inevitable. The picture is a masterpiece because it "represents what is beautiful and good."

What is Great Art?

It is apparent, then, that truth must be dominant in every element of great art. This means that truth must be dominant in great art. "Great art," Ruskin says, in the third volume of *Modern Painters*, includes the largest possible quantity or Truth in the most perfect possible harmony. The difference between the great and inferior artists is of the same kind, and may be determined at once by the question, which of them conveys the largest sum of Truth." The inferior artist cannot appreciate the great truths of life because his life is not full enough to enable him to experience the thrill of noble emotions. For that reason, the truths he chooses are unimportant and scattered. The great artist, on the other hand, has little of the common nature in him. He lives so completely and in a state of so much enthusiasm that he experiences the finest shades of emotion and is elevated by them. He chooses the most necessary truths first, and afterwards truths most consistent with these, so as to obtain the greatest possible and most harmonious sum. To illustrate this point Ruskin shows how Rembrandt always sacrifices the less important truths of light and color for the one great truth of the force with which the most illumined part of an object is opposed to its obscurer portions. Ruskin gives a little different expression to similar thought in the first volume of *Modern Painters*. The first merit of manipulation is that delicate and ceaseless expression of refined

(*Modern Painters III, Ch. III. ** Modern Painters III, Ch. III. Par. 16
*** Modern Painters III, Ch. III, Par. 17. **** Modern Painters I, Part II, Sec. II, Ch. II, Par. 2. *)
truth ... which makes every hairbreadth of importance and every gradation full of meaning. It is not, properly speaking, execution, but it is the only source of difference between the execution of a common-place and a perfect artist.

* Again, great art is truthful because it dwells on all that is beautiful, while false art omits or changes all that is ugly. Great art takes nature as it finds her, without emphasizing the less perfect parts it directs the attention to what is most perfect in her. False art either has not the power or the will to take the trouble to direct the attention to what is most important in true landscape; it simply removes or alters whatever it thinks objectionable.

** "The Art is greatest," Ruskin says, "which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas." "And I call an idea great," he adds, "in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received. He is the greatest artist who has embodied in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas."

It is, then, an undisputed fact that great art must assert something, and that the more it asserts the greater it is. In order to assert the most, it must tell the story of the life of its time; it must represent the living forms and daily deeds of the people among whom it rose. If the people are faithless, their art is faithless; if they indulge in undue luxury, their art tends to sensuality; if they strive after sensationalism, their art is gaudy. Rubens, for example, was only reflecting the spirit of the age when he painted pictures that were coarse and unrestrained. It is necessary then, if art is to be great, that the country itself be clean and its people beautiful. It

[* Modern Painters III, Ch. III, Par. 13. **Modern Painters I, Part I Sec. I, Ch. II, Par. 9. ***Pre Raphaelism 137. ****Ruskin's Art Teaching by Collingwood 176. *****Modern Painters III, Ch. XVI, Par. 31. 1* Rubens, Edited by T. Leman Hare. 2* Lectures on Art Par. 116. )
is only by their being pictures that they can produce pictures.

"Laborers must be raised up and become living souls. Children must be educated into living heroes; flights and fondnesses of the heart must be blinded down into practical duty and faithful devotion." If a people are not preeminently strong, contrasts in light and shade will not produce strength in their pictures. If they are not sincerely religious all the halos that have been painted cannot make their pictures religious.

Art does more than show the character of a nation or of an epoch; it shows, as well, the individuality of the artist himself. Since truth and imagination demand, above all things, sincerity, no false or mean man can be a great artist. But, you object, many artists have been immoral. Ruskin anticipates this objection and answers it by saying that immoral artists have never been great artists. Noble art can only be had from noble persons associated under laws fitted to their time and circumstance, whose ancestors have likewise been noble persons. For Ruskin does not look upon a great piece of art as the product of one man; he considers it to be the result of previous life and training; that is, the high powers of several ancestors have united in this man and are bearing fruit in the work he is producing.

Perhaps the finest examples of the art which represents the whole life, the life not only of the individuals or the communities but of centuries, as well, are the Gothic cathedrals, which were built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Whole villages united to give their praise to God by working for the glorification of His name. There was work on these edifices for every man, because the cathedral could show the individuality of as many men as there were stones in the

( * Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Appendix I and II. ** Pre Raphaelitism, Par. 137. *** Lectures on Art, Par. 72. ****Ruskin's Art Teaching by Collingwood, l71; Modern Painters, V. P. 196. 1* Lectures on Art, par. 27. 2* Ruskin's Art Teaching by Collingwood 151; Study of Architecture O. R. Vol. I, Par. 272. )
building. If a man could make finer pictures in stained glass than he could in stone, he worked with stained glass. If he could carve a cross better than he could carve an angel, he carved a cross. In this way, each part was done well because it was done by the man who could do it best and by the man, therefore, who took pleasure in his work.

In the temples of Greece and Rome there was no opportunity for individuality, because every single line was laid down by rule or measure. The workman was a mere tool. But in the Gothic cathedral there was opportunity in every figure and in every image for the assertion of the workman's individuality. He was broadening himself and elevating his work by putting his whole being into that execution which was working toward the highest assertion of truth. There was work for the master architect who planned the building as well as for the poorest stone cutter, who did the leaf work; the wood cutter had his part just as the mason and the lead worker had theirs.

And yet, despite this multiplicity in construction there is in every cathedral a central thought around which every other thought is grouped. In the cathedral at Amiens this central thought is represented by a figure of Christ, which stands at the center of the main portal. On either side of this statue are figures of the apostles and underneath each of these is a quatrefoil medallion representing the virtues which the apostle taught or manifested in his life. For example, Saint Peter, denying in fear, is afterward the apostle of courage. Both fear and courage, then, are represented in the medallions. Such details as this serve to show how intricately Biblical subjects were carried out, how familiar they were to the workmen, and how great an influence they had on the lives of those men. The people were devoting their lives to the development of the highest truth, and by it they elevated not only their own generation but all the generations that

(*Pre Raphaelitism, P. 3. **Bible of Amiens IV, Par. 37.)
have followed.

In other ways than in religion, too, they expressed the life of their time. They represented every-day life by showing how men worked at the different trades, from carding wool to making shoes and reaping grain. The representation in stone of the calendar at Chartre cathedral shows the husbandry of the time. The art of rhetoric was represented along with the science of astronomy. In every detail, from the noblest designs to the slightest reliefs there was an expression of all the thought and hope and aspiration of the time.

In this way art, if it is to be the expression of life, whether of one life or of many, must represent the whole man, both body and soul; for "all art is an expression of one by and through the other." They are to be raised and glorified together. The material things must of course be represented; but art becomes valuable only as it expresses the personality, activity, and living perception of a good and great human soul and the vigor, perception, and invention of a mighty human spirit. Without these things, it may become precious in some other way, but as art it is worthless. Great art compasses and calls forth the entire human spirit—love, affection, sympathy, patience, admiration, devotion, reverence. Any other kind of art, being more or less small or narrow, compasses and calls forth only part of the human spirit. There may be love and affection without reverence, or there may be reverence without love and affection. But unless the whole human spirit is represented, there cannot be the greatest ascertainable truth respecting visible things and moral feelings. "The fair tree of

(* Stones of Venice Vol. III, Ch. IV, Par. 7. ** Stones of Venice III, Ch. IV, Par. 6. *** Modern Painters III, Par. 24. **** Laws of Fesole Ch. X.)