

A COMMON VALUISM FOR BOTH CONSCIENCE AND CREATIVE POWER

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THE essential valuism of aesthetics may be generally concerned in our thoughts, feelings, fancies or sentiments in observing or otherwise experiencing the beautiful, the sublime, the picturesque, the tragic, pathetic, agreeable, grotesque or exotic. But not in any valid measure of aesthetic delight or positive appreciative function does any normal person value(?) the ugly, the trifling, the discordant, the decadent and repoussant. Like the ugly or trifling traits in human character, these are negations of the true and positive aesthetic experiences and, while etymologically aesthetic as being so many sensuous perceptions, they are not members to any spiritual or moral aesthetic because they are not recognized or accepted as perceptions of any of the qualities which make up the positive, i. e., the real, active and creative, aesthetic series. These positive characteristics are real and durable homogeneous and continuous, whether we approach them empirically or intuitively; under examination and validation they are posited as being objective elements in an objective situation and do not properly belong to the subjective domain of bare sensory receipt or pleasure.

Any adequate and defensible valuism should start and end with these positive objective characteristics as its *items de metier*, and only mention the negative subjective characteristics for what they are as adjectival readings rather than substantial entities. The analysis and understanding of affection and aversion should be the psychological approach to such a valuism because affection and aversion are the two main categories of human aesthesia. The situation is not altered by trying to reduce our affections and aversions to terms of volition and conation, for we do not have the will to pursue or avoid, to examine or ignore, without first having recourse

to whether our feelings relative to such an object or end are expressions of affection or aversion. We recognize and accept the truth of things anyway more by the way we feel than by the way we think, and we are anxious to reify only those ideal conceptions which happen to be congruous with our native desires or needs.

As in any other sphere of inquiry then, the actual pivot on which the whole valuistic action turns is to be found in man's affections and aversions; and even when the objects of these differ, we also have only to vary the terminology to suit the difference in the degree of our feeling for or against any certain external situation or object. Whence for abstract entities we may have *sentiments* such as those for morality, justice, reality, truth; for friends, relatives or pet animals, *love* or affection in the popular sense; while for our health, wealth or other material welfare we have only a more or less serious *interest*. It is quite apparent that both the object and the feeling for the object in these cases are positive and affective in the sense of being relished and sought after; so then when a feeling is one of repulsion and we seek to avoid contact with the object we give them negative names such as *im-morality*, *in-justice*, *un-reality*, or we call them enemies, beasts, sins, fakes, diseases or whatever term fits the degree of our aversion. As any sensible man can see, our personal valium in these several fields of affection or aversion is an activity which takes place in ourselves and is directed *toward or for* the objects, and not *in* them, as the pseudo-realists claim, regardless of how we or our neighbors feel. We are all far surer of our eisegesis than of our exegesis when it comes to quoting scripture or experience.

Something like the same line of argument could be used against the algedonic aesthetician who cannot carry his antinomial thesis of pleasure and pain through all the vicissitudes of life and art, because the most essential elements of the aesthetic function are aimed at abstract qualities which are objects of contemplation and affection but not of mere pleasure or sensuous satisfaction; they aim to hold mental contact and spiritual communion with what is positive, active, noble, wise, beautiful, good and inspiring, and not with anything that is negative, passive, ignoble, ugly, vain, fickle or disgusting. The whole field of moral aesthetic is bounded between these adjectival limits but the substantive character of what it aims to know and cherish demands that our affections be dynamic instead of impotent, wise instead of foolish, and melioristic instead of spoliating or decadent.

Aesthetic morality does not leave men free to be either freebooters or free-agents in their pursuits of art, religion, philosophy or ethics, no one being at any time free to be vulgar, blasphemous, foolish or criminal with impunity. Just because they escape man's little inaccurate penalties does not mean that they have also dodged that finer, closer-fitting dispensation which God has given them to follow. But even for those who think they can live without the Grace of God, there is yet to be considered the moral aesthesia of their daily deeds and dreams. If at all active and responsible it will give them a certain commendable pattern to follow, a certain ethical law to abide by, and when they have either the perversity or the cupidity to run amiss from this pattern or afoul of this law, it is not any fault of morality or life, but their very own if they have to grieve or suffer. Aristotle (Eth. Nicod. iii, 1) has mentioned sufficient reason why we are all subject to loves and laws, relations and restraints we know not of, that external constraint keeps us all from relapsing into barbarism, and that civilization would very soon come to a sorry mess if we were all as selfish and ignorant and grasping as we secretly want to be. The disputed question as to just what degree our would-be free-agency is interfered with by penalties and pains, deception and ignorance and other derelict device, is of no serious consequence at all compared with the miserably cheap and archaic affair our civilization would soon become if the world had no one but fools and rogues to make up its personnel. The clever sophists shirk and ridicule man's proper duties enough already, without giving them *more* fools to victimize and fatten on.

Our future social combat will probably have to do first with dissipating that moral cretinism which borders on stupidity and irresponsibility when a person is incompetent from sheer neglect and malnutrition of conscience; when that is once well under way and begins to give promise of man's moral redemption, we may then expect that there will be a popular regard for that rare discrimination which sees that concupiscence and purified desire, the sensual appetite and the *amor amicitiae*, are as diametrically opposite as the poles. But it will be a hard fight to disaffect the scoundrel's wicked emotional complex, to purge his will and crafty deeds of their specious valor, to prevent his cunning exploits from injuring or misleading others. There are hopeful signs however, for right today we are becoming suspicious of the blatant "security" and sincerity of laws which do not guard against the rogue as well as against the fool; laws under the heading of *Caveat Vendor*, instead of *Caveat*

Emptor, will give this matter closer consideration than it received at the hands of the Romans who seemed more lenient or tolerant and did not consider malice, fraud or bad faith as cases under *dolus malus*.

But if we are really bent on assaying a full assignment of all instruments and accessories to a common valuum for morality and art, we cannot be too stringent on what others do, for they may not intend to misquote their lines at all; and anyway, if we are open to the various suggestions of others, we may find occasional items of original theory or practice which will prevent our valuum from becoming specialistic and provincial. As with some of the hard-won philosophical values of science and sociology, we might then discover that "our rules of three for *Artistrie*" were after all not so irreducible nor even so problematic as we had superficially thought; the real struggle having been against our own affective prejudices and functional inertia. We should learn first of all that humanity cannot achieve much in the way of ethical stability or social justice until we have cultivated to some appreciable degree of power and expression a spiritual aesthetic which is at once valid in theory and virtuous in practice. Until this view of honest constructiveness in all our social activities, which are based primarily on moral and aesthetic considerations, is recognized as a prime necessity and emulated as the most exemplary form of intelligent social life, we can only expect the world to continue on its crude vulgarian course while the derivation and defense of our valuum might aim nominally at serving an aesthetic morality, but will really be still specious and variable. For this reason I do not think that our present precarious situation in either art or morality can be relieved in the least by our continued pursuit of the current eleutheromania (freedom-madness) which seems to be on the verge of debauching the whole contemporary era.

Something constructive in this direction can be realized I believe by using control experiments to either prove our purposes worthy and defensible or else to gradually eliminate all the antithetical moods which thwart and mock our better nature. In either case it will be no easy quondam affair of snap judgment and lazy Jenkins-gestures, for if our action-patterns are properly derived and serve us right, we will find that even philosophical speculation under test conditions usually has to eliminate, or at least expurgate with drastic energy, nearly all of our pet hypotheses before it can get rid of the problems of the *given* world, and have an open field for the dis-

covery of what is real and true. On the borderland of philosophic departure we will be able to see the romantic irony of those two epigrams of Pope and Heinie which read about the same, saying:

“One science only will our genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit.”

Real culture always starts with the individual himself making the first venture away from his petty personal aims and wishes, out into that larger world where duty, art, benevolence and public joy demand that he no longer live only for his own smug selfish sake. In more general terms it means that in order to have a real civilization, a real cultural process pursued as a moral aesthetic and determined to achieve something ethically constructive, spiritually worthy and socially ennobling, we must first have a real human aspiration and upright desire: second, in order to have an honest and upstanding aspiration we must first have that driving sufficiency of force known to better minds as a good and powerful conscience, the will-to-hold-Goodness, Truth and Beauty uppermost in life and thought: and third, in order to have this irrepressible power of will and conscience we must first have sensed in some substantial degree the existence of a living wakeful soul within us that can serve as foundation, model, plan, and finished memorial to house all our hopes and aims and efforts toward the meliorism of our half-profane life in a half-holy world. But the new recruit must preserve an individual loyalty and responsibility, and not let himself be lost in the mad whirl of social life, else he soon find himself derelict and abandoned. He does well to be fascinated by the cultural adventure, but he should watch his log and chart and compass the while he is out a-venturing.

Cultural education is a vain mockery when it lacks the moral atmosphere. We may be ever so industrious to build up imposing economic organizations, work out ingenious industrial schemes, or even produce more or less monumental works in science, philosophy or art, but if we have brought no deliberate moral sense, no conscientious precision and loyalty to the ethical logistic of our activity, to the scene of our accomplishment, what more than an idle piece of worldliness have we put our talents to? Do we really have any just claim on immortality or any other durable reward in such culpable circumstance? I hardly believe so. Even when an erstwhile genius owes his rent and finds that he *must* produce something to recoup his dwindling fortune, regardless of beauty, use or virtue,

any facetious phase of audacity or indubitable charm of expression which he may happily strike upon will not redeem his default of the moral pledge. Any such subterfuge would mean that his livelihood was made in pretense of some phase of culture and art, that he had cast off the burden of moral restraint in favor of mere vendibility or other vulgar patronage, and that he seeks to please a questionable clientele already wayward and incorrigible. All such despicable treachery to cultural education, ever since the monthly paydays of Protagoras and Gorgias, has been the rhyomist's perennial refuge, a damp and dreadful dugout where he can find false security from the fatal judgment of Time and the truer critics of valid motivation. I cannot see, for the life of me, how any sane responsible genius can find any inspiration for his art in soliloquies from sophistry's salon, in dishabille and procuration.

But, however this condition may be caused or remedied, it remains a fact that the critical values follow rather than precede the cultural values whether the particular field of action be that of philosophy and art or religion and morality. Accordingly then, we must recognize first that cultural education in its full significance does not mean only a bare intellectual refinement or vocational instruction, but comprises also those various contacts with the aesthetic and spiritual world as will make for introstruction and ennoblement through the clear understanding and spontaneous practice of religious, moral, social and other inter-ethical principles. With this well in mind we will then recognize and accept the fact that our truer life as intelligent social beings depends upon a more virtuous valium than is ever argued by the rhyomistic rogue or foolish hedonist. Some people do not seem to think that neither morality nor art would be possible were it not for a staunch and strenuous sincerity in just this sort of cultural education, that it even includes passional reclamation and the rebalancing of lost powers in motive-choice and actional discrimination, such being the physical approach to the affective relay of the secondary moral influences in any real or honestly cultural exertion. Take away the necessary function of any organized procedure and its structure will soon degenerate and atrophy; take away the cultural values which label the function of morality and art in human life and see how soon the social structure degenerates, see how soon the critical values become decadent with false argument if not in time debauched also with downright delinquency and every other derelict device of sophistry and spoliation.

Such a resolution and reconstitution of our aesthetic valuism does not afford us any thaumaturgy of absolute morality or implastic art-creation; but it should afford us new and juster grounds for understanding our proper limitations and doing our proper duties relative to both morality and art. Both conscience and creative power should be the primary attributes of every bonafide artistic genius, and having these he can go on toward his chosen work with confidence that he will not fall far short of the ethical as well as cultural influence demanded of his artistic accomplishments. If nothing more it would serve him as a philosophical refuge where he could retire from the mad usury of the moiling world and there preserve his own integrity and innocence safe and secure from any umbrage or intrusion. Under pain of this apparently forced asceticism the most fundamental cultural discrimination, I might say, is that of the noble-minded and conscientious genius who has the world's aesthetic welfare at heart but fears for its moral probity, and therefore takes great care to forestall all vendible values or interpretations being put upon his art by choosing only those vehicles of expression, feeling, thought or action-pattern as will best serve the spirit and the symbolism of his high affective purpose. In this more or less fond resort he will prove himself an exacting connoisseur of pure aesthetic motives, a consecrated spirit whose membership in that august society of affective thinkers who *think in hemispheres* proves that he is by nature fitted to think in terms of cosmic truth and act in terms of humanitarian love and benediction. Even though he belonged to a group of thinkers such as the New England Transcendentalists and could achieve only a naive realization of the extent to which his efforts were aesthetically cultural upon society at large, could we justly deny him the solace of our sympathy or the sanction of our supporting patronage simply because he could not prophesy for us the full course of his art's development? The fault for such a gross misunderstanding would rest with us, and not with him.

Aesthetic morality is a delicate subject. That is, it bears many possibilities of delicate discrimination regarding human nature, culture, character, and motivation. There are even great and pronounced differences between masculine and feminine opinion as to what constitutes truth, reality, justice, wisdom, honor, virtue and beauty. Men, however, are the born philosophers for they live objective lives and long ago learned to test everything according to objective valuation. Women are the born companions and exem-

plars for they are forever occupied with subjective interests and supply new problematic thrills when man has wearied of his struggle with the hard external world. Man's sense of beauty rests in cosmic truth while woman's lies in cosmetic imitation. Man wants his wisdom, truth and beauty adorned with various ornaments and symbols, but woman never recognizes them until they are about half-naked from intensive adaptation and analysis. The situation is another fairly representative instance of the contrast between ampliative and categorical judgments, and no attempt to present a philosophical conception of the moralism of art can be considered a valid procedure unless it gives some attention to their differing valuations of the esthete's peirastic ideal.

Ampliative judgments in morality and art are not limited to bare testimony out of the subject alone, to the bare elements of knowledge or experience which are elicited only through analysis of the subject in hand. They look beyond the empirical dative, trying to read some clear supplementary message of the loves and laws, relations and restraints, ethical influences and compound social functions which are additional predications of fact or act not to be found immediately from bare examination or analysis of the subject. Thus, private morality may spring from a live and dominant conscience in the individual, but its full value and understanding by anyone else involves comparison and appreciation in conjunction with the moral code of society, the morality which is a product of the various consciences of others. It cannot operate as self-sufficient or solipsistic because its operation takes place in a public organism whose best interests are not served by any form of selfish individualism however clever or domineering. So too with activities in pursuit of art, the immediate aesthetic inspiration or delight may be fairly limited to subjective receipt and function, but we can predicate many additional features as soon as we look at it as one member only in the whole field of human culture and spiritual expression. In this larger aspect all the functions of artistic genius are seen to have greater honors, nobler aims, and more profound cultural values. No educated mind is sufficiently naïve to give purely analytical judgment on any subject; it knows too many items of autral relationship to hold itself down to any such logical naïvete. This indicates why there is a whole psychology textbook full of arguments to prove that value-judgments are always synthetic, always ampliative, because the human mind cannot help casting them in retrospect of experience in other fields of knowledge and cultural endeavor.

Still, it is just this empirical ground which is most often questioned by the philosophers of "pure" aesthetics, asking whether it is a valid hypothesis on which to hang all the laws and prophets of art. With them, purity of judgment means affirmation of what is innate or substantive only, giving no thought or attention to what is acquisitive or ampliative. And if we only *assume* that our empirical preclusion from any certain subject is just and complete, then we too can agree that our judgments on that subject can be made similarly affirmative and "pure." Unfortunately however, neither morality nor art can very honestly or consistently be considered subject to any empirical preclusion on our part, although they do very often suffer for our ignorance and incompetence. Categorical judgments, with Aristotle, were always affirmative; mere negative findings do not justify changing or replacing any judgment which is first posited as covering a whole positive or categorical series. And, being always affirmative of the first primary and absolute significance, a categorical judgment will always affirm what is entital, innate and substantive. It will have no sympathy to share with the connotative valuism which seeks the supplementary company of secondary functions, the conditional and relational significance of things, for in its viewpoint all attribution and implication are adjectival procedures, and in such measure they are adulterous and *impure*. The Hegelians and neo-Aristotelians even go further, saying that under the "new logic" also of evolutionary formulae and evolutionistic debate from Spencer to Bergson the nature of valid thought is not altered when its modus operandi only is changed or revised. The same subject can have various functions, aims or moods without in the least becoming a different subject. Diversity of outward form or aspect does not necessarily indicate any essential diversity of inward nature or disposition. The categorical judgment, then, remains the same whether it applies to a static or dynamic, a conservative or a progressive series. It is made *simpliciter* and has no homage due to the varying fortunes of external relations or conditional welfare; otherwise it would not be categorical or substantive, but merely hypothetical, adjectival and predicative.

Here then are the two great dialectic adversaries face to face in the arena of morality and art. The anxiety that some sort of common valuism for both these zones of human cultural achievement should be arrived at, has turned into the anxiety (nay, the apprehensive dread!) that they are apt to be smothered and mangled

beyond all recognition under the mad stampede of Kantian rationalism, Hegelian terminology, and logical psychologism. But no; not so callously do I intend to abandon either subject to such undeserved disaster for either under cold Kantian categorical absolutes or on top of hot Bergsonian *elans et nerf-fevres* I am afraid the moral aesthetic would soon take sick and fare no better than the romantic morality of Schiller or Swinburne.