

A sense of style is the reason for the feeling of dissatisfaction with which we regard all inadequacies and reject all exaggerations.

In speaking of the arts, the word style can be used only in the figurative sense. It is not the stylus, burin, pen, brush, or any other implement that can be standard for estimating the work, but the way in which it is employed. Style is not simply craftsmanship or technique, which help to form it, but composition, the ability to give animated representation to an idea in its essential form. This always means the expression of a mental and spiritual individuality, namely a composition which bears the impress of, and is animated by, the character of its author and of his work, without which component it is nothing but a meaningless mannerism and vain pose.

Perfect style is the result of the triple combination of the author, the idea and the material. It is achieved only when the author, in dealing with the subject, pays regard to the kind of idea and material, and when he is a master of both. Hence every kind of representation and every art has, in the first place, the style of its character, which depends on the idea, the means, and the material which it employs. Building, painting, portraiture, speaking, authorship, musical composition, and acting are different forms of expression and composition, each of which must be treated in its own way, for they all have their own laws. Anyone infringing these laws commits a breach of style, and must not be surprised if he is found to be lacking in style. For style is not free will but the will to characterization, and emanates directly from naturalness. Style is formed when the creative idea arranges the form on the basis of the essentials. Every potsherd excavated and every implement or pictorial representation from the earliest days of mankind is evidence of this. If the naturalness is spoiled, and if the sense and natural feeling for reality and essentials are also lacking, the result, instead of being a composition, is merely a poor piece of work which may show evidence of special technique but which has no special life. As an expression of what is animated, the formation of a style depends, of course, in the first place, on the kind of people who develop it, but also on all the phenomena and conditions of the time and place which affect the creative character, regardless of whether the place is taken to be the cosmos or the earth, namely by the sun, moon and stars, the climate and the landscape. The conceptions of Nature and the world are capable of infinite extension and limitation, in the same way as the possibilities of the emotions which move the feelings, and thus exercise influence on the kind of composition.

Style is the sign of arriving at a convention with reality in all due form. This convention may be peaceful or militant, gay or serious, mild or strict, profane or sacred, humble or proud, and give the style a charming, heroic or sublime character. Cult and style are inseparably connected, for a style can be formed only by devout cultivation of character. Thus style, as an expression of character, tempera-

ment, time, and place, becomes a characteristic of the cultivation and the culture, personal culture or community culture, such as is found in the character of a family, a people, a generation or an era, in the character of an art, an ideology or a religion.

Wherever there is natural life in the sense of reality, a style must develop in regular composition. Having its origin in a movement, style becomes a sign of intellectual life. Every gesture and every way of moving, walking, or dancing can have style. Hence the phenomenon of style is almost as old as the human race. As soon as man or a human community is moved by the character of things to give them creative form, the first simple forms develop all the characteristics of style, which are so clear from the very start to the present day that their differences permit of determining the age to which they belong. Style reflects the ideology and mental attitude towards life of a creative individual and of a creative people. Otherwise how could it be possible to speak of the style of old and new masters, of an Egyptian, Greek, Gothic, or Romanesque style, of a Chinese style, or of the style of a period like the Renaissance? The description always applies to the characteristic expression of a personality, of a community of people or of a period whose peculiarities are sufficiently marked and definite to find involuntary expression. In doing so the peculiarities are so clear, and the differences between the various styles so noticeable, that the influence exercised by one style on another, such as that of the Hellenic on the later Egyptian, can be easily recognized.

"Style is the physiognomy of the spirit. It is more unmistakable than that of the body. To copy an alien style is like wearing a mask", said Schopenhauer on one occasion, and it is true. In the individuality of a style there is something which cannot be copied, which can perhaps be carefully imitated with intellectual disinterestedness, but not selfishly copied without betraying its inner spuriousness. In any case the copy is not only evidence of creative poverty, for what is more, it is proof of lack of a sense of reality, and hence of ability to appreciate the life and essential conditions of one's own environment and one's own times. The mask of the alien style conceals a personal intellectual weakness. All copyists lack a personal feeling for style. They take the style as a fact, and not as reality, and think that they can adopt and own it without risk. That applies both to individuals and to peoples. When the Roman Empire had reached an eminent degree of civilization and had, consequently, no time left for its own culture, the culture and style of Greece were adopted as the fashion. Its world of facts and questions of power had but little sense left for reality. As matters of culture were regarded, from the strictly business point of view, as a luxury and not as a necessity, the adoption of an alien culture and an alien style became a question of technique, money,