

THE SWAYING FORM

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A Problem in Poetry

BY HOWARD NEMEROV

THE present essay is not an attempt to solve a problem so much as an attempt to make certain that a problem of some sort exists, and, if it does, to put it clearly before you. No matter how many problems really exist—and now, as at all times, there must be plenty of them—the world is always full of people inventing problems simply as make-works for their prefabricated solutions. As a friend of mine wrote in a prize-winning poem at college, “We know the answers, but shall we be asked the questions?” He has since become a novelist.

The problem I want to try to elucidate is most often discussed as one of belief, or of value, which is prior to poetry, and the great instance of Dante's *Comedy* stands at the gate of the discussion. It is usually argued on this basis that an explicit and systematized belief is (a) intrinsically of value to the poet in his composition and (b) a means for improving his communication with the mass of mankind.

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Now I shall be taking up this theme by what many people will consider to be the wrong end, and talking from the point of view of the poet. My reflections are very far from being impartial and objective, and positively invite objections, or even cries of protest. I shall be suggesting, roughly, that the poet, if he has not attained to a belief in the existence of God, has at any rate got so far as to believe in the existence of the world; and that this, sadly but truly, puts him, in the art of believing, well out in front of many of his fellow-citizens, who sometimes look as if they believed the existence of the world to be pretty well encompassed in the sensations they experience when they read a copy of *Time*. (These, by the way, are the people who, adapting a metaphor of Aristotle's, think of poetry as a gentle laxative for the emotions.)

SO WHEN I hear discussions, or see symptoms, of some *rapprochement* between religion and the arts—A has written a passion play in modern dress, B has composed an atonal oratorio, C has done murals for the little church in the hometown which he left thirty years ago to become a not quite first-rate cubist with a world reputation—my response is not one of unmixed happiness, and I incline to see, in the characteristic imagery of this period, religion and the arts as two great corporations, each composed of many subsidiary companies but both in roughly the same line of busi-

ness, circling each other warily in the contemplation of a merger, wondering meanwhile where the ultimate advantage will lie, and utterly unable to find out. To unfold a little this metaphor, I should say that in my view the persons seated around the conference table on this occasion are not the inventors of the product—not the prophets, saints, teachers, and great masters of art—but the usual vice-presidents, accountants, and lawyers on either side; the bishops and grand inquisitors, the critics and epimethean pedagogues who arbitrate these matters.

In other words, between ourselves and any clear view of the problematic area lies the Plain of Shinar, where the usual construction work is going forward vigorously, and the serious planners exchange their watchwords: "culture," "responsibility," "values," and "communication." In this Babel, the word "religion" may mean "weekly attendance at the church of your choice," or it may mean the sort of thing that happened to Job—impossible to say. Similarly, the word "art" may be applied equally to the forty-eight preludes and fugues and to advertisements for whisky. That these things are so says nothing against either whisky or church attendance, but may be seriously damaging to art and religion.

Somewhere toward the beginning of things the two have a connection; as our somewhat frequently employed word "crea-

tive" will suggest. "Non merita il nome di creatore," said Tasso, "si non Iddio od il poeta." Clear enough: God and the poet alone deserve to be called creative, because they both create things. The recent history of this word is revealing: one reads, e.g., of "creative advertising," "creative packaging," and the possibility of becoming

"a creative consumer." A dialect usage may be equally revealing: the mother says of her infant, "he is creating again," meaning either that the child is kicking up an awful fuss, or that he has soiled his diaper.



HOWARD NEMEROV
Hopwood Lecturer for 1959

THE RELATION OF religion to more worldly activities is frequently characterized by extreme positions. To show what I hope I am not talking about, I shall give an example of each. Here is the extreme whereby religion, in seeking a connection with the world, becomes worldly itself:

SEES BOOM IN RELIGION, TOO

Atlantic City, June 23 (1957) AP.—President

Eisenhower's pastor said tonight that Americans are living in a period of "unprecedented religious activity" caused partially by paid vacations, the eight-hour day, and modern conveniences.

"These fruits of material progress," said the Rev. Edward L. R. Elson of the National Presbyterian Church, Washington, "have provided the leisure, the energy, and the means for a level of human and spiritual values never before reached."

Despite an air of farcical silliness which will accompany any display of *hubris* which

is at the same time unheroic, this statement—a kind of cartoonist's exaggeration of what one suspects is the real belief of many right-thinking persons—does fix the attention on a real question: whether it is possible for a religious attitude to exist in the acceptance of prosperity, and with its face set against suffering; a question near the heart of Christianity, and a question asked over and over, always to be answered negatively, in the Old Testament, where any statement that "the land had rest for so and so many years" is certain to be followed by the refrain, "And the children of Israel did evil *again* in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth . . ."

The opposed extreme, wherein religion purifies itself quite out of the world, may likewise be identified by anecdote. At a conference on Elizabethan and seventeenth century poetry, where a number of college students presented papers for discussion, the first three or four essays dealt with the lyrics of such poets as Campion and Herrick; after which a most serious young man arose, frowning, to say that his topic was George Herbert. He completed his impromptu introduction by saying, "We have heard a good deal this morning on the subject of *Love*; well, now we must turn our attention to an entirely different and more serious topic: *Religion*." This inadvertence, I am sorry to say, seemed to me the revelation of something sad and true in attitudes bearing the official institutional name of religious attitudes. We might compare a remark of Yeats, that only two subjects are of interest to a serious intelligence: sex and the dead.

II

BUT OUR problem may be as easily obscured from the other side, the side which professes to be that of art, as from the side of religion. If we look to that great arena of the war of words where there are no poems but only Poetry, no

paintings but only Art, we find statements of similar monolithic simplicity, which affect to find nothing problematic in the matter at all.

In that arena, for example, a well-known literary journalist has recently written (*New York Times* Book Review, May 3, 1959): "What the arts, literature included, need more than anything else just now, is a declaration of faith—faith in man's potentialities, faith in God, however you may conceive Him."

As a citizen, I may incline to accept the vague benevolence of all this. But as a practitioner of the art of writing, I am bored and disturbed by this sort of loose talk; just as I should probably be, were I a member of some religious community, by the pseudo-liberality of that casual rider to the idea of God—"however you may conceive Him." Again we might compare the view of an artist, in the saying of Joseph Conrad that it is the object of art to render the highest kind of justice to the *visible world*: "It is above all, in the first place, to make you see."

By such exclusions I come to some definition of my theme: the elucidation of what things may be called religious in poetical works and in the professional attitude of the artist to the making of such works.

EVEN in this somewhat narrower definition, the problem is not easy to focus. I shall be trying to say that the artist's relation to spiritual and eternal things is comprised rather in the form of his work than in its message or its content; but that form is itself somewhat elusive, as I have indicated in titling these reflections "The Swaying Form" after the following passage in Florio's translation of Montaigne: "There is no man (if he listen to himself) that doth not discover in himselfe a peculiar forme of his, a swaying forme, which wrestleth against the art* and the institu-

* The phrase about "the art" is not included in all editions.

tion, and against the tempest of passions, which are contrary unto him."

Florio's somewhat dreamlike English duplicates nicely the possibilities of Montaigne's phrase, "une forme maistresse." The form, that is, is simultaneously ruling and very variable, or fickle; shifting and protean as the form of water in a stream, where it is difficult or impossible to divide what remains from what runs away. The passage, read in this way, speaks of something in us which is double in nature, on both sides of things at once or by turns. And I would identify this "forme" with the impulse to art, the energy or libido which makes works of art. It is no paradox to say that the artistic impulse fights against "the art," for anyone who persists in this business knows that a part of his struggle is precisely against "the art," that is, against the accepted and settled standards of art in his time.

So this "forme" has the following characteristics. It is (1) allied with religion, for it is against "the tempest of passions" and thus in favor of control, discipline, *askesis*, renunciation. But it is (2) opposed to religion, for it is also against "the institution," that is, against church, state, dogma, or any fixed habit of the mind. Finally, it is (3) against something in its own nature, called "the art," against, perhaps, the idea of form itself.

For a curious tension exists between poetry and belief, idea, principle, or reason. That is, while we hear a good deal about poetry's need to be based upon an explicit view of the meaning of existence, we are very often bored and exasperated by the poetry which testifies to such a view, and incline to say that it is bad poetry precisely in the degree that the poet has insisted on referring the natural world to prior religious or philosophic valuations.

PERHAPS it will be illuminating now if I try to sum up the swaying form, this complicated condition of the mind, by

imagining a poet at his table in the morning. He faces the blank page, the page faces his mind—which, if it is not also a blank, is a palimpsest on which fractions of world, which he receives chiefly through language, are continually being recorded and erased and coming into strange, dissolving relations to one another; these are, for the most part, not the consequential relations of thought, but rather insanely atomic instead.

To be piously in keeping with the values of the age, I imagine this poet as asking himself, "What can I afford this morning?" And going on to consider the possibilities, or impossibilities: A little *saeva indignatio*? Something smart and severe in a toga? A romantic pathos, or pathology, with wild glances *de chez* Hölderlin? The dewy freshness of an early lyricism, say about the period of Skelton and really, after all, noncommittal? And so on, since the alternatives are very numerous.

There is only one, however, which now arises to give him trouble: "How about me? Shall I be me? And who is that?" He looks doubtfully at his tweeds, his grey flannels, stares at his alert (but modern, but rootless) face in the mirror, and tries to view that crew-cut in quick succession as a Franciscan tonsure, an Augustan wig, a Romantic disorder. No good. He would like to be himself, but acknowledges that himself is poetically not what most interests him, nor what is likely to interest others very much. Sighing, he wonders if poetry, if all great effort in the world, does not involve a necessary hypocrisy (even if one calls it, more politely, not hypocrisy but drama or metaphor, a necessary approach by analogy), and now he gratefully recalls having read somewhere (it was in Castiglione, but he likes the elegant indolence of "somewhere") that Julius Caesar wore a laurel crown to disguise the fact that he was bald. Encouraged a little, he jots down a note reducing to iambic pentameter mighty Caesar—

Who hid his baldness in a laurel crown
—and adds, in prose: "Poets do this, too." Comforted, he occupies the rest of the morning contemplating the publication of a small volume of epigrams on this theme. But come lunchtime, his wife having uncanned a can of alphabet soup which seems to him the image of his condition, the problem remains: Hypocrisy. Seeming, Angelo, seeming. The truest poetry is the most feigning. But is it, really? And how shall we edify the common reader this afternoon? By being Plato? Moody and Sankey? The Pope? Alexander Pope? How shall we solve the problems of society? Affirm the eternal verities? Become rich and famous and sought-after for our opinions (the filing cabinet is full of them) on all sorts of important themes?

No, this will never do. Hypocrisy merges with cynicism. Where is that portrait of Keats?

And so the weary circle begins again. Only once in a while it opens, as something comes into his head and he suddenly commits a poem. At that time, curiously, he does not worry in the least about whether this poem faithfully represents himself, his beliefs, values, tensions, or the absence of all these. He simply writes the poem.

By this ordinary anguish, occasionally relieved in action, a great deal of literature, both good and bad, gets itself produced.

THE TROUBLES of this hypothetical or generalized poet will perhaps strike some of you as very literary, over-educated, or even positively neurasthenic, and you may be inclined to say impatiently to him, "Fool, look in thy heart and write," not caring to consider that when Sir Philip Sidney made this excellent recommendation, he was speaking, just like our poet, to himself. And, too, such is the confusion over these things, instructions to look in one's heart and write may turn out translated for practical purposes in weird ways,

e.g.: "Look in thy heart and be big, free and sloppy, like Whitman, who is now becoming fashionable again." There is no end, except for that poem once in a while, to the poet's ability at perverting sound doctrine.

If the foregoing description is even partly applicable to the poetic process, it will be plain that the world will wait a long time for "a declaration of faith" in the poems of this poet. It may also be a consequence of his problem with his identity that a good deal of modern poetry is poetry about the problem, poetry which reveals to interpretation one reflective dimension having to do with the process of composition itself. This development, where the mind curves back upon itself, may be always a limit, not only for poetry but for every kind of thought, for that "speculation" which Shakespeare says "turns not to itself till it hath travel'd and is mirror'd there where it may see itself," adding that "this is not strange at all." But perhaps it has become more strange in the present age, that palace of mirrors where, says Valéry, the lonely lamp is multiplied, or where, as Eliot says, we multiply variety in a wilderness of mirrors, and where the "break-through," so pathetically and often discussed in relation to all contemporary arts, is most faithfully imagined in Alice's adventure through the looking-glass, the last consequence of narcissism and "incest of spirit" (Allen Tate, "Last Days of Alice") being the explosion into absurdity, very frequently followed by silence.

Silence, alas, may be preferable to the demand of "educators" that the poet should affirm something (anything?) or the often iterated instruction of certain literary persons that he should *communicate* (what?). But silence, for anyone who has set out to be a poet, is an unlovely alternative, containing in itself some religious (that is, some sinful) implication of being too good for this world, so that many poets accept the disabilities of their elected condition by

making many small refusals to prevent one great one. The vanities of publication, these seem to say, are better than the silences of pride. And so, for them, the weary round begins again after every poem, as they seek over and over an image of their being: hermit crabs, crawling unprotected from one deserted shell to the next, finding each time a temporary home which, though by no means a perfect fit, is better at any rate than their nakedness.

It is gratuitous, or even impertinent after all this, and surely offers no defense, to say that they sometimes write good poems in their planetary course from house to house. What can we possibly mean, now, by *a good poem*? Let that be another circle, in another hell. While the present purpose is to say something about the process itself, the kind of relation with the world which results in poetic writings and is an attempt to fix for a moment the swaying form.

III

WHEN people are impatient with a work of art they assert their feeling in this way: "What does it mean?" Their tone of voice indicates that this is the most natural question in the world, the demand which they have the most immediate and God-given right to make. So their absolute condemnation and dismissal of a work of art is given in this way: "It doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean anything *to me*." Only in those plaintive last words does there appear a tiny and scarcely acknowledged doubt of the all-sufficiency of this idea of meaning—that there may actually be meanings, which one does not personally possess.

Now we are all forced to believe about large areas of the world's work that this is so: that all around us physicists, financiers, and pharmacists are conducting complex operations which do have meaning though we do not know what it is. While we may occasionally wonder if those emperors are in fact wearing any clothes, we more usually

allow that our bewilderment belongs to ourselves and does not say anything destructive about those disciplines in themselves, even where they do not produce any overwhelmingly obvious practical result such as an atomic explosion. But about works of art we continue to ask that question, "what do they mean?" and regard the answer to it as somehow crucial.

In a realm of contemplation, the question about meaning could, though it generally does not, begin a chain reaction involving the whole universe, since the answer can be given only in terms to which the same question is again applicable. But because we are well-mannered people, or because we haven't the time, or really don't care, or because we are in fact reassured and consoled by receiving an answer—any answer—we know where to stop. So that a large part of our intellectual operations takes inevitably the following form:

A. Why is the grass green?

B. Because of the chlorophyll.

A. Oh.

So, in a realm of contemplation, meaning would itself be inexplicable. The typewriters rattle, the telephones ring, the moving finger keeps writing one triviality after another, the great gabble of the world goes incessantly on as people translate, encipher, decipher, as one set of words is transformed more or less symmetrically into another set of words—whereupon someone says, "O, now I understand. . . ."

BUT THE question about meaning attests, wherever it is asked, the presence of civilization with all its possibilities, all its limitations; attests the presence of *language*, that vast echoing rattle and sibilance, buzzing between ourselves and whatever it is we presume we are looking at, experiencing, being in, and which sometimes appears to have an independent value, if any at all, like the machine someone built a few years back, which had thousands of moving parts and no function. The se-

manticist to the contrary, words are things, though not always the things they say they are. The painter Delacroix expressed it by saying that Nature is a dictionary. Everything is there, but not in the order one needs. The universe itself, so far as we relate ourselves to it by the mind, may be not so much a meaning as a rhythm, a continuous articulation of question and answer, question and answer, a musical dialectic precipitating out moments of meaning which become distinct only as one wave does in a sea of waves. "You think you live under universal principles," said Montaigne, "but in fact they are municipal by-laws."

Language, then, is the marvelous mirror of the human condition, a mirror so miraculous that it can see what is invisible, that is, the relations between things. At the same time, the mirror is a limit, and as such it is sorrowful; one wants to break it and look beyond. But unless we have the singular talent for mystical experience we do not really break the mirror, and even the mystic's experience is available to us only as reflected, inadequately, in the mirror. Most often man deals with reality by its reflection. That is the sense of Perseus' victory over the Gorgon by consenting to see her only in the mirror of his shield, and it is the sense of the saying in Corinthians that we see now as through a glass darkly—a phrase rendered by modern translators as "now we see as in a little mirror."

Civilization, mirrored in language, is the garden where relations grow; outside the garden is the wild abyss. Poetry, an art of fictions, illusions, even lies—"Homer," said Aristotle, "first taught us the art of framing lies in the right way"—poetry is the art of contemplating this situation in the mirror of language.

"Only connect . . ." is the civilized and civilizing motto of a book by E. M. Forster, where he speaks eloquently of meaning, art and order in "the world of telegrams and anger," and of what exists outside that

world: "panic and emptiness, panic and emptiness." W. H. Auden, also very eloquently, writes of the limiting extremes within which meaning means, between "the ocean flats where no subscription concerts are given" and "the desert plain where there is nothing for lunch."

BUT MEANING, like religion, seeks of its own nature to monopolize experience. For example, in children's playbooks there are numbered dots to be followed in sequence by the pencil; the line so produced finally becomes recognizable as a shape. So the lines produced among stars (which can scarcely all be in the same plane) become the geometrical abstractions of a Bear, a Wagon, Orion the Hunter, and by softening or humanizing the outlines, recognizable images are produced, but in the process the stars themselves have to be omitted. So does meaning at first simplify and afterward supersede the world. Poetry, I would say, is, in its highest ranges, no mere playing with the counters of meaning, but a perpetual re-deriving of the possibility of meaning from matter, of the intelligible world from the brute recalcitrance of things. Poetry differs from thought in this respect, that thought eats up the language in which it thinks. Thought is proud, and always wants to forget its humble origin in things. In doing so, it begins to speak by means of very elevated abstractions which quickly become emptied and impoverished. The business of poetry is to bring thought back into relation with the five wits, the five senses which Blake calls "the chief inlets of soul in this age," to show how our discontents, as Shakespeare finely says of Timon's, "are unremovably coupled to nature." So the ivory tower must always be cut from the horn of Behemoth.

The relation of poetry to religion is both intimate and antithetical, for poetry exists only by a continuing revelation in a world always incarnate of word and flesh indissolubly, a world simultaneously solid and

transpicuous. At the same time, religion can never really dissociate itself from poetry and the continuing revelation, and its attempts to do so turn it into a form of literary criticism, as the scriptures and sacred books of the world, in comparison with their interminable commentaries, will sufficiently show. Poetry and institutionalized religion are in a sense the flowing and the static forms of the same substance, liquid and solid states of the same elemental energy.

This is a simple thing; it has been said many times and forgotten many times plus one. William Blake says it this way:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the Genius of each city and country, placing it under its Mental Deity;

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, and enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realise or abstract the Mental Deities from their objects—thus began Priesthood;

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.

Thus men forgot that All Deities reside in the Human Breast.

THE POET'S business, I would say, is to name as accurately as possible a situation, but a situation which he himself is in. The name he gives ought to be so close a fit with the actuality it summons into being that there remains no room between inside and outside; the thought must be "like a beast moving in its skin" (Dante). If he does his work properly, there won't be any other name for the situation (and for his being in it) than the one he invents, or, rather, his name will swallow up all the others as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of Pharaoh's wizards.

Sometimes the name so given is a rela-

tively simple one, as when Alexander Pope gave the Prince of Wales a dog, and had inscribed on its collar:

I am his Highness' dog at Kew.
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?

And sometimes the name so given, the situation thus identified and brought into being, is immensely complex, so that one has to refer to it by a tag, an abbreviation, e.g., "King Lear."

A poem, whether of two lines or ten thousand, is therefore the name of something, and in its ideal realm of fiction or illusion it corresponds to what is said of the Divine Name in several significant respects:

It is unique.

It can never be repeated.

It brings into being the situation it names, and is therefore truly a creation.

It is secret, even while being perfectly open and public, for it defines a thing which could not have been known without it.

As to the poet himself, one might add this. Writing is a species of *askesis*, a persevering devotion to the energy passing between self and world. It is a way of living, a way of being, and, though it does produce results in the form of "works," these may come to seem of secondary importance to the person so engaged.

The young writer is always told (he was, anyhow, when I was young) that writing means first and last "having something to say." I cherish as a souvenir of boyhood that honorable and aged platitude, but would like to modify it by this addition: writing means trying to find out what the nature of things has to say about what you think you have to say. And the process is reflective or cyclical, a matter of feedback between oneself and "it," an "it" which can gain its identity only in the course of being brought into being, come into being only in the course of finding its identity. This is a

matter, as Lu Chi says, of how to hold the axe while you are cutting its handle.

I say that writing is a species of *askesis*. But as it works in an ideal or fictional, rather than in a practical, realm, so it purifies not the character but the style. There is, however, a connection between the two, at least in the hope that a charity of the imagination shall be not quite the same thing as an imaginary charity.

IV

THAT, then, is what I have tried to characterize as "the swaying form," a process of becoming related to nature and the nature of things (*natura naturata* and *natura naturans*). The view here taken suggests that art has some evident affinities with both religion and science on the very simple basis that all three exist in the presumption that the truth is possible to be told about existence; but these affinities themselves also define differences, distances, and intrinsic antagonisms.

As to art's relation with science. The experimental method was defined, by Galileo, I believe, as putting nature to the question, where "the question" meant the judicial process of torture. The definition seems to imply a faith that nature, so treated, will reveal the secret name for a situation; when once that situation has been isolated, treated as a situation in itself and considered for a moment apart from the flux of all things, nature will, as it were, confess her presumably guilty secret.

Well, the artist, it seems to me, works on a not so different principle, leading from hypothesis—"what will happen to this noble nature if it can be led to believe Desdemona unfaithful?"—through experiment—the question as put by Iago—to result, to "the tragic loading of this bed." In this sense, and not in the fashionable popular sense, art is "experimental," and its methods to a certain extent resemble those of the laboratory; art, too, produces its process under controlled and limiting conditions,

cutting away irrelevancies, speeding up or slowing down the reaction under study, so that the results, whatever they may be, will stand forth with a singular purity and distinction. The instruments of science, of course, have as their aim the creation of an objectivity as nearly as possible universal in character; the poet's aim might be thought of as the same and reversed, a mirror image—to represent in the world the movement of a subjectivity as nearly as possible universal in character.

AND ART is akin to religion, if we will be non-denominational about it, in that the work (though not, perhaps, the artist, oddly enough) is driven by its own composition to the implication of invisible things inherent in visible ones. The subject, the content, of the art work is sorrowful, because life is sorrowful; but the work itself, by the nature of its form, dances. A beautiful passage from Proust's novel will be relevant here. Marcel is thinking of the writer Bergotte, who died of a stroke while contemplating a detail, a piece of yellow wall, in a painting by Vermeer:

He was dead. Forever? Who can say? After all, occult experiences demonstrate no more than the dogmas of religion do about the soul's continuance. But what can be said is this, that we live our life as though we had entered it under the burden of obligations already assumed in another; there is, in the conditions of our life here, no reason which should make us believe ourselves obliged to do good, to be fastidious or even polite, nor which should make the godless painter believe himself obliged to start over twenty times a detail the praise of which will matter very little to his body eaten by worms—a detail such as the section of yellow wall painted with such skill and taste by an artist forever unknown and scarce identified under the name of Vermeer. All such obligations, which have no sanction in our present life, seem to belong to a different world based on goodness, consideration and sacrifice, a world altogether different from this one, and from which we emerge to be born on this earth, before perhaps returning there to

live under the rule of those unknown laws which we have obeyed because we carry their teaching within us though unaware who traced it there—those laws to which every profound work of the intelligence tends to reconcile us, and which are invisible only—and forever!—to fools.

So the work of art is religious in nature, not because it beautifies an ugly world or pretends that a naughty world is a nice one—for these things especially art does not do—but because it shows of its own nature that things drawn within the sacred circle of its forms are transfigured, illuminated by an inward radiance which amounts to goodness because it amounts to being itself. In the life conferred by art, Iago and Desdemona, Edmund and Cordelia, the damned and the blessed, equally achieve

immortality by their relation with the creating intelligence which sustains them. The art work is not responsible for saying that things in reality are so, but rather for revealing what this world says to candid vision. It is thus that we delight in tragedies whose actions in life would merely appall us. And it is thus that art, by its illusions, achieves a human analogy to the resolution of that famous question of theodicy—the relation of an Omnipotent Benevolence to evil—which the theologians, bound to the fixed forms of things, have for centuries struggled with, intemperately and in vain. And it is thus that art, by vision and not by dogma, patiently and repeatedly offers the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.