

1942

## Types of Aesthetic Appeal

H. G. Alexander

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq>

---

### Recommended Citation

Alexander, H. G.. "Types of Aesthetic Appeal." *New Mexico Quarterly* 12, 3 (1942). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol12/iss3/5>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Mexico Press at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Mexico Quarterly* by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

## TYPES OF AESTHETIC APPEAL

*H. G. Alexander*

**T**HOUGH BEAUTY is usually assumed to be the essential quality of aesthetic appeal, it is well recognized that objects which have such appeal are not equally beautiful. Some aesthetic objects are just pleasantly pretty, and some, from certain angles at least, may even appear ugly. Now beauty is a quality singularly difficult to define, and often difficult to locate, though its influence in matters of human behavior is very great indeed, as witness the fact that for many peoples and cultures, the search for beauty has been more compelling than the search for truth.

In the first place, let us not prejudice ourselves with the assumption that beauty is the aesthetic essence. It may rather be an *emergent quality* which arises from certain basic types of aesthetic appeal. If we can analyze these types of appeal and discover in what way the aspect of beauty customarily attaches to them, we should seem to have a potent argument in favor of such a view, and at least a starting point for further exploration.

It is often noticed that the term "beauty" may have a wider or a narrower meaning. Sometimes in the narrow sense it is contrasted with other "aesthetic types," such as the comic, the tragic, the sublime, or the pretty. On other occasions it refers equally to the whole range of aesthetic appeal. If, however, it is an emergent quality, as we have just postulated, there will be certain preliminary or prerequisite qualities whose combined presence will produce a sense of beauty in varying degrees.

Our first task is that of establishing the basic types. Now the good dialectician—like the good carver, as Socrates remarked—is concerned with the following of *natural* distinctions. Economy of thought demands that we think in terms of large groups or classes or types, and

from this point of view we observe how necessary and useful are such groupings. But it is never certain that divisions and classifications are natural. Upon closer scrutiny it turns out that classifications have little stability. Too often they walk around as did the definitions of Euthyphro at the hand of a greater Daedalus.

It is hard to escape the conviction that in the last degree all classifications and analyses are in some measure arbitrary, that nature, for some reason, does not produce clear-cut boundaries, and that our logic must create these before reasoning can commence. If that is so, the sciences too are partially arbitrary in their descriptions; for there is no science which is so completely particular in reference that it is not concerned with classes of objects or events. Historical sciences approach particularity, but even there, comparisons, abstractions, and generalizations are commonplace and necessary.

In a world of innumerable objects and events we glance about and hunt feverishly for the similarities and groupings which appear to be the only road to intellectual salvation. We may pause to notice that in the process we are aided by linguistic habit. Language, as given to us, has already dichotomized experience into classes. Linguistic symbols are for most of us, that is, terms which symbolize some key image or central type from and by which we customarily judge the nature of other objects or events in experience. Any term but a proper name is from the very beginning a metaphor. It symbolizes a group of objects a more or less different from the key image; but since it focuses attention upon the similarities, the differences are usually neglected. It often happens that several key images refer almost equally well to the same situation creating a momentary perplexity of terminology. Or it may be that in spite of the customary usage the differences are excessive, in which case the metaphorical character of the terms is more apparent. For example, if we extend the term "book" to a looseleaf notebook, the differences are not too great, but if we should call a building a "veritable book," the metaphor is seen immediately. What happens? Simply in the light of a certain key image (e. g., book) some aspect of the new object (e. g., building) is called to mind. The latter is, as it were, thrown into an unusual *perspective* by means of the metaphor.

Thus a class of objects is an extended type, the product of the extension of a key image through experience, finding thereby the similarities, and neglecting (we must remember) the differences. Linguistic terms, in a sense, then, are tools for the investigation of

experience and the discovery of perspectives just as much as telescopes or galvanometers. Each name that is at all applicable enhances the understanding of the new object or situation.

It has been stated that our linguistic, logical, and mathematical symbols are metaphorical. Now, the aesthetic temperament enjoys rather the use of far-fetched metaphor, while the scientific temperament prefers the safe similarity which holds within narrow extensions of meaning, cases in which the presence of metaphor is scarcely noticeable. Indeed, the scientific ideal would be to find nature so perfectly dichotomized that logical and mathematical symbols might apply precisely. In a sense, the artist is bolder in his application of terms. He is more concerned with insight than with precision. He loses the ability to create the careful system of interconnected data which the scientist seeks, but he gains the inspiration of a brilliant *rappôrt* in the face of great contrast. And by this very device a sense of reality is created which is lacking in scientific abstractions.

The basic intellectual and philosophical value is the sense of realities. Art, insofar as it can capture a feeling of reality, shares in this value. Now, historical science is an effort to recite actual events, but history is only ideally the story of reality, for the real is too complex and elusive to be taken altogether into human consciousness and understanding. Customarily we abstract in two ways from historical reality: (1) toward repetition of similar events, and the abstract patterns of science; (2) toward single, unique events and the particularity which is better represented in art. But just as the abstract pattern has meaning only in its reference back to the historical reality, so the single event has meaning only in some extended context. In drama this context is that of the "whole story," the beginning, the middle, and the end. The dramatic quality of the single event is due, then, to the realization of its significance in the whole process. In general, dramatic qualities are those closely associated with man's fears, desires, strivings, and ideals. Happiness, sadness, anticipation, disappointment, internal tumult and calm, and so on—these are the emergent qualities of drama and history. Insofar as these qualities are caught in the single work of art, it will reflect the dramatic character of reality.

However, such expression of reality is not the only aesthetic value. There are others which are more distinctively aesthetic, as, for example, the capturing or preserving of any experienced quality or impression whatsoever. To reproduce or imitate through some aesthetic media

those traits of nature and human nature which appeal to us for reason at all, is certainly one of the primary functions of art. There is a value in the simple ability to preserve in somewhat permanent form the moments of experience which have proved pleasant or unusual, amusing or harmonious or especially significant.

Another value of art, and one which is usually esteemed more highly than the preservative function, is the ability to enhance or improve qualities of experience which are reproduced. Through distortions and exaggerations, highlightings and emphases of one sort or another, art can call attention to qualities and make them stand out beyond the ordinary force.

There is even a value in experimenting, or playing with the elements of aesthetic media, a process comparable to scientific experiment or mathematical and logical postulation. But this value appears to be strongly instrumental inasmuch as it is the *result* of the experiment. It is the need for novelty of presentation (see below) which is largely responsible for the demands of experimentation in art. Yet even the realization of novelty is not in itself sufficient justification if the claim is merely a startlingly new technique or arrangement rather than a concern for expression of beauty or significance.

Types of aesthetic appeal are so closely connected with aesthetic values that they may appear only another aspect of the same thing. However, from the point of view of the appeal alone we are not concerned with a reasoned justification of our evaluation, but rather with the simple qualities in things which are capable of producing aesthetic experience. Nevertheless it is difficult to escape arranging these qualities in a scale of relative importance, even though the basis of such an arrangement is admittedly subjective. Let us essay it.

In the first place a purely experimental desire is least important; the preservative value is next, and the value of enhancement or improvement in expression is uppermost. But there is another issue to be considered, namely, the type of quality which is to be preserved or enhanced, and these likewise may be arranged according to importance. We have mentioned five such qualities: the pleasant, the unusual, the amusing, the harmonious, and the significant, tentatively arranged, in the order of their importance; and at the moment these seem to exhaust the range of ordinary aesthetic appeals. Let us remember, however, that these qualities are "types" or typical focal centers (key images) which may

applied more or less to any work of art. That is, as mental instruments they create perspectives by which to aid our perceptions and understandings. It may be further assumed that all the major arts are capable of expressing these types in varying ways and degrees.

Considering first the typically "pleasant," let us take as example a sunny landscape or a pretty face, and all art whose primary concern is to capture or enhance any moment of direct sensory appeal. This quality is marked by an obvious and immediate appeal which evokes a rather simple and spontaneous reaction of pleasure in the spectator. It is not necessary that the subject matter of pleasant art be absolutely representational, for it may vary considerably toward the stylized and conventionalized forms. These latter, however, tend to lose the sort of pleasantness which depends upon associations, conscious or unconscious, and which we have here in mind. As art becomes formalized, it is rather the appeal of harmony or form which predominates, and as this occurs there comes less a sense of perceptual pleasure than of intellectual satisfaction with the realization of abstract pattern.

It is possible that aesthetic media themselves, such as colors or sounds, may have a directly pleasant quality of the same sort as the pleasantness of natural objects. These qualities, as for example brilliant colors, may be to a certain extent suggestive of past associations in an indirect and less concrete way than the scenes themselves. However, they produce a spontaneous appeal, such as a natural object or scene itself would have (though in this respect nature has the advantage of being able to produce more sensations at once). There are thus two sources of pleasantness in art: first, from the subject matter, and second, from the sense matter itself.

The most successful presentation of pleasantness would seem to occur when a pleasing effect of aesthetic media or sense matter is concerned with a pleasant subject matter, thus augmenting and harmonizing both sources; and in this case, of course, art has the advantage over nature in being the product of intelligent combination. It might be noted further that those arts, such as music, which are less directly representational must depend more upon the intrinsic pleasantness of the media themselves than upon pleasant subject matter.

In the appeal of the pleasant the sense or impression of beauty is slight. The customary description of such art would be to term it merely "pretty" or "graceful" or "delightful." The term "beauty" has

a more dignified connotation attaching it to a higher level of appeal. This may be due to the fact that pleasantness is immediate and relatively easy to discover. There is little use of the imaginative or intellectual functions of the mind in this type of appreciation.

The antithesis of pleasantness lies in hideous or badly distorted subject matter, or in jarring media. To some individuals these characteristics are enough to cause art to be completely ugly. Yet there are high types of appeal which redeem distortions and sensory pain, so that it would be very unfair to human imagination to rule these qualities from the realm of the beautiful. It is possible that strong, rough, fierce, brutish qualities have a *direct* sensory appeal. Is it not, however, that this appeal comes rather as a reaction against mere pleasantness, and therefore as less spontaneous and more cultivated? (See below under "formal appeal.")

The second appeal is that of the "unusual" or "novel." A particular scene or object is suddenly given a new quality which strongly attracts us to it. This is especially realized in the case of old and familiar objects when abruptly they possess qualities for us which seem quite new. Mountains which we see every day may suddenly become aesthetically attractive because of a strange lighting effect. Often, for example, when we say that a scene appears "unreal" we do not mean this literally but only in the sense of "unaccustomed."<sup>1</sup> Subjective factors often account for a new attitude toward an object or event which makes us aware of a strange aspect of it. As Professor Pepper says, the sense of novelty comes with the breaking of our habits of perception.

In art, novelty occurs in two ways. First, there may be novelty of the object or event *represented*; and second, there may be novelty of technique or *presentation*. It is the first kind which we have had primarily in mind; for it is the desire to catch and enhance the quality of the unusual in nature or experience which contributes directly to the appeal of novelty. Distortions of recognizable subject matter through underemphasis or overemphasis or any sort of alteration are common devices for this purpose. But there is not only a breaking with habits of perception; there is a breaking with habits of artistic presentation. The artist seeks new techniques in the arrangement of his aesthetic media. It

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent discussion of the ambiguity of the term "real," see L. A. Reynolds, *A Study in Aesthetics* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), Chap. X. For an interesting treatment of the general subject of novelty in art, see S. C. Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), Chapter II.

true that we still appreciate the art of former ages, of artists whose schemes if reproduced today would seem trite. But in these cases, either we place ourselves mentally in the epoch of the artist and realize to some degree the novelty of his mode of expression, or else the appeal rests upon other qualities in his work. That artistic expression which most successfully embodies the appeal of novelty should utilize a certain novelty of presentation to convey the original impression of novelty in nature. It should, of course, be cautioned that works of art surpass the proper limits of novel presentation when their distortions are so crazy or juxtapositions so odd that they require labored explanations to convey the artist's intention, even to the intelligent observer.

The apprehension of novelty requires a higher level of mental activity than the apprehension of pleasantness. In the awareness of novelty a focus is created which causes some central image to stand out in high relief against the background of experience. This step is preliminary to any further intellectual activity, such as the abstraction of traits or relations from the central image itself. The creation of a key image in this fashion achieves the importance of becoming a potentially fertile instrument of cognitive exploration. In nature, or in the artistic embodiment of nature, the quality of novelty is sensed whenever the new insight of a unique individual is realized, and its importance is felt when we have the further realization that a new instrument of thought has been forged. But the application of this new instrument has not yet been made.

Extended metaphor is especially useful in the representation of novelty; for extended metaphor (e. g., the world is a stage) has the effect of highlighting generally unnoticed aspects of familiar objects or events. This is accomplished by the strong contrast created with the original image. The differences between the objects metaphorically related far outnumber the similarities, thus causing the similar trait or traits to stand out in that much stronger relief. However, metaphor when used to indicate novelty does not depend so much upon awareness of the contrast as upon awareness of the hitherto unnoticed trait in the object illuminated. When the two terms of the metaphor are equally before the attention, we have more a sense of dramatic quality than of mere novelty. In the one case, metaphor is used to indicate the highlighted trait, in the other to indicate the contrast itself.

Metaphor is particularly a device of poetry. However, in a more general way other arts can accomplish the same end. Dramatic allegory



is a complex metaphor, and may be frequently used to show underlying similarity in the face of strong contrast, though it cannot be as direct a pointer type of metaphor as the simpler kind. Allegorical subject matter in painting and sculpture likewise is metaphorical. More directly, however, the subtle distortions, exaggerations, narrowing, intensifications, etc., which we find in painting and sculpture are modes of heightening certain aspects or qualities, that is, of producing the impression of novelty. And in a remote sense they are metaphorical.<sup>2</sup> In music, likewise, there are various more or less metaphorical techniques. But here, as in drama, it is usually done by conscious contrast, so that the quality which emerges is more the dramatic than the novel. In music, novelty is produced by unusual effects, either in harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic progressions. This is done only by contrast with conventional music of a certain culture and period, so that it is always rather novelty of presentation than of insight which is achieved. In the unexpected juxtaposition of different styles in music, the effect produced is rather that of humor.<sup>3</sup>

The quality of novelty can produce the effect of beauty. The strange, the unusual, the exotic, are well-known traits surrounding the impression of beauty, and it is just these traits which depend upon unique presentations or the breaking of habitual perceptions. Nevertheless, novelty alone is not so often associated with beauty as is harmony of form, nor with significance as is dramatic contrast. For the more central qualities of beauty and significance we must turn to these latter types.

The character of the amusing and the comic comes so much by contrast with the serious and significant that it seems better to consider them together. Let us turn, therefore, to the appeal of formal harmony. Here we shall consider all types of pattern or structure which first response in the strong human sense of rhythm and balance, and then search for which constitutes the very essence of man's abstractive intellectual delight.

The idealization of form and symmetry was so strong in Classical art

<sup>2</sup> For example, the attenuated figures of El Greco enhance certain human qualities by analogy with elongations and attenuations themselves. We might say that the feeling of slenderness, grace, ethereality, super-mundaneness is created by analogy (i.e., metaphorically) with these qualities present in the aesthetic media.

<sup>3</sup> See below concerning the ridiculous effect of metaphor which is extended too far. For the general position that metaphor constitutes the aesthetic essence, see especially Helen Huss Parkhurst, *Beauty* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1930), Chapter XI.

that traditionally the term "beauty" has more often than not meant formal beauty. It is thus in a sense justifiable to consider that formal harmony is the key image of beauty, or at least the maximum point of the beautiful. Beauty of form will include, in this case, all degrees from simplicity to complexity of structure (even the most "intricate" type of "difficult beauty," to use Bosanquet's term.<sup>4</sup>) In general, we have only to remember how Plato, in the *Philebus*, almost identifies beauty with harmony and symmetry, in order to realize how close was this association for Classical thought.

The appeal of form is primarily due, it seems, to the inner sense of equilibrium to which it leads. There comes a strong feeling of repose and satisfaction, as from a Greek temple or a Bach chorale. This sense of repose gains its character from being the resolution of struggle, a sort of final universal peace which envelops the wearied yearnings of mortals. Perhaps there is in this idea too much of an entelechal perfection, but at least the great feeling of satisfaction which only the formal appeal can give is easily associated with the realization of order in the chaotic.

A balance which is too perfect or too simple is apt to seem commonplace and monotonous. It has lost the suggestion of chaos which it needs to give it meaning. The most successful artistic structures are those which are more or less upset so far as absolute balance or symmetry is concerned. Even when the lack of repose of an asymmetrical arrangement is ultimately resolved in a larger harmony, the general character of formal satisfaction is preserved. However, the greater the noticeable contrast between harmony and disharmony, the more a dramatic quality is introduced.

Appreciation of structure and form involves more mental activity than appreciation of either the pleasant or the novel. A well-developed abstractive ability is necessary before patterns as such are even recognizable in concrete perceptions. That is, perceptions of form are not immediately realized, though structures and interrelations are present in the perceived matter. There is a certain amount of elementary intellectual analysis and synthesis necessary before we can become aware of formal properties. Some imaginative abstraction is presupposed by the very discovery of form. Now, the abstraction of patterns and structures from the raw data of experience is a cogent evidence of the presence of

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Bosanquet, *Three Lectures on Aesthetic* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1931), Lecture III. For the other types of difficult beauty, involving "tension" (dramatic quality) and "width" (range of variety), I believe we must go beyond the formal.

mentality and intellect. (Again we remember the Platonic evaluation which links beauty with meaning and intelligence.) However, it is not only from admiration of the abstractive power of human intellect that the harmonious is beautiful. There appears to be in man almost an innate love of symmetries, as though the perceiving, sensing, and creating of symmetries and rhythms could bind man harmoniously with nature itself. It is this subtler harmony of man with his environment which produces the strong appeal of the formal.

From the point of view of formal beauty, ugliness would be found in the chaotic, the unformed, which is no part of a larger symmetry. There is, however, a primitive joy in the strength of rough and hideous aspects of experience, which is itself sometimes mentioned as an aesthetic type. In dealing with this quality in art, Professor Flaccus points out that "the task of unifying such material tests our mettle,"<sup>5</sup> thus intimating that one side of the appreciation of the chaotic is the very fact that it challenges us to create of it a harmony. This might also be said of unpleasantness portrayed in art: it challenges us to find the pleasure therein. The suggestion is certainly worth considering, though they do not appear to be oftentimes a genuine joy and a pleasant exhilaration in the sense of brute strength, or irrational and chaotic nature. It may be that such strength is pleasant because it implies a potency to overcome the ordinarily displeasing factors; yet in the moment of enjoyment one is scarcely aware of this implication.

Great quantities of art bear witness to the strong aesthetic appeals of the amusing or humorous and the significant or profound. Though not at all the same in origin, the humorous and significant are in a sense complementary; for whereas the essence of humor lies in incongruity and meaningless contrasts, the significant is, if anything, meaningful. Moreover, it is often but a matter of attitude whether a profound insight appears truly profound or only ludicrous. Considering the amusing and significant together, then, we may term them both "dramatic" though dramatic quality in art pertains primarily to strong contrast while the degree of humor or significance grows with increasing contrast. However, it is at the level of greatest contrast that these types stand out in strongest relief.

Dramatic qualities are associated in particular with man's striving

<sup>5</sup> Flaccus, Louis W., *The Spirit and Substance of Art*, 3rd edition (Crofts, 1941), p. 2

and ideals, his successes and frustrations. Yet a sense of dramatic quality is present wherever there is a full realization of contrast. It was said above that contrast is present in the quality of novelty; but in that case, as we said, there is not so much an awareness of the two contrasting terms as of the unusual nature of the object highlighted or illuminated by the new perspective. That is, in novelty we are not aware of the perspective itself; in the dramatic we are.

Now, of all the large contrasts, of whose realization man is capable, it is that between uniqueness and endless cosmic process, between the infinitesimal individual and the totality of the universe, which produces the most tremendous dramatic effect upon man's spirit. In the moment of dramatic action something of the uniqueness and irrevocability of that action crowds into the situation heightening the sense of responsibility and creating the impression of significance. There are other contrasts, contrasts of hope and defeat, of life and death, of heaven and hell, of soul and body; but they all lead to the supreme significant conflict of the human and the cosmic.<sup>6</sup>

The various arts capture and present dramatic quality in a variety of ways. A pose is dramatic, for example, when it makes us keenly aware of the historical context which surrounds it, or of the aspirations of the poser. A portrait is dramatic when the historical background, past and future, is concentrated in its lineaments; when it is seen, that is, as a living character engaged in the process of life. But even in the aesthetic media themselves there are dramatic symbolisms. Contrasts of color, of line, of rhythm and balance, all contribute to produce a sense of the dramatic. Dynamic art, especially music, is capable of great dramatic contrast in this latter sense. But all such contrasts appear to be suggestive or symbolic of the more profound significance which attaches to the realization of contrast itself. It is in metaphor that this significance is best understood.

In metaphor, as we said, the key image may be shot far into the universe to shed its light upon some remote region. The result is a striking realization of contrasts, sometimes stunning, almost overpowering. This experience is closely akin to that of vast spatial or temporal perspectives. So much so that the images of such perspectives may be used to create this effect. In this aspect it is called "sublime," for sublimity is associated with any breath-taking sweep of the imagination. The work of art,

<sup>6</sup> See the excellent treatment of the importance of contrast in significant art in Miss Parkhurst's work, *op. cit.*

man's art or nature's, conquers at one blow, by one illumination, the confused vastness of the universe. When the full realization of this illumination has been borne in upon us, we feel it as profound. There thus a connection between the sublime or lofty and the profound deep, for one is preliminary to the other. Often the return of contemplation upon man's own insignificance in contrast to the grandiose panorama of reality which has just been divulged will bring with it a feeling of misery and the tragic. The outward movement of thought is thrilling and inspiring, the return is heavy, sickening. Nevertheless, the grandeur of man emerges, found in the self-redemption of a mind which can span such reaches and then return to itself with a more profound sense of its own nobility. "La grandeur de l'homme est grande en ce qu'il connaît misérable." "The greatness of man is great in this, that he knows himself miserable. A tree does not know itself miserable. To know one's misery is to be miserable, to know that one is miserable is to be great."<sup>7</sup> So spoke Pascal to whom the vision of man's incompetence was overshadowed by the greatness of his aspirations.

Tragedy is found in the hostility of nature to human aspirations. It is found in the animal stupidities of man himself, stupidities which circumscribe his imaginative powers and thwart the accomplishment of his projects. The beauty and significance of tragedy seems to lie, however, in the opportunity to view dispassionately, somehow remotely, our own futility and weakness, to see the failures of man and yet transcend them. Even in this there is an ultimate gain in understanding.

The nature of the comic emerges from incongruities. The observation of awkwardness in human behavior, of inappropriateness of thought, may give us the desire to laugh, even at ourselves. Where an extended metaphor strikes no chord of sympathy, where the analogy appears too farfetched, the impression of absurdity easily arises. Symbols meaninglessly and inappropriately applied constitute the basis of nonsense humor. Where ignorance and error of others lead to confusion and failure, provided we are not drawn into sympathy and a feeling of pity, we become amused at the comedy of errors.

There is indeed a narrow margin between the ridiculous of a metaphor too farfetched and the sublimity which that metaphor might give if rightly apprehended. The risk of incongruous absurdity is taken whenever artistic metaphor is used. An equally fine margin lies between

<sup>7</sup> *Pensées*, Brunschvicg edition, no. 397.

the comic and the tragic; for a tragic situation easily becomes one in which the slender link of sympathy is lost, and the aloof observer only mocks the sufferings of others. This even seems to be especially so when the frailties of the observer himself are found in another; for he is given, as it were, a chance to transcend his own weaknesses in laughing at them in someone else. Such humor is a support to his morale and a defense against the sense of failure. As simplification is an intellectual need, so a comic relief is often a moral need.

When the comic takes the form of ridiculing the broader deceptions and frauds of mankind, it becomes satire. As the breadth of the trait satirized becomes greater, the satiric itself takes on the character of significance. Every trait condemned implies an ideal. It is a greater desire for the genuine that leads Socrates to ridicule sophistries, or Voltaire to satirize the best of all possible worlds, or Anatole France to blast man's penguin-like uniformity as he repeats again and again the same old follies. In satire the ideal is indirectly revealed, but the ideal of human aspiration is just as surely present as in the direct type of idealistic metaphor.

The effect of dramatic contrast is to produce a strong sense of significance. Is there also an impression of beauty? It would seem that the effect of humor or of a sense of importance in art is not to produce primarily the impression of beauty. Beauty there may be. But in such cases it is almost a secondary trait, subordinated to the primary realizations. In the significant we have passed beyond mere beauty to the level of valued meanings. Why these meanings are valued, and whether they convey truth, and whether indeed in certain cases they alone are capable of conveying truth, all this is another question.<sup>8</sup> Here we shall limit ourselves to the quality of beauty.

Now beauty is strongest at the levels of novelty and formal harmony. It is traditionally connected with the strangely pleasant, the exotic, or with the harmonious, the rhythmic, and the patterned. Yet a sense of beauty pervades all types of aesthetic appeal. Is it not that the quality of beauty emerges at a given level in the contemplative process, whether the object of contemplation is nature or art? Simple pleasantness is too elementary, too direct, in this process and full significance is too far advanced. The intermediate recognition of uniqueness or of harmonies or both produces the strongest sense of beauty.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Urban, W. M., *Language and Reality* (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1939), Chapters IX, X.

This does not preclude the possibility that a further realization of humor or significance cannot enhance the effect of beauty. The latter attitude may be resumed after an investigation of contrasts and meanings, and subtly these searchings have their effect. The total impression of a work of art will be the result of all such explorations into traits and aesthetic types. Perhaps this exploration never ends. Indeed, it appears a character of all great art that new realizations of quality continue to arise even after numerous investigations.

In a sense, philosophy is art. Its visions are realizations of great contrasts. In metaphysics we find these contrasts between epistemological optimisms and pessimisms, or between the various metaphysical systems. Thought can be, like art, fraught with dramatic quality; for the great sweeps of philosophic metaphor we find dramatic contrasts. It is first the realization of new perspectives, and second the realization that these new perspectives are the illuminations of the world's meanings, the sources of man's understandings, and the triumph of human intelligence, which grant to the systems of the great thinkers the quality of aesthetic significance. Even the disillusioned return to the view of the skeptic cannot destroy the impression of greatness and beauty.