Chapter 16

ART *and* AESTHETICS

Chapter 16 is divided into seven sections: 16.1 THE REALM OF ART, 16.2 BOOKS AND READING, 16.3 POETRY AND POETS, 16.4 TRAGEDY AND COMEDY, 16.5 MUSIC, 16.6 BEAUTY AND THE BEAUTIFUL, and 16.7 CRITICISM AND THE STANDARDS OF TASTE.

The lines that divide these sections cannot be sharply drawn. The reader will, therefore, find passages quoted in one section that might with good reason be placed in another. Sections 16.2, 16.3, and 16.4 all deal with literature in one or another aspect. The presence of a special section on music, together with the absence of similar sections on such other fine arts as painting, sculpture, architecture, and the dance, has no explanation other than the fact that the writings of the great authors here quoted are richer in their comments on that art than on any others except the arts of literature. Nevertheless, if the reader will consult the index under painting, sculpture, architecture, and so on, he will find the location of passages dealing with these arts.

One group of arts, the traditional liberal arts of mathematics and of grammar, rhetoric, and logic is treated in other chapters: grammar, rhetoric, and logic in Section 7.2 on THE ARTS OF LANGUAGE in Chapter 7 on LANGUAGE; and THE DISCIPLINE OF MATHEMATICS in Section 17.3 of Chapter 17 on PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND MATHEMATICS.

16.1 | *The Realm of Art*

The passages quoted in this section treat both art and the artist in the most general sense of these terms, and the reader must, therefore, be forewarned that the most general sense of these terms in the tradition of Western thought is radically different from the extremely restricted connotation that attaches to them in current usage. As used by almost all of the authors quoted, from the Greeks down to the end of the eighteenth century, the word "art" refers to skill in the making of anything—a shoe or a ship as well as a poem or a painting or, for that matter, a demonstration in mathematics or a political oration. The artist is a man who has a specific skill to some degree. Those who happen to make something without art do so entirely by chance. Since the word "art" is used to refer to the skill possessed by a maker, it is not used to refer to the thing he makes, the object he produces. That is a work of art. The terms thus used are not evaluative. They do not signify the achievement of excellence. Artists may have more or less skill; works of art may be more or less good.

It is only in the last few centuries that the term "art" has become so restricted that it refers only to literary and musical compositions, paintings, and sculptures, and the like; it is even narrowed further in the familiar expression "literature, music, and the fine arts," in which the last phrase refers exclusively to what hangs on walls, stands on pedestals, or is enclosed in cases. When the phrase "fine art" was first coined (it makes its first appearance in the age of Immanuel Kant), it was used to distinguish one group of arts from all others, i.e., those arts the products of which are an end (Latin, *finis*) in themselves—to be enjoyed for what they are rather than used for some ulterior purpose.

The basic points made in the discussion of art in general apply equally to the fine arts, the useful arts, and the liberal arts. Writers call our attention, for example, to the fact that a work of art may either have an enduring existence or be a transient process. A statue and a poem, like a house or a chair, endure in themselves after the artist has finished his work; not so the performance of an actor or a dancer on the stage, the speech of an orator, and the operation of a surgeon.

Occasionally, authors touch on the subject of art in passages dealing with other matters. The reader would, therefore, do well to glance at the index under such terms as "art," "artist," "work," and so forth.

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1 *Agathon.* Of his [Love's] courage and justice and temperance I have spoken, but I have yet to speak of his wisdom; and according to the measure of my ability I must try to do my best. In the first place he is a poet (and here, like Eryximachus, I magnify my art), and he is also the source of poesy in others, which he could not be if he were not himself a poet. And at the touch of him every one becomes a poet, even though he had no music in him before; this also is a proof that Love is a good poet and accomplished in all the fine arts; for no one can give to another that which he has not himself, or teach that of which he has no knowledge. Who will deny that the creation of the animals is his doing? Are they not all the works of his wisdom, born and begotten of him? And as to the artists, do we not know that he only of them whom love inspires has the light of fame?—he whom Love touches not walks in darkness. The arts of medicine and archery and divination were discovered by Apollo, under the guidance of love and desire; so that he too is a disciple of Love. Also the melody of the Muses, the metallurgy of Hephaestus, the weaving of Athene, the empire of Zeus over gods and men, are all due to Love, who was the inventor of them.

Plato, *Symposium,* 196B

2 She [Diotima] answered me [Socrates] as follows: "There is poetry, which, as you know, is complex and manifold. All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers." "Very true." "Still," she said, "you know that they are not called poets, but have other names; only that portion of the art which is separated off from the rest, and is concerned with music and metre, is termed poetry, and they who possess poetry in this sense of the word are called poets." "Very true," I said.

Plato, *Symposium,* 205A

3 *Socrates.* The artist disposes all things in order, and compels the one part to harmonize and accord with the other part, until he has constructed a regular and systematic whole.

Plato, *Gorgias,* 503B

4 *Socrates.* There is another artist . . . one who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.

Glaucon. What an extraordinary man!

Wait a little, and there will be more reason for your saying so. For this is he who is able to make not only vessels of every kind, but plants and animals, himself and all other things—the earth and heaven, and the things which are in heaven or under the earth; he makes the gods also.

He must be a wizard and no mistake.

Oh! you are incredulous, are you? Do you mean that there is no such maker or creator, or that in one sense there might be a maker of all these things but in another not? Do you see that there is a way in which you could make them all yourself?

What way?

An easy way enough; or rather, there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round—you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants, and all the other things of which we were just now speaking, in the mirror.

Yes, he said; but they would be appearances only.

Very good, I said, you are coming to the point now. And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another—a creator of appearances, is he not? . . .

Suppose now that . . . we enquire who this imitator is?

If you please.

Well then, here are three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say—for no one else can be the maker?

No.

There is another which is the work of the carpenter?

Yes.

And the work of the painter is a third?

Yes.

Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter?

Yes, there are three of them.

God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed in nature and one only; two or more such ideal beds neither ever have been nor ever will be made by God.

Why is that?

Because even if He had made but two, a third would still appear behind them which both of them would have for their idea, and that would be the ideal bed and not the two others.

Very true, he said.

God knew this, and He desired to be the real maker of a real bed, not a particular maker of a particular bed, and therefore He created a bed which is essentially and by nature one only.

So we believe.

Shall we, then, speak of Him as the natural author or maker of the bed?

Yes, he replied; inasmuch as by the natural process of creation He is the author of this and of all other things.

And what shall we say of the carpenter—is not he also the maker of the bed?

Yes.

But would you call the painter a creator and maker?

Certainly not.

Yet if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed?

I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.

Plato, *Republic,* X, 596A

5 The products of art . . . require the pre-existence of an efficient cause homogeneous with themselves, such as the statuary's art, which must necessarily precede the statue; for this cannot possibly be produced spontaneously. Art indeed consists in the conception of the result to be produced before its realization in the material.

Aristotle, *Parts of Animals,* 640^{a}30

6 All arts, that is, all productive forms of knowledge, are potencies; they are originative sources of change in another thing or in the artist himself considered as other.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1046^{b}3

7 Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from

the activities that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities. Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth. But where such arts fall under a single capacity—as bridle-making and the other arts concerned with the equipment of horses fall under the art of riding, and this and every military action under strategy, in the same way other arts fall under yet others—in all of these the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued.

Aristotle, *Ethics,* 1094a1

8 Those occupations are most truly arts in which there is the least element of chance; they are the meanest in which the body is most deteriorated, the most servile in which there is the greatest use of the body, and the most illiberal in which there is the least need of excellence.

Aristotle, *Politics,* 1258b35

9 Since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant—for instance, painting, sculpture, poetry—and every product of skilful imitation; this latter, even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant; for it is not the object itself which here gives delight; the spectator draws inferences ('That is a so-and-so') and thus learns something fresh. Dramatic turns of fortune and hairbreadth escapes from perils are pleasant, because we feel all such things are wonderful.

Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* 1371b4

10 Ships and tillage, walls, laws, arms, roads, dress, and all such like things, all the prizes, all the elegancies too of life without exception, poems, pictures, and the chiselling of fine-wrought statues, all these things practiced together with the acquired knowledge of the untiring mind taught men by slow degrees as they advanced on the way step by step. Thus time by degrees brings each several thing forth before men's eyes and reason raises it up into the borders of light; for things must be brought to light one after the other and in due order in the different arts, until these have reached their highest point of development.

Lucretius, *Nature of Things,* V

11 The height of art is to conceal art.

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria,* I

12 Every art aims at this, that the thing which has been made should be adapted to the work for which it has been made; and both the vine-planter who looks after the vine, and the horse-breaker, and he who trains the dog, seek this end.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* VI, 16

13 As for the arts: such as look to house building and the like are exhausted when that object is achieved; there are again those—medicine, farming, and other serviceable pursuits—which deal helpfully with natural products, seeking to bring them to natural efficiency; and there is a class—rhetoric, music, and every other method of swaying mind or soul—with the power of modifying for better or for worse.

Plotinus, *Fourth Ennead,* IV, 31

14 Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for, to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations; then, we must recognise that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the ideas from which Nature itself derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking.

Plotinus, *Fifth Ennead,* VIII, 1

15 But how did You make heaven and earth? What instrument did You use for a work so mighty? You are not like an artist; for he forms one body from another as his mind chooses; his mind has the power to give external existence to the form it perceives within itself by its inner eye—and whence should it have that power unless You made it? It impresses that form upon a material already existent and having the capacity to be thus formed, such as clay or stone or wood or gold or such like. And how should these things have come to be unless You had made them to be? It was You who made the workman his body, and the mind that directs his limbs, the matter of which he makes what he makes, the intelligence by which he masters his art and sees inwardly what he is to produce exteriorly, the bodily sense by which he translates what he does from his mind to his material, and then informs the mind of the result of his workmanship, so that the mind may judge by that truth which presides within it whether the work is well done.

Augustine, *Confessions,* XI, 5

16 As to the . . . arts, whether those by which something is made which, when the effort of the workman is over, remains as a result of his work, as, for example, a house, a bench, a dish, and other things of that kind; or those which, so to speak, assist God in His operations, as medicine, and agriculture, and navigation: or those whose sole result is an action, as dancing, and racing, and wrestling; in all these arts experience teaches us to infer the future from the past. For no man who is skilled in any of these arts moves his limbs in any operation without connecting the memory of the past with the expectation of the future.

Augustine, *Christian Doctrine,* II, 30

17 All natural things were produced by the Divine art, and so may be called God's works of art. Now every artist intends to give to his work the best disposition; not absolutely the best, but the best as regards the proposed end. And even if this entails some defect, the artist does not care. Thus, for instance, when a man makes himself a saw for the purpose of cutting, he makes it of iron, which is suitable for the object in view; and he does not prefer to make it of glass, though this be a more beautiful material, because this very beauty would be an obstacle to the end he has in view. Thus, therefore, God gave to each natural being the best disposition; not absolutely so, but in view of its proper end.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I, 91, 3

18 Art is nothing else but the right reason about certain works to be made. And yet the good of these things depends, not on man's appetite being affected in this or that way, but on the goodness of the work done. For a craftsman, as such, is commendable not for the will with which he does a work, but for the quality of the work. Art, therefore, properly speaking, is an operative habit. And yet it has something in common with the speculative habits, since the quality of the object considered by the latter is a matter of concern to them also, but not how the human appetite may be affected towards that object. For as long as the geometrician demonstrates the truth, it does not matter how his appetitive part may be affected, whether he be joyful or angry, even as neither does this matter in a craftsman, as we have observed. And so art has the nature of a virtue in the same way as the speculative habits, in so far, that is, as neither art nor speculative habit makes a good work as regards the use of the habit, which is proper to a virtue that perfects the appetite, but only as regards the aptness to work well.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I–II, 57, 3

19 When anyone endowed with an art produces bad workmanship, this is not the work of that art, but rather is contrary to the art, even as when a man lies while knowing the truth, his words are not in accord with his knowledge, but contrary to it. Therefore, just as science has always a relation to good . . . so it is with art, and it is for this reason that it is called a virtue. And yet it falls short of being a perfect virtue, because it does not make its possessor use it well, for which purpose something further is requisite, although there cannot be a good use without the art.

In order that man may make good use of the art he has, he needs a good will, which is perfected by moral virtue; and for this reason the Philosopher says that there is a virtue of art, namely, a moral virtue, in so far as the good use of art requires a moral virtue. For it is evident that a craftsman is inclined by justice, which rectifies his will, to do his work faithfully.

Even in speculative matters there is something by way of work; for example, the making of a syllogism or of a fitting speech, or the work of counting or measuring. Hence whatever habits are ordered to such works of the speculative reason, are by a kind of comparison called arts indeed, but liberal arts, in order to distinguish them from those arts that are ordered to works done by the body, which arts are, in a fashion, servile, in so far as the body is in servile subjection to the soul, and man, as regards his soul, is free. On the other hand, those sciences which are not ordered to any work of this kind, are called sciences absolutely, and not arts. Nor, if the liberal arts be more excellent, does it follow that the notion of art is more applicable to them.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I–II, 57, 3

20 The good of an art is to be found not in the craftsman himself, but in the product of the art. . . . It is a perfection not of the maker, but of the thing made. . . . Consequently art does not require of the craftsman that his act be a good act, but that his work be good. Rather would it be necessary for the thing made to act well (for example, that a knife should carve well, or that a saw should cut well), if it were proper to such things to act rather than to be acted on, because they do not have dominion over their actions. Therefore the craftsman needs art not that he may live well, but that he may produce a good work of art, and preserve it.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I–II, 57, 5

21 It is not reasonable that art should win the place of honor over our great and powerful mother Nature. We have so overloaded the beauty and richness of her works by our inventions that we have quite smothered her. Yet wherever her purity shines forth, she wonderfully puts to shame our vain and frivolous attempts. . . . All our efforts cannot even succeed in reproducing the nest of the tiniest little bird, its contexture, its beauty and convenience; or even the web of the puny spider.

Montaigne, *Essays,* I, 31, Of Cannibals

22 I very much doubt that Phidias or any other excellent sculptor would be so pleased with the preservation and long life of his natural children as with that of an excellent statue that his long labor and study had brought to artistic perfection. And as for those vicious and frenzied passions which have sometimes inflamed fathers with love for their daughters, or mothers for their sons, the like even of these are found in this other sort of parenthood: witness what they tell of Pygmalion, who after building a statue of a woman of singular beauty, became so madly and frantically smitten

with love of this work that the gods, for the sake of his passion, had to bring it to life for him.

Montaigne, *Essays,* II, 8, Affection of Fathers

23 *Hamlet.* 'Tis the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar; and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* III, iv, 206

24 As the understanding is elevated and raised by rare and unusual works of nature, to investigate and discover the forms which include them also, so is the same effect frequently produced by the excellent and wonderful works of art; and even to a greater degree, because the mode of effecting and constructing the miracles of art is generally plain, whilst that of effecting the miracles of nature is more obscure. Great care, however, must be taken, that they do not depress the understanding, and fix it, as it were, to earth.

For there is some danger, lest the understanding should be astonished and chained down, and as it were bewitched, by such works of art, as appear to be the very summit and pinnacle of human industry, so as not to become familiar with them, but rather to suppose that nothing of the kind can be accomplished, unless the same means be employed, with perhaps a little more diligence, and more accurate preparation.

Now, on the contrary, it may be stated as a fact, that the ways and means hitherto discovered and observed, of effecting any matter or work, are for the most part of little value, and that all really efficient power depends, and is really to be deduced from the sources of forms, none of which have yet been discovered.

Thus (as we have before observed), had any one meditated on ballistic machines, and battering rams, as they were used by the ancients, whatever application he might have exerted, and though he might have consumed a whole life in the pursuit, yet would he never have hit upon the invention of flaming engines, acting by means of gunpowder; nor would any person, who had made woollen manufactories and cotton the subject of his observation and reflection, have ever discovered thereby the nature of the silkworm or of silk.

Bacon, *Novum Organum,* II, 31

25 All the arts are but imitations of nature in one way or another; as our reason or understanding is a derivative from the Divine intelligence, manifested in His works; and when perfected by habit, like another adventitious and acquired soul, gaining some semblance of the Supreme and Divine agent, it produces somewhat similar effects.

William Harvey, *Animal Generation,* 50

26 How useless is painting, which attracts admiration by the resemblance of things, the originals of which we do not admire!

Pascal, *Pensées,* II, 134

27 First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same;
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.

Pope, *Essay on Criticism,* I, 68

28 All polite letters are nothing but pictures of human life in various attitudes and situations; and inspire us with different sentiments, of praise or blame, admiration or ridicule, according to the qualities of the object, which they set before us. An artist must be better qualified to succeed in this undertaking, who, besides a delicate taste and a quick apprehension, possesses an accurate knowledge of the internal fabric, the operations of the understanding, the workings of the passions, and the various species of sentiment which discriminate vice and virtue. How painful soever this inward search or enquiry may appear, it becomes, in some measure, requisite to those, who would describe with success the obvious and outward appearances of life and manners.

Hume, *Concerning Human Understanding,* I, 5

29 It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind, as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination.

It is therefore not a sufficient vindication of a character, that it is drawn as it appears, for many characters ought never to be drawn; nor of a narrative, that the train of events is agreeable to observation and experience, for that observation which is called knowledge of the world, will be found much more frequently to make men cunning than good. The purpose of these writings is surely not only to show mankind, but to provide that they may be seen hereafter with less hazard; to teach the means of avoiding the snares which are laid by TREACHERY for INNOCENCE, without infusing any wish for that superiority with which the betrayer flatters his vanity; to give the power of counteracting fraud, without the temptation to practise it; to initiate youth by mock encounters in the art of necessary defence, and to increase prudence without impairing virtue.

Johnson, *Rambler No. 4*

30 The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and, above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts the dexterity of the hand is of little avail unless it is animated by fancy and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* XIII

31 Art is distinguished from nature as making is from acting or operating in general, and the product or the result of the former is distinguished from that of the latter as work from operation.

By right it is only production through freedom, that is, through an act of will that places reason at the basis of its action, that should be termed art.

Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,* 43

32 Art, as human skill, is distinguished also from science (as ability from knowledge), as a practical from a theoretical faculty, as technic from theory (as the art of surveying from geometry). For this reason, also, what one can do the moment one only knows what is to be done, hence without anything more than sufficient knowledge of the desired result, is not called art. To art that alone belongs for which the possession of the most complete knowledge does not involve one's having then and there the skill to do it.

Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,* 43

33 Art is further distinguished from handicraft. The first is called free, the other may be called industrial art. We look on the former as something which could only prove final (be a success) as play, i.e., an occupation which is agreeable on its own account; but on the second as labour, i.e., a business, which on its own account is disagreeable (drudgery), and is only attractive by means of what it results in (e.g., the pay), and which is consequently capable of being a compulsory imposition. Whether in the list of arts and crafts we are to rank watchmakers as artists, and smiths on the contrary as craftsmen, requires a standpoint different from that here adopted—one, that is to say, taking account of the proposition of the talents which the business undertaken in either case must necessarily involve. Whether, also, among the so-called seven free arts some may not have been included which should be reckoned as sciences, and many, too, that resemble handicraft, is a matter I will not discuss here. It is not amiss, however, to remind the reader of this: that in all free arts something of a compulsory character is still required, or, as it is called, a mechanism, without which the soul, which in art must be free, and which alone gives life to the work, would be bodyless and evanescent (e.g., in the poetic art there must be correctness and wealth of language, likewise prosody and metre). For not a few leaders of a newer school believe that the best way to promote a free art is to sweep away all restraint and convert it from labour into mere play.

Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,* 43

34 Fine art . . . is a mode of representation which is intrinsically final, and which, although devoid of an end, has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication.

Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,* 44

35 Genius (1) is a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given, and not an aptitude in the way of cleverness for what can be learned according to some rule; and . . . consequently originality must be its primary property. (2) Since there may also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, that is, be exemplary; and consequently, though not themselves derived from imitation, they must serve that purpose for others, that is, as a standard or rule of estimating. . . . Where an author owes a product to his genius, he does not himself know how the ideas for it have entered into his head, nor has he it in his power to invent the like at pleasure, or methodically, and communicate the same to others in such precepts as would put them in a position to produce similar products.

Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,* 46

36 Despite the marked difference that distinguishes mechanical art, as an art merely depending upon industry and learning, from fine art, as that of genius, there is still no fine art in which something mechanical, capable of being at once comprehended and followed in obedience to rules, and consequently something academic, does not constitute the essential condition of the art. For the thought of something as end must be present, or else its product would not be ascribed to an art at all, but would be a mere product of chance. But the effectuation of an end necessitates determinate rules which we cannot venture to dispense with. Now, seeing that originality of talent is one (though not the sole) essential factor that goes to make up the character of genius, shallow minds fancy that the best evidence they can give of their being full-blown geniuses is by emancipating themselves from all academic constraint of rules, in the belief that one cuts a finer figure on the back of an ill-tempered than of a trained horse.

Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,* 47

37 *Faust.* Unless you feel, naught will you ever gain;
Unless this feeling pours forth from your soul
With native, pleasing vigour to control
The hearts of all your hearers, it will be in vain.
Pray keep on sitting! Pray collect and glue,
From others' feasts brew some ragout;

With tiny heaps of ashes play your game
And blow the sparks into a wretched flame!
Children and apes will marvel at you ever,
If you've a palate that can stand the part;
But heart to heart you'll not draw men, no, never,
Unless your message issue from your heart.

Goethe, *Faust,* I, 534

38 There is no surer method of evading the world than by following art, and no surer method of linking oneself to it than by art.

Goethe, *Reflections and Maxims*

39 Were any one to despise art on the ground that it imitates nature, we should reply that Nature herself imitates many other things, and that, furthermore, art does not merely imitate that which we see with our eyes, but goes back to that element of reason of which nature consists and according to which she acts.

Goethe, *Reflections and Maxims*

40 The artist has a twofold relation to nature; he is at once her master and her slave. He is her slave, inasmuch as he must work with earthly things, in order to be understood; but he is her master, inasmuch as he subjects these earthly means to his higher intentions, and renders them subservient.

Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann (Apr. 18, 1827)*

41 The religious concentration of the soul appears in the form of feeling; it nevertheless passes also into reflection; a form of worship is a result of reflection. The second form of the union of the objective and subjective in the human spirit is art. This advances farther into the realm of the actual and sensuous than religion. In its noblest walk it is occupied with representing, not indeed, the spirit of God, but certainly the form of God; and in its secondary aims, that which is divine and spiritual generally. Its office is to render visible the divine; presenting it to the imaginative and intuitive faculty. But the true is the object not only of conception and feeling, as in religion—and of intuition, as in art—but also of the thinking faculty; and this gives us the third form of the union in question—philosophy.

Hegel, *Philosophy of History,* Introduction, 3

42 What is the true content of art, and with what aim is this content to be presented? On this subject our consciousness supplies us with the common opinion that it is the task and aim of art to bring in contact with our sense, our feeling, our inspiration, all that finds a place in the mind of man. . . . Its aim is therefore placed in arousing and animating the slumbering emotions, inclinations, and passions; in filling the heart, in forcing the human being, whether cultured or uncultured, to feel the whole range of what man's soul in its inmost and secret corners has power to experience and to create, and all that is able to move and to stir the human breast in its depths and in its manifold aspects and possibilities; to present as a delight to emotion and to perception all that the mind possesses of real and lofty in its thought and in the Idea—all the splendour of the noble, the eternal, and the true; and no less to make intelligible misfortune and misery, wickedness and crime; to make men realize the inmost nature of all that is shocking and horrible, as also of all pleasure and delight; and, finally, to set imagination roving in idle toyings of fancy, and luxuriating in the seductive spells of sense-stimulating visions.

Hegel, *Philosophy of Fine Art,* III

43 We have here to consider three relations of the Idea to its outward shaping.

First, the Idea gives rise to the beginning of art when, being itself still in its indistinctness and obscurity, or in vicious untrue determinateness, it is made the import of artistic creations. As indeterminate it does not yet possess in itself that individuality which the Ideal demands; its abstractness and one-sidedness leave its shape to be outwardly bizarre and defective. The first form of art is therefore rather a mere search after plastic portrayal than a capacity of genuine representation. The Idea has not yet found the true form even within itself, and therefore continues to be merely the struggle and aspiration thereafter. In general terms we may call this form the Symbolic form of art. . . .

In the second form of art, which we propose to call Classical, the double defect of symbolic art is cancelled. The plastic shape of symbolic art is imperfect, because, in the first place, the Idea in it only enters into consciousness in abstract determinateness or indeterminateness, and, in the second place, this must always make the conformity of shape to import defective, and in its turn merely abstract. The classical form of art is the solution of this double difficulty; it is the free and adequate embodiment of the Idea in the shape that, according to its conception, is peculiarly appropriate to the Idea itself. With it, therefore, the Idea is capable of entering into free and complete accord. Hence, the classical type of art is the first to afford the production and intuition of the completed Ideal, and to establish it as a realized fact. . . .

[There] arises, in its turn, the defect which brings about the dissolution of classical art, and demands a transition into a third and higher form, viz. into the Romantic form of art.

The romantic form of art destroys the completed union of the Idea and its reality, and recurs, though in a higher phase, to that difference and antagonism of two aspects which was left unvanquished by symbolic art. The classical type at-

tained the highest excellence, of which the sensuous embodiment of art is capable; and if it is in any way defective, the defect is in art as a whole, i.e. in the limitation of its sphere. This limitation consists in the fact that art as such takes for its object Mind—the conception of which is infinite concrete universality—in the shape of sensuous concreteness, and in the classical phase sets up the perfect amalgamation of spiritual and sensuous existence as a conformity of the two. Now, as a matter of fact, in such an amalgamation Mind cannot be represented according to its true notion. For mind is the infinite subjectivity of the Idea, which, as absolute inwardness, is not capable of finding free expansion in its true nature on condition of remaining transposed into a bodily medium as the existence appropriate to it.

Hegel, *Philosophy of Fine Art,* V

44 Art is a jealous mistress, and if a man have a genius for painting, poetry, music, architecture or philosophy, he makes a bad husband and ill provider, and should be wise in season and not fetter himself with duties which will embitter his days and spoil him for his proper work.

Emerson, *Wealth*

45 To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover and a bee
And revery.
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.

Emily Dickinson, *To Make a Prairie*

46 I want a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim: I do not say therefore that the art is greatest which gives most pleasure, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to teach, and not to please. I do not say that the art is greatest which teaches us most, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to please and not to teach. I do not say that the art is greatest which imitates best, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to create, and not to imitate. But I say that the art is greatest, which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas, and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received.

If this then be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.

Ruskin, *Modern Painters,* Pt. I, I, 2

47 1. Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which *Invention* has no share.

2. Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.

3. Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving record of great works.

Ruskin, *Stones of Venice,* II, 6

48 Literary and artistic productions never grow old, in this sense, that they are expressions of feeling, changeless as human nature.

Claude Bernard, *Experimental Medicine,* II, 2

49 Art is a human activity, whose purpose is the transmission of the highest and best feelings to which men have attained.

Tolstoy, *What Is Art?,* VIII

50 Future artists will understand that it is incomparably more important to compose a fairy-tale, a little song, a lullaby, an amusing riddle or joke, or to draw a sketch that delights millions of children and adults over the generations, than to create a novel or symphony, or paint a canvas that diverts a few members of the wealthy class for a moment and then is forgotten forever.

Tolstoy, *What Is Art?,* XIX

51 The present task of art is to make the feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor, which is now shared only by the best members of society, the customary feeling, even the instinct, of all human beings. . . . Art is destined to promulgate the truth that the well-being of men consists in their being united together, and to help to set up, in place of the reign of force that now exists, the kingdom of God (Who is Love) that we all recognize as the highest goal of human life.

Tolstoy, *What Is Art?,* XX

52 The artist notoriously selects his items, rejecting all tones, colors, shapes, which do not harmonize with each other and with the main purpose of his work. That unity, harmony . . . which gives to works of art their superiority over works of nature, is wholly due to *elimination.* Any natural subject will do, if the artist has wit enough to pounce upon some one feature of it as characteristic, and suppress all merely accidental items which do not harmonize with this.

William James, *Psychology,* IX

53 The world of æsthetics . . . is an ideal world, a Utopia, a world which the outer relations persist in contradicting, but which we as stubbornly persist in striving to make actual. Why do we thus invincibly crave to alter the given order of nature? Simply because other relations among things are far more interesting to us and more charming than the mere rates of frequency of their time- and space-conjunctions. These other relations are all secondary and brain-born, "spontaneous variations" most of them, of our sensibility, whereby

certain elements of experience, and certain arrangements in time and space, have acquired an agreeableness which otherwise would not have been felt. It is true that habitual arrangements may also become agreeable. But this agreeableness of the merely habitual is felt to be a mere ape and counterfeit of real inward fitness; and one sign of intelligence is never to mistake the one for the other.

William James, *Psychology,* XXVIII

54 *Tanner.* The true artist will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art. To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it. He persuades women that they may do this for their own purpose whilst he really means them to do it for his. He steals the mother's milk and blackens it to make printer's ink to scoff at her and glorify ideal women with. He pretends to spare her the pangs of child-bearing so that he may have for himself the tenderness and fostering that belong of right to her children. Since marriage began, the great artist has been known as a bad husband. But he is worse: he is a child-robber, a blood-sucker, a hypocrite, and a cheat. Perish the race and wither a thousand women if only the sacrifice of them enable him to act Hamlet better, to paint a finer picture, to write a deeper poem, a greater play, a profounder philosophy!

Shaw, *Man and Superman,* I

55 Goodness is the third member of the trinity which traditionally has been assigned as the complex aim of art—namely, Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. With the point of view here adopted, Goodness must be denied a place among the aims of art. For Goodness is a qualification belonging to the constitution of reality, which in any of its individual actualizations is better or worse. Good and evil lie in depths and distances below and beyond appearance. They solely concern inter-relations within the real world. The real world is good when it is beautiful. Art has essentially to do with perfections attainable by purposeful adaptation of appearance. With a larger view and a deeper analysis, some instance of the perfection of art may diminish the good otherwise inherent in some specific situation as it passes into its objective actuality for the future. Unseasonable art is analogous to an unseasonable joke, namely, good in its place, but out of place a positive evil. It is a curious fact that lovers of art who are most insistent on the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' are apt to be indignant at the banning of art for the sake of other interests. The charge of immorality is not refuted by pointing to the perfection of art. Of course it is true that the defence of morals is the battle-cry which best rallies stupidity against change. Perhaps countless ages ago respectable amœbæ refused to migrate from ocean to dry land—refusing in defence of morals. One incidental service of art to society lies in its adventurousness.

It is a tribute to the strength of the sheer craving for freshness, that change, whose justification lies in aim at the distant ideal, should be promoted by Art which is the adaptation of immediate Appearance for immediate Beauty. Art neglects the safety of the future for the gain of the present. In so doing it is apt to render its Beauty thin. But after all, there must be some immediate harvest. The Good of the Universe cannot lie in indefinite postponement. The Day of Judgment is an important notion: but that Day is always with us. Thus Art takes care of the immediate fruition, here and now; and in so doing is apt to lose some depth by reason of the immediate fruition at which it is aiming. Its business is to render the Day of Judgment a success, now. The effect of the present on the future is the business of morals. And yet the separation is not so easy. For the inevitable anticipation adds to the present a qualitative element which profoundly affects its whole qualitative harmony.

Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* XVIII, 3–4

56 The merit of Art in its service to civilization lies in its artificiality and its finiteness. It exhibits for consciousness a finite fragment of human effort achieving its own perfection within its own limits. Thus the mere toil for the slavish purpose of prolonging life for more toil or for mere bodily gratification, is transformed into the conscious realization of a self-contained end, timeless within time. The work of Art is a fragment of nature with the mark on it of a finite creative effort, so that it stands alone, an individual thing detailed from the vague infinity of its background. Thus Art heightens the sense of humanity. It gives an elation of feeling which is supernatural. A sunset is glorious, but it dwarfs humanity and belongs to the general flow of nature. A million sunsets will not spur on men towards civilization. It requires Art to evoke into consciousness the finite perfections which lie ready for human achievement.

Consciousness itself is the product of art in its lowliest form. For it results from the influx of ideality into its contrast with reality, with the purpose of reshaping the latter into a finite, select appearance. But consciousness having emerged from Art at once produces the new specialized art of the conscious animals—in particular human art. In a sense art is a morbid overgrowth of functions which lie deep in nature. It is the essence of

art to be artificial. But it is its perfection to return to nature, remaining art. In short art is the education of nature. Thus, in its broadest sense, art is civilization. For civilization is nothing other than the unremitting aim at the major perfections of harmony.

Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* XVIII, 6

57 There is, in fact, a path from phantasy back again to reality, and that is—art. The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honour, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his libido too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis. There must be many factors in combination to prevent this becoming the whole outcome of his development; it is well known how often artists in particular suffer from partial inhibition of their capacities through neurosis. Probably their constitution is endowed with a powerful capacity for sublimation and with a certain flexibility in the repressions determining the conflict. But the way back to reality is found by the artist thus: He is not the only one who has a life of phantasy; the intermediate world of phantasy is sanctioned by general human consent, and every hungry soul looks to it for comfort and consolation. But to those who are not artists the gratification that can be drawn from the springs of phantasy is very limited; their inexorable repressions prevent the enjoyment of all but the meagre day-dreams which can become conscious. A true artist has more at his disposal. First of all he understands how to elaborate his day-dreams, so that they lose that personal note which grates upon strange ears and become enjoyable to others; he knows too how to modify them sufficiently so that their origin in prohibited sources is not easily detected. Further, he possesses the mysterious ability to mould his particular material until it expresses the ideas of his phantasy faithfully; and then he knows how to attach to this reflection of his phantasy-life so strong a stream of pleasure that, for a time at least, the repressions are out-balanced and dispelled by it. When he can do all this, he opens out to others the way back to the comfort and consolation of their own unconscious sources of pleasure, and so reaps their gratitude and admiration; then he has won—through his phantasy—what before he could only win in phantasy: honour, power, and the love of women.

Freud, *General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis,* XXIII

58 As regards intellectual work, it remains a fact, indeed, that great decisions in the realm of thought and momentous discoveries and solutions of problems are only possible to an individual, working in solitude. But even the group mind is capable of genius in intellectual creation, as is shown above all by language itself, as well as by folk-song, folklore and the like. It remains an open question, moreover, how much the individual thinker or writer owes to the stimulation of the group in which he lives, or whether he does more than perfect a mental work in which the others have had a simultaneous share.

Freud, *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego,* III

59 People say that women contributed but little to the discoveries and inventions of civilization, but perhaps after all they did discover one technical process, that of plaiting and weaving. If this is so, one is tempted to guess at the unconscious motive at the back of this achievement. Nature herself might be regarded as having provided a model for imitation, by causing pubic hair to grow at the period of sexual maturity so as to veil the genitals. The step that remained to be taken was to attach the hairs permanently together, whereas in the body they are fixed in the skin and only tangled with one another. If you repudiate this idea as being fantastic, and accuse me of having an *idée fixe* on the subject of the influence exercised by the lack of a penis upon the development of femininity, I cannot of course defend myself.

Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,* XXXIII

60 Art . . . explicitly recognizes what it has taken so long to discover in science; the control exercised by emotion in reshaping natural conditions, and the place of the imagination, under the influence of desire, in re-creating the world into a more orderly place. When so-called nonrational factors are found to play a large part in the production of relations of consistency and order in logical systems, it is not surprising that they should operate in artistic structures. Indeed, it may be questioned whether any scientific systems extant, save perhaps those of mathematics, equal artistic structure in integrity, subtlety and scope, while the latter are evidently more readily and widely understood, and are the sources of a more widespread and direct satisfaction. These facts are explicable only when it is realized that scientific and artistic systems embody the same fundamental principles of the relationship of life to its surroundings, and that both satisfy the same fundamental needs. Probably a time will come when it will be universally recognized that the differences between coherent logical schemes and artistic structures in poetry, music and the plastics are technical and specialized, rather than deep-seated.

Dewey, *Affective Thought*

61 That art originated in play is a common saying. Whether or not the saying is historically correct, it suggests that harmony of mental playfulness and seriousness describes the artistic ideal. When the artist is preoccupied overmuch with means and materials, he may achieve wonderful technique, but not the artistic spirit *par excellence.* When the animating idea is in excess of the command of method, æsthetic feeling may be indicated, but the art of presentation is too defective to express the feeling thoroughly. When the thought of the end becomes so adequate that it compels translation into the means that embody it, or when attention to means is inspired by recognition of the end they serve, we have the attitude typical of the artist, an attitude that may be displayed in all activities, even though not conventionally designated arts.

Dewey, *How We Think,* Pt. III, XVI, 2

62 O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enameling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*

63 The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely. . . . It is not the "greatness," the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts.

T. S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

64 This mental vegetation, this fitful nervous groping, is . . . a sign of life, out of which art emerges by discipline and by a gradual application to real issues. An artist is a dreamer consenting to dream of the actual world; he is a highly suggestible mind hypnotised by reality.

Santayana, *Life of Reason,* IV, 3

65 The subject matter of art is life, life as it actually is; but the function of art is to make life better. The depth to which an artist may find current experience to be sunk in discord and confusion is not his special concern; his concern is, in some measure, to lift experience out. The more barbarous his age, the more drastic and violent must be his operation.

Santayana, *Life of Reason,* IV, 4

66 Love, one of the great commonplaces of existence, is slowly leaving mine. The maternal instinct is another great commonplace. Once we've left these behind, we find that all the rest is gay and varied, and that there is plenty of it. But one doesn't leave all that behind when or as one pleases. How wise one of my husbands was when he remonstrated: "But is it impossible for you to write a book that isn't about love, adultery, semi-incestuous relations and a final separation? Aren't there other things in life?" If he had not been in such a hurry to get to his amorous rendezvous—for he was handsome and charming—he might perhaps have taught me what can take the place of love, in a novel or out of it.

Colette, *La Naissance du jour*

67 Art, which rules Making and not Doing, stands therefore outside the human sphere; it has an end, rules, values, which are not those of man, but those of the work to be produced. This work is everything for Art; there is for Art but one law—the exigencies and the good of the work.

Hence the tyrannical and absorbing power of Art, and also its astonishing power of soothing; it delivers one from the human; it establishes the *artifex*—artist or artisan—in a world apart, closed, limited, absolute, in which he puts the energy and intelligence of his manhood at the service of a thing which he makes. This is true of all art; the ennui of living and willing ceases at the door of every workshop.

But if art is not human in the end that it pursues, it is human, essentially human, in its mode of operating. It's a work of man that has to be made; it must have on it the mark of man: *animal rationale.*

Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism,* III

68 Art in general tends to make a work. But certain arts tend to make a *beautiful* work, and in this they differ essentially from all the others. The work to which all the other arts tend is itself ordered to the service of man, and is therefore a simple means; and it is entirely enclosed in a determined material genus. The work to which the fine arts tend is ordered to beauty; as beautiful, it is an end, an absolute, it suffices of itself; and if, as work-to-be-made, it is material and enclosed in a genus, as beautiful it belongs to the kingdom of the spirit

and plunges deep into the transcendence and the infinity of being.

The fine arts thus stand out in the *genus* art as man stands out in the *genus* animal. And like man himself they are like a horizon where matter and spirit meet. They have a spiritual soul. Hence they possess many distinctive properties. Their contact with the beautiful modifies in them certain characteristics of art in general, notably, as I shall try to show, with respect to the rules of art; on the other hand, this contact discloses and carries to a sort of excess other generic characteristics of the virtue of art, above all its intellectual character and its resemblance to the speculative virtues.

Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism,* V

69 Art is *gratuitous* or disinterested as such—that is to say, . . . in the production of the work the virtue of art aims only at one thing: the good of the work-to-be-made, beauty to be made to shine in matter, the creating of the thing according to its own laws, independently of all the rest; and accordingly it desires that there be nothing in the work which will escape its regulation, and that it be alone in immediately ruling the work, in moulding it and fashioning it.

There are many ways of failing in this "gratuitousness." One may think, for instance, that good moral intentions make up for the quality of the craft or the inspiration, and suffice to construct a work. Or else one may go so far as to adulterate the work itself, such as the rules and the determined ways of art would have it to be, by forcibly applying to it, in order to rule it, foreign elements—the desire to edify, or to disedify, not to shock the public, or to create scandal, to have "arrived" in society, or to cut a figure in the bars and cafés as an *artist* free and rare.

Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism,* Appendix I

70 Art is just as comprehensible as science, but in its own terms; that is, one can always ask, and usually can determine, how the artistic semblance of life is made and in what it consists.

Langer, *Mind,* I, Intro.

71 Artistic conception, for all its similarities to mythical ideation and even dream, is not a transitional phase of mental evolution, but a final symbolic form making revelation of truths about actual life. Like discursive reason, it seems to have unlimited potentialities. The facts which it makes conceivable are precisely those which literal statement distorts. Having once symbolized and perceived them, we may talk about them; but only artistic perception can find them and judge them real in the first place.

Langer, *Mind,* I, 4

72 Art is the objectification of feeling, and the subjectification of nature.

Langer, *Mind,* I, 4

73 Every kind of art is beautiful, as all life is beautiful, and for much the same reason: that it embodies sentience, from the most elementary sense of vitality, individual being and continuity, to the full expansion of human perception, human love and hate, triumph and misery, enlightenment, wisdom.

Langer, *Mind,* I, 5

16.2 | *Books and Reading*

The passages here assembled require little or no preamble. They are about the writing and reading of books, the collection and enjoyment of them, and the pleasures and pretensions of the literary life.

The reader will find both praise and dispraise of books, criteria for distinguishing good books from bad, enduring from ephemeral literature, and wise counsel about the books to be read or about the amount and character of the reading one should do, including the cautionary observation by Socrates that the living mind of man can never be enclosed within the dead pages of a book.

Comments on literature will also be found

in the next two sections of this chapter; and for relevant passages in other chapters, the reader should consult the index under such terms as "book," "books," and "literature."

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1 Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Ecclesiastes 12:12

2 *Socrates.* The worst of authors will say something which is to the point.

Plato, *Phaedrus,* 235B

3 *Socrates.* I cannot help feeling, Phaedrus, that writing is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of speeches. You would imagine that they had intelligence, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer. And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves.

Phaedrus. That again is most true.

Soc. Is there not another kind of word or speech far better than this, and having far greater power—a son of the same family, but lawfully begotten?

Phaedr. Whom do you mean, and what is his origin?

Soc. I mean an intelligent word graven in the soul of the learner, which can defend itself, and knows when to speak and when to be silent.

Phaedr. You mean the living word of knowledge which has a soul, and of which the written word is properly no more than an image?

Soc. Yes, of course that is what I mean. And now may I be allowed to ask you a question: Would a husbandman, who is a man of sense, take the seeds, which he values and which he wishes to bear fruit, and in sober seriousness plant them during the heat of summer, in some garden of Adonis, that he may rejoice when he sees them in eight days appearing in beauty? at least he would do so, if at all, only for the sake of amusement and pastime. But when he is in earnest he sows in fitting soil, and practises husbandry, and is satisfied if in eight months the seeds which he has sown arrive at perfection?

Phaedr. Yes, Socrates, that will be his way when he is in earnest; he will do the other, as you say, only in play.

Soc. And can we suppose that he who knows the just and good and honourable has less understanding, than the husbandman, about his own seeds?

Phaedr. Certainly not.

Soc. Then he will not seriously incline to "write" his thoughts "in water" with pen and ink, sowing words which can neither speak for themselves nor teach the truth adequately to others?

Phaedr. No, that is not likely.

Soc. No, that is not likely—in the garden of letters he will sow and plant, but only for the sake of recreation and amusement; he will write them down as memorials to be treasured against the forgetfulness of old age, by himself, or by any other old man who is treading the same path. He will rejoice in beholding their tender growth; and while others are refreshing their souls with banqueting and the like, this will be the pastime in which his days are spent.

Phaedr. A pastime, Socrates, as noble as the other is ignoble, the pastime of a man who can be amused by serious talk, and can discourse merrily about justice and the like.

Soc. True, Phaedrus. But nobler far is the serious pursuit of the dialectician, who, finding a congenial soul, by the help of science sows and plants therein words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them, and are not unfruitful, but have in them a seed which others brought up in different soils render immortal, making the possessors of it happy to the utmost extent of human happiness.

Phaedr. Far nobler, certainly.

Plato, *Phaedrus,* 275B

4 Every man of worth, when dealing with matters of worth, will be far from exposing them to ill feeling and misunderstanding among men by committing them to writing. In one word, then, it may be known from this that, if one sees written treatises composed by anyone, either the laws of a lawgiver, or in any other form whatever, these are not for that man the things of most worth, if he is a man of worth, but that his treasures are laid up in the fairest spot that he possesses. But if these things were worked at by him as things of real worth, and committed to writing, then surely, not gods, but men "have themselves bereft him of his wits."

Plato, *Seventh Letter*

5 Go, little book, my little tragedy!
God grant thy maker, ere his ending day,
May write some tale of happy poetry!