John Ruskin and the sociology of art, 1856-1860

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JOHN RUSKIN AND THE SOCIOLOGY
 OF ART, 1856-1860

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the degree of

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PREFACE

Born into a wealthy merchant family in London, John Ruskin (1819-1900) had open to him all the educational and career opportunities of his class. Yet, he acquired no more than an A.B. at Oxford, and he did not pursue a career in the family wine business, in the government, or in the professions. Instead, he spent his life between living in London and traveling on the Continent, the whole scrutinizing first art, then society, continually writing about what he saw. He arrived at his conclusions without reference to outside authority. This independent thought resulted in such statements as those in which he regarded Rembrandt and Raphael as inferior artists and John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, and Jeremy Bentham as faulty economists. Such pronouncements alienated him from many of his own class, not only because he uttered heresy, but also because he presumed authority in two seemingly disparate fields. Yet, he was in wide demand as a lecturer on art, and his being the first Slade Professor of Art at Oxford
was a high point in his career. The fact is, that although Ruskin's teachings are individualistic, they conform so well to fundamental truths, and here he appealed to many people of all classes. One of these fundamental truths is that truly great art comes only from a society equal to producing it.

The purpose of this study is to show how Ruskin thought great art could be generated in a society. He sees this generation possible only in the hearts of all members of a society. First, he defines what great art is by locating its excellence in the heart of the individual artist rather than in external considerations of technique or convention. Second, he seeks to produce conditions for a great society, the kind of society out of which great artists can come. He defines greatness in a society in the same terms that he defines greatness in art, that is, society must try to produce happy people rather than make more money. Third, he shows how once general welfare is achieved, then individuals of artistic ability will immortalize that society in their art, thus welding artist and society together. In short, the artist, rather than be repelled by what he sees around him,
embodies the ideals of his people. The union between art and society, if it is to occur at all, must occur within the individual.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although the years 1856-1860 span only a short time in terms of Ruskin's long life and prolific work, they are significant because during this time Ruskin not only formulates the characteristics of noble or great art, but he also sets forth the corresponding characteristics that are necessary in a society to produce such art. For a true union between art and society to exist, not only must a nation provide for art, but art must, in turn, have reference to the nation producing it. The fusion of the two can only occur, however, when both put away theoretical preoccupations that are not founded upon man's experience. Only when they are guided by the truth of experience will they become vital and enriching influences in men's lives. Society then must provide for material well-being, and art for spiritual and aesthetic well-being. Both then will serve mankind totally, and life will become ennobled.

That the year 1856 is a significant starting point is indicated by Francis G. Townsend when he says that in
1871 Ruskin prepared some of his works for republication. In the preface of *Sesame and Lilies* in this edition, Ruskin tells how his early works were hampered by religious fervor and a desire to show off his writing ability. Except for his pronouncements on "art, policy, or morality, as distinct from religion," he therefore decided to "reprint scarcely anything in this series out of the first and second volumes of *Modern Painters*" and to "omit much of the *Seven Lamps* and *Stones of Venice.*" However, he would reprint all of his books written in the previous fifteen years "without change." Townsend concludes by pointing out that in Ruskin's own judgment, his earlier works were youthful experiments: "His real work began in 1856, the year of *Modern Painters* III and IV."¹

Following those two volumes were: *The Political Economy of Art* (1857), later titled *A Joy Forever*, *The Two Paths* (1859), *Modern Painters* V (1860), and *Unto This Last* (1860). Together with *Modern Painters* III and IV, these works comprise the canon of this study.

In the first ten chapters of Modern Painters III and the first five chapters of Modern Painters IV, Ruskin clears up ambiguities and apparent contradictions for which Modern Painters I and II had been criticized in connection with his views on art and Turner's achievement.² Ruskin had been accused of contradicting himself in Modern Painters II when he said that Turner was superior both in showing details and in being visionary.³ In Modern Painters III Ruskin defines his central position of what he means when he says Turner is superior in an apparently contradictory sense:

That art is the greatest which expresses the greatest number of the noblest ideas. Art is the expression of an artist's soul. A man may have soul and not be able to paint, in which case he ought not to be a painter. But, be his manipulation never so perfect, he is not a great artist unless he is also capable of receiving and imparting noble impressions.⁴

The last eight chapters of Modern Painters III and the last two chapters of Modern Painters IV ("The Mountain Gloom" and "The Mountain Glory") are a treatise on the

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³Ibid., 338-39.
⁴Ibid., 339-40.
history of man's attitudes toward natural scenery. In these chapters Ruskin traces the gradual disappearance of man's faith in God by comparing Greek, medieval, and modern concepts of God in natural elements. This loss of man's faith figures strongly in Ruskin's view of error in modern art and society.

The last two parts of Modern Painters V, "of Invention Formal" and "of Invention Spiritual," are, as Edward T. Cook says, "a treatise on 'the relations of Art to God and man.'" In the chapters on "Invention Spiritual," Ruskin begins to define the interrelationship between art, God, and man. Here he departs from theoretical concerns to a practical concern for the future of nations like England which ignore the legitimate place of art and religious devotion in national life. As he closes this five-volume effort, spanning seventeen years of intense thought and observation, his concern for humanity, the apparent digressive element in the work, is set forth as his real concern. In "The Dark Mirror" he says that Modern Painters

5Ibid., 343-44.
6Ibid., 337.
7Ibid.
has brought "everything to a root in human passion or human hope." They were designed to defend Turner, but they have been colored throughout,--nay, continually altered in shape, and even warped and broken, by digressions respecting social questions, which had for me an interest tenfold greater than the work I had been forced into undertaking.⁸

Indeed, had his father not prodded him, Ruskin may never have completed Modern Painters. As he worked on this last volume, economic and political ideas vied with his attempt to close this work on art. Art is still the ostensible topic, but, according to Cook, "the inquiry leads him to consider the right economy of labour."⁹

This overt concern for humanity is perhaps the greatest distinguishing feature of Modern Painters, III, IV, and V as compared to Modern Painters I and II. John D. Rosenberg says that in the ten years between the second and third volumes Ruskin "became less moved by the beauty of art and nature than by the waste, mystery, and terror


⁹Cook, I, 529-30.
of life." His deepening sense of the tragic condition of man is exemplified in the chapter, "The Mountain Gloom," in *Modern Painters* IV. The mountain peasantry barely eke out a living from the rocky mountain slopes. They share none of the religious inspiration that the grandeur of the mountain peaks seems to suggest. Cook says that more and more Ruskin was disturbed by the apparent indifference of men toward trying to make their lives noble and good:

> The responsibilities of human life, the shortness of the allotted span, as measured by the infinity of things to be learnt and to be done, weighed heavily upon a man whose curiosity was . . . unbounded. . . .

Both "The Mountain Gloom" and "The Mountain Glory" had a practical purpose. By marking this contrast between mountain glory and human misery, Ruskin hoped to arouse the attention of his readers to help the mountain peasantry better their condition.

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11 Ibid., pp. 24-25.

12 Cook, I, 509.

13 Ibid., 347.
After completing *Modern Painters* III and IV, Ruskin pursued his interest in man's condition more intensely. He was in demand throughout England as a lecturer on art. But, he was more concerned about the conditions necessary in society for great art to be produced and honored. In July, 1857, he delivered two lectures on art and society at Manchester, England. Later published as *A Joy Forever*, these lectures outlined the responsibility of the people in nurturing and preserving great art. From 1858 to 1859 he delivered five more lectures in various towns. These lectures, on how the characteristics of a nation are reflected in that nation's art, were published as *The Two Paths*. These two works connect Ruskin's theories of art with economic and practical life.14 Through these lectures, he was able to take his views to the masses of people, those who were more doers than thinkers. He did not want to write merely for a passive audience. Cook says, "he wanted to see, in the everyday world, some fruit of his principles and labours."15 The reason *A Joy Forever* became

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15Cook, I, 430.
the title of the Manchester lectures was that it summarized all of Ruskin's teaching as far as he was concerned: "If only the English nation could be made to understand that the beauty which is indeed to be a joy forever, must be a joy for all."\(^{16}\)

The year 1860 is significant as a terminating point in a study of Ruskin's works, because with the publication of *Unto This Last* he began the social and economic criticism that was to occupy his chief thought the rest of his life. The book ranked high in his estimation. In 1877 he called *Unto This Last* "the central work of my life; ... it contained at once the substance of all that I have had since to say."\(^{17}\) He not only considered its message important, but he also rated its simple style above the ornateness of *Modern Painters*.\(^{18}\) The superiority of the book's style is also noted by Frederic Harrison, who says it contains all that is noble in Ruskin's written prose, with hardly any, or very few, of his excesses and mannerisms.

\(^{16}\) *Ibid.*, 431.

\(^{17}\) *Ibid.*, II, 2.

The book as a whole is a masterpiece of pure, incisive, imaginative, lucid English.\textsuperscript{19}

In \textit{Unto This Last} Ruskin attacks the purely theoretical science of political economy which ignores the broad concerns for humanity in its justification of the processes of industrialism. The force of his argument, carried forward in a spirit of ironic humor and mixed with a tone of righteous indignation, is that by ignoring love and justice, the things that truly motivate people, political economy is not a science at all. Its theories are not based upon society in its totality. It considers only how men become rich and ignores the equally important fact that men also become poor. In a nation pursuing such a dichotomous course, Ruskin sees no sense of the kind of national life and ideals conducive to the production of either great art or noble living.

Ruskin's qualifications as an economist or social critic were discounted by many people who could not conceive an art critic writing about economics. However, E. T. Cook says that Ruskin's mind was analytical regardless of whether artistic or economic principles were under

\textsuperscript{19}Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill, and Other Literary Estimates (New York, 1902), p. 69.
consideration. His grasp of language and respect for words served him well in attacking the "masked words" of the economists. Further, Ruskin grew up in a merchant's house, and was aware of his father's dealings in the wine business. Cook says other qualifications such as "his first-hand knowledge of arts and crafts gave him a real insight into the finer qualities of work, and a considerable advantage over many of the arm-chair economists." His extensive travels in western and southern Europe also gave him insights into agricultural and national life.

Ruskin's concern for the working classes was not a sudden thing in 1860. When he was young, he heard his father's Spanish partner in their wine business speak deprecatingly about the Spanish and French peasants who worked in their vineyards. Young Ruskin, however, knew that these lowly people produced the wine that not only brought satisfaction to the upper classes, but also supported his own family. In 1847 as he toured Scotland, he noted in his diary how cheerful fishermen were, despite their hard lives. Between 1848 and 1858, as he toured the Continent,

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20Cook, II, 12.

he saw luxury and misery developing side by side. In France in 1848 he saw masses of lower-class people on the verge of violence in Paris and Rouen. These things greatly upset him, for he not only felt guilty about his own well-being, but he noticed the contrast between God's work in the beauty of nature and the apparent absence of it in human nature.22

By 1852 he was ready to publicly express his views on politics, and he drafted three letters to the Times. However, his father, fearing for his son's reputation, succeeded in suppressing the letters, and Ruskin shelved them. Yet, some of his views came through in the chapter, "The Nature of Gothic" in The Stones of Venice, which he was writing at this time.23

The years 1856-1860 saw more than a maturing of Ruskin's artistic thought in Modern Painters III and IV and a maturing of his social thought in Unto This Last. Most important is the maturing of his concept of the interrelationship of these major facets of man's being. For art to be great, it must have reference to the society

22Ibid., p. 138.
23Cook, I, 277.
producing it. Where before he spoke about the necessity of art to refer to nature to be great, he now shifts this reference to man and society. Yet, the quality of life in a nation must be such that its artists, in a spirit of devotion or worship, seek to immortalize national life in their art.

However, the energy of nineteenth-century, industrial England was being spent in widening the gulf between rich and poor. With materialism and technology as the sole considerations in most industrial and political leaders' minds, the necessary human and spiritual grounds for great art were not included in national goals. As long as this condition lasted, neither material welfare for the poorer masses of men nor spiritual and aesthetic health for all Englishmen was possible. The qualities of mind that Ruskin set forth as necessary for great art became the same qualities necessary for the ennobling of society. This is the direction Ruskin's thought took in the years 1856-1860.
CHAPTER II

GREATNESS IN ART

As Ruskin opens Modern Painters III, he determines to define what makes art great:

I have said that the art is greatest which includes the greatest ideas; but I have not endeavoured to define the nature of this greatness in the ideas themselves. We speak of great truths, of great beauties, great thoughts. What is it which makes one truth greater than another, one thought greater than another?¹

His first concern is to show the error that occurs when the attempt is made to define great art in a purely technical sense. He notes the "supposed distinction" between the "Great and Low Schools" of art. The former school is purported to be "descriptive of a certain noble manner of painting" that is to be revered by art students. The latter school is characterized as "vulgar," "low," or "realist," and art students are taught to avoid it (V, 19). Ruskin questions this "highness" in art:

Has it been, or is it, a true highness, a true princeliness, or only a show of it, consisting in courtly manners and robes of state? (V, 19)

To answer this question, Ruskin draws upon the art theories of Sir Joshua Reynolds in The Idler. In his essays Reynolds tries to distinguish between the "Great" and "Low" schools of art along purely technical lines. He says that the Italian painters belong to the "Great" school because they excel in a style which corresponds to that of imaginative poetry. He relegates the Dutch painters to the "Low" school because they excel in a mechanical imitation of their subject matter "in which the slowest intellect is always sure to succeed best" (V, 21-22). Reynolds bases his distinction upon the kind of details the painters use. Because Dutch painting "attends to literal truth and minute exactness in the details of nature modified by accident," it uses "variable" details, corresponding to those which historical writing uses. On the other hand, the Italians use "invariable" details as they treat of spiritual and eternal subjects. Reynolds concludes: "Works which attend only to the invariable are full of genius and soul" (V, 24).

To show the error of Reynolds' reasoning, Ruskin applies his criteria to poetic writing, an example of "High"
art, and examines the kinds of details which appear in such writing. Does poetic art use only invariable details? Does the appearance of variable details render a work unpoetic as Reynolds states? Ruskin answers both of these questions in the negative, and he shows the invalidity of Reynolds' distinction by examining some lines from Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillon." Ruskin finds that Byron draws heavily upon variable details in writing his poem. Ruskin cites these lines:

   A thousand feet in depth below  
The massy waters meet and flow;  
   So far the fathom line was sent  
From Chillon's snow-white battlement.

A purely historical rendering of these lines appears as follows: "The lake was sounded from the walls of the Castle of Chillon, and found to be a thousand feet deep." If Reynolds is right, Byron will have left out unnecessary, "variable," details and included only the invariable, for example, "the points which the Lake of Geneva and Castle of Chillon have in common with all other lakes and castles" (V, 25-26).

Yet, such words as "below," "massy," "meet and flow," "fathom line," and "snow-white" are details not absolutely necessary to describe Chillon:
This is a curious result. Instead of finding, as we expected, the poetry distinguished from the history by the omission of details, we find it consist entirely in the addition of details; and instead of being characterized by regard only of the invariable, we find its whole power to consist in the clear expression of what is singular and particular! (V, 25-27)

Although it would appear that Reynolds had reversed his terms, and that poetry should be defined as having variable and history invariable details, Ruskin warns that this would be an erroneous conclusion, too.

Reynolds and those who try to classify art according to intellectual or technical questions are on the wrong track. It is not the addition or subtraction of certain kinds of details that determines historical or poetical utterance, but rather:

There is something either in the nature of the details themselves, or the method of using them, which invests them with poetical or historical propriety. (V, 27-28)

As in poetry, so in painting:

. . . we shall, therefore, find presently that a painting is to be classed in the great or inferior schools, not according to the kind of details which it represents, but according to the uses for which it employs them. (V, 30-31)

Ruskin shifts attention as to the components of great art from the purely technical aspects, the tools, to the intent of the artist or writer. The truth which Reynolds glossed
over was that the greatness of a painting lies not in the technique, that is, in the materials, or subject, or method of treatment, but rather "in the nobleness of the end to which the effort of the painter is addressed" (V, 42).

This nobility is determined by how much of the artist's soul becomes involved in his art. Evidence of this involvement of soul appears in four ways. First, it appears in his love for his subject matter. This love involves the suppression of his ego in deference to his subject matter, or content. Allied to this love for subject matter is the quality of seeing nature clearly. The task does not lie in "simple" imitation, for to capture nature as she is, is highly challenging. Third, the artist must love beauty consistent with natural fact. The ugly must be taken with the beautiful for true beauty to exist in art. Last, and most important, the artist must possess invention, the imaginative quality which either presents visions in the artist's mind or participates in the arrangement of observed or remembered fact. All these elements must appear, in varying degrees, in a work of art for it to be great (V, 65-66). Matters of technique, formula, theory, or convention simply get in the way, and prevent
the artist's communication of experience, or nature, to
the viewer.

I. LOVE OF SUBJECT MATTER

Great artists choose noble subjects, which involve
"wide interests and profound passions, as opposed to those
which involve narrow interests and slight passions." The
habitual choice of such sacred subjects as the Nativity,
Transfiguration, or Crucifixion shows a natural tendency
to depict highest human thoughts. Leonardo's "The Last
Supper" is an example. On the next lower level would be
Raphael's "School of Athens," which depicts great men.
The third order includes "passions and events of ordinary
life." There are degrees in this last order, too. Paint-
ings, such as Hunt's "Claudio and Isabella," which show
deep thoughts and sorrows are higher than those which treat
of brutalities and vices for no instructive purpose
(V, 48-49).

If Ruskin were merely content to impose his own
standards of ranking art, then he could be accused of com-
mitting a worse error than Reynolds did. Reynolds at least
proceeded on logical grounds. But Ruskin does not stop
at merely a moral ranking of subject matter as an index of nobility. He is quick to refer again to the devotional state of mind of the artist toward his subject. This is the factor which Reynolds had over-looked. The choice of subject, Ruskin says, must be "sincere." That is, it must be "made from the heart." When this qualification enters, the order of nobility can become reversed. Painters of peasant's brawls and children's games raise the nobleness of their subjects when they paint them sincerely. Noble subjects are frequently chosen insincerely. The reason for this is that such choices are made out of ambition and vanity. Such an artist

mistakes his vanity for inspiration, his ambition for greatness of soul, and takes pleasure in what he calls "the ideal," merely because he has neither humility nor capacity enough to comprehend the real. (V, 49-50)

Although great artists are aware of the excellence of their work in comparison to that of other artists, and the world in general, nevertheless they are humble. They simply accept this separation between the high quality of their own labor and the low quality of the labor of others as a matter of fact (V, 331). The reason for this quiet acceptance is that there is a basic unity between their genuine nature and their work. They produce what
they are. In this respect Ruskin values Scott and Turner somewhat more than Wordsworth, whom he considers "often affected in his simplicity" (V, 332). This truth to self helps the young artist find his way through all the various theories and teachings about creating art. He may gain quick attention by following popular fads or theories, but if he paints true to himself, he will be painting better pictures, even if he is not popular (XVI, 295).

The reason such an artist will paint better pictures is that he will become less self-conscious. He will be able to concentrate more on his subject. When this happens, he becomes more closely linked to the truth of his world. Ruskin says that a great artist never can be egotistic:

The whole of his power depends upon his losing sight and feeling of his own existence, and becoming a mere witness and mirror of truth. . . . (V, 125)

There is no room for the "I" in great art, and it is the willingness, indeed, the innately felt necessity of removing or suppressing the "I" which Ruskin refers to when he speaks of the morality of the artist. He denies that he says only a good man can produce great art. What he does say is that an artist needs the one quality of
perceiving the goodness of nature, a quality that requires "certain moral conditions." The artist may be "warped" in his personal life, and he may be talented, nevertheless. But, the one element he needs to produce great art is a true perception of nature, or his subject, whether this makes him a good man or not (XVI, 310). Charles Dougherty states why this requirement is so necessary to achieve greatness. He says that according to Ruskin, our moral nature is not a perceiving thing in itself. It operates through love, or "the capacity to lose sight of one's self. . . . The passions of love energize and sharpen the intellect and the sensibilities." If an artist does not love his subject, he "will not be able to know it because his senses and intellect will lack the extra dimension of passionate intensity that is added by love."²

This love, or attitude of devotion, toward the subject achieves the synthesis between fact and art that Ruskin deems essential. In Modern Painters II he details how this synthesis is achieved when he describes the

penetrative imagination. It pierces external appearance and "plunges into the very central fiery heart" of things. "Its function and gift are the getting at the root, its nature and dignity depend on its holding things always by the heart." Ruskin calls this faculty "the highest intellectual power of man" (IV, 250-51). But, Ruskin warns that we must not confuse sensibility with sensitive penetration. He is not talking about mere sentiment which plays on the surfaces of things: "Sensitive feeling reaches below sentiment with the more real power of penetrating to the truth." For the penetrative imagination, as an "intellectual" power, to be operative, the artist needs the prior condition of love toward his subject and the complete abnegation of himself in deference to conveying the message that subject seems to offer.

Ruskin seems to attribute the artistic excellence of Shakespeare and Turner to their power of penetrative imagination. Inherent in his consideration of these artists is his admiration for their negation of self. Shakespeare

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succeeds in depicting the germ of human nature in his characters. He

sympathizes so completely with all creatures as to deprive himself, together with his personal identity, even of his conscience, as he casts himself into their hearts. (VI, 440)

Shakespeare succeeds because by negating himself, he can become several different persons. He is capable of a multiple personality that he could not have, if, instead of seizing the essence of his characters first, he became preoccupied with problems of technique.

Ruskin attributes Turner's superior power to his ability to subordinate himself to his subject and allow his penetrative imagination to reveal truths which are hidden to pure formalists. After he details the Turnerian mind in terms of its imaginative qualities in producing "Turnerian topography," Ruskin concludes that the imagination, rather than a faculty suspect, is to be the most trusted:

In its work, the vanity and individualism of the man himself are crushed, and he becomes a mere instrument or mirror, used by a higher power for the reflection to others of a truth which no effort of his could ever have ascertained. (VI, 44)

According to Waldo H. Dunn, Turner was an established and wealthy artist when Ruskin wrote the first
volume of *Modern Painters*, the purpose of which was a defense of Turner against what Ruskin considered unjust criticism. Ruskin was defending Turner's later "impressionistic" manner of painting against critics who judged only by fidelity to convention. Dunn goes on to say that Ruskin's attitude toward Turner's later impressionistic paintings was a modern one, that is, he searched for the intent of the artist, the source from which the artist received his impressions. In examining such sources, Dunn says, Ruskin's approach was scientific, not sentimental. Solomon Fishman concurs with Dunn's estimation of Ruskin's criticism. He says that Ruskin's description of the penetrative imagination brought him close to enunciating the modern definition of Expressionism. In defining this quality of the imagination, Ruskin revolutionized art theory by repudiating neo-classical idealization of nature and focused on the artist's ability to get to inner truth as a basis for a picture's reason for being. Ruskin was calling for a genuine communication between the artist

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5"Ruskin and the Values of Life," *Lectures on Three Eminent Victorians* (Claremont, Calif., 1932), p. 41.

and men, accomplished only by a realistic discernment of fact of experience so that convention and formula could not get in the way.  

This need for communication of experience by the artist to men made the intent, the "nobility of the end," of the artist so important to Ruskin. The love of the artist for the particular experience he wishes to convey insures that the communication will be a moral one. Ruskin requires that the spectator of a work of art needs a moral sense capable of grasping the artist's communication of a vital truth which the artist, in his turn, has, through his penetrative imagination, discerned in nature, or experience. In this way the spectator, discerning the truth the artist has conveyed, knows the work is moral, and so he can love what the artist has produced.  

In short, the viewer can love art, the end to which Ruskin's efforts are directed.

Although love and devotion toward the subject must be primary in the artist's mind, nevertheless technical

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8Ibid., p. 153.
excellence determines whether one truly can call himself an artist in the first place. One who cannot "both colour and draw beautifully . . . has no business to consider himself a painter at all . . . ." (V, 52).

Not only must there be technical excellence, but even love for the subject does not mean great art will be produced. The artist must be honest with himself in determining whether or not he has penetrative imagination. He must honestly assess his imaginative powers so that he does not try to paint sacred subjects or great men if he cannot enter their minds or imagine great events as they really happened. Otherwise, he will degrade the subjects he intended to honour, and his work is more utterly thrown away, and his rank as an artist is, in reality, lower, than if he had devoted himself to the imitation of the simplest objects of natural history. (V, 50)

There is nothing ignoble, in Ruskin's eyes, about an artist who pursues such a course:

Pure history and pure topography are most precious things; in many cases more useful to the human race than high imaginative work; and assuredly . . . a large majority . . . in art should never aim at anything higher. It is only vanity, never love, . . . which prompts men to desert their allegiance to the simple truth, in vain pursuit of the imaginative truth . . . evermore sealed to them. (VI, 29)

A noble imagination cannot be resisted. If an artist
doubts he has imagination, or if he can resist it, then he should

. . . never try to be a prophet; go on quietly with your hard camp-work, and the spirit will come to you in the camp . . . ; but try above all things to be quickly perceptive of the noble spirit in others. . . . (VI, 29)

Although love of the subject can quicken the perceptive qualities of the mind and can cause the artist to forget himself so that the penetrative imagination yields up the essence of the subject, this feeling for the subject can also have an opposite effect when, through strong feeling, the artist allows these feelings to obscure the true nature of the subject matter. Ruskin describes this effect when he calls it the "pathetic fallacy." Basically, it is the true appearance of lifeless things in nature on the one hand and "the extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion . . ." (V, 204).

The pathetic fallacy is a quality of modern artists, especially writers. The artist expresses something which he, as a living creature, imagines in the lifeless object, while the classical and medieval artists were content with expressing the unimaginary and actual qualities of the object itself. (V, 221)
The reason the pathetic fallacy occurs is because moderns have removed God from nature, and they have theorized that natural things are purely physical. Yet, their religious instinct, left without a divine reference, nevertheless overcomes theory when they personally confront nature, which seems alive. We give in to our religious instinct, and instead of ascribing this "unaccountable life" to the workings of God, we ascribe human feelings to the natural elements, and so we commit the pathetic fallacy (V, 231). Ruskin compares Keats, who has committed the pathetic fallacy, with Homer, who does not. Keats has described an incoming wave as breaking with a "wayward indolence." "Wayward" and "indolent" are terms which basically describe human actions, but Keats transposes these terms to a sea wave which then seems to have a life or motive power of its own:

But Homer would never have written, never thought of, such words. He could not . . . have lost sight of the great fact that the wave, . . . do what it might, was still . . . salt water; and that salt water could not be either wayward or indolent. (V, 221-22)

Instead, the waves are "over-roofed," "full-charged," "monstrous," "compact-black," "dark-clear," "violet-colored," "wine-colored," and so on. These epithets
describe pure physical nature:

... they are as accurate and intense in truth as words can be, but they never show the slightest feeling of anything animated in the ocean. Black or clear, monstrous or violet-colored, cold salt water it is always, and nothing but that. (V, 220)

It is not that Homer did not feel as strongly about the sea as Keats. Actually, Homer had stronger feelings. But, he separates the sense of life in the sea into "a great abstract image of a Sea Power:

He never says the waves rage, or the waves are idle. But he says there is somewhat in, and greater than, the waves, which rages, and is idle, and that he calls a god. (V, 220-21)

Homer's perception of nature is accurate because his faith in divine beings answers his religious instinct. The divine and the physical are separated in his mind; he does not confuse the two as Keats does. There is a healthy control of emotion as to physical nature, strong as that emotion is. Instead of imposing his own emotions upon natural elements, he attributes their evident sentiency to the divine beings he believes in, while at the same time seeing the elements as the dead, lifeless, or insentient things they are. Homer, then, succeeds in the same suppression of ego that Ruskin admires in Shakespeare and Turner.
Ruskin goes on to explain what a Greek's idea of a god was. Fire, for example, seemed just as ravenous and pitiless to him as it does to Keats. The Greek also felt that the sea-wave was wayward or idle. But, he reasoned that he could light or put out the fire and dry up the water or drink it. It is not the fire or the water that rages or is wayward. Rather, there is something in these elements which cannot be either controlled or destroyed, any more than I destroy myself by cutting off my finger; I was in my finger,—something of me at least was; I had a power over it, and felt pain in it, though I am still as much myself when it is gone. So there may be a power in the water which is not water, but to which the water is as a body;—which can strike with it, move in it, suffer in it, yet not be destroyed in it. This something, this great Water Spirit, I must not confuse with the waves, which are only its body. They may flow hither and thither, increase or diminish. That must be indivisible—imperishable—a god. So of fire also; those rays which I can stop, and in the midst of which I cast a shadow, cannot be divine, nor greater than I. They cannot feel, but there may be something in them that feels,—a glorious intelligence, as much nobler and more swift than mine, as these rays, which are its body, are nobler and swifter than my flesh... . (V,222-23)

The Greek also believed that such powers, or intelligences, within the elements could assume human form at will so that they could communicate with men or do anything else for which their "proper body, whether fire, earth, or air, was unfitted":
And it would have been to place them beneath, instead of above, humanity, if, assuming the form of man, they could not also have tasted his pleasures. (V, 223)

As an example of the gods' ability to come out of their natural element and assume human form, Ruskin cites the passage in the Iliad in which the river Scamander defends the Trojans against Achilles. To deal with Achilles, the river god assumes a human form, which Achilles nevertheless recognizes as that of the river god. Achilles addresses it as a river, not as a man, and its voice is that of a river, "out of the deep whirlpools." When Achilles refuses to obey it, it changes from its human form back into its natural, or divine form, and tries to overwhelm him with waves:

Vulcan defends Achilles, and sends fire against the river, which suffers in its water-body, till it is able to bear no more. At last even the "nerve of the river," or "strength of the river" . . . , feels the fire, and this "strength of the river" addresses Vulcan in supplications for respite. There is in this precisely the idea of a vital part of the river-body, which acted and felt, and which, if the fire reached it, was death, just as would be the case if it touched a vital part of the human body. (V, 223-24)

Their gods acted in nature, whereas moderns theorize that nature is motivated by physical laws only. The Greeks never tried to contradict their instinctive sense that God was everywhere. What sympathy or fellowship a Greek
had "were always for the spirit in the stream, not for the stream . . ." (V, 231). He accepted the spirit in natural elements as "plain fact," the forces of these elements when ruled by such a spirit as plain fact, and the deadness of these elements when "without their spirit":

a rose was good for scent, and a stream for sound and coolness; for the rest, one was no more than leaves, the other no more than water; he could not make anything else of them; and the divine power, which was involved in their existence, having been all distilled way by him into an independent Flora or Thetis, the poor leaves or waves were left, in mere cold corporeal-ness, to make the most of their even being discernibly red and soft, clear and wet, and unacknowledged in any other power whatsoever. (V, 230)

In defining his faith, the Greek "threw it entirely into a human form, and gave his faith to nothing but the image of his own humanity. . . . Content with his human sympathy, he approached the actual waves" and woods "with no sympathy at all" (V, 230). Consequently, the Greek believed his landscape subservient to "human comfort, to the foot, the taste, or the smell" (V, 230). The Odyssey has many references to "pleasant landscape" in which their every feature is "quietly subjugated to human service." Ruskin points out how Ulysses reveals his identity to his father Laertes, "whom he finds at work in his garden, 'with thick gloves on, to keep his hands from the thorns,'"
by reminding him of the vines, pear-trees, and apple trees Laertes gave him as a youth (V, 234). There are other references to Ulysses' kissing the "corn-giving land" when he finds land after being ship-wrecked (V, 238).

The medieval mind, however, did not see landscape as of service to man for essential needs as the Greeks did. Peasants did menial work, while the nobility considered their landscape as a place to play and make love only. This change brought about a less solemn, divine aspect of the land. No offerings to God were made of the land's fruits:

As the idea of a definite spiritual presence in material nature was lost, the mysterious sense of unaccountable life in the things themselves would be increased, and the mind would instantly be laid open to all those currents of fallacious, but pensive and pathetic sympathy, which we have seen to be characteristic of modern times. (V, 251)

Yet, although Ruskin considers the pathetic fallacy as a weakening quality in art, he does not condemn it. With his emphasis upon the Greeks' genuine belief in God, compared to the modern lack of faith, Ruskin condemns the faithlessness which gives rise to the pathetic fallacy. Yet, as a result of strong feeling, the pathetic fallacy gives evidence that men still react to their world genuinely, and Ruskin forgives the pathetic fallacy for this
reason. What he condemns is the affectation of feeling, a false pathetic fallacy, the sort that Pope uses, revealing his "cool blood." To distinguish no pathetic fallacy, false pathetic fallacy, and genuine pathetic fallacy, Ruskin compares Homer, Pope, and Keats in their treatment of a passage rendered originally by Homer. When Ulysses and his companions flee the Circean palace, they unknowingly leave behind the body of Elpenor, the youngest follower, whom they do not know is dead. After they cross the sea to safe land, Ulysses "summons the shades from Tartarus." Elpenor's is the first to appear. Startled, Ulysses addresses the spirit simply, but in a manner of "bitter and terrified lightness": "Elpenor? How comest thou under the shadowy darkness? Hast thou come faster on foot than I in my black ship?" Pope's rendition is:

O, say, what angry power Elpenor led
To glide in shades, and wander with the dead?
How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjoined,
Outfly the nimble sail, and leave the lagging wind?

Pope does not utter a pathetic fallacy at all as to the nimbleness of the sail and the laziness of the wind. He

utters the wrong passion, agonized curiosity. But, Ulysses wants to know the facts of the matter; and the very last thing his mind could do at the moment would be to pause, or suggest in any wise what was not a fact. The delay in the first three lines, and conceit in the last, jar upon us instantly, like the most frightful discord in music. (V, 206)

Keats, however, asks a similar question with "exquisite sincerity":

> He wept, and his bright tears
> Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
> Thus, with half-shut, suffused eyes, he stood;
> While from beneath some cumb'rous boughs hard by,
> With solemn step, an awful goddess came.
> And there was purport in her looks for him,
> Which he with eager guess began to read:
> Perplexed the while, melodiously he said, 'How cam' st thou over the unfooted sea?'

"Therefore," Ruskin says, "we see that the spirit of truth must guide us in some sort, even in our enjoyment of fallacy." (V, 207)

Pope, Keats, and Homer illustrate the three orders of poets, according to Ruskin. The lowest, exemplified by Pope, are those who see truly but feel nothing. They employ their subject matter to illustrate their own technical skill. The second order are poets like Keats and Tennyson whose emotions overcome their intellect. They see untruly and commit the pathetic fallacy. The first order, to which Homer and Dante belong, consists of poets
whose intellectual and emotional faculties are strong but balanced. There is a fourth, prophetic order, that of the Biblical prophets, whose strong intellects are overcome by emotion nevertheless, when they contemplate certain God-made events (V, 209).

It is important to emphasize that by "second order" Ruskin does not mean "second-rate." George Whaley makes this error when he says that Ruskin believes "second-rate art--or worse--arises from the inability to control emotion, and this failure is a sign of morbidity and weakness." It is not excess of feeling that Ruskin deplores, but the absence of feeling. As long as the emotion which causes the pathetic fallacy is true, then the fallacy is pleasant. But if the metaphor is not meant but done only for effect, then that is reprehensible. A true emotion means it comes from perceiving pure fact which gives rise to the emotion (V, 210-11).

Ruskin's concern is always for a genuine communication of the essence of subject matter to the viewer or

\[10 \text{Ibid., 346.}

\[11 \text{"Pathetic Fallacy," Queen's Quarterly, LVII (Winter, 1950), 522.}\]
reader. He looks at the intent of the artist as revealed in the work of art to make this determination. A genuine error in the artist's mind is a natural fact. The artist cannot help it. If this results in a defective communication, then the work cannot be condemned. It is not the best, but it is the best the artist, true to himself, can do. Through the pathetic fallacy, Ruskin is able to reconcile the paradox of defective beauty with truth. He does so by relating the pathetic fallacy to the truth of the mind, psychological truth.\textsuperscript{12} If there is no artifice in the appearance of the pathetic fallacy in a work of art, then the fallacy can be trusted and enjoyed. It is an imposition of the self upon natural fact, but as it cannot be helped, and as it is not an act of pride or pure technique, then it is moral.

Ruskin places Scott in a category of his own in terms of Scott's response to Landscape. Scott neither regards nature as being dead like Homer does, nor does he impose his own feelings upon it as Keats and Tennyson do. Rather, he senses nature as having a life of its own, independent of himself. He does not commit the pathetic

\textsuperscript{12}Thomas, 347.
fallacy; he does not place himself above nature, but he puts nature above him. He instinctively senses something in nature, but he cannot identify it because of his lack of faith. As an example, Ruskin cites these lines from one of Scott's poems:

Yon lonely thorn,—would he could tell
The changes of his parent dell,
Since he, so gray and stubborn now,
Waved in each breeze a sapling bough!
Would he could tell, how deep the shade
A thousand mingled branches made,
How broad the shadows of the oak,
How clung the rowan to the rock,
And through the foliage showed his head,
With narrow leaves and berries red!

Scott does not consider the thorn's grayness or stubbornness because he feels dull or stubborn, nor does he consider the "cheerful peeping forth of the rowan, because he himself is at that moment cheerful or curious." He perceives the thorn and rowan as he would were he considering an old man or a "climbing boy; forgetting himself, in sympathy with either age or youth" (V, 337-38).

Scott displays the modern mind in general, "the instinctive sense which men must have of the Divine presence, not formed into distinct belief" (V, 338). The sense of animation is "universal . . . , only varying in depth according to the greatness of the heart that holds it"
(V, 339). As Scott is "more than usually intense, and accompanied with infinite affection and quickness of sympathy," he conquers all tendency to the pathetic fallacy. He "paints" nature as she is, and he refuses to allow his own thoughts to intrude (V, 339). For this reason, Ruskin places Scott in an order which would be between the first and second orders (V, 340). Scott's deference to nature, the suppression of his ego, gives him a higher standing in Ruskin's eyes.

Ruskin cites various erroneous forms of art that have developed because artists took their eyes off their subject matter and for various reasons, chiefly pride in skill, produced their art according to technical concerns. He calls picturesque art a "spurious form" of landscape because it only displays "the skill of the artist, and his powers of composition; or to give agreeable forms and colours, irrespective of sentiment." An example of this art appears in modern Dutch paintings of street life and church interiors (VII, 255).

This feeling for the merely picturesque was absent in Greek art. The Greeks saw land only in terms of its pleasantness, accessibility, and usefulness. The
picturesque entered art when Renaissance artists, ignoring the "truth," painted classical landscapes without a sense of "quiet natural grace, sweetness of asphodel meadows, tender aspen populars, or running vines." Instead, they painted only seaports or caves, the former appearing as bays of "insipid sea" and the latter as rocks with holes in them (V, 243-44).

Technique was considered before subject matter in medieval times as well. Regard for the subject took one form when medieval art was used for communicative and identifying purposes on armor, shields, and flags. Although Ruskin excuses this departure because it served a real need, nevertheless, the practice furthered the obscuring of natural beauty in art (V, 259).

Attention to technique also brought the downfall of Gothic art. Ruskin notes how a statue of the Madonna on Amiens Cathedral marks the culminating point of Gothic art, because, up to this time, the eyes of its designers had been steadily fixed on natural truth--they had been advancing from flower to flower, from form to form, from face to face,--gaining perpetually in knowledge and veracity--therefore, perpetually in power and in grace.

But, there was a change: Attention shifted from the statue
to its niche and from floral ornament to the mouldings enclosing it. Where formerly imperfections had appeared in walls and statues in the builders' efforts to convey the significance of their subject, now perfect harmony between lines of the building and the statues became the builders' aim. A sense of calculation entered. Although this technical perfection produced a beautiful result, the builders developed pride in their skill. Where delight had been in the things they thought as they carved, now they concentrated on how cleverly they could put the stones together. Gothic art became

a mere expression of wanton expenditure, and vulgar mathematics; and was swept away . . . by the severer pride, and purer learning, of the schools founded on classical traditions. (XVI, 282-83)

II. SEEING NATURE CLEARLY

There is another reason why technique must be eliminated as a consideration in the artist's approach to his work. Seeing nature clearly, closely perceiving the mere physical qualities of the subject matter, is enough of a problem in itself. It is so challenging that it renders insignificant the role of the artist's self. Further, it is a far greater challenge to an artist's
skill than the mere mastery of a convention. Ruskin places this ability in its true perspective when he says,

The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion,—all in one. (V, 333)

A "seer" is grounded to the world, the facts of his existence, much better than a thinker, who is given to ephemeral things, ideas not grounded in what has been seen:

Metaphysics would, indeed, have led me far astray long ago, if I had not learned also some use of my hands, eyes, and feet. (V, 333-34)

Great artists try to include, in their work, "the largest possible quantity of Truth in the most perfect possible harmony." As much of nature as possible should be included in the work of art. This inclusion of nature's diversity and variety in a harmonious relationship is a far greater testimony to an artist's skill, and devotion, than the elimination of as much as possible of nature for pleasing effect. Ruskin compares the work of two painters, Veronese and Rembrandt, to illustrate what he means. He considers Rembrandt inferior to Veronese because Rembrandt obscures most of a picture to bring out a single truth, such as the play of light on jewelry or faces. Veronese,
on the other hand,

chooses to represent the great relations of visible things to each other, to the heaven above, and to the earth beneath them. He holds it more important to show how a figure stands relieved from delicate air, or marble wall; how as a red, or purple, or white figure, it separates itself, in clear discernibility, from things not red, nor purple, nor white; how infinite daylight shines round it; how innumerable veils of faint shadow invest it; how its blackness and darkness are, in excess of their nature, just as limited and local as its intensity of light; all this, I say, he feels to be more important than showing merely the exact measure of the spark of sunshine that gleams on a dagger-hilt, or glows on a jewel. (V, 58-59)

The challenge of an accurate and complete portrayal of the truths of nature become fully evident in this passage. Yet, in his call for a complete rendition of nature, Ruskin is not calling for absolute clarity, the inclusion of every single detail. Such terms as "clear discernibility," "infinite daylight," and "intensity of light" must not give such an impression. He also refers to the "blackness and darkness" of "innumerable veils of faint shadow." It is in this dual condition of obscurity and clarity of nature that the artist's skill is challenged. The artist who, like Veronese, masters this aspect of nature has accomplished far more than one who simply masters a convention.

The fact is that indistinctness is necessary if great art is to show the truth in nature:
there is a continual mystery caused throughout all spaces, caused by the absolute infinity of things. WE NEVER SEE ANYTHING CLEARLY. . . . Everything we look at, be it large or small, near or distant, has an equal quantity of mystery in it. . . . What we call seeing a thing clearly, is only seeing enough of it to make out what it is.

An open book and a handkerchief, for example, are indistinguishable a quarter of a mile away. The mystery attaches to the whole of each object. Closer, we see the one is a book, the other a handkerchief, but we cannot read the one nor trace the embroidery in the other. The mystery exists in the details. But, after we can read the book and trace the embroidery, the mystery exists in the paper's fibres and the handkerchief's threads, and so on. The closer we perceive, the deeper goes the mystery. In this sense we do not clearly see the book, even though we know it is one. When most artists paint an object, they get only close enough to recognize the object for what it is. But, there still is mystery as to finer details (VI, 75-76). Seeing clearly, then, is a relative term.

Veronese, Titian, and Tintoretto produce works that are like nature in their being distinct generally, but obscure in fine details:

... when compared with work that has no meaning, all great work is distinct,—compared with work that
has narrow and stubborn meaning, all great work is indistinct.

If everything in a painting can be clearly made out, it is not first-rate work: "EXCELLENCE OF THE HIGHEST KIND, WITHOUT OBSCURITY, CANNOT EXIST" (VI, 80-81).

John D. Rosenberg says that Ruskin voices these arguments to answer critics' charges that he contradicts himself in calling for clarity in paintings while defending the misty nature of Turner's paintings. Ruskin is trying to show that Turner is superior to the idealizing Italian painters on the one hand and the Dutch realists on the other. Turner's superiority is that he lies between these two schools and most effectively represents nature as partially clear, partially obscure.\(^{13}\) Rosenberg goes on to say that in maintaining that an artist must be true to nature, Ruskin is not advocating photographic reproduction:

For Ruskin nature was infinitely various, infinitely potent, but visible only to eyes which, in Wordsworth's phrase, half-create what they perceive. Imitation was impossible; the re-creation of part of nature's infinity was all the artist could hope for. Turner

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created the largest segment, and was thus at once the most truthful and creative of landscapists.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 11-12.}

There is a moral reason why cloudiness or mistiness in a painting is good: It appeals to our sense of happiness in having only partial knowledge of our existence. "If we insist upon perfect intelligibility and complete declaration in every moral subject, we shall instantly fall into misery of unbelief." We have an innate sense that only so much knowledge as we can bear is given us. To resent cloudiness and mistiness is a result of pride. Although "utter darkness and ignorance is indeed unmanly," to pursue knowledge and light because of pride is erroneous, too. "Men perished in seeking knowledge..." We must be humble and then our state of relative ignorance becomes pleasurable:

... every rightly constituted mind ought to rejoice in feeling that there is infinitely more which it cannot know. None but proud or weak men would mourn over this, for we may always know more if we choose, by working on, but the pleasure is... to humble people, in knowing that the journey is endless and the treasure inexhaustible... (VI, 89-90)

This is an example of Ruskin's dialectic. It is similar to that mentioned in the first section of this chapter,
that of losing one's ego to master one's art, which is a "losing" of one's "life" to find it. Here, Ruskin calls for the denial of one's understanding to gain more understanding. Mistiness and obscurity in art, in showing this aspect of nature, reminds man of his ignorance and the need for continued study of his world.

The indistinctness of nature in art attests to the mystery surrounding nature's origin, and communicates this question to the viewer. Such indistinctness occurs when a great artist deals with his perception of the unknown, the province of highest knowledge. Ruskin states the paradoxical nature of "high" knowledge, whether of the spiritual world or physical nature, and its effect upon an artist's work:

... to know anything well involves a profound sensation of ignorance, while yet it is equally true that good and noble knowledge is distinguished from vain and useless knowledge chiefly by its clearness and distinctness. . . .

The best drawing involves a wonderful perception and expression of indistinctness; and yet all noble drawing is separated from the ignoble by its distinctness . . . and firm assertion of Something; whereas bad drawing . . . asserts Nothing. (V, 60-61)

In all this discussion about indistinctness, mistiness, and mystery, it must not be forgotten that Ruskin
deems clarity just as important, too. He is simply trying to reconcile these opposite aspects of great art by identifying them in nature first and then showing their place in art. The inclusion of these qualities in art is so complex that it is difficult to theorize. Great artists simply have the ability; but it can be developed, if, as Ruskin has emphasized earlier, the artist develops a proper attitude toward his subject matter. This attitude is love, which suppresses the artist's pride in self and technique, things which obscure his powers of perceiving the complexity and challenge of nature, or subject matter.

Lesser artists, considering only technique, make a fundamental error when they study this duality of clarity and obscurity in great art. "Dull" artists mistake "the mystery of great masters for carelessness, and their subtle concealment of intention for want of intention." Very few people can perceive the "delicacy, invention, and veracity" of Tintoretto or Reynolds. Even though Reynolds painted speedily, he rendered subtlety and tenderness in his brush-strokes. Obscurity can come from two different sources: "It is sometimes difficult to understand the words of a deep thinker; but it is equally difficult to
understand an idiot." The best thing that art students can do is try neither for obscurity nor clarity as ends in themselves:

Mean something, and say something, whenever you touch canvas; yield neither to the affectation of precision nor of speed, and trust to time, and your honest labour, to invest your work gradually, in such measure and kind as your genius can reach, with the tenderness that comes of love, and the mystery that comes of power. (VI, 86-87)

Noting the precise imitation of nature and its complexity as revealed in great works of art is a frequent admonishment of Ruskin. He desires art students to study only the greatest artists so that they can have a firm grasp of what great art is. With such knowledge and appreciation of greatest art, they will have a standard by which they can judge not only their own work, but that of others. By studying the works of Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto, young artists will become less concerned with passing fads and theories and more concerned about the qualities of these artist's works which have universal appeal. Ruskin recommends Reynolds and Turner as examples of modern artists who paint in the manner, or with the intent, of the earlier Venetian artists. By studying the excellence of modern artists, students will realize that great art is not
attached to any period in time, but that it may be produced in all times and nations. Ruskin hopes that the English will produce art as great as that of the Venetians (XVI, 314-18).

Studying a great painting calls for the same concentration that studying nature does. Ruskin is his own best example. In July, 1858, at the Turin gallery in Italy, a visitor saw him examining Veronese's "The Queen of Sheba."

E. T. Cook quotes the visitor's account:

He was sitting all day upon a scaffold in the gallery, copying bits of the great picture by Paul Veronese. . . . One day . . . I asked him to give me some advice. He said, "Watch me." He then looked at the flounce of a dress of a maid of honor of the Queen of Sheba for five minutes, and then he painted one thread: he looked for another five minutes, and then he painted another thread. At the rate at which he was working he might hope to paint the whole dress in ten years: but it was a lesson as to examining what one drew well before drawing it.\[15\]

Such is the challenge of seeing nature clearly.

III. LOVE OF BEAUTY

Not only must the artist desire to capture the essence of his subject matter and reveal as many of its

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natural truths as possible, he must also have a love of beauty. But, the artist's aesthetic sense must be linked to his love of nature. That is, he must accept natural beauty rather than try to artificially produce beauty according to formula or convention. This idea is inherent in Ruskin's stricture that beauty must be consistent with truth. He objects to either calling beauty truth, or truth beauty, for this is a confusion of two distinct but related ideas. Worse, in the identification of beauty with truth, beauty is pursued as a thing in itself, a practice which results in the artificiality of beauty, a question of technique only. Ruskin shows how the two terms are distinct by saying that a statement like "two and two make four" is true, "but it is neither beautiful nor ugly, for it is invisible:

a rose is lovely, but it is neither true nor false, for it is silent. That which shows nothing cannot be fair, and that which asserts nothing cannot be false. (V, 55n)

A work of art is true or false only when it purports to state facts. If a picture purports to show a man, dog, or tree, but in fact doesn't, it is false. When colors and lines purport to resemble something they do not, then they are false. Normally, their beauty is independent of
what they state. But, they may be ugly when they faithfully record ugly things:

a picture may be frightfully ugly, which represents with fidelity some base circumstance of daily life; and a painted window may be exquisitely beautiful, which represents men with eagles' faces, and dogs with blue heads and crimson tails. . . . If this were not so, it would be impossible to sacrifice truth to beauty; for to attain the one would always be to attain the other. (V, 55n)

The problem with the school of "high art" is that it pursues beauty only. Truth should be sought first, and then beauty added, consistent with that truth. What Ruskin is basically doing is taking the middle, and more complex, ground between the "high school" of art, the Formalists, who despise nature, and the "low school," the Naturalists, who despise symbolism. Both of these schools fail to comprehend the wholeness of nature.16

Just as nature, or the artist's subject matter, contains elements of clarity and obscurity, so, in terms of beauty, nature has elements of good and evil, beauty and ugliness. These elements are so intertwined and fused that to segregate them according to convention, formula, or theory is to produce a false aspect of the world. The artist's attitude toward his subject again enters as an

16Ibid., I, 343.
important consideration. He must subjugate himself in
deferecence to a desire to communicate truth. Great art,
for example, in depicting a large gathering of people,

will not deny the facts of ugliness or decrepitude,
or relative inferiority and superiority of features
as necessarily manifested in a crowd, but it will . . .
seek for and dwell upon the fairest forms, and in all
things insist on the beauty that is in them, not on
the ugliness. (V, 56)

What Ruskin calls false art "omits or changes all that is
ugly":

Great art accepts Nature as she is, but directs the
eyes and thoughts to what is most perfect in her;
false art saves itself the trouble of direction by
removing or altering whatever it thinks objectionable.
(V, 56-57)

There is a sense of balance to be maintained, it seems,
with the balance to be tipped slightly to the beautiful
aspects of nature. When Ruskin calls for inclusion of
the ugly with the beautiful, he also places the burden
upon the author's skill in not allowing ugly features to
dominate the beautiful.

But as he criticizes the "high" school of art for
its inclusion of beautiful things only, he may appear to
emphasize ugliness. He warns against this kind of pre-
occupation, too. The greatest beauty comes from overcoming
fear of evil or ugly things in life and using them in art
along with beauty. This the Greeks and Venetians did. The next highest beauty, that of northern European art, comes from not being able to conquer fear or evil, but "remaining in melancholy war with it." Lowest art is so conquered by evil that it unites with it and becomes sensual. Salvator's work has this quality (VII, 271). The artist's greatness is to be seen in this delicate treatment of the beautiful and ugly in nature.

This discussion also extends to the frank portrayal of men. Although man is God's chief work, and his best art reveals him as such, nevertheless his full nature should be rendered. To paint him as having either a spiritual nature or an animal nature results from misunderstanding man as he is:

For his nature is nobly animal, nobly spiritual—coherently and irrevocably so; neither part of it may, but at its peril, expel, despise, or defy the other. All great art confesses both. (VII, 264)

The single-minded pursuit of beauty results eventually in the loss of it. It is lost in two ways. First, beauty is better appreciated when it has ugly elements to set it off. To show sunshine, a painter must darken his canvas in appropriate areas. Beauty "must be foiled by inferiority before its own power can be developed."
The art of Angelico, who paints spiritual subjects, "is continually refreshed and strengthened by his frank portraiture of the most ordinary features of his brother monks." The schools of Raphael and the modern Germans, however, depict only beautiful faces, straight noses, and curled hair. But, "Veronese opposes the dwarf to the soldier, and the negress to the queen; Shakespeare places Caliban beside Miranda . . ." (V, 57).

The full range of beauty is also lost when it is abstracted from one's subject:

The ugliest objects contain some element of beauty; and in all it is an element peculiar to themselves, which cannot be separated from their ugliness, but must either be enjoyed together with it or not at all.

As the artist accepts nature as he finds it, he will discover beauty where he thought only ugliness was (V, 58).

When beauty is divorced from its natural surroundings, it becomes artificial and ugly. This is what happened in the eighteenth century. As people sought beauty in artificial things, they were repelled by it. They "powdered the hair, patched the cheek, and hooped the body." This same kind of thinking resulted in brick walls and dim pictures: "Reaction from this state was inevitable. . . ."

Men were repelled by this artificial beauty of city life.
to find the color, sweetness, light, and sense of liberty in the country that they instinctively desired (V, 324).

The medieval ages are considered "Dark Ages," but the art of modern times reveal that these are the dark ages and medieval times were really bright. Modern people mechanically build their homes with brown bricks and clothe themselves in brown coats (V, 321-22):

... whereas all the pleasure of the medieval was in stability, definiteness, and luminousness, we are expected to rejoice in darkness, and triumph in mutability. ... (V, 317)

Scott is an example of this modern flight from artificial beauty. He finds nature a unifying influence. He regains a sense of the past which cities obscure. He finds liberty where flowers and vines grow freely, and he finds the color, light, and variety of forms in nature which city life has practically eliminated. In nature Scott, as all moderns, is able to discover and unify all his various natural instincts (V, 345).

That beauty is artificial rather than instinctual is a point upon which Ruskin criticizes Reynolds and those who consider art from a technical standpoint only. Beauty has become so divorced from reference to nature that Reynolds considers beauty a matter of custom rather than
instinct. It is this same thinking that resulted in the artificial beauty and eventual dullness from which men flee to the country (V, 325). Reynolds believes that if people were used to deformity, they would consider it beauty. Ruskin remonstrates:

But the world has never succeeded, nor ever will, in making itself delight in black clouds more than blue sky, or love the dark earth better than the rose that grows from it. . . . The most subtle reasoner will . . . find that colour and sweetness are still attractive to him, and that no logic will enable him to think the rainbow sombre or the violet scentless. (V, 44-45)

Part of Reynolds' problem is that he instinctively paints beauty, but when he tries to rationalize this instinct, he errs:

For nearly every word that Reynolds wrote was contrary to his own practice; . . . he enforced with his lips generalization and idealism, while with his pencil he was tracing the patterns of the dresses of the belles of his day; . . . he denied the existence of the beautiful, at the same instant that he arrested it as it passed, and perpetuated it forever. (V, 46)

Ruskin goes on to explain why Reynolds' performance varies with his pronouncements: The temptation to rationalize an instinct is natural. It is most evident when people sense degrees of beauty in works of art, and they try to explain to themselves and others why one work seems more beautiful than another. This tendency is good; one should
know why he likes certain works of art, but too frequently he tries to find the source of beauty in technique, something which lends itself more to rationalization than does the subtle communication of the artist's experience, which may be the actual source of beauty. Thus, concrete standards become formulated which do not conform to the real reasons why some artists seem greater than others, or, as in Reynolds' case, why he succeeds in painting beauty (V, 46). In addition to Reynolds' theory that great art differs from low art in terms of details, there are theories which state that the bigger in size a picture is, the "greater" it is. Another theory is that nude bodies make for greater art than clothed ones. A third is that the artist must never have seen what he paints, that only the past presents great subjects. A last erroneous theory is that painting must improve upon God's work (V, 46-47). In the light of what has already been said about Ruskin's feeling as to the artist's attitude toward nature or subject matter, it is easy to see why Ruskin would consider this last theory erroneous. The effect of such intellectualizing is that it ignores the fact that men have a natural sense of beauty, and that great artists transfer
beauty from nature to canvas or page through this sense. As a result, this rationalizing ironically produces such false and unreasonable theories as those above.

Beauty must be consistent with truth not only in showing the ugly in nature and the animal in man, it should also ally "higher" nature with "lower" nature. Neither aspect of the world should be isolated. For example, the statues on the exterior of the Cathedral of Chartres closely associate "the beauty of lower nature in animals and flowers, with the beauty of higher nature in human form. . . . Greek statues are always isolated; blank fields of stone, or depths of shadow, relieving the form of the statue. . . ." By contrast, the clothed statue of Chartres seems to be

the type of the Christian spirit--in many respects feebler and more contracted--but purer; clothed in its white robes and crown, and with the riches of all creation at its side. (XVI, 280)

Evident in this passage is Ruskin's admiration of the Christian sculptor's devotion to his subject matter, his desire to communicate the wholeness of man's existence from spiritual to floral, beauty consistent with truth. An artist with this frame of mind can bring true beauty even into "lower" forms of art, such as furniture, dishes, and clothing, even though these items may not be considered
relevant to natural fact. Yet, Giotto, Cellini, Holbein, and Michael Angelo all worked in these art forms as well as in the higher forms. Their regard for natural fact can be seen in these "lower" works (XVI, 288).

IV. INVENTION

For all of Ruskin's emphasis upon the artist's attitude toward his subject, he is not discounting the role of the artist's imagination in producing great art. As a matter of fact, this element is the most important in Ruskin's art theory. Even though nature must be thoroughly perceived in all her complexity, there is room for the operation of the imagination. True perception of nature is only a starting point, a foundation, for young artists. They must concentrate on exact reproduction:

Then, when their memories are stored and their imaginations fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and the gold, give reins to their fancy, and show us what their heads are made of.  

There are two steps in the production of great art:

First, the observation of facts; secondly, the manifesting of human design and authority in the way that fact is told. Great and good art must unite the two,

17Quoted in E. T. Cook, "Ruskin as an Artist and Art Critic," The Studio, XIX (March, 1900), 91.
it cannot exist for a moment but in their unity. . . .
(XVI, 269-270)

For these reasons Ruskin will accept a photograph because of its exact reproduction of nature. But, he does not see photography as a supplement or substitute for a painting because it omits the second step, at least in photography's current stage of development.

Invention is the term Ruskin uses to describe the operation of the imagination, and it acts in two ways. It either "entirely imagines its subject, or it arranges the materials presented to it" (V, 63). In both cases, however, the artist is able to conceive his subject in its entirety: "... partial conception is no conception. The whole picture must be imagined, or none of it is" (VII, 243).

Just as the artist must submerge his ego to perceive truly his subject matter, so he must continue this abnegation of the self in deference to this image that his invention presents to him. The qualities that Ruskin sees important in the artist for this condition to exist have moral value. To be true to the image in his mind, the artist must control his feelings, even though strong feeling is a necessity. Excessive emotion destroys
fidelity to the invented image. A calmness of mind is necessary to maintain the image; therefore no vain or selfish person can paint nobly: "Vanity and selfishness are troublous, eager, anxious, petulant. . . ." Further, the calmness must be natural; it cannot be forced. Rubens, Velasquez, Titian, and Veronese were all calm and unhurried as they painted the images in their minds. An artist cannot be shallow or petty, either: "Mere cleverness or special gift never made an artist. It is only perfectness of mind, unity, depth, decision, the highest qualities, in fine, of the intellect, which will form the imagination." Finally, "no false person can paint." He cannot perceive the wholeness of truth, only parts of it:

It is only the constant desire of, and submissiveness to truth, which can measure its strange angles and mark its infinite aspects; and fit them and knit them into the strength of sacred invention. (VII, 249-50)

To transfer the invented image from the mind to the canvas is a delicate and complex act requiring far more than mere conscious effort. In calling invention a sacred quality, Ruskin says only an act of worship produces inventive art.

Needless to say, attention to technique or convention merely gets in the way. The artist who has no invention
is always setting things in order, and putting the world to rights, and mending, and beautifying, and pluming himself on his doings as supreme in all ways. (V, 125)

Not only do great artists work without following rules, but the power of an artist is inversely proportional to his following rules or principles. (V, 122)

The first quality of invention, that of entirely imagining the subject, would seem to contradict Ruskin's stricture for a prior observance of nature as she is before using the imagination. This idea would be true were it not for the fact that visions in the mind are a kind of "inner" nature as opposed to the outer nature Ruskin is talking about. Basically, it has to do with man's religious sense; "sight of faith" is Ruskin's alternative term. Because it involves the same suppression of ego and technique that the true observance of outer nature calls for, Ruskin approves of it, although he holds it on a level below that of working from eyesight. Examples of this treatment of inner nature in art are seen in Ruskin's discussions of the "purist idealists" and the "grotesque idealists." The problem with the purist idealists is that they "shrink" from the everyday evils that are a part of external nature. They "endeavor to create for themselves
an imaginary state, in which pain and imperfection either do not exist, or exist in some edgeless and infeebled condition." They draw everything "without shadows, as if the sun were everywhere at once." Although a modern artist knows better, these artists who lived in the thirteenth century did not. They were honestly expressing their personal spiritual affections and hopes. Angelico is an example. As a monk, his life was devoted to imagining the spiritual world. The exemplary qualities instilled in him enabled him to excel in expressing "the sacred affections upon the human countenance." Further, he gave the best idea of spiritual beings. Although he is a true idealist, nevertheless he is not a master of his art. He did not paint the truth of experience (V, 103-105).

The grotesque idealists demonstrate inventive power in their rendition of fictional beings. Although these artists have never seen such creatures, nevertheless their imaginations present them to them so strongly that the image is equivalent to eyesight. To illustrate his point, Ruskin compares the "true" griffin of a Lombard workman to a "false" griffin of a classical sculptor who worked according to convention. Because the Lombard saw his
griffin in his imagination so vividly, he succeeded not only in combining the physical features of a lion and eagle, but he also conveyed the essence of the lion and eagle. He managed to combine the rather indolent bulk of the lion with the streamlined alertness of the eagle. This sculpted griffin, in its massiveness, supports a pillar resulting in harmony between function and conception. The classical griffin, however, is merely ornamental. The natural forms of lion and eagle are distorted to make the figure fit inside the boundaries of a frieze. The result is an unbelievable figure, rather than one that just might have existed (V, 145-47).

The second function of invention, that of arranging the materials seen in outer nature, is more important than visions of the mind because it relates the viewer more to the world. There is common ground between artist and viewer, so meaningful communication can take place. For this reason Ruskin makes evidence of imagination in a work of art the criterion of excellence. It is upon this basis that he draws the distinction between "poetical" and "historical" art in preference to such technical considerations as variable or invariable detail:
... to create anything in reality is to put life into it.

A poet, or creator, is therefore a person who puts things together, not as a watchmaker steel, or a shoemaker leather, but who puts life into them.

His work is essentially this: it is the gathering and arranging of material by imagination, so as to have in it at last the harmony or helpfulness of life, and the passion or emotion of life. (VII, 215)

Ruskin defines poetry in the same manner that he defines great painting. It results when the poet imaginatively assembles facts of experience ("noble grounds") to give rise to "noble emotions." Such emotions would be "Love, Veneration, Admiration, and [unselfish] Joy," and the opposite emotions—"Hatred, Indignation . . ., Horror, and Grief. . . ." The "noble grounds" for these emotions must be "large as well as just." For example, indignation is poetic when caused by serious injury, but not when one is cheated out of his money. But, the imagination must furnish the grounds of these emotions. Everyone has poetical feeling, or the noble emotions: "But, the power of assembling, by the help of the imagination, such images as will excite these feelings, is the power of the poet or literally of the 'Maker'" (V, 28-29). It is impossible, then, for a writer without invention to tell what
tools a true poet will make use of or how he will use them: "It is vain to say that the details of poetry ought to possess, or ever do possess, any definite character" (V, 30).

Invention also plays a role in purely historical art as well. There are high and low orders of history in terms of the importance of the facts themselves, so that what with difference of subject, and what with difference of treatment, historical painting falls or rises in changeful eminence, from Dutch trivialities to a Velasquez portrait, just as historical talking or writing varies in eminence, from an old woman's story-telling up to Herodotus.

When the imagination, or invention, enters in terms of the writer's commentary or arrangement of details, then the line between poetry and history may disappear. Yet, these two modes of writing should not be confused (V, 64). Although historical art becomes higher as the imagination plays a greater role, the highest art is purely imaginative, "all its materials being wrought into their form by invention..." As this "highest" art must deal with facts of experience, it includes historical art: "for all imagination must deal with the knowledge it has before accumulated; it never produces anything but by combination or contemplation" (V, 65). Further, excellent historical
art requires the same negation of self necessary to poetical art. After studying historical facts carefully, the artist lets "these truths . . . rise up and form the body of his imaginative vision. . . ." He must then be able to "quit his own personality, and enter . . . into the hearts and thoughts of each person" (V, 124-25).

Art which fulfills Ruskin's requirements of first observing nature closely, leaving nothing out, and then applying the inventive powers to arrange the subject matter is called "naturalist ideal" art. It accepts "the weaknesses, faults, and wrongnesses in all things that it sees, and it so places them and harmonizes them that they form a noble whole." For this reason this art is "that central and highest branch of ideal art" (V, 111). Shakespeare is one example. He "sees the truth wholly, and neither desires nor dares to mutilate it." He places Falstaff opposite his Prince Henry, Shallow opposite Falstaff, and Cordelia opposite Regan (V, 112-13). Homer is a naturalist idealist in that he shows imperfections or lownesses in perfect elements, such as Achilles cutting pork chops:

For it is to be kept in mind that the naturalist ideal has always in it, to the full, the power expressed by those two words. It is naturalist, because studied from nature, and ideal, because it is mentally arranged
in a certain manner. Achilles must be represented cut-
ting pork chops, because that was one of the things
which the nature of Achilles involved his doing: he
could not be shown wholly as Achilles, if he were not
shown doing that. But he shall do it at such time and
place as Homer chooses. (V, 113)

Linking the imagination to the facts of nature,
or experience, is so important because the imagination can
obscure nature as easily as the pursuit of technique can.
When the imagination and technique become linked, then
reality is totally obscured. No message about experience
can be communicated, and the consequences have far-flung
effects, especially in modern times. This idea lies behind
Ruskin's warning in The Two Paths that when artificiality
sets in as a result of ignoring nature, either through
mere ornamentation or following artistic rules,

there is but one word for you--Death:--death of every
healthy faculty, and of every noble intelligence, in-
capacity of understanding one great work that man has
ever done, or of doing anything that it shall be help-
ful for him to behold. (XVI, 289)

A noble person observes nature and the world "full in the
face," understands these deeply and calmly deals with them.
In so doing he furthers the good and reduces evil. The
"ignoble" person, however, does not clearly see nature and
the world for what they are. Understanding nothing, he is
"swept away by the trampling torrent, and unescapable force"
of unforeseen and misunderstood things (XVI, 287).

The sociological implications become evident when Ruskin describes the modern mind in terms of its ignoring fact and pursuing imaginary things. The preoccupations of a society becomes evident in their art and lives, and Ruskin sees these preoccupations in terms of the ignoble person.

Modern people do not follow their "proper business" in the world, which are: to know themselves and what in life they must deal with; to be happy with themselves and the world; and to improve themselves and the world. They remain ignorant, unhappy, and indolent because they do not face disagreeable facts. Instead, they become "a species of instinctive terror at all truth" and they love "glosses, veils, and decorative lies of every sort." Further, they have "a general readiness to take delight in anything past, future, far off, or somewhere else, rather than in things now, near, and here." For these reasons they pursue what Ruskin calls a "false ideal" in art and literature. In doing so they abuse their imaginations (V, 71).
In the development of this false ideal in art, Ruskin traces the separation of the imagination from nature, and its alliance with technique to form "ideal beauty," or false beauty. This separation first took place in the vision-making aspect of invention, when artists began to paint religious imagery without believing in it. In the thirteenth century this imagery "consisted merely in simple outlines and pleasant colours, which were understood to be nothing more than signs of the thing thought of. . . ." It only suggested the idea, and the viewer "went on to form truer images for himself" (V, 73). For example, a symbolic depiction of the Nativity appeared in the Bible, and the reader was not distracted from the text. He saw it only as illustrating the meaning of such words as "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (V, 74). It is important to note that the symbolism is subordinate to the experience that is to be conveyed. Symbolic presentation is not pursued as a thing in itself; the only reason exact reproduction is impossible is because technical skill is not developed. But, when skilled artists "with exquisite power of representing the human form, and high knowledge of the mysteries of art, devoted all their skill to the
delineation of an impossible scene," then people's attention was attracted to the art itself. The Madonna appeared as a

queenly lady, her dress embroidered with gold, and with a crown of jewels upon her hair, kneeling, on a floor of inlaid and precious marble, before a crowned child, laid under a portico of Lombardic architecture; with a sweet, verduous, and vivid landscape in the distance, full of winding rivers, village spires, and baronial towers. . . . the continual presentment to the mind of this beautiful . . . imagery . . . chilled its power of apprehending the real truth. . . . (V, 75)

The real truth is that the Madonna was "a plain Jewish girl."

These early Christian artists, however, genuinely believed they were worshipping the Madonna and Christ when they painted the Nativity in a glorified manner. They were trying to express "the enthusiastic state" of their own feelings about the fact. Such an artist

covers the Virgin's dress with gold, not with any idea of representing the Virgin as she ever was, . . . but with a burning desire to show what his love and reverence would think fittest for her. (V, 76)

These "purist idealists," like the writers who commit the pathetic fallacy, are not condemned by Ruskin in their representing other than actual fact. He sees both groups proceeding from a genuine state of mind, a result of psychological truth, religious faith in the former and emotion
in the latter. It is interesting to point out that these two groups are on opposite sides of the religious coin as far as Ruskin is concerned, but he accepts both their work. The purist idealists depart from factual representation by great faith; the committers of the pathetic fallacy err by no faith. The saving factor in both groups is their lack of calculation or pursuit of technique in their work. They perform according to what genuinely lies in their minds.

When these religious artists, however, did turn their attention to technique instead recording early Christian experience or elaborating their faith, then a complete separation between imagination and experience was effected: "In early times art was employed for the display of religious facts; now, religious facts were employed for the display of art" (V, 77). The Madonna, for example, was seen only with a mechanical eye as an available subject for the display of transparent shadows, skillful tints, and scientific foreshortenings,—as a fair woman, forming, if well painted, a pleasant piece of furniture for the corner of a boudoir. . . . It was thus that Raphael thought of the Madonna. (V, 78)

With the imagination dazzled by technique, religious faith faded into the background. This pursuit of
ideal beauty, or the false ideal, brought secular, or "profane" art, into existence:

as long as men sought for truth first, and beauty secondarily, they cared . . . for the chief truth, and all art was instinctively religious. But as soon as they sought for beauty first, and truth secondarily, they were punished by losing sight of spiritual truth altogether, and the profane . . . schools of art were instantly developed. (V, 91)

The imagination became so far removed from fact of experience that it dealt with fictitious subject matter in which the artist did not believe. "Heathen" mythology supplied examples for artists who discarded the robes of subjects in religious art to display the "nobility of nakedness" of the human form. Ruskin notes how this pursuit of false ideal beauty led to an extreme:

Formerly, though they attempted to reach an unnatural beauty, it was yet in representing historical facts and real persons; now they sought for the same unnatural beauty in representing tales they knew to be fictitious, and personages who, they knew, had never existed. Such a state of things had never before been found in any nation. . . . The ideal art of modern Europe was the shadow of a shadow; and, with mechanism substituted for perception, and bodily beauty for spiritual life, it set itself to represent men it had never seen, customs it had never practised, and gods in whom it had never believed. (V, 92-93)

Vices became depicted because virtue lay only in displaying truth. Subject matter became brutal or sensual. Battle slaughters, orgies, "grotesque fiends," and "picturesque
infernos" were depicted. More seriously, Biblical and mythological forms were used to flatter important people in their portraits (V, 93).

As stated earlier, this separation between the imagination and experience, or "truth," has broad negative sociological effects. The inventive powers of the imagination create an unreal vision of the world. Men make a mistake when they try to ignore the evil and misery that is coexistent with the good. In the midst of God's beauty, He also provides a warning:

... this I know ... that no good or lovely thing exists in this world without its correspondent darkness; and that the universe presents itself continually to mankind under the stern aspect of warning, or of choice, the good and the evil set on the right hand and the left. (VI, 416)

But, like the early Christians, some modern artists tend to ignore the effect that "the elements of decay, danger, and grief in visible things" have on people's lives. Believing that all would turn out good in the attainment of Heaven despite life's problems, such artists gloss over the true depths such problems have in human life:

It may perhaps be thought that this is a very high and right state of mind.

Unfortunately, it appears that the attainment of it is never possible without inducing some form of intellectual weakness. (VIII, 267)
Men, especially artists and writers, should not be content to look at "the bright side" of things because of religious optimism. To do so results in ignoring the actual effects of evil and blinds them from perhaps helping others. God has given man two sides, and He has "intended us to see both." A Scotch clergyman, for example, rhapsodically describes a Highland scene as evidence of God's work. Ruskin has also seen such a view, but it included the carcass of an ewe rotting in a stream with oily waters. Further down the stream a man and boy were fishing: "a picturesque and pretty group ... if they had not been there all day starving" (VII, 267-69).

The fact is that natural beauty, such as that of mountains, has no aesthetic relationship to the lives of the people living on their slopes and in their valleys. One may think that there is "innocence and peace, and fellowship of the human soul with nature. It is not so." These people know nothing of beauty or knowledge and little of virtue. They live hard lives, gleaning a bare existence from the rocky soil:

For them, there is neither hope nor passion of spirit; for them neither advance nor exultation. Black bread, rude roof, dark night, laborious day, weary arm at sunset; and life ebbs away.
Paradoxically, English cottages, situated in "dull flat fields and uninteresting hedgerows" are neat and cheerful-looking due to "energy of heart, and happiness in the simple course and simple possessions of daily life." But, the mountain cottage, amidst "inconceivable, inexpressible beauty" is a "dark and plague-like stain" on the landscape (VI, 388-89).

In contrast to this reality, this truth of nature, rich London and Parisian play-goers pursue the false ideal when they watch idealized plays which show mountain people as being cheerful, carefree, and happy:

If all the gold that has gone to paint the simulcra of the cottages, and to put new songs in the mouths of the simulcra of the peasants, had gone to brighten the existent cottages, and to put new songs into the mouths of the existent peasants, it might in the end, perhaps, have turned out better so, not only for the peasants but for even the audience. (VI, 390)

This pursuit of the false ideal occurs in literature as well. People succeed in allowing their imaginations to obscure natural truth, the consequence of which is that nothing is done to cure social ills. People instead follow the "vagaries of their minds." They read "senseless fictions" instead of the "real human histories" around them. They pursue "romantic historical deceptions," or they "take
pleasure" in "fanciful portraits of rural or romantic life in poetry and on the stage, without the smallest effort to rescue the living rural population . . . from its ignorance or misery" (V, 100-101).

This modern pursuit of false ideal beauty, as opposed to beauty that is both naturalist and ideal, causes men to shun even the present. They go to their imaginations which reveal to them the beauty of their ancestors and of the past in general. Ruskin notes a contradiction in modern life in regard to the past that did not exist in older societies: we say we've surpassed the accomplishments of the past, yet we long for a past way of life. The older societies valued their accomplishments, but they did not desire a past way of life: "The Greeks and medievals honoured, but did not imitate their forefathers; we imitate, but do not honour" (V, 325).

Great art, to Ruskin, is not defineable in terms of technique, but rather in terms of the mental make-up of the artist, especially in his ignoring technique or convention in preference to seeing accurately the essence of his experience. All aspects of man are utilized in producing great art:
For as (1) the choice of the high subject involves all conditions of right moral choice [through negation of the self], and as (2) the love of beauty involves all conditions of right admiration [evil with good, ugly with beautiful], and as (3) the grasp of truth involves all strength of sense, evenness of judgment, and honesty of purpose [to show nature as she is], and as (4) the poetical power involves all swiftness of invention, and accuracy of historical memory, the sum of all these powers is the sum of the human soul.

Hence, the word "Great" applies to such art. All lower art calls forth only part of the human spirit (V, 65-66), and this is the problem with modern art and society. All these qualities are necessary for a true communication between artist and viewer to take place. And, it is the difficulty of attaining all these qualities that renders consideration of technique an insignificant, or at best, an interfering, matter.

The complexity of stating the different sides of great art as a product of the soul, or whole man, lay at the bottom of Ruskin's apparent contradictions in Modern Painters I and II. Found among his papers after his death was a statement intended for addition to some material in Stones of Venice. This statement reveals his realization of why error and contradiction had been attributed to him. The problem was his trying to express art principles broadly;
yet, in doing so, he opened himself to dual interpretations of what he had said about fact against design in art:

It was assumed that all great . . . art was essentially Ideal or of the Soul, as distinguished from the lower art which is principally the body. . . . There is not a definite separation between the two kinds. . . . Only exactly in proportion as the Soul is thrown into it, the art becomes Fine; and not in proportion to any amount of practice, ingenuity, strength, knowledge, or other calculable and saleable excellence thrown into it. . . . This one truth I have throughout had at my heart--variously struggling and endeavoring to illustrate it--according to the end immediately in view.18

Yet, even though the Soul must be added, not all great artists possess all the elements in equal degree. Some may be more inventive, and others tend more to the realistic aspects. It is these contradictory or independent elements that cause people to rank great artists. But, one artist is not greater or lesser than another because he tends one way or the other. The fact that all the elements are present renders him great (V, 66-67). An example is Titian, who unifies all these elements of the soul so delicately that different people see different things in his art, although not to the degree they would like. Sensualists find sensuality in him, thinkers, thought;

18Quoted in Cook, The Life of John Ruskin, I, 341-42.
saints, sanctity; colorists, color; and anatomists, form. A Titian picture is never overwhelmingly popular, because no one element dominates. Lesser painters, with dominant qualities, are loudly praised. Yet a deep murmur persists through the centuries and this timeless, quiet approval attests to his greatness (XVI, 297-98).
CHAPTER III

GREATNESS IN SOCIETY

Ruskin's social criticism parallels his art criticism. As he attacks the "lifeless conventions of contemporary art," so he attacks the materialistically-oriented doctrines of the political economists.¹ The idea of an "Economic Man" is as repulsive to him as the idea of an "Aesthetic Man." He is trying to establish a link between art and common life on the one hand and economics and common life on the other. He sees the esthete and the philistine as each pursuing one half of the total life.² The economist, in his emphasis upon theory, and the esthete, in his emphasis upon convention or technique, both neglect nature, or experience. Neither considers that greatness is not possible in either art or society unless the human soul's preeminence becomes recognized.

Although there is not an exact correspondence between the qualities necessary for great art and those necessary for greatness in a society, nevertheless Ruskin calls for basically the same manner of thinking. What he calls for in society is the same negation of self that he calls for in art. In society, however, the self is to defer to the promotion of human life in an educational and cultural as well as material sense. Humanity replaces nature in Ruskin's social criticism.

For this deference to take place, the qualities men need are faith, affection, unselfishness, and cooperation. All these qualities are nearly identical, but they progress from purely spiritual matters to specific social actions. Further, they are a recognition of man's soul as the key to a society's greatness, just as the presence of the soul is necessary for great art.

I. FAITH

Much of Ruskin's criticism of modern art centers around its testimony to man's loss of faith. In a like manner, he sees the darkness and sadness of modern society as the result of this faithlessness. Savages, he says,
have more belief in a divinity than cultured Europeans. Those who do believe are divided into Romanists and Puritans, who wish only to destroy each other. This division "between persons nominally of one religion" has "become a stumbling block . . . to all thoughtful and far-sighted men. . . .

Hence, nearly all our powerful men . . . are unbelievers; the best of them in doubt and misery; the worst in reckless defiance; the plurality, in plodding hesitation, doing, as well as they can, what practical work lies ready to their hands. . . .

In politics, religion is now a name; in art, a hypocrisy or affectation. . . . All sincere and modest art is . . . profane.  

Scott is an example of this faithlessness, or at best "waver ing belief." He is a Presbyterian only because he lives in Edinburgh, Scotland:

He thinks Romanism more picturesque, and profaness more gentlemanly; does not see that anything affects human life but love, courage, and destiny; . . . not matters of faith . . . , but of sight. (V, 336)

Scott considers religion only as a matter of form, which is the same sort of thinking that Ruskin sees fatal in art.

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As a result there is a dichotomy in English society between professed religion and a conscious "disobedience of its first principles" as national policy. Christianity condemns the love of money and the desire for material things, but "we forthwith investigate a science of becoming rich as the shortest road to national prosperity" (XVII, 75-76). This dichotomy brings confusion and paradox into church doctrine. Churches preach that one must war against the "world." Ruskin wonders if this is the same world as the one people are to "get on in." The Bible inveighs against spiritual evil in the world but not against the world itself: "God loved the world... Christ is the light of it." On Judgment Day, the Bible says, men will not leave this world, but God's kingdom will come to it (VII, 457-59).

This unification between God and the earth takes place in man. Man's soul is the image of God, and it has, from the beginning, reflected Him. It has never changed, although it has been defiled:

We are not made now in any other image than God's. There are, indeed, the two states of this image--the earthly and heavenly, but both Adamite, both human, both the same likeness; only one defiled, and one pure. So that the soul of man is still a mirror, wherein may be seen, darkly, the image of the mind of God. (VII, 260)
II. AFFECTION

But, separation between spiritual and material concerns, between belief and practice, is a result of loss of faith, and so man's nature is divided as well. Attention to his soul is ignored, while attention to his body, as an economic tool, dominates. Unbelief in God, then, results in an unbelief in humanity. People adopt the idea that man is a brute, that "all motive force in him is essentially brutish, covetous, or contentious." But, man is never motivated by these things, but rather by love and trust. The greatest scientific discoveries and artistic works were not done for pay at all. This belief that man is a brute has led to the wrong ways of getting men to work. Large amounts of money have not brought significant results. Only love and trust extended to the able will bring results (VII, 448-52).

The problem with the political economists is that they dissociate social action from "social affection." They call the social affections "accidental and disturbing elements in human nature; but avarice and the desire of progress are constant elements." They wish to eliminate the "inconstant" affections and to consider man as merely
a "covetous machine" in order to determine how the greatest amount of material wealth can be obtained. Then the variable "affectionate element" may be added to determine, as each individual wishes, the result of the new conditions. But, the affections are not a quantitative, but a qualitative element. They do not simply become an addition to the "constant" factors, but they alter these factors. Therefore, a social science which proceeds without taking the affections into consideration becomes as inapplicable to reality as a science of gymnastics which discounts the human skeleton. To alter the human form and then to try to reinsert the skeleton renders such a process ludicrous. As such a science ignores man's skeleton, so the current science of political economy ignores man's soul and supposes that man is all skeleton (XVII, 25-27).

The inapplicability of economic theory, as it exists, to reality or experience, can be seen in current workmen's strikes, a situation which the economists are powerless to solve. The reason for these strikes is that workers and masters believe that because their interests differ, they must be against each other. If both sides would consider the work that must be done, then they would
not be so antagonistic. The question of whether or not their interests differ is pointless. What must regulate their relationship is a sense of justice. This sense of justice must be based upon the "affections as one man owes to another" (XVII, 28).

These affections issue out of man's soul, and it is the negation of the soul as man's chief motive power that renders the economic theories nugatory. Man cannot be treated or theorized about as if he were a machine, because only one part of his true nature is considered. This idea of man's soul "enters into all the political economists' equations . . . and falsifies . . . their results" (XVII, 29).

If affection governs the relationship between worker and master, then more material benefits occur for the master. The good that a worker renders will exceed material concerns in "protective watchfulness of his master's interest and credit," and in "joyful readiness to seize unexpected and irregular occasions of help" (XVII, 30). The role of the affections in the worker here is analogous to that of the devotion of the artist toward his subject matter. The removal of material, or technical concerns,
in both cases results in increased effort toward accomplishing the goal: good art from the artist, better production from the worker. Ruskin's idea that work is good and not an evil to be shunned, runs counter to the assumptions of the political economists. From his observance of art, the professions, and handicrafts, he early realized that wages are not the only incentives to work.⁴

Ruskin's mode of inquiry along these lines has led to its being termed basically scientific, rather than merely sentimental. But, Derrick Leon points out that his mind went beyond mere scientific inquiry, it went beyond the "merely rational horizon," and by the vision of categorical truth thus got was guided by a deeper understanding of facts and their laws, than is possible to a Darwin, a Huxley or a Metchnikoff. . . . The tendency of Victorian science was to prove man a mechanism: whereas the whole of Ruskin's work went to show that this was precisely what he was not--and could not become, without disaster to soul and body, individual and race.⁵

Ruskin's economic criticism is not limited to worker-master relationships only. He considers the relationship between the rich and the poor, the broader aspect

⁴John A. Hobson, John Ruskin, Social Reformer (Boston, 1898), pp. 79-80.

of the worker-master relationship. The "captains of industry" must consider the effects of their activities on other people. The kind of mind "which pursues its own interests at any cost of life" is deplorable, even if the evil caused is unintended. An intentional evil act shows that the doer knows right from wrong. But pursuing one's own economic way, ignorant of the hardships caused, is a worse state of mind (XVI, 405). The reason that such ignorance is deplorable is that the actor must first be convinced that he is responsible for a condition for which he does not feel responsible. The mere suggestion of change may be regarded as an insult, hardening him all the more in his self-satisfaction.

To be relevant, the science of political economy must therefore cease its teaching that the sole concern of men is how to get rich, and also consider that as some men get rich, others get poor (XVII, 43-44). Once people realize this fact, then they will carefully consider the justice with which their wealth is obtained, rather than consider quantity only. Wealth accumulated through just actions signifies a general prosperity, since no one has been cheated or mistreated. If gotten unjustly, then "that
which seems to be wealth may . . . be only the gilded in-
dex of far-reaching ruin . . . " (XVII, 53). It is not
enough to "buy in the cheapest market and sell in the
dearest." Rather, one must see why the one market is
cheap, and the other is dear. No person can know all
this; he can only know if his own transactions are "just
and faithful" (XVII, 53-54).

But, the rich will come face-to-face with the
poor. This is as much a natural fact as streams flowing
into the ocean. How the rich and poor interact depends
on the justness with which the poor are treated. Yet,
justice is the very thing that the rich are most hesitant
to give (XVII, 59-60). They prey upon the poor, instead.
The reason crime and misery exist is the misapprehension
of one truth, that "a certain quantity of work is necessary
to produce a certain quantity of good. . . ." The rich,
however, try to get their needs for nothing or on the
efforts of others.

Instead of helping others overcome difficulties,
the rich use these difficulties to advantage. For example,
if, due to distress, poor producers must sell at less than
full value, the rich take advantage of them (XVI, 396).
The poor need more than material things, however:

The life is more than the meat. The rich not only refuse food to the poor; they refuse wisdom; they refuse virtue; they refuse salvation. (XVII, 107)

To help bring these more important intangibles to the poor working classes, Ruskin taught at the Working Men's College, which was to make available to the working classes, as Edward T. Cook says, "the same kind of education that the upper classes enjoyed:

It saw in education a means of life as well as of livelihood. It sought not to help working-men to "get on" and "rise out of their class," but to improve themselves by satisfying the needs of their mental and spiritual natures.

Material advancement is not Ruskin's purpose in his social criticism. People must seek only to be happy in the world rather than rise in it. They must resolve to seek—not greater wealth, but simpler pleasure; not higher fortune, but deeper felicity; making the first of possessions, self-possession; and honoring themselves in the harmless pride and calm pursuits of peace. (XVII, 112)

Such statements give Ruskin's ideas a paradoxical appearance—calling for better treatment of the poor, yet denying them the same right to property that the rich have.

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This appearance comes from Ruskin's looking through simple material concerns to the deeper needs of men. His penetrative imagination, as it perceives men's hearts and discerns their true motivating force, brings the realization that simple recognition of their humanity, and treatment accordingly, is what makes them happy: "The life is more than the meat." There is a middle ground between stagnation and revolution, and Ruskin seeks this ground. Therefore, as Cook says,

He was a Republican as against institutions or laws which oppressed the poor; and a conservative as against theories and reforms which were based on doctrines of liberty and equality.  

Ruskin cannot be called a socialist, because he fears division of property like he fears every other form of division. The rich do not deprive the poor by merely having property, but rather it is the misuse of property that deprives the poor:

Riches are a form of strength; and a strong man does not injure others by keeping his strength, but by using it injuriously. (XVII, 106n)

His relegation of material concerns to second place dis-gruntled leftists and rightists who saw the issues in

7Ibid., I, 273.
material terms only. John D. Rosenberg says that Ruskin did not desire to "invalidate the security of property."

Rather, he desired to

extend its range and whereas it has long been known and declared that the poor have no right to the property of the rich, I wish it also to be known and declared that the rich have no right to the property of the poor.®

There may be some inconvenience to the rich, however, if they extend justice and knowledge to the poor. They may have to forego a few of their luxuries. But, such will only be a temporary condition until all people achieve a decent standard of living. Then those who can afford more things may have them. However,

luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. (XVII, 114)

III. UNSELFISHNESS

The idea that social wrongs are artificial and not natural lies behind Ruskin's belief that God has so organized the world that if a man works well, he should have life's necessities, plus a few luxuries, rest, and

leisure. In terms of a nation, it is the misapplication or insufficiency of labor that results in misery, hardship, and unemployment. Man's error causes economic problems; the world is not naturally constituted so (XVI, 18-19).

One of the ideas that Ruskin sees as the kind of artificiality that blinds people from the true ends of a society is their restricted concept of money, wealth, and value. In Unto This Last Ruskin sets out to redefine these economic terms in their full implications. The purely theoretical science of political economy had limited these terms in justifying the processes of industrialism. Parodying the reasoning of the political economists, Ruskin poses definitions of money, wealth, and value in their broadest and historical sense. Thus, he exposes the incompleteness of contemporary economic theories.

Basically, the purpose of a society is not to make a few rich at the expense of many, but rather to make life a joyful experience for everyone. With this idea in mind, Ruskin broadens the concept of money, for example. When many people need the essentials of life, how one spends his money is important. He should not spend his money
only on himself, thinking that he is giving others work. He must also consider the kind of work to which he is putting them. Instead of buying one expensive suit of clothes, a person should buy six cheaper suits, wear one and give five away. In this way the workers will receive the benefits of their labors much sooner (XVI, 48).

People must not think that their money is their own and that they may spend it however they wish. They get this idea because they think that money is not God-given like talent, intellect, or good birth. Although the money itself may not be God-given, the ability to earn it is. Therefore, it should not be used to deprive others, but to help them. People scorn a physical bully, but not an economic one. The poor exist for the rich to help, and this is why the ability to make money is God-given (XVI, 99-103).

Most people equate "value" with how much money a thing is worth. This is another artificial idea that obscures reality. The Latin root word for "value" means to be strong in life, or valiant as applied to men. In reference to things it means to be strong for life: "To be 'valuable,' therefore, is to 'avail towards life.'"
If an article does not "lead to life," then it is less valuable. The term, "value," in a true science of political economy, "teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life. . . ." As air, light, cleanliness, peace, trust, and love are more conducive to life than gold or iron, they are more valuable (XVII, 84-85).

In his redefinition of value, Ruskin is again scientific rather than sentimental. Patrick Geddes, in John Ruskin, Economist (1884), notes how closely Ruskin's social criticism follows scientific biological fact, that "intrinsic value is the absolute power of anything to support life." Geddes continues:

The inductive logic and statistics, the physics and chemistry, the biology and medicine, the psychology and education were all essentially on the side of Mr. Ruskin; while on the other were too often sheer blindness to the actual facts of human and social life-organism, function, and environment alike.9

As he redefines "value" in terms of its contribution to life, so Ruskin redefines "wealth." He questions Mill's definition of wealth as meaning "to have a large stock of useful articles." He examines "have" as a quality of possession and "useful" as a quality of utility. What

9Quoted in Cook, II, 135.
is the nature of possession and utility? To possess an article depends upon the ability of the "possessor" to use it. A dead saint, clasping a gold cross in his coffin, cannot be said to "have" it, nor can a man sinking in the ocean with two hundred pounds of gold strapped to him be said to possess the gold. Sometimes a person cannot control an object, even though he may "own" it. Thus "wealth" is expanded to mean "the possession of useful articles which we can use" or control. Ruskin, in characteristic fashion, shifts attention from the object to the person. Here, the ability of the possessor determines the "wealth" of an item, not the inherent characteristics of the item itself (XVII, 86-87).

"Use" implies its opposite, "ab-use." Whether or not an article is useful depends upon the person. Wine had a dual aspect to the Greeks. As Bacchus, it was useful in "cheering god and man." That is, it strengthened both the reasoning and carnal powers of man. As Dionysus, wine hurt man's spiritual and bodily powers. The Greeks also considered that the human body could be used or ab-used. When disciplined, it served the State in war and labor. When undisciplined, it was valueless to the State.
Hence . . . if a thing is to be useful, it must be not only of an availing nature, but in availing hands. . . .

Wealth, therefore, is "THE POSSESSION OF THE VALUABLE BY THE VALIANT. . . :" The value of the thing, and the valour of its possessor must be estimated together. (XVII, 87-88)

Just as he looks through a painting to see how well it represents nature or experience, so Ruskin looks through the vocabulary of the political economists to see how their terms reflect experience. Needless to say, he finds that vocabulary wanting. It is like the artistic conventions which obscure the real truths of existence from artists and viewers alike. In a sense, such a vocabulary is an unsympathetic fallacy by which the political economists cast their own preconceived notions upon the social structure and see what they want to see. Certainly their theories serve the limited purpose for which they are devised, but so does any artistic convention and technique. The problem in both cases is that without reference to fact of experience in the broad sense, their validity becomes inapplicable with time.

But, the vocabulary of the economists is not important to Ruskin as such. In examining the meaning of "value" and "wealth," Ruskin looks through the words to
the things they are supposed to represent. He objects to the narrowing of the original meaning of wealth by confining it to material objects measured only by money. John A. Hobson says, "He is not ultimately concerned with the perversion of a word, but with the perversion of an idea." Ruskin objects to the taking of material objects as a separate study and announcing that it describes "an art of national and individual conduct." In his art criticism he objects to the definition of art in technical terms on the same grounds.

As value and wealth depend upon people for their true meaning, so does the term, "price." A fair determination of price, however, is based upon the amount of labor expended upon a product, rather than upon what others think the product is worth. Much labor for a small thing is not "cheapness of labor," but rather "dearness of the object wrought for" (XVII, 96).

As value, wealth, and price are dependent upon human factors, then these terms do not really apply to the amount of property one has; for mines and mills are worthless unless there are men to work them. Wealth lies

\[\text{Hobson, p. 75.}\]
in the power one has over men, rather than in the amount of property one has (XVII, 46). Therefore, it's very possible that the men, and not the property or money, are the wealth. If so, then

the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy human creatures.

Yet, most people do not see men as wealth at all, or if they do, then they believe that they must be kept in a low condition (XVII, 55-56).

Ruskin concludes that the real test of production is how many people can live decent lives on what's produced:

Production does not consist in things laboriously made, but in things serviceably consumable; and the question for the nation is not how much labour it employs, but how much life it produces. For as consumption is the end and aim of production, so life is the end and aim of consumption. (XVII, 104)

In short, "There Is No Wealth But Life." This statement summarizes Ruskin's idea of the true function of an economic system, the way it would work if man did not produce such artificialities as political economy. A true economy simply operates according to natural principles and is grounded in truth. But, the existing "science" of political economy, based on self-interest, obscures this truth
(XVII, 105). In insisting that wealth consists only of things contributing to "wholesome human wants" and not in serving base or injurious purposes, Ruskin is basing true political economy, according to Hobson, on "eternal and immutable principles of health and disease, justice and injustice." He is piercing through the "is" of the political economists to the true "is" which the political economists only consider the "ought." He refers to the broader range of human economic affairs rather than the narrow material concerns of the political economists.11

IV. COOPERATION

The only way for society to produce "healthy, happy human beings" is through cooperation, rather than competition, of its members. The seeds for this idea appeared as early as Modern Painters II in the chapters on "vital beauty" in which Ruskin relates the decaying effect of impure matter upon healthy matter. His ideal state is an analogy of nature in which a state is healthy only in proportion to the health and welfare of each

11Ibid., pp. 91-92.
member. In *Modern Painters V* he defines composition as each element in a picture contributing to the picture's total effect by balancing imperfections in each other, or "helping" each other. He also repeats this idea in social and educational terms in *A Joy Forever* when he says,

> Every so named soul of man claims from every other such soul protection and education in childhood--help or punishment in middle life--reward or relief, if needed, in old age.

Just as an individual must be able to control his property and money before it can be thought of as wealth, so control in a nation has a positive connotation. The flow of wealth in a country is like the flow of its streams. As such it can be directed and distributed by human laws just as streams are dammed and controlled by humans for beneficial purposes. To propose no control as those do who propose the "law of supply and demand," is to propose disaster and misery (XVII, 60-61):

> ... the notion of Discipline and Interference lies at the very root of all human progress or power; that
the "let-alone" principle is . . . death; that it is ruin to [man] . . . if he lets his land alone--if he lets his fellow-men alone--if he lets his own soul alone. (XVI, 26)

Secrecy, competition, and enmity in mercantile dealings are destructive because each person only increases the difficulty of the other. Commerce should occur in a spirit of openness, cooperation, and good-will. In unity of effort men produce the greatest and best results. But in divided effort, men frustrate the efforts of each other, and each being on his own, cannot do as much as he could with help from others (XVI, 95-96). Here Ruskin is calling for the narrower "self" to give in to the broader "self" to be dominated by Justice and Honesty as purifying elements. When the narrower self does sacrifice itself for the broader self, then the latter grows "as we identify our good with that of others."\(^\text{15}\)

This banding together of men to further the life elements of a society is an idea which Ruskin got from reading Plato's The Republic. Rosenberg points out that he uses "justice" in the same sense that Plato did, that of man acting in a social, rather than an individual sense.

\(^{15}\text{Hobson, p. 98.}\)
Cooperation, not competition, conduces to a just society. For Ruskin as for Plato, the state, Rosenberg says, "is a moral rather than merely a political or economic organism." As Plato saw no virtue without a just state, so Ruskin sees no wealth without one.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, such things as "the profit motive" are questioned because they further competition and imply unfair advantage. Actually, in a just society there can be no profit for either party in an exchange situation, because articles of equal value have changed hands. But, whenever a profit is made by either party, it means that the other party has lost something in the transaction. For one to profit, he must know something that the other doesn't. Because it justifies this kind of activity, political economy is a "nescience" rather than a science. Whereas other sciences or arts try to do away with their "opposite nescience and artlessness," the present science "must . . . promulgate and prolong its opposite nescience; otherwise the science itself is impossible. It is . . . the science of darkness . . ." (XVII, 91-92).

\textsuperscript{16}Rosenberg, p. 134.
In a just society a merchant, because he cooperates with others to further life in the community, is honored as much as doctors, lawyers, and clergymen are honored. But the basic selfishness of the merchants separates them from these professions. As these professions serve humanity, so should the merchants. Doctors heal, lawyers enforce justice, and clergymen teach. Merchants should also serve by providing food and clothing and essentials of life. The people in the other professions are prepared to sacrifice themselves to fulfill their duties. So should the merchants be prepared to sacrifice their economic life to get essentials of life to the people. As they are not prepared to sacrifice themselves, but rather exist to serve themselves first, they are isolated and not honored in society. (XVII, 38-39)

Not only must merchants be more attentive to material needs, but they should also be attentive to the moral condition of society. They should produce items that would appeal to the good qualities in people rather than to their lower desires. Businessmen are not to be less ambitious, but more ambitious. With their vast economic power, they also carry great moral power, and they
should exercise this power, in keeping with the moral responsibility that goes with it. With business leading the way to morality, there is hope for European art and manufacture (XVI, 343-45).

Cooperation would also solve the unemployment problem. England's problem is not in finding work for her men, but in finding men for her work. Harbors need development, and streets need to be built and repaired. There is a vast amount of work to be done on the nation's farms as well:

The serious question for you is not how many you have to feed, but how much you have to do; it is our inactivity, not our hunger, that ruins us. (XVI, 22-23)

One way merchants could cooperate would be to re-institute a guild system in order to eliminate individual competition and commercial warfare. Such guilds would open the way to "more social and communicative systems" (XVI, 97).

Another way to promote cooperation, would be a "paternalistic" government. Ruskin is not calling for an institutional change, but a mental change. Up to now government has been considered in a merely judicial sense. But, there should be a system of "laws, councils, or kings"
that would provide for the economic direction of the nation, just as a father directs his household (XVI, 25-26). What the physical form of the government should be makes little difference. The nation must be brought together and headed for some positive goal. Pursuit of self-interest does not weld a society together.

As stated before, Ruskin does not desire to redistribute property. His reasoning is to make people consider what the true ends of a society are, and once they admit that serving themselves first does not lead to fulfilling the ends of society, then they will use their money and property in the desirable way. He is not a "slave to a fixed idea, the owner of a panacea applied indiscriminately to cure all evils." Although he passionately denounces evil, he never becomes so absorbed with it that it dominates his mind. Industrial dishonesty does not cause a bitter class resentment in him, nor does it cause him to require structural reforms. Education is the cure. John A. Hobson concludes:

In a word, his social mission was distinctively an ethical rather than a political one; and he never lost sight of the first requirement of all valid ethical teaching, the need "to see life steadily and see it
Greatness in a society, then, is the degree to which its members cooperate to answer the needs of life, both materially and spiritually. If Ruskin emphasizes the material aspects, it is from the same desire to obtain a foundation in reality that exists in producing great art. He calls for both a vitalizing and idealizing process in a nation's economy. Hobson says,

The reduction of money-cost and money-measured utility to the pains of production and the pleasures of consumption, estimated in accordance with the actual desires and feelings of those who produce and consume, would be a vitalizing process.

But, granted that workers are happy and healthy, the idealizing process is important, too:

Neither order nor progress is possible or conceivable without ideals; . . . the welfare of an individual or a nation implies a standard of true humanity to which the desires and caprices of the moment must be referred.18

In calling for cooperation, Ruskin is calling for the same submission of ego in members of society as he calls for in the artist. The same idea of losing one's life to find it applies to both messages. The obstacles,

17Hobson, p. 58.

18Ibid., pp. 96-97.
however, are the same. They are pride and attention to artificial theories which obscure the true nature of things. They negate the element of man's soul, and they result from the kind of mind which lacks penetrative imagination and merely plays on the material surfaces of things. Such a society not only cannot produce great art, but it also, in its neglect of essential life-producing goals, is in danger of the very ossification of man that the political economists assume in their theories.

For these reasons, Ruskin sees it fit to conclude his final volume of Modern Painters with a statement of apparent helplessness in changing the course of English society, followed by a warning:

I do not know what my England desires, or how long she will choose to do as she is doing now;—with her right hand casting away the souls of men, and with her left the gifts of God. (VII, 457)

So far as you desire to possess, rather than to give; so far as you look for power to command, instead of to bless; so far as your own prosperity seems to you to issue out of contest or rivalry . . . with other men or other nations; so long as the hope before you is for supremacy instead of love; and your desire is to be greatest, instead of least;—first, instead of last;—so long you are serving the Lord of . . . Death. (VII, 460)
For either to be vital, art and society must function together, society providing for art and art referring to society. Ruskin states the need for this interrelationship when he says that there are two divisions in the economy of nations and households: utility and splendor. Neither is to be neglected in favor of the other. The pursuit of material things and their accumulation not only neglects beauty and culture, but it also develops a mind that sees things only in material terms. On the other hand, the pursuit of splendor, pomp, art, and rich dress has also been the prelude to national ruin.¹

There must be a middle ground between a "too laborious England" and a "too luxurious Italy." This middle ground is "neither oppressed by labor nor wasted in vanity--the

¹The Works of John Ruskin, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols. (London, 1903-1912), XVI, 20. Reference to this edition will be by volume and page number, and will be included in the text.
condition of a peaceful and thoughtful temperance in aims, and acts, and arts" (XVI, 342).

I. SOCIETY TO PROVIDE FOR ART

The concentration upon industrialism and commercialism was destroying what Ruskin felt were conditions necessary for great art. By ignoring nature and broad considerations for mankind, as exemplified in the deeper and more important needs of the human soul, the mechanical mind was widening the gulf between the practical and ideal. Permanent values such as faith, love, and cooperation were being undermined by concerns for change in order to "make money." Much of Ruskin's work reveals a desire for these permanent values. Advancing industrialism and commercialism were destroying the natural scenery of English and European landscape, which Ruskin had long felt was a source of genuine artistic expression. Restoration of the European cathedrals was replacing the authentic works of the past with the kind of imitation without belief which Ruskin deplored. He felt these changes personally:

There are no inns, no human beings any more anywhere; nothing but endless galleries of rooms, and automata
Evidence of the soul's participation in rendering a viable environment was being replaced by pure intellectual calculations, independent of feeling in the affairs of men. The only retreat was to remnants of nature, stones and plants, symbols of former excellence in architecture, sculpture, and painting. Ruskin's conclusion is that given the present tendency of development, every acre of England and Europe will be either mine-pit or factory site. Under these circumstances no beautiful art is possible. Englishmen cannot hope to have both art and an England devoid of nature (XVI, 338).

Former works of beauty as a result of nature's influence are being neglected. In the midst of factories, for example, sits a once-stately Carolingian mansion, now abandoned. Its once-fertile garden will not even support a weed. An English artist doesn't have much to go on here. In contrast, medieval northern Italian artists had for their "school of design" towns with colorfully-dressed

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people and white marble buildings shining under clear sunlight (XVI, 338-40). Ruskin compares the environmental influences upon Turner as a boy in the late eighteenth century with those upon Georgione, who grew up in fifteenth-century Venice. Venice had bright streets, vital architecture, and robust people of strong religious faith as reflected in both their public and private lives. Late eighteenth-century London, however, provided Turner with dark, littered lanes and miserable, hypocritical people. Georgione, consequently, delighted in painting city life, but Turner fled the city to paint country scenes after he first experienced the freshness and purity of nature for the first time (VII, 387).

For the English to be able to produce artists of the excellence of Turner and the Venetians, they must develop some kind of vision of the ultimate condition their city and country are to attain. With such a vision, they can order the growth of city and nation so that conditions for great art become possible. But, as they are going now, with only material wealth as their goal, there will be no sense of plan in England's industrial development. It may be that the English are satisfied with the prospect of
all flatlands being iron, coal, clay and lime pits and
the mountains serving as quarries, for this is the direc-
tion in which they are heading (XVI, 337-38).

The kind of thinking nourished in an industrial
society indicates a more fundamental separation between
people than merely in how much money they are able to ac-
cumulate:

The persons who become rich are . . . industrious,
resolute, proud, covetous, prompt, methodical, sensible,
unimaginative, insensitive, and ignorant. The persons
who remain poor are the entirely foolish, the entirely
wise, the idle, the reckless, the humble, the thought-
ful, the dull, the imaginative, the sensitive, the
well-informed, the improvident, the irregularly and
impulsively wicked, the clumsy knave, the open thief,
and the entirely merciful, just, and godly person.
(XVII, 90)

As the more powerful people lack the qualities of
soul that Ruskin deems essential in both art and society,
they tend to ignore the engendering or nourishment of these
qualities in their educational systems. Education is di-
rected only toward developing intellectual qualities, with
the result that things like drawing are considered inferior
to writing. Further, anyone possessing visual and manual
abilities are neglected in school curriculums. Consequently,
they become "runaways and bad scholars." These people see
truly "while your well-behaved and amiable scholars are disciplined into blindness and palsy of half their faculties" (V, 376-77). The division, then, extends from society, through the educational system, down into the individual. Unification of mind and heart becomes impossible.

The nature of work to which men are put in the factories also discourages artistic invention. Repetitious work goes against human nature, because it discounts the deeper abilities of men in terms of their putting their souls into their work. Work that is meaningless to a man cannot engage his heart. Artists and craftsmen should not be employed to draw, carve, or make identical articles. As men are individuals, they produce different results. Allowing individual expression will result in their becoming more interested in what they are doing. Consequently, they will do better work, and more of it (XVI, 37). William Morris, in a preface to The Nature of Gothic, which he published separately in 1892, summarizes Ruskin's unique contribution in this regard:

... the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us, is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labor; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for,
strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it, and lastly, that unless man's work once again becomes a pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain, and therefore live in pain.  

In short, a society which recognizes only one half of human nature cannot produce the kind of art in which the influence of the human soul can be seen. Great art grows out of a great society, and a society which does not recognize the total nature of man and his deep needs is not great:

Without observation and experience, no design—without peace and pleasureableness in occupation, no design—and all the lecturings, and teachings, and prizes, and principles of art, in the world, are of no use, so long as you don't surround your men with happy influences and beautiful things. . . . Inform their minds, refine their habits, and you form and refine their designs; but keep them illiterate, uncomfortable, and in the midst of unbeautiful things, and whatever they do will still be spurious, vulgar, and valueless. (XVI, 341)

II. ART TO REFER TO SOCIETY

In its turn, art, to be meaningful to a society which provides the conditions to produce it, must reciprocate

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and refer to the people, their nation, and their god. True beauty results when this fusion of art and society is achieved. By depicting what's important in a society, art serves as a unifying influence:

There never was, nor can be, any essential beauty possessed by a work of art, which is not based on the conception of its honored permanence, and local influence, as a part of appointed and precious furniture, either in the cathedral, the house, or . . . thoroughfare. . . . (XVI, 10)

That art should have a place in the everyday lives of people seems to be a strange notion. Ordinarily one thinks of great art as something aloof from everyday life, something kept in massive galleries and jealously guarded. But, Ruskin believes that great art should be available to as many people as possible. He prefers private galleries to large public ones, because those who own the works will take better care of them than some incompetent, job-seeking curator. He feels that when the public sees these works in a domestic setting, the art will seem much more meaningful and not so strange (XVI, 80-81).

Great art is most effective when it is decorative, for then it becomes involved most closely with humanity. Ruskin chides art students for thinking that decorative
art is ignoble. This view of art is too restrictive, the result of not placing art's function in its true perspective:

The best sculpture yet produced has been the decoration of a temple front—the best painting, the decoration of a room.

Because decorative art combines various pieces of art for a total effect, it is really noble: "'Portable' art—dependent of all place—is . . . ignoble art" (XVI, 319-20).

By separating architecture and sculpture, English architects have diminished the power of both: sculpture's because it has no room for the story-telling function it had when it decorated buildings; architecture's because it has been reduced to mere rules of mechanism (XVI, 360).

There is no essential difference between architecture and sculpture. Any architect can draw moldings, and all architects prefer some molding to no ornamentation. There is little difference between drawing moldings and drawing the folds of a draped statue (XVI, 358). The only way that architects can really use their imaginations is to become sculptors as well as architects in the spirit of the Greek,
Phidias, and the Italians--Michael Angelo, Orcagna, Pisano, and Giotto (XVI, 360-61).

The underlying thought in The Two Paths is, as Ruskin points out in the preface, the danger of separating art from its reference to society and nature. He says that he is holding out to the art student the choice "between two modes of study, which involve ultimately the development, or deadening, of every power he possesses."

The student must recognize

the hour and the point of life when the way divides itself, one leading to the Olive mountains--one to the vale of the Salt Sea... Let him pause at the parting of The Two Paths. (XVI, 353-54)

The choice, of course, is whether to work according to nature or according to technique and convention. Ruskin illustrates the problem by linking these two "modes of study" with the kind of thinking productive of them. Northern Scotchmen are devoid of art, yet they have noble character. The people of India have a great deal of art, yet they are savage and cruel. The difference is not the absence of art among the Scotch and the presence of it in the Indians, but rather the presence of a love of nature in the Scotch and the absence of it in the Indians. Indian
art is pure design; there is no relation to natural fact in it. Ruskin concludes:

... art, followed as such and for its own sake, irrespective of the interpretation of nature by it, is destructive of whatever is best and noblest in humanity. . . .

Nature, "simply observed," ennobles humanity. Art, connected with nature, becomes "helpful and ennobling, also" (XVI, 268).

Yet, art must be more than simply connected with nature in the narrow sense. If society is included in the term, nature, then such art is meaningful. Taken by itself, the landscape feeling is really valueless because it cannot be applied to practice. Art must unite thought and action, the ideal and nature. By itself, the landscape feeling and the resultant art represent the very form of conventionalism that Ruskin sees as ignoble (X, 376). But, because it does refer to nature, it has the redeeming quality of uniting thought and sight in perceiving nature truly (V, 363). The reason the landscape feeling is so ineffectual is that modern people do not believe that God is in nature. It has always been the element of the human mind which brings man to God and the revelation
of sacred truths. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ directed men to observe nature in order to perfect their minds (V, 378-79). But now,  

... all true landscape, whether simple or exalted, depends primarily for its interest on connection with humanity or with spiritual powers. Banish your heroes and nymphs from the classical landscape--its laurel shades will move you no more. Show that the dark clefts of the most romantic mountain are uninhabited and untraversed; it will cease to be romantic. (VII, 255)  

Picturesque art, as it is painted on the continent, is nobler than English picturesque because it embodies a sense of man's suffering, poverty, and decay. Unlike the English, who try, in their tidiness and cleanliness, to deny "human calamity," Continental people sense "the pathos of character" hidden beneath their old cathedrals (VI, 14-15). Turnerian picturesque is superior, too, because he has a "communion of heart" with his picturesque subjects: "the lower picturesque ideal is eminently a heartless one." It is heartless because the artist delights only in the outward, visual pleasure without sensing the effect time has on the people connected with the structure being depicted. But, Turner makes his ruined buildings and cathedrals symbolic of people's lives.
By rendering "the heart" of old buildings artists give a sense of continuity and stability in a society, as well. There is created a healthy attitude among the people toward their past. The Tower of Calais church is an example of a people who live comfortably with their past. Old as it is, the people still use it, because it is not strange to them. The English, so sensitive to what is fashionable and what is not, remove vestiges of age from their midst as soon as they can. Nothing on the Continent is "in" or "out" of "fashion" (VI, 12-13).

Each generation should regard both its past and future, and provide for them. It must make its present works useful for future generations. At the same time it should accept the work handed to it by preceding generations; it should not destroy or tear down old works of art or structures by thinking that these past works are useless. Concern only for the present results not only in forgetting those who tried to produce greatness in the past, but also in being forgotten by future generations who truly cannot use works which grow useless with time (XVI, 63).
Works of genius should be made of durable materials so that they may be seen in all ages. An extreme example of genius wasted is Prince Medici's command to Michael Angelo to carve a sculpture in snow. Yet, as artists and craftsmen are made to work with cheap materials, the English are being no different in their foresight than the "unworthy prince" (XVI, 39).

The rendering of truth in one's own time renders that truth for all time, and such art is accomplished only by great artists who render the heart and not the exterior of people. They provide faces and expressions of the present, then provide exteriors of the past. Anachronisms do not bother them (V, 127-28). Such an artist is Tintoretto. His "The Last Judgment" occurs in Venice, and the faces of local Venetians are depicted. Emotions become more genuinely depicted than those expressed in the more stereotyped paintings of the same subject by lesser artists.4

A good understanding of Ruskin's concept of the sociology of art is seen in his discussion, "Iron in Nature" in the fifth lecture of The Two Paths. Implicit in this

discussion, also, is his idea of the sort of thinking conducive to a viable society. He says that most people consider rusty iron a spoiler of spring water and a generally worthless thing. On the other hand, they consider polished knives and razors more useful and desirable. But, iron's tendency to rust is a virtue, not a fault, "for in that condition it fulfills its most important functions in the universe, and most kindly duties to mankind. . . . Iron rusted is Living, but when pure or polished, Dead" (XVI, 376-77). The rust shows that the iron has taken in oxygen, the "breath of life." This combination of iron and air is not only nobler than polished steel, but more useful: "... the main service of this metal ... is not in making knives, ... but in making the ground we feed from ..." (XVI, 377).

Iron in the ground is universal, too. It gives the earth its brown color. Otherwise the earth would be a "dirty white ... in all places, and at all times." Not only does it color the earth, but it also colors the bricks from which the English build their comfortable, warm-looking cottages (XVI, 379-80).
Iron oxide spans continents, time, and economic classes. It colors flint and marble and many jewels of the rich. But, the poor can admire the purpleness of hills seen at a distance. Iron oxide formed the purple in porphyry, so much admired by the Greeks and Romans. It "gives flush to all the rosy granite of Egypt . . . and to the rosiest summits of the Alps . . . (XVI, 381-84).

No other passage in Ruskin's works in the years 1856-1860 seems to symbolize so well the body of his thought at this time. His idea of the nobility of rusty iron shows how far away popular thought has drifted from considerations of natural fact. As a symbol of society and industrialism, iron is an index of how artificial and technical men have become: they fail to see or value the life-giving nature of iron just as they fail to consider the life-giving ends society and industry should have. Society, as it exists, is iron polished.

But, just as iron must unite with oxygen to be of service in nature, so must art, to be of service to man, unite body and soul. But, amateur artists and workmen try to work with their hands alone, improving their technique. All this is useless because "without mingling of
heart-passion with hand-power, no fine art is possible" (XVI, 385).

If iron represents society, and if oxygen represents art, the union of these two major elements to produce life is also easily understood. Ruskin's iron "parable" seems to operate on three levels: the need in the individual for the unification of fact and ideal to produce great art, the need for society to see value in human lives, and the need for society and art to fuse for the creation of true vitality, both material and spiritual, and wholeness.
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