



Shoji Hamada, stoneware. Contemporary.

## Introduction

THIS BOOK IS A SELECTION from the extensive writings by the late Sōetsu Yanagi, who was the father of the Japanese craft movement, and my close friend for fifty years. I, who am unable to read his original texts, have attempted to translate with the help of able and understanding Japanese assistants, so that readers in the Western world may penetrate that which Buddhism contains for the seeker looking for the meaning of beauty in the face of truth. His chapters are addressed, in the main, to Oriental craftsmen and lovers of craftsmanship, but they are concerned with the very nature of human life and work and are therefore of vital importance to men and women all over the world in our present stage of evolutionary change.

Yanagi was at first a pupil, and later a friend, of the late Dr. Daisetsu Suzuki, whose many books, written by him in English, have made Buddhism known to the West during the last half century. From that background Yanagi has extracted the first aesthetic of Eastern art, which has born fruit in Japan in our time, both in the preservation of the country's folk art and in the recognition and encouragement of artist-craftsmen. Such a man is the potter Shōji Hamada, for example, who continues today the leadership of the strongest national handcraft movement since the Industrial Revolution took place in England.

Emphasis should be laid here upon what Yanagi really did, particularly for Japan and Korea, in discovering the beautiful truthfulness of their domestic handmade crafts. So ordinary as to be unobserved by people at large even though they were the springboard for the Tea masters and their quietism four centuries earlier, folkcrafts were as



central to his philosophy as wild flowers to horticulture; this we ourselves perhaps are in danger of forgetting. As he demonstrates with examples again and again in these pages, the purity of the wild flower and the unspoiled countryside so often puts to shame the high culture of town and court. There is a wild and untamable beauty in man when he is in harmony with nature.

This aesthetic is the story of the *seeing eye* of Japan. Let us call it an Eastern perception of significant loveliness. Originally an understanding of the function of true beauty in life, the concept has deteriorated almost from the time of the early Tea masters in the sixteenth century. This was brought about in part by contact with the life and arts of the rest of the world and in part from cultural decay. It was Yanagi's creative thought that began to close this long gap. The publication of this Buddhist aesthetic is the more important because it is a part of that deeper exchange between East and West upon which the pattern of the cultural unification of mankind depends. Many young minds in the West are ripening to feel and eventually understand in their hearts that which moves and inspires Oriental man.

When, following two world wars, the young deny the existence of God, they are confused by what seems to them to be the futility of all religious beliefs in the face of atomic warfare and they protest with disgust at the leaden words of past centuries. They may not know what Yanagi meant when he stood long and silent before the great facade of Chartres; he said, "That is what you have lost. You need a new gospel" Implying any man for everyman, he meant the totality of belief in all mankind. The French built stone upon carved stone visible for thirty miles, lit through coloured glass painted with their dreams and faith—clear-cut as their belief. All men for all men, life for Life Itself. Our disbelief is for lack of wholeness.

I must speak intimately of the Yanagi I knew. His life work was to re-establish art in relationship to the Tree of Life, to God—which is *thusness* to the Buddhist, and from that you cannot escape.

What was Yanagi to me? A question unavoidable and direct. When I was in trouble in Peking in 1917 he came to stay at my Chinese house for a month and persuaded me to go back to Japan, where I lived and worked for a year on his family land at Abiko until one night my workshop burned down. His persuasion was, "Why are you troubled follow-

ing a mistaken leader? There is no need—the light is in your own work. I have seen it in your pots and drawings. Awake! I have seen it".

If a man knows not and knows not that he knows not, shun him,  
If a man knows not and knows that he knows not, awaken him,  
If a man knows and knows that he knows, follow him.

*Arabian saying*

Yanagi lit my lamp.

Yanagi had this also to say about the importance of individual artists. His belief was that with the drying up of the roots of folk art, those with developed intelligence could see that which the simple close-to-earth peasant could not see. He stated that, in consequence, our function at this stage in evolution is that of pilots employing intelligence with humility; thus emerging from isolation and joining hands in the good company of artisans.

Art in Japan is an open sesame. Yanagi sets its criteria at the highest level of total belief. At first reading, some ideas he propounds may appear to contradict our prevalent values, but many people find on reflection that a longer perspective of Western thought reveals counterparts in our own past. His deep reverence for William Blake and Meister Eckhart is an example of what I mean. Differences undoubtedly exist, but extremes touch, and we are the richer thereby if we expand to the full orbit of man's presence on this globe.

I hope and believe that this book will challenge the individual artist and craftsman, because this, our age, is bereft of group, or communal, art; we have lost faith in so much of all but private interpretations of life's meaning. Throughout these pages there is no distinction between truth and beauty, nor basically, between fine and applied art. In Yanagi's "Kingdom of Beauty" all varieties of art—primitive, folk, aristocratic, religious, or individual—meet in equality at a topless, bottomless, round table. This, I think, has never been stated before and may indeed come to be accepted in a mature and round world.

Yanagi was described by Shōji Hamada as a creative critic. Such men are rare, for they help to fashion the character of an epoch. In his case there was a depth of understanding covering the arts and beliefs of the cultures of two hemispheres, penetrating to the roots of all their flowering.

Every artist knows that he is engaged in an encounter with infinity,



and that work done with heart and hand is ultimately worship of Life Itself. Sometimes a pot sings out from its wheel-head, from all its related parts, and the potter may pause in himself thinking. "No pattern this time—just a single good glaze—or none at all", and hope that fire will bless with added strength and variety that which his hands have made. Such a pot, or indeed any work of art, is not an expression of the maker alone, but of a degree of enlightenment wherein infinity, however briefly, obliterates the minor self. Herein one may catch a glimpse of Yanagi's width and depth of thought.

#### THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Sōetsu Yanagi was born in 1889 and died in May, 1961. During the seventy-two years of his life he did many things besides founding the Japanese craft movement and directing its unique museums in Tokyo and elsewhere. He is best known to Western people through the Japan Folkcraft Museum (Mingei-kan) in Tokyo.

It would not be entirely amiss to describe Yanagi's position in Japan as relatively comparable to that of Ruskin and Morris in England. In both cases a deep and comprehensive statement was made regarding work and the qualification of work by beauty, against a background of rapid industrialization. In each case the creative thought behind the resulting movements, separated as they are by approximately one hundred years, may be regarded as counter Industrial Revolutions. Morris and his followers felt that there was no genuine heartbeat left in work and so they set out to print and weave and decorate with their own hands. Seen from the present day they appear almost as romantic and nostalgic as the Pre-Raphaelite painters, but some of their work does not stand up to the reality of the time test. Whether the Japanese will fare better remains to be seen, but this Far Eastern reaction against the overwhelming effects of scientific industrialization at breakneck speed has already lasted forty-two years and has spread all over these islands with more vigour and considerably greater response from the general public than our own movement under Morris generated.

Fundamentally, human beings, whether Eastern or Western, need belief, free play of imagination and intuition in their homes and workshops or they become starved. All the cog-wheels and electronic brains cannot assuage these human needs in the long run. It is for lack of such



makers, textile artists, and lacquerers; the illustrations, the intimate articles by craftsmen; actual samples of papers and textiles still being made; the high selectivity; the awakening of Japan to her own living treasures; the far-seeing leadership—again Yanagi was the editor.

By 1936 private support had grown to such an extent that the present Japan Folkcraft Museum was built in Tokyo. It houses many thousand examples of Japanese and Korean crafts, old and new, and of other countries as well, beautifully displayed and constantly changed. It is the focal point of the movement, but at Kurashiki, in Okayama Prefecture, there is another unique craft museum housed in architecturally fine old fireproof storehouses, and there are smaller museums in Tottori, Osaka, and other cities as well. But the work is not only carried out in museums—the objects furnish restaurants and hotels and are sold in craft shops all over Japan.

#### THE FUTURE OF CRAFTS

The facts have to be faced concerning the future of craftsmanship anywhere within an industrial civilization and about what Yanagi has to say about this in the following chapters. Before the age of science and modern industry, crafts used to spring out of the hearts and hands of man.

Not long ago questions were thrust at Hamada and myself by a keen young journalist from one of the leading dailies on behalf of a younger generation who eyed with suspicion the word *mingei*. Hamada handled him with so much understanding and wisdom that after a couple of hours he fell silent and quietly offered his thanks. This was the best and deepest discussion on the road forward for craftsmen that I have heard. Hamada said in effect that we were as sick of the word *mingei* as we were of the opposed word *sakka*, meaning the current so-called individual or artist-craftsman. He said they had become, equally, misconceptions of Yanagi's intentions. Someone tried to quell the young journalist, but he would not be shaken off and, turning to me, asked what I considered craft to be. "Good work proceeding from the whole man, heart, head, and hand, in proper balance", I replied. Then he went on, "How do we obtain that in our society now?" Hamada broke in at this point saying that he had met one man in America, Charles Eames, who had shown a way forward. He described the first meeting, together with Yanagi and myself, at his home near Los Angeles in 1954. He laid stress upon Eames's open

acceptance both of the contemporary scientific and industrial world as well as the traditions of the past; upon his playful refusal to be chained by fear, and his constant inventiveness and domination of the mechanical by a new freedom of intuition and joy in making. He was saying, in fact, that the inner had regained control of the outer in this man, which I think goes to the root of the matter.

At this point in time we are trying to face the problem of how to make best use of the individual craftsman, who is displacing the traditional craftsman. Regarding this issue it was Yanagi, Hamada, and myself who had found in Denmark the use of a new kind of designer of furniture for contemporary life. There a bridge was thrown across the chasm that has long kept handcraftsmen and designers in industry apart. Danish architects started with practise before theory. They only came to their drawing boards after an apprenticeship in handling wood, stone, brick, etc. Therefore they embraced and understood both the hand and the machine and could and did employ both. Some of this work, made entirely by hand, was expensive, other examples, made partly with the use of machinery, was moderately priced, but the greatest number were cheap and were made entirely by mechanical means.

If I am right in my belief that "theory before practise" has been at the root of a division that has kept the two camps at daggers drawn ever since the Industrial Revolution took place—particularly in England where it started—then we owe the Danes gratitude for having found a canker at the root and for providing a new source of industrial designers in the future whose vision is sufficiently expanded. The mistake was, I believe, in putting theory before practise, and this affected not only work, but also our concept of education. This does not imply a necessity for all craftsmen to become designers for industry, but it does indicate a liberation from a nineteenth century bondage of the spirit, a prison of rationalism, materialism, and individualism.

I have left the last question concerning individual craftsmanship to the end. The problem is how artist-craftsmen are to function rightly in a world of machines. Probing further, one is forced to ask what the function of an artist-craftsman is and why has Yanagi given him his full support? The appearance of one hundred thousand potters alone, outside industry, in the United States after the last war indicates that the gap was not being filled. Clearly something was lacking that mechanized labour



## Towards a Standard of Beauty

### THE JAPAN FOLKCRAFT MUSEUM

I CANNOT FORGET THE NIGHT in January, 1926, when, in company with Kanjirō Kawai and Shōji Hamada at the great mountain monastery of Kōya-san, we made the decision to start a national collection of folk arts. It was a great night preceded by years of preparatory thought. The love of things of beauty had been mine since school days. I had collected small pieces of old Imari porcelain, particularly saké bottles, from childhood, but it was while travelling in Korea that this interest burst into flame, fifty-four years ago. I have been to Korea at various times, and my love and respect for its crafts has continued to grow. I always returned loaded with trophies. In those early days, pots of the Koryo dynasty (936–1392) were expensive, and I could not afford them, but work of the later Yi dynasty (1392–1910) was quite cheap. The beauty of these pieces attracted me much more, so I arranged a small exhibition of objects of the Yi dynasty in Tokyo in 1921. However, at that period my feeling was that the Korean people needed a folk museum badly, and so I contrived to get a small building in the old palace in Seoul devoted to that purpose and filled it with Korean pots and other crafts. Most of them were of the Yi period. It was still there at the time of World War II, but what happened to the articles during the Korean War I do not know. Having accomplished that work, my thought turned to my own country and its similar need of discovery and collection of things of truth and beauty for the sake of the future. So I began to gather Japanese crafts. By the late 1920s I already had a large number and was feeling the lack of space in



my house. The time was ripe, and it was at this point that the meeting described above took place.

We had many dreams, and slowly realized how much money any one of them would cost. I approached the authorities in the Tokyo National Museum, suggesting that some space should be allotted to my idea of crafts, in which case we would contribute what we collected. The museum at this time had almost no folkcrafts worthy of the name, and we thought they would accept them gladly; but whether they attached no value to the objects as such or simply had not the space, there was no reply at all. This was to prove a blessing, for it meant that we were to have our own independent museum that would become known all over the world. However, the founding of the museum was to require another five years.

In 1929 I made a journey to Europe with Mr. Hamada and visited the Skansen Folk Museum in Stockholm. We came away more determined than ever, and also with the feeling that we could exercise more discretion and make a display of good things only.

In 1935, with the help of many friends, the advice of the late Tame-saburō Yamamoto and the substantial contributions of the late Mago-saburō Ohara, the building was begun. My long-cherished dream was coming true, with what joy to me I cannot describe.

A house originally intended for my own personal use was made into one wing of the museum. It was an old, long gatehouse, built partly of stone, and brought in piecemeal from Hamada's countryside. The main museum building was built to harmonize with it, to the derision of many moderns. We did not employ foreign architecture. A quiet white light penetrated into the interior through Japanese paper windows. By arrangement with the government, the contents of the museum were free of taxation in return for making them a gift to the nation in perpetuity. I have learned a lesson from seeing many wonderful private collections of art that were due for dispersal at the close of their owner's lives. At the time when I attained the age of sixty-one, which in Japan is specially celebrated, I received so many fine craft gifts from my friends and from those whom I had helped that I decided to make all my property and possessions concerned with crafts, including a library of books, a part of the Japan Folkcraft Museum. This I did with a sense of relief, in much the same way as with a religious gift. The name, Japan Folkcraft Museum (Nihon Mingei-kan), is not mere words: it stands for the arts of the people, returned to the people.

The war brought two threats to the museum. First a great fire caused by incendiary bombs burned to within a few feet of the building, when the wind veered. Later came the decision by the American forces to commandeer my house, which was only countermanded by the representations of an American friend of Japanese crafts, who was head of the Red Cross, Beth Blake.

The bulk of the contents of the museum are representative examples of the country crafts of the Japanese people. It is my belief that while the high level of culture of any country can be found in its fine arts, it is also vital that we should be able to examine and enjoy the proofs of the culture of the great mass of the people, which we call folk art. The former are made by a few for a few, but the latter, made by the many for many, are a truer test. The quality of the life of the people of that country as a whole can best be judged by the folkcrafts. The main objective of the folkcraft museum is to allow this to be done. A visit will convince any open mind of the great beauty that the simple and ordinary men and women of the countrysides of Japan put into the work of their hands, despite a long history of war, earthquake, and fire. There was little freedom in old Japanese society, the hand of the samurai was very oppressive, but out of the life of the mass of the people these fresh flowers bloomed. The life of people themselves unfortunately is not given much attention by historians: one reads about the aristocracy and the great. I hope this museum will be a slight corrective.

Sometimes, in the past, instead of heavy monetary taxes governments enacted tax in kind, as, for example, in the case of the lovely textiles of the Ryūkyū Islands, and yet those gay and harmonious fabrics continued to blossom forth. One wonders why. How does one explain the fact that after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the uplifting of this burden on the poor, such a change for the worse in the quality of their products took place? I think the answer is to be found in the spread of wholesale trading. The profit-making motive became uppermost, and the change from the age of the hand to the age of the machine took place; the two together have had a disastrous effect not only on the crafts but also on the way of natural life in which they had their roots. The new industrialized life is freer. Why, then, did the crafts flourish under social oppression? Apparently, despite its weight, the people were really more at liberty to live their country life supported by their Buddhist beliefs, and even by



their superstitions. They accepted the picture of life as it was given to them, with its balance of good and evil under heaven, without question or protest. That made the struggle bearable and even left room for the play of the life spirit in their rice fields and the work of their hands, their crafts.

Religion is derided by Communism as an appendix of slavish ignorance but what has Communism got to offer the hungry spirit? I have studied and thought about the flowering of the crafts of mankind for a long time and always find that I come back to the mothering care of the beliefs of man. What a great debt we owe them.

Looking back over two thousand years of Japanese history, in the early period, up to the ninth century, national life was centred in the power both secular and religious, of the emperor. Then power passed to the Fujiwara family and the aristocracy. Meanwhile, the gentle pacifying and spiritualizing effect of Buddhism was spreading through the land, so that in the following Kamakura era (1185–1333) the determining factors of social life were the sword on one side and the rosary on the other. After that came the Ashikaga era (1333–1573), in which the religion, having permeated the whole country, was flowering in all the arts and crafts. Finally we arrive at the long Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868), which gave Japan over 250 years of peaceful isolation in which to digest foreign influences and to produce those crafts of which this museum is full.

Since the Meiji Restoration, the overwhelming influx of Western ideas has had such an effect that today the mass of the people neither know nor wish to know their inheritance as Japanese. They regard everything from the West as new and progressive and everything traditional as retrogressive. Emulation is one thing, and this blind imitation in the belief that something new is being achieved is misguided because the only true, and at the same time new, things can grow from Japanese roots. Truth is both old and new.

I would like to believe that beauty is of deep import to our modern age. Without question, the intention of morality, philosophy, and religious belief is to bring hope, joy, peace, and freedom to mankind. But in our time religion has lost its grip. Intellectualism has undermined spiritual aspiration in most people. At this juncture I would put the question, might not beauty, and the love of the beautiful, perhaps bring peace and harmony? Could it not carry us forward to new concepts of life's mean-

ing? Would it not establish a fresh concept of culture? Would it not be a dove of peace between the various cultures of mankind?

#### THE INDIVIDUAL CRAFTSMAN AND THE FOLK CRAFTSMAN

The ordinary idea regarding fine arts is simply to exhibit them to be seen, but the folkcraft museum aims to provide standards for beauty and even a meeting place where one may come into contact with the religion of beauty. I would like the visitor not so much to "meet the craftsman at home" as to see how such things fit into everyday life and to take home some ideas for enriching his own life. The other aim is to provide hints as to what should be produced in the future. The first aim has relevance for the user, the second to the maker and seller.

I feel that the great problem is how to make good things in the present state of society. I wish that everyone would realize that until recently beauty in things was commonplace and that it is our responsibility to demand that of the future. From the things exhibited here I would like to pass on the power to do so.

This is not a place where things are actually made, but there are many craftsmen in our ranks and among our leaders. We hold exhibitions, moreover, of new work both of traditional and of individual crafts. The importance of the latter lies not only in their individual merit but also in their pathfinding significance.

I am asked from time to time if the individualism of such work is not in opposition to the character of traditional crafts. Certainly the nature of individual work is different, but the closeness of the relationship between the two is very important for the future. The individual craftsmen whose work is shown at the museum are all lovers and respecters of folkcraft, and they are very good friends. There are other individual artists who dismiss as unimportant traditional crafts and craftsmen. I wonder why their own work is so poor.

If they had the eyes to see with and the will to ponder over what they saw, instead of exhibiting arrogance or mere learning, the situation would be different. There is so much to learn and to respect—the true individual, or artist, craftsman does so, that is why he is a friend. Those who do not do so have no capacity for self-examination, and that is why their work is poor. The individual craftsman of today has the potentiality of shepherding craftsmanship towards a rebirth of true work. Work



without innate beauty is dead work; that is why the artist-craftsman is important to us. The great need of our time is for the artist-craftsman not only to produce his own good work but also to ally himself closely with the artisan, so that eventually we may have beauty in common things again.

This kind of artist or craftsman is a part of society. He only qualifies his name when he joins forces with the designer. Through his efforts alone can the leadership either in the countryside or in the factory be established. For lack of this guiding hand, crafts are dying everywhere, and industry itself does not know which way to turn in matters of design and continues to produce what we have unfortunately grown accustomed to.

The country craftsman does not know how to deal with the changes of fashion and their demands in the cities. Exporters and importers of industrial goods have little thought beyond profit and loss. In both cases the discriminating eye, which is the faculty of the artist, is not being called into use. This is the position as I see it.

#### HANDWORK AND MACHINE WORK

Almost all the things in the folkcraft museum are handmade. The period of handmade goods was extremely long, and during the mere fifty or sixty years of Japanese industrialism it can hardly be expected that the objects produced are very good or beautiful. Even during these years, however, handwork has continued alongside the machine; the folkcraft museum collection naturally contains examples of this recent work.

Members of the younger generation frequently tell me that the age of handwork is passed, that the increase in population has made machine production a necessity in order to produce enough at a low enough price. There is also no doubt that the modern sensibility is more attracted by machine-made beauty, and that young people tend to look on a taste for handcrafts as out of date. I understand this; I have had it brought up so many times that it has become stale, but the issue is not so simple as this. Such is the age of the machine, and many think that science can achieve anything and that religion is banished together with hand labour. But there are others who think that religion is all the more needed at such a time. It must be recognized that the machine has in its nature more power than the hand and that there is a limit to what the hand can do, but just as the hand has its limitations, so does the machine.

As we all know, America is the home of the machine; there has never been much handwork there since the beginning of its modern history. Most articles are made by machine—yet, ever since the last war, it is there that a new move towards handwork has taken place. Even the universities are teaching handcrafts as part of their curricula, especially pottery and weaving. Why has this strange thing happened? England started the Industrial Revolution, and the beauty of products deteriorated. In protest, William Morris's arts and crafts movement arose and spread all over Europe. Again why did this happen? The answer is that so many shoddy and badly designed goods caused protest. Moreover, the nature of machine work is such that its products are standardized and thus monotonous and cold, ill-fitted to serve as man's companions in his daily life. Human nature is complex and in the long run cannot put up with this. The situation is considerably worsened by the combination of machine production with the modern large-scale profit motive of commerce. These together have the effect of spoiling the quality of raw materials and of lessening the hours of labour for the sake of greater gain. Satisfaction in work itself decreases. Because the workers have no outlet of expression, the products are heartless. To remedy all this, first of all good designers are needed. But there are hardly any. Even if there were many, designers would require complete support from management. At present, for lack of both good designers and industrial support, the good article is a rarity. That is why there have been these reactions in both England and America.

On reflection, one must conclude that in bringing cheap and useful goods to the average household, industrialism has been of service to mankind—but at the cost of the heart, of warmth, friendliness, and beauty. By contrast, articles well made by hand, though expensive, can be enjoyed in homes for generations, and, this considered, they are not expensive after all. Is spendthrift replacement economical? Rapid turnover of goods is the salesman's policy, especially in America. It seems to me that there is something so basic, so natural in the hand that the urge to utilize its power will always make itself felt. Moreover, the chief characteristic of handcrafts is that they maintain by their very nature a direct link with the human heart, so that the work always partakes of a human quality. Machine-made things are children of the brain; they are not very human. The more they spread, the less the human being is needed. What seems to be a great advance is also a great step backward;



the desire for the natural as opposed to the artificial surely has some basic, unchanging significance.

No machine can compare with a man's hands. Machinery gives speed, power, complete uniformity, and precision, but it cannot give creativity, adaptability, freedom, heterogeneity. These the machine is incapable of, hence the superiority of the hand, which no amount of rationalism can negate. Man prefers the creative and the free to the fixed and standardized.

The machine, of course, came into being for man's use and advantage; therefore, we need not avoid it but should find a way of using it more cleverly than we have done hitherto. The problem is not a matter of either hand or machine, but of utilizing both. We have yet to discover just what is suitable work for each. To this end, again, it is a truly new kind of designer that is needed. He must, in the first place, know beauty at sight; then it is essential that he should understand the principles of mechanics and their operation in industry yet at the same time must also appreciate fully the value of handwork. Such designers could make machine-made products better and healthier. But they must not forget that the machine, too, has its limitations. The best course, probably, is that handwork and the machine should co-operate and supplement each other's shortcomings. This had already happened in the industrial arts in Denmark.

Beyond all question of old or new, the human hand is the ever-present tool of human feeling, whereas the machine, however new, is soon out of date. Young people nowadays judge according to whether a thing is new or old, but more important is whether it is true or false. If true, whether it is handmade or machine-made, it will always preserve its newness.

Finally, to protect the financial interests of the makers, whether using the hand or machine, from the octopus of wholesaling, they should form associations or guilds in the interest of honest craftsmanship. To this end, an advance in the ethics of production is essential, as is a deepening of the religious sense in everyday life. The question of handicrafts is not simply technological or economic, but, basically, a spiritual question. Both handwork and machine work will go astray if there is not spiritual preparation. In this sense, the many objects in the Japan Folkcraft Museum should provide an endless source of inspiration for the crafts—the handmade objects of the future—for they show, always, what is true work.

1954

## Seeing and Knowing

SEEING AND KNOWING are often separate. Nothing could be more admirable than when they coincide, but only too often they remain estranged. In some fields this does not matter, but in the areas of aesthetics or art history or the like, any gap between perception and knowledge assumes fatal proportions. This is an obvious fact that is too frequently overlooked. Similar cases are common in other fields as well.

The critic of religion, for example, who has no religious feelings has no force in his criticisms. In the same way, the moralist who does not live by his theories carries no weight, however brilliant he may be. I know many famous art critics who have no feeling of beauty, and I cannot therefore respect their knowledge. They may be learned, but it avails nothing. It is the same with philosophy and history. The student of philosophy and the philosopher should be distinguished; a man who knows a great deal about history is not necessarily a historian.

Doubtless many would reply that intuitive perception of beauty is incomplete without learning, that without knowledge one does not see a thing as a whole. Socrates saw the identity of action and knowing. To see and at the same time to comprehend is the ideal, but in practise we are far removed from this unity. The things to be seen and the knowledge to be gained have so vastly increased in this modern age that man's activities have been pushed either into one direction or the other. But of the two, those forced into the field of knowledge are in the worse position as far as beauty is concerned.

To be unable to *see* beauty properly is to lack the basic foundation for any aesthetic understanding. One should refrain from becoming a student



of aesthetics just because one has a good brain; to know a lot about beauty is no qualification. Seeing and knowing form an exterior and an interior, not a right and a left. Either way, they are not equal. In understanding beauty, intuition is more of the essence than intellectual perception.

The reversal of these two faculties stultifies vision. To "see" is to go direct to the core; to know the facts about an object of beauty is to go around the periphery. Intellectual discrimination is less essential to an understanding of beauty than the power of intuition that precedes it.

Beauty is a kind of mystery, which is why it cannot be grasped adequately through the intellect. The part of it available to intellection lacks depth. This might seem to be a denial of aesthetics, but it is as Aquinas said: "No one shows such a knowledge of God as he who says that one can know nothing". Aquinas was one of the greatest minds of medieval times and knew well how foolish his own wisdom was in the face of God. No one could rival the wisdom with which he acknowledged the poverty of his own mind. Though he is renowned as a theologian, he was surely still greater as a man of faith; without that fact he would have been a commonplace intellectual.

He who only knows, without seeing, does not understand the mystery. Even should every detail of beauty be accounted for by the intellect, does such a tabulation lead to beauty? Is the beauty that can be neatly reckoned really profound? The scholar of aesthetics tends to base his ideas on knowledge—or rather, he tries to make seeing proceed from knowing. But this is a reversal of the natural order of things.

The eye of knowledge cannot, thereby, see beauty. What is the beauty that a man of erudition sees as he holds a fine pot in his hands? If he picks a wild flower to pieces, petal by petal, and counts them, and tries to put them together again, can he regain the beauty that was there? All the assembly of dead parts cannot bring life back again. It is the same with knowing. One cannot replace the function of seeing by the function of knowing. One may be able to turn intuition into knowledge, but one cannot produce intuition out of knowledge. Thus the basis of aesthetics must not be intellectual concepts. For this purpose all the classification in the world avails nothing, and the scholar does not even become a good student of aesthetics. There are so many whose voices invariably rise round works of art, trying to pin them down in neat categories, always preceding the verification of beauty with such questions as "who made it,

when, and where". The recognition of date and school, etc. is a matter of pride for them. They are intensely ashamed of leaving any mystery unaccounted for in their explanations. This is commonly referred to as the "academic conscience". In fact, I suspect it is because they have not better work to do, or cannot do it properly.

The man in the street is hoodwinked, he thinks he is being informed by a man who really does know everything. Should we apply the adjective "good" to such critics and art historians? How their writings on art are flooded with exaggerated and strained expressions. They use words, too, in remarkable numbers. They cannot suggest beauty without great heaps of adjectives.

When the power to see does not accompany the power to know—when the power to see is blunted—art historians, critics, and collectors all fall into the same kind of confusion. Even assuming that they correctly praise beautiful things, they will also, without fail, praise the ugly as well. This shows that, ultimately, they are not even praising the beautiful for the right reasons. Their blurred eyesight is incapable of distinguishing beauty and ugliness. They have not grasped the yardstick of beauty. They study things that have no place in history and cheerfully rank the good and bad side by side. They have no sense of values, when they are right, they are right by luck. Beauty is essentially a matter of values; if values are confused, if there are no standards, if valueless things are admitted among the valued, judgements of beauty lose their basis.

The number of collectors of art in the world is constantly increasing, but there are few whose perceptions are developed enough to gather various types of art together with a uniformity of standard and taste. This is undoubtedly due to the foot-rule approach that I am decrying. As great an importance is placed on secondary issues, for example the idea that because something is expensive it is necessarily good. It may be rare, or unblemished, or be inscribed with the name of a famous artist, but these are all tradesman's arguments or tactics, after all, and have nothing to do with beauty. These good people are deceived in this way because they have not got eyes to see with. If they had, they would not be concerned with rarity, perfect condition, or former ownership. There is no real point in collecting unless for the sake of beauty, nor is it truly possible for those who cannot see, for if they persist, their collections are bound to be a jumble of good and bad. This is the inevitable result of putting a foot-rule between one's eyes and an object.



To look at the question from a different angle, seeing relates to the concrete, knowing to the abstract. Let us say that we have a painting by Tawaraya Sōtatsu in front of us: it is an object that the eyes see and research, and to which one's heart can respond, but the knower with the foot-rule is immediately busy with a dozen questions as to age, authenticity, previous ownership, technique and the like. These secondary and circumferential matters are all very well only if they lead to a better appreciation of Sōtatsu's painting. Without such appreciation all the knowledge in the world will take one nowhere. Thereby it becomes clear that both to see and to know is best, but that in any case seeing comes first. See first and know afterwards.

Seeing is a born faculty, knowledge is acquired. To a point anyone can acquire knowledge, but the potential of seeing is born with us. Although some are more gifted than others, it is generally accepted that the musical or the artistic gifts are born with us and that there is nothing to be done about it if one is not so fortunate. The gift of seeing is of the same order. This leaves the ungifted forlorn. I would like to give them three pieces of advice.

First, put aside the desire to judge immediately; acquire the habit of just looking. Second, do not treat the object as an object for the intellect. Third, just be ready to receive, passively, without interposing yourself. If you can void your mind of all intellectualization, like a clear mirror that simply reflects, all the better. This nonconceptualization—the Zen state of *mushin* ("no mind")—may seem to represent a negative attitude, but from it springs the true ability to contact things directly and positively.

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