CHAPTER VIII
Art and the Age:

Does art hold up the mirror to its period? Huxley asks. Or does every period hold up the mirror to its art? Or does the artist heed only the categorical imperatives of his talent and the inner logic of his tradition? Does he represent a whole epoch or only his own particular class of talented persons? He answers that there are no general rules, only particular cases.¹

If the art of a period reflects the social history of that period, in what way precisely do Perugino's paintings, for instance, express the age whose history is written in The Prince of Machiavelli? And are Voltaire and Hume more typical of the eighteenth century than Bach and Wesley? The truth is that every variety of human being exists at every period. As in religion every generation has its fetishists, its revivalists, its legalists, its rationalists and its mystics, so every age has its congenital romantics and

¹ 'Art and Religion': Themes and Variations; Chatto & Windus, 1954; p.153.
its natural classicists, whatever the prevailing fashion in art may happen to be.¹

The BAROQUE:

Huxley cites the case of baroque² art and seventeenth-century Catholicism. In what way were the two related? The personages represented in baroque religious art are all in a state of chronic emotional excitement. We look at them with aesthetic admiration and moral distaste, then start to speculate whether the contemporary religious life was as wildly agitated. And if so, which was the cause, and which the effect?³

The agitation was for purely aesthetic reasons, says Huxley. Baroque artists were tired of doing what their predecessors had done and were committed by the inner logic of their tradition to an exploration of the inordinate. The symmetrical now gives place to the disbalanced, the static to the dynamic, the formalized to the realistic. Statues are now caught in the act of changing their positions; pictorial compositions now

¹ 'Variations on The Prisons': Themes and Variations; Chatto & Windus, 1954, pp.198-99.
² The Baroque is a decadent, fantastic style in art, characterized by florid taste and lack of simplicity in ornamentation, arising in the later Renaissance and dominating European subject-painting and architecture till the late eighteenth century. So named from the Portuguese barrocco, a mis-shapen pearl.
try to break out of their frames. Hence their failure to find an adequate artistic expression for the mystical experience, though their period witnessed a great efflorescence of mystical religion. The mystics had taught that the end of the spiritual life is the unitive knowledge of God, an immediate intuition of Him beyond discursive reason, beyond imagination and beyond emotion. But unitive knowledge of God lacked the picturesqueness of visions, raptures and miracles, and picturesque and dramatic occurrences were the predestined subject-matter of baroque artists. That is why, when the mystic is represented in baroque art, it is either as a psychic with supernormal powers, or as an ecstatic in a state hardly distinguishable from that of sexual enjoyment. And this in spite of what all the contemporary masters of the spiritual life were saying. Thus, baroque painting and sculpture of the seventeenth century misrepresented the religious experience of the time.¹

Huxley notes, incidentally, that the baroque style and the kindred romantic style are best fitted for the expression of comedy. All practitioners of pure comedy, whether in literature or in art — have employed

an extravagant, baroque, romantic style. Except in the hands of prodigious men of genius (such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Rembrandt) this style, when used for serious purposes is ludicrous.¹

Thus, by an apparent paradox, artists who abandon themselves too unreservedly to passion are unable to create passion — only its parody, or at best a wild, grotesque extravagance. It would be interesting to hear Mr. Cardan on the subject. By some strange and malignant fate, he says, the Italians, once arrived at baroque, seem to have got stuck there. Their literature, their modern painting and architecture, their music — it is all baroque. It gesticulates rhetorically, it struts across stages, it sobs and bawls to show you how passionate it is. It is amusing no doubt; but one demands from art the added luxury of being moved. It is not by making wild and passionate gestures that an artist can awaken emotion. Art which is to move us must itself be still.²

Impressionism:

The outcry against the Impressionists, says Huxley, proved that the great mass of human beings are

¹ 'Conxolus': *Along the Road*; Chatto & Windus, 1948; p.174.
normally incapable of seeing the external world; for the Impressionists painted accurately what they actually saw. They put their visual impressions straight on to the canvas, raw, and mentally undigested. People were not used to seeing shapes and colours revealed by their sensations. They were used to seeing what almost all of us ordinarily see — visualized words, the Platonic ideas of things. The actual, particular thing seemed impossibly queer, when the Impressionists revealed it to them. Sometimes, however, by luck or with a deliberate effort, we are able to see the external world with their innocent and unbiassed eyes, see it for a little sub specie momenti. But strangely and mysteriously, sub specie momenti is somehow sub specie aeternitatis. Our impressions of actuality on these rare occasions seem to have a quality of supernaturalness. When, instead of what we ordinarily call 'nature', we are made directly and immediately aware of our sensations, it is an apocalypse; they seem supernatural. But it is through sensations that we come into contact with the external world. Hence a seeming paradox: external Nature is supernatural; and the supernatural (that is, mental) universe in which we live, is natural to the point of dullness. runners

The attempt to present, in art, life in the raw, Huxley notes elsewhere results almost invariably in the production of something lifeless. Unless things are to some extent subdued to the rationalizing intellect, the work of art, of which these things are the material, will lack life. For example, the Impressionists, in their anxiety to catch the actual luminous appearance of things, allowed all substantiality to evaporate from their creations. The world in their pictures lost its body and died. It is the same in literature, as, for example, in the work of Miss Dorothy Richardson. Her microscopic fidelity to the psychological facts defeats its own ends; her personages fade out of existence.

Surrealism:

A similar fate has attended the creations of the Surrealists who have given us, not the finished product of creative thought, but the dream-like incoherencies which creative thought uses as its raw material. It is the statue that lives, not the stone.

1. Dorothy Miller Richardson (1873-1957), English novelist. Her work belonged to the 'Stream of Consciousness' School.
Geometrizing Mania:

But if excessive submission to 'things' is fatal, so also is too much arrogance. If the art of those slaves of appearances who cannot organize the chaos of immediate experience is imperfect, the art of those who aspire to organize it too much and reduce nature to a few geometric forms, is equally imperfect. This geometrizing mania has afflicted whole epochs of literary and artistic history. Geometry is doubtless an excellent thing; but a well-composed landscape with figures is still better.

While literature at the present time is perhaps insufficiently geometrical, with contemporary painting, however, the case is different. Reacting against both impressionism and conventional realism, the most self conscious of modern painters deliberately transformed their art into a branch of geometry. But the possibilities of Cubism in its strictest form having been soon exhausted, there has been a general return to representation — but a representation still geometrical enough in its studied omissions and distractions. Art is still insufficiently humble and insists on subjecting the outer world too completely to its abstracting and geometrizing intellect. A kind of aesthetic asceticism prevents them from enjoying the loveliness of the world about them. They impose their
tyrannical will on things; they substitute arbitrary forms of their own making for the, almost invariably, much subtler and lovelier forms presented by their own direct experience. The result, Huxley concludes, has been an impoverishment, a deadening of the art.¹

While there are welcome signs that the painters themselves are retreating, there are many young people who, in their anxiety not to be thought old-fashioned, regard all pictures bearing a close resemblance to their subjects as highly suspicious and even ridiculous. To these ascetics, a beautiful woman accurately painted is 'chocolate boxy'; a beautiful landscape mere poetry.²

Cubism:

In one of the essays in Music at Night, Huxley analyses the causes that have been responsible for the advent of Cubism in art. No age could be less like that of the genuine Romantics than ours, he says. Modern romanticism is the old romanticism turned inside out, with all its values reversed. It is the photographic negative of the romanticism which flourished in the first half of the last century. While the old romantics were democrats

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1. 'Francis and Grigory': Do What You Will; Chatto & Windus, 1949; pp.166-69.
2. 'Conxolus': Along the Road; Chatto & Windus, 1948; p.171.
and individualists, for whom the supreme political value was personal liberty, the modern romantics believe in pure collectivism. Both beliefs are extravagant and one-sided.

This modern romanticism, far from being confined to politics, has filtered into the thought and art of every country. Communism may be found only in countries like Russia and China; but its romantic disparagement of spiritual and individual values has affected, to a greater or less extent, all Western art. Thus, the whole 'Cubist' tendency in modern art is deeply symptomatic of that same revolt against the soul and the individual. The Cubists deliberately eliminated from their art all that is 'mystically organic', replacing it by solid geometry. They were the enemies of what they called "sentimentality," of all mere 'literature' — that is to say, of all the spiritual and individual values which give significance to individual life. Art, they proclaimed, is a question of pure form. A Cubist picture is one from which everything that might appeal to the individual soul, as a soul, has been omitted. It is addressed exclusively (often with consummate skill) to an abstract aesthetic man.\footnote{1. 'The New Romanticism': Music at Night; Penguin Books, 1955; pp.140-42.} To
quote Mark Rampion (of *Point Counter Point*): "Nothing like modern art for sterilizing the life out of things."¹

The Cubist dehumanization of art is frequently accompanied by a romantic admiration for machines. Fragments of machinery are scattered through modern painting. Sculptors laboriously try to reproduce forms invented by engineers. Advanced architects wish to make dwelling-houses indistinguishable from factories; in Le Corbusier's² phrase, a house is 'a machine for living in'.

The passion for machines, so characteristic of modern art, is a kind of regression to what one may call second boyhood. At twelve, it was our ambition to be a stoker, or an engine-driver. Growing up, most of us found that human souls are more interesting than the most elaborate mechanism. The modern artist seems to have grown down and reverted to the preoccupations of his childhood.³

Actually, there were certain Cubists who not only liked to paint machines but to represent human figures as

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¹ *Point Counter Point*; Avon Publications, V-2031; p.314.
² Le Corbusier is the pseudonym of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (1887- ), Swiss-French architect and writer on architecture.
parts of machines. But a machine, after all, is itself a work of art, much more interesting from a formal point of view than any representation can be. In other words, a machine is its own highest artistic expression, and merely loses by being simplified in a symbolic representation.

Considered from a purely formal point of view, Piranesi's *The Prisons* are remarkable as being the nearest eighteenth-century approach to a purely abstract art. Piranesi uses architectural forms to produce a series of beautifully intricate designs, which resemble the abstractions of the Cubist in being composed of geometrical elements, but which have the advantage of combining pure geometry with enough subject-matter, enough 'literature', to express more forcibly than a mere pattern can do, the obscure and terrible states of spiritual confusion and accidia.3

The portentous Scogan's4 artistic creed underlies even more clearly the limitations of Cubismus. "I for

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2. Giambattista Piranesi (1720-78), Italian engraver.
4. A character in *Crome Yellow*.
one"., he says, "without ever having had the slightest appreciation of painting, have always taken particular pleasure in Cubismus. I like to see pictures from which nature has been completely banished, pictures which are exclusively the product of the human mind. They give me the same pleasure as I derive from a good piece of reasoning or a mathematical problem or an achievement of engineering." Nature, or anything that reminds him of nature, disturbs him; he is at home with the works of man, and can understand anything that any man has made or thought. "That is why I travel by the Tube", he adds, "never by bus if I can possibly help it. For, travelling by bus, one can't avoid seeing, even in London, a few stray works of God." Travelling by the Tube, one sees nothing but the works of man. All here is human and comprehensible. All philosophies and all religions — what are they but spiritual Tubes bored through the universe? "Yes", Scogan concludes, "give me the Tube and Cubismus every time .... And preserve me from nature, preserve me from all that's inhumanly large and complicated and obscure. I haven't the courage, and, above all I haven't the time to start wandering in that labyrinth."¹ Thus, in these remarks of Scogan in

¹ Crome Yellow; Chatto & Windus, 1958; p.170.
Crome Yellow and the paragraph that is to follow, Huxley gives us, by ironical implication, his own view of Cubism.

During the last eight years, writes Huxley, Combauld had worked his way industriously through Cubism. Beginning with a formalized nature, he had, little by little, risen into the world of pure form, till in the end he was painting nothing but his own thoughts in geometrical forms. But then, quite suddenly, he grew dissatisfied; he felt himself cramped and confined within intolerably narrow limitations; humiliated to find how few and crude and uninteresting were the forms he could invent, while the inventions of nature were without number. He had done with Cubism. He was out on the other side. But the Cubist discipline preserved him from falling into excesses of nature worship. It was still his aim to work the forms of nature into a whole that should have the thrilling simplicity and formality of an idea; to combine prodigious realism with prodigious simplification. Forms of a breathing, living reality built themselves up into compositions as luminously simple and single as a mathematical idea.²

1. A character in Crome Yellow.
2. Crome Yellow; Chatto & Windus, 1958; pp. 75-76.
We thus see, thanks to Cubism, the plastic arts stripped of all their 'literary' qualities, and pictures and statues reduced to their strictly formal elements. We listen to a music that has deliberately confined itself to the expression of physical energy, of the lyricism of speed and mechanical motion. Both music and the visual arts are impregnated, to a greater or less extent, with that new and topsy-turvy romanticism which exalts the machine, the crowd, the merely muscular body and despises the soul, the solitude and nature.

The Two Romanticisms:

Personally, says Huxley, he has no great liking for either of the romanticisms. If it were absolutely necessary for him to choose, he would choose the older one. An exaggeration of the significance of the soul and the individual, at the expense of matter, society, machinery and organization, seems to Huxley an exaggeration in the right direction. The new romanticism, he says, is headed straight towards death. If Huxley could have his own way, he would not choose either of the romanticisms; he would vote for the adoption of a middle course. The only philosophy of life which has any prospect of being permanently valuable is a philosophy which takes in all the facts — the facts of mind and the facts of matter, of instinct and intellect, of individualism and
sociableness. The wise man will avoid both extremes of romanticism and choose the realistic golden mean.¹

Tropical Landscapes:

No good pictures have ever been painted, says Huxley, of tropical landscapes. Perhaps, no good painters have ever worked in the tropics. The temples of Ceylon, the ghats of Benares, Penang harbour, the palms and fantastic volcanoes of Java, which are annually reproduced in thousands of water colours, are the works of amateurs. The real reason is that painters avoid the tropics, knowing them to be unpaintable.²

Huxley, whose hobby it was to paint, himself realised the great difficulty of painting a tropical landscape during his Central American tour. He once tried to do some painting in the woods behind the hotel where he was putting up, but soon gave it up in despair on account of the hot sun and the insects. But the greater difficulty was: how to render a brilliantly coloured landscape in equivalently brilliant tones? A number of contemporary painters ignore the brilliance and transpose the whole scene into a much lower and quieter key. The

² Jesting Pilate; Chatto & Windus, 1948; pp.222-23.
result, says Huxley, is often very agreeable. But then, a difficulty has been shirked. It is relatively easy to achieve a pleasant harmony when you are using a few quiet colours; it is far more difficult to harmonize the many and brilliant tones which actually exist in tropical nature.¹

It is a significant fact, Huxley observes, that the scenery which the enthusiastic amateur finds most picturesque is the scenery most carefully avoided by serious professionals. Turner² is one of the few great landscape painters who ever chose to represent picturesque subjects. A picturesque landscape is one which inevitably imposes itself on the painter, so that he finds himself reduced to the role of a merely passive recording instrument. This is just what the amateur wants. It excuses him from making any creative gesture of his own; all he has to do is to make a faithful copy. But the serious painter wants to impose himself upon his subject. That is why he prefers a plain, and almost neutral subject, on which he can impress his own human ideas of composition and harmony.

¹ Beyond the Mexique Bay; Chatto & Windus, 1949; pp.133-34.
² Joseph Mallord Turner (1775-1851) was born, appropriately enough, on Shakespeare's birthday, April 23, 1775; appropriately, because he was destined to become the Shakespeare of English Painting.
his own conception of the grand and the dramatic. Turner, it is true, could turn Italy into art; but then he was a kind of spiritual ostrich. Most painters prefer a lighter diet.

What is true of Italian is true, also, of tropical landscape. It bullies the serious artist, so to say, robs him of his initiative, dictates to him. There is also another reason. Tropical landscapes, besides being too picturesque to be turned into good pictures, are also too rich. There is no room in a painting for the profusion that exists in tropical reality. That is why Gauguin, one of the few good painters who ever painted in the tropics, habitually left nine-tenths of reality out of his pictures.

Tropical nature, Huxley feels, still awaits its pictorial interpreters, who will do for tropical landscape what hundreds of painters have done for European landscape. English landscapes were beautiful before Gainsborough was born; but it was Gainsborough who made the

1. Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), French painter of the Post-Impressionist School. He painted the primitive folk and tropical landscape of Tahiti.

2. Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), English landscape painter. He once confessed that he painted "portraits for money, landscapes for love."
loveliness nearly visible, who gave it a name and a
definition. So far, the best pictures of the tropics
are in books — in Conrad and Herman Melville\(^1\), in
H.M. Tomlinson\(^2\) and Pierre Loti\(^3\).

**Landscape Painting and Visionary Experience:**

At a number of places in his writings, Huxley
discusses how landscape painting and visionary experience
go together, and points out how, centuries ago, in China
and the Far East, landscape painting was practised as a
religion.

As Vijay, a character in *Island*, remarks, pseudo-
religious pictures always refer to something beyond the
things they represent — some piece of metaphysical non-
sense, some absurd dogma from the local theology. A
genuinely religious picture is always intrinsically mean-
ingful. A picture of Christ or Buddha is merely a record

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1. Herman Melville (1819-1891), American novelist; author of *Moby Dick*.
of something observed by a Behaviourist and interpreted by a theologian. But when one is confronted with a landscape, one is practically compelled to perform an act of self-knowing. It is a view, at one remove, of one's own mind, of everybody's mind as it exists above and below the level of personal history. Their ability to express the fact of distance is yet another reason why landscapes are the most genuinely religious pictures. Distance reminds us that there is a lot more to the universe than just people.\(^1\)

The poet's or the painter's vision of the divine in nature, Huxley observes elsewhere, is not entirely subjective. True, such perceptions cannot be had by all perceivers; but the thing known is independent of the mode and nature of the knower. What the poet and painter see, and try to record for us, is actually there, waiting to be apprehended by any one who has the right kind of faculties.\(^2\)

Reviewing a succession of human cultures, Huxley finds that landscape painting, as a full-blown art, has existed in Europe for only four or five centuries, in China for not more than a thousand years, in India, for .all practical purposes, never.

\(^1\) Island; Chatto & Windus, 1962; pp. 182-83.
\(^2\) The Perennial Philosophy; Chatto & Windus, 1950; p. 72.
Landslides are a regular feature of the visionary experience; but paintings of landscapes do not make their appearance until comparatively recent times. Huxley conjectures that people may be content with the merely verbal expression of this aspect of their visionary experience and feel no need for its translation into pictorial terms; for men either do not choose to express all that they experience or may try to express it in only one of the arts.1

Mature in Christian Art:

No fully adequate rendering of the contemplative life was ever achieved in the plastic arts of Christendom, writes Huxley. Perhaps because the Christian saint has his being in a world from which non-human Nature has been almost completely excluded; while, on the other hand, in China and Japan mountains were taken more seriously and the aspiring artist was advised to go and live among them, to contemplate them lovingly until he could feel within them the workings of the immanent and transcendent Tao. While the medieval Christian artists painted mere backgrounds, those of the Far East painted landscapes that are the equivalent of mystical poetry.2

2. 'Variations on a Baroque Tomb'; *Themes and Variations*; Chatto & Windus, 1954; p. 172.
Compared with that of the Taoists and Far Eastern Buddhists, the Christian attitude towards nature has been curiously insensitive and often downright domineering and violent. Taking their cue from an unfortunate remark in Genesis, Catholic moralists have regarded animals as mere things which men do right to exploit for their own ends. Like landscape painting, the humanitarian movement in Europe was an almost completely secular affair. In the Far East both were essentially religious.

The supreme example of mystical art, says Huxley, is the Zen-inspired landscape painting which arose in China during the Sung period and came to new birth in Japan four centuries later. India has no mystical landscape painting, but she has its equivalent — for instance, Vaishnava painting in India, where the theme is sexual love. The experiences of sexual union, Huxley feels, partake of that essential otherness characteristic of all vision, including that of the landscapes.1

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1. Zen Buddhism was a movement in Oriental mysticism having a strong influence on the arts. It started in China and reached its highest development in Japan.
2. Sung period in Chinese art, end of tenth to thirteenth century, A.D.; named after Chinese dynasty Sung.
3. Heaven and Hell; Chatto & Windus, 1956; p.41.
* The Perennial Philosophy; Chatto & Windus, 1950; p.91.
From time immemorial deity has been associated with the earth and sky and trees, rivers and mountains, whirl-wind and sunshine and the lilies of the field.

Space and time on the cosmic scale are symbols of the infinity and eternity of the Spirit. Non-human Nature is the outward and visible expression of the mystery which confronts us when we look into the depths of our being.

The first artists to concern themselves with the spiritual significance of Nature were the Taoist landscape painters of China. When, twelve hundred years later, European artists discovered landscape, they developed no philosophy to explain and justify what they were doing. That was left to the poets — to Wordsworth, to Shelley, to Whitman. But the lack of philosophy did not prevent the best of European landscape painters from making manifest that something far more deeply interfused, "This is not drawing", Blake exclaimed, when he was shown one of Constable's sketches, "this is inspiration". Constable is a great Nature mystic without knowing or intending it.

1. John Constable (1776-1837), English painter. Unquestionably the two greatest English painters of landscape, and probably the two greatest painters of any kind, were Turner and Constable.
And so is Seurat¹, another consummate master of landscape.²

In painting, during recent times, we have witnessed a general retreat from landscape, the predominant art of the nineteenth century. This retreat has not been into that other, inner divine Datum, where men have always found the raw materials of myth and religion. It has been a retreat from the outward Datum into the personal subconscious, into a mental world more squalid and more tightly closed than even the world of conscious personality.³

What Landscapes are most Transporting ?

What landscapes — or, more generally, what representations of natural objects — are most transport- ing, most intrinsically vision-inducing ? Huxley asks. Other things being equal, the most transporting landscapes, he answers, are, first, those which represent

¹Georges Seurat (1859-1891), French painter of the Neo-Impressionist School. But for his early death Seurat, who was a genius in design as well as a great colourist, would have obtained a foremost place in modern art.
²Variations on El Greco¹: Collected Essays; 1960; ER pp.154-56.
³The Doors of Perception; Chatto & Windus, 1957; p.38.
natural objects a very long way off, and, second, those which represent them at close range. A Sung painting of far away mountains, clouds and torrents is transporting; but so are the close-ups of tropical leaves in the *Douanier Rousseau's* jungles; when we look at those leaves, we are reminded of those living patterns so characteristic of the visionary world. They make one see with eyes that transfigure a work of art into something beyond art. Only the middle distances are strictly human. When we look very near or very far, man either vanishes altogether or loses his primacy.

### The Close-up Landscape

Though for theological reasons, Islam had to be content, for the most part, with 'arabesques', the close-up landscape was not unknown to it. Nothing can exceed in beauty and in vision-inducing power the mosaics of gardens and buildings in the great Omayyad mosque at Damascus. Both the realistic close-ups of foliage and flowers of medieval Europe, and the tapestries with which the rich men of northern Europe adorned their houses a

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1. *Theodore Rousseau* (1812-1867), one of the most famous French painters of the Barbizon School. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Constable.
century later are — the best of them — vision-inducing works of the highest order. Vuillard's bourgeois interiors are masterpieces of vision-inducing art. While, at the near point, Vuillard painted interiors for the most part, he sometimes also painted gardens. In a few compositions he managed to combine the magic of propinquity with the magic of remoteness, by representing a corner of a room in which there stands or hangs one of his own, or someone else's, representations of a distant view of trees, hills and sky. It is an invitation to make the best of both the worlds, the telescopic and microscopic, at a single glance.

Art of China and Japan:

There is nothing in the West comparable to the Chinese and Japanese renderings of nature at the near point — a spray of blossoming plum, a bamboo stem with its leaves, etc. Each tiny life is represented at the centre of its own universe; each, by ironic implication, derides our absurd pretensions to lay down merely human rules for the conduct of the cosmic game; each mutely repeats the divine tautology: I am that I am.

1. Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940), French painter.
Nature at the middle distance is familiar. But seen very close at hand, or at great distance, or from an odd angle, it seems disquietingly strange. The close-up landscapes of China and Japan are so many illustrations of the theme that *samsara* and *nirvana* are one, that the Absolute is manifest in every appearance. All objects are here represented in a state of unrelatedness against a blank of virgin silk or paper, and take on a kind of absolute Thing-in-Itselfhood. Western artists have used this device in painting figures and objects at a distance; Rembrandt's *Mill* and Van Gogh's *Cypresses* are examples of long-range landscapes in which a single feature has been isolated. The magical power of much of Goya's work can be accounted for by the fact that a few silhouettes, or even a single silhouette, seen against a blank, possess the visionary quality of intrinsic significance, heightened by isolation and unrelatedness to preternatural intensity.

1. Van Rijn Rembrandt (1606-1669), Dutch painter and etcher.
2. Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), Dutch painter. He exclaimed in one of his letters, "I want to paint humanity, humanity, and again humanity."
3. Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828), Spanish painter. Art seemed dead and past the hope of revival till Goya came to Madrid.
Human Figure in Repose:

Landscape and the human figure in repose — these are the symbols through which, in the past, the spiritual life has been most clearly and powerfully expressed. The angels, under many names and attired in an endless variety of costumes, have appeared in the religious art of every culture. Sometimes these heroic figures are shown at rest, sometimes in historical or mythological action. But the law of their being is to do nothing. That is why the most transporting representations of angels are those which show them as doing nothing in particular.

And that, says Huxley, accounts for the overwhelming, the more than merely aesthetic, impression made upon the beholder by the great static master-pieces of religious art. At all times and places, the divine or superhuman figures have one characteristic in common — a profound stillness. And it is just this which gives them their numinous quality.¹

Art in Recent Times:

For a great variety of reasons, some sociological and some intrinsically aesthetic, some easily discernible and some obscure, the traditions of European arts and

* "Variations on El Greco": Collected Essays; Chatto & Windus, 1960; p.154.
crafts have been disintegrated, since the middle of the nineteenth century, into a chaos of fertile bad taste and ubiquitous vulgarity.¹

Our standards too have changed. The altered standards of appreciation and generally greater tolerance are chiefly the result of increased acquaintance with the art of every nation and period—an acquaintance due in its turn chiefly to photography.²

Photography, says Huxley, is not an unmixed blessing. It has made it possible to reproduce pictures so easily and cheaply that all the bad artists who were well occupied in the past, making engravings of good artists' paintings, are now free to do bad original work of their own.³

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1. 'Faith, Taste and History': Adonis and the Alphabet; Chatto & Windus, 1956; p.230.
2. 'Guide-Books': Along the Road; Chatto & Windus, 1948; p.43.