ize that emotions are not so clearly differentiated or so sharply separable from other elements in cognition that the distinction can provide a firm basis for answering any moot questions.

5. Symptoms of the Aesthetic

Repeated failure to find a neat formula for sorting experiences into aesthetic and nonaesthetic, in rough conformity with rough usage, suggests the need for a less simple-minded approach. Perhaps we should begin by examining the aesthetic relevance of the major characteristics of the several symbol processes involved in experience, and look for aspects or symptoms, rather than for a crisp criterion, of the aesthetic. A symptom is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for, but merely tends in conjunction with other such symptoms to be present in, aesthetic experience.

Three symptoms of the aesthetic may be syntactic density, semantic density, and syntactic repleteness. As we have seen, syntactic density is characteristic of nonlinguistic systems, and is one feature distinguishing sketches from scores and scripts; semantic density is characteristic of representation, description, and expression in the arts, and is one feature differentiating sketches and scripts from scores; and relative syntactic repleteness distinguishes the more representational among semantically dense systems from the more diagrammatic, the less from the more 'schematic'. All three features call for maximum sensitivity of discrimination. Syntactic and semantic density demand

endless attention to determining character and referent, given any mark of the system; and relative syntactic repleteness in a syntactically dense system demands such effort at discrimination along, so to speak, more dimensions. Impossibility of finite determination may carry some suggestion of the ineffability so often claimed for, or charged against, the aesthetic. But density, far from being mysterious and vague, is explicitly defined; and it arises out of, and sustains, the unsatisfiable demand for absolute precision.

The fourth and final symptom of the aesthetic is the feature that distinguishes exemplificational from denotational systems and that combines with density to distinguish showing from saying. An experience is exemplificational insofar as concerned with properties exemplified or expressed—i.e., properties possessed and shown forth—by a symbol, not merely things the symbol denotes. To count being exemplificational as aesthetic may seem a concession to the tradition that associates the aesthetic with the immediate and nontransparent and so insists that the aesthetic object be taken for what it is in itself rather than as signifying anything else. But exemplification, like denotation, relates a symbol to a referent, and the distance from a symbol to what applies to or is exemplified by it is no less than the distance to what it applies to or denotes. As 'ineffability' upon analysis turns into density rather than mystery, 'immediacy' becomes a matter of exemplification rather than of intimacy—a function of direction rather than of distance. Nothing here implies that representation, in contrast with exemplification, is nonaesthetic. Exemplifica-

tion contrasts with denotation rather than with representation. We saw that fictive representation and also representation-as are matters of exemplification; and representation in the arts is seldom explicitly factual and otherwise purely denotational. Moreover, an aesthetic experience need not exhibit all four symptoms.

The four symptoms probably tend to be present rather than absent, and to be prominent in aesthetic experience; but any of them may be absent from aesthetic or present in nonaesthetic experience. The symbolic vehicle of the literary arts, for example, is not syntactically dense, while the gauging of weights or temperatures may be dense both syntactically and semantically. Absence of some aesthetic or presence of some nonaesthetic symptom does not make for an aesthetically less pure totality, nor is an experience the more aesthetic the higher the concentration of aesthetic symptoms. Yet if the four symptoms listed are *severally* neither sufficient nor necessary for aesthetic experience, they may be *conjunctively* sufficient and *disjunctively* necessary; perhaps, that is, an experience is aesthetic if it has all these attributes and only if it has at least one of them.

I am not claiming that this proposal conforms faithfully to ordinary usage. Presystematic usage of "aesthetic" and "nonaesthetic" is even less clearly established by practice, and more seriously infected with inept theorizing, than in the case of most terms. I am rather suggesting that we have here an appropriate use for a badly abused pair of terms. Density, repleteness, and exemplification, then, are earmarks of the aesthetic; articulateness, attenuation, and denotation, earmarks of the nonaesthetic. A vague and yet harsh di-

chotomy of experiences gives way to a sorting of features, elements, and processes. Classification of a totality as aesthetic or nonaesthetic counts for less than identification of its aesthetic and nonaesthetic aspects. Phases of a decidedly aesthetic compound may be utterly nonaesthetic; for example, a score and its mere reading are devoid of all aesthetic aspects. On the other hand, aesthetic features may predominate in the delicate qualitative and quantitative discrimination required in testing some scientific hypotheses. Art and science are not altogether alien.

The distinction here drawn between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic is independent of all considerations of aesthetic value. That is as it should be. An abominable performance of the *London Symphony* is as aesthetic as a superb one; and Piero's *Risen Christ* is no more aesthetic but only better than a hack's. The symptoms of the aesthetic are not marks of merit; and a characterization of the aesthetic neither requires nor provides a definition of aesthetic excellence.

6. The Question of Merit

Folklore has it that the good picture is pretty. At the next higher level, "pretty" is replaced by "beautiful", since the best pictures are often obviously not pretty. But again, many of them are in the most obvious sense ugly. If the beautiful excludes the ugly, beauty is no measure of aesthetic merit; but if the beautiful may be ugly, then "beauty" becomes only an alternative and misleading word for aesthetic merit.

Little more light is shed by the dictum that while sci-

ence is judged by its truth, art is judged by the satisfaction it gives. Many of the objections urged earlier against satisfaction, yielded or anticipated, as a distinguishing feature of the aesthetic weigh also against satisfaction as a criterion of aesthetic merit: satisfaction cannot be identified with pleasure, and positing a special aesthetic feeling begs the question. We are left with the unhelpful formula that what is aesthetically good is aesthetically satisfactory. The question is what makes a work good or satisfactory.

Being satisfactory is in general relative to function and purpose. A good furnace heats the house to the required temperature evenly, economically, quietly, and safely. A good scientific theory accounts for the relevant facts clearly and simply. We have seen that works of art or their instances perform one or more among certain referential functions: representation, description, exemplification, expression. The question what constitutes effective symbolization of any of these kinds raises in turn the question what purpose such symbolization serves.

An answer sometimes given is that exercise of the symbolizing faculties beyond immediate need has the more remote practical purpose of developing our abilities and techniques to cope with future contingencies. Aesthetic experience becomes a gymnasium workout, pictures and symphonies the barbells and punching bags we use in strengthening our intellectual muscles. Art equips us for survival, conquest, and gain. And it channels surplus

amusement of the guiltily leisure class, is acclaimed as a universal servant of mankind. This is a comforting view for those who must reconcile aesthetic inclinations with a conviction that all value reduces to practical utility.

More lighthearted and perhaps more simpleminded is the almost opposite answer: that symbolization is an irrepressible propensity of man, that he goes on symbolizing beyond immediate necessity just for the joy of it or because he cannot stop. In aesthetic experience, he is a puppy cavorting or a well-digger who digs doggedly on after finding enough water. Art is not practical but playful or compulsive. Dogs bark because they are canine, men symbolize because they are human; and dogs go on barking and men go on symbolizing when there is no practical need just because they cannot stop and because it is such fun.

A third answer, bypassing the issue over practicality versus fun, points to communication as the purpose of symbolizing. Man is a social animal, communication is a requisite for social intercourse, and symbols are media of communication. Works of art are messages conveying facts, thoughts, and feelings; and their study belongs to the omnivorous new growth called 'communications theory'. Art depends upon and helps sustain society—exists because, and helps ensure, that no man is an island.

Each of these explanations—in terms of gymnastics, play, or conversation—distends and distorts a partial truth

and renewal, too. Discoveries become available knowledge only when preserved in accessible form; the trenchant and laden symbol does not become worthless when it becomes familiar, but is incorporated in the base for further exploration. And where there is density in the symbol system, familiarity is never complete and final; another look may always disclose significant new subtleties. Moreover, what we read from and learn through a symbol varies with what we bring to it. Not only do we discover the world through our symbols but we understand and reappraise our symbols progressively in the light of our growing experience. Both the dynamics and the durability of aesthetic value are natural consequences of its cognitive character.

Like considerations explain the relevance to aesthetic merit of experience remote from the work. What a Manet or Monet or Cézanne does to our subsequent seeing of the world is as pertinent to their appraisal as is any direct confrontation. How our lookings at pictures and our listenings to music[9] inform what we encounter later and elsewhere is integral to them as cognitive. The absurd and awkward myth of the insularity of aesthetic experience can be scrapped.

The role of theme and variation—common in architecture and other arts as well as in music—also becomes intel-

[9] Music can inform perception not only of other sounds but also of the rhythms and patterns of what we see. Such cross-transference of structural properties seems to me a basic and important aspect of learning, not merely a matter for novel experimentation by composers, dancers, and painters.

ligible. Establishment and modification of motifs, abstraction and elaboration of patterns, differentiation and interrelation of modes of transformation, all are processes of constructive search; and the measures applicable are not those of passive enjoyment but those of cognitive efficacy: delicacy of discrimination, power of integration, and justice of proportion between recognition and discovery. Indeed, one typical way of advancing knowledge is by progressive variation upon a theme. Among modern composers, theme and variation along with all recognizable pattern is sometimes scorned, and maximum unpredictability is the declared aim; but, as C. I. Lewis pointed out,[10] complete irregularity is inconceivable—if no sequence is ever repeated in a given composition, that fact in itself constitutes a notable regularity.

Aesthetic merit, however, has by no means been my main concern in this book, and I am somewhat uncomfortable about having arrived at an incipient definition of what is often confusingly called 'beauty'. Excessive concentration on the question of excellence has been responsible, I think, for constriction and distortion of aesthetic inquiry.[11] To say that a work of art is good or even to say how good it is does not after all provide much information, does not tell us whether the work is evocative, robust, vibrant, or exquisitely designed, and still less what are its salient specific qualities of color, shape, or sound. More-

[10] *Mind and the World Order* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 385.

[11] Cf. my "Merit as Means" in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. S. Hook (New York, New York University Press, 1966), pp. 56–57.