

INTRODUCTION TO AN ACCOUNT OF SIR JOSHUA
REYNOLDS'S DISCOURSES:

THE general merit of these Discourses is so well established that it would be needless to enlarge on it here. The graces of the composition are such, that scholars have been led to suspect that it was the style of Burke (the first prose-writer of our time) carefully subdued, and softened down to perfection : and the taste and knowledge of the subject displayed in them are so great, that this work has been, by common consent, considered as a text-book on the subject of art, in our English school of painting, ever since its publication. Highly elegant and valuable as Sir Joshua's opinions are, yet they are liable (so it appears to us) to various objections; and it becomes more important to state these objections, because, as it generally happens, the most questionable of his precepts are those which have been the most eagerly adopted, and carried into practice with the greatest success. The errors, if they are such, which we shall attempt to point out, are not casual, but systematic. There is a fine-spun metaphysical theory, either not very clearly understood, or not very correctly expressed, pervading Sir Joshua's reasoning; and which appears to have led him in several of the most important points to conclusions, either false or only true in part. The rules thus laid down, as general and comprehensive maxims, are in fact founded on a set of half principles, which are true only as far as they imply a negation of the opposite errors, but contain in themselves the germ of other errors just as fatal: which, if strictly and literally understood, cannot be defended, and which by being taken in an equivocal sense, of course leave the student as much to seek as ever. The English school of painting is universally reproached by foreigners with the slovenly and unfinished state in which they send their productions into the world, with their ignorance of academic rules and neglect of the subordinate details; in other words, with aiming at *effect* only in all their works of art: and though it is by no means necessary that we should adopt the defects of the French and German painters, yet we might learn from them to correct our own. There was no occasion to encourage our constitutional indolence and impatience by positive rules, or to incorporate our vicious habits into a system. Or if our defects were to be retained, at least they ought to have been tolerated only for the sake of certain collateral and characteristic excellences out of which they might be thought to spring. Thus a certain degree of precision or regularity might be sacrificed rather than impair that boldness, vigour, and originality of conception, in which the strength of the national genius might be supposed to lie. But the method of instruction pursued in the Discourses seems calculated for neither of these objects. Without endeavouring to overcome our habitual defects, which might be corrected by proper care and study, it damps our zeal, ardour, and enthusiasm. It places a full reliance neither on art nor nature, but consists in a kind of fastidious tampering with both. Both genius and industry are put out of countenance in turn. The height of invention is made to consist in compiling from others, and the perfection of imitation is not copying from nature. We lose the substance of the art in catching a shadow, and are thought to embrace a cloud for a Goddess!

That we may not seem to prejudge the question, we shall state at once, and without further preface, the principal points in the Discourses which we deem either wrong in themselves, or liable to misconception and abuse. They are the following —

1. *That genius or invention consists chiefly in borrowing the ideas of others, or in using other men's minds.*
2. *That the great style in painting depends on leaving out the details of particular objects.*
3. *That the essence of portrait consists in giving the general character, rather than the individual likeness.*
4. *That the essence of history consists in abstracting from individuality of character and expression as much as possible.*
5. *That beauty or ideal perfection consists in a central form.*
6. *That to imitate nature is a very inferior object in art.*

All of these positions appear to require a separate consideration, which we shall give them in the following articles on this subject.

II: ON GENIUS AND ORIGINALITY

IT IS a leading and favourite position of the Discourses that genius and invention are principally shewn in borrowing the ideas, and imitating the excellences of others. Differing entirely from those 'who have undertaken to write on the art of painting, and have represented it as a kind of *inspiration*, as a gift bestowed upon peculiar favourites at their birth,' Sir Joshua proceeds to add, 'I am, on the contrary, persuaded, that by imitation only,' (that is, of former masters,) 'variety and even originality of invention is produced. I will go further! even genius, at least what is generally called so, is the child of imitation.' 'There can be no doubt but that he who has most materials has the greatest means of invention, and if he has not the power of rising them, it must proceed from a feebleness of intellect.' 'Study is the art of using other men's minds.' 'It is from Raphael's having taken so many models, that he became himself a model for all succeeding painters, always imitating, and always original' Vol. i. p. 151, 159, 169, &c. All that Sir Joshua says on this subject, is either vague and contradictory, or has an evident bias the wrong way. That genius either consists in, or is in any proportion to, the knowledge of what others have done, in any branch of art or science, is a paradox which hardly admits serious refutation. The answer is indeed so obvious and so undeniable, that one is almost ashamed to give it. As it happens in all such cases, an advantage is taken of the old-fashioned simplicity of truth, to triumph over it. It is another of Sir Joshua's theoretical opinions, often repeated, and almost as often retracted in his lectures, that there is no such thing as genius in the first formation of the human mind. That is not the question here, though perhaps we may recur to it. But, however a man may come by the faculty which we call *genius*, whether it is the effect of habit and circumstances, or the gift of nature, yet there can be no doubt, that what is meant by the term, is a power of original observation and invention. To take it otherwise, is a solecism in language, and a misnomer in art. A work demonstrates genius exactly as it contains what is to be found no where else, or in proportion to what we add to the ideas of others from our own stores, and not to what we receive from them. It may contain also what is to be found in other works, but it is not that which stamps it with the character of genius. The contrary view of the question can only tend to deter those who have genius from using it, and to make those who are without genius, think they have it. It is attempting to excite the mind to the highest efforts of intellectual excellence, by denying the chief ground-work of all intellectual distinction. It is from the same general spirit of distrust of the existence or power of genius that Sir Joshua exclaims with confidence and triumph, 'There is one precept, however, in which I shall only be opposed by the vain, the ignorant, and the idle. I am not afraid that I shall repeat it too often. YOU MUST HAVE NO DEPENDENCE ON YOUR OWN GENIUS. If you have great talents, industry will improve them. If you have but moderate abilities, it will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well-directed labour; nothing can be obtained without it. Not to enter into metaphysical discussions on the nature and essence of genius, I will venture to assert, that assiduity unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call *the result of natural powers*.' P 44, 45. Yet so little influence had the metaphysical theory, which he wished to hold *in terrorem* over the young enthusiast, Sir Joshua's habitual unreflecting good sense, that he afterwards, in speaking of the attainments of Carlo Maratti, which, at well as those of Raphael, lie attributes to the imitation of others, says, 'It is true there is nothing very captivating in Carlo Maratti; but this proceeded from a want which cannot be completely supplied, that is, *want of strength of parts*. In this, certainly, men are not equal; and a man can bring home wares only in proportion to the capital with which he goes to market. Carlo, by diligence, made the most of what he had : but there was

undoubtedly a heaviness about him, which extended itself uniformly to his invention, expression, his drawing, colouring, and the general effect of his pictures. The truth is, he never equalled any of his patterns in any one thing, and he added little of his own.' P 172. Poor Carlo, it seems, then, was excluded from the benefit of the sweeping clause in this general charter of dulness, by which all men are declared to be equal in natural powers, and to owe their superiority only to superior industry. What is here said of Carlo Maratti is, however, an exact description of the fate of all those, who, without any genius of their own, pretend to avail themselves of the genius of others. Sir Joshua attempts to confound genius and the want of it together, by shewing, that some men of great genius have not disdained to borrow largely from their predecessors, while others, who affected to be entirely original, have really invented little of their own. This is from the purpose. If Raphael, for instance, had only copied his figure of St. Paul from Mascacio, or his groupe, in the sacrifice of Lystra, from the ancient bas-relief, without adding other figures of equal force and beauty, he would have been considered as a mere plagiarist. As it is, the pictures here referred to, would undoubtedly have displayed more genius, that is, more originality, if those figures had also been his own invention. Nay, Sir Joshua himself, in giving the preference of genius to Michael Angelo, does it on this very ground, that 'Michael Angelo's works seem to proceed from his own mind entirely, and that mind so rich and abundant, that he never needed, or seemed to disdain to look abroad for foreign help;' whereas, 'Raffaelle's materials are generally borrowed, though the noble structure is his own.' On the justice of this last argument, we shall remark presently. Perhaps Reynolds's general account of the insignificance of genius, and the all-sufficiency of the merits of others, may be looked upon as an indirect apology for the gradual progress of his own mind, in selecting and appropriating the beauties of the great artists who went before him: he appears anxious to describe and dignify the process, from which he himself derived such felicitous results, but which, as a general system of instruction, can only produce mediocrity and imbecility. It is a lesson which a well-bred drawing-master might with great propriety repeat by rote to his fashionable pupils, but which a learned professor, whose object was to lead the aspiring mind to the heights of fame, ought not to have offered to the youth of a nation. 'You must have no dependence on your own genius,' is, according to Sir Joshua, the universal foundation of all high endeavours, the beginning of all true wisdom, and the end of all true art. Would Sir Joshua have given this advice to Michael Angelo, or to Raphael, or to Corregio? Or would he have given it to Rembrandt, or Rubens, or Vandyke, or Claude Lorraine, or to our own Hogarth? Would it have been followed, or what would have been the consequence, if it had? — That we should never have heard of any of these personages, or only heard of them as instances to prove that nothing great can be done without genius and originality! We are at a loss to conceive where, upon the principle here stated, Hogarth would have found the materials of his *Marriage a la Mode* or Rembrandt his Three Trees? or Claude Lorraine his Enchanted castle, with that one simple figure in the foreground,—

'Sole sitting by the shores of old romance?'

Or from what but an eye always intent on nature, and brooding over 'beauty, rendered still more beautiful' by the exquisite feeling with which it was contemplated, did he borrow his verdant landscapes and his azure skies, the bare sight of which wafts the imagination to Arcadian scenes, 'thrice happy fields, and groves, and flowery vales,' breathing perpetual youth and freshness? If Claude had gone out to study on the banks of the Tyber with Sir Joshua's first precept in his mouth, 'Individual nature produces little beauty,' and had returned poring over the second, which is like unto it, 'You must have no dependence on your own genius,' the world would have lost one perfect painter. Rubens would have shared the same fate, with all his train of fluttering Cupids, warriors and prancing steeds, panthers

and piping Bacchanals, nymphs, fawns and satyrs, if he had not been reserved for 'the tender mercies' of the modern French critics, David and his pupils, who think that the Luxembourg gallery ought to be destroyed, to make room for their own execrable performances. Or we should never have seen that fine landscape of his in the Louvre, with a rainbow on one side, the whole face of nature refreshed after the shower, and some shepherds under a group of trees; piping to their heedless flocks, if instead of painting what he saw and what he felt to be fine, he had set himself to solve the learned riddle proposed by Sir Joshua, whether *accidents in nature* should be introduced in landscape, since Claude has rejected them. It is well that genius gets the start of criticism; for if these two great landscape painters, not being privileged to consult their own taste and inclinations, had been compelled to wait till the rules of criticism had decided the preference between their different styles, instead of having both, we should have had neither. The folly of all such comparisons consists in supposing that we are reduced to a single alternative in our choice of excellence, and the true answer to the question, 'Which do you like best, Ruben's landscapes or Claude's?' is the one which was given on another occasion—both. If it be meant which of the two an artist should imitate, the answer is, the one which he is likely to imitate best. As to Rembrandt, he would not have stood the least chance with this new theory of art. *But* the warning sounds, 'you must have no dependence on your own genius,' never reached him in the little study where he watched the dim shadows cast by his dying embers on the wall, or at other times saw the clouds driven before the storm, or the blaze of noon-day brightness bursting through his casement on the mysterious gloom which surrounded him. What a pity that his old master could not have received a friendly hint from Sir Joshua, that getting rid of his vulgar musty prejudices, he might have set out betimes for the regions of *virtu*, have scaled the ladder of *taste*, have measured the antique, lost himself in the Vatican, and after 'wandering through dry places, seeing he knew not what, and finding nothing,' have returned home as great a critic and painter as so many others have done! Of Titian, Vandyke, or Correggio we shall lay nothing here, as we have said so much in another place.

A theory, then, by which these great artists could have been lost to themselves and to the art, and which explains away the two chief supports and sources of all art, *nature* and *genius*, into an unintelligible jargon of words, cannot be intrinsically true. The principles thus laid down may be very proper to conduct the machinery of a royal academy, or to precede the distribution of prizes to the students, or to be the topics of assent and congratulation among the members themselves at their annual exhibition dinner: but they are so far from being calculated to foster genius or to direct in course, that they can only blight or mislead it, wherever it exists, and 'lose more men of talent to this nation,' by the dissemination of false principles, than have been already lost to it by the want of any.

But it may be said, that though the perfection of portrait or landscape may be derived from the immediate study of nature, yet higher subjects are not to be found in it; that there we must raise our imaginations by referring to artificial models; and that Raphael was compelled to go to Michael Angelo and the antique. Not to insist that Michael Angelo himself, according to Sir Joshua's account, formed an exception to this rule, it has been well observed on this instance, that what Raphael borrowed was to conceal or supply his natural deficiencies: what he excelled in was his own. Raphael never had the grandeur of form of Michael Angelo, nor the correctness of form of the antique. His expression was perfectly different from both, and perhaps better than either, certainly better than what we have seen of Michael Angelo in the prints from him compared with those from Raphael in the Vatican. In Raphael's faces, particularly his women, the expression is superior to the form; in the antique

statues, the form is evidently the principal thing. The interest which they excite is in a manner external; it depends on a certain grace and lightness of appearance, joined with exquisite symmetry and refined susceptibility to voluptuous emotions, but there is no pathos; or if there is, it is the pathos of present and physical distress, rather than of sentiment. There is not that deep internal interest which there is in Raphael; which broods over the suggestions of the heart with love and fear till the tears seem ready to gush out, but that they are checked by the deeper sentiments of hope and faith. What has been remarked of Leonardo da Vinci, is still more true of Raphael, that there is an angelic sweetness and tenderness in his faces peculiarly adapted to his subjects, in which natural frailty and passion are purified by the sanctity of religion. They answer exactly to Milton's description of the 'human face divine.' The ancient statues are finer objects for the eye to contemplate : they represent a more perfect race of physical beings, but we have no sympathy with them. In Raphael, all our natural sensibilities are raised and refined by pointing mysteriously to the interests of another world. The same intensity of passion appears also to distinguish Raphael from Michael Angelo. Michael Angelo's forms are grander, but they are not so full of expression. Raphael's, however ordinary in themselves, are full of expression even to o'erflowing: every nerve and muscle is impregnated with feeling, or bursting with meaning. In Michael Angelo, on the contrary, the powers of body and mind appear superior to any events that can happen to them, the capacity of thought and feeling is never full, never tasked or strained to the utmost that it will bear. All is in a lofty repose and solitary grandeur which no human interests can shake or disturb. It has been said that Michael Angelo painted *man*, and Raphael *men*; that the one was an epic, the other a dramatic painter. But the distinction we have made is perhaps truer and more intelligible, *viz.* that the former gave greater dignity of form, and the latter greater force and refinement of expression. Michael Angelo borrowed his style from sculpture, which represented in general only single figures, (with subordinate accompaniments,) and had not to express the conflicting actions and passions of a multitude of persons. He is much more picturesque than Raphael. The whole figure of his Jeremiah droops and hangs down like a majestic tree surcharged with showers. His drawing of the human figure has all the characteristic freedom and boldness of Titian's landscapes.

To return to Sir Joshua. He has given one very strange proof that there is no such thing as genius, namely, that 'the degrees of excellence which proclaim genius is different in different times and places.' If Sir Joshua had aimed at a confutation of himself, he could not have done it more effectively. For what is it that makes the difference but that which originates in a man's self, *i.e.*, is first done by him, is genius, and when it is no longer original, but borrowed from former examples, it ceases to be genius, since no one can establish this claim by following the steps of others, but by going before them? The test of genius may be different, but the thing itself is the same,—a power at all times to do or to invent what has not before been done or invented. It is plain from the passage above cited what influenced Sir Joshua's mind in his views on this subject. He quarrelled with genius from being annoyed with premature pretensions to it. He was apprehensive that if genius were allowed to stand for any thing, industry would go for nothing in the minds of 'the vain, the ignorant, and the idle.' But as genius will do little without labour in an art so mechanical as painting, so labour will do still less without genius. Indeed, wherever there is true genius, there will be true labour, that is, the exertion of that genius in the field most proper for it. Sir Joshua, from his unwillingness to admit one extreme, has fallen into the other, and has mistaken the detection of an error for a demonstration of the truth. 'The human understanding,' says Luther, 'resembles a drunken clown on horseback; if you set it up on one side, it tumbles over on the other.'

III: ON THE IMITATION OF NATURE

THE imitation of nature is the great object of art. Of course, the principles by which this imitation should be regulated, form the leading topic of Sir Joshua Reynolds's lectures. It is certain that the mechanical imitation of individual objects, or the parts of individual objects, does not always produce beauty or grandeur, or, generally speaking, that *the whole of art does not consist in copying nature*. Reynolds seems hence disposed to infer, that the whole of art consists in *not* imitating individual nature. This is also an error, and an error on the worst side.

Sir Joshua's general system may be summed up in two words,— '*That the great style in painting consists in avoiding the details, and peculiarities of particular objects.*' This sweeping principle he applies almost indiscriminately to portrait, history, and landscape;—and he appears to have been led to the conclusion itself, from supposing the imitation of particulars to be inconsistent with general truth and effect. It will not be unimportant to inquire how far this opinion is a well-founded: for it appears to us, that the highest perfection of the art depends, not on the separation, but on the *union* (as far as possible) of general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy

First, it is said that the great style in painting, as it relates to the immediate imitation of external nature, consists in avoiding the details of particular objects

It consists neither in giving nor avoiding them, but in something quite different from both. Any one may avoid the details. So far, there is no difference between the Cartoons, and a common sign-painting. Greatness consists in giving the larger masses and proportions with truth;—this does not prevent giving the smaller ones too. The utmost grandeur of outline, and the broadest masses of light and shade, are perfectly compatible with the greatest minuteness and delicacy of detail, as may be seen in nature. It is not, indeed, common to see both qualities combined in the imitations of nature, any more than the combination of other excellences; nor are we here saying to which the principal attention of the artist should be directed; but we deny, that, considered in themselves, the absence of the one quality is necessary or sufficient to the production of the other.

If, for example, the form of the eye-brow is correctly given, it will be perfectly indifferent to the truth or grandeur of the design, whether it consist of one broad mark, or is composed of a number of hair lines, arranged in the same order. So, if the lights and shades are disposed in fine and large masses, the *breadth* of the picture, as it is called, cannot possibly be affected by the filling up of those masses with the details;—that is, with the subordinate distinctions which appear in nature. The anatomical details in Michael Angelo, the ever-varying outline of Raphael, the perfect execution of the Greek statues, do not assuredly destroy their symmetry or dignity of form,—and in the finest specimens of the composition of colour, we may observe the largest masses combined with the greatest variety in the parts, of which those masses are composed.

The *gross* style consists in giving no details,—*the finical* in giving nothing else. Nature contains both large and small parts,—both masses and details; and the same may be said of the most perfect works of art. The union of both kinds of excellence, of strength with delicacy, as far as the limits of human capacity and the shortness of human life would permit, is that which has established the reputation of the greatest

masters. Farther,—their most finished works are their best. The predominance, however, of either excellence in these masters, has, of course, varied according to their opinion of the relative value of these different qualities,—the labour they had the time or patience to bestow on their works,—the skill of the artist, or the nature and extent of his subject. But, if the rule here objected to,—that the careful imitation of the parts injures the effect of the whole,—be at once admitted, slovenliness would become another name for genius, and the most unfinished performance would necessarily be the best. That such has been the confused impression left on the mind by the perusal of Sir Joshua's discourses, is evident from the practice as well as the convention of many (even eminent) artists. The late Mr. Opie proceeded entirely on this principle. He left many admirable studies of portraits, particularly in what relates to the disposition and effect of light and shade. But he never finished any of the parts, thinking them beneath the attention of a great man. He went over the whole head the second day as he had done the day before, and therefore made no progress. The picture at last, having neither the lightness of a sketch, nor the accuracy of a finished work, looked coarse, laboured, and heavy.

'Would you then have an artist finish like Denner?' is the triumphant appeal which is made as decisive against all objections. To which, as it is an appeal to authority, the proper answer seems to be,—'No, but we would have him finish like Titian or Correggio.' Denner is an example of finishing not to be followed, but shunned, because *he did nothing but finish*; because he finished ill, and because he finished to excess,—for in all things there is a certain proportion of means to ends. He pored into the littlenesses of objects, till he lost sight of nature, instead of imitating it. He represents the human face, perhaps, as it might appear through a magnifying-glass, but certainly not as it ever appears to us. It is the business of painting to express objects as they appear naturally, not as they may be made to appear artificially. His flesh is as blooming and glossy as a flower or a shell. Titian's finishing, on the contrary, is equally admirable, because it is engrafted on the most profound knowledge of effect, and attention to the character of what he represents. His pictures have the exact look of nature, the very tone and texture of flesh. The endless variety of his tints is blended into the greatest simplicity. There is a proper degree both of solidity and transparency. All the parts hang together: every stroke tells, and adds to the effect of the rest.

To understand the value of any excellence, we must refer to the use which has been made of it, not to instances of its abuse. If there is a certain degree of ineffectual microscopic finishing, which we never find united with an attention to other higher and more indispensable parts of the art, we may suspect that there is something incompatible between them, and that the pursuit of the one diverts the mind from the attainment of the other. But this is the real point to stop at—where alone we should limit our theory or our efforts. Wherever different excellences have been actually united to a certain point of perfection, to that point (abstractedly speaking) we are sure that they may, and ought to be united again. There is no occasion to add the incitements of indolence, affectation, and false theory, to the other causes which contribute to the decline of art!

Sir Joshua seems, indeed, to deny that Titian finished much, and says that he produced, by two or three strokes of his pencil, effects which the most laborious copyists would in vain attempt to equal. It is true that he availed himself, in a considerable degree, of what is called *execution*, to facilitate his imitation of nature, but it was to facilitate, not to supersede it. By the methods of scumbling or glazing, he often broke the masses of his flesh,—or by laying on lumps of colour produced particular effects, to a degree that he could not otherwise have reached without

considerable loss of time. We do not object to execution : it saves labour, and shews a mastery both of hand and eye. But then there is nothing more distinct than execution and *daubing*. Indeed, it is evident, that the only use of execution is to give the details more compendiously, and sometimes, even more happily. Leave out all regard to the details, reduce the whole into crude unvarying masses, and it becomes totally useless; for these can be given just as well without execution as with it. Titian, however, made a very moderate, though a very admirable use of this power; and those who copy his pictures will find, that the simplicity is in the results, not in the details.

The other Venetian painters made too violent a use of execution, unless their subjects formed an excuse for them. Vandyke successfully employed it in giving the last finishing to the details. Rembrandt employed it still more, and with more perfect truth of effect.—Rubens employed it equally, but not so as to produce an equal resemblance of nature. His pencil ran away with his eye—To conclude our observations on this head, we will only add, that while the artist thinks that there is any thing to be done, either to the whole or to the parts of his picture, which can give it still more the look of nature, if he is willing to proceed, we would not advise him to desist—This rule is still more necessary to the young student, for he will relax in his attention as he grows older. And again, with respect to the subordinate parts of a picture, there is no danger that he will bestow a disproportionate degree of labour upon them, because he will not feel the same interest in copying them, and because a much less degree of accuracy will serve every purpose of deception;—the nicety of our habitual observations being always in proportion to our interest in the objects —Sir Joshua somewhere to the attempt to deceive by painting, and his reason is, that wax-work, which deceives most effectually, is a very disagreeable as well as contemptible art. It might be answered, first, that nothing is much more unlike nature than such figures generally are, and farther, that they only produce the appearance of prominence and relief, by having it in reality,—in which they are just the reverse of painting.

Secondly, with regard to EXPRESSION, we can hardly agree with Sir Joshua that '*the perfection of imitation consists in giving the general idea or character, not the peculiarities of individuals.*'—We do not think this rule at all well-founded with respect to portrait-painting, nor applicable to history to the extent to which Sir Joshua carries it. For the present, we shall confine ourselves to the former of these.

No doubt, if we were to chuse between the general character and the peculiarities of feature, we ought to prefer the former. But they are so far from being incompatible with, that they are not without some difficulty distinguishable from, each other. There is indeed a general look of the face, a predominant expression arising from the correspondence and connection of the different parts, which it is always of the first and last importance to give; and without which no elaboration of detached parts, or marking of the peculiarity of single features is worth any thing; but which at the same time, is certainly not destroyed, but assisted, by the careful finishing, and still more by giving the exact outline of each part.

It is on this point that the French and English schools differ, and (in my opinion) are both wrong. The English seem generally to suppose, that, if they only leave out the subordinate parts, they are sure of the general result. The French, on the contrary, as idly imagine, that by attending to each separate part, they must infallibly arrive at a correct whole,—not considering that, besides the parts, there is their relation to each other, and the general character stamped upon them by the mind itself, which to be seen must be felt,—for it is demonstrable that all expression and character are

perceived by the mind, and not by the eye only. The French painters see only lines, and precise differences,—the English only general masses, and strong effects. Hence the two nations constantly reproach one another with the difference of their styles of art; the one as dry, hard and minute, the other as gross, gothic, and unfinished; and they will probably remain for ever satisfied *with each other's defects*, which afford a very tolerable fund of consolation on either side.

There is something in the two styles, which arises, perhaps, from national countenance as well as character :—the French physiognomy is frittered away into a parcel of little moveable compartments and distinct signs of intelligence,—like a telegraphic machinery. The English countenance, on the other hand, is too apt to sink into a lumpish mass, with very few ideal, and those set in a sort of stupid stereotype.

To return to the proper business of portrait-painting. We mean to speak of it, not as a lucrative profession, nor as an indolent amusement, (for we interfere with no man's profits or pleasures), but as a *bona fide* art, the object of which is to exercise the talents of the artist, and to add to the stock of ideas in the public. And in this point of view, we should imagine that that *is* the best portrait which contains the fullest representation of individual nature.

Portrait-painting is the biography of the pencil, and he who gives most of the peculiarities and details, with most of the general character,—that is of *keeping*,—is the best biographer, and the best portrait painter. What if Boswell (the prince of biographers) had not given us the scene between Wilkes and Johnson at Dilly's table, or had not introduced the little episode of Goldsmith strutting about in his peach-coloured coat after the success of his play,—should we have had a more perfect idea of the general character of those celebrated persons from the omission of these particulars? Or if Reynolds had not painted the former as '*blinking Sam*,' or had given us such a representation of the latter as we see of some modern poets in some modern magazines, the fame of that painter would have been confined to the circles of fashion,—where they naturally look for the same selection of beauties in a portrait, as of topics in a dedication, or a copy of complimentary verses!

It has not been uncommon that portraits of this kind, which professed to admit all the peculiarities, and to heighten all the excellences of a face, have been elevated by ignorance and affectation, to the dignified rank of historical portrait. But in fact they are merely *caricature transposed*: that is, as the caricaturist makes a mouth wider than it really is, so the painter of *flattering likenesses* (as they are termed) makes it not so wide, by a process just as mechanical, and more insipid. Instead, however, of objecting captiously to common theory or practice, it will perhaps be better to state at once our own conceptions of historical portrait. It consists, then, in seizing the predominant form or expression, and preserving it with truth throughout every part. It is representing the individual under one consistent, probable, and striking view, or shewing the different features, muscles, &c. in one action, and modified by one principle. A face thus painted, is *historical*;—that is, it carries its own internal evidence of truth and nature with it; and the number of individual peculiarities, as long as they are true to nature, cannot lessen, but must add to the general strength of the impression.

To give an example or two of what we mean. We conceive that the common portrait of Oliver Cromwell would be less valuable and striking if the wart on the face were taken away. It corresponds with the general roughness and knottiness of the rest of the face;—or if considered merely as an accident, it operates as a kind of

circumstantial evidence of the genuineness of the representation. Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Dr. Johnson has altogether that sluggishness of outward appearance,—that want of quickness and versatility,—that absorption of faculty, and look of purblind reflection, which were characteristic of his mind. The accidental discomposure of his wig indicates his habits. If, with the same felicity and truth of conception, this portrait (we mean the common one reading) had been more made out, it would not have been less historical, though it would have been more like and natural.

Titian's portraits are the most historical that ever were painted; and they are so for this reason, that they have most consistency of form and expression. His portraits of Hippolito de Medici, and of a young Neapolitan nobleman in the Louvre, are a striking contrast in this respect. All the lines of the face in the one;—the eye-brows, the nose, the corners of the mouth, the contour of the face,—present the same sharp angles, the same acute, edgy, contracted expression. The other face has the finest expansion of feature and outline, and conveys the most exquisite idea possible of mild, thoughtful sentiment. The harmony of the expression constitutes as great a charm in Titian's portraits, as that of colour. The similarity sometimes objected to them, is partly national, and partly arises from the class of persons whom he painted. He painted only Italians; and in his time none but persons of the highest rank, senators or cardinals, sat for their pictures.

Sir Joshua appears to have been led into several errors by a false use of the terms *general* and *particular*. Nothing can be more different than the various application of both these terms to different things, and yet Sir Joshua constantly uses and reasons upon them as invariable. There are three senses of the expression *general character*, as applied to ideas or objects. In the first, it signifies the general appearance or aggregate impression of the whole object, as opposed to the mere detail of detached parts. In the second, it signifies the class, or what a number of such objects have in common with one another, to the exclusion of their characteristic differences. In this sense it is tantamount to *abstract*. In the third, it signifies what is usual or common, in opposition to mere singularity, or accidental exceptions to the ordinary course of nature. The general idea or character of a particular face, *i.e.* the aggregate impression resulting from all the parts combined, is surely very different from the abstract idea, or what it has in common with several others. If on giving the former all character depends; to give nothing but the latter is to take away all character. The more a painter *comprehends* of what he sees, the more valuable his work will be: but it is not true that his excellence will be the greater, the more he *abstracts* from what he sees.

—There is an essential distinction which Sir Joshua has not observed. The details and peculiarities of nature are only inconsistent with abstract ideas, and not with general or aggregate effects. By confounding the two things, Sir Joshua excludes the peculiarities and details not only from his historical composition, but from an enlarged view and comprehensive imitation of individual nature.

We have here attempted to give some account of what should be meant by the *ideal* in portrait-painting: in our next and concluding article on this subject, we shall attempt an explanation of this term, as it applies to historical painting.

The great works of art at present extant, and which may be regarded as models of perfection in their several kinds, are the Greek statues—the pictures of the celebrated Italian masters—those of the Dutch and Flemish schools—to which we may add the comic productions of our own countryman, Hogarth. These all stand unrivalled in the history of art; and they owe their pre-eminence and perfection to one and the

same principle—*the immediate imitation of nature*. This principle predominated equally in the classical forms of the antique, and in the grotesque figures of Hogarth: the perfection of art in each arose from the truth and identity of the imitation with the reality; the difference was in the subjects—there was none in the mode of imitation. Yet the advocates for the *ideal system of art* would persuade their disciples that the difference between Hogarth and the antique does not consist in the different forms of nature which they imitated, but in this, that the one is like, and the other unlike, nature. This is an error.

What has given rise to the common notion of the *ideal*, as something quite distinct from *actual* nature, is probably the perfection of the Greek statues. Not seeing among ourselves anything to correspond in beauty and grandeur, either with the feature or form of the limbs in those exquisite remains of antiquity, it was an obvious, but a superficial conclusion that they must have been created from the idea existing in the artist's mind, and could not have been copied from anything existing in nature. The contrary, however, is the fact. The general form of both the face and figure, which we observe in the old statues, is not an ideal abstraction, is not a fanciful invention of the sculptor, but is as completely local and national (though it happens to be more beautiful) as the figures on a Chinese screen, or a copper-plate engraving of a Negro chieftain in a book of travels. It will not be denied that there is a difference of physiognomy as well as of complexion in the different races of men. The Greek form appears to have been naturally beautiful, and they had, besides, every advantage of climate, of dress, of exercise, and modes of life to improve it.

In general, then, I would be understood to maintain that the beauty and grandeur so much admired in the Greek statues were not a voluntary fiction of the brain of the artist, but existed substantially in the forms from which they were copied, and by which the artist was surrounded. A striking authority in support of these observations, which has in some measure been lately discovered, is to be found in the *Elgin Marbles*, taken from the Acropolis at Athens, and supposed to be the works of the celebrated Phidias. The process of fastidious refinement and indefinite abstraction is certainly NOT VISIBLE THERE. The figures have all the ease, the simplicity, and variety, of individual nature. Even the details of the subordinate parts, the loose hanging folds in the skin, the veins under the belly or on the sides of the horses, more or less swelled as the animal is more or less in action, are given with scrupulous exactness. This is true nature and true art. In a word, these invaluable remains or antiquity are precisely like casts taken from life. The *ideal* is not the preference of that which exists only in the mind to that which exists in nature; but the preference of that which is fine in nature to that which is less so. There is nothing fine in art but what is taken almost immediately, and, as it were, in the mass, from what is finer in nature. Where there have been the finest models in nature, there have been the finest works of art.

As the Greek statues were copied from Greek forms, so Raphael's expressions were taken from Italian faces, and I have heard it remarked that the women in the streets of Rome seem to have walked out of his pictures in the Vatican.

Sir Joshua Reynolds constantly refers to Raphael as the highest example in modern times (at least with one exception) of the grand or ideal style; and yet he makes the essence of that style to consist in the embodying of an abstract or general idea, formed in the mind of the artist by rejecting the peculiarities of individuals, and retaining only what is common to the species. Nothing can be more inconsistent than the style of Raphael with this definition. In his Cartoons, and in his groups in the Vatican, there is hardly a face or figure which is any thing more than fine individual nature finely disposed and copied.

There is more an appearance of abstract grandeur of form in Michael Angelo. He has followed up, has enforced, and expanded, as it were, a preconceived idea, till he sometimes seems to tread on the verge of caricature. His forms, however, are not *middle*, but *extreme* forms, massy, gigantic, supernatural. They convey the idea of the greatest size in the figure, and in all the parts of the figure. Every muscle is swollen and turgid. This tendency to exaggeration would have been avoided if Michael Angelo had recurred more constantly to nature, and had proceeded less on a scientific knowledge of the structure of the human body; for science gives only the positive form of the different parts, which the imagination may afterwards magnify as it pleases, but it is nature alone which combines them with perfect truth and delicacy, in all the varieties of motion and expression. It is fortunate that I can refer, in illustration of my doctrine, to the admirable fragment of the Theseus at Lord Elgin's, which shows the possibility of uniting the grand and natural style in the highest degree. The form of the limbs; as affected by pressure or action, and the general sway of the body, are preserved with the most consummate mastery. I should prefer this statue, as a model for forming the style of the student, to the Apollo, which strikes me as having something of a theatrical appearance; or to the Hercules, in which there is an ostentatious and overlaid display of anatomy. This last figure, indeed, is so overloaded with sinews, that it has been suggested as a doubt, whether, if life could be put into it, it would be able to move.

[Reynolds] lays it down, as a general and invariable rule, that "*the great style in art, and the most PERFECT IMITATION OF NATURE, consists in avoiding the details and*

peculiarities of particular objects." This sweeping principle he applies almost indiscriminately to *portrait, history, and landscape*; and he appears to have been led to the conclusion itself from supposing the imitation of particulars to be inconsistent with general rule and effect. It appears to me that the highest perfection of the art depends, not on separating, but on uniting general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy...

It might be shown, if there were room in this place, that Sir Joshua has constructed his theory of the ideal in art upon the same mistaken principle of the negation or abstraction of a *particular nature*. The *ideal* is not a negative, but a positive thing. The leaving out the details or peculiarities of an individual face does not make it one jot more ideal. To paint history is to paint nature as answering to a general, predominant, or pre-conceived idea in the mind, of strength, beauty, action, passion, thought, etc.; but the way to do this is not to leave out the details, but to incorporate the general idea with the details: that is, to show the same expression actuating and modifying every movement of the muscles, and the same character preserved consistently through every part of the body. Grandeur does not consist in omitting the parts, but in connecting all the parts into a whole, and in giving their combined and varied action; abstract truth, or ideal perfection does not consist in rejecting the peculiarities of form, but in rejecting all those which are not consistent with the character intended to be given, and in following up the same *general idea* of softness, voluptuousness, strength, activity, or any combination of these, through every ramification of the frame.

But these modifications of form or expression can only be learnt from nature, and therefore the perfection of art must always be sought in nature.

IV: ON THE IDEAL.

THE CHAMPION. JANUARY 8, 1815.

'FOR I would by no means be thought to comprehend those writers of surprising genius, the authors of immense romances, or the modern novel and Atalantis writers, who, without any assistance from nature or history, record persons who never were, or will be, and facts which never did, nor possibly can happen: whose heroes are of their own creation, and their brains the chaos whence all their materials are collected. Not that such writers deserve no honour; so far from it, that perhaps they merit the highest. One may apply to them what Balzac says of Aristotle, that they are *a second nature*; for they have no communication with the first, by which authors of an inferior class, who cannot stand alone, are obliged to support themselves, as with crutches.'—Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, vol. ii.

What is here said of certain writers of romance, would apply equally to a great number of painters of history. These persons, not without the sanction of high authority, have come to the conclusion that they had only to quit the vulgar path of truth and reality, in order that they 'might ascend the brightest heaven of invention,'—and that to get rid of nature was all that was necessary to the loftiest flights of art, as the soul disentangled from the load of matter soars to its native skies. But this is by no means the truth. All art is built upon nature; and the tree of knowledge lifts its branches to the clouds, only as it has struck its roots deep into the earth. He is the greatest artist, not who leaves the materials of nature behind him, but who carries them with him into his world of invention;—and the larger and more entire the masses in which he is able to apply them to his purpose, the stronger and more durable will his productions be. Sir Joshua Reynolds admits that the knowledge of the individual forms and various combinations of nature, is necessary to the student, but it is only in order that he may *avoid* them, and steering clear of all representation of things as they actually exist, wander up and down in the empty void of his own imagination, having nothing better to cling to, than certain shadowy middle forms, made up of an abstraction of all others, and containing nothing in

themselves. Stripping nature of substance and accident, he is to exhibit a decomposed, disembodied, vague, ideal nature in her stead, seen through the misty veil of metaphysics, and covered with the same fog and haze of confusion, while

‘Obscurity her curtain round him draws,
And siren sloth a dull quietus sings.’

The concrete, and not the abstract, is the object of painting, and of all the works of imagination. History-painting is *imaginary* portrait-painting. The portrait-painter gives you an individual, such as he is in himself, and vouches for the truth of the likeness as a matter of fact: the historical painter gives you the individual such as he is likely to be,—that is, approaches as near to the reality as his imagination will enable him to do, leaving out such particulars as are inconsistent with the pre-conceived idea,—as are merely trifling and accidental,—and retaining all such as are striking, probable, and consistent. Because the historical painter has not the same immediate data to go upon, but must connect individual nature with an imaginary subject, is that any reason why he should discard individual nature altogether, and thus leave nothing for his imagination, or the imagination of the spectator to work upon? Portrait and history differ as a narration of facts or a probable fiction differ, but abstraction is the essence of neither. That is not the finest historical head which has least the look of nature, but which has most the look of nature, if it has the look of history also. But it has the look of nature, *i.e.* of striking and probable nature,—as it has a marked and decided character, and not a character of indifference: and as the features and expression are consistent with themselves, not as they are common to others. The ideal is that which answers to the idea of something, and not to the idea of any thing, or of nothing. Any countenance strikes most upon the imagination, either in picture or in reality, which has the most distinctness from others, and most identity with itself. The keeping in the character, not the want of the character, is the essence of history. Without some such limitation as we have here given, on the general statement of Sir Joshua, we see no resting-place where the painter or the poet is to make his stand, so as not to be pushed to the utmost verge of naked commonplace inanity,—nor do we understand how there should be any such thing as poetry or painting tolerated. A *tabula rasa*, a verbal definition, the bare name, must be better than the most striking description or representation;—the argument of a poem better than the poem itself,—or the catalogue of a picture than the original work. Where shall we stop in the easy down-hill pass of effeminate, unmeaning insipidity? There is one circumstance, to be sure, to recommend the system here objected to, that is, that he who proposes this ideal perfection to himself, can hardly fail to succeed in it. An artist who paints on the infallible principle of not imitating nature, in representing the meeting of Telemachus and Calypso, will not find it difficult to confound all difference of sex or passion, and in portraying the form of Mentor, will leave out every distinctive mark of age or wisdom. In representing a Grecian marriage he will refine on his favourite principles till it will be possible to transpose the features of the bridegroom and bride without the least violation of propriety; all the women will be like the men; and all like one another, all equally young, blooming, smiling, elegant, and insipid. On Sir Joshua's theory of the *beau ideal*, Mr. Westall's pictures are perhaps the best that ever were painted, and on any other theory, the worst; for they exhibit an absolute negation of all expression, character, and discrimination of form and colour.

We shall endeavour to explain our doctrine by some examples which appear to us either directly subversive of, or not very obviously included in Sir J. Reynolds's theory of history painting, or of the principles of art in general. Is there any one who can possibly doubt that Hogarth's pictures are perfectly and essentially

historical?—or that they convey a story perfectly intelligibly, with faces and expressions which every one must recognise? They have evidently a common or general character, but that general character is defined and modified by individual peculiarities, which certainly do not take away from the illusion or the effect any more than they would in nature. There is, in the polling for votes, a fat and a lean lawyer, yet both of them are lawyers, and lawyers busy at an election squabble. It is the same with the voters, who are of all descriptions, the lame, the blind, and the halt, yet who all convey the very feeling which the scene inspires, with the greatest variety and the greatest consistency of expression. The character of *Mr. Abraham Adams* by Fielding, is somewhat particular, and even singular: yet it is not less intelligible or striking on that account; and his lawyer and his landlady, though copied from individuals in real life, had yet, as he himself observes, existed four thousand years, and would continue to make a figure in the world as long as certain passions were found united with certain situations, and operating on certain dispositions.

It will, we suppose, be objected that this, though history and invention, is not high history, or poetical invention. We would answer then at once by appealing to Shakespeare. It will be allowed that his characters are poetical as well as natural; yet the individual portrait is almost as striking as the general expression of nature and passion. It is this and this only which distinguishes him from the French school. Dr. Johnson, proceeding on the same theoretical principles as his friend Sir Joshua, affirms, that the excellence of Shakespeare's characters consists in their generality. We grant in one sense it does; but we will add that it consists in their particularity also. Are the admirable descriptions of the kings of Thrace and Inde in Chaucer's; Knight's Tale, less poetical or historical, or ideal, because they are distinguished by traits as characteristic as they are striking;—in their lineaments, their persons, their armour, other attributes, the one black and broad, the other tall, and fair, and freckled, with yellow crisped locks that glittered as the sun. The four white bulls, and the lions which accompany them are equally fine, but they are not fine because they present no distinct image to the mind. The effect of this is somehow lost in Dryden's Palamon and Arcite, and the poetry is lost with it.

Much more is it necessary to combine individuality with the highest works of art in painting, 'whose end and use both at the first, now is, and was, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.' The painter gives the degree and peculiarity of expression where words in a manner leave off, and if he docs not go beyond mere abstraction, he does nothing. The cartoons of Raphael, and his pictures in the Vatican, are sufficiently historical, yet there is hardly a face or figure in any of them which is any thing more than fine and individual nature finely disposed. The late Mr. Barry, who could not be suspected of a prejudice on this side of the question, speaks thus of them,—'In Raphael's pictures (at the Vatican) of the Dispute of the Sacrament and the School of Athens, one sees all the heads to be entirely copied from particular characters in nature, nearly proper for the persons and situation which he adapts them to; and he seems to me only to add and take away what may answer his purpose in little parts, features, &c.: conceiving, while he had the head before him, ideal characters and expressions, which he adapts these features and peculiarities of face to. This attention to the particulars which distinguish all the different faces, persons and characters, the one from the other, gives his pictures quite the verity and unaffected dignity of nature, which stamp the distinguishing differences betwixt one man's face and body and another's."

If any thing is wanting to the conclusiveness of this testimony, it is only to look at the pictures themselves, particularly the Miracle of the Conversion, and the Assembly of Saints, which are little else than a collection of divine portraits, in

natural and expressive attitudes,—full of the loftiest thought and feeling, and as varied as they are fine. It is this reliance on the power of nature, which has produced those masterpieces by the prince of painters, in which expression is all in all,—where one spirit—that of truth—pervades every part, bringi down heaven to earth, mingles cardinals and popes with angels and apostles, and yet blends and harmonises the whole by the true touches and intense feeling of what is beautiful and grand in nature. It is no wonder that Sir Joshua, when he first saw Raphael's pictures in the Vatican, was at a loss to discover any great excellence in them, if he was looknig out for his theory of the ideal, of neutral character and middle forms.

Another authority, which has been in some measure discovered since the publication of Sir Joshua's Discourses, is to be found in the Elgin Marbles, taken from the Acropolis, and supposed to be the works of the celebrated Phidias. The process of fastitious refinement, and flimsy abstraction, is certainly not visible there. The figures have all the ease, the simplicity, and variety of nature, and look more like living men turned to stone than any thing else. Even the details of the subordinate parts, the loose folds in the skin, the veins under the belly or on the sides of the horses, more or less swelled as the animal is more or less in action, are given with scrupulous exactness. This is true nature, and true history. In a word, we can illustrate our position here better than we could with respect to painting, by saying that these invaluable remains of antiquity are precisely like casts taken from nature.— Michael Angelo and the antique may still be cited against us, and we wish to speak on this subject with great diffidence. We confess, they appear to us much more artificial than the others, but we do not think that this is their excellence. For instance, it strikes us that there is something theatrical in the air of the *Apollo*, and in the *Hercules* an ostentatious and over-laboured display of the knowledge of the muscles. Perhaps the fragment of the *Theseus* at Lord Elgin's has; more grandeur as well as more nature than either of them. The form of the limbs, as affected by pressure or action, and the general sway of the body, are better preserved in it. The several parts in the later Greek statues are more balanced, made more to tally like modern periods; each muscle is more equally brought out, and highly finished, and is so far better in itself, but worse as a part of a whole. If these wonderful productions have a fault, it is the want of simplicity, of a due subordination of parts, which sometimes gives them more a look of perfect lay-figures put into attitudes, than of real imitations of nature. The same objection may be urged against the work of Michael Angelo, and is indeed the necessary consequence either of selecting from a number of different models, or of proceeding on a scientific knowledge of the structure of the different parts; for the physical form is something given and defined, but motion is various and infinite. The superior symmetry of form, common to the ancient statues, we have no hesitation in attributing to the superior symmetry of the models in nature, and to the superior opportunity for studying them.

In general, we would be understood to mean, that the ideal is not a voluntary fiction of the brain, a fanciful piece of patch-work, a compromise between the defects of nature, or an artificial balance struck between innumerable deformities, (as if we could form a perfect idea of beauty though we never had seen any such thing,) but a preference of what is fine in nature to what is *less so*. There is nothing fine in art but what is taken almost immediately and entirely from what is finer in nature. Where there have been the finest models in nature, there have also been the finest works of art. The Greek statues were copied from Greek forms. Their portraits of individuals were often superior to their personifications of their gods; the head of the *Antinous*, for example, to that of the *Apollo*. Raphael's expressions were taken from Italian faces; and we have heard it observed, that the women in the streets of Rome seem to have walked out of his pictures in the Vatican.

If we are asked, then, what it is that constitutes historic expression or ideal beauty, we should answer, not (with Sir Joshua) abstract expression or middle forms, but consistency of expression in the one, and symmetry of form in the other.

A face is historical, which is made up of consistent parts, let those parts be ever so peculiar or uncommon. Those details or peculiarities only are inadmissible in history, which do not arise out of any principle, or tend to any conclusion,—which are merely casual, insignificant, and unconnected,—which do not *tell*; that is, which either do not add to, or which contradict the general result,—which are not integrant parts of one whole, however strange or irregular that whole may be. That history does not require or consist in the middle form of central features is proved by this, that the antique heads of fauns and satyrs, of *Pan* or *Silenus*, are perfectly grotesque and singular; yet are all undoubtedly historical, as the Apollo or the Venus, because they have the same predominant, intelligible, characteristic expression throughout. *Socrates* is a person whom we recognise quite as familiar, from our general acquaintance with human nature, as *Alcibiades*¹. The simplicity or the fewness of the parts of a head facilitates this effect, but is not necessary to it. The head of a negro, a mulatto, &c., introduced into a picture is always historical, because it is always distinct from the rest, and uniform with itself. The face covered with a beard is historical for the same reason, because it presents distinct and uniform masses. Again, a face, not so in itself, becomes historical by the mere force of passion. The same strong passion moulds the features into the same emphatic expression, by giving to the mouth, the eyes, the forehead, &c., the same expansion or contraction, the same voluptuous movement or painful constraint. All intellectual and impassioned faces are historical;—the heads of philosophers, poets, lovers, and madmen. Passion sometimes produces beauty by this means, and there is a beauty of form, the effect entirely of expression; as a smiling mouth, not beautiful in common, becomes so by being put into that action.

Sir Joshua was probably led to his opinions on art in general by his theory of beauty, which he makes to consist in a certain central form, the medium of all others. In the first place, this theory is questionable in itself: or if it were not so, it does not include many other things of much more importance in historical painting (though perhaps not so in sculpture²) namely, character, which necessarily implies individuality; expression, which is the excess of thought or feeling, strength or grandeur of form, which is excess also.—There seems, however, to be a certain symmetry of form, as there is a certain harmony of sounds or colours, which gives pleasure, and produces beauty, independently of custom. Custom is undoubtedly one source or condition of beauty, but it appears to be rather its limit than its essence; that is, there are certain given forms and proportions established by nature in the structure of each thing, and sanctioned by custom, without which there can only be distortion and incongruity, but which alone do not produce beauty. One kind *is* more beautiful than another; and the objects of the same kind are not beautiful merely as we are used to them. The rose or lily is more beautiful than the daisy, the swan than the crow, the greyhound than the beagle, the deer than the wild goat; and we invariably prefer the Greek to the African face, though our own inclines more to the latter. We admire the broad forehead, the straight nose, the small mouth, the oval chin. Regular features are those which record and assimilate

¹ The pictures of Rubens at Blenheim are another proof of this, and certainly finer than the Luxembourg gallery.

² Michael Angelo took his ideas of painting from sculpture, and Sir Joshua from Michael Angelo

most to one another. The Greek face is made up of smooth flowing lines, and correspondent features; the African face of sharp angles and projections. A row of pillars is beautiful for the same reason. We confess, on this subject of beauty, we are half-disposed to fall into the mysticism of Raphael Mengs, who had some notion about a principle of *universal harmony*, if we did not dread the censure of an eminent critic.