

# Studies in the History of the *Renaissance*

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# I. Walter Pater



- 1839. 08. 04. ~ 1894. 07. 30,
- An English critic·essayist·humanist
- Advocacy of “Art for art’s sake”
- Interested in early classic studies
- Aestheticism, autonomy of art
- Prominent works : Marius the Epicurean (1885), Imaginary Portraits (1887)  
Appreciations (1889), Plato and Platonism (1893)

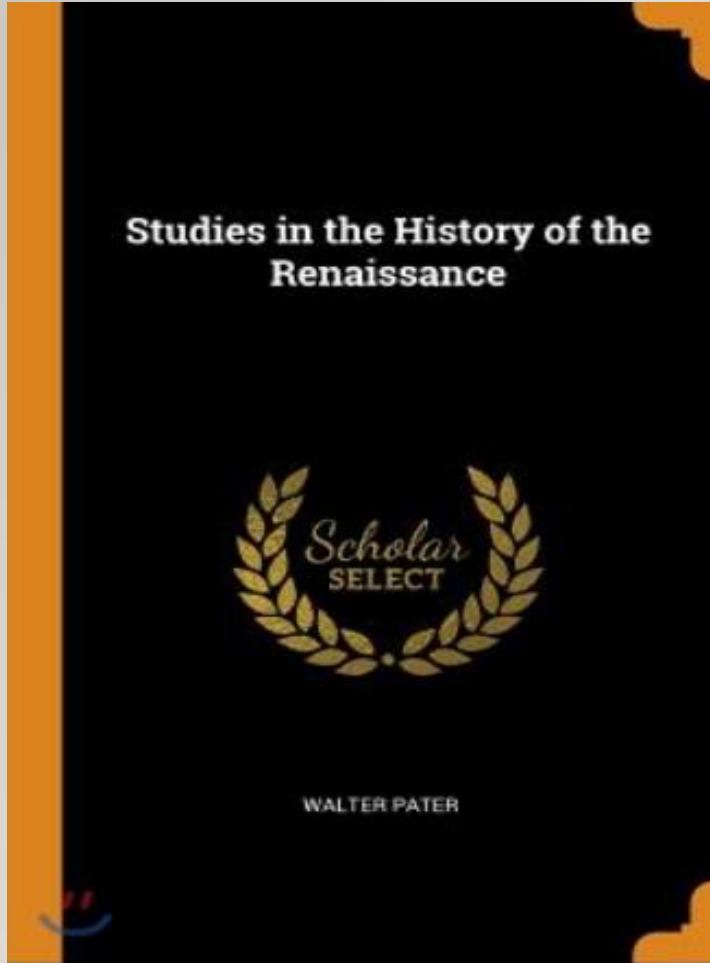
# Walter Pater in The Norton Anthology



- Epicurean gospel
- A highly wrought prose style
- Impressionistic criticism
- “Absolutely modern” – Oscar Wilde
- “Life passes quickly and our only responsibility is to enjoy fully ‘this short day of frost and sun’.”
- “Seeking always the right word”,  
“Special unique impression of pleasure”



## II. Studies in the History of the Renaissance



### i. Brief Introduction

- Published into various editions between 1867 and 1877
- Made up of eight essays
- Criticize authors and poets in the Renaissance based on his concept of art
- Link the Renaissance with different eras (antique, Middle Age, Romanticism)
- Significance of beauty in all art forms and life experiences
- Controversial conclusion

## ii. Preface

### *From Studies in the History of the Renaissance*

#### *Preface*

Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.

"To see the object as in itself it really is,"<sup>1</sup> has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for one's self, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

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- 미(美)를 추상적, 가장 보편적인 용어·공식으로 표현하려는 시도
  - 문학 작품을 향유하고, 탁월함을 구분하며, 미(美)·탁월성·예술 등의 용어의 확장된 의미를 활용하는 데에 거의 도움을 주지 못한다.
- **미(美)의 상대성**
- 진정한 미학을 배우는 사람의 목적 : ① 추상적으로 미(美)를 정의 < 가능한 '구체적' 용어로 미(美)를 정의
  - ② 보편적인 공식의 발견 < 가장 '적절히' 표현하는 공식의 발견



by Matthew Arnold

‘To see the object as in itself it really is’ has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one’s object as it really is, is to know one’s own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals, music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life, are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces; they possess, like natural elements, **so many virtues or qualities**. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for oneself or not at all. And he who **experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the analysis and discrimination of them**, need not trouble himself with **the abstract question** what beauty is in itself, or its exact relation to truth or experience,—**metaphysical questions**, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

- ‘To see the object as in itself it really is’ : Pater가 말하는 미학적 비평의 기반
- 미학적 비평이 다루는 문학 작품에는 수많은 **미덕과 우수함**이 내재
  - ▷ music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life
- 추상적·형이상학적 질문 ≠ 미학적 비평가의 관심사



The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces, **producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind**. This influence he feels and wishes to **explain, analyzing it, and reducing it to its elements**. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, La Gioconda, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandula, are valuable for their virtues, as we say in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of **affecting one with a special, unique impression of pleasure**. Education grows in proportion as one's susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the aesthetic critic is **to distinguish, analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue** by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces **this special impression of beauty or pleasure**, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has **disengaged that virtue, and noted it**, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a **recent critic** of Sainte-Beuve: *'De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanists accomplis.'* (= To confine themselves to knowing beautiful things, and to sustain themselves by these) → “아름다움을 가까이 하고 지속적으로 경험하는 것”

- 미학적 비평의 목표 : 작품에 내재한 **즐거운 감정**을 설명·분석·요소로 분해  
→ virtues를 **구분하고 분석하며 부속물로부터 분리**
- Virtues : 기쁨의 특별하고 고유한 인상을 주는 것
- **Recent critic** : 예술적 비평가로서의 목표를 달성한 자

What is important, then, is **not** that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, **but** a certain kind of **temperament**, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that **beauty exists in many forms**. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always, In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? Who was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation, its taste? ‘**The ages are all equal,**’ says **William Blake**, ‘**but genius is always above its age.**’

영국의 문학가

(e.g. La Gioconda)

- 예술적 비평가가 갖추어야 할 자질 : abstract definition of beauty < **temperament** (아름다운 존재에 깊이 감명 받는 힘)
- 아름다움은 다양한 형태로 존재
  - 개인적 경험·인상의 중요성

Often it will require great nicety to **disengage this virtue from the commoner elements** with which it may be found in combination. **Few** 독일의 문학가·철학자 artists, not **Goethe** or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all debris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take for instance the writings of **Wordsworth**. 영국의 시인 The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallized a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the Stanzas on **'Resolution and Independence'** Wordsworth의 작품 and the Ode on the **'Recollections of Childhood,'** Wordsworth의 작품 sometimes, as if at random, turning **a fine crystal** ≡ virtue here and there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transform, we trace the action of **his unique incommunicable faculty, that strange mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature**, drawing strength and colour and character from local influences, from the hills and streams and natural sights and sounds. Well! **that is the virtue**, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is **to trace that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.**

- Virtue·qualities만을 담은 작품을 지어 내는 예술가는 드물
- Virtue : William Wordsworth 작품의 능동적 원칙

→ 비평가는 **그 원칙을 추적 및 세분화하여 그의 작품을 관통하는 virtue를 포착**



The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of **the Renaissance**, and touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote only that **revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century** 본래 'Renaissance'가 의도한 의미 which was but one of many results of a **general stimulus and enlightening of the human mind**, and of which the great aim and achievements of what, as **Christian art** 그리스도교 예술, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. This **outbreak of the human spirit** may be traced far into the **middle age** itself, with **its qualities already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination**. I have taken = Middle Age as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the middle age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, a little composition in early **French**; **not because** it is the best possible expression of them, **but because** it helps the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance ends also in France, in French poetry, in a phase of which the writings of **Joachim du Bellay** 조아생 뒤 벨레, 프랑스의 시인 are in many ways the most perfect illustration; the Renaissance thus putting forth in France an aftermath, **a wonderful later growth**, the products of which have to the full the **subtle and delicate sweetness** which belong to a **refined and comely decadence**; just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of asceticism 금욕, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.

- 르네상스 언급 이유: Pater가 생각하는 중요한 점을 다루고 있기 때문
- **중세 시대** - outbreak of the human spirit (우수함의 명확한 표명, 육체적 아름다움, 신체 숭배, 종교의 한계 극복)
  - **르네상스** 시대의 인간 정신에 대한 계몽에 영향

But it is in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies, in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

- 15세기 이탈리아 르네상스의 관심사 : ㉠ 지성과 상상의 긍정적 결과  
(unity of spirit)
  - ㉡ 구체적인 예술 작품
  - ㉢ 특별하고 중요한 개성
  - ㉣ 보편적인 정신·특징
  - ㉤ 온전한 윤리적 우수성

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting points and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a **common character and unconsciously illustrate each other**; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in **intellectual isolation**. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the open places of the world, are each of them **confined to its own circle of ideas**, and those who prosecute either of them are generally **little curious of the thoughts of others**. There come **however** from time to time eras of more **favourable conditions**, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The **fifteenth century in Italy** is one of these happier eras; and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo—it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralized, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but **breathe a common air and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts**. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. It is the **unity of this spirit** which gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance, and it is to this **intimate alliance with mind**, this **participation in the best thoughts which that age produced**, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

페리클레스, 고대 아테네의 정치가

- 사람마다 각자의 영역에서 머물던 감상 → 사실은 고립적인 것이 아님(인지하지는 X) → 'unity of spirit'이 'unity of products of the Renaissance'에 영향
- **More favourable conditions** : 서로의 생각이 유사해지고, 다양한 관심사·주관이 일정한 지점으로 다소 수렴  
 (⇒ **intellectual isolation**)      구성원끼리 소통하며 서로의 의견을 참고  
 → **'unity of this spirit'** (intimate alliance with mind, participation in the best thoughts)



독일의 미술 고고학자

I have added an essay on **Winckelmann**, as not incongruous with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs **in spirit to an earlier age**. By his **enthusiasm** for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his **Hellenism**, his life-long struggle to attain to the **Greek spirit**, he is in sympathy with the humanists of an earlier century. He is the **last fruit of the Renaissance** and **explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies**.

▪ **Winckelmann** - 헬레니즘 사상, 그리스 정신

→ 18세기의 인물이지만 이전 시대의 정신·사상

→ 르네상스의 마지막 성과, 르네상스의 동기·경향을 설명

### iii. LA GIOCONDA

[“LA GIOCONDA”]<sup>1</sup>

“La Gioconda” is, in the truest sense, Leonardo’s masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the “Melancholia” of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least. As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio,<sup>2</sup> faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo’s work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams, and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo’s brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo’s house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes<sup>3</sup> and flute-players, that subtle expression was projected on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labor never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all “the ends of the world are come,”<sup>4</sup> and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its melodies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Age

LA GICONDA



## Pater's assessment

- Subdued and graceful mystery
- The unfathomable smile → something sinister in it
- His ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last
- “The ends of the world are come”
- All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there
- She is older than the rocks among which she sits, like a vampire  
“The ages are all equal, but genius is always above its age.” – William Blake
- Embodiment of the old fancy & Symbol of the modern idea



# iv. Conclusion

## Conclusion<sup>7</sup>

Λέγει πον Ἡράκλειτος ὅτι πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει<sup>8</sup>

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibers, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn.<sup>9</sup> Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or, if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye, the gradual fading of colour from the wall—movements of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed,

5. A powerful Italian family during the Renaissance, notorious for scandalous conduct.

6. Helen's father was Zeus (who approached Leda in the form of a swan).

7. This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some

slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning. I have dealt more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* with the thoughts suggested by it [Pater's note to the 3rd edition, 1888].

8. Heraclitus says, "All things give way; nothing remaineth" [Pater's translation]. The Greek philosopher was active ca. 500 B.C.E.

9. Grain.

Λέγει πο υ Ἡράκλε ιτ ος ὅτι πάντ α χωρε ῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει . ✓

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✓ Heraclitus, “All things give way; nothing remaineth.” (Pater’s translation)

- 고대 철학자들의 책을 많이 읽은 Pater ⇒ 유물론적 사고방식을 갖게 됨.
- 고대 그리스 철학자 / 유물론자 헤라클레이토스 “같은 강물에 두 번 들어갈 수 없다”
- **유물론**: 만물은 고정되지 않고, 계속해서 바뀜. 새로운 무엇이 되었다가 용해 되어 다시 새로운 조합으로 변화함.  
세界的 본원은 물질이므로 죽음은 불가피함.
- Pater → 따라서 죽기 전에 주어진 유희기간동안 잘 살아야 하는데, 의미 있게 산다는 것은 곧 ‘미학의 추구’



... At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. ✓ But when reflection begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force is suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. ... the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. ... To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

- 유물론(헤라클레이토스)의 내용이 계속해서 기반을 이룸.
- ✓ Pater가 주장하는, impression이 중요한 이유가 잘 드러남.
- 헤라클레이토스의 주장 → Reflection을 통해 현실이 인상으로 해체될 때, 다시 합쳐지려는 힘은 약해짐.  
⇒ ‘Analysis leaves off,’로 이어짐.
- 지속적으로 변화가 일어나는 세상에서 최대한 많은 경험(=impression)을 해야 함을 주장
- 경험은 각자만의, 각자의 dream of a world에서 일어나는 것

To philosophize is to cast off inertia, to make oneself alive.

*Philosophiren*, says Novalis, *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren*. The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; **some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest**; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us—**for that moment only**. **Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end**. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we **pass** most swiftly from point to point, and **be** present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

- 매 순간 어떤 형태가 완벽히 묘사되기도 하고, 어떤 순간에는 언덕이나 바다 등의 느낌에 더 끌릴 때가 있음.
- 경험으로 얻는 산물 (fruit)보다, **경험 그 자체가 목표**  
= 대상을 통해 논리/definite한 것을 얻는 것보다 **인상을 얻는 것이 중요함**.
- 예술은 예술 **고유의 미**를 위해 존재하고 (예술을 위해 존재하는 예술), 도덕적 기준이나 실용주의적 관점은 예술의 의의가 될 수 없다고 주장



To burn always with this hard **gem-like flame**, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that **our failure is to form habits**; for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. ✓ **While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion**, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. **Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us**, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, **is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening**. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, **we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch**. What we have to do is **to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions**, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte or of Hegel, or of our own. Philosophical theories of ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

- 당시 빅토리아 시대(특히 중산층)의 삶의 가치: 종교적 믿음, 도덕성, 사회적 위치, 사업 경쟁 등(유보된 형식과 억압된 쾌락)
- **But, Pater가 주장한 삶의 가치 → gem-like flame, passion**
- 실패는 바로 습관이다 → 고정관념(stereotype)을 가지는 것은 문제이다 [↔ 다양한 경험과 인상]
- ✓ (유물론)모든 게 '녹아서' cohesive force가 저지된 순간 → 이때 열정을 잡아야 함.
- 주변의 열정적 태도(감상)를 알아보지 못하는 것 = '짧은 하루에서 밤이 되기도 전에 잠드는 것'  
⇒ 그만큼 짧은 인생을 제대로 살지 않는 것이므로, 열정적으로 호기심을 가지며 새로운 감상을 해야 함.

French political theorist and philosopher

One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had always clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of \*Voltaire. Well! we are all *condamnés*, as \*\*Victor Hugo says: **we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve** – *les hommes sont tous condamnés a morte avec des sursis indéfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among “the children of this world,” in art and song. **For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time.** Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. **Only be sure it is passion** – that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake has most. **For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments** as they pass, and simply for those moments’ sake.

- 우리는 모두 사형 선고 아래 있지만, 동시에 무기한 유예상태임.  
⇒ 주어진 시간 안에 최대한 많고 다양한 경험을 하고, 인상을 받아야 함.
- 정해진 시간 내에서 **더 많은 경험**을 하여 상대적으로 그 기간을 늘리는 것
- **열정(passion)**만이 우리에게 황홀, 사랑의 슬픔, 풍부한 인식 등을 더해줄 수 있음. ⇒ 중요성 역설

\* Pen name of the French author and philosopher Francois-Marie Arouet  
\*\* French poet, writer

cf. The Bishop of Oxford specifically preached against the book’s ‘neo-pagan’ character. Fearing ‘it might possibly mislead some of the young men into whose hands it might fall’, **Pater removed the most controversial section, the Conclusion**, in time for the 1877 edition.

# Discussion questions

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1. Although Pater seems to favor the concrete over the metaphysical, he still regards an introspective attitude as "the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is." Is Pater trying to abandon metaphysical analysis of art, or reconcile it with his own emphasis on emotional evaluation?
2. What reason might Pater have had to focus on artists from the Italian Renaissance rather than those from his own time?
3. Comparing Pater with Ruskin, which do you think is more reasonable, **Pater's** argument that art exists for art itself and moral criteria or pragmatism cannot be significant for art, OR **Ruskin's** argument that art's moral value is important?





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**THANKS FOR LISTENING!** 😊

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echoing Thomas Carlyle's call to duty and social responsibilities, Pater reminded his readers that life passes quickly and that our only responsibility is to enjoy fully "this short day of frost and sun"—to relish its sensations, especially those sensations provoked by works of art.

This epicurean gospel was conveyed in a highly wrought prose style that baffles anyone who likes to read quickly. Pater believed that prose was as difficult an art as poetry, and he expected his own elaborate sentences to be savored. Like Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), the French novelist whom he admired, Pater painstakingly revised his sentences with special attention to their rhythms, seeking always the right word, *le mot juste*, as Flaubert called it. For many years Pater's day would begin with his making a careful study of a dictionary. What Pater said of Dante is an apt description of his own polished style: "He is one of those artists whose general effect largely depends on vocabulary, on the minute particles of which his work is wrought, on the colour and outline of single words and phrases." An additional characteristic of his highly wrought style is its relative absence of humor. Pater was valued among his friends for his flashes of wit and for his lively and irreverent conversation, but in his writings such traits are suppressed. As Michael Levey observed in *The Case of Walter Pater* (1978), "Even for irony the mood of his writing is almost too intense."

In addition to being a key figure in the transition from mid-Victorianism to the "decadence" of the 1890s, Pater commands our attention as the writer of exemplary impressionistic criticism. In each of his essays he seeks to communicate what he called the "special unique impression of pleasure" made on him by the works of some artist or writer. His range of subjects included the dialogues of Plato, the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, the plays of Shakespeare, and the writings of the French Romantic school of the nineteenth century. Of particular value to students of English literature are his discriminating studies of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and Sir Thomas Browne in his volume of *Appreciations* (1889) and his essay on the poetry of William Morris titled "Aesthetic Poetry" (1868). These and other essays by Pater were praised by Oscar Wilde in a review in 1890 as "absolutely modern, in the true meaning of the term modernity. For he to whom the present is the only thing that is present, knows nothing of the age in which he lives. . . . The true critic is he who bears within himself the dreams and ideas and feelings of myriad generations, and to whom no form of thought is alien, no emotional impulse obscure."

The final sentences of his *Appreciations* volume are a revealing indication of Pater's critical position. After having attempted to show the differences between the classical and romantic schools of art, he concludes that most great artists combine the qualities of both. "To discriminate schools, of art, of literature," he writes, "is, of course, part of the obvious business of literary criticism: but, in the work of literary production, it is easy to be overmuch occupied concerning them. For, in truth, the legitimate contention is, not of one age or school of literary art against another, but of all successive schools alike, against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form."

## From Studies in the History of the Renaissance

### Preface

Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us

very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.

"To see the object as in itself it really is,"<sup>1</sup> has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to ~~me~~? What effect does it really produce on ~~me~~? Does it give ~~me~~ pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for one's self, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere: He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, by analyzing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, "La Gioconda," the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola,<sup>2</sup> are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864; p. 1404).

<sup>2</sup> Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Italian philosopher and classical scholar, subject of an essay by Pater that was included in *Studies in the His-*

*tory of the Renaissance.* "La Gioconda": another name for Leonardo da Vinci's painting the *Mona Lisa* (1503–6; see below). "The hills of Carrara": marble quarries in Italy, particularly associated with Michelangelo (1475–1564).

stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve: *De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.*<sup>3</sup>

What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always: In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation, its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."<sup>4</sup>

Often it will require great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination. Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all debris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallized a part, but only a part; of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the stanzas on *Resolution and Independence*, or the *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood*,<sup>5</sup> sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transmute, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and color and character from local influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sounds. Well! that is the *virtue*, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.

The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of the *Renaissance*, and touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was only one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind, but of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the Middle Age itself, with its motives already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the Middle Age imposed on the heart and the imagination. I have taken as an example of this movement, this ear-

3. To confine themselves to knowing beautiful things intimately, and to sustain themselves by these, as sensitive amateurs and accomplished humanists do (French). In 1980 the editor Donald J. Hill discovered that this quotation is by the French man of letters Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869) rather than about him; therefore, Hill conjectures that "a recent critic" ought

to be "a recent critique."

4. From Blake's annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1778). The "genius" was the German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528).

5. Wordsworth's ode is actually titled "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"; both poems were published in 1807.

lier Renaissance within the Middle Age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, two little compositions in early French; not because they constitute the best possible expression of them, but because they help the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance ends also in France, in French poetry, in a phase of which the writings of Joachim du Bellay<sup>6</sup> are in many ways the most perfect illustration. The Renaissance, in truth, put forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence, just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascêsis*,<sup>7</sup> of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.

But it is in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies—in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting points, and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little curious of the thoughts of others. There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favorable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras, and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:<sup>8</sup> it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralized, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. The unity of this spirit gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

I have added an essay on Winckelmann,<sup>9</sup> as not incongruous with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs in spirit to an earlier age. By his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his Hellenism, his

6. French poet and critic (ca. 1522–1560), subject of another essay in *Studies of the History of the Renaissance*.

7. Asceticism (Greek).

8. Lorenzo de Medici (1449–1492, also known as Lorenzo the Magnificent), ruler of Florence and

patron of the arts. Pericles (ca. 495–429 B.C.E.), a statesman who led Athens during its period of greatest political and cultural dominance.

9. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), German classicist.

lifelong struggle to attain to the Greek spirit, he is in sympathy with the humanists of a previous century. He is the last fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.

["LA GIOCONDA"]<sup>1</sup>

"La Gioconda" is, in the truest sense, Leonardo's masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the "Melancholia" of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least. As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio,<sup>2</sup> faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, [the unfathomable smile], always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams, and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first inchoately in Leonardo's brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo's house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes<sup>3</sup> and flute-players, that subtle expression was projected on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labor never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come,"<sup>4</sup> and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell; of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Age

1. Or *Mona Lisa*, the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) that now hangs in the Louvre in Paris. The sitter for the portrait may have been Lisa, the third wife of the Florentine Francesco del Giocondo (to whom Pater refers as "Il Giocondo")—hence her title, La Gioconda. *Mona* (more correctly *Monna*) *Lisa* means "Madonna Lisa" or "My Lady Lisa." This selection

is drawn from the essay on Leonardo.

2. Andrea del Verrocchio (1435-1488), Florentine painter and sculptor. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), author of *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Painters* (1550).

3. Mimics or clowns.

4. 1 Corinthians 10.11.

with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world; the sins of the Borgias.<sup>5</sup> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants, and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy,<sup>6</sup> and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has molded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

Conclusion<sup>7</sup>

Λέγει τον Ηράκλειτος ότι πάντα χωρεί και οὐδὲν μένει<sup>8</sup>

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibers, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn.<sup>9</sup> Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or, if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye, the gradual fading of colour from the wall—movements of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed,

5. A powerful Italian family during the Renaissance, notorious for scandalous conduct.

6. Helen's father was Zeus (who approached Leda in the form of a swan).

7. This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some

slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning. I have dealt more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* with the thoughts suggested by it [Pater's note to the 3rd edition, 1888].

8. Heraclitus says, "All things give way; nothing remaineth" [Pater's translation]. The Greek philosopher was active ca. 500 B.C.E.

9. Grain.



though in apparent rest—but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

*Philosophieren*, says Novalis, *ist dephlegmatisieren, vivificieren*.<sup>1</sup> The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, We may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted

1. To philosophize is to cast off inertia, to make oneself alive (German). "Novalis" was the pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772–1801), German Romantic writer.

horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful<sup>2</sup> brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel,<sup>3</sup> or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought."<sup>4</sup> The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau<sup>5</sup> is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well! we are all *condamnés* as Victor Hugo<sup>6</sup> says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world,"<sup>7</sup> in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

1868

1873

2. Awe-inspiring.

3. Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), German idealistic philosopher. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), French founder of positivism.

4. The quotation is taken from the novel *Les Misérables* (1862) by the French writer Victor Hugo (1802–1885).

5. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Swiss-

born French political theorist and philosopher; his *Confessions* were published in 1781 and 1788.

6. The quotation is taken from his work *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* (*The Last Day of a Condemned Man*, 1832). "Voltaire" was the pen name of the French author and philosopher François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778).

7. Luke 16.8.



*Studies in the History of  
the Renaissance*

Walter Pater (1839 – 1894)

# Introduction

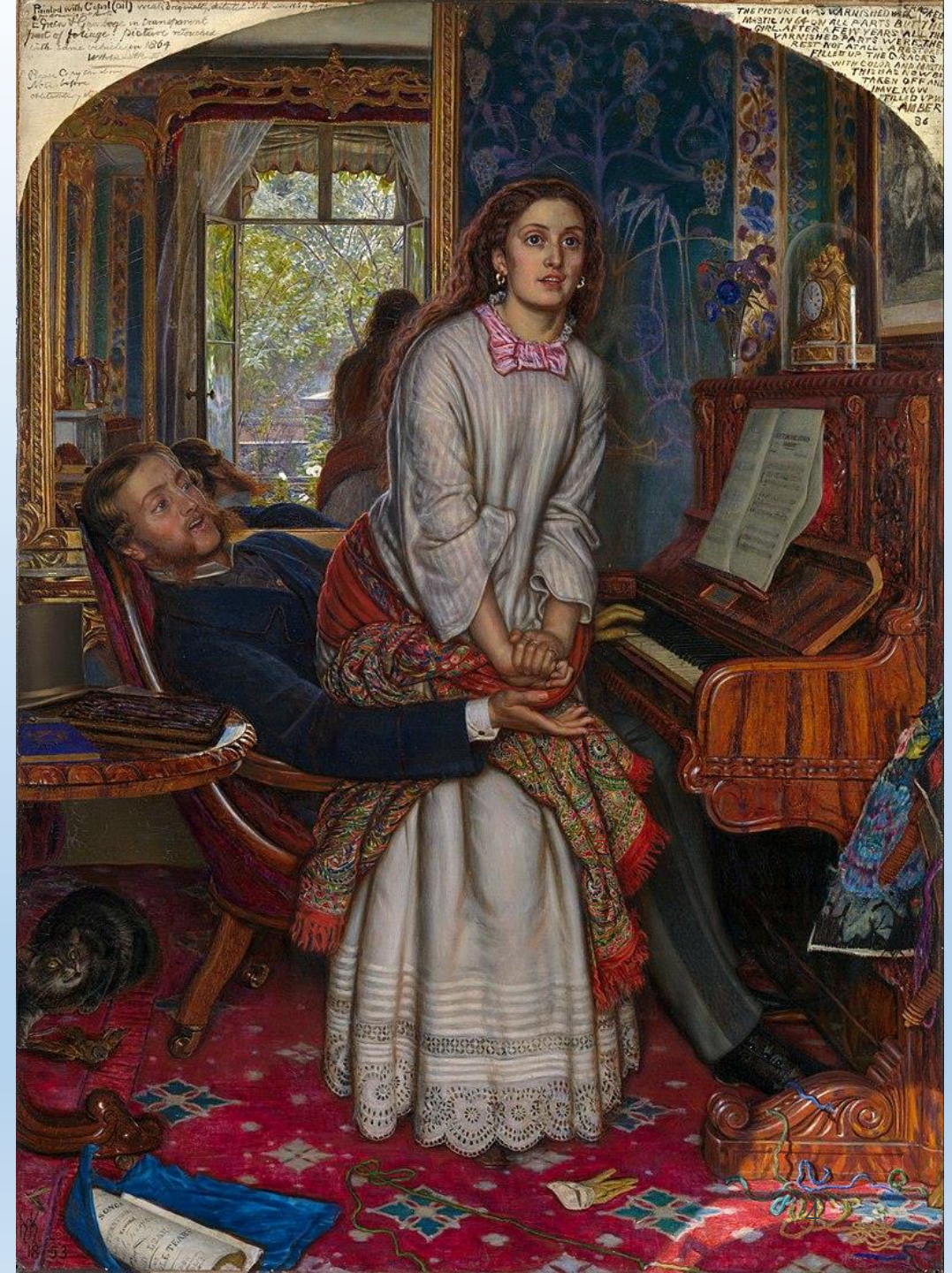
- Pater's ideas were central to the aesthetic movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Pater's writings legitimized the sensuous aspects of art in place of didactic elements.
- Disregarding the twin Victorian virtues of hard work and moral earnestness, he argued in favor of an aesthetic that valued "the love of art for its own sake."

# Introduction

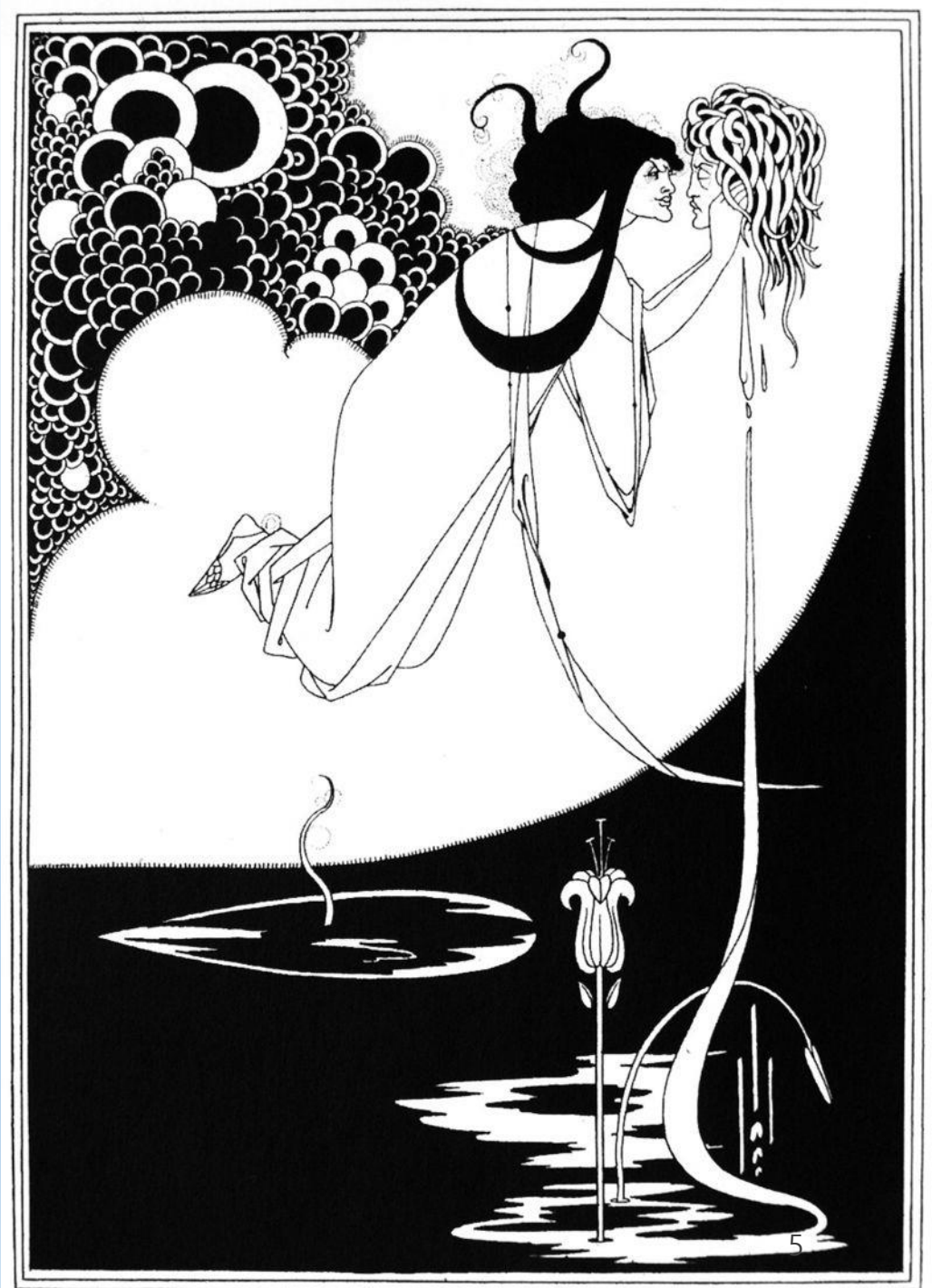
- In contrast to Ruskin, Pater believed that art had to be appreciated not for its content, but for its immediate effect upon the senses.



*The Awakening  
Conscience* (1853)  
by William Holman Hunt



*The Climax* from the  
illustrations for *Salome*  
(1893)  
by Aubrey Beardsley





# Main Point

Aesthetic criticism should not concern itself with beauty, but with the sensations or effects of the art object and the means by which those sensations or effects are rendered.

# Themes

- The aesthetic moment is transient.
- Art should be valued for its own sake, for the immediate pleasure, not for any larger meaning.



# Impressionistic criticism

In addition to being a key figure in the transition from mid-Victorianism to the “decadence” of the 1890s, Pater commands our attention as the writer of exemplary impressionistic criticism.

In each of his essays he seeks to communicate what he called the “special unique impression of pleasure” made on him by the works of some artist or writer.

# Sources

- *Teaching with The Norton Anthology of English Literature: A Guide for Instructors*, 9th ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2012. (Slides 2-5)
- Stephen Greenblatt, general editor, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2, 9th ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2012. (Slide 6)