

# ORNAMENT

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**A**S remarked by Clement of Alexandria, the scriptural style is parabolic, but it is not for the sake of elegance of diction that prophecy makes use of figures of speech. On the other hand, "The sensible forms [of artifacts], in which there was at first a polar balance of physical and metaphysical, have been more and more voided of content on their way down to us: so we say, 'This is an ornament' . . . an 'art form' . . . [Is the symbol] therefore dead, because its living meaning had been lost, because it was denied that it was the image of a spiritual truth? I think not" (Andrae, *Die ionische Säule, Bauform oder Symbol*, 1933, *Schlusswort*). And as I have so often said myself, a divorce of utility and meaning, concepts which are united in the one Sanskrit word *artha*, would have been inconceivable to early man or in any traditional culture.

In the present article we are not concerned with beauty, which is traditionally proportionate to the perfection of the artifact itself, and is the attractive power of this perfection, and being thus objective is dependent upon truth and not upon opinion: our concern is rather with the aesthetic view of art, and the decorative values of art, which depend on taste and liking rather than on judgment. We should distinguish accordingly between the beautiful on the one hand and the lovely, i.e., loveable or likeable, on the other,<sup>1</sup> bearing in mind that "the beautiful is not just what we like, for there are some who like deformities" (St. Augustine, *De Musica*, VI, 38). What we have in view is to support by the analysis of certain familiar terms and categories the proposition that our modern preoccupation with the "decorative" and "aesthetic" aspects of art represents an aberration that has little or nothing to do with the original purposes of art; to demonstrate from the side of semantics the position that has been stated by Maes with special reference to Negro art that "Vouloir séparer l'objet de sa signification sociale, son rôle ethnique, pour n'y voir, n'y admirer et n'y chercher que le côté esthétique, c'est enlever à ces souvenirs de l'art nègre leur sens, leur signification et leur raison-d'être! Ne cherchons point à effacer l'idée que l'indigène a incrustée dans l'ensemble comme dans chacun des détails d'exécution de l'objet sans signification, raison-d'être, ou vie. Efforçons nous au contraire de comprendre la psychologie de l'art nègre et nous finirons par en pénétrer toute la beauté et toute la vie" (IPEK, 1926, p. 283), and that, as remarked by Karsten, "the ornaments of savage peoples can only be properly studied in connection with a study of their magical and religious beliefs" (*ib.*, p. 164); emphasizing, however, that the application of these considerations is not merely to negro, "savage," and folk art but to all traditional arts, those for example of the Middle Ages and of India.<sup>2</sup>

1. Cf. the distinction of the "honest" from the "pleasant," the one desired for its own sake by the rational appetite and an intelligible good, the other desired for its own sake by the sensible appetite and a sensible good: that which is honest (admirable) is naturally pleasing, but not all that is pleasing is honest (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, 145, 3, cf. I-II, 30, 1); and that of *śreyas* from *preyas*, the glorious or beautiful from the merely delectable, in *Kaṭha Up.*, II, 2.

2. As remarked by Th. W. Danzel, in a primitive culture

—by "primitive" the anthropologist often means no more than "not quite up to (our) date"—"sind auch die Kulturgebiete Kunst, Religion, Wirthschaft usw. noch nicht als selbständige, gesonderte, geschlossene Betätigungsbereiche vorhanden" (*Kultur und Religion des primitiven Menschen*, 1924, p. 7). This is, incidentally a devastating criticism of such societies as are not "primitive" and in which the various functions of life and branches of knowledge are treated as specialities, "gesondert und geschlossen" from any unifying principle.

Let us consider now the history of various words that have been used to express the notion of an ornamentation or decoration and which in modern usage for the most part import an aesthetic value added to things of which the said "decoration" is not an essential or necessary part. It will be found that most of these words which imply for us the notion of something adventitious and luxurious, added to utilities but not essential to their efficacy, originally implied a completion or fulfilment of the artifact or other object in question; that to "decorate" an object or person originally meant to endow the object or person with its or his "necessary accidents," with a view to "proper" operation; and that the aesthetic senses of the words are secondary to their practical connotation; whatever was originally necessary to the completion of anything, and thus proper to it, naturally giving pleasure to the user; until still later what had once been essential to the nature of the object came to be regarded as an "ornament" that could be added to it or omitted at will; until, in other words, the art by which the thing itself had been made whole began to mean only a sort of millinery or upholstery that covered over a body that had not been made by "art" but rather by "labor"—a point of view bound up with our peculiar distinction of a fine or useless from an applied or useful art, and of the artist from the workman, and with our substitution of ceremonies for rites.

A related example of a degeneration of meaning can be cited in our words "artifice," meaning "trick," but originally *artificium*, "thing made by art," "work of art," and our "artificial," meaning "false," but originally *artificialis*, "of or for work."

The Sanskrit word *alamkāra*<sup>3</sup> is usually rendered by "ornament," with reference either to the rhetorical use of "ornaments" (figures of speech, assonances, kennings, etc.), or to jewelry or trappings. The Indian category of *alamkāra-sāstra*, the "Science of Poetic Ornament," corresponds, however, to the medieval category of Rhetoric or Art of Oratory, in which eloquence is thought of not as an end in itself or art for art's sake, or to display the artist's skill, but as the art of effective communication. There exists, indeed, a mass of medieval Indian poetry that is "sophistic" in Augustine's sense ("A speech seeking verbal ornament beyond the bounds of responsibility to its burden (*gravitas*) is called 'sophistic'," *De doc. christ.*, II, 31). At a time when "poetry" (*kāvya*)<sup>4</sup> had to some extent become an end in itself, a discussion arose as to whether or not "ornaments" (*alamkāra*) represent the essence of poetry; the consensus being that, so far from this, poetry is distinguishable from prose (i.e., the poetic from the prosaic, not verse from prose) by its "sapidity" or "flavor" (*rasa*, *vyāñjana*, corresponding to the *sap-* in Lat. *sapientia*, wisdom, "*scientia cum sapore*"). Sound and meaning are thought of as indissolubly wedded; just as in all the other arts of whatever kind there was originally a radical and natural connection between form and significance, without divorce of function and meaning.

If we analyse now the word *alamkāra* and consider the many other than merely aesthetic senses in which the verb *alam-kṛ* is employed, we shall find that the word is composed of *alam*, "sufficient," or "enough," and *kṛ* to "make." It must be mentioned for the sake of what follows that Sanskrit *l* and *r* are often interchangeable, and that *alam* is represented

3. The present article was suggested by, and makes considerable use of, J. Gonda, *The meaning of the word "alamkāra" in the Volume of Eastern and Indian studies presented to F. W. Thomas*, Bombay, 1939, pp. 97-114; the same author's *The meaning of Vedic bhūṣati*, Wageningen, 1939; and "*Ābharana*" in the *New Indian Antiquary*, May, 1939.

4. Derivative of *kavi*, "poet." The reference of these words to "poetry" and "poet" in the modern sense is late: in Vedic contexts, *kavi* is primarily an epithet of the highest

Gods with reference to their utterance of words of creative power, *kāvya* and *kavitva* the corresponding quality of wisdom—Vedic *kavi* being therefore rather an "enchanter" than a "charmer" in the later sense of one who merely pleases us by his sweet words.

In much the same way Greek *ποίησις* originally meant a "making," so that as Plato says "The productions of all arts are kinds of poetry and their craftsmen are all poets" (*Symposium*, 205, C).

by *aram* in the older literature. Analogous to the transitive *aram-kṛ* are the intransitive *arambhū*, to become able, fit for and *aram-gam*, to serve or suffice for. The root of *aram* may be the same as that of Greek ἀπαρίσσω, to fit together, equip or furnish. *Aram* with *kṛ* or *bhū* occurs in Vedic texts in phrases meaning preparedness, ability, suitability, fitness, hence also that of “satisfying” (a word that renders *alam-kṛ* very literally, *satis* corresponding to *aram* and *facere* to *kṛ*), as in RV, VII, 29, 3 “What satisfaction (*aramkṛti*) is there for thee, Indra, by means of our hymns?” *Alam-kṛ* in the *Atharva Veda* (XVIII, 2) and in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is employed with reference to the due ordering of the sacrifice, rather than to its adornment, the sacrifice indeed being much less a ceremony than a rite; but already in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a “poetical” work, the word has usually the meaning to “adorn.”

Without going into further detail, it can easily be seen what was once the meaning of an “adornment,” viz., the furnishing of anything essential to the validity of whatever is “adorned,” or enhances its effect, empowering it.

In just the same way *bhūṣaṇa* and *bhūṣ*, words that mean in Classical Sanskrit “ornament,” respectively as noun and as verb, do not have this value in Vedic Sanskrit, where (like *alamkāra* etc.) they refer to the provision of whatever properties or means increase the efficacy of the thing or person with reference to which or whom they are employed:<sup>5</sup> the hymns, for example, with which the deity is said to be “adorned,” are an affirmation of and therefore a confirmation and magnification of the divine power to act on the singers’ behalf. Whatever is in this sense “ornamented” is thereby made the more in act, and more in being. That this should be so corresponds to the root meaning of the verb, which is an extension of *bhū*, to “become,” but with a causative nuance, so that, as pointed out by Gonda, *bhūṣati dyūn* in RV, X, 11, 7 does not mean “ornaments his days,” but “lengthens his life,” “makes more his life,” cf. Skr. *bhūyas*, “becoming in a greater degree” (Pāṇini), “abundantly furnished with,” and “more.” *Bhūṣ* has thus the value of *vṛdh*, to increase (trans.), Macdonell rendering the gerundives *ābhūṣenya* and *vāvṛdhenya* both alike by “to be glorified” (*Vedic Grammar*, 580): an identical connection of ideas survives in English, where to “glorify” is also to “magnify” the Lord, and certain chants are “Magnificats.” Vedic *bhūṣ* in the sense “increase” or “strengthen,” and synonymous with *vṛdh*, corresponds to the later causative *bhāv* (from *bhū*), as can be clearly seen if we compare RV, IX, 104, 1, where Soma is to be “adorned,” or rather “magnified” (*pari bhūṣata*) by sacrifices, “as it were a child” (*śiṣum na*) with *Ait. Ār.*, II, 5, where the mother “nourishes” (*bhāvayati*) the unborn child, and the father is said to “support” (*bhāvayati*) it both before and after birth; bearing also in mind that in RV, IX, 103, 1 the hymns addressed to Soma are actually compared to “food” (*bhṛti*) from *bhṛ*, to “bear,” “bring,” “support,” and that in the *Ait. Ār.* context the mother “nourishes . . . and bears the child” (*bhāvayati . . . garbham bibharti*). And insofar as *ābharana* and *bhūṣaṇa* in other contexts are often “jewelry” or other decoration of the person or thing referred to, it may be observed that the values of jewelry were not originally those of “vain adornment” in any culture, but rather metaphysical or “magical.”<sup>6</sup> To some extent this can be recognized even at the present day: if, for example, the judge is only a judge in act when wearing his robes, if the mayor

5. The two values of *bhūṣaṇa* are found side by side in *Viṣṇudharmottara*, III, 41, 10 where outline, shading (the representation of) jewelry (*bhūṣaṇam*), and color are collectively “the ornaments (*bhūṣaṇam*) of painting,” and it is clear that these “ornaments” are not a needless elaboration

tion of the art, but much rather the essentials or characteristics of painting, by which it is recognized as such.

6. As in AV, VI, 133, where the girdle is worn “for length of life” and invoked to endow the wearer with insight, understanding, fervor, and virility.

is empowered by his chain, and the king by his crown, if the pope is only infallible and verily pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, “from the throne,” none of these things are mere ornaments; but much rather an equipment by which the man himself is “mored” (*bhūyas-kṛta*), just as in AV, X, 6, 6 Bṛhaspati wears a jewel, or let us say a talisman, “in order to power” (*ojase*). Even today the conferring of an order is a “decoration” in the same sense: and it is only to the extent that we have learned to think of knighthood, for example, as an “empty honor” that the “decoration” takes on the purely aesthetic values that we nowadays associate with the word.

The mention of *bhr*, above, leads us to consider also the word *ābharāṇa*, in which the root is combined with a self-referent *ā*, “towards.” *Ābharāṇa* is generally rendered by “ornament,” but is more literally “assumption” or “attribute.” In this sense the characteristic weapons or other objects held by a deity, or worn, are his proper attributes, *ābharāṇam*, by which his mode of operation is denoted iconographically. In what sense a bracelet of conch (*śaṅkha*),<sup>7</sup> worn for long life, etc., is an “*ābharāṇam*” can be seen in AV, IV, 10, where the “sea-born” shell is “fetched (*ābhṛtaḥ*) from the waters.” In the same way *āhārya*, from *hr*, to “bring,” with *ā* as before, means in the first place that which is “to be eaten,” i.e., “nourishment,” and secondly the costume and jewels of an actor, regarded as one of the four factors of dramatic expression; in the latter sense the sun and moon are called the *āhārya* of Śiva when he manifests himself on the world stage (*Abhinaya Darpaṇa*, invocatory introduction).

Returning now to *ālaṃkāra* as “rhetorical ornament,” Gonda very properly asks, “Have they always been nothing but embellishments?,” pointing out that very many of these so-called embellishments appear already in the Vedic texts, which, for all that, are not included in the category of poetry (*kāvya*), i.e., are not regarded as belonging to “belles lettres.” Yāska, for example, discusses *upamā*, “simile” or “parable” in Vedic contexts, and we may remark that such similes or parables are repeatedly employed in the Pali Buddhist canon, which is by no means sympathetic to any kind of artistry that can be thought of as an ornamentation for the sake of ornamentation. Gonda goes on to point out, and it is incontrovertibly true, that what we should now call ornaments (when we study “the Bible as literature”) are stylistic phenomena in the sense that “the scriptural *style* is parabolic” by an inherent necessity, the burden of scripture being one that can be expressed only by analogies: so this style had another function in the Vedic contexts “than to be nothing but ornaments. Here, as in the literature of several other peoples, we have a sacred or ritual ‘Sondersprache’ . . . different from the colloquial speech.” At the same time, “These peculiarities of the sacral language may also have an aesthetic side . . . Then they become figures of speech and when applied in excess they become ‘Spielerei’.” *Ālaṃkāṛta*, in other words, having meant originally “made adequate,” came finally to mean “embellished.”

In the case of another Sanskrit word *subha*, of which the later meaning is “lovely,” there may be cited the expression *subhaḥ silpīn* from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where the reference is certainly not to a craftsman personally “handsome,” but to a “fine craftsman,” and likewise the well-known benediction *subham astu*, “May it be well,” where *subham* is rather the “good” than the beautiful as such. In RV we have such expressions as “I furnish (*sumbhāmi*) Agni with prayers” (VIII, 24, 26), where for *sumbhāmi* might just as well have been said *ālaṃkaromi* (not “I adorn him,” but “I fit him out”); and *sumbhanto* (I, 130, 6),

7. The commentators here, and on RV, I, 35, 4; I, 126, 4; and X, 68, 11 (where *kṛsana*=*suvarṇa*, golden, or *suvarṇam ābharāṇam*, golden ornament) offer no support

whatever for the rendering of *kṛsana* by “pearl-.” It is, moreover, amulets of conch, and not of pearl oyster shell that have been worn in India from time immemorial.

not “adorning” but “harnessing” a horse; in J.V, 129 *alamkata* is “fully equipped” (in coat of mail and turban, and with bow and arrows and sword). In I, 130, 6, it is Indra that is “harnessed” like a steed that is to race and win a prize, and it is obvious that in such a case the aptitude rather than the beauty of the gear must have been the primary consideration, and that although the charioteer must have enjoyed at the same time the “pleasure that perfects the operation,” this pleasure must have been rather in the thing well made for its purpose, than in its mere appearance; it would be only under the more-unreal conditions of a parade that the mere appearance might become an end in itself, and it is thus, in fact, that over-ornamented things are made only for show. This is a development that we are very familiar with in the history of armor (another sort of “harness”), of which the original life-saving purpose was pre-eminently practical, however elegant the resultant forms may have been in fact, but which in the end served no other purpose than that of display.

To avoid confusion, it must be pointed out that what we have referred to as the “utility” of a harness, or any other artifact, had never been, traditionally, a matter of merely functional adaptation;<sup>8</sup> on the contrary, in every work of traditional art we can recognize Andrae’s “polar balance of physical and metaphysical,” the simultaneous satisfaction (*alam-karana*) of practical and spiritual requirements. So the harness is originally provided (rather than “decorated”) with solar symbols, as if to say that the racing steed is the Sun (-horse) in a likeness, and the race itself an imitation of “what was done by the Gods in the beginning.”

A good example of the use of an “ornament” not as “millinery” but for its significance can be cited in ŚB. III. 5. l. 19–20 where, because in the primordial sacrifice the Aṅgirasas had accepted from the Ādityas the Sun as their sacrificial fee, so now a white horse is the fee for the performance of the corresponding Sadyahkri Soma-sacrifice. This white horse is made to wear “a gold-ornament (*rūkma*), whereby it is made to be of the form of, or symbol (*rūpam*) of the Sun.” This ornament must have been like the golden disk with twenty-one points or rays which is also worn by the sacrificer himself and afterwards laid down on the altar to represent the Sun (ŚB. VI. 7. l. 1–2, VII. l. 2. 10, VII. 4. l. 10). It is familiar that horses are even now sometimes “decorated” with ornaments of brass (a substitute for gold, the regular symbol of Truth, Sun, Light, Immortality, ŚB. VI. 7. l. 2, etc.) of which, the significance is manifestly solar; it is precisely such forms as these solar symbols that, when the contexts of life have been secularised, and meaning has been forgotten, survive as “superstitions”<sup>9</sup> and are regarded only as “art forms” or “ornaments,” to be judged as good or bad in accordance, not with their truth, but with our likes or dislikes. If children have always been apt to play with useful things or miniature copies of useful things for example carts, as toys, we ought perhaps to regard our own aestheticism as symptomatic of a second childhood; *we* do not grow up.

8. “Honesty” having been identified with “spiritual (or intelligible) beauty,” St. Thomas Aquinas remarks that “Nothing incompatible with honesty can be simply and truly *useful*, since it follows that it is contrary to man’s last end” (*Sum. Theol.*, II–II, 145, 3 ad 3). It is the intelligible aspect of the work of art that has to do with man’s last end, its unintelligible aspect that serves his immediate needs; the “merely functional” artifact corresponding to “bread alone.” In other words, an object devoid of all symbolic ornament, or of which the form itself is meaningless and therefore unintelligible, is not “simply and truly *useful*,” but only physically serviceable, as is the trough to the pig. Perhaps we mean this when we think of mere utili-

ties as “uninteresting,” and fly for refuge to the fine or materially useless arts; it is nevertheless the measure of our unawareness that we consent to an environment consisting chiefly of *in-significant* artifacts.

9. “Superstition . . . a symbol which has continued in use after its original meaning has been forgotten . . . The best cure for that, is not misapplied invective against idolatry, but an exposition of the meaning of the symbol, so that men may again use it intelligently” (Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 1939, p. 379). Our contemporary culture, from the point of view of this definition, is preëminently “superstitious” and “unintelligent.”

Enough of Sanskrit. The Greek word *κόσμος* is primarily “order” (Skr. *ṛta*), whether with reference to the due order or arrangement of things, or to the world-order (“the most beautiful order given to things by God,” St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, 25, 6 ad 3).; and secondarily “ornament,” whether of horses, women, men, or speech. The corresponding verb *κοσμέω* is to order or arrange, and secondarily to equip, adorn, or dress, or finally with reference to the embellishment of oratory. *Κόσμημα* is an ornament or decoration, usually of dress. *Κοσμητικός* is skilled in ordering, *κοσμητική* the art of dress and ornament, *κοσμητικόν* “cosmetic,”<sup>10</sup> *κοσμητήριον* a dressing-room. *Κοσμοποίησης* is architectural ornament; hence our designation of the Doric etc. “orders.” Again we see the connection between an original “order” and a later “ornament.” In connection with “cosmetic” it may be remarked that we cannot understand the original intention of bodily ornaments (unguents, tattooing, jewelry, etc.) from our modern and aesthetic point of view. The Hindu woman feels herself undressed and disorderly without her jewels which, however much she may be fond of them from other and “aesthetic” points of view, she regards as a necessary equipment, without which she cannot function as a woman (from Manu, III, 55 “it appears that there existed a connection between the proper adornment of women and the prosperity of their male relatives,” Gonda, *Bhūṣati*, p. 7).<sup>11</sup> To be seen without her gear would be more than a mere absence of decoration, it would be inauspicious, indecorous, and disrespectful, as if one should be present at some function in “undress,” or have forgotten one’s tie: it is only as a widow, and as such “inauspicious,” that the woman abandons her ornaments. In ancient India or Egypt, in the same way, the use of cosmetics was assuredly not a matter of mere vanity, but much rather one of propriety. We can see this more easily, perhaps, in connection with hair-dressing (*κοσμός* and also one of the senses of *ornare*); the putting of one’s hair in order is primarily a matter of decorum, and therefore pleasing, not primarily or merely for the sake of pleasing *Κοσμίξω*. “clean” and *κόσμητρον* “broom” recall the semantics of Chinese *shih* (9907) primarily to wipe or clean or be suitably dressed (the ideogram is composed of signs for “man” + “clothes”), and more generally to be decorated; cf. *hsiu* (4661), a combination of *shih* with *san* = “paint-brush,” and meaning to put in order, prepare, regulate and cultivate.

The words “decoration” and “ornament,” whether with reference to the embellishment of persons or of things, can be considered simultaneously in Latin and in English. *Ornare* is primarily to “fit out, furnish, provide with necessities” (Harper) and only secondarily to “embellish,” etc. *Ornamentum* is primary “apparatus, accoutrement, equipment, trappings”<sup>12</sup> and secondarily embellishment, jewel, trinket,<sup>13</sup> etc., as well as rhetorical ornament (Skr. *ālamkāra*); the word is used by Pliny to render *κόσμος*. “Ornament” is primarily “any adjunct or accessory (primarily for use . . .)” (Webster): so Cooper (sixteenth century) speaks of the “tackling or ornaments of a ship,” and Malory of the “ornementys of an

10. Cf. Skr. *añj*, to anoint, to shine, to be beautiful; *añjana*, ointment, cosmetic, embellishment.

11. Cf. such terms as *rakṣābhūṣaṇa*, “apotropaic amulet,” *Suśruta*, I, 54, 13; *maṅgalālamkāra*, “Wearing auspicious ornaments,” *Kālidāsa*, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I, 14; and similarly *maṅgalamātrabhūṣaṇa*, *Vikramorvaṣī*, III, 12, cited by Gonda. The bow and the sword which are Rāma’s equipment, and in this sense “ornaments” in the original sense of the word “are not for the sake of mere ornamentation or only to be worn” (*na . . . bhūṣaṇāya . . . na . . . ābandhanārthāya*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 23, 30).

12. “Trappings,” from the same root as “drape,” and *drapau*, “flag,” was originally a cloth spread over the back or saddle of a horse or other beast of burden, but has ac-

quired the inferior meaning of superficial or unnecessary ornament.

13. “Trinket,” by which we always understand some insignificant ornament, was originally a little knife, later carried as a mere ornament and so disparaged. We often refer to a trinket as a “charm,” forgetting the connections of this word with *carmen* and “chant.” The “charm” implied originally an enchantment: our words “charming” and “enchanted” have acquired their trivial and purely aesthetic values by a development parallel to that which has been discussed throughout the present article. It may be added that an “insignificant” ornament is literally one without a meaning; it is precisely in this sense that ornaments were *not* originally insignificant.

aulter.”<sup>14</sup> Even now “The term ‘ornaments’ in Ecclesiastical law is not confined, as by modern usage, to articles of decoration or embellishment, but it is used in the larger sense of the word ‘ornamentum’” (Privy Council Decision, 1857). Adornment is used by Burke with reference to the furnishing of the mind. *Decor*, “what is seemly . . . ornament . . . personal comeliness” (Harper) is already “ornament” (i.e. embellishment) as well as “adaptation” in the Middle Ages. But observe that “decor” as “that which serves to decorate; ornamental disposition of accessories” (Webster) is the near relative of “decorous” or “decent,” meaning “suitable to a character or time, place and occasion” and to “decorum,” i.e. “what is befitting . . . propriety” (Webster), just as *κόσμημα* is of *κοσμιότης*.

The law of art in the matter of decoration could hardly have been better stated than by St. Augustine, who says that an ornamentation exceeding the bounds of responsibility to the content of the work is sophistry, i.e. an extravagance or superfluity. If this is an artistic sin, it is also a moral sin: “Even the shoemakers’ and clothiers’ arts stand in need of restraint, for they have lent their art to luxury, corrupting its necessity and artfully debasing art” (St. Chrysostom, *Super Matth.* hom. 50, a med.). Accordingly, “Since women may lawfully adorn themselves, whether to manifest what becomes (*decentiam*) their estate, or even by adding something thereto, in order to please their husbands, it follows that those who make such ornaments do not sin in the practice of their art, except in so far as they may perhaps contrive what is superfluous and fantastic” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, 169, 2 ad 4). It need hardly be said that whatever applies to the ornamentation of persons also applies to the ornamentation of things, all of which are decorations, in the original sense of an equipment, of the person to whom they pertain. The condemnation is of an excess, and not of a richness of ornament. That “nothing can be useful unless it be honest” (Tully and Ambrose, endorsed by St. Thomas) rules out all pretentious art. The concurrence here of the laws of art with those of morals, despite their logical distinction, is remarkable.

We have said enough to suggest that it may be universally true that terms which now imply an ornamentation of persons or things for aesthetic reasons alone originally implied their proper equipment in the sense of a completion, without which satisfaction (*alam-karaṇa*) neither persons nor things could have been thought of as efficient or “simply and truly useful,” just as, apart from his at-tributes (*ā-bharaṇa*), Deity could not be thought of as functioning.<sup>15</sup> To have thought of art as an essentially aesthetic value is a very modern development, and a provincial view of art, born of a confusion between the (objective)

14. “Whatever makes a thing befitting (*decentem*) is called ‘decoration’ (*decor*), whether it be in the thing or externally adapted to it, as ornaments of clothing and jewels and the like. Hence ‘decoration’ is common to the beautiful and to the apt” (Ulrich of Strassburg, *De Pulchro*, see THE ART BULLETIN, XVII, p. 44): as in the case of “the iron style that is made by the smith on the one hand that we may write with it, and on the other that we may take pleasure in it; and in its kind is at the same time beautiful and adapted to our use” (St. Augustine, *Lib. de ver. rel.*, 39), between which ends there is no conflict; cf. the style illustrated in my *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, fig. 129.

15. The analogy is far reaching. Whatever is unornamented is said to be “naked.” God, “taken naked of all ornament” is “unconditioned” or “unqualified” (*nirguṇa*): one, but inconceivable. Ornamented, He is endowed with qualities (*saguṇa*), which are manifold in their relations and intelligible. And however insignificant this qualification and this adaptation to finite effects may be when con-

trasted with His unity and infinity, the latter would be incomplete without them. In the same way a person or thing apart from its appropriate ornaments (“in the subject or externally adapted to it”) is valid as an idea, but not as species. Ornament is related to its subject as individual nature to essence: to abstract is to denature. Ornament is adjectival; and in the absence of any adjective, nothing referred to by any noun could have an individual *existence*, however it might be in principle. If, on the other hand, the subject is inappropriately or over-ornamented, so far from completing it, this restricts its efficiency, and therefore its beauty, since the extent to which it is in act is the extent of its existence and the measure of its perfection as such and such a specified subject. Appropriate ornament is, then, essential to utility and beauty: in saying this, however, it must be remembered that ornament may be “in the subject” itself, or if not, must be something added to the subject in order that it may fulfil a given function.

beauty of order and the (subjectively) pleasant, and fathered by a preoccupation with pleasure. We certainly do not mean to say that man may not always have taken a sensitive pleasure in work and the products of work; so far from this, "pleasure perfects the operation." We do mean to say that in asserting that "beauty has to do with cognition," Scholastic philosophy is affirming what has always and everywhere been true, however we may have ignored or may wish to ignore the truth—we, who like other animals know what we like, rather than like what we know. We do say that to explain the nature of primitive or folk art, or, to speak more accurately, of any traditional art, by an assumption of "decorative instincts" or "aesthetic purposes" is a pathetic fallacy, a deceptive projection of our own mentality upon another ground; that the traditional artist no more regarded his work with our romantic eyes than he was "fond of nature" in our sentimental way. We say that we have divorced the "satisfaction" of the artifact from the artifact itself, and made it seem to be the whole of art; that we no longer respect or feel our responsibility towards the burden (*gravitas*) of the work, but prostitute its thesis to an aisthesis; and that this is the sin of luxury.<sup>16</sup> We appeal to the historian of art, and especially to the historian of ornament and the teacher of the "appreciation of art," to approach their material more objectively; and suggest to the "designer" that if all good ornament had in its beginning a necessary sense, it may be rather from a sense to be communicated than from an intention to please that he should proceed.

16. It may be remarked that in the animal world an excessive development of ornament usually preludes extinction ("The wages of sin is death"; sin, as always, being defined as "any departure from the order to the end").

In the preceding text, the following abbreviations have been employed: RV., *Rgveda Saṁhitā*; TS., *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*; AV., *Atharva Veda Saṁhitā*; ŚB., *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*; Ait.Ār., *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*; J., *Jātaka*.