

THE
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ON THE GENESIS OF THE ÆSTHETIC
CATEGORIES.

THE purpose of this article is to consider some of the generally accepted æsthetic categories in the light of social psychology. The thesis to be maintained is that the distinctive characteristics of æsthetic feeling or of the æsthetic judgment (æsthetic value) are due, in part at least, to the social conditions under which the æsthetic consciousness has developed. This thesis may be presented in three parts :

I. The æsthetic consciousness in its beginnings is connected with art rather than with nature.

II. The relation of the æsthetic (appreciative) consciousness to art is not that of cause, but that of effect. Art has not arisen primarily to satisfy an already existing love of beauty. It has arisen chiefly, if not wholly, from other springs, and has itself created the sense by which it is enjoyed.

III. Art has its origins, almost without exception, in social relations ; it has developed under social pressure ; it has been fostered by social occasions ; it has in turn served social ends in the struggle for existence. In consequence, the values attributed to æsthetic objects have social standards, and the æsthetic attitude will be determined largely by these social antecedents. Or, in other words, the explanation of the æsthetic categories is to be sought largely in social psychology.

Before considering the propositions *seriatim*, it will be convenient to note briefly what the characteristics of the æsthetic consciousness are. In this, the aim will be not to present an exhaus-