

Précis 14: CSS 2009

2: Write a précis of the following passage and suggest a suitable title: (20)

From Plato to Tolstoy art has been accused of exciting our emotions and thus of disturbing the order and harmony of our moral life. "Poetical imagination, according to Plato, waters our experience of lust and anger, of desire and pain, and makes them grow when they ought to starve with drought. "Tolstoy sees in art a source of infection. "Not only in infection," he says, "a sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of excellence in art." But the flaw in this theory is obvious. Tolstoy suppresses a fundamental moment of art, the moment of form. The aesthetic experience - the experience of contemplation - is a different state of mind from the coolness of our theoretical and the sobriety of our moral judgment. It is filled with the liveliest energies of passion, but passion itself is here transformed both in its nature and in its meaning. Wordsworth defines poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility". But the tranquility we feel in great poetry is not that of recollection. The emotions aroused by the poet do not belong to a remote past. They are "here"-alive and immediate. We are aware of their full strength, but this strength tends in a new direction. It is rather seen than immediately felt. Our passions are no longer dark and impenetrable powers; they become, as it were, transparent. Shakespeare never gives us an aesthetic theory. He does not speculate about the nature of art. Yet in the only passage in which he speaks of the character and function of dramatic art the whole stress is laid upon this point. "The purpose of playing," as Hamlet explains, "both at the first and now, was and 's, to hold, as, there, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." But the image of a passion is not the passion itself. The poet who represents a passion does not infect us with this passion. At a Shakespeare play we are not infected with the ambition of Macbeth, with the cruelty of Richard III, or with the jealousy of Othello. We are not at the mercy of these emotions; we look through them we seem to penetrate into their very nature and essence. In this respect Shakespeare's theory of dramatic art, if he had such a theory, is in complete agreement with the conception of the fine arts of the great painters and sculptors.

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Art: The Expression of beauty and emotions

Many writers have criticized poetry of arousing feelings and has negative effects upon morals. Plato opines that the imagination resulted by reading poetry enhances various emotions, instead of curbing them. Tolstoy's views about art is that it is a root of infection. But he (Tolstoy) has neglected form, a principle feature of art. The experience of beauty is a distinct aspect of mind than the theoretical and judgemental aspect. The emotions aroused by a great piece of creation is spontaneous and lively. Shakespeare has never given any theory of aesthetics but in one of his dramas, he said that the aim of a play is to show the characteristics of everything in a play as their mirrors. A piece of poetry does not infect its readers with passion. In many of the plays of Shakespeare, the readers/audience are not affected by the negative emotions of the characters depicting their negative emotions. The readers/audience are not dominated by emotions. Shakespeare's views about drama align with other forms of art.