

There are facts, however, which are calculated to shake our faith a little in what thus seems to be the evidence of the senses, and the verdict of the common sense of men; for common sense, let me say, is variable, and veers with light and knowledge. We put a straight stick in the water, and it seems bent: we sit in a train in rapid motion, and seemingly trees and posts fly past us, when really it is we who thus are flying: we shut our eyes, putting our hands upon them heavily, and direct them as if to look straight forward, and we see all sorts of brilliant colours moving and melting into each other, vanishing and reappearing: and, to give no other instance, we say that the fire is hot, though strictly speaking it is the fire that makes *us* hot. Now may there not be some such illusion in the case of beauty? If we see things straight as crooked, and things stationary as in motion, what reason have we for trusting our senses when we see things as beautiful? May they not in themselves be the reverse of what they appear to us? If we can make colours for ourselves by putting our hands upon our eyes, why may we not clothe the world with them? If we naturally and unconsciously transfer what can belong to a sentient being only—the sensation of heat—to the fire, and say that *it* is hot, may we not in the same way unconsciously transfer our feelings to the outer world, and say of things that *they* are beautiful? There is a perfect analogy between the two cases, is there not? And if there is a general illusion in the one case, why may there not be in the other? And that there is such an illusion in the case of beauty may be plausibly maintained, and has been plausibly maintained.

First, from the variety of objects to which beauty is ascribed. If beauty be a quality of objects, how, it may be asked, could things so various and unlike as a statue and a thought, a cloud and an eye, a hill and a dog, be possessed of it? There is but little resemblance, it would seem, between a trunk of a tree and a lyric poem, a gnarled stick and a perfect circle, a waving line and a theory of morals, a tumble-down wall o'er-grown with ivy and the life of a hero, a spire of grass and a foaming cataract; yet they may all be called beautiful. Have they anything in common which entitles them to the epithet? "How shall mind assert its supremacy so as to establish an order between things belonging to such different domains as a pillar, a song, a colour, and a smile? Under what mysterious art of mastery shall we comprehend the