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THEME 3

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ART

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The problem of the relations between art and science has often been raised as a result of the development of painting since Impressionism. It can be considered from two points of view, as a question of the thing made or as a question of aesthetics. The connection between the development of modern painting and the parallel transformation of science calls for special study. However it is necessary that other examples be considered, in particular that arising from the simultaneous development of art and science in the quattrocento. A rapid outline of the facts which justify the parallel between the development of the arts and sciences in the 15th, 19th and 20th centuries will first of all be put forward by the rapporteurs for the attention of the Congress. It seems desirable that the discussion should then cover the aesthetic and psychological problem which the existence of this phenomenon raises.

Without doubt we have exaggerated the idea of relating influences and it is extremely difficult to counteract the assertion that the superficial assimilation of the methods of art and science is wrong and in conflict with the more specific nature of activity and of language. There is no question of defending the idea that the arts have, in a given period, borrowed from the sciences, in order to define their method. If it be admitted, in defence, that the arts like the sciences reduce to specific forms mans creative power in the universe, one can admit and thoroughly examine the idea not only of an exterior interaction of forms, the one on the other, but of a more complex relation resulting from the fact that the arts as the sciences render in a precise moment and in a strictly specialised language and technique, certain needs and aspiration common to all mankind. It is a question of substituting for the whole literary doctrine of interrelations, a point of view at once psychological and sociological, which discloses at a given moment in all its profundity the unique human achievement of finding a strictly specialised means of expression. At this stage we return to the problem raised elsewhere of the relations which exist between the momentary and the lasting significance of a work of art.