

from The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891)  
by Oscar Wilde

## THE PREFACE

The artist is the creator of beautiful things.

To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things.

The highest, as the lowest, form of criticism  
is a mode of autobiography.

Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.

Those who find beautiful meanings in  
beautiful things are the cultivated. For  
these there is hope.

They are the elect to whom beautiful things  
mean only Beauty.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral  
book. Books are well written, or  
badly written. That is all.

The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism  
is the rage of Caliban not seeing  
his own face in a glass.

The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter  
of the artist, but the morality of art consists  
in the perfect use of an imperfect medium.

No artist desires to prove anything. Even  
things that are true can be proved.

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical  
sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable  
mannerism of style.

No artist is ever morbid. The artist  
can express everything.

Thought and language are to the artist instruments  
of an art.

Vice and virtue are to the artist materials  
for an art.

From the point of view of form, the type of all the arts is the art of the musician. From the point of view of feeling, the actor's craft is the type.

All art is at once surface and symbol.

Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.

Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows  
that the work is new, complex, and vital.

When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself.

We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for  
making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a Gothic and philosophical novel by Oscar Wilde, first published complete in the July 1890 issue of Lippincott's Monthly Magazine. Fearing the story was indecent, the magazine's editor deleted roughly five hundred words before publication without Wilde's knowledge. Despite that censorship, The Picture of Dorian Gray offended the moral sensibilities of British book reviewers, some of whom said that Oscar Wilde merited prosecution for violating the laws guarding public