Benedetto Croce

Guide to Aesthetics

Translated, with
Introduction and
Notes, by
Patrick Romanell

BREVIARY OF AESTHETICS

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BREVIARY OF AESTHETICS: FOUR LECTURES

BENEDETTO CROCE

Introduction by Remo Bodei
Translated by Hiroko Fudemoto

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In breve –
per M.

Without the previous aesthetic intuitions of *fantasia*, nature can stimulate none. A man faced with natural beauty is just Narcissus at the fountain.

Estetica, 98

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Acknowledgments

That which is 'written poorly, is poorly thought.' So wrote Croce in *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione*, referring to parts of a text that were inadequately expressed. Where the present translation succeeds is properly due to the philosopher's own symmetry of words in addition to the indispensable (and fortunate) corrections, and invaluable comments, of those who generously gave of their time to read the manuscript while it was still a work in progress and to whom I remain grateful. I would like to extend a sincere word of appreciation to University of Toronto Press, specifically to Ron Schoeffel for his amiable patience and good faith, as well as for the laudable suggestions of the (anonymous) readers for the Press and the copy editor, Miriam Skey, each of whom truly helped to better this translation. I would also like to extend cordial thanks to Richard Ratzlaff, assistant managing editor at the Press, for his guidance of this volume. I send a friendly thank you to Professors Donald Beecher (Carleton University), Brian Copenhaver (UCLA), and Michael Heim (UCLA) for their sound advice whenever solicited. Finally, a very special thank you to Professor Remo Bodei (UCLA) for the generosity of his wise counsel.

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Introduction

REMO BODEI

1

Theodor W. Adorno maintained that the experience of beauty is characterized by an intense emotion, by the 'capacity to shiver, as if goose bumps were the first aesthetic image.'[1] Does this mean that the perception of beauty, although conserving a somewhat indistinct relation to knowledge, is reduced to a shiver, to a disturbance or a distortion of the rational faculties, to Plato's notion of 'divine madness'?

In general, poetry and art are also a 'language of emotions,' but as so eminently shown in music, they unite the greatest of formal rigour with the greatest of emotivity, the greatest of precision with the greatest of vagueness. In stressing this aspect of mathematical precision, the Pythagorean tradition identified truth with beauty; and from the fifth century BC to the Renaissance, for some two thousand years, it placed works of art under the sign of perfect form, harmony, proportion, and symmetry (the head of a Greek statue as proportionally one-eighth the length of the body; the diameter of a column as the module for the entire building; metrical poetry scanned according to long or short beats). That is, it has viewed art as a calculation, a concept that is now substantially foreign to us, especially after romanticism and ever since we began to think of the artist as a genius possessed by 'agony and ecstasy.'

Generally speaking, we are today equally far from attributing any moral intention or function to art, as has occurred from the time of Plato to that of Soviet socialistic realism, passing through the great historical movements that wanted to shape human consciousness by using beauty as an instrument of preliminary pleasure, to transmit – through

art – ethical, religious, and political values that were not readily accepted. By this approach, art is similar to the pleasant tasting liqueur placed around the rim of a glass of bitter medicine, as in Torquato Tasso's imagery: 'Thus to the infirm child we offer the vessel, its rim laced with sweet liquor' (Così a l'egro fanciul porgiamo aspersi / di soavi licor gli orli del vaso). Under this profile, art is also useful, that is, functional in regards to the desired goal or to the object produced (an armature, a typewriter, a pair of shoes). In this way, it is helpful to society and to the individual, reinforces vitality, and renders our existence more pleasant and comfortable.

For thousands of years in Western society, philosophy has thus conceived of beauty either as truth manifested in a sensible form, or as a splendid vestment wrapped around morality, or as value added to useful objects. Very slowly, with the birth of 'aesthetics' as a discipline, toward the middle of the eighteenth century with Baumgarten, beauty (natural and artistic) detaches itself from truth and, gradually, also from moral goodness. It is then that the intrinsic and ineliminable bond with sensation (*aisthesis*) was recognized, something that seems completely obvious to us: in fact, how could beauty manifest itself without the help of line, form, colour, volume, sound, or rhythm? And yet, for more than two millennia the theories dominating our cultural landscape have maintained that perceived beauty represents nothing more than the first (and less important) step on the 'ladder' leading to 'true Beauty': that invisible, inaudible, and intangible one, the intelligible beauty of ideas, to which the senses only allude. Such a view radically denies the very characteristic that for us constitutes the felicitous anomaly of beauty with respect to values of 'Truth' and 'Goodness,' whereby it is joined in a classical 'trinity' of sorts. The reference to sensation, rather than to the intellect, entails admitting to the fact that sensible beauty no longer functions as a mere vehicle in the ascent to ultimate Truth or to the greatest Good, nor as an alluring award of seduction to facilitate the triumph of faiths, practices, or ideologies. In Baumgarten, certainly, the bond to logical truth was not yet broken, and his young science remains a form of lesser knowledge.

Furthermore, the progressive emancipation of art from its dependency on truth, moral goodness, or utility, leads – particularly between

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – to the understanding of sensation as sensualism, in the manner of D'Annunzio or of European decadentism after Huysmans, and to confer to the slogan *ars gratia artis* (art for art's sake) the significance of a rhetorical assertion.

2

Placed against this backdrop, drawn here in broad strokes, is Benedetto Croce's reflection on aesthetics, which informs and clarifies problems still debated today, such as the one between those who claim that art is a form of knowledge (cognitivists) and those who maintain instead that it concerns our emotions (emotivists), or the one that opposes those who consider beauty independent of any other spiritual sphere and those who still tie it to functional, ethical, or religious values.

Although considered the most important Italian philosopher of the twentieth century, the name of Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) is no longer commonly recognized by the English-speaking public as it once was in the first half of the twentieth century. It would seem appropriate, therefore, to present a few facts that will frame his thought and assist us in an adequate understanding of his theory of aesthetics.

Croce began his career as an erudite historian, interested in both local and national history, before turning to philosophy, beginning with Marxism (which he later abandoned), after meeting Antonio Labriola,[2] considered the father of Italian Marxism. It was Croce's 'Philosophy of Spirit' (*filosofia dello spirito*), the philosophical system he had first developed in the early 1900s, which led to the dynamic appearance of his thought onto the Italian and international cultural scenes. His philosophical 'debut' took place in 1902 with the publication of *Aesthetic*, followed by *Logic* in 1908, the *Philosophy of the Practical: Economic and Ethic* in 1909, and lastly, *Theory and the History of Historiography* in 1914.[3] Croce's role – which became determinant during Fascism, as the point of reference for adversaries to that regime and for defenders of individual rights – grew with the founding, in 1903, of the influential journal *La Critica*. Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944), an early collaborator and cofounder of this journal, later became an adversary to Croce and an active supporter of Fascism, also as Minister of Education.[4]

'Spirit' – understood as the living presence, found in every man, of the common faculties that have been historically set down in the course of civilization's development – is structured by Croce according to a simple, but effective, schema. It is manifested in two parts and four moments (which Gentile later disparagingly refers to – having become an opponent to Croce – as the 'four little words'): the theoretical part, divided into knowledge of the individual (aesthetics) and knowledge of the universal (logic); and the practical part, divided into individual will (economics) and universal will (ethics). The first element of each part is the indispensable step for the concrete existence of the second. It means that logic presupposes aesthetics, just as ethics presupposes economics, but that aesthetics and economics do not require, respectively, either logic or ethics. Unlike Hegelian dialectics, then, such moments of *Spirito* are neither in opposition, nor in contradiction, to one another; however, they are 'distinct,' which means they must remain separate. Opposites are located only within each 'distinct': beautiful and ugly, true and false, beneficial and detrimental, good and evil.

This system, meant to negate any abstraction, is characterized by Croce himself as 'historicism'; that is, the system is founded on the thesis of the absolute historicity and immanence of every human life and expression, on its dependence upon specific temporal contexts that, nevertheless, can be interpreted precisely by 'distincts.' History is the product of our actions incorporating themselves into this unique and non-transcendent world, that is, of the plunging and the irrevocable becoming of individual actions in the torrents of collective events; and it then transforms our actions beyond the intentions of each of us: we cannot step out of history, just as we cannot step out of our own skin. This gives rise to the Crocean denial of any religious transcendence, to a respect for life's hardships, and to an emphasis on individual responsibility. Such an approach does not at all imply having to accept the course of history as an inevitable necessity. Rather, pressured by ever new and continually arising practical needs, by the desire to be rid of the obscurities and phantasms that interfere with action, to be free of the servitude and burden of the past the individual interrogates history and makes it come alive, makes it his contemporary. Philosophy, defined by Croce as 'the methodology of historiography,' allows us

thus to comprehend concretely the sense of events, to convert the past into knowledge under the premise of our becoming the creators of a new history.

According to the Crocean 'religion of works,' therefore, it is only what is objectified, what enters in relation to the activity of others – leaving some sign – that has permanent value: not the impotent efforts, not the boasting, not the various forms of 'paralysis of will' that wear souls down, not the idle chatter. For this reason, as will be better understood later, art must be 'expression,' not the reclaiming of a nebulous inner life that would be too noble and profound for translation into language; it must be communication, knowledge, and not turbid sensualism nor the instrument of political and religious propaganda. For this reason, philosophy must become actual knowledge of the 'concrete universal,' of ideas that live incarnate in reality and not gathered from hazy abstractions or from merely convenient labels. For the same reason, 'economic' acts must be carried out in good conscience, without the intermingling of moral prejudices (the category of the 'useful' and of the 'vital,' this 'green' force in which Croce places the legacy of Machiavelli and of Marx, is what will later oblige him to modify further his theoretical system, destabilizing and threatening his doctrine in the overall balance of 'distincts'). For this reason, finally, moral actions are not disembodied ethereal acts, pure altruism aiming for a world that is different and superior to our own, but universal will in which individual will is presupposed, that is, actions directed toward the collective interest, by which each individual benefits but which presuppose a temporary abandonment of the individual's still licit egoism.

The life of the 'Spirit' is the endless fulfilment of the movement of the Whole through the works of individuals, who become 'immortal' in the secular sense and have value only if they knowingly agree to become the building material for the making of a history that rises above them but in which they are, in part, the actors: 'every one of our acts, upon completion, detaches from us and lives an immortal life, and we ourselves (who really are nothing more than the process of our actions) are immortal, because having lived is to live forever.'[5] In this unique world we of course suffer, but only in it are the objects of our every desire, passion, interest, and knowledge. In truth, we would not want another

world, the one religions promise: we are indissolubly bound to this 'earthness,' to this immanence. We must bravely immerse ourselves in it, accept the risk, the possibility of suffering, the disappointments, and the bitterness: 'Is life worth living if we must check our pulse every second and be wrapped in hot compresses and avoid any drafts of air for fear of some disease? Is being in love worth always thinking and caring for the hygiene of love, adjusting its dosages and moderating them, trying from time to time to abstain from it as an exercise in abstinence, afraid that the future may hold too many terrible shocks and torments?'[6]

3

Within the framework of his multiple interests, we can state beyond doubt that what constituted Croce's most enduring interest was his work on aesthetics, which began with his essay, *History Reduced under the General Concept of Art* (*La storia ridotta sotto il concetto generale dell'arte*) in 1893, and continued on to his final writings just before his death in 1952. The solution to problems that he reaches – and not without difficulty and ambiguity over the course of more than thirty years (from the Italian editions of *Aesthetics* in 1902 to its third revised edition of 1908, from the *Guide to Aesthetics* in 1912 to *Aesthetics in Nuce* in 1928, up to *Poetry* in 1936) – remains exemplary, even today, of his fertile originality.[7]

His was an undertaking that is only fully intelligible if we confront the question of aesthetics as Croce himself would have wanted, by penetrating the fortified 'quadrilateral'[8] of 'distincts,' where his ideas are honed and articulated, through successive differentiations and delimitations, taking their position through confutation and by moving beyond commonly held opinions or the more illustrious philosophical theories. In such a manner, the stronghold becomes a citadel the better armed and almost impenetrable unless we pass through its entire defence system.

That art is 'intuition,' an 'aural form of knowing,'[9] and not concept or judgment, that is, knowledge of the universal, has been the principal thesis of Crocean aesthetics since 1902. What is meant by intuition is the knowledge of things in their individuality (analogous to that of *res singulares*, which Spinoza attributes to 'intellectual love' in his *Ethics*). With

the following example, Croce explains what he means by intuition: 'this river, this lake, this stream, this rain, this glass of water; the concept, water, is not this or that occurrence or particular instance of it but water in general, at any time or in any place it appears, the material of infinite intuitions but of a single and constant concept.'[10] Pirandello, incidentally, became a vehement opponent of this 'arbitrary' separation of intuition from concept, of art from science, in that it splits up the 'compagination of conscience' and leads to an aesthetic that is 'rudimentary and incomplete.'[11]

The other aspect to which Croce continuously returns concerns the nexus between the cognitive and emotive sides of art or beauty, the relation between individual knowledge on the one hand, and feeling and passion – or, what he will later call the 'lyric' nature of this knowledge – on the other. Feeling, the artistic expression 'in the active and creative sense,' does not coincide, certainly, with the physiological one, which, in its 'cellular' state appears as interjection: 'Ah!' – 'Oh!' – 'Alas!' – and the like. Even Darwin, in his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872, trans. Italian 1878), recognizes the diversity of these expressions, while stating that 'in works of art, beauty is the chief object; and strongly contracted facial muscles destroy beauty.'[12] The heart, this 'vile muscle, poisonous to pure art' (Carducci),[13] must allow its contents, passions, to be brought to the light of intuition. In *Reflections on Art* (*Pensieri sull'arte*) (1928), Croce states that 'poetic expression is not exhausted in the release but reveals itself only in contemplation and when content with itself.'[14] Only contemplative detachment, the withdrawal from the storm or viscosity of passions, characterizes art and beauty. But feeling is not to be isolated from intuition and from expression, with which it is united in an 'a priori synthesis.' Feeling, more accurately, is contemplating the world *sub specie intuitionis*: 'As for this state of mind, which we call feeling, what else is it if not the whole spirit, which has thought, wanted, acted, and thinks and desires and suffers and enjoys, and is in itself tormented? Poetry resembles a ray of sunshine that shines upon this darkness and wraps it in its light, and makes clear all the hidden aspects of things. Poetry, therefore, is not the work of those empty of soul and narrow of mind; artists who, poorly espousing pure art and art for art's sake, close themselves off from life's tumult and anxiety of

thought show how completely unproductive they are, and at best, succeed at imitating others or a disjointed impressionism.'[15]

Pure intuition, being devoid of intellectual and logical referents, is full of feeling and passion, and only in men stirred by great passions do works of art rise: 'the eternal flower, grown out of their passion' (*BA*, 24). And yet art is such precisely because it constitutes a form of elaboration and of detachment from passion (indeed, this is what the ancients had in mind when speaking of 'catharsis'): 'In elaborating his impressions, man *liberates* himself from them. In objectifying them, he detaches from them and rises above them … The activity is liberating because it overcomes passivity. As a result, we also understand why we occasionally attribute to artists the greatest sensibility or *passionality*, and the greatest detachment or Olympian *calm*' (*E*, 24). Significantly, another form is represented by the objectification of pain and by the work of grieving. It is expressed in monuments, tombs, or ceremonies, which, in truth, are nothing more than a means entirely of our own making (and not simply attributable to the anonymous passage of 'time'), of our wanting to forget the deceased so that life may return to normal: 'by expressing sorrow in the various forms of celebration and cult of the dead, anguish is overcome by objectifying it. Thus, in wishing that the dead were not dead we begin actually to let them die within ourselves.'[16]

Similar to the elaboration of mourning, even in artistic activity something, in effect, does die within us every time we abandon our passions, our past experiences, especially if they have profoundly marked us, as in the case of deep trauma, joy, or solemn occasion. Yet conversely, does to contemplate life not also mean to live more intensely, to connect our individual experience to the dimension of universality? And is it not true perhaps that art appears at the same time as a way of strengthening our sense of reality and as an instrument to weaken that prepotent force, which renders us passive before it?

Yes, something does die and in every separation there is, in effect, a moment of ineliminable melancholy by which art and beauty are stricken:

> In order to render the impression poetry leaves behind in our souls, the word that came naturally to the lips was 'melancholy'; and, truly, it is the

> reconcilitation of opposites, in whose combat alone throbs with life – the vanishing of passions that together with pain produce I know not what voluptuous warmth, the separation from the *aiuola*[17] that makes us so fierce, but is, nonetheless, the little garden where we enjoy, we suffer, and we dream; this raising itself of poetry to heaven is at the same time a looking back that, without regrets, has still something of regret. Poetry was placed near love, almost a sister, and joined and combined with love into one creature that partakes of one and of the other. But poetry is rather the sunset of love in the euthanasia of remembrance. A veil of sorrow seems to shroud Beauty, and it is no veil but the very face of Beauty.' (*P*, 23)

This sorrow is, however, accompanied by the joy of 'having escaped from sea to shore' (fuor del pelago a la riva),[18] of finding calm after the storm, of making contact with totality: '[Is it] perhaps that the part and the whole, the individual and the cosmos, the finite and the infinite, have a reality, one apart from the other, one outside of the other?' (*BEA*, 152). With pure intuition, 'the individual throbs with the life of the whole, and the whole is in the life of the individual; and every true artistic representation is itself and the universe, the universe in that individual form, and that individual form as the universe … Therefore, it is intrinsically inconceivable that in artistic representation the mere particular, the abstract individual, the finite in its finiteness, could ever assert itself' (ibid.,152–3).

4

This operation of leaving the immediacy of past experience behind us is valid, in a different way, for all men. Art is called upon to operate on the grounds of what I would define as 'common-places,' similar to the piazzas or meeting places where men exchange their goods and discuss past experiences. These common-places are not to be confused with banalities. Rather, they are the zones of extreme concentration and sedimentation of experience and inquiry, shared by virtually everyone because they touch upon unavoidable common experiences, although seldom expressed in discussions, except in a superficial way, or remaining on the margins of what is expressible. Art instead gives them a lucid

form, articulated and meaningful and, above all, communicable. In communicative rituals, such common-places constitute the point of equilibrium between what we are capable of saying and what, in itself, seems ineffable but which can almost be instinctively understood by all those who have undergone similar trials and are able to integrate the words of others into their own experiences. Paradoxically, the majority of men are incapable of expressing what is most important to them, having the feelings but lacking the words. Poets have the words to express these common-places, in which all people can recognize themselves and which they feel speak of them. And at times they feel the words as intense emotion, in the form of a shiver, explosive joy, or aching melancholy, as if the deepest chords of their soul had been touched and made to vibrate.

Here it should be stressed that, for Croce, all men are endowed with genius, with the capacity to intuit, and therefore, to express what they feel:

> Nothing more than a quantitative difference is what we can admit to as constituting the meaning of the word *genius*, or as artistic genius – distinct from the non-genius – of the common man. It is said that great artists reveal us to ourselves. But how would that be possible if there was not an identical nature between our fancy and theirs, or if the difference was not only one of quantity? It would be better that *poëta nascitur* be stated as *homo nascitur poëta*, minor poet the one, major poet the other. Turning this quantitative difference into a qualitative difference led to the cult and superstition of genius, forgetting that genius did not descend from heaven but is humanity itself. The man of genius who puts on airs or proves himself to be far from this finds himself punished by becoming, or by appearing, rather ridiculous. Such is the genius of the romantic period, such is the *superman* of our times. (*E*, 18)

The polemic against the romantic conception of 'genius' or against the D'Annunzian superman is clear. But its implications are more profound: the separating of art from the common life of the spirit, the turning it into I know not what aristocratic circle or singular exercise, was among the principal causes that prevented aesthetics, the science of art, from attaining its true nature, the true roots of this in the human soul' (*E*, 17).

If art is democratic in everyone and aristocratic in artists, it does not elevate man; rather, it makes him withdraw into himself: 'If poetry were a language apart, a "language of gods," man would not understand it, and if it elevates him, it elevates him not above, but within himself: true democracy and true aristocracy, also in this case, coincide' (*BA*, 37).

However, this means that poetry's fruition also has a spiritual value, complete and autonomous in its scope; this does not coincide with either a moral or a pedagogical value, or with a utilitarian one, or with the theoretical demonstration of the truth of reason, or with one that is economic, tied to special interests. Instead, it is a question of favouring spiritual life, of communicating it in the form of intuition, in that it gives rhythm to the universe while thought turns it into a system.[19] Insofar as aesthetics, together with political economics, represents one of the two modern 'mundane sciences,' it favours and consolidates faith in the world. In art it is necessary that 'sensation be conceived as something active and cognitive and not as something passive … And, second, that it be taken in its purity, outside of any reflection and logical elaboration … With this twofold clarification, the active, cognitive, and unreflecting sensation becomes nothing other than a synonym for representation or intuition.'[20]

Great artists, therefore, reveal us to ourselves. It is this commonly held notion that, almost during the same years, finds its most clear and touching expression in Proust, who shows how art develops, in the manner of a photographic negative, what in our own lives and our experiences was already implicitly present, opening the spirit to different worlds. Art thus separates the spirit from the one and only world that is fabricated and restored on a daily basis in a self-evident form. According to Proust, great works of art, in fact, are charged with making us see

> that reality, remote from our daily preoccupations, from which we separate ourselves by an ever greater gulf as the conventional knowledge which we substitute for it grows thicker and more impermeable, that reality which it is very easy for us to die without ever having known and which is, quite simply, our life. Real life, life at last laid bare and illuminated – the only life in consequence which can be said to be really lived – is literature, and life thus defined is in a sense all the time immanent in ordinary men no less

> than in the artist. But most men do not see it because they do not seek to shed light upon it. And therefore their past is like a photographic darkroom encumbered with innumerable negatives which remain useless because the intellect has not developed them … Through art alone are we able to emerge from ourselves, to know what another person sees of a universe which is not the same as our own and of which, without art, the landscapes would remain as unknown to us as those that may exist on the moon. Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we see that world multiply itself and we have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists, worlds more different one from the other than those which revolve in infinite space, worlds which, centuries after the extinction of the fire from which their light first emanated, whether it is called Rembrandt or Vermeer, send us still each one its special radiance.[21]

Elaborating further on this concept, Proust, in the final pages of *Le temps retrouvé*, states his desire to leave to others his own book deciphered – the distilled 'vrai moi' of everyone – as it may be of help to others in interpreting their own existence. And if it achieves artistic form, the book in fact no longer belongs to its author:

> But to return to my own case, I thought more modestly of my book and it would be inaccurate even to say that I thought of those who would read it as 'my' readers. For it seemed to me that they would not be 'my' readers but the readers of their own selves, my book being merely a sort of magnifying glass like those which the optician at Combray used to offer his customers – it would be my book, but with its help I would furnish them with the means of reading what lay inside themselves.[22]

5

Even though art, together with religion, philosophy, and history, is a fellow citizen 'of the same world of theory and knowledge' (*BA*, 17), it nevertheless tells us nothing about the reality or unreality of the state of things as judgment can do. Art, the work of fancy, stops notoriously short of what is true and what is false, of what is a concept.[23] Intuition is the 'undifferentiated unity of perception of the real and the simple image of

the possible (*E*, 6),' or, as well, the 'non-distinction of reality and unreality, the image in its value of mere image (*BA*, 15).' For this reason, intuition is autonomous from the concept.[24] According to this approach, for Croce, the artist 'produces an image or a phantasm; and the person who enjoys art turns his eye to where the artist has pointed, looks through the opening that he made for him, and reproduces in himself that same image' (*BA*, 9). Such fanciful activity is distinguished from the fantasizing that wants to correct reality, as, for example, when we wonder what our lives would have been like if certain events that have marked us had unfolded differently. It is a futile pastime and – in case someone insists on these ruminations – a symptom of intellectual and moral failing. The error in logic is in forgetting that what we are is precisely because we have undergone these experiences. The question is, in fact,

> [a] little game we play with ourselves, in moments of idleness and laziness, daydreaming about which way our life might have gone if we had not met a person that we did meet, or if we had not committed a mistake that we did commit; in which, very carelessly, we treat ourselves as the constant and necessary element. And we do not think to replace mentally this 'we ourselves' as well, which is what it is in this moment – with its experiences, its regrets, and its daydreams – precisely for having met that given person then, and for having committed that mistake, except that, by reintegrating reality with the facts, the game of course would be interrupted and vanish.[25]

Art is as remote from passive mimesis as it is from arbitrary and confused imagination. It grasps the fulness of a world coherent with itself only by virtue of the 'poetic logic' that articulates it. For this reason it is difficult to express, and many delude themselves, believing they have in their possession, like great artists, completed intuitions. However, beauty consists precisely in actually expressing – in a single and irrepeatable work of art – that intuition which otherwise would remain indeterminate and vague in our feelings and in our mind. In this sense, beauty is simply '*expression achieved*, or better, *expression* – to be sure – since expression, when it is unachieved, is not expression' (*E*, 9).

A similar theory (with its identification not being readily understood as it forces the common usage of the terms 'intuition' and 'expression'

to mean the immediate knowing of something with the first, and the manifestation of it with the second) proves to be more accessible when we reveal the hidden prejudice in the belief that we fully intuit what we perceive or what we think:

> The principal reason why we find the thesis – that we defend – [of the identity of intuition and expression] to be paradoxical is the illusion or prejudice that we intuit reality more than we actually do. Some often dare to make the claim of having a number of important thoughts on their mind but of not being able to express them. In truth, if they really did have them, they would have formulated them with beautiful sounding words, and thereby would have expressed them. If, in the act of expressing them, those thoughts seem to fade, or become scant and poor, it is because, for him, they did not exist or were precisely that scant and poor … The world we ordinarily intuit is a meagre thing and consists of few expressions, which, little by little, become greater and more plentiful only with our increasing spiritual concentration in given moments. (*E,* 12)

Similar to those who delude themselves in regard to the extent of their own wealth and are then proven terribly wrong by the arithmetic, we are, for the most part, accustomed to overestimating the intensity and precision of our intuitive gift. The 'casting-out-nines,' or the *pons asinorum* of the expression, [26] exposes our shortcomings, while at the same time making us more aware of the fact that the painter (and even he, only in certain moments of grace) 'is a painter because he sees what others only feel, or can only catch a glimpse of, but do not see.'[27]

In the same way as many of his contemporaries (Edmund Husserl and Bertrand Russell among them), Croce is also against psychologism, that is that to say, against the primacy of consciousness separated from the world, against the cult of interiority, but he is also against the fetish of an external world completely detached from its subject and, in particular, against the conception of the senses as being mere passivity. The same experiment for artistic expression is also valid for the concept:

> … let us invite whoever claims its possession [of the *res*] to explain it in words and in other means of expression (graphic symbols and the like).

> If he refuses and says that his concept is so profound that no words suffice to translate it, we can be sure that either he deludes himself about possessing a concept and possesses only turbid phantasms or the odds and ends of ideas, or that his profound concept is only dimly foreseen by him and at most is just starting to form, and will be, but is not yet possessed. (*L*, 26)

In Croce, therefore, the pathos of communicability dominates, for which only what enters into the circle of the spiritual world has value: not pure interiority and not even pure exteriority, but, precisely, the completed identity of intuition and expression.

6

In the complex evolution of Croce's aesthetics, the *Breviario di estetica*[28] occupies a position of privilege. According to one of its translators and interpreters, Patrick Romanell of the United States, the *Breviario* is 'writ better' in respect to the *Estetica*, 'insofar as it brings together neatly the theoretical and historical ramifications of the subject which had been separated somewhat artificially, though intentionally, in the celebrated work of 1902.'[29]

In the English-speaking world the reception of Croce's aesthetic theory – in general, more than his philosophy – began early. In the United States, Joel Spingarn was the first to advance Croce's ideas; they began a correspondence in 1899 and discussed Croce's early works: the *Fundamental Principles of Aesthetics* (1900) and the *Aesthetic* (1902).[30] Moreover, the journal *La critica*, serving as an influential vehicle for the diffusion of Crocean thought, was soon found in every major North American library. And even if, with the exceptions of Joel Spingarn and Raffaello Piccoli,[31] Croce had few disciples in the United States, his concepts were known well enough to be subjects of debate, even into the 1960s. Hastily designated – also by John Dewey – with the label of 'idealist,' 'neo-idealist,' 'neo-Hegelian,' or 'romantic,' owing above all to the mediation of such English translations and interpretations as that of R.G. Collingwood,[32] Croce's theory of aesthetics underwent this reductive formulation, which was compensated, in a positive way, by his standing

as a philosopher of politics and ethics, and as a fierce adversary of Fascism and a tireless defender of liberty.

The debate on Croce's aesthetics enjoyed renewed vigour following the Second World War with the appearance of some notable works,[33] only to fall into obscurity later during the 1970s, when his ideas seemed virtually forgotten. In recent times we have witnessed a more dispassionate analysis of his ideas, attributable in part to the passage of time, which tends to dilute polemics, and in part to the recognition of the classical nature of Croce's works and to the international stature achieved and sustained by his thought, which is characterized by a limpid prose and coherent rigour.[34]

Debate over Croce's aesthetics is, and will continue to be, ongoing. One cannot in any event renounce his point of view, so arduously won. After all, Croce was aware of this himself, when, in his *Breviary of Aesthetics*, he writes with a mixture of pride and modesty: 'To say that art is intuition may not seem like much … Nor should it be any wonder that this philosophical conquest has cost an extraordinary amount of effort, because it is like having set foot on a hill long contested in battle, making it an altogether different accomplishment than a relaxed climb by a carefree hiker during peacetime. This is no mere resting place along a stroll, but the result and symbol of an army's victory' (*BA*, 18).

Translator's Introduction

HIROKO FUDEMOTO

One of the well-known perils of translating Benedetto Croce is met whenever an attempt is made to simplify his hypotactic syntax. By trimming it of the many words and connective clauses the grammar becomes more palatable to the reader, but the particular nuance of his thought may be sacrificed to a taste for economy. Accordingly, my role as translator was one of not merely parroting his words, but of having Croce's voice 'register' more with the reader. With this objective in mind, I emphasize that the endnotes to this translation are meant only to provide some background to the text. The exegesis of the *Breviary* is respectfully left to the student or scholar, to whom Croce indeed advises a return to the text, on further 'excursions.'

Giovanni Gullace, in the preface to his translation of Croce's *La Poesia* (1981), comments on how translators 'have tended to hurt Croce more than their own language,' and that he 'endeavored to do the opposite, because what matters here is the author's thought, not the stylistic elegance of the new medium.'[1] Such an approach contrasts with that of translator Arthur Livingston, who, some fifty years before Gullace, made this observation on translating *Frammenti di etica*:

> I have a feeling that the translator of Croce who is over-respectful of such dangers – [i.e., too wary of interpreting and thus rewriting Croce] – is likely to run into greater ones: the danger of leaving him unintelligible save to those few who are willing to prepare for reading him by a long and thorough study of all the philosophy of the nineteenth century; and the further danger of losing his clarity in the end by transferring his terms into an American language which has most of the same terms, but is coloured by a thought history different from the history of Croce's idealism.[2]

For this translation I have attempted to reconcile both approaches; similar to the objective of Gullace, it remains close to Croce's text, and being mindful of Livingston, I have included a selection of notes.

A first reading of this philosopher is not always straightforward. The reader is asked to engage in Croce's thought, which is encased within an older form of writing. As mentioned above, his sentences can be densely constructed, replete with connective clauses and historical, literary, cultural, and philosophical references, as well as parenthetical comments. Furthermore, readers are occasionally asked to set aside any conventional or current understanding of certain terminology. For example, the term 'fancy,' for Croce, is what today we call imagination; his use of 'imagination' is what we would call fantasy. With the acceptance of this challenge, the reward to the reader of the *Breviario* is an encounter with one whose erudition is undeniable, whose writing is almost geometrically precise, and whose speech is spiked with an occasional twist of ironic humour.

Why another English translation?[3] Croce's *Breviario* was commissioned for the translation series Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library, which brings to readers of English a selection of works by Italian authors that are considered for their literary, philosophical, or historical contribution to the study of ideas. The series also includes those works in Italian that have enjoyed a particular connection to other languages or cultures. Following such criteria, the *Breviario di estetica* is an ideal text, not only for its philosophical discussion but also because, as noted by Croce in his preface, he first wrote it as the inaugural address for the Rice Institute in Texas, in 1912.

How does one decide upon a word from one language to speak for a word in another? In the case of the word *breviario*, from Croce's title *Breviario di estetica*, we may first consider its definition. In Latin, *brevis* means brief, evolving later into *breviarium*, a compendium, or abridgement, and then to breviary. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines breviary as a 'brief statement, summary, or epitome,' and informs us that the Roman Catholic Church applied breviary to 'the book containing the "Divine Office" for each day, which those who are in orders are bound to recite.'[4] However, to call the translation a 'statement,' or 'summary,' or 'epitome of aesthetics' does not convey enough of what

awaits the reader in terms of its exploration of aesthetics. According to dictionaries of Italian, *breviario* signifies a text 'to which one regularly returns for precepts and rules,'[5] 'a work frequently read, as a source of constant reflection,'[6] and a 'book for spiritual guidance.'[7] In *Breviario di estetica* Croce addresses that sphere of 'knowledge of the particular' known as aesthetics within his philosophy of 'Spirit,' albeit secular, and since he surmises that the reader will be 'tempted by this bird's-eye view of the landscape,' and will then return and revisit its aesthetic 'orders' – *Breviary of Aesthetics: Four Lectures* seems appropriate as an English title.

The present translation is based on Benedetto Croce's *Breviario di estetica*: *Quattro Lezioni* (1913; 16th ed., Bari: Laterza, 1969). The footnote on Sainte-Beuve (p. 62) is the only one that Croce himself included, and though it did not appear in the 1913 first edition, it was included in subsequent printings with Laterza. For general background information, I began to add a few notes here and there but as their number arbitrarily grew, I thought it best finally to limit them to a selection, by no means exhaustive, of the many references infusing the text. I have also maintained the masculine designation in Croce's discourse, thus forgoing any he/she or his/her attributions to avoid imposing, post facto, a gender issue, which is better served in another forum.

In the Laterza editions, Croce visually conveyed emphasis through the use of two printing conventions, italic characters and letterspacing (a form in which the space between letters, or words, is wider than for the norm). In the Da Ponte edition, such letterspacing has been rendered in additional italics, in the belief that what the author wished to highlight for the reader should be made visible. My rendering of the *Breviary*, for the most part, remains close to Croce's syntax and vocabulary, unless the result proved to be unwieldy in English. However, as with any translation, it is understood that solutions are never definitive and never perfect, and wherever the present translation seems poorly wrought, the fault can be attributed only to this translator. And, as with every form of human expression, the *Breviario* is a living document; that is to say, it remains open to ongoing interpretation and renewal.

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BREVIARY OF AESTHETICS:
FOUR LECTURES

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Preface

On the occasion of the formal inauguration of the Rice Institute – celebrated in October of last year at the new and great University of Houston, in Texas – I was invited by the president of the university, Professor Edgar Lovett Odell, to give several lectures on the themes that form the argument of this short volume, and which, for the listeners, were to serve as an orientation to the problems central to the study of aesthetics. After having excused myself, owing to personal obligations that kept me from undertaking that lengthy trip to the Gulf of Mexico, the invitation was reissued to me, with swift courtesy, in a form dispensing with any bodily voyage, and with only a request for the 'manuscript' of my lectures, to be translated into English (which was then done), for its inclusion in the commemorative proceedings of the opening ceremony.

So it was that I initially wrote *Breviary of Aesthetics* in a matter of days, without any other intention than to honour this obligation, but once completed – and not without some intellectual gratification – it was clear to me that not only had the most important concepts from my previous works on this very argument been condensed, but they had been developed here with a better nexus and with greater lucidity than I achieved almost twelve years ago with the *Estetica*. It also occurred to me that my four lectures, collected in this little volume, could be useful to young people studying poetry, or art in general, and perhaps be of value in secondary schools as helpful reading for literary and philosophical teachings.

This is because I believe the study of Aesthetics, when properly taught, perhaps better than any other philosophical discipline, may encourage students to learn philosophy, as there is nothing that attracts the interest and attention of the young as quickly as art and poetry

whereas the study of Logic requires the methodology of scientific research and, to the young, its more theoretical parts remain too abstract. The subject of Ethics, moreover, usually sounds like a boring sermon, at least in Italy, where, for well-known historical reasons, any incentive from the religious spirit to meditate on the destiny of man is lacking, and so-called 'Psychology,' rather than leading to philosophy, is straying from it.

The questions posed by art, on the other hand, not only lead more easily and spontaneously to acquiring a habit for speculative thought but they also provide a foretaste to logic, ethics, and metaphysics. This is because, to be brief, to understand the relation between content and form in art, is to begin to understand a priori synthesis; to understand the relation between intuition and expression is to learn to overcome materialism along with spiritualistic dualism; to understand the empiricism of the classifications of art and literary genres is to gain a glimmer of insight into the difference between a naturalistic process and a philosophical one, and so forth.

In any event, this may only be an illusion of mine, born of what little experience I have of secondary schooling (which provides me with distant, but clear memories of the time I was a student, and upon which I base these thoughts), but such an illusion has persuaded me to have my American lectures published in Italian and be included in my friend Laterza's new 'School Texts Collection,' for which I wish him all good fortune.

B. C. (Naples, New Year's), 1913

1 'What is Art?'

To the question – What is art?[1] – we might respond in jest (but it would not be such a foolish jest) that art is what everyone knows it to be. And in truth, if in some way we were not to know what it is, we could not even ask the question, because every question implies a certain knowledge of what is being asked, designated by the question, and therefore qualified and known. This is evident in the correct and profound ideas we often overhear in reference to art stated by those whose profession is in neither philosophy nor theory – the layman, the artist (not a lover of reasoning), the ingenuous, even the average person – ideas that at times are implicit in the judgments they make about a work of art but which, at other times, actually take on the direct form of aphorisms and definitions. The thought does occur that, if we wanted, we could embarrass every proud philosopher who reckons he has 'discovered' the nature of art by placing before his eyes, and by having his ears resonate with, propositions written in the most common books and statements taken from the most ordinary of conversations, thus showing him that they already contain – clearly stated – his much vaunted discovery.

The philosopher, in this case, would have good reason to turn red, if, that is, he ever fostered the illusion of introducing, through his own doctrines, something entirely original of his own into the collective human consciousness, something outside of this consciousness, as the revelation of an entirely new world. But he remains unperturbed and continues along his own path, because he does not ignore the fact that the question on what is art (as with every philosophical question on the nature of the real or of knowledge in general) – if even, in the choice of words, the question takes on the aspect of a general and total problem, which is expected to be resolved for the first and last time – always

actually has a *circumstantial* meaning, referable to the particular difficulties that arise in a particular moment in the history of thought. It is certain that truth walks among us, like the *esprit* of the old French proverb, or, like metaphor – the 'queen of tropes,' according to rhetoricians – which Montaigne could recognize in the chatter of his chambermaid.[2] But the metaphor as used by the chambermaid is the solution to an expressive problem, proper to the emotions troubling the chambermaid at that moment, and the obvious assertions overheard either accidentally or intentionally every day on the question of art are solutions to logical problems presented to this or that individual who is not a philosopher by profession and who, despite this, as a man, is in some measure also a philosopher. And just as the metaphor as used by the chambermaid usually expresses a small and limited range of emotions with respect to that of the poet's, so too the obvious assertion made by the non-philosopher resolves a lesser problem than the one the philosopher poses for himself. The answer to what is art can sound outwardly similar in one and the other case, but we differentiate between each of the two cases in the diverse richness of its inmost content, because the answer of the philosopher worthy of that name has no more nor less than the assumption of satisfactorily resolving all problems that have arisen up to that moment throughout history on the nature of art, whereas the layman's answer, dealing with a much more restricted range, becomes ineffective outside of those limits. One example can be seen in the power of the eternal Socratic Method, and in how easily the skilled practitioner can leave the inexperienced confused and open-mouthed by the relentless questioning, even though he had begun by speaking well enough, but to whom – having been placed at risk throughout the course of the dialogue of losing even what little knowledge he possessed – no other defence remains than to retreat into his shell, declaring that he does not enjoy such 'subtleties.'

Here, then, is where the pride of the philosopher finds its only place: in the awareness of the greater intensity of his questions and of his answers; this pride does not go unaccompanied by modesty, that is, in his awareness that, if his range of thought is more extensive, or the most extensive it can be in a given moment, it nevertheless has its limits, drawn by the

history of that moment, and it cannot expect a value of totality, or as we might say, a *definitive* solution. The subsequent life of the spirit, renewing and multiplying the problems, renders any preceding solutions, not false, but inadequate, part of which fall into a number of those implicit truths, and part of which must be taken up once again and be integrated. A system is a house that, immediately after having been constructed and furnished, requires (being subject to the corrosive effects of the elements) the diligence, more or less active but assiduous, of maintenance; at some point it no longer helps to restore and to reinforce it, and it needs to be torn down and rebuilt from the foundation up, with, however, one primary difference: that in the work of thought, the perpetually new house is perpetually sustained by the old, which almost by magic continues to survive within it. As we know, those unfamiliar with this magic, the superficial-minded or ingenuous, are unnerved by it, so much so that one of their tiresome refrains against philosophy is that it constantly undoes its own work, and that one philosopher contradicts the other. As if man does not always make, unmake, and remake his houses, and the architect following is not the one to contradict the architect preceding him; as if from this making, unmaking, and remaking of houses, and from this contradiction between architects, we could arrive at the conclusion that it is pointless to build houses!

With the advantage of a greater intensity, the questions and answers of the philosopher also carry with them the risk of greater error, and are frequently marked by a kind of lack of common sense, which, because it belongs to a higher cultural sphere, does have – despite its being reproachable – an aristocratic character, the object not only of contempt and derision but also of concealed envy and admiration. Herein lies the contrast, which many delight in pointing out, between the level-headedness of the ordinary man and the extravagances of philosophers, it being clear that no person of common sense would have said, for example, that art is resonant of the sexual instinct, or that it is a harmful thing deserving to be banned from a well-governed republic,[3] absurdities which philosophers – and great philosophers – have even declared. But the innocence of the man of common sense is poverty, the innocence of the primitive; and however often one has longed for the simple life of the primitive or called for a way to rescue common sense from

philosophy, the fact remains that the spirit, in its development, courageously confronts, since it cannot do without them, the dangers of civilization and the momentary loss of common sense. On his search regarding the question of art, the philosopher is compelled to walk along paths of error to discover the path of truth, which is no different from them and is the same; however, it is traversed by a thread that allows the philosopher control over the labyrinth.[4]

The close nexus between error and truth is born of this, which is, that a plain and complete error is inconceivable. And, because it is inconceivable – it does not exist. Error speaks with a dual voice, one of which states what is false, but the other denies it; and it is this struggle between yes and no that is called a contradiction. Therefore, when, from a general consideration, we get down to examining, in its parts and in its precision, a theory that has been denounced as erroneous, we find in that same theory the remedy to its error, which is the true theory that germinates from the ground of error.[5] And we see that those who claim the right to reduce art to the sexual instinct – in order to demonstrate their thesis – return to arguments and mediations, which, rather than uniting, separate art from that instinct; or that the one that drove poetry out from well-governed republics remained apprehensive about the banning, and he himself created, in that act, a new sublime poetry.[6] There have been historic periods in which the most distorted and coarse doctrines of art predominated, but this did not prevent one even during those times to discern consistently, in a very sound way, the beautiful from the ugly, and to reason quite subtly around it, when – abstract theory aside – one arrived at particular cases. Error is always condemned, not by the words of a judge but, *ex ore suo,* by its own words.

Because of this close nexus to error, the assertion of truth is always a process of struggle, by which it is freeing itself in the error from the error, whence there is another pious but impossible hope, the demand that truth be directly exposed, without discussion or polemic, allowing it to proceed majestically, alone, as if such a staged performance could be the apt symbol for truth, which is thought itself, and, as thought, is always active and struggling. In fact, no one succeeds in exposing a truth if not by way of a critical evaluation of the different solutions to the problem to

which that truth refers. And there is no shoddy treatment of a philosophical science, no little school manual nor academic dissertation that does not place at the beginning, or does not contain within its body, a survey of opinions historically established or theoretically possible, which it intends to oppose and to correct. It is an evaluation that, no matter how often executed in an arbitrary and disorganized manner, precisely expresses the legitimate need, in treating a problem, to cover all solutions attempted in history or that can be attempted in theory (that is, at the present moment but still in history), in such a way that the new solution includes in itself all preceding labour of the human spirit.

This need is a *logical* need, and as such, it is intrinsic to every true thought and inseparable from it; we must not confuse it with a given literary form of exposition, to avoid falling into the pedantry for which Scholastics in the Middle Ages and the dialectics of the Hegelian school in the nineteenth-century were famous, and which is quite similar to formalistic superstition, believing in the wondrous faculty of a certain extrinsic and mechanical manner of philosophical exposition. In short, we must understand it in a substantive rather than an accidental sense, respecting the spirit and not the letter, and be at liberty to proceed with the exposition of our own thought, according to the times, the place, and the people. And so, in these brief lectures, meant to be an orientation to considering questions on art, I will refrain from narrating (as I have done elsewhere)[7] the history of aesthetic thought or from dialectically expounding (as I have also done elsewhere) on the entire process of liberation from erroneous conceptions of art, from the poorest ascending ever higher to the richest. And I will fling far from the reader's reach, though not from my own, some of the luggage, which they will be bringing later, when, tempted by this bird's-eye view of the landscape, they may want to conduct more specialized excursions to study this part or that, or to revisit it all again, piece by piece.

Returning now to the question that first prompted this indispensable prologue (indispensable for the removal of any trace of pretence from my talk, along with any allegation of being useless): 'What is art?' To this question I immediately respond, very simply, that art is *vision* or *intuition.* The artist produces an image or phantasm, and the person who enjoys art turns his eye to where the artist has pointed, looks through

the opening he made for him, and reproduces in himself that same image. The words 'intuition,' 'vision,' 'contemplation,' 'fancy,'[8] 'imagination,'[9] 'depiction,' 'representation,' and the like continuously return almost synonymously in discussions on art, and all bring to mind the same concept, or the same realm of concepts, an indication of universal consensus. Yet this response of mine, that art is intuition, draws both strength and meaning from all that it implicitly negates and from which it distinguishes art. But which negations does it include? I will indicate the main ones, or at least the ones that for us, at this moment in our culture, are the most important.

This response refutes first and foremost that art is a *physical fact*, for example, certain given colours or colour combinations, certain given forms of the body, certain given sounds or combinations of sounds, certain given phenomena of heat or electricity; in short, whatever is designated as 'physical.' The connection to the error of 'physicalizing' art already exists in popular thinking, and like the child that touches a bubble of soap – wanting to touch its rainbow – the human spirit, admiring beautiful things, spontaneously turns to an external nature in order to trace the causes, and undertakes to think, or believes it must think, that certain colours are beautiful, while others are ugly, and that certain forms of the body are beautiful, while others are ugly. Deliberately and methodically this effort has then been repeated more than once in the history of thought: from the 'canons' set forth by Greek and Renaissance artists and theorists[10] on the beauty of the human body, from the speculation on geometric and numeric relations determinable in shapes and sounds, up to the studies conducted by nineteenth-century aestheticians (Fechner, for example)[11] and to the 'papers' that, at conferences today on philosophy, psychology, and the natural sciences, the inexperienced habitually present on relationships between physical phenomena and art. And if we ask for what reason art could not be a physical fact, the reply must be that, in the first place, physical facts *have no reality*, and that art, to which many devote their entire lives and which fills all of us with divine joy, is *extremely real*; so art cannot be a physical fact, which is something that is not real. At first glance, this undoubtedly appears paradoxical, because to the average person nothing seems

more solid and certain than the physical world; but it is not given to us, in the interest of truth, to abandon sound reasoning or to substitute it with something less than sound simply because a first impression may appear false to us. And, besides, to overcome the strangeness and difficulty of that truth, to become more familiar with it, we can move on to consider that the proof of the non-reality of the physical world not only has been established in an irrefutable way and is acknowledged by all philosophers (those who are neither crass materialists nor caught up in the blatant contradictions of materialism), but is professed by physicists themselves, in the philosophical outlines they mix in with their science, when they conceive of physical phenomena as products of principles removed from our experience – of atoms, or of ether – or as a manifestation of an Unknowable: the same Matter of the materialists is, after all, a supermaterial principle.[12] And so, physical facts reveal themselves, through their internal logic and common agreement, not yet as a reality, but as an *intellectual construct meant for scientific purposes*. As a consequent, the question of whether or not art is a physical fact must rationally assume this different meaning: whether or not it is possible *to construct art physically*. And this is indeed possible; we do it, in fact, when, distracted from the sense of a poem and forgoing our enjoyment of it, we start (by way of an example) to count how many words are in the composition of a poem and divide them into syllables and letters, or, distracted from the aesthetic effect of a statue, we measure and weigh it. It is something that is extremely useful for those who package statues, just as the former is useful for typographers who must 'compose' a page of poetry, but it is completely useless for the one who contemplates art and for the scholar of art, for whom it is neither helpful, nor permissible, to be 'distracted' from his object proper. Not even in this second meaning, then, is art a physical fact; that is, when we set out to penetrate the nature of art and the way it operates, it is of no value for us to construct it physically.

Another negation is implicit in the definition of art as intuition; that is, if art is intuition, and if intuition means *theory* in the original sense of contemplation, then art cannot be a utilitarian act. A utilitarian act always aims to arrive at pleasure and thus to avoid pain, whereas art, considered in its proper nature, has nothing in common with *utility* and with *pleasure* and with *pain* as such. In fact, we can concede, with little

resistance, that pleasure as a pleasure, any pleasure, is not in itself artistic: the pleasure of drinking water to quench our thirst, of walking outdoors to stretch our lower limbs and allow our blood to circulate more easily, of attaining a hoped for position that stabilizes our practical life, and so on, is not artistic. Even in relations that take place between ourselves and works of art, the difference between art and pleasure leaps out at us, because the figure represented can be dear to us and awaken the most wonderful memories, and yet the painting can be ugly; or, to the contrary, the painting can be beautiful and the figure represented is hateful in our heart; or the painting itself, which we agree is beautiful, can then provoke anger and envy because it is the work of our enemy or rival, to whom it will bring an advantage and confer new power: our practical interests, with their correlative pleasures and pains, intermingle with, at times become confused with, or disturb, but they never *fuse* with our aesthetic interest. At most, to sustain more solidly the definition of art as the pleasurable, we can state that art is not the pleasurable in general, although it is a *particular* form of the pleasurable. But this restriction is no longer a defence and is, instead, a true abandonment of that thesis, because, assuming that art is a particular form of pleasure, its distinctive character would be given, not by the pleasurable but by what distinguishes that pleasurable form from other pleasurable forms, and it would be better to turn our investigation to that distinctive element rather than to what is pleasurable, or different from the pleasurable. Nevertheless, the doctrine that defines art as the pleasurable has a special designation – Hedonistic aesthetics – and a long and complicated chapter in the history of aesthetic theory: it was already known during the Greco-Roman era, prevailed in the eighteenth century, flourished again in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and still enjoys much favour, and is especially well received among novices of aesthetic theory, who are struck above all by the fact that art arouses pleasure. The life of this doctrine has consisted in proposing, each time, one or another class of pleasures, or more classes combined (the pleasure of our higher senses, the pleasure of play, the awareness of one's own strength, one's own eroticism, and so on), or by adding elements differing from the pleasurable, the useful for instance (when it was understood as being distinct from the pleasurable), the satisfaction of cognitive and moral needs, and

so forth. The progress of this doctrine developed precisely by virtue of this, its very restlessness, and by allowing to ferment within its viscera the extraneous elements that had been introduced by it out of a need to reconcile itself in some way with the reality of art, and thereby arrive at its dissolution as hedonistic doctrine and to promote, not intentionally, a new one, or at least call attention to its necessity. And since every error has an element of truth (as was seen in the case of physical theory, which is the possibility of the physical 'construction' of art, as of any other fact), hedonistic theory has an eternal element of truth by placing, in relief, its hedonistic accompaniment, that is, the pleasure that is common to all aesthetic activity, and to every other form of spiritual activity, and which is not at all denied by flatly refusing to identify art with pleasure and by distinguishing art from pleasure, thus defining it as intuition.

A third negation that results from the theory that art is intuition is that art is a *moral act*, which is to say, that form of practical act that, even though necessarily combining with the useful and with pleasure or pain, is not immediately utilitarian and hedonistic, and moves in a superior spiritual sphere. But intuition, being a theoretical act, is opposed to anything practical, and in truth, art, as in the age-old observation, is not born of an act of will: the good will that defines an honest man does not define the artist. And since it is not born of an act of will, it also avoids all moral discrimination, not because it has been granted a privilege of exemption, but simply because moral discrimination cannot find a way to apply itself to art. An artistic image may portray an act morally laudable or reprehensible, but the image itself, in that it is an image, is neither morally laudable nor reprehensible. Not only is there no penal code that can sentence an image to prison or to death, but no moral judgment, passed by a rational person, can make the image its object: otherwise it would be like judging Dante's Francesca as immoral, or Shakespeare's Cordelia as moral (who but serve as simple artistic devices[13] and as musical notes from the souls of Dante and Shakespeare), and like judging a square moral or a triangle immoral. In any case, the moralistic theory of art is also represented in the history of aesthetic doctrines, and is not completely dead today, even though it has been greatly discredited in common opinion – discredited not only for its

intrinsic flaw but also, in some measure, for the moral flaw of some tendencies today that facilitate, thanks to their psychologic irritation, that rejection, which should be done – and which we are doing here – for strictly logical reasons. A derivation of the moralistic doctrine is that of a predestined end for art: leading to goodness, encouraging the abhorrence of evil, correcting and improving morals; and demanding that artists contribute on their part to the public education of the people, to strengthen the national or warlike spirit of a people, to spread the ideals of a simple and industrious life, and so on. These are all things that art cannot do, just as geometry cannot do them, although geometry has not lost its respectability at all for this inability; and there is no reason why art should then lose its respectability. That art could not accomplish these things had been understood even by the aesthetic moralists, who were therefore quite willing to reach a compromise with it, by allowing art to promote even pleasures that were not moral as long as they were not blatantly dishonest; or by recommending that both the control and the hedonistic power that it possessed over men's souls be used for a good cause, and to gild the pill, to sweeten the rim of the glass containing the bitter medicine,[14] in conclusion, to act like a courtesan,[15] yes – (because art was unable to give up this age-old and natural habit) – but at the service of the Holy Church or of morality. At other times, they thought of art as a worthy didactic tool, because not only virtue but also science is a harsh undertaking, and art could minimize that harshness and make the entrance to the halls of science both attractive and entertaining, or better yet, lead men as if through a garden of Armida,[16] happily and sensually, without them being aware of the great benefit they were receiving, and of the crisis of renewal they themselves were undertaking. When discussing these theories today, we cannot help but smile, but we must not forget that these were serious matters and corresponded to a serious effort to understand the nature of art and to elevate it as a concept, some of whose believers (confining ourselves to Italian literature) were named Dante and Tasso, Parini and Alfieri, Manzoni and Mazzini.[17] And even the moralistic doctrine on art was, is, and forever will be beneficial for its very contradictions, just as it was, is, and will be an effort, however regrettable, to separate art from the mere pleasurable (with which it is sometimes confused), and assign it

to a more dignified place. This doctrine also has its side of truth, because if art is beyond morality, the artist, who is neither on this nor that side of morality but under the domain of art, being a man, cannot avoid the responsibilities of men; and he must consider art itself – the art that is not, nor ever will be morality – as a mission, practised as a priesthood.

Again (and this is the last, and perhaps the most important, of general negations appropriate for me intentionally to recall), with the definition of art as intuition, it is denied that art has the character of *conceptual knowledge*. Conceptual knowledge, which in its pure form is philosophical, is always realistic and aims to establish reality against unreality, or to reduce unreality by having it included within reality as a subordinate moment of reality itself. But intuition means, precisely, the lack of distinction between reality and unreality, the image in its value as a mere image, the pure ideality of the image; and, by contrasting intuitive or sensible knowledge to conceptual or intelligible knowledge, the aesthetic to the noetic, we aim to assert the autonomy of this more simple and elementary form of knowledge, which has been compared to the dream (the dream, not the sleep) of theoretical life, in respect to which, philosophy is the waking state. And in truth, whoever asks before a work of art, if what the artist has expressed is metaphysically and historically true or false, asks a meaningless question, and makes the error analogous to that of whoever would bring the airy images of fancy before a court of morality. The question is meaningless because the distinction between what is true or what is false always concerns an affirmation of reality, that is, a judgment; but it cannot be on the presentation of an image or over a mere subject, which is not subject to judgment, since it is lacking the qualification or the predicate. It is pointless to argue that the individuality of an image does not exist without a reference to the universal, of which that image is its individuation, because of course here we do not deny that the universal, like the spirit of God, is everywhere and animates all things, but we do deny that, since intuition is intuition, the universal is logically explicit and is thought. And it is also pointless to call upon the principle of the unity of the spirit, which is not shaken but rather is reinforced by the clear distinction between fancy and thought, because only from the distinction is opposition born and from the opposition, concrete unity.

Ideality (as this aspect has also been called that distinguishes intuition from concept, art from philosophy and from history, from affirmation of the universal and from perception or narration of what has happened) is the ulterior virtue of art: the moment reflection and judgment develop from that ideality, art dissipates and dies. It dies in the artist who becomes his own critic, and it dies in the spectator or the listener who, from rapt contemplator of art becomes a pensive observer of life.

However, the distinction of art from philosophy (as understood in its broadest sense, which encompasses any thinking of the real) draws along with it other distinctions, first among which is that of art from *myth*. Because myth, for those who believe in it, stands as the revelation and knowledge of reality in opposition to unreality, expelling from itself all other beliefs as illusory and false. Art can become myth only for the one who no longer believes in art, for whom the value of mythology is one of a metaphor, of the austere world of the gods as a beautiful world, of God as an image of the sublime. Considered, therefore, in its genuine reality – in the soul of the believer and not of course in the non-believer – myth is religion and not mere fancy; and religion is philosophy, philosophy in progress, philosophy more or less perfect, but philosophy, just as philosophy is religion, more or less purified and elaborated, in a continuous process of elaboration and purification, but religion or thought of the Absolute and of the Eternal. Art, to be myth and religion, is precisely lacking in thought and the faith generated from it: the artist does not believe or disbelieve in his image; he produces it. For a different reason, the concept of art as intuition also excludes the conception of art as a production of *classes and types*, *species and genera*, and even (according to what a great mathematician and philosopher[18] had to say about music) as an exercise of an unconscious *arithmetic*; that is, intuition distinguishes art from the positive sciences and from mathematics, in both of which conceptual form occurs, although it is lacking in realistic quality, as mere general representation or mere abstraction. Except ideality, which the natural sciences and mathematics seem to have acquired as opposed to the world of philosophy, religion, and history, and which seemed to bring it closer to art (about which scientists and mathematicians are given to boasting lately, of being creators of worlds, of *fictiones*, which are similar – even in the vocabulary they designate to

them – to the fictions and inventions of poets), is gained at the expense of concrete thinking, by way of a generalization and an abstraction, which are arbitrary, wilful decisions – practical acts, and, as practical acts, extraneous and inimical to the world of art. It then follows that art would show an even greater repugnance to the positive sciences and mathematics than to philosophy, religion, or history, because these present themselves as fellow citizens in the same world of theory and of knowledge, whereas the others offend it with their disrespectful practice toward contemplation. Poetry and classification, and even worse, poetry and mathematics seem as unsuited as fire and water: the *esprit mathématique* and the *esprit scientifique* are the greatest sworn enemies of the *esprit poétique*; the times in which the natural sciences and mathematics prevail (during the intellectualist eighteenth century, for instance) are the most sterile for poetry.

This assertion of the alogical character of art, as I have said, is the most difficult and the most important of the polemics included in the art-intuition formula, because theories that attempt to explain art as philosophy, as religion, as history, or as science, and to a lesser extent, as mathematics, in fact occupy the greater part of the history of aesthetic science, which is adorned with the names of some of the greatest philosophers. In nineteenth-century philosophy, examples of the identification or confusion of art with religion and with philosophy are provided by Schelling and Hegel; of its confusion with the natural sciences, by Taine; of that with historical observation and documentation, by the French naturalists; and of its confusion with mathematics, by the formalism of the Herbartians.[19] But it would be futile to search in all of those authors, and in others we could name, for pure examples of those errors because error is never 'pure'; if this were the case, it would be truth. And therefore even the doctrines – which for brevity I will call 'conceptualistic' – on art contain in themselves dissolving elements, the more numerous and effective as the more energetic was the spirit of the philosopher professing them; and in no one as numerous and effective, therefore, as in Schelling and in Hegel. Both men had such a keen awareness of artistic production as to suggest, with their observations and particular developments, a theory contrary to the one proposed by their systems. After all, the same conceptualistic theories not only are

superior to the ones previously examined because they acknowledge the *theoretical* character of art, but they also make their contribution to the true doctrine through the requirement they contain for a determination of relations (which, if they are relations of distinction, they are also of unity) between fancy and logic, between art and thought.

And here we can already see how the extremely simple formula that 'art is intuition' – which, translated into synonymous terms (that 'art is the work of fancy,' for example), is heard from the mouths of those who every day speak about art, and is found in older terminology ('imitation,' 'fiction,' 'fable,' and so on) in various old books – when pronounced now within the context of a philosophical discourse, it fills with an historical, political, and polemical content, the richness of which it has been possible to offer only a taste. Nor should it be of any wonder that this philosophical conquest has cost an extraordinary amount of effort, because it is like having set foot on a hill long contested in battle, making it an altogether different accomplishment from a relaxed climb by a carefree hiker during peacetime. This is no mere resting place along a stroll but the result and symbol of an army's victory. The historian of Aesthetics follows in the footsteps of this arduous march, in which (and here is more magic of thinking) the victor, instead of losing strength from his adversary's blows, gains from them in strength and reaches the coveted knoll, thus denying his adversary but still remaining in his company. Here, I can only comment in passing on the importance of the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis* (which arose in opposition to Plato's condemnation of poetry), and on the attempt by that same philosopher to make a distinction between *poetry* and *history*[20] – a concept not sufficiently developed, and perhaps not fully formed in his mind, for which it remained long misunderstood, but that would become, many centuries later in modern times, the departure point of aesthetic thought. I will also briefly mention the gradual awareness of the difference between *logic* and *fancy*, between *judgment* and *taste*, between *intellect* and *genius* – which increasingly enlivened the course of the seventeenth century – and the solemn form that the contrast between *poetry* and *metaphysics* took in the *Scienza nuova*, by Vico; and again the Scholastic construction of an *aesthetica*, distinct from the *logica*, as *gnoseologia inferior* and *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*, through the work by Baumgarten, who, moreover, remained entangled

in a conceptualistic notion of art and did not adapt the proposition, which he had formed, to his work; and Kant's criticism of Baumgarten and all followers of Leibniz and Wolff, which made clear how intuition is intuition and not a 'confused concept'; and the romanticism that, with its artistic criticism and its stories, better perhaps than with its systems, developed the new idea of art, heralded by Vico;[21] and finally, the criticism in Italy initiated by Francesco De Sanctis,[22] which, against any utilitarianism, moralism, and conceptualism, asserted art as *pure form* (in his words) or as pure intuition.

And yet, at the foot of truth, 'like a shoot'[23] – as in the tercet by Father Dante – a doubt is born, which then drives man's intellect 'from height to height.' The doctrine of art, as intuition, as fancy, as form, gives rise to an ulterior (and I have not yet said 'last') problem, which is no longer one of opposition or of distinction from physics, hedonism, ethics, and logic, but internal to the field of images itself; and by putting into question the adequacy of the image to define the character of art, it in fact sidesteps the manner of discerning the genuine image from the spurious and in so doing enriches the concept of the image and of art. What function (one wonders) can a world of mere images have in the spirit of Man, devoid of philosophical, historical, religious, or scientific value, devoid even of moral or hedonistic value? What is more futile than dreaming with open eyes in a life that demands not only the eyes but that the mind be open and the spirit vibrant? Pure images! However, to live on pure images has the less than honourable name of 'daydreaming' – that usually follows the epithet of 'idle' – and is something rather unproductive and vapid. Could this be art? Indeed, there are times when we enjoy ourselves by reading some dime-novel, where image after image follow one another in the most diverse and unexpected ways, but we enjoy this during moments of fatigue, when we are forced to kill time, and are fully aware that it is not art. In such cases, it is a matter of a pastime and a game, but if art were a game, and a pastime, it would fall into the broad, always welcoming, embrace of hedonistic doctrines. A utilitarian and hedonistic need is what occasionally pushes us to relax the bow of the mind and the will, lean back, and allow images to parade by in our memory, or combine them in odd ways in our imagination, in

a kind of reverie, which we shake off the moment our rest is over. And we shake it off at times to return precisely to the work of making art, which is never achieved by lying down. So it is that, either art is not pure intuition, and the demands made by the doctrines – which we thought were refuted above – then remain unsatisfied, and is then the reason why the refutation of those doctrines is itself troubled by doubt; or that intuition cannot consist of a simple imagining.

To narrow the problem and make it more difficult, it is best to eliminate from it right away that part for which there is an easy answer, and which I did not want to overlook precisely because it usually becomes muddled and confused with it. In truth, intuition is the production of an image and not of an incoherent mass of images obtained by recalling past images, by having them arbitrarily follow one after the other, by combining – out of a similar arbitrary act – one image with another, as in attaching the head of a man to the neck of a horse and making a childish game of it. To express this distinction between intuition and reverie, classical Poetics[24] made use above all of the concept of *unity*, requiring of whatever artistic work to be done that it be *simplex et unum*, or the similar concept of *unity in variety*; that is, that multiple images should again find their centre and merge together into a whole image. Arising from the same need was the distinction that was formulated by nineteenth-century aesthetics, and found in not a few of its philosophers, between *fancy* (that is, the artistic faculty proper) and *imagination* (that is, the extra-artistic faculty). The heaping of images, selecting them, chopping them up, combining them, presupposes, in the spirit, the production and possession of single images; and while fancy is the producer, imagination is the parasite, suitable for extrinsic combinations and not for generating an organism and life. The more profound problem that underlies the formula, which I initially presented somewhat superficially, is therefore: what task awaits the pure image in the life of the spirit? Or (which in the end means the same thing): how is a pure image born? Every brilliant work of art sparks a long line of imitators who, in fact, repeat, chop up, combine, and mechanically exaggerate that work, and they represent the part of imagination that moves toward or against fancy. But what is the justification or what is the genesis of a brilliant work, which is then subject (sign of glory!) to so much

torment? To clarify this point, we must still examine further the character of fancy and of pure intuition.

The best way to prepare for this deeper analysis is to recall and to critique the theories through which the attempt was made (being careful not to fall back into realism or conceptualism) to differentiate artistic intuition from mere incoherent imagination, and to establish in what the principle of unity consists, and justify the productive character of fancy. It has been said that the artistic image is such when it joins what is sensible to what is intelligible, and represents an *idea*. Now then, 'intelligible' and 'idea' cannot signify something other than concept (nor does it have any other meaning for the followers of this doctrine), and may even be the concrete concept or idea proper to high philosophical speculation, different from the abstract concept and from the one representative of the sciences. In any event, the concept or the idea always unites the intelligible to the sensible, and not only in art, because the new concept of the concept, inaugurated by Kant and immanent (so to speak) in all of modern thought, mends the breach between the sensible world and the intelligible world by conceiving the concept as judgment, and judgment as an a priori synthesis, and the a priori synthesis as the word that becomes flesh, as history. Therefore, that definition of 'art,' contrary to its purpose, leads fancy back to logic and art back to philosophy, and proves to be effective, at most, against the abstract conception of science, but not yet toward the problem of art (Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, of the aesthetic and teleological, had precisely this historical function of correcting whatever still remained abstract in his *Critique of Pure Reason*). To require a sensible element for the concept, beyond what it already contains in itself, as a concrete concept, and beyond the words with which it is expressed, would be something superfluous. By insisting on this requirement, we in fact depart from the conception of art as philosophy or as history, but only to pass to the conception of art as *allegory*. The insurmountable difficulties associated with allegory are well known, as is its frigid – and antiartistic – character known, and universally felt. Allegory is the extrinsic union, or the conventional and arbitrary juxtaposition of two spiritual facts – of a concept or thought and an image – for which one holds that *this* image must represent *that* concept. And not only, thanks to allegory, is the unitary character of the

artistic image not explained, but what is more, a duality is established, deliberately, because in that juxtaposition thought remains thought and the image remains image, without a relationship between the two, so much so that in contemplating the image, we forget the concept, without peril, in fact as an advantage; and in thinking about the concept, we dissolve, also to our advantage, the superfluous and bothersome image. Allegory met with great favour in the Middle Ages, in that Germanic and Romanic admixture of cruelty and of culture, of vigorous fancy and of subtle reflection, but it was theoretical prejudice – and not the actual reality of medieval art itself – which, where there is art, either rejects allegory or resolves it in itself. And this need to resolve the allegorical dualism leads, in fact, to a refinement of the theory of intuition as allegory of the idea in the other theory of intuition as *symbol*, because in the symbol, the idea no longer stands by itself, thinkable as separate from the symbolizing representation, nor can this stand by itself, representable in a vivid manner without the symbolized idea. The idea completely disappears in the representation – as Vischer[25] said, who, if anything, is responsible for such a prosaic comparison of so poetic and metaphysical a matter – like a piece of sugar dissolved in a glass of water, which remains in the water and has an effect on every molecule of water but is no longer to be found again as a piece of sugar. However, the idea, which has disappeared, the idea that has entirely become representation, the idea that can no longer be grasped as idea (unless we extract it, like the sugar from sugared water) is no longer idea, and is only the sign of the still undiscovered principle of the unity of the artistic image. Without doubt, art is symbol, all symbol, that is, all signifying, but symbol of what? Signifying what? Intuition is truly artistic, is truly intuition, and not a turbulent mass of images, only when it has a vital principle that animates it, becoming at one with it. But what is this principle?

We can say the answer to this question becomes apparent, as a result, from the examination of the greatest of rivalries known between tendencies in the field of art (and which does not appear only in the age from which it took its name, and in which it prevailed): the conflict between *romanticism* and *classicism*. In general terms, convenient for our use here and leaving aside any minor or accidental determinations,

romanticism asks of art, above all, spontaneous and violent outbursts of feelings, love and hate, anguish and joy, desperation and elation, and is readily contented and pleased with hazy, indistinct images with a fragmented and implied style, with vague suggestions, with inexact phrases, with powerful and murky sketches; whereas, classicism loves the calm soul, the learned design, precisely sketched character studies, deliberation, balance, clarity. And where classicism tends resolutely toward *representation*, romanticism tends toward *feeling*. And whoever sides with one or the other point of view finds abundant reasons to uphold it and to refute the opposing point of view. The romantics say, what good is an art, rich in precise images, when it does not speak to the heart? And, if art does speak to the heart, what does it matter if its images are not precise? The classicists say: What good is stirring up feelings if the spirit cannot find calm in a beautiful image? And, if the image is beautiful, if it satisfies our taste, what does the absence of that tumult matter, when we can all experience it outside of art, and more often than we would wish from life? Except that, when we tire of the meaningless defence of one or the other partial point of view, when, above all, from ordinary works of art, produced by the romantic and classical schools, from works convulsed with passion and from the coldly precise ones we turn our gaze to works created, not by the pupils but by the teachers, not by the mediocre but by the masters, we see the conflict disappear and there is no further need for one slogan over the other. Great artists, great works, or the great parts of those works cannot be called either romantic or classical, nor passionate or representative, because they are simultaneously classical and romantic, emotional and representative – a powerful feeling entirely turned into clearest representation. This is distinctly true of Greek works of art, and the art and poetry of Italy: the transcendence of the Middle Ages is imprinted in Dante's tercets; the melancholy and delicate vision, in the transparency of Petrarch's sonnets and canzoni; the wise life experiences and parody of traditional legends, in Ariosto's limpid octaves; the heroism and reflections on death, in Foscolo's perfect unrhymed hendecasyllables, and the never-ending vanity of all, in Giacomo Leopardi's sober and austere cantos. And – with no desire to equate them to the works previously cited – even the voluptuous refinements and animal sensuality of international decadentism

today were perhaps best expressed in the prose and verse of an Italian, Gabriele D'Annunzio. The souls of these poets were profoundly passionate (even the tranquil Ludovico Ariosto, so loving and so tender, often withholding his emotions behind a smile) and their works of art are the eternal flower, grown out of their passion.[26]

These experiences and critical judgments can be summarized theoretically in the formula: that which gives cohesion and unity to intuition is the feeling; intuition is truly such because it represents a feeling, and can arise only from it and on it. The feeling, not the idea, is what confers on art the sheer lightness of the symbol: a longing enclosed in the circle of a representation – this is art. And in art, longing is there only for the representation and representation only for the longing. Epic and lyric, or drama and lyric, are Scholastic divisions of the indivisible; art is always lyric of feeling or, if one prefers, epic and dramatic. What we admire in genuine works of art is the perfect fanciful form, which assumes a state of mind; and this is what we call life, unity, cohesion, the wholeness of a work of art. What we find displeasing, in false and flawed works, is the lack of unity in the contrast of more and different states of mind – their stratification, or their combination, or their unsteady progress – which receive apparent unity according to the will of the author who, to this end, avails himself of a scheme, or an abstract idea, or a commotion of extra-aesthetic emotions. The series of images, taken one by one, appear rich in evidence but they soon leave us disappointed and diffident because we do not see them as originating from a state of mind, from a *macchia*[27] (as only painters say), from an inspiration – and they follow one another and crowd each other without that tone of authenticity, without that intonation that comes from within. What is a figure removed from its background in a painting or transferred onto another background? What is a character from a play or from a novel when outside of his relationship with all the other characters and the general action? And what value does this general action have if it is not an action of the author's spirit? What still remain instructive – in regard to that resolution – are the secular debates on dramatic unity, which, from external determinations of time and place, was first restored to the unity of 'action' and later to the unity of 'interest,' and the interest in

turn should have been dissolved in the interest of the poet's spirit, in the ideal that inspires him. Equally instructive, as we have seen, are the results of the critical debates between classicists and romantics, when what was denied was the type of art that – with its abstract feeling, with its violent practice of feeling, with a feeling that has not become contemplation – tries to overwhelm the soul and to deceive it as to the inadequacy of the image, just as the art that – with its superficial clarity, with its falsely correct design, with its falsely precise word – tries to deceive us as to its lack of an aesthetic reason, which would justify its imagery, and about the inadequacy of its inspirational feeling. An English critic's celebrated comment – now turned into a journalistic commonplace – declares that 'All art tends toward the condition of music.'[28] But it would be more accurate to say that all the arts are music, if we wish to accentuate the emotional genesis of artistic images, by excluding from their number the mechanically constructed or overly realistic ones. Another statement no less celebrated, ascribed to a Swiss semi-philosopher, and to whom has fallen the same good or bad luck of having been trivialized, reveals that 'every landscape is a state of mind': which is undeniable, not because a landscape is a landscape but because the landscape is art.[29]

Artistic intuition, therefore, is always *lyric* intuition: this last word lyric is not used as an adjective or as a modifier of the first, but as a synonym – another of the synonyms that can join the many I have already mentioned, and which all designate intuition. And, if at times the word 'lyric' assumes the grammatical form of an adjective, it is only to clarify the difference between the intuition-image, that is, a nexus of images (since what is called image is always a nexus of images, as images-atoms or thoughts-atoms are non-existent) between true intuition, which is an organism whose vital principle is the organism itself; and that false intuition, which is an accumulation of images put together for amusement, or for a calculation, or for some other practical end, and whose nexus, being practical, proves to be, when considered under its aesthetic aspect, not at all organic but mechanical. Outside of this particular explanatory and polemical function, the word 'lyric' would be redundant; art is still perfectly defined when we simply define it as *intuition*.

2 Prejudices about Art

The process of distinction, which I have briefly outlined, between art and all that it has been or will only be confused with, undoubtedly obliges us to make a not insignificant mental effort, but this exertion eventually obtains its reward in the freedom, acquired through it, from the many misleading distinctions that litter the field of aesthetics. These distinctions, although they initially seduce with their very effortlessness and misleading evidence, impede in the matter of any profound knowledge of what is truly art. And even though there is no shortage of people who, in order to retain the comfort of repeating traditional and common distinctions, willingly resign themselves to understanding nothing, for us, instead, it is now advantageous to be rid of those distinctions as obstacles to the new labour – toward which the new theoretical direction invites and leads us – and to enjoy the greatest ease that comes from feeling wealthy, because wealth is obtained not only by the acquisition of various objects, but also by ridding ourselves of all *economic liabilities*.

Let us begin with the most famous of these economic liabilities in the circle of Aesthetics – the distinction between *content* and *form*, which, in the nineteenth century, led to a celebrated division between schools of Aesthetics, that is, of Content (*Gehaltsästhetik*) and of the Aesthetics of Form (*Formästhetik*). In general, the problems that arose from this opposition of schools were the following: – 'Does art consist only of content, or only of form, or of both form and content together? What is the nature of content, and what is the nature of aesthetic form?' – And the ones responded that art is all in the content, determined from time to time as that which pleases, or as that which is moral, or as that which elevates man to heaven through metaphysics and religion, or as that which

is realistically exact, or even, as that which is naturally and physically beautiful. The others replied that content is unimportant, that it is only a hanger or frame on which to suspend beautiful forms, which alone truly beatify the aesthetic spirit: unity, harmony, symmetry, and the like. And each tried to attract to their respective side – and then placing it as their own – the element they had initially excluded from the nature of art. The contentualists admitted that it would help content – which for them was the constitutive element of beauty – to be dressed in forms that are also beautiful, and to be presented as unity, symmetry, harmony, and so forth; the formalists, in their turn, claimed that, if not art, the effect of art is enhanced by the value of content, because from that moment on, it no longer had just one value but, in this case, the sum of two values. However, these doctrines, which reached their greatest Scholastic corpulence in Germany among the Hegelians and Herbartians, are periodically found throughout the history of Aesthetics in classical, medieval, modern, and contemporary writings, and, more important, in public opinion, because nothing is more common than hearing that a play is fine 'in form' but has 'an ugly turn of phrase,' that a poem is most noble 'in concept' but 'poorly written,' that a painter would be greater if he were to stop squandering his talent as a designer and colourist on 'trivial and unworthy subjects' and were to choose instead those of an historical, patriotic, or sociological importance. It can be said that fine taste and a genuine critical sense of art are compelled to defend themselves at every turn against the distortions of judgment, arising from these doctrines, in which philosophers turn into ordinary people, and ordinary people almost feel like philosophers because they find themselves agreeing with those people-philosophers. The origin of these doctrines is no secret to us because, even from the brief outline given here, it is clear that they stem from the hedonistic, moralistic, conceptualistic, or physical conceptions of art, which, unable to grasp what it is in art that makes it art, they are then forced to regain in some way the art they had let slip away, and to reintroduce it under the form of a supplementary or accidental element; contentualists conceive of art as the abstract element of form, and formalists as the abstract element of content. What interests us about such aesthetic doctrines is precisely this dialectic, whereby contentualists involuntarily turn into formalists, and

formalists into contentualists. And the ones cross over to the side of the others, only to become uneasy there, and so return to their own side, which sets off their restlessness once again. The Herbartian 'beautiful forms' do not differ in any way from Hegelian 'beautiful contents,' because the one and the other are both *nothing*. Yet of even more interest to us is to observe their attempts to break out of their prison, the blows with which they weaken doors or walls, and the cracks that, in effect, some of those thinkers succeed in opening. Clumsy and empty efforts, like those of the contentualists (seen, for example, in Hartmann's[30] *Philosophy of Beauty* [*Philosophie des Schönen*]), who, linking one knot at a time and making a net of their beautiful 'contents' – the beautiful, sublime, comic, tragic, humourous, pathetic, idyllic, sentimental, and so on and so forth – tried to embrace every form of reality with it, including even the one they had called 'ugly.' But they never noticed that their aesthetic content, made little by little to agree with all of reality, no longer had any characteristic that would distinguish it from other contents – there not being any other content outside of reality – that is, that their fundamental theory was, in this manner, fundamentally negated. — They are but tautologies, like those of other contentualist-formalists, who maintained the concept of an aesthetic content but defined it as 'that which interests man,' and put the interest as being relative to man in various historical situations, that is, relative to the individual. This was another way to negate the fundamental assumption, since it is quite clear that the artist would not produce art if he were not interested in something that is either the datum or the problem of his production, but that this something becomes art only because the artist, who took an interest in it, has made it so. — And they are the contrivances of the formalists who, after confining art to beautiful abstract forms – which in themselves are lacking in content and which, on the other hand, could be added to the contents, making like the sum of two values – timidly introduced in among the beautiful forms the one of 'harmony of form to content.' Or, more resolutely, they declared themselves partisans of a sort of eclecticism that put art back into the 'relation' between beautiful content and beautiful form, and thus, with the impropriety worthy of eclectics, they attributed to the terms outside of the relation the qualities that they can assume only within it.

The truth of the matter is that content and form must each be clearly distinguished in art, but each cannot separately qualify as artistic, precisely because to be artistic is only their relation, that is, their unity, understood not as an abstract or dead unity but as concrete and living, which is of an a priori synthesis. And art is a true a priori aesthetic synthesis, of feeling and image in the intuition, for which it can be repeated that feeling without the image is blind, and image without the feeling is empty. Feeling and image, outside of the aesthetic synthesis, do not exist for the artistic spirit: they will have existence, differently expressed, in other realms of the spirit; and the feeling will then be the practical aspect of the spirit that loves and hates, desires and repulses, and the image will be the inanimate residue of art, the dry leaf prey to the gusts of imagination and to the whims of a pastime. But this has nothing to do with the artist or with aesthetics because art is not idle daydreaming, and it is not tumultuous passion but the overcoming of this act by virtue of another act – or, if so preferred, the substitution of this tumult with another tumult – with the longing for its formation and its contemplation, with all the anguish and joy of artistic creation. It makes no difference, therefore, or is a mere convenience of terminology, whether art is presented as content or as form, as long as it is understood that content is given form and form is filled [with content], that the feeling is figured-feeling, and the figure is felt-figure. It is only out of respect for the man who, more than any other, ensured the autonomy of art, and by asserting this autonomy with the word 'form,' placed himself in opposition to the abstract contentualism of 'philosophizers' and moralists, as in the case of the abstract formalism of academics. And 'by respect for the man', I mean, for De Sanctis – as well as for the ever urgent polemic against those attempts to confuse art with other modes of spiritual activity – that we can call the aesthetics of intuition, 'aesthetics of form.' Nor is it useful to counter with an objection, which of course could be made (though more from the sophistry of a lawyer than from the acumen of a scientist), that, even the aesthetic of intuition, designating the content of art as feeling or state of mind, qualifies it outside of intuition and seems to recognize that a content, which is not a feeling or a state of mind, does not lend itself to artistic elaboration and is not aesthetic content. The feeling or state of mind is not a particular content but is the

whole universe viewed *sub specie intuitionis* (under the intuitive aspect); outside of this no other content is conceivable that is not also a form, different from intuitive form: not thoughts, which are the whole universe *sub specie cogitationis* (under the cognitive aspect); not physical things or mathematical entities, which are the whole universe *sub specie schematismi et abstractionis* (under the schematic and abstract aspect); not acts of will, which are the whole universe *sub specie volitionis* (under the volitional aspect).

Another distinction, no less fallacious (and for which the terms 'content' and 'form' are also used), detaches *intuition* from *expression*, the image from its physical translation, and places on the one side, phantasms of feelings, images of men, of animals, of landscapes, of actions, of adventures, and the like; and on the other, sounds, tones, lines, colours, and the like. And these things it calls external to art, and those, internal: the former are properly called art, and the latter, *technique*. To distinguish between what is internal and external is an easy matter, at least at the level of talk, especially when the reasons and the manner of distinction are not thoroughly investigated, and when the distinction is then thrown out there without ever requiring that it be used, so much so that, by never having to think about it, it can even give the appearance of thought. But it is a different matter when, as with every distinction, from the distinguishing we proceed to setting up their relation and to unifying them, because this time we meet with the most hopeless of obstacles. This time what has been distinguished, being poorly distinct, cannot be unified. In what way can something external and unrelated to what is internal be united with the internal and express it? In what way can a sound or a colour express an image that is soundless or colourless, a body that is bodiless? In what way, in one and the same act, can the spontaneity of fancy concur with its reflection, or rather, the technical action? Once intuition is distinguished from expression, and the nature of the one is established to be different from the other, no ingenious middle term can weld one to the other. All the means of association, of habit, of mechanization, of oblivion, of instinctivity, which psychologists have proposed and have tirelessly developed, in the end allow the breach to reappear: the expression over here and the image over there. And it seems there is no other way out than to seek refuge behind the

hypothesis of a mystery, which, according to tastes that now are poetic and now mathematical, will pose as that of a mysterious marriage or as a mysterious psychophysical parallelism.[31] The first is itself a parallelism falsely sublated;[32] the second is a marriage celebrated centuries ago or in the darkness of the unknowable.

Before resorting to a mystery (being a refuge for which there is always time), it must be determined if the two elements were legitimately distinguished, and if intuition can subsist and is conceivable, deprived of an expression. Perhaps it is something as non-existent and inconceivable as a soul without a body, which, in truth, has been discussed as much in philosophy as in religion, but having discussed it does not mean having experienced and having conceived it. In reality, we know nothing other than expressed intuitions: a thought for us is not a thought unless it can be formulated into words; a musical fancy, unless it has become concrete in sounds; a pictorial imagining, unless it has been coloured. We are not saying that the words must necessarily be recited aloud, and the music be played, and the painting be fixed on a canvas or panel. But it is certain that, when a thought is really a thought, when it has reached the maturity of thought, the words rush through our entire organism, working the muscles of our mouths[33] and resonating internally in our ear. When music is really music, it trills in our throat or reverberates through our fingers over an imaginary keyboard. When a pictorial image is pictorially real, we are suffused with lympha that are colours, and in the case where colouring materials are unavailable, we spontaneously colour surrounding objects through a kind of irradiation, as is said of certain hysterics and certain saints who, through their imagination, could imprint stigmata on their hands and feet! Prior to the formation of this expressive state of the spirit, thought, musical fancy, and pictorial image were not only without expression, they did not exist at all. To believe in preexistence is for the simple-minded, if being simple is to have faith in those impotent poets, musicians, or painters whose heads are always filled with creations poetic, musical, and pictorial, and are simply unable to translate them into an external form, or because, so they say, they cannot bear to express them, or because technology has not progressed far enough with the means adequate to their expression. The means technology

afforded centuries ago were adequate for Homer, for Phidias, or for Apelles,[34] but now are inadequate for those who, to hear them talk, carry within their vast heads an art even greater! At times that ingenuous belief is born out of an illusion; that is, when, by having ideated a few single images, which were consequently expressed, and then by taking a mistaken accounting of ourselves, we believe that we already possess, within us, all the other images needed to go into a work – but which we do not yet possess. Nor do we possess the vital nexus that must connect them and that is still unformed, and therefore, neither the ones nor the other have been expressed.

Art, understood as intuition according to the concept I have explained, having denied a physical world before it and having considered it an abstract construct of our intellect, does not know what to do with the parallelism of cognitive substance and extended substance, and it does not have to promote impossible marriages because its cognitive substance, or better, its intuitive act is perfect in itself; and it is that same fact that the intellect constructs as extended substance. And as much as an image without expression is inconceivable, it is also just as conceivable, or rather, logically necessary, that an image is together the expression, that is, that it really is the image. If we take away from a poem its metre, its rhythm, and its words, there does not remain – without all of that, as some suppose – poetic thought: nothing remains. Poetry is born as those words, that rhythm, and that metre. We could not even compare an expression to the epidermis of an organism, unless we were to say (and perhaps it would not even be wrong in the physiology) that the entire organism, in every cell and in every cell of each cell, is collectively the epidermis.

I would be remiss in my methodological convictions and in my objective to render justice to the errors (as I have already done to the duality of content and form, demonstrating the truth toward which it tended, but failed to grasp) if I did not also state what truth lies at the basis of this attempted distinction of the indistinguishable, of the intuition in intuition and expression. Fancy and technique are rightly distinguished, although not as elements of art, and they bond and conjoin with each other, although not in the field of art, but in that more immense field of

the spirit, in its totality; problems technical or practical to be resolved, and difficulties to be overcome truly challenge the artist, and there really is something that, although not 'physical,' but spiritual, like all things real, can, with respect to intuition, metaphorize into the physical. What is this something? The artist we had left vibrating with expressed images surging through infinite channels of his entire being is wholly a man, and is therefore also a practical man. As such, he cautions his means of art not to let his ongoing spiritual endeavour go to waste, and to enable and facilitate, for himself and for others, the *reproduction* of his images, for which he promotes practical acts useful to that artistic reproduction. These practical acts are guided, as is every practical act, by knowledge, and thus they are called technical; and being practical – distinguishing themselves from intuition which is theoretical – they appear external to it, and thus they are called physical; and they more easily take this name because they are fixed and abstracted by the intellect. In this way, words and music are joined with writing and the phonograph; painting with the canvas and panels and walls covered with colour; sculpture and architecture with carved stone, iron, bronze, or other fused, hammered, and variously formed metals. The two forms of activity are so clearly distinct that one can be a great artist and a bad technician, a poet who poorly corrects the proofs of his poems, an architect who uses unsuitable materials or does not provide enough stability to a structure, a painter who uses colours that quickly deteriorate: examples of these weaknesses are so frequent that it is not worth mentioning names. What is not possible, however, is to be a great poet who writes bad verse, a great painter who does not harmonize colours, a great architect who does not balance proportions, a great composer who does not harmonize notes, in short, to be a great artist unable to express himself. Of Raphael, it has been said that he would have been a great painter even without hands, but not that he would have been great even without a gift for drawing.

Let it be quickly noted, for I must proceed in a condensed manner, that this apparent transformation of intuitions into physical things – completely analogous to the apparent transformation of need and economic labour into things and merchandise – also explains why we have come to speak not only of 'artistic things' and 'beautiful things,' but

even of the 'beauty of nature.' It is evident that, beyond the devices fashioned for the reproduction of images, intuitions may also encounter objects already in existence, whether or not produced by man, which fulfill that function; that is, they are more or less suitable to fix the memory of our intuitions. These objects are known as 'natural beauties,' and exercise their power only when we are able to comprehend them with the same soul by which the artist has comprehended and appropriated them, or with the soul of the artists who first recognized their value and established from which 'point of view' we are to look at them, connecting them thus to their one intuition. But the always imperfect adaptability and the fleeting and mutable nature of a 'natural beauty' also justify its lower position with respect to the beauty produced by art. Let the rhetoricians, or the drunkard, declare that a beautiful tree, a beautiful river, a sublime mountain, or even a beautiful horse and beautiful human figure are superior to the stroke of Michelangelo's chisel and a verse by Dante, and we will say, more appropriately, that with respect to art, 'Nature' is dumb, and that she is 'mute' unless man makes her speak.

A third distinction, which also strives to distinguish the indistinguishable, seizes upon the concept of aesthetic expression, and divides it into two moments – of the expression strictly considered or *propriety*, and of the beauty of expression or the *ornate* – founding upon these the classification of two orders of expression: the plain and the ornate. It is a doctrine whose vestiges are detectable throughout the various domains of art, but in none was it developed to the same extent as in speech, where it is called by the celebrated name of 'rhetoric' and has covered a very long history, from Greek rhetoricians up to the present day. Moreover, it still persists in schools, in treatises, and even in aesthetic studies with scientific pretensions, other than (as is natural) in popular ideas, despite having lost in our times much of its original power. Men of great intellect, by force of inertia or tradition, for centuries have either accepted or tolerated it, and what few rebels there were almost never attempted to turn their rebellion into a system and to root out the error. The damage wrought by rhetoric, with the idea of 'ornate' speech being different and more valuable than 'plain' speech,

is not confined only to the circle of aesthetics, but has worked its way into criticism and even frequently into literary education, because, as inept as it was in doing justice to genuine beauty, it was that more adept at giving apparent justification for deceptive beauty,[35] and at encouraging a form of writing that was overblown, precious, and inappropriate. However, the division that it introduces – and on which it rests – is logically a self-contradiction, because, as can easily be shown, it destroys the very concept, which it assumes to divide into moments, and the objects, which it assumes to divide into classes. A proper expression, if proper, is also beautiful, beauty being nothing more than the precision of the image, and therefore of the expression, and, if by calling it plain we let it be known that it is lacking something that should be there, then, in this case, it is improper and deficient, that is – it is not, or not yet, an expression. Conversely, an ornate expression, if expressive in every part, cannot call itself ornate, but plain, like the other, and like the other, proper. If it contains inexpressive elements – added, extrinsic – it is not beautiful, but ugly, that is, it is not, or not yet, an expression; for to be so, it must cleanse itself of extraneous elements (just as the other must acquire elements lacking in it).

Expression and beauty are not two concepts but one only, which can legitimately be designated by one or the other synonymous terms: artistic fancy is always corporeal but it is not obese, always dressed as itself in the same way, and never laden with other things, or 'ornate.' Of course, even beneath this patently false distinction a problem was threatening, and with it the need to make a distinction. And the problem (as is gathered from certain passages in Aristotle, and from the psychology and gnoseology of the Stoics, and as more clearly seen from the seventeenth-century discussions by Italian rhetoricians) concerned the relations between thought and fancy, philosophy and poetry, logic and aesthetics ('dialectic' and 'rhetoric,' as they continued to be called then: 'closed fist' and 'open hand').[36] And 'plain' expression alluded to thought and to philosophy, while 'ornate' expression alluded to fancy and to poetry. But it is no less true that this problem of distinction between the two forms of theoretical spirit could not be resolved in either one of these fields alone – of intuition or of expression – where nothing other than fancy, poetry, and aesthetics will ever be found. And the unwarranted

introduction of logic there will only project a misleading shadow that obscures intelligence and makes it bristle, and deprives intelligence of a view of art, in its fullness and purity, without offering it one of logicality and thought.

But the most grievous damage that the rhetorical doctrine of 'ornate' expression has caused to the theoretical arrangement of forms of the human spirit concerns the treatment of language. This is because when plain and simple grammatical expressions and ornate and rhetorical expressions are admitted, language becomes necessarily united to plain expression and is brought back to grammar and, as a further consequence, (grammar not finding a place in rhetoric or in aesthetics) back to logic, where it is assigned the subordinate task of semiotics or *ars significandi*. In fact, the logicist conception of language is strictly connected to and proceeds in step with the rhetorical doctrine of expression; both originated in ancient Greece and both still live – albeit at odds – in our own time. Instances of rebellion against logicism in the doctrine of language have been rare and thus as ineffective as those against rhetoric; it was only in the romantic period (anticipated the century before by Vico) that, among certain thinkers or in some select circles, a keen awareness was formed of the *fantastic* or *metaphorical* nature which is that of language, and of the closer bond it has with poetry than with logic. However, even among the best of these thinkers, in continuing with a more or less extra-artistic idea of art (conceptualism, moralism, hedonism, etc.), an extreme distaste for *identifying language with poetry* persisted, which to us, instead, appears as inevitable as it is effortless, after having established the concept of art as intuition and of intuition as expression, and thus implicitly, the identification of expression with language. Of course, it is always with the understanding that language is conceived in all its extension (without arbitrarily restricting it to the so-called articulate language and arbitrarily excluding from it tonic, mimetic, or graphic uses) and in all its intension, that is, understood in its reality, which is the very act of speaking (without falsifying it with grammatical or dictionary abstractions, and without foolishly imagining that man speaks according to a dictionary and a grammar). Man speaks in every moment like a poet because, like the poet, he expresses his impressions and feelings in what

is known as a conversational or familiar form, with no abyss separating it from the other forms of speech called prosaic, prosaic-poetic, narrative, epic, dialogic, dramatic, lyric, melic, cantata (the list can go on). And if in general it does not displease man to be thought of as a poet and always a poet (which he is, by virtue of his humanity), it must not displease the poet to be joined to common humanity, because this connection alone explains the power that poetry – understood in the sense of *per angusta ad augusta* (through narrow paths to high places) – has over the soul of every man; for if poetry were a language apart, a 'language of the gods,'[37] man would not understand it, and if it elevates him, it elevates him not above, but within himself, where true democracy and true aristocracy, also in this case, coincide. Coincidence of art and language naturally implies the coincidence of Aesthetics and of the Philosophy of language, one definable by the other, that is, identical, which is something I ventured to say years ago in the title of one of my treatises on Aesthetics,[38] which, in truth, did not fail to have its effect on many – linguists and philosophers of art – within and outside of Italy, as seen from the copious 'literature' that has come out on it. With regard to studies on art and poetry, this identification carries the benefit of purging them of any hedonistic, moralistic, and conceptualistic residue still to be found in much of literary and art criticism. But no less significant is the beneficial effect it will have on linguistic studies, which urgently need to be rid of physiological, psychological, and psycho-physiological methods currently in fashion, and be free from the ever recurring theory on the *conventional* origins of language, which brings with it, as an inevitable reaction, the inevitable correlate to *mystical* theory. Even here, it will no longer be necessary to construct absurd parallelisms or to encourage mysterious marriages between image and sign, since language is no longer conceived as the sign, but as the image which is signifying, that is, as its own sign, and capable therefore of colouring, of sounding, and of singing. The signifying image is the spontaneous activity of fancy, while the sign, by which man convenes with man, presupposes the image and therefore language. And when we insist on explaining speech by means of a concept of signs, we are compelled finally to turn back to God as the giver of the first signs, that is, to presuppose language in another way, returning it to the unknowable.

I will conclude my review of prejudices against art with the one most commonly held, because it mingles in with the daily activities of art criticism and art historiography: the prejudice that it is possible to distinguish many or numerous *particular forms of art*, each determinable in its particular concept and limits and furnished with its own laws. This erroneous doctrine is embodied in two systematic series, the first of which is known as the *theory of literary and artistic genres* (lyric poetry, drama, the novel, epic and fantastical poems, the idyll, comedy, tragedy; sacred, secular, family portraits; animal life, still life, landscapes, fruit and floral paintings; heroic, funerary, or historical sculptures; church, chamber, or theatre music; public, military, or church architecture, etc., etc.). The second is known as the *theory of the arts* (poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, the actor's craft, gardening, etc.), and at times one series functions as a subdivision of the other. Even this prejudice, the origin of which in any case is easy to determine, has its first illustrious monuments in Greek culture, and it too persists to this day. Many aestheticians still write treatises on the aesthetics of the tragic or comedic or lyric or humourous, and on the aesthetics of painting or music or poetry (the latter are still known under the old term of Poetics). And what is worse (since little attention is paid to those aestheticians, who write for solitary enjoyment or for professional academic reasons), in judging works of art, critics have not entirely given up on the habit of fitting them into a *genre* or to a *particular art form* in which, in their opinion, they would fit; and instead of clearly stating whether a work is beautiful or ugly, they continue to justify their impressions by saying that it correctly follows, or badly violates, the laws of drama or the novel or painting or bas-relief. It has become quite popular to treat artistic and literary histories as *histories of genres*, and to introduce artists as the cultivators of this or that genre. And the work of an artist, which always has a unity of development whatever form it takes – lyric or novel or drama – is divided up and the pieces are fitted into as many slots as there are genres; thus Ludovico Ariosto, for example, in one instance appears among the cultivators of Renaissance Latin poetry, in another among the vernacular poets, a third time among the authors of the first Italian satires, a fourth among the authors of the first comedic plays, and a fifth among the perfecters of chivalric poetry, as if the Latin and

vernacular poetry and satires and comedies and poems were not always all by the same poet Ariosto, in the many attempts and in the many forms and in the logic of his spiritual development.

This is not to say that the theory of genres and of the arts did not have, or may not have, its own internal dialect and self-criticism, or its irony, depending on which term we prefer to use. No one ignores the fact that literary history is filled with these cases in which the work of a brilliant artist gives offence to an established genre, inciting the reprimand of the critics. But it is a reprimand, which, in any case, fails to stifle the admiration and popularity of the work, so that, not being able to fault the artist and not wanting to find fault with the critic of genres, it usually ends in a compromise, and the genre broadens or accepts to have next to it, like a legitimized bastard, a new one; and the compromise survives out of inertia, until another brilliant work comes along to upset once again the established norm. An irony of the doctrine is also the impossibility in which its theorists find themselves of logically delimiting the genres and the arts; when all the definitions elaborated by them are examined a little more closely, they either disappear gradually into a general definition of art or they prove to be arbitrary elevations of individual works of art to a genre and a norm, and therefore not reducible to rigorous terms of logic. And the absurdities to which this effort leads – of determining rigorously what is indeterminable due to the contradictory nature of its assumption – can be seen even among the greats, even in Lessing,[39] who arrived at this extravagant thought that painting represents 'bodies': bodies, not actions and not souls, and not the soul and action of the painter! The absurdity can also be seen in the questions logically arising from that illogical one; that is, once every genre and every art form has been assigned a determinate field, which art or which genre is *superior*? Is painting superior to sculpture, drama to lyric poetry? And once the powers of each art form are identified through those divisions, does it not make sense to *reunite* the separate powers into one genre of art that could crush each of the others, like a coalition of armies against one single army? Take opera, for example, in which poetry, music, art scenery, and decoration are united – does it not have greater aesthetic power than a simple *Lied* of Goethe, or a drawing by Leonardo? These are questions and distinctions and definitions and judgments that move the artistic or

poetic sensibility to rebellion, because it loves each work in itself, for what it is, as a living creature that is individual and incomparable, and it knows that each work has its own individual law and its own complete and irreplaceable value; out of this, discord arose between the affirmative judgment of artistic souls and the negative judgment of professional critics, between the positive of the one and the negative of the other. Professional critics, not without good reason, at times pass for pedants, even though artistic souls, in their turn, may be 'unarmed prophets,' that is, unable to reason and deduce the correct theory immanent in their judgments, and to use this to counter the pedantry of their adversaries.

This correct theory is precisely one aspect of the concept of art as intuition or lyric intuition; and, since every work of art expresses a state of mind, and the state of mind is individual and always new, intuition entails infinite intuitions, which are impossible to reduce to a filing cabinet of *genres*, unless it too is composed of an infinite number of files, that is, no longer of genres, but of intuitions. And since, on the other hand, the individuality of intuition entails the individuality of expression, and a painting is as distinct from another painting as it is from a poem, and poetry and painting are not valued for their sounds striking air and for their colours refracting light but for what they say to the spirit as they are internalized in the spirit – it is pointless to turn to abstract means of expression to construct some other series of genres or classes; which is to say, any theory on the division of the *arts* is unfounded. The genre or the class, in this case, is only one – art itself or intuition – while single works of art are then infinite: all original, each untranslatable into the other (since to translate, to translate in an artistic vein, is to create a new work of art), each indomitable by the intellect. Between the universal and the particular no intermediate element is interposed philosophically, no series of genres or of species, of *generalia*. Neither the artist who produces art nor the spectator who contemplates it has need of anything other than the universal and the individual, or better, the universal individuated, universal artistic activity, which is entirely compressed and concentrated in the representation of a single state of mind.

However, if the pure artist and the pure critic, together with the pure philosopher, cannot agree on the *generalia*, on the genres or on the

classes, in other respects these still retain their utility; this utility is the true side – which I will not leave without mentioning – of those erroneous theories. It is without doubt useful to interweave a net of *generalia*, not for the production of art, which is spontaneous, and not for the judgment of it, which is philosophical, but to gather and to circumscribe, by some means, for the purpose of observation and memory, the infinite single intuitions; to number in some way the innumerable single works of art. And these classes, as expected, will always be conducted according to either the abstract image or the abstract expression, and therefore as classes of states of mind (literary and artistic genres) and classes of expressive means (the arts). And there is no reason to object here that the various genres and arts are arbitrarily distinct, and that the general dichotomy itself is arbitrary, since it is of course conceded that the process is arbitrary, but the arbitrariness then becomes harmless and useful, once we remove from it every pretence of philosophical principle and criterion for judging art. Such genres and classes facilitate the knowledge of art and the education of art, offering to the first an index of some of the most important art works, to the second, a summary of the most critical advice the practice of art can recommend. What matters is not to confuse the indices for the reality, and the precepts or hypothetical imperatives for categorical imperatives, a confusion which we are given to make easily but which we must and can avoid. Books of literary principles, of rhetoric, of grammar (with divisions of the parts of speech, and the laws of morphology and syntax), of the art of musical composition, of poetic metrics, of painting, and so forth, are primarily indices and precepts. But secondly, they reveal tendencies toward particular expressions of art; in which case, they are to be considered as art that is still abstract, art in preparation (poetic arts from classicism or romanticism, purist or popular grammars, etc.). And thirdly, they reveal the impulses and efforts toward a philosophical understanding of their argument – flawed by the error, which has been critiqued – on the divisions of genres and the arts, which, because of its contradictions, opens the way to a true theory on the individuality of art.

Certainly, on first impact, this doctrine produces the sense of being lost: intuitions that are individual, original, untranslatable, and unclassifiable

seem to escape the rule of thought, which could not control them if not by placing them in relation to one another. And that is precisely what seems to be forbidden by the doctrine that has developed, which, rather than being liberal or a free-trader, actually looks anarchic, or like an anarchist.

A short poem is aesthetically equal to a longer poem; a miniature painting or a sketch, to an altar painting or fresco; a letter can be a work of art no less than a novel; even a fine translation is as original as the original work! Are these propositions irrecusable for having been deduced along a strictly logical line from sound premises? Are they true, even though (and this is undoubtedly a merit) paradoxical, that is, going against popular opinion? But, by any chance, are they not also in need of some complement? There must yet be a method to classify, subordinate, connect, comprehend, and rule over this tumult of intuitions if, in following them, we do not want our intellect to lose its way.

This method actually does exist and denying theoretical value to abstract classifications was not meant to deny that value to a genetic and concrete classification, which is not then a 'classification,' but is called *History*. In history, each work of art takes the place awaiting it, that place alone and no other: the little ballad of Guido Cavalcanti and the sonnet of Cecco Angiolieri that seem the sigh or laughter of a moment, and the *Commedia* of Dante that in itself seems to encapsulate a millennium of the human spirit; the *Maccheronea* of Merlino Cocaio that, from out of buffoonery opens to the subtlety of poetry, and the sixteenth-century reworking of the *Aeneid* by Annibale Caro; the lean prose of Sarpi and the florid Jesuitic prose of Daniello Bartoli.[40] In history, there is no need to judge as unoriginal what is original, because it lives; as small what is neither small nor large, because it escapes all measurements; or, if preferred, we can say small and large, but metaphorically, with the intent of showing certain admiration and of revealing certain important relations (not at all arithmetical or geometrical). It is in history, which is always becoming richer and more determinate – and not in the pyramids of empirical concepts, which, the more they rise and the more they taper, the more empty they are – where we find the link to all works of art or to all intuitions, because in history they appear organically connected, as the successive and necessary stages of the development of the spirit, each one a note of the eternal poem that harmonizes in itself all the single poems.

3 The Place of Art in the Spirit and Society of Man

The dispute over the dependence or independence of art was at its most heated in the romantic period, when the saying 'art for art's sake' was coined, and the other, its apparent antithesis, 'art for life's sake.' In truth, it was already then more heatedly discussed among the literati and among artists than among philosophers. These days it is of less interest, and has come down to a theme for the beginner to try his hand at while carrying out his training, and as the argument of academic oration. Even prior to the romantic period, however, and already in the earliest documents on reflections on art, its vestiges can be found; and the same philosophers of Aesthetics, even when it seems as if they are neglecting it (and they certainly scorn it altogether in its popular form), are actually giving it some thought; rather, it can be said that they think of nothing else, because to dispute the independence and dependence, the autonomy and heteronomy of art means, finally, to look at *whether or not art exists*, and if it does, then *what it is*. An activity whose principle depends on that of another activity is, essentially, that other activity, and retains for itself an existence that is only putative or conventional; the art that depends on morality, pleasure, or philosophy is morality, pleasure, or philosophy, and it is not art. If art is not to be judged as dependent, we must investigate what its independence is based upon; that is, in what way is art distinct from morality, from pleasure, from philosophy, and from all other things, which means knowing what this thing is, and positing that such a thing truly is autonomous. It is also possible that a number of those same ones – who assert the original nature of art – may then assert that, though preserving its own nature, art may be subject to another form of higher office and, as once was said, made to be the handmaiden to ethics, minister to politics, and interpreter to science;

but this would only prove that there are people who are accustomed to contradicting themselves or to having inconsistent thoughts, bewildered people whose existence really has no need of proof. For our part, we will try to avoid falling into such foolishness; and having already made clear that art is distinct from the so-called physical world as *spirituality*, and from practical, moral, or conceptual activity as *intuition*, we will not give it another thought and submit, along with our previous proof, that we have demonstrated the *independence* of art.

However, there is another problem implicit in the dispute over the dependence or independence of art, which I have purposely avoided discussing before, and which I will now proceed to examine. Independence is a concept of relations, and in this respect, only the Absolute is independent absolutely, that is, the absolute relation: every form and particular concept is independent on the one hand and dependent on the other, that is, independent and dependent at the same time. If this were not so, the spirit, and reality in general, would either be a series of juxtaposed absolutes, or (which is the same thing) a series of juxtaposed nullities. The independence of a form presupposes the material upon which it acts, as we have already seen in the development of the genesis of art as the intuitive formation of an emotional or passional material; and in absolute independence, lacking all material or nourishment, the form itself, being empty, would nullify itself. But since the acknowledged independence means that an activity cannot be subjected to the principle of another, the dependency must be such as to guarantee independence. This would not be guaranteed even in the hypothesis that one activity be dependent on the other in the same way that the other be dependent on the one, like two forces in counterpoint in which one does not win over the other; if neither can win, there is mutual prevention and stasis, and if one wins, there is dependence – pure and simple – which has already been excluded. When considering the matter overall, it seems the only way to think of the independence and dependence of various spiritual activities together is to conceive them in the relation of the condition to the conditioned, in which the conditioned sublates the condition in presupposing it, and having then become, in its turn, the condition, and giving rise to a new conditioned, constitutes a series of *development*. To this series we could impute no

other flaw, if not that its first step is a condition without a preceding conditioned, and the last a conditioned that does not become in its turn a condition, thus committing a double violation of the law itself of development. Nevertheless, even this flaw can be cured by making the last the condition of the first, and the first the conditioned of the last; that is, if the series is conceived as having a reciprocal action, or better (in order to forgo any naturalistic terminology) as a *circle*. This conception appears to be the only way out of the difficulties debated by other conceptions of spiritual life, like the one that has it consist of a collection of independent and unrelated faculties of the soul, or of independent and unrelated ideas of value; or the one that subordinates all the various faculties or ideas of value to only one and resolves them in that one alone, which remains immobile and impotent; or more to the point, it conceives of them as necessary steps along a linear development, which leads from a first irrational one to a last one that would like to be very rational, but which is super-rational, and as such, it too is irrational.

However, it is not the case to insist upon so abstract a scheme, but rather to consider how it is brought about in the life of the spirit, beginning with the aesthetic spirit. To that end, we turn once again to the artist, or man-artist, who has completed the process of freeing himself of emotional tumult and has objectified this into a lyric image; that is, he has arrived at art. In this image he finds satisfaction because toward it he worked and moved: everyone knows, in some measure, the joy to be had from the perfect expression we succeed in giving to the impulses of our soul, and the joy for the impulses of others – which are also ours – contemplated in their works that, in a sense, are our works and that we make our own. But is the satisfaction definitive? Was it only toward the image to which the man-artist had moved? Toward the *image* and toward the *other thing* at the same time: toward the image as the man-artist, and toward the other as the artist-man; toward the image on the first level, and since the first level is connected to the second and third levels, he also moved toward the second and third ones, even though it was immediately toward the first and mediately toward the second and the third. And now that the first level has been reached, what rises behind it is the second level, which, from an indirect objective, becomes a direct one;

and a new need arises, and a new process begins. Not, let us carefully note, that the intuitive power yields its place to another power, almost in shifts, as one of pleasure or of service; but the same intuitive power, or better, the spirit itself, which first seemed to be, and in a way was, entirely intuition, develops within itself the new process, which rises from the entrails of the first. There is no one soul that can 'flame in us,'[41] above the others – (this time as well, I will avail myself of Dante's words) – but the only soul, which first collects everything into a single virtue, and that seems to be 'neglecting any other power it has,' satisfied in that virtue alone (in the artistic image), and finds in that virtue, together with its satisfaction, its dissatisfaction. Its satisfaction, because it gave all that it could give and all that the soul is asking of it; its dissatisfaction, because after having obtained all of that, after having been satisfied by that virtue's 'final sweetness,' and 'while thankful for the first, we crave the latter':[42] the soul demands the satisfaction of a new need, which arises from having satisfied the first, and which, without that first, could not have arisen. And from ongoing experience, we are also all familiar with the new need that follows the formation of images. Ugo Foscolo has a liaison with the Countess Arese; what that love means, and what kind of woman that woman is, he does not ignore, as verified in his letters to her (and which can be read in their published form). And yet, in those moments when he loves her, that woman is his universe and he feels the possession of her as supreme beatitude, and in his enthusiastic admiration, she who is mortal he would render immortal, she who is worldly transfigure into godly, in the faith of generations to come, fulfilling – through the power of his love – a new prodigy. He can already see her being assumed, in the 'Empyrean,' as an object of worship and prayer:

> E avrai, divina, i voti
> fra gl'inni miei, delle insubri nepoti![43]
>
> [And through my hymns, divine one, you shall
> have the vows of the Insubrian heirs!]

If, for one instant, this metamorphosis of love had not been lovingly contemplated and longed for in all seriousness by Foscolo – (those in

love, and even the gentlemen-philosophers, if at any time they were in love, can verify that this foolishness truly is sought) – the ode 'All'amica risanata'[44] (to my convalescent friend) would not have formed in his spirit; and the images by which he represents the rich allure of the dangers of his goddess-friend would not be as vivid or as spontaneous. But that impetus of the soul, which has now become a magnificent lyric representation, what was it? Foscolo – soldier, patriot, erudite, troubled by many spiritual needs – had he really exhausted himself through that longing? And had that longing really operated through him forcefully enough to convert into action and in some way give direction to his real life? Just as, at times, in the course of his amorous affairs, he was not lacking in insight, so too in regard to poetry – his creative tumult calmed, reverting back to himself and regaining or fully gaining insight – Foscolo is questioning himself and trying to determine what he really wants or what that woman merited. Perhaps a trickle of this scepsis had already insinuated itself in him during the formation of the image, for if our ear does not deceive us, here and there throughout the ode, there is a drop of elegant irony toward the woman, and by the poet toward himself: something that would not have occurred in a more ingenuous spirit, and the poetry itself, therefore, would have also turned out to be completely ingenuous. In any case, Foscolo, poet fulfilled, and therefore poet no longer (unless to rise again as one), now senses the need to understand his real condition. He no longer forms the image because he has already done so, and he no longer fancies, but he perceives and narrates: 'that woman,' he will later say about 'the divine one,' 'instead of a heart, kept part of her brain.'[45] Here, the lyric image changes, for him and for us, into an autobiographical fragment or into a *perception*.

With *perception*, we have entered into a new and very vast spiritual field, and really there are no words adequate to satirize those thinkers who, now as in the past, confuse image with perception, and turn the image into a perception (art as a portrayal or copy or imitation of nature, or the history of an individual and of an era, etc.), and, even worse, make of the perception a sort of image, supposedly gathered by the 'senses.' But perception is neither more nor less than a complete *judgment*; and as judgment it entails an image and category or system of mental categories

that controls the image (reality, quality, etc.). And with respect to the image, or *aesthetic a priori synthesis* of feeling and fancy (intuition), perception is a new synthesis: of representation and category, of subject and predicate the *logical a priori synthesis*. In view of this, it would be better to repeat everything that has been said about the other, and above all, that in perception, content and form, representation and category, subject and predicate do not stand as two elements joined together by a third, but the representation stands as category, and the category as representation in an indivisible unity: the subject is subject only in the predicate, and the predicate is predicate only in the subject. Nor then is perception a logical act among other logical acts, or the most rudimentary or imperfect of them; whoever knows where to dig for all the treasures it contains has no need to look outside of it for other determinations of logicality, because from perception is geminated (and in itself, it is this synthetic gemination) the consciousness of what really happened – which, in its well-known literary form, takes the name of *history* – and the consciousness of the universal – which, in its well-known form, takes the name of system or *philosophy*. And philosophy and history, for no reason other than the synthetic nexus of perceptive judgment whence they are born and in which they live, constitutes the superior unity that philosophers have discovered – of identifying philosophy with history – and that men of good sense discover in their own way, as long as they understand that ideas suspended in air are phantasma, and that what alone is true, and what alone is worth knowing are the facts that take place, the real facts. Likewise, perception (the variety of perceptions) can explain why the human intellect strives to move beyond these and superimpose onto them a world of types and of laws, governed by measurements and mathematical relationships; this is the reason why, in addition to philosophy and history, the *natural sciences* and *mathematics* were formed.

It is not my purpose to provide a summary of my *Logica*, as I have done elsewhere and as I am doing here for my *Estetica*; therefore, setting aside any need to determine and develop a framework of the *Logica* – and of intellective, perceptive, or historical knowledge – I will take up the thread of aesthetic development once again. This time I will not proceed from the artistic and intuitive spirit, but from the logical and

historical one, which has sublated the intuitive spirit by elaborating the image into perception. Does the spirit find satisfaction in this form? To be sure, we all know the very vivid satisfactions of knowledge and science; we know from experience the keen desire that rises in us to reveal the face of reality hidden behind our illusions; and though that face may be dreadful, the revelation itself is never without the intense pleasure that comes from the satisfaction of possessing the truth. But is that satisfaction, by chance, unlike the previous satisfaction of art, complete and final? Besides the satisfaction of knowing reality, does it not perhaps foster dissatisfaction? This is also true, and that dissatisfaction of having known is manifested (as we likewise know from experience) with a longing for action: to know the real situation of things is all well and good, but to know it in order to have an effect; to know the world, optimally, but to change it: *tempus cognoscendi, tempus destruendi, tempus renovandi.* No man rests on his knowledge, not even the sceptics or pessimists, who, as a consequent of that knowledge, assume this or that attitude, adopt this or that lifestyle. And already the fixing of the acquired knowledge, the 'retaining' it after 'having understood' it, and without which, to quote Dante again – 'there is no *scienza*'[46] – the formation of types, laws, and canons of measurement, the natural sciences and mathematics, to which I have just referred, were a moving beyond an act of theory and proceeding to the act of action. And not only do we know from experience, and can always verify by testing the facts, that the thing proceeds in this way, but, if we were to think about it, we see that it could not be otherwise. At one time (and even now, by not a few unaware Platonists, mystics, and ascetics) it was believed that knowing was to raise the soul to God, to an Idea, to a world of ideas, to an Absolute, existing above the phenomenal world of man. It was then natural that, when the soul – estranged from itself through an effort contrary to its nature – had arrived at that higher sphere, it was foolish if it returned to earth, for it could have and should have remained there, perpetually blessed and inactive. And it was natural that thought itself, which was no longer thought, had, as a cross-check, a reality that was not reality. But ever since knowledge – with such authors as Vico, Kant, Hegel, and like-minded heresiarchs – descended to earth and came to be conceived not as a more or less pale copy of an unchanging reality but as ongoing

human work, which produces not abstract ideas but concrete concepts – syllogisms and historical judgments, perceptions of the real – the practical is no longer something that represents a degradation of knowledge, a casting down again from heaven to earth, or from paradise to hell. It is not even something that one resolves or from which one can abstain but is intrinsic to theory itself, as a requirement of theory, and like theory, like practice. Our thought is historical thought of historical world, a process of development of a development; no sooner is the qualification of a reality pronounced than its qualification is no longer valid because it has itself produced a new reality, which awaits a new qualification. A new reality, which is economic and ethical life, changes the intellectual man into the practical man, into the politician, into the saint, into the businessman, and into the hero, and formulates the *logical a priori synthesis* into *practical a priori synthesis*, but it is still always a new feeling, a new desire, a new willingness, a new passion, in which not even the spirit can rest, and that solicits, first and foremost – as new material – a new intuition, a new lyricism, a new art.

Thus, the last term of the series reunites (as I have stated at the beginning) with the first term, and the circle closes again, and a new course begins again – a course that is a recurrence of the course already completed, from which the Vichian concept arrives, expressed by the term – and rendered classic by Vico – *ricorso*.[47] But the development I have outlined explains the independence of art, as well as the reasons why it appeared to be dependent to those who conceived the erroneous doctrines (hedonistic, moralistic, conceptualistic, etc.) that I critiqued earlier, while noting, however, in critiquing them, that each one suggests some truth. If we ask which of the various activities of the spirit is real, or if they are all real, the answer must be that none is real, because real is only the activity of all those activities, which does not reside in any particular one: of the various syntheses that we have gradually differentiated – aesthetic synthesis, logical synthesis, practical synthesis – only the *synthesis of syntheses* is real, the Spirit which is the true Absolute, the *actus purus*. And yet in another respect, and for the same reason, they are all real, in the unity of the spirit, in the eternal course and eternal recourse, which is their eternal constancy and reality. Those who saw or

see in art, a concept, history, mathematics, type, morality, pleasure, and any other thing, are correct, because in it, by force of the unity of the spirit, are these and all other things. In fact, this being all things, and the energetic unilaterality of art, like that of any other particular form that tends to reduce together all things to one alone, explains the passage from one form to another, the fulfilment of one form in the other, and the development. But those same ones are then wrong (on the strength of the distinction, which is a moment inseparable from unity) for the way in which they determine them, either all abstractly the same, or haphazardly: concept, type, number, measure, morality, utility, pleasure, and pain are all part of art as art, or as antecedents or consequents – or better yet, as antecedents and consequents; therefore they are there like presuppositions – taken in and forgotten,[48] to use a favourite expression of De Sanctis – or like premonitions. Without that presupposition, without that premonition, art would not be art, but it would not even be art (and all other forms of the spirit would be disrupted) if those exigencies were to be imposed on art as art, which is and can never be anything but pure intuition. The artist is always morally blameless and philosophically irreproachable, even if the subject matter of his art has an inferior morality and inferior philosophy; as an artist, he does not work to influence and he does not reason, but he poetizes, paints, and sings; in short, he expresses himself. If some other criterion were adopted, we would return to condemning the poetry of Homer in the same way that seventeenth-century critics in Italy, and those in France under Louis XIV, wrinkled their nose at what they called the 'morals' of his belligerent, loud-mouthed, violent, cruel, uncouth heroes. Criticism may well object to the underlying philosophy of Dante's poem, but such criticism will only penetrate, as through a tunnel, to the subsoil of Dante's art, and leave the fertile topsoil intact, which is the art. Niccolò Machiavelli[49] will uproot Dante's political ideal, recommending that the *Veltro* liberator[50] no longer be a supranational emperor or pope, but a tyrant or national prince; however, he will not have uprooted Dante's lyric poetry of that aspiration. It could be equally recommended that children and young people not be shown certain paintings or not be allowed to read certain novels or certain dramas; but this recommendation and act of prohibition will function on a practical level and will

have an impact, not on the works of art, but on the books and canvases that serve as instruments for the reproduction of art; and just as – being practical works – they receive a market value comparable in gold or in grain, so too they lend themselves to being locked away in a cabinet or storage, and even to being burned in a 'bonfire of vanities,' like Savonarola.[51] To confuse, out of a misunderstood impulse of unity, the various phases of the development by expecting that morality would dominate art in the act in which art sublates morality instead, or that art would dominate science in the act in which science dominates or sublates art, or when science itself has for some time already been dominated or sublated by life – this is what a well-understood unity, which is at the same time a rigorous distinction, must reject and prevent.

Unity must prevent and reject this confusion also because the ordered determination of the various stages of the circle allows us to understand not only the independence and dependence of various forms of the spirit, but also the *ordered preservation* of the former in the latter. Of the problems associated with this, I should mention one, or rather return to it, since I have already alluded to it: the relation between fancy and logic, between art and science. It is a problem that is substantially the same as the one that reappears as the search for a distinction between *poetry and prose* – at least from the time (and its discovery was made early on, as it is already found in the *Poetics* of Aristotle) it was recognized that the distinction is not to be conducted by the criterion of a free or bound discourse, poetry being found in free prose (novels and dramas, for example) and prose in bound verse (didactic and philosophic poems, for example). We will conduct it therefore according to a more intimate criterion, which is the one we have already explained, of image and of perception, of intuition and of judgment; and poetry will be the expression of the image and prose the expression of the judgment or concept. But actually the two expressions, as expressions, have the same nature and both have the same aesthetic value, because, if the poet is the lyrist of his feelings, the prose writer is likewise lyrical in his feelings, that is, a poet, even if those feelings are born to him out of the search and in the search of the concept. And there is no reason at all to attribute poetic quality to the composer of a sonnet, and to refuse it to those who have composed

the *Metaphysics*, the *Summa Theologiae,* the *Scienza Nuova*, the *Phänomenologie des Geistes,* or who have narrated the histories of the Peloponnesian War, the politics of Augustus and of Tiberius, or 'universal history.'[52] In each of these works, there is as much passion and as much lyrical and representative power as found in any sonnet and poem. Therefore, all the distinctions that have been attempted, which reserve poetic quality to the poet and deny it to the prose writer, are similar to those boulders carried by immense effort to the top of a steep mountain, which then plunge ruinously into the valley below. Of course, an obvious difference between the two can be seen, except, to determine this, it does not help to separate poetry and prose in the manner of naturalistic logic, like two coordinated concepts that are simply to be contrasted. It is better to conceive of them in their development as the passage from poetry to prose. And in this passage, not only does the poet, on the strength of the unity of the spirit, presuppose a passionate matter, but he preserves the passion by elevating it to the passion of the poet (passion for art), just as the thinker or prose writer not only preserves that passion by elevating it to the passion for science, but likewise preserves the intuitive power from which his judgments emerge, expressed together with the passion that envelops them, and so they retain, together with the new scientific character, artistic character. We can always contemplate this artistic character by presupposing its scientific character, or by disregarding both it and science criticism in order to enjoy the aesthetic form that this has taken. This form also ensures that science belongs together, although under different aspects, with the history of science and with that of literature, and that among the many classes of poetry – which rhetoricians enumerate – it is, at the least, capricious of them to refuse to count the 'poetry of prose,' which is more clearly poetry at times than much of the pretentious poetry of poetry. And yet another problem of the same order, which I even briefly touched upon and do well to come back to here, is that of the relationship between art and morality, which has been denied – since one was immediately identified with the other – but which now needs to be reaffirmed, while noting that, just as the poet in his liberation from every other passion preserves the passion for art, so he preserves along with this passion the conscience for duty (the duty to art), and every poet, in the act of creation, is moral because he fulfils a sacred duty.

The order and logic of the various forms of the spirit, in rendering them mutually necessary, one for the other, and therefore all necessary, reveals the error in the denials of one for the sake of the other: the error of the philosopher (Plato), and of the moralist (Savonarola, or Proudhon),[53] and of the naturalist and practical man (being so many, I will not embellish any further with names!), who reject art and poetry; and, conversely, the error of the artist who rebels against criticism and against science, against the practical and against morality, as so many 'romantics' have done in their tragedies and so many 'decadent' authors repeat these days in their comedies. These result in error and folly, for which we can allow some indulgence (always abiding by our wish not to leave anyone completely unhappy) because it is evident that there is something positive in their very negativity, as rebellion against certain false conceptions or certain false manifestations of art and science, of the practical and the moral (Plato, for example, against the idea of poetry as 'science'; Savonarola against the lack of austerity and hence the morally corrupt and rapidly decaying culture of the Italian Renaissance, etc.). But the folly is shown when we realize that, without art, philosophy would be lacking to itself, because it would be lacking that which conditions its problems, and that to have it valued alone against art would be taking away the very air philosophy breathes, the practical is not practical when it is not stirred and revived by aspirations and, as we say, by 'ideals,' by 'caro immaginare,'[54] which is the art. Conversely, we realize that art without morality – the art that among decadent writers usurps the title of 'pure beauty,' and to which incense is burned as in a witch's sabbath to a diabolical idol – as the result of morality lacking in the life into which it is born and which surrounds it, decomposes as art, and becomes caprice, sensuality, and charlatanry. It is then no longer the artist serving art, but art serving, like the lowliest servant, the personal and futile interests of the artist.

And yet, against the idea of the circle in general – which is very helpful in clarifying the relations of the independence of art and of other spiritual forms – the objection has been made that it describes the work of the spirit as a tiresome and melancholic doing and undoing, a monotonous spinning round on itself that is not worth the effort. And, to be

sure, there is no metaphor that does not lend itself to parody and caricature, which, nevertheless, after amusing us momentarily, compels us to reflect seriously on the thought expressed within the metaphor. And the thought is not that of a sterile self-repetition, of the course in recourse, but the other one, as is clear, of the continuous enrichment of the course in recourse, and in the recourses of recourses. The last term, which becomes the first again, is not the old first, but appears with a multiplicity and precision of concepts, with an experience of life lived, and even of works contemplated that was missing from the old first; it offers material to a higher art, more refined, more complex, more mature. Therefore, instead of always revolving around the same point, the idea of the circle is nothing other than the true philosophical idea of *progress*, of the perpetual growth of the spirit, and of reality itself, where nothing is repeated except the form of the growth, even though, to a man who is walking, we may want to object that his walking is that of standing still, because he always moves his legs with the same rhythm!

Another objection, or rather another act of rebellion, is often sensed, if not always consciously, against the same idea: the restlessness, found in few or in many, the impulse to break away and move beyond the circularity that is the law of life, to arrive at a place where rest can be found from the course heavy with worry, and – away from the open sea – to be found standing on the shore, now gazing back at the troubled waters.[55] But I have already had occasion to say what this rest is: behind the appearance of elevation and sublimation there is an actual negation of reality, where one certainly arrives, but its name is death; death of the individual, and not of reality, which does not die and is not troubled by its course but enjoys it. While still others dream of a higher spiritual form in which the circle is resolved, a form that should be Thought of Thought, unity of the Theoretical and the Practical, Love, God, or whatever else it has been called. They do not realize that this thought, this unity, this Love, this God, already exists in the circle and for the circle, and that they needlessly duplicate a search already fulfilled or they repeat by metaphorizing the already discovered, almost as in the myth of another world that portrays the same drama of the one and only world.

The drama, as I have described up to now as it truly is, ideal and extratemporal – availing myself of the first and then the other term out of verbal convenience, to denote a logical order – is ideal and extratemporal because there is no instant and there is no individual in which the drama is not celebrated whole, just as there is no particle in the universe on which the spirit of God does not breathe. But the ideal moments, indivisible in the ideal drama, can be seen as divided in empirical reality, almost a corpulent symbol of the ideal distinction. Not that they are really divided (ideality is the true reality), but empirically they appear as such to the one who observes them as types and has no other way to determine – in among the types – the individuality of the facts to which his attention is turned, except to enlarge and exaggerate the ideal distinctions. Thus, the artist, the philosopher, the historian, the naturalist, the mathematician, the businessman, and the good man each appear to exist one distinct from the other; and the spheres of artistic, philosophical, historical, naturalistic, mathematical, economical, and ethical culture – with the many institutions connected to them – seem constituted as one distinct from the other. And it even appears that the history of mankind throughout the centuries is divided into epochs, in which one or the other or only some of the ideal forms are represented: epochs fantastic, religious, speculative, naturalistic, industrial, of political passion, of moral enthusiasm, of the cult of pleasure, and so forth. And these epochs have their more or less perfect courses and recourses. However, among the uniformities of individuals, of classes, and of epochs, the one with the eye of the historian discerns the perpetual difference, and the one with knowledge of philosophy discerns the unity in the difference, and the philosopher-historian sees in that difference and unity ideal progress together with historical progress.

But let us speak, for a moment, as empiricists ourselves (since empiricism, if it exists, is beneficial for something); and let us ask ourselves to which type does our epoch belong, or from which type are we emerging and what is its dominant character? To this question the immediate unanimous response is that it is, or it was, naturalistic in culture and industrial in practice; and also unanimously, that it will be denied philosophical greatness and artistic greatness. But since (and already here, empiricism is in danger) no epoch can exist without philosophy or

without art, even our own epoch then has had the one and the other, in ways that were available to it. And its philosophy and its art, the former immediately and the latter mediately, take their place before thought as documents of what our epoch has truly been in its complexity and entirety; and from our interpretation of them we can clearly see the point at which our *duty* must arise.

Contemporary art, sensual, insatiable in its hunger for pleasure, is deeply marked by turbid impulses toward a misunderstood aristocracy that shows itself to be a voluptuary ideal, or one of prepotency and cruelty; at times aspiring to a mysticism that is likewise selfish and voluptuary; without faith in God and without faith in thought, unbelieving and pessimistic and often extremely powerful in rendering such frames of mind. Such art, which moralists vainly condemn once its deep-seated motives and origins have been understood, spurs action that certainly will not aim to condemn, repress, or correct art, but to direct life more energetically toward a healthier and more profound morality, which will be the bearer of an art more noble in content and, I would add, of more noble philosophy, more noble than the one of our own times, which is incapable of giving an account not only of religion, of science, and of its own existence, but of art itself. And art has once again become a profound mystery, or rather, the theme of horrendous blunders by the positivists, neo-critics, psychologists, and pragmatists, who have almost solely represented contemporary philosophy up to now, and have fallen once again (no doubt to regain new strength and brood new problems!) into the most infantile and crass forms of concepts of art.

4 Criticism and the History of Art

Literary and art criticism is often conceived by artists as a brusque and tyrannical *pedagogue* that issues arbitrary orders and imposes prohibitions and grants liberties, and so helps or harms their work by determining their fate at will. And to it, therefore, artists make themselves subservient, humble, flattering, or adulatory – while in their hearts despising it. Or should they fail to obtain their objective or a proud nature prohibit them from lowering themselves to those arts of the courtier, they rebel against criticism, denying its usefulness, cursing, mocking, and comparing the critic (a personal memory) to an ass that enters a pottery shop, and with its *quadrupedante ungulae sonitu*[56] smashes the delicate works of art left to dry in the sun. The fault this time, to be honest, is with the artists, who do not know what criticism is: they expect favours that it is unable to bestow, and fear damages that it is unable to inflict, it being clear that, just as no critic can make an artist out of one who is not an artist, so it is that no critic can ever – a metaphysical impossibility – unmake, ruin, or even slightly damage an artist who is an artist. These things have never happened in the course of history, they are not happening in our time, and one can rest assured that they will never happen in the future. Yet, at other times, it is the critics themselves, or the self-styled ones, who actually pose as pedagogues, oracles, art tour guides, legislators, clairvoyants, or prophets, and they dictate to artists what they should or should not do, assign their topics to them, and declare which material is poetic and which is not. They are dissatisfied with the art produced in the present, and would prefer an art similar to this or that era past, or to some other they foresee in the near or distant future. They reprimand Tasso for not being Ariosto, Leopardi for not being Metastasio, Manzoni for not being Alfieri, and D'Annunzio for not being Berchet or Friar Iacopone.[57] They

draft the blueprint for the great artist of the future, providing him with an ethic, philosophy, history, language, metre, colour, and architectural techniques, and anything else that, according to them he will need. In this case the critic is clearly at fault and artists are justified, when confronted by this arrogant beast, in behaving as one does with animals that one tames, tricks, or deceives in order to make use of them, or runs them off and sends them to the slaughterhouse when they are no longer of any use. In deference to criticism it is necessary to add, however, that these impulsive critics are not so much critics as they are instead artists: failed ones, who tend to aspire toward a certain form of art that they cannot attain, either because the tendency was conflicting and empty, or because their own ability failed them, and by preserving in their heart the bitter feeling of an unfulfilled ideal, they are unable to speak of anything else, while everywhere lamenting its absence and everywhere promoting its presence. At times, they are even artists that are anything but failed – artists who are quite fulfilled – but that same forceful temperament makes them incapable of appreciating art forms different from their own, and they are therefore disposed to reject them with violence. Adding to such negativity is *odium figulinum*,[58] the jealousy of one artist toward another, envy that without a doubt is a flaw, but a defect that many talented artists appear to be marked by; so that we cannot deny to them the same indulgence shown toward the defects of women, which, as we know, are so difficult to separate from their charms. To these artist-critics, the other artists should calmly respond: 'Keep doing the art that you do so well, and let us continue with ours'; and to the failed artists and improvised critics: 'Do not expect from us what you yourselves were unable to do, or that we make some work of the future, which is something neither you, nor we, know anything about.' In fact, one usually does not respond like this because passion gets in the way, but that is still the logical response, and with that response the matter is logically brought to an end, although we can foresee that the quarrel will not end, but rather it will last as long as there are artists, intolerant artists and failed artists, which is to say, forever.

There is another conception of criticism, which, just as the preceding one was expressed in the pedagogue and the tyrant, is expressed in the

magistrate and in the *judge*. It assigns to criticism the task, not of promoting and guiding the life of art – which is promoted and guided, if one likes, by history alone, or by the overall movement of the spirit in its historical course – but simply of discerning, in the art that has already been produced, the beautiful from the ugly, and to sanctify the beautiful and to censure the ugly with the solemnity of its own severe and conscientious sentences. But I fear that not even this other definition will revoke the charge of uselessness against criticism, although perhaps the grounds for the same charge may change considerably. Do we truly need criticism to discern the beautiful from the ugly? The production of art itself is nothing if not this discernment, because the artist reaches purity of expression precisely by eliminating the ugliness that threatens to invade it. And that ugliness comes from the passions of man, which run against the pure passion of art; it is in his weaknesses, his prejudices, his comforts, his neglect, his haste, his having one eye on art and the other on the spectator or publisher or promoter, which are all things that impede the artist in the physiological gestation and normal delivery of his image-expression, the poet in the verse he sounds out and creates, the painter in the sure design and harmonic colours, the composer in the melody, and that – if care is not taken to defend against them – introduce into their works pleasing but empty words, inaccuracies, false notes, dissonances. And just as the artist in the act of producing is a judge – a most severe judge on himself, who misses nothing, not even what escapes others – so can others also discern for themselves, in the spontaneity of contemplation, immediately and very well, where the artist was an artist and where he was a man, a mere man. They can discern, in which works or in which parts of the works, where lyric enthusiasm and creative fancy reign supreme, and where they grew cold and gave way to other things, which simulate art, and therefore (considered under the aspect of this simulation) are called 'ugly.' What does the sentence of criticism serve, when the sentence has already been given by genius and by taste? And genius and taste are legion: they are the people; they are general and secular consensus. So true is this that the sentences of criticism always arrive too late to consecrate the forms already solemnly consecrated by universal applause (although we must not confuse pure applause with the clapping of hands and worldly

clamour – the constancy of glory with the transience of fortune). Criticism also arrives too late to condemn the ugliness that has already been condemned and fussed over and forgotten, or still praised in words but with a bad conscience, out of an ulterior motive and stubborn pride. Criticism, conceived as a magistrate, kills the dead or breathes in the face of the living – which is very much alive – imagining that its breath is the breath of God the giver of life; that is, it does what is useless – useless because it has already taken place, before the existence of criticism. I would like to know if critics were the ones to establish the greatness of Dante or Shakespeare or Michelangelo, and not their legions of readers and contemplators instead. If to such legions, who have praised and who praise these greats, we were also to include, as would be entirely natural, the learned and the professional critics, their acclaim would not differ from that of anyone else, not even from that of children and the average man, for all are equally ready to open their hearts to the beautiful, which speaks to everyone, except for the times when, out of disrespect, beauty remains silent, after having caught sight of the sullen face of a critic-judge.

It therefore gives rise to a third concept of criticism: *interpretation* or *commentary* criticism, which must keep a low profile before works of art and limit itself to the task of the one that dusts it, shows it in the best light, provides information on the period when it was painted and on the things the painting represents, and explains the linguistic forms, the historical references, the factual and conceptual assumptions of a poem. And in one or the other case – once its duty has been fulfilled – it allows art to operate at a spontaneous level in the heart of the observer and reader, who will judge it according to what his own personal taste tells him. The critic, in this case, had come to represent a learned cicerone, or a patient, discreet schoolmaster: 'criticism is the art of teaching how to read,'[59] as has been particularly described by a famous critic, and as a definition it has not left without an echo. Today no one would contest the usefulness of museum or exhibition guides or directed readings, much less of the erudite guides and scholars who, with the knowledge of many things, concealed to most, can dispense much light. Not only does the art of long ago need such guidance, but also art from the near past,

called contemporary, which, although it deals in subject matter or offers forms that seem obvious, is not always obvious enough. And there are times when considerable effort is required to prepare people to experience the beauty of a little poem, or any work of art, even if born only yesterday. Prejudice, custom, and oblivion form barriers to the entrance to that work and it calls for the experienced hand of an interpreter and commentator to clear them away, or to put them in their proper place. Criticism, in this sense, is certainly very useful, but it is not known why it should be called criticism, when this type of work has its own name: interpretation, commentary, and exegesis. It would at least be advisable not to call it such and so avoid generating an annoying ambiguity.

Ambiguous, because criticism asks to be, and wants to be, and is some other thing: not to encroach upon art, not to rediscover the beauty of the beautiful and the ugliness of the ugly, not to keep a low profile before art, but rather to stand as tall as art and, in a certain sense, above it.* Therefore, what is legitimate and true criticism?

First and foremost, criticism is *together all three* things that I have explained up to now, which means all three of them are its necessary conditions, without which it would not be possible. Without the moment of art (and art-vs-art in a certain sense is, as we have seen, the criticism claiming to be productive, or an aid to production, or suppressing certain forms of production to the advantage of certain others) criticism would lack the material on which to practise itself. Without taste (criticism as judge), the critic would be lacking the experience of art, the art made internal to his spirit, the art separated from non-art and enjoyed against that. Finally, criticism would be lacking this experience without exegesis – that is,

* 'C'est un beau moment pour le critique comme le poète que celui où l'un et l'autre peuvent, chacun dans un juste sens, s'écrier avec cet ancien: *Je l'ai trouvé.* Le poète trouve la région où son génie peut vivre et se déployer désormais; le critique trouve l'instinct et la loi de ce génie,' C.A. Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits littéraires,* vol. I, p. 31. (It is a great moment for the critic as for the poet when one and the other can, each for his own reason, cry out this ancient: *I found it.* The poet discovers the place where his genius can live and continue to thrive; the critic discovers the instinct and the law of such genius). *This footnote, the only one included by Croce, does not appear in his first edition (1913) of the* Breviario*, but is found in subsequent Laterza editions.*

without having removed the obstacles to reproductive fancy – providing the spirit with those suppositions of historical knowledge, which it needs, and which are the kindling that burn in the fire of fancy.

But before proceeding further, it is better to resolve a serious doubt that has been raised, one that often reappears in the circle of philosophical literature as it does in popular thought, and which, no doubt if it were justified, would compromise not only the possibility of criticism – about which we are speaking – but also the same reproducer of fancy or of taste. To assemble, as in the case of exegesis, the necessary material to reproduce the works of art of others (or of our own work from the past, as we search our memory and consult our notes to remind ourselves of who we were when we produced it), and to reproduce that work of art in our fancy in every authentic detail – is this truly possible? Can the collection of the necessary material ever be complete? And however complete it is, will fancy ever let itself be restricted by it, in its work of reproduction? Or will it not operate as a new fancy, introducing new material? Or will it not be compelled to do so because it is really unable to reproduce the work of others and of the past? Is it conceivable for the reproduction of the individual, of the *individuum ineffabile*, when every sound philosophy teaches that it is only the universal that is forever reproducible? As a consequent, the reproduction of the works of art by others or from the past, is it not perhaps a mere impossibility? And what we take to be a self-evident fact in ordinary conversation, and which is the stated or implied presupposition of every debate on art, is it not perchance (as was said about history in general) *une fable convenue*?[60]

Indeed, to speculate about the problem somewhat extrinsically, it seems highly unlikely that the unwavering faith we all have, in the comprehension and intelligence of art, is unfounded. It is even more unlikely if we consider that those same ones, who, theorizing in the abstract, deny the possibility of reproduction – or, as they say, the absoluteness of taste – and are then very tenacious in maintaining their own judgments of taste, and can clearly tell the difference when I affirm that I like or dislike wine because it agrees or disagrees with my physiological organism, and affirm that one poem is beautiful and another an eyesore. The second order of judgments (as Kant demonstrated in a classical

analysis) brings with it the invincible claim to universal validity, and souls become impassioned by it, and in chivalrous times there have even been those who defended, sword in hand, the beauty of the *Gerusalemme*[61] – whereas, no one, that we know of, has ever been killed for having affirmed the pleasant or unpleasant taste of wine. Nor is it worth objecting that the more artistically abject works are liked even by very many or by a few and, if by no one else, by their author, because what is in question is not whether or not they are liked (no one being able to originate anything in the soul without the consent of the soul, and therefore a correlative pleasure), but whether that pleasure has been an aesthetic pleasure and founded upon a judgment of taste and beauty. And passing from extrinsic scepsis to intrinsic consideration, it is worth noting that the objection made against the conceivability of aesthetic reproduction is based upon a reality conceived in turn as a jumble of atoms or as abstractly monadic, composed of monads[62] lacking communication between them and coordinated only from without. But reality is not that: reality is spiritual unity and in spiritual unity nothing is lost, all is in eternal possession. Not only the reproduction of art, but in general the memory of any fact (which is always the reproduction of intuitions) would be inconceivable without the unity of the real; and if Caesar and Pompey were not us – that is, that universe once determined by Caesar and Pompey and which is now determined by us, as we living as them in us – we would not have any idea of Caesar and Pompey. That individuality is then irreproducible, and what is reproducible is only the universal, will certainly be a doctrine of 'sound' philosophy, but of sound Scholastic philosophy, which detached the universal from the individual, and made this the accident of that (the dust that time steals away), and ignored that the true universal is the universal individuated, and that what is only truly *effable* is the so-called *ineffable*, the concrete and the individual. And, in the end, what does it matter that material is not always available for reproducing a complete exactness of all works or of a single work of art from the past? The entire reproduction of the past, as with every human endeavour, is an ideal that is endlessly carried out, and for that very reason, is always carried out in the way consented to by the reality of each moment in time. Is there, in a poem, a nuance whose full meaning eludes us? No one would claim that this nuance,

about which we have a crepuscular[63] view that for now is dissatisfying to us, will not somehow redefine itself at some point in the future, as a result of investigation and meditation, and by the formation of favourable conditions and sympathetic currents.

Therefore, just as taste is confident of the legitimacy of its argument, so too is historical research and interpretation tireless in restoring and preserving and broadening our knowledge of the past, leaving the relativists and sceptics of taste and of history to make their cries of despair from time to time, which do not bring anyone, not even, as we have seen, themselves, to the actual hopeless act of not judging.

The exception is that – with this long yet indispensable parenthesis closed, and taking up the thread of the discourse once again – art, historical exegesis, and taste, if they are the *antecedents* of criticism, are not yet *criticism*. In fact, with that triple presupposition, nothing is obtained other than the reproduction and enjoyment of the image-expression; that is, we go back and place ourselves more or less in the condition of the artist-producer, in the act that produced his image. Nor do we come away from that condition with the intention, as many boast, of reproducing the work of a poet or an artist in a new form, giving an equivalent, whence they define the critic: *artifex additus artifici*,[64] because that reproduction, in new clothes, would be a translation. That is, it would be a variation, another work of art inspired in some way by the first; and if it were the same, it would be a reproduction, pure and simple, a material reproduction, with the same words, with the same colours, with the same tones – that is, useless. The critic is not *artifex additus artifici*, but *philosophus additus artifici*: his work is not actualized until the received image is both preserved and surpassed; it belongs to thought, which we have seen go beyond fancy and shed new light on it, and render intuition as perception, and qualify reality, and so distinguish reality from unreality. In this perception, in this distinction – which is always and entirely criticism or judgment – art criticism, which we are dealing with now in particular, is born asking the question: if and in what measure is the fact, which is before us as a problem, *intuition*, that is, real as such; and if and in what measure is it not such, that is, unreal: reality and unreality, which in art are called beauty and ugliness, in logic truth and error, in economics beneficial and detrimental, in morality good

and evil. Therefore, all of art criticism can be shortened to this very brief proposition, which, moreover, is enough to differentiate its work from that of art and of taste (which, considered on their own, are logically mute), and from exegetic erudition (which, lacking a logical synthesis, is also logically mute): 'There is a work of art *a*,' with the corresponding negative, 'There is no work of art *a*.'

It seems a trifle, but no more nor less than the definition of art as intuition seemed a trifle, and instead we have seen how many things it included, how many assertions and how many negations – so many in fact, that although I have proceeded and will proceed in an analytical way, I have been and will be able to give but a few indications of them. That proposition or judgment of art criticism which states: 'There is a work of art *a*,' entails, above all, as every judgment, a subject (the intuition of the work of art *a*) whose attainment requires the diligence of exegesis and fanciful reproduction with the conjoined discernment of taste – something that, as we have seen, is often arduous and complicated, and where many lose their way for lack of fancy or for want of and shallowness of culture. Moreover, as with every judgment, it entails a predicate, a category, in this case the category of art, which must be conceived in the judgment, and which therefore becomes the concept of art. And likewise for the concept of art, we have seen the many difficulties and complications to which it may lead, and how the possession of it is always unstable, as it is constantly attacked and entrapped and constantly to be defended against assaults and entrapments. Art criticism, therefore, develops and grows, declines and rises again with the developing and declining and rising of the philosophy of art; and each is given to comparing what it was in the Middle Ages (when we can almost say it did not exist), and what it became in the first half of the nineteenth century with Herder[65] and Hegel and the romantics, and in Italy with De Sanctis; and, in a more restricted field, from what it was with De Sanctis, to what it became in the successive naturalistic period, in which the concept of art was actually obscured – confused even with physics and with physiology – with pathology. And if half, or less than half, of the disagreements over judgments are due to the poor clarity over what the artist has done – from a lack of sympathy and taste – the other half,

or more than half, derive from the poor distinction among ideas on art, whence it often happens that two individuals are substantially in agreement over the value of a work of art, but one gives his approval to what the other deplores because they are each referring to a different definition of art.

Because of this dependency of criticism on the concept of art, there are as many forms of false criticism to distinguish among as there are false philosophies of art. But, confining ourselves to the main ones that have already been discussed, there is a type of criticism that, instead of reproducing and characterizing art, fragments and classifies it; and there is another, moralistic one, which treats works of art as actions with respect to the ends that the artist proposed for himself or should have proposed. There is the hedonistic one, which shows art to be so, depending on whether it has or has not arrived at sensual pleasure and enjoyment; and there is the intellectualistic one, which measures the progress of art in the same way as it measures the progress of philosophy, and knows Dante for his philosophy but not for his passion, and judges Ariosto weak for the philosophical weakness in his work, and Tasso more serious because he has a more serious philosophy, and Leopardi contradictory in his pessimism. There is the criticism that separates content from form, which is usually called psychology and, rather than looking at works of art, looks at the psychology of artists as men; and there is the other that separates forms from content and is pleased with abstract forms, because – depending on the instance and personal sympathies – they bring to mind antiquity or the Middle Ages. And there is still another that finds beauty where it finds ornate rhetoric; and finally, there is the one that, once having defined the laws of genres and the arts, welcomes or rejects works of art according to whether they move toward, or away from, the models fashioned. Nor have I enumerated all of them, and neither did I have in mind to do so, nor will I expound on the criticism of criticism, which would be nothing more than a repetition of the aforementioned descriptions of criticism and dialectic of Aesthetics; with the few indications given, the beginning of inevitable repetition will already have been noted. It would be more profitable to summarize – (if even a quick summary did

not occupy so much space) – the history of criticism, put historical names to those ideal positions I have indicated, and show how the models of criticism were rampant above all in Italian and French classicism, the conceptualistic one in nineteenth-century German philosophy, the moralistic one in the period of religious reform, or in that of the national Italian Risorgimento,[66] and the psychological one in France with Sainte-Beuve and various others. Hedonistic criticism was spread especially with the judgments of society people and of critics from the salons and journals; and that of classifications, in schools, where it seems that the function of criticism is conscientiously fulfilled when the so-called origins of metres and 'technique' and 'subjects' and literary and artistic 'genres' have been investigated and the exponents of the various genres have been enumerated.

What is more, the forms I have summarily described are forms of criticism, although incorrect; the same thing, in truth, cannot be said of other forms that hoist their flags and fight among themselves, one taking the name of 'aesthetic criticism,' and the other 'historical criticism,' and which, I request permission to baptize instead, as they deserve, *pseudoaesthetic criticism* (or, aesthetistic) and *pseudohistorical criticism* (or, historicistic). These two forms, even in the fierce competition between them, share a common abhorrence of philosophy in general, and of the concept of art in particular: of any intervention of thought in art criticism – which, according to the former, is the competence of artistic souls and, according to the latter, of the erudite. In other words, one and the other again lowers criticism beneath criticism, the ones bringing it back to pure taste and the enjoyment of art, the others to pure exegetic research or the preparation of materials for the reproduction of fancy. What 'aesthetics,' which entails thought and a concept of art, has to do with pure taste devoid of concept, is difficult to say; and what 'history' has to do with the unleashed erudition on art – which is not organizable to history because it is devoid of a concept of art and is unaware of what art is (whereas history always insists on knowing its subject) – is even more arduous to establish; at most one could note the reasons for the odd 'fortune' to which these two terms have been subjected. In any event, there would be no harm either in the use of those names, or in the refusal to practise criticism, as long as the proponents

of one or the other direction were actually to stay within the limits they themselves set down. And the ones would enjoy works of art, and the others would gather material for the exegesis of art, and both would leave criticism to those who want to practice it, or be content to speak poorly of criticism without interfering in its problems. To attain such a level of abstention would necessitate, no more nor less, that the would-be aesthetes not open their mouths, enrapturing on art and ruminating its joys in silence; and that, at best, when encountering those like themselves, that they understand each other – as animals are said to do (whether true or not!) – without speaking: and that their faces lost in rapture, arms outstretched in wonder, or hands joined in a prayer of thanksgiving for the joy experienced should say it all. The historicists, on their part, could of course speak – of codices, corrections, chronological and topical data, political events, biographical episodes, the origins of a work, language, syntax, metres – but never of art, which they serve but upon whose face they cannot, as simple men of erudition, rest their eyes – just as the servant may not raise his eyes to gaze upon the face of his mistress, for whom he must still brush clothes or prepare meals: *sic vos, non vobis*.[67] But yes! – by all means, go right ahead and ask a man, no matter how extravagant his ideas or how fanatical in his extravagances, about just such abstentions and sacrifices and heroics! In particular, go ask the one who, for one reason or another, has dallied in art his entire life, not to speak of art and not to judge it! The mute would-be aesthetes speak and judge and deliberate on art, as do the ineffectual historicists. And since, in all that talk, they do not have the guidance, disparaged and abhorred by them, of philosophy and of a *concept* of art – and it is a concept that they still need – and when good sense does not, by chance, suggest the right one to them (without their realizing it), they roam through all the various *preconceptions* I have noted – moralistic and hedonistic, intellectualistic and 'contentistic,' formalistic and rhetorical, physiological and academic – clinging first to one and then to another, and then combining them all together and contaminating them. Yet the most curious spectacle (although foreseen by the philosopher) is that, in their drivel on art, the aestheticist and the historicist – irreconcilable adversaries, motivated by opposing views – reconcile so well that they both end up speaking the same drivel. And

there is nothing more amusing than to recognize the most hackneyed intellectualistic and moralistic ideas in the writings of those emotionally moved lovers of art – moved to the point of despising thought – and of the very positive historians – so positive in fact that they fear compromising that positivity if they were to understand the subject of their research, which, coincidentally, this time happens to be called art!

True art criticism is, without doubt, *aesthetic* criticism, but not because it disdains philosophy, as does pseudoaesthetic criticism, but rather because it operates as a philosophy and as a conception of art. And it is *historical* criticism, but not because it concerns what is extrinsic to art, as does the pseudohistorical, but rather because, after having availed itself of historical data for the reproduction of fancy (and at this point it is not yet history), after having obtained what is the reproduction of fancy, *it becomes history*, thereby determining which fact it was that was reproduced in its fancy; that is, characterizing the fact by means of the concept, and establishing exactly which fact has taken place. So the two tendencies – which are in conflict in lesser directions of criticism – in true criticism coincide; and '*historical art criticism*' and '*aesthetic criticism*' *are the same*. The use of one or the other term makes no difference, and one or the other can have its particular use only for reasons of opportunity, as when, for example, with the first term, we want more particularly to call attention to the need for understanding art, and with the second, for the historical objectivity of what is under consideration. The problem, posited by certain methodologists, thus becomes equally resolved as to whether history enters into art criticism as a means or as an end; for it is clear by now that history which is used as the means, precisely because it is a means, is not history, but exegetic material. And history that has value as an end certainly is history, but it does not enter into criticism as a particular element, but as the constituent and the whole, which precisely expresses the word 'end.'

If art criticism is historical criticism, it follows that its task of discerning the beautiful and the ugly cannot come down to one of simple approval and refusal, as occurs in the immediate consciousness of the artist as he produces or of the man of taste as he contemplates; it will have to be

amplified and raised to the task called *explanation*. And since, in the world of history (which is certainly the world), negative or privative facts do not exist, what to taste seems repugnant and ugly because it is not artistic, will not be, under historical consideration, either repugnant or ugly, because it knows that what is not artistic is still *some other thing*, and has its own right to existence; it did indeed exist. The virtuous and Catholic allegory that Torquato Tasso composed for his *Gerusalemme* is not artistic, nor is the patriotic declamatory rhetoric of Niccolini and Guerrazzi,[68] nor the subtleties and conceits that Petrarch introduced in his noble, graceful, and melancholic lyric poetry. But Tasso's allegory is one of the manifestations of the work conducted by the Catholic Counter-Reformation in Latin countries; the declamatory rhetorics of Niccolini and Guerrazzi were violent attempts to goad the hearts of Italians against foreigners and clergy, or to follow in the fashion of such goading; the subtleties and conceits employed by Petrarch were in devotion to the traditional elegance of the troubadours, revived and enriched in the new Italian society; that is, they are all practical events, worthy of respect and historically quite significant. For vividness of language and in keeping with the current jargon, we will continue to speak, within the field of historical criticism, of the beautiful and the ugly, on condition that at the same time we show – or mention and make known, or at least not exclude – the *positive* content; not only the positive content of the *beautiful*, but also that of the *ugly*, which will never be so radically *condemned* for its ugliness as when it is *fully explained and understood*, because in this case, it has been yanked – in the most radical manner – from the sphere of art.

For this reason art criticism, when it is truly aesthetic or historical, is extended in the same act to *life criticism*, by not being able to judge, that is, to assign their character to works of art without having to judge at the same time works from the whole of life, and assign to each work its own character. This has been observed in the truly great critics, and above all in De Sanctis, who, in his *History of Italian Literature* and in *Essays on Criticism*, is as profound a critic of art as he is of philosophy, morality, and politics. And he is so profound in the one because he is profound in the others, and vice versa: the strength of his pure aesthetic consideration of art is the strength of his moral consideration of morality, of his

pure logical consideration of philosophical thought, and so forth. The forms of the spirit, of which criticism avails itself as categories of judgment, are indeed ideally distinguishable in unity, but they are not materially separable from each other and from unity, unless we wish to see them quickly wither and die. The usual distinction of art criticism from other forms of criticism, therefore, simply serves to indicate that the attention of the speaker or of the writer is turned to one rather than to another aspect of the same unique and indivisible content. Likewise empirical is the distinction – that for the sake of didactic clarity I have kept in my talk until now – between art *criticism* and the *history* of art. Such a distinction is principally made by that in which, in the examination of contemporary literature and art, prevails the judging or polemical tone, for which the name of 'criticism' seems more fitting; and in that of more remote literature and art, prevails the narrative tone, which is more readily called 'history.' In effect, true and complete *criticism* is the calm *historical narration of what has happened*, and history is the only and true criticism that we can apply to the facts of humanity, which cannot be non-facts – since they have happened – and they are not commandable by the spirit in any other way than by *comprehending them*. And just as art criticism has shown itself to be inseparable from other forms of criticism, so it is, for the history of art that, for reasons only of literary prominence, can be split from the overall history of human civilization, wherein, to be sure, it follows its own law that is art, but from which it receives its historical movement that is of the spirit whole – and never of one form of the spirit, torn from the rest.

1912

Notes

Introduction

Translated, except where noted, by Hiroko Fudemoto. A note enclosed in square brackets indicates an authorized note added by the translator.

1 Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69), *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 331. Translation of *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfort: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970).

2 [Antonio Labriola (1843–1904), Italian, was a philosopher, author, socialist (regarded as the father of Italian Marxism), and author of *In memoria dei comunisti* (1895), trans. *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*: *In Memory of the Communist Manifesto* (1904); *Socialismo e filosofia* (1897), trans. *Socialism and Philosophy* (c. 1906); and others (not translated into English). The young Croce had first met Labriola – who lectured at the University of Rome – at his politically renowned uncle Silvio's [Spaventa] house in Rome, meeting place for political and intellectual exchange. While living with his uncle, Croce was a law student at the university, but unenthused about his courses he began to sit in on Labriola's lectures on moral philosophy. Although Croce would return to Naples before finishing his law degree, the two had a relationship of intellectual debate.]

3 [*Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (hereafter *E*) (1902), trans. *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (1909); *Logica come scienza del concetto puro* (hereafter *L*) (1908), trans. *Logic as the Science of the Pure Concept* (1917); *Filosofia della practica: Economica ed etica* (1909), trans. *Philosophy of the Practical: Economic and Ethic* (1915); *Teoria e storia della storiografia* (1916), trans. *Theory and History of Historiography* (1921). All were translated by Douglas Ainslie.]

4 For autobiographical and biographical readings on Croce, see Benedetto Croce, *An Autobiography*, trans. Robin G. Collingwood (Oxford: Clarendon

Press, 1927); Gennaro Sasso, '*Per invigilare me stesso': I taccuini di lavoro di Benedetto Croce* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989); Cecil J.S. Sprigge, *Benedetto Croce: Man and Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press,1952); Fabio Fernando Rizi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). See also the essay by David D. Roberts, 'Croce in America: Influence, Misunderstanding, and Neglect,' *Humanitas* 8 (1995): 3–34.

5 Benedetto Croce, *Religione e serenità*, in *Frammenti di etica*, now in *Etica e politica* (Bari: Laterza, 1973), 23.

6 Benedetto Croce, *Amore per le cose*, in *Frammenti di etica*, ibid., 19.

7 Among works by Croce translated into English on literary and aesthetic subjects, see *Ariosto, Shakespeare, and Corneille*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (1920) [*Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille* (1920)]; *The Conduct of Life*, trans. Arthur Livingston (1926) [*Frammenti di etica* (1915–22)]; *Philosophy – Poetry – History: An Anthology of Essays*, trans. Cecil J.S. Sprigge (1966) [*Filosofia, poesia, storia* (1951)]; *The Poetry of Dante*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (1922) [*La poesia di Dante* (1921)].

8 [The quadrilateral alludes to the four strongholds, the cities of Peschiera, Mantua, Verona, and Legnago, that remained of Austria's domination in Italy during the seven years prior to Austria's defeat in the Austria-Prussia war of 1866.]

9 Benedetto Croce, *Breviary of Aesthetics* (hereafter *BA*), the translation of *Breviario di estetica*, in *Breviario di estetica – Aesthetica in nuce* (hereafter *BEA*) (Milan: Adelphi, 1990). On the meaning of the term 'intuition,' see the still interesting book by Vittorio Sainati, *L'estetica di Benedetto Croce, dall'intuizione visiva all'intuizione catartica* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1953).

10 See Benedetto Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (hereafter *E*) (1908), 3rd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1990), 27.

11 See Luigi Pirandello, *Arte e scienza* (Rome: W. Mode, 1908). It was well known that Croce and Pirandello did not like each other. Croce first showed his irritation in 1909 while discussing Pirandello's essay *L'umorismo*, where he defined the Sicilian author as a 'philosopher by the hour' (filosofo a ore), and considered his novel *The Late Mattia Pascal* (*Il fu Mattia Pascal*) as 'a triumph for the town's Hall of Records' (un trionfo dello stato civile); see Benedetto Croce, *'L'umorismo' di Luigi Pirandello* (1909), in *Conversazioni critiche*, Serie I (Bari: Laterza, 1939), 43–8; and Benedetto Croce, *Luigi Pirandello*, in *Letteratura della nuova Italia*: *Saggi critici*, vol. 6, ch. 54 (Bari: Laterza, 1945). Croce's aversion is perhaps connected to the ambiguity and protean nature of Pirandello's characters, their absolute diffidence and reluctance to accept the world as it really is in its intrinsic rationality, their

pretensions as would-be Hamlets and propensity for nihilistic sophistry, and, not least, to the lack of any intrinsic 'dignity,' on Pirandello's part, attributed to life. All of which was contrary to the effort by Croce, as a political educator, which was aimed toward a 'religion of works' (religione delle opere), the reinforcement of the concreteness of knowing and of making, and the calm acceptance of the real limits imposed by things, and by the relation of power to one's own actions.

12 [English naturalist and theorist Charles Robert Darwin (1809–82) writes in the introduction to his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: J. Murray, 1872): 'In order to acquire as good a foundation as possible, and to ascertain, independently of common opinion, how far particular movements of the features and gestures are really expressive of certain states of mind … I had hoped to derive much aid from the great masters in painting and sculpture, who are such close observers. Accordingly, I have looked at photographs and engravings of many well-known works: but, with few exceptions, have not thus profited. The reason no doubt is, that in works of art, beauty is the chief object; and strongly contracted facial muscles destroy beauty' (13–15).]

13 [The lines, by Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907), '*o a la grand' arte pura / Vil muscolo nocivo*' are from *Intermezzo* 3, lines 37–8, in *Poesie di Giosuè Carducci* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1927). Carducci was an Italian poet, scholar, teacher, orator, and critic, considered to be his nation's unofficial poet, and highly regarded for his experimentation with Greek metres. Carducci became the first Italian poet to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1906.]

14 Benedetto Croce, *Pensieri sull'arte* (hereafter *PA*) (1928), in *Dal libro dei pensieri* (hereafter *LP*) (Milan: Adelphi, 2002), 73.

15 Benedetto Croce, 'L'arte nelle sue relazioni', in *BEA*, 202–3. In 1928 Croce discovers the idea of poetry as vision from afar (theorized by him in an article on Conrad Fiedler) in the essay by Charles Magnin, 'Ahasvèrus, Mystère; Et de la nature du génie poétique,' *Revue des deux mondes* 4 (1833): 553–76. Cf. *PA*, 87–8.

16 Benedetto Croce, *I trapassati*, in *Frammenti di etica*, in *Etica e politica* (Bari: Laterza,1973), 23–4.

17 [On the interpretation of *aiuola* in Dante, see the essay by John A. Scott, '*Paradiso* 22.151: "L'aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci,"' *Philology and Hermeneutics* (29 April 2003), http://www.princeton.edu/~dante/ebdsa/scotto42903.html, accessed on 6 March 2007, in which he writes: 'With antecedents in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (3.16), Dante here expresses an attitude typical of the medieval *contemptus mundi*. The earth's appearance strikes him as so *vile* (1.135) that he smiles in contempt at the passions it

arouses … Vile points to the corruption on earth for this *aiuola*, this little plot of ground.']

18 [Dante,'s *Inferno*, 1:22–4: 'E come quei che con lena affannata / uscito fuor del pelago a la riva / si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata' (And just as he who, with exhausted breath, / having escaped from sea to shore, turns back / to watch the dangerous waters he has quit) trans. A. Mandelbaum, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980; Bantam Classic edition, 1982), 3.]

19 Giuseppe Galasso, *Croce e lo spirito del suo tempo* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2002), 401.

20 Benedetto Croce, *Logica come scienza del concetto puro* (hereafter *L*) (Bari: Laterza, 1971), 5.

21 Marcel Proust, in *In Search of Lost Time, Volume VI: Time Regained*, trans. Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D.J. Enright (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 298–9. Translation of *Le temps retrouvé*, in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard [La Pléiade], 1987–9), 4:474.

22 English trans., ibid., 508; in French, ibid., 610.

23 It was not like this for the young Croce, who, in 1885, asserted that 'the expression of the logical form is precisely the aesthetic form' (l'espressione della forma logica è appunto la forma estetica) (*PA*, 19).

24 I believe that, at this point, Croce wanted to introduce into the discussion, first initiated by Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) (see *Etica*, 2, Proposition XIL, Scholium), his own notion that as long as the child who imagines a horse with wings, 'perceives of nothing that could exclude the existence of such a horse, he will necessarily think of the horse as being real and not doubt its existence, even though he may not be sure.' We must not confuse Croce's idea of 'intuition' with that of Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) because for Croce, intuition has to do with art, while for Bergson it has to do with truth (see Patrick Romanell in his introduction to Benedetto Croce, *Guide to Aesthetics* (South Bend, IN: Gateway, 1965; reprint New York: Hackett, 1999), xxvii (trans. Patrick Romanell).

25 *La storia come pensiero e come azione* (1938) (Bari, Laterza, 1973), 19.

26 [Casting-out-nines, also known as the Hindu check, is a preliminary check to see if an arithmetic calculation is correct. It was described by Fibonacci (Leonardo da Pisa [c.1170–c.1240]) in his *Liber abaci* (1202), in which he had translated the (probable Hindu) procedure from the Arabic. *Pons asinorum*, Latin for 'bridge for asses' or 'dunces,' is the name given to the fifth proposition in Euclid's *Elements*, Book I, as 'the first true test' of the student's intelligence.]

27 *E*, 13; see also Croce's statement: 'This profound philosophical proposition on the identity of intuition and expression is, after all, just ordinary common sense that laughs at anyone who claims to have ideas but does not know how to express them, or to have conceived of a great painting but does not know how to paint. Having the idea, the words will follow (Rem tene, verba sequentur), but if the words (*verba*) are missing then the substance (*res*) is also missing' (*BEA*, 211).

28 See Benedetto Croce, *The Breviary of Aesthetic*, in *The Book of the Opening of the Rice Institute*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (Houston: The Rice Institute, 1912), 450–517. The same translation was revised by Ainslie and published in England as *The Essence of Aesthetic* (London: William Heinemann, 1921) at the same time as the release of *Croce's Aesthetic*, by Bernard Bosanquet (London: Oxford University Press, 1921). After the translation by Patrick Romanell of the *Guide to Aesthetics* (South Bend, IN: Gateway, 1965; reprint New York: Hackett, 1995), the Da Ponte edition, *Breviary of Aesthetics: Four Lectures*, is (technically) the fourth translation to be published in English.

29 Patrick Romanell, from his introduction to Croce, *Guide to Aesthetics*, xxiii.

30 See Marshall Van Deusen, *J.E. Spingarn* (New York: Twayne, 1971), 19. For items written by Joel Spingarn, see the *Notes* section in *The Nation*, 71, 15 November 1900, 386, and *The Nation*, 75, 25 September 1902, 252–3. Once he became professor at Columbia University, Spingarn declared himself a convert to Croce's philosophy. He also opened the way, involuntarily, for a rather hostile review by George Santayana (1863–1952), who found Croce's concepts to be abstract and artificial and later took him for a champion of art for art's sake; see G. Santayana, 'Croce's Aesthetics,' *Journal of Comparative Literature* 1 (1903): 191–5. A rich source for the reception of Croce's thought in the United States is the essay by David D. Roberts, 'Croce in America: Influence, Misunderstanding, and Neglect,' *Humanitas* 8 (1995): 3–34; idem, *Historicism and Fascism in Modern Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2007). See also Gian N.G. Orsini, 'Note sul Croce e la cultura americana,' in *Benedetto Croce*, ed. Francesco Flora (Milan: Malfasi, 1953), 359–66; Dante Della Terza, 'Croce in America'; idem, *Da Vienna a Baltimora: La diaspora degli intellettuali europei negli Stati Uniti d'America* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987), 197–205; Giovanni Gullace, introduction to his translation of Croce's *La poesia: Benedetto Croce's Poetry and Literature: An Introduction to Its Criticism and History* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), xiii–lxxiv.

31 See Raffaello Piccoli, *Benedetto Croce: An Introduction to His Philosophy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922).

32 Among the notable interpreters of Croce and his influence, see Herbert W. Carr, *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce: The Problem of Art and History* (London: Macmillan, 1917). On the misunderstanding of Croce's concepts in a neo-idealistic or neo-Hegelian sense, see Frederic S. Simoni, 'Benedetto Croce: A Case of International Misunderstanding,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11 (September 1952): 7–14. In 1934 John Dewey regarded Croce as an idealist for having considered art only in relation to cognitive categories of 'intuition' and 'expression,' ignoring concrete aesthetic experience: see his *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1934), 294–5. That Croce did not take such criticism well can be seen in his review of *Art as Experience*, which appeared in *La critica* in 1940, and was reprinted in *Discorsi di varia filosofia* (Bari: Laterza, 1945), 2:112–19, and which marked the beginning of a critical confrontation between the two philosophers. On this debate, see George H. Douglas, 'A Reconsideration of the Dewey-Croce Exchange,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (summer 1970): 497–504, and Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 1–13, 25–6, 281–2n. On this entire matter, see again Roberts, *Croce in America: Influence, Misunderstanding, and Neglect*. For a long time, the significance of Giambattista Vico (author of *Scienza nuova* [New Science], considered to be the true founder of modern aesthetics as opposed to Baumgarten) on Croce's thought was underestimated, despite the English translation of Croce's book on him: *The Philosophy of Gian Battista Vico*, trans. by R.G. Collingwood (London: Howard Latimer, 1913). The influence of literary critic Francesco De Sanctis on Croce has been similarly undervalued. However, Croce's interpretation of Hegel was also known in the English-speaking world; see his *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel* (Bari: Laterza, 1907) translated as *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*, by Douglas Ainslie (London: Macmillan, 1915).

33 See Gaetano J. Nardo, *The Aesthetics of Benedetto Croce: A Critical Evaluation of Its Terminology and Internal Consistence* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1957); Calvin G. Seerveld, *Benedetto Croce's Earlier Aesthetic Theories and Literary Criticism: A Critical Philosophical Look at the Development during His Rationalistic Years* (Kampen, the Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1958); G. (Gian) N.G. Orsini, *Benedetto Croce: Philosopher of Art and Literary Critic* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961); Annie Edwards Powell (Mrs Dodds), *The Romantic Theory of Poetry: An Examination in the Light of Croce's Aesthetic* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962); Merle Elliott Brown, *Neo-idealist Aesthetics: Croce – Gentile – Collingwood* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University

Press, 1966). On Croce's role in Italian literary criticism, see Walter Binni, 'Croce e il crocianesimo nella critica letteraria del Novecento,' in *Letteratura italiana, I critici: Storia monografica della filologia e della critica moderna in Italia*, ed. Gianni Grana (Milan: Marzorati, 1976), 3: 2229–38.

34 See Giovanni Gullace, *Benedetto Croce's Poetry and Literature* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981); René Wellek, *Four Critics: Croce, Valéry, Lukács, and Ingarden* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 3–18; idem, *History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 8, *French, Italian, and Spanish Criticism, 1900–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 187, 189; Paolo D'Angelo, *L'estetica di Benedetto Croce* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1982); Colin Lyas, 'The Master Thought of Croce's *Estetica*,' *International Yearbook of Aesthetics* 2 (1998) (http://www2.eur.nl/fw/hyper/IAA/Yearbook/iaa2/index.htm, accessed 1 March 2007); Ernesto Paolozzi, *L'estetica di Benedetto Croce* (Naples: Guida, 2002); and Massimo Verdicchio, *Naming Things, Aesthetics Philosophy and History in Benedetto Croce* (Naples: Città del sole, 2000).

Translator's Introduction

1 *Poetry and Literature*: *An Introduction to Its Criticism and History*, trans. Giovanni Gullace (Carbondale-Edwardsville, IL: South Illinois University Press, 1981), viii-ix.

2 *The Conduct of Life* (1924), trans. Arthur Livingston (Rahway, NJ: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), ix.

3 See the Introduction by Remo Bodei, note 28.

4 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), s.v.

5 *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, ed. Salvatore Battaglia (Turin: UTET, 1961).

6 *Grande Dizionario della lingua italiana De Agostini* (Florence: Remo Sandron Editions; and Novara: De Agostini, 1990), 288.

7 *DISC: Dizionario Italiano Sabatini Coletti* (Florence: Giunti Gruppi, 1997), 328.

Breviary of Aesthetics

All translations, except where noted, are by Hiroko Fudemoto.

English citations of the *Divine Comedy* are from the translations by Allen Mandelbaum. See *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, *Inferno* 1980, *Purgatorio* 1982, *Paradiso* 1984; New York: Random House, Bantam Classic, *Inferno* 1982, *Purgatorio* 1984, *Paradiso* 1986).

1 Croce opens the *Breviario* with the specific question posited by Leo [Lev Nikolayevich] Tolstoy (1828–1919) in the title of his 1897 treatise *What is Art?* There, Tolstoy discusses his meaning of art, its relation to moral goodness and truth, and its uncertain connection to beauty (for Tolstoy, the word 'beautiful' in Russian was not applied to art). He also addresses the difference between good art and bad art, that is, non-art, which is adulterated. In brief, good art speaks to everyone and can be universally understood; above all it 'infects' the spectator by transmitting, through the artist, an emotional connection of previously experienced feelings – considered to be a critical element in broadening discussions on art. Works were judged as bad or non-art if they inhibited these feelings, especially if they did not impart feelings of an appropriate religious nature and of 'brotherly love,' or if the art failed to communicate with everyone, that is, if the art produced was meant exclusively for a particular spectator. Tolstoy, a Russian, was a pacifist, anarchist, and philanthropist and is considered one of the greatest and most influential writers in the world (*War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina, The Kingdom of God is Within You*). See, for example, Croce's reference to Tolstoy in his *Aesthetica*, 10th ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1858), 460–1.

2 Croce paraphrases Michel de Montaigne (1533–92): 'Oyez dire metonomie, metaphore, allegorie, et autres tels noms de la grammaire, semble-il pas qu'on signifie quelque forme de langage rare et pellegrin? Ce sont titres qui touchent le babil de vostre chambriere' (To hear talk about metonymy, metaphor, allegory, and other such grammatical terms, does it not seem to indicate some rare and peregrine language? These are designations appropriate to the chatter of your chambermaid). See Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. Jean Plattard (Paris: Société les Belles Lettres, 1946), I.51, page 231.

3 A reference to Plato, *Republic*, X.607.

4 A reference to the Greek myth of Ariadne and the Minotaur. Ariadne was the daughter of Pasiphae and King Minos of Crete, who attacked Athens in retaliation for the murder there of his son Androgeos, or Androgeus. Defeated, the Athenians were to send seven male youths and seven female youths every nine years to be sacrificed to the Minotaur in its labyrinth. Theseus, son of Aegeus (or of Poseidon) and the future king of Athens, disguised himself as one of the sacrificial youths, but his real task was to kill the Minotaur. Ariadne, in love with Theseus, helped him to defeat the Minotaur by giving him a magic sword and a spool of silk thread to mark his path into, and hence out of, the labyrinth.

5 Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, IV: 130–1: 'Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo, / a piè del vero il dubbio' (Therefore, our doubting blossoms like a shoot / out

from the root of truth). Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) is Italy's most celebrated poet and considered one of the most important writers of European literature. In addition to his masterpiece, *La divina commedia*, he wrote a pseudo-autobiographical work combining poetry and prose, *La vita nuova* (New Life); a treatise on monarchy, *De monarchia*; an essay about language usage, written in Latin, *De vulgari eloquentia*; as well as an extensive number of poems.

6 A reference to Plato, *Republic*, X.607.

7 A reference to Croce's *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale*. See p. 73, note 3 in the Introduction by Remo Bodei.

8 Fancy, the 'particular artistic faculty,' is used here by Croce in the romantic sense. Fancy is supreme imagination, the 'produttrice,' the producer and creator, hence able to generate, to create an image on its own. Its use by Croce is more akin to what today we call imagination.

9 Imagination, the 'extra artistic faculty,' is used here by Croce in the romantic sense. Imagination is capable of extrinsic combinations of images but otherwise remains sterile, that is, incapable of generating an image on its own. Its use by Croce is more akin to what today we call fantasy.

10 The Greek 'canon' of proportions, from the book attributed to the ancient sculptor Polycleitos the Elder, was based on the mathematical proportions of the human body (see his bronze statue Doryphorus, the 'Spear-bearer'). The canon was appropriated by Vitruvius in his book on architecture and became the model adopted by Renaissance artists.

11 Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–87), German philosopher and physicist, founder of psychophysics. His greatest achievement was in the investigation of exact relationships in psychology and aesthetics. He formulated the rule known as Fechner's, or Weber's, law: within limits, the intensity of a sensation increases as the logarithm of the stimulus increases.

12 Put simply, materialism, by way of ancient Indian and ancient Greek philosophy (Kanada and Epicurus, for example), is the theory that matter alone exists, wherein the spirit, mind, or a divine being are denied, unless they constitute matter. See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (50? BC) (On the Nature of Things); see also physicalism.

13 References are to Dante's episode of Francesca da Rimini in *Inferno*, V, and to the character of Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

14 Torquato Tasso (1544–95), *Gerusalemme liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered) (c. 1575–80), I.iii. Tasso is the great Italian poet of the late Renaissance, and his masterpiece is the epic poem on the exploits of Godfrey of Bouillon in the capture of Jerusalem during the First Crusade. He wrote *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico* (1587), a treatise on the art of poetry that follows an

Aristotelian unity in which, for Tasso, unity of action should not exclude a variety of episodes. His influence on English poets was long lived, from Edmund Spenser (1552?–99), to John Milton (1608–74), and Lord Byron (1788–1824).

15 A possible response to Tolstoy's charge: 'The art of our time and of our circle has become a prostitute.' See 'What is Art?' in *The Kingdom of God is Within You. What is Art? What is Religion?* trans. by Mrs Aline Delano (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1899), 166.

16 In Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, XVI, these are the enchanted gardens of the pagan sorceress Armida, who was in love with the Christian knight-errant Rinaldo and attempted to keep him (and others) captive by means of her seductive magical powers.

17 Giuseppe Parini (1729–99) was an Italian prose writer, poet, and author of many odes and the collection of satiric poems 'Il giorno' (1763) on the selfishness and superficiality of the Milanese aristocracy. Mozart composed the operatic score for Parini's play *Ascanio in Alba. Dei principi generali e particolari delle belle lettere* (1801) is the title of his treaty on aesthetics. Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803) was an Italian writer, dramatist, and poet, whose major theme was the overthrow of tyranny. Author of *Cleopatra* (1775) and *L'America libera*, he was one of the leading literary and patriotic figures of modern Italian history. Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873), Italian poet and novelist, was the author of *I promessi sposi*, 3 vols. (1825–7) (*The Betrothed*, 1952) ranked as a masterpiece; it was the most renowned and influential Italian novel of the nineteenth century. Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72), Italian patriot and teacher, was actively committed to the unification of Italy (founder of the Young Italy association). He opposed Austrian control of Italian city states, supported a republic, and opposed a monarchy. He spent most of his adult life in exile and in poverty in England. His letters and writings are contained in some one hundred volumes.

18 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), German rational philosopher, historian, councillor, mathematician, and logician, was best known for having discovered differential and integral calculus (independently of Sir Isaac Newton), and for developing the binary system of arithmetic. He perfected his metaphysical system in the 1680s, attempting to reduce reasoning to algebra of thought. His publications (in Latin, French, or German) include *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis* (Reflections on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas), which clarified his theory of knowledge, *Discours de métaphysique* (1686), *Theodicée* (1710), and *Monadologie* (1714). Equally significant is his vast correspondence in which he elaborated on his theories.

19 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854) was a brilliant German idealist philosopher, whose thought stands between his one-time mentor J.G. Fichte and one-time friend G.W.F. Hegel. Schelling's aesthetic held art to be 'the concrete accomplishment of the philosophical task.' His critique of Hegel's Idealism, given in a series of lectures (posthumously published) from the 1830s to the 1850s, resonated with such philosophers as Ludwig Feuerbach, Søren Kierkegaard, and Karl Marx. *Of Human Freedom* (1809) is his most significant work. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), among the most influential of the German idealist philosphers, is esteemed for his 'original contributions' to the understanding of logic, history, aesthetics, and religion, to name a few. His efforts tended toward a 'system' of philosophy of an all-encompassing unity or totality of truth, the notion of which led to 'revolts against his ideas' that continue into this century. His master work *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807; Phenomenology of Mind/Spirit) implements a dialectical (speculative) process in which the mind/spirit moves from consciousness through 'self-consciousness,' reason, spirit, and religion toward absolute knowledge. Hegel's thought, with a positive or negative response, can be detected in the development of existentialism, Marxism, positivism, and analytic philosophy. Hyppolyte Adolphe Taine (1828–93) was a highly influential French critic, historian, and positivist philosopher, for whom 'everything was a mathematical problem.' In the wake of the romantic era in France, his passionate propensity and preoccupation for logic, abstraction, and classification led one to call him a 'poète-logicien.' One of his formulations concerns 'la race, le milieu, le moment' (race, environment, times) by which a man is to be studied before being considered. *Les origines de la France contemporaine* (1875/6–93) an *De l'intelligence* (1870) are among his important works. The Herbartians were followers of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), an anti-Hegelian German philosopher, preoccupied with inner freedom (after Kant), and an educator who developed a 'psychological process of learning' based upon the student's aptitudes, abilities, and interests. Herbart is known as the father of modern scientific pedagogy.

20 *Mimesis*, usually (although inadequately) translated as 'imitation,' denoted in ancient Greece the basic nature of what today we call works of art. Painting, sculpture, dance, music, and theatre were defined as *mimemata*, that is, allusive representations of real things. Plato held both a positive and negative view of mimesis. Under the negative aspect, since mimesis is ontologically separated from reality, it can corrupt the soul; under the positive aspect, it can be used as a means, secondary to dialectics, of approaching truth.

However, when he bans the poets in *Republic* X, Plato refers specifically to his condemnation of mimesis in *Republic* III. In *Poetics* IV, Aristotle, redeems the concept of mimesis, stating that the 'essential pleasure of all mimesis … is one that involves learning and inference,' and that people have their first learning experiences through mimesis, and that all people, not just philosophers, share in the pleasures of learning by means of mimesis.

21 Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), Italian, was a philosopher, philologist, and historian. Author of *La scienza nuova* (*The New Science*), he greatly influenced many of the philosophers and critics of the nineteenth century, including Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, and Francesco De Sanctis (see note 22). His work linked history with the social sciences and he became a forerunner to cultural anthropology/ethnology and aesthetics. For Vico, a man understands only what he has made – history, rationality, culture – and only God can fully understand Nature. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a preeminent German philosopher whose theories on knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics have had a profound impact on German idealism. After defending his 'Inaugural Dissertation' (On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World) in 1770, Kant was silent for some ten years before offering his master work, *Critique of Pure Reason* (A, 1781; B, 1787), a treatise on metaphysics that broke from traditionally held views to become epoch-making. It was followed by, among other works, his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), in which he offers his aesthetic theory or 'judgment of taste.' For Kant, knowledge of the external world is derived through the intuitions of our senses, and is elaborated by the two pure (a priori) forms of intuition (time and space). The synthesis of this 'manifold' of intuitions occurs in the mind. Reason, which entails an activity that seeks conditions for each condition, presents concepts that we can think but that we cannot know. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62) was a German educator and philosopher after the school of Leibniz and Wolff. He was noted as among the first to establish a distinct field of philosophical inquiry into aesthetics, referring to the pleasure we derive from beauty, which is a sensory phenomenon rather than a conceptual one. His signature work is *Aesthetica* (2 vols, 1750–8). Christian Freiherr Wolff (1679–1754) was a German philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, best known for having systematized the rationalist tradition in Germany.

22 Croce is referring here to the theory of Francesco De Sanctis (1817–83) that true art will address the diversity of social practices and beliefs while simultaneously unifying that content in a specific form; that is, the essence of art is form united with content. De Sanctis is one of the fundamental figures of

nineteenth-century Italian intellectual history. He was a literary critic, professor, and patriot (he took part in the Neapolitan revolution in 1848, and was held prisoner by the Bourbons, later living in exile in Turin and Zurich). He served as Minister of Education at different times between 1861 and 1880. Most of his addresses, essays, and publications deal with cultural literacy, aesthetic, literary, and cultural theory, and the making of a national literature – *Saggi critici* (*Critical essays*), *Saggio critico sul Petrarca* (*Critical essay on Petrarch*), *Storia della letteratura Italiana* (*History of Italian Literature*), his most important work – and were written between 1860–83. The last work is significant for illuminating not only Italian literature, but also the development of Italian society from the thirteenth through to the nineteenth centuries.

23 *Divine Comedy, Paradise,* IV.130: 'Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo, / a piè del vero il dubbio; ed è natura / ch'al sommo pinge noi di collo in collo' (Therefore, our doubting blossoms like a shoot / out from the root of truth; this natural / urge spurs us toward the peak, from height to height). See also note 5.

24 Croce is referring to one of the fundamental principles of Horace's (65–8 BC) poetics, that the subject of poetry must be simple and single.

25 Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807–87), German author, professor of literature and aesthetics, and literary critic, was first a follower of Hegel – evident in his *Aesthetik, oder Wissenschaft des Schönen* (6 vols, 1846–53/57) – but he would later move away from these views. His aim was to create a theoretical basis for literary realism; he wrote a popular novel, *Auch Einer,* 2 vols., 1879 (*The Humour of Germany*).

26 Francesco Petrarch (Petrarca) (1304–74) was an Italian poet, considered the greatest scholar of his time and among the first to reclaim ancient Greek and Latin works (Homer and Cicero, for example) and to formulate a humanist tradition synthesizing classical culture with Christianity. In 1341, at Rome, Petrarch was crowned the first Poet Laureate since antiquity. His canzoniere (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*) have influenced European poets, including Shakespeare, for centuries. Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533) was an Italian playwright and poet in the Este Court in Ferrara. His great epic poem *Orlando Furioso* is regarded as the finest expression of the literary tendencies and spiritual attitudes of the Italian Renaissance. Critical of ecclesiastical corruption, he was the first to write a play in the vernacular. Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827) was one of Italy's major nineteenth-century poets (see note 43). Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837) was a scholar, philosopher, and Italy's most renowned poet of the romantic period. His *Appressamento della morte* is described as visionary. Gabriele

D'Annunzio (1863–1938), Italian poet, novelist, dramatist, journalist, and military hero was considered the great interpreter of European decadence in post-Risorgimento Italy: *Il fuoco* (1900, *The Flame*) was an erotic novel of his affair with the great French stage actress Eleonora Duse. Best known for *Le vergini delle rocce* (Maidens of the Rocks) (1895), with its utterly self-absorbed and wholly amoral 'Nietzschean heroes' (see note 63), he later became an ardent Fascist.

27 Here, Croce likely uses *macchia* in the sense of an 'effect,' a 'sketch,' not the traditional sketch of a lengthy preparation but the immediate way an artist – Caravaggio for example – would work in oil paint directly onto the canvas. On the significance of this practice, art historian Robert Carleton Hobbs, comments: 'Derived from the Latin macula, the Italian word "macchia" connotes simply a stain or a spot but it has a much richer range of meaning. Since the Renaissance macchia has been associated with a sketchy way of applying the initial color to a drawing or painting … In the 17th century, macchia designated the special quality of improvisational sketches that appear to be nature's miraculous creation rather than mere human work. Two centuries later, attention was transferred from the work of art to its creator; at that time, macchia signified the initial idea originating in the mind or eye of the artist that becomes the focus of a sketch.' See Hobbs's essay, 'Reflections on Chihuly's *Macchia,*' in *Chihuly alla Macchia*, from the George R. Stroemple Collection (Seattle: Portland Press, 1993). This exhibition took place at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas and Laguna Gloria Art Museum, who are corporate authors.

28 Croce is referring to Walter Pater (1839–94) and specifically to different passages in the 'The School of Giorgione,' in which the English essayist, critic, literary historian, author, cultural theorist, and educator writes: 'It is the art of music which most completely realizes this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of matter and form. In its consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire.' *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 144.

29 Henri Frédéric Amiel (1821–81) was Swiss critic and professor of aesthetics and later of moral philosophy in Geneva. He was best known posthumously for his remarkable *Journal Intime* (*The Intimate Journal of Henri Amiel*, trans. Mary A. Ward, 1890), a masterpiece of self-analysis; written over a period of more than thirty years, it consists of some 17,000 pages.

30 Karl Robert Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), German metaphysical philosopher and aesthetician, author of *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten*, 3 vols. (1869), tried to unite the 'reason' (rationalism) of Georg Hegel (1770–1831) with the 'will' (irrationalism) of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) in his doctrine of the Absolute Spirit: the absolute, all encompassing spiritual principle at the core of all existence. His work influenced nihilism.

31 An indirect reference to René Descartes (1596–1650) and the rationalist theory on the duality of mind-body (variations of which are interactionism, parallelism, epiphenomenalism) and to occasionalism, a theory of causation that arose in France with seventeenth century philosophers (after Descartes) such as Johannes Clauberg (1622–65), Arnold Geulincx (1624–69), Louis de la Forge (1632–66), and most notably, Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715). It denies the existence of any necessary nexus between events, since – for the occasionalist – neither the body nor the mind can cause an effect. An extreme doctrine of this theory held that God, or the will of God, is the only true causal agent for all phenomena, that is, in the context ('marriage') of mind-body, body-body, or the mind alone; each is simply an occasion for God to act and to do his will.

32 Here, Croce uses *superare*, the Italian rendering of the German word *aufheben* (in Hegel). One English rendering is 'to overcome'; another, as rendered here, is 'to sublate,' which, in a dialectical process, occurs when a higher form of an element supersedes, eliminates, or overcomes a lower form, while still preserving (synthesizing) what is true of that lower form. 'A thing is sublated, resolved, only so far as it has gone into unity with its opposite,' *OED*, s.v.

33 The famous English naturalist and theorist Charles Robert Darwin (1809–82) writes in the introduction to his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: J. Murray, 1872): 'In order to acquire as good a foundation as possible, and to ascertain, independently of common opinion, how far particular movements of the features and gestures are really expressive of certain states of mind … I had hoped to derive much aid from the great masters in painting and sculpture, who are such close observers. Accordingly, I have looked at photographs and engravings of many well-known works: but, with few exceptions, have not thus profited. The reason no doubt is, that in works of art, beauty is the chief object; and strongly contracted facial muscles destroy beauty' (13–15).

34 Homer (800?-750? BC), possibly from Ionia (today's Turkey), is the attributed author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which follow the oral tradition of storytelling and superbly relate both the 'heroic exploits' of the gods and profound human expression. Phidias (490?–32? BC), emblematic of an idealistic,

classical style of the time, was a famous Athenian sculptor, who directed the construction of the Parthenon. He was known for having seen the exact image of the gods (e.g., Zeus, Athena), which he then revealed to Man. Among his famous works were the Temple of Zeus at Olympia – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – and possibly part of the marble sculptures adorning the Parthenon. Apelles (fourth? century BC), was a Hellenistic painter, and although none of his works survived, he is still considered the greatest painter of antiquity. He was court painter to Philip II of Macedonia and later to his son Alexander III, the Great. Descriptions of his *Aphrodite Rising from the Sea* inspired Italian Renaissance artists to emulate him for his 'beauty of line, and charm of expression.'

35 With the term 'bellezza fucata,' Croce applies a Latinism here: *fucata* – *fucatus* in Latin, fucated in English, is defined as having been 'artificially coloured, beautified with paint, falsified, counterfeit' (*OED*, s.v.), in short, something that, in this sense, is covered up. Croce specifically uses 'bellezza fucata' as an expression to distinguish it from genuine beauty, 'bellezza schietta,' which is 'pure,' unadulterated. But to use the term 'artificial' for 'fucata' does not quite convey the sense of being falsified. The translation of 'fucata' as 'deceptive' is further supported by Croce's comment that 'many works of literature that are effusive, oratorical, and emotional appear this way in order to deceive as to their true nature. However, they still do not deceive the acuity of hearing, that is, the true aesthetic consciousness and as a consequent, not even discernment and judgment. Everything seems, in those works, poetry, but it lacks the ultimate touch, the touch of Beauty.' See 'L'inganno delle apparenze,' in the Notes to *La Poesia* (Milan: Adelphi, 1994), 243.

36 Instead of the (interesting) term 'pugno aperto,' or open fist, as Croce wrote in the *Breviario*, in the *Poesia* he writes 'mano aperta,' or open hand: 'The relation between mere scientific prose and literary prose can be referred more particularly to the comparison with which the Stoics (Zeno) designated dialectic and rhetoric – the closed fist and open hand – of "compressed" or "contracted" speech for the first, and of "extended" speech for the second.' See H. Hohmann, 'Rhetoric and Dialectic: Some Historical and Legal Perspectives,' *Argumentation* 14:3 (August 2000): 223–4. The terminology is traceable through Quintillian and Cicero back to Zeno, 'that rhetoric was like the palm of the hand, dialectic like the closed fist' (ibid.).

37 Here, the phrase that Croce uses 'che la poesia, intesa nel senso angusto e augusto' (that poetry, understood in the angust and august sense), in all likelihood is taken from the Latin motto, *per angusta ad augusta* (through narrow paths to high places, or through hardship to greatness). In ancient

Greece Apollo and Dionysus were considered the gods of poetry; thus, poetry was the language of the gods.

38 Croce is referring to his *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Milan: Sandron, 1902).

39 German playwright, poet, aesthetician, and critic, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) is considered the main representative of the Enlightenment in Germany, and known as the true founder of modern German literature. His works include *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755) (the first major domestic tragedy in German literature), *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767), and *Nathan der Weise* (1779). His theory on painting and poetry, that 'both are imitative arts,' was remarkable for its departure from the prevailing view, which arrived through Horace, that 'Ut pictura poesis' (as is painting, so is poetry). See *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), which served to expand his theory. He died a pauper, but wrote the first German plays of lasting importance.

40 Croce is probably referring to Dante's ninth *Rime* sonnet, 'Guido i' vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io' (Guido I wish you and Lapo and I). The verse addressed Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1250–1300), a Florentine poet and philosopher, contemporary and once great friend to Dante. Cavalcanti's own *Rime*, greatly admired by Ezra Pound and Dante Gabriele Rossetti, were in the *dolce nuovo* style; the most famous of its fifty-two compositions is *Donna me prega*. Cecco Angiolieri (c. 1260–1312) is considered the preeminent exponent of what is known as light or realistic comic poetry. Croce is probably referring to Cecco's best-known poem, 'S'i fosse fuoco, arderei 'l mondo' (If I were fire I would burn down the world). Merlino Cocaio, the pseudonym (aka Limerno [sentimental], Fulica [serious]) for Teofilo Folengo (c. 1491–1544), was the most important Italian macaronic poet (combining Latin grammar forms with a vernacular vocabulary). His major burlesque poem, 'Baldus,' was well known to Rabelais, who copied from the poem at will. Annibale Caro (1507–66) was a Roman lyric poet, satirist, and translator, remembered chiefly for his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1581). Paolo Sarpi (born Pietro, 1552–1623) was a Venetian patriot, scholar, scientist, and church reformer best known as the author of the *History of the Council of Trent*. Daniello Bartoli (1608–85), Jesuit theologian and historian, wrote the well-known and frequently translated *L'uomo di lettere difeso ed emendato* [*The Learned Man Defended and Reformed*]. He also wrote a history of the Jesuits in Italian, *Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù*.

41 Croce quotes and paraphrases from the *Divine Comedy*, *Purgatorio*, IV.1–6: 'Quando per dilettanze o ver per doglie, / che alcuna virtù nostra

comprenda, / l'anima bene ad essa si raccoglie, / par ch'a nulla potenza più intenda; / e questo è contra quello error che crede / ch'un'anima sovr'altra in noi s'accenda' (When any of our faculties retains /a strong impression of delight or pain, / the soul will wholly concentrate on that, / neglecting any other power it has / (and this refutes the error that maintains / that – one above the other – several souls / can flame in us …). Dante believed that Plato postulated the existence of a plurality of souls in man (the 'errore' of v. 6), a doctrine refuted by Aristotle. As Mandelbaum states in his endnote to the verses: 'If the "powers" [virtù] of the soul were not subordinate to *one* soul but were separate, autonomized, unsubordinated souls, each with its separate presence in the body of an individual human, then while one soul was bent on something, it would not absorb *all* of a man's attention … but if the soul is one, then when one of its subordinate powers is fully engaged … all the other powers of the soul would be immobilized … In sum, the fact of individual attention is proof that, despite its multiple powers, the soul is indivisible: when a part of us is engaged, we are *fully* engaged' (325).

42 The final or last 'sweetness' – 'l'ultima dolcezza che la sazi' – is from *Paradiso,* XX.75. Croce paraphrases Dante, *Paradiso*, III.91–3: 'Ma sì com' elli avvien, s'un cibo sazia / e d'un altro rimane ancor la gola, / che quel si chere e di quel si ringrazia' (But just as, when our hunger has been sated / with one food, we still long to taste the other–/ while thankful for the first, we crave the latter –).

43 Croce quotes the last two lines of the ode 'All'amica risanata' by Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827). Foscolo was an Italian poet and patriot, best known for his poem *Dei sepolcri,* 1806, and the novel, *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802). He was highly motivated politically and enlisted in the French army in 1799 when Austria and Russia invaded Italy, becoming a captain of that army's Italian division. With the final defeat of Napoleon in 1814, and the Austrians' re-entry into Italy, Foscolo, rather than live under Austrian authority, fled first to Switzerland and then to England in 1816, where he spent his remaining years. He is buried in Italy.

44 Foscolo wrote 'All'amica risanata' for the Marchioness Antonietta Fagnani Arese (with whom he was in love) when she became seriously ill.

45 A paraphrase of Foscolo's words. A line, found in the passage – by the writer and economist Giuseppe Pecchio's (1785–1835) biography of the poet – concerns a walk he took with Foscolo some time after the poet's affair with Antonietta Arese had ended, during which they had a chance encounter with her. Later, Pecchio wondered aloud if the beautiful and enchanting lady had ever felt the same passions she so readily aroused in her lovers, to

which Foscolo supposedly replied 'Non credo, ha il cuore fatto di cervello' (I think not, she has a heart of brain). See G. Pecchio, *Vita di Ugo Foscolo* (1830) (Genoa: Dario Giuseppe Rossi, 1853), 70.

46 Dante, *Paradiso,* V.40–2: 'Apri la mente a quel ch' io ti paleso / e fermalvi entro; ché non fa scïenza, / sanza lo ritenere, avere inteso' ('Open your mind to what I shall disclose, / and hold it fast within you: he who hears, / but does not hold what he has heard, learns nothing'). In the *Breviario*, Croce renders Dante's 'fa' into a reflexive verb, 'si fa.' *Scienza*, from the Latin *scientia*, 'science,' refers to theoretical knowledge, *epistêmê* (Plato), or an organized body of learning, which can lead to demonstrable truths (Aristotle).

47 *Ricorso*: as in 'recurrence' or 'recourse.' In his S*cienza nuova* (*New Science*), Vico (see note 21) wrote that every historical period has a distinct character, and that similar periods recur throughout history in the same order ('corsi e ricorsi della storia'). However, he did not embrace the old cyclical theories of history since he believed that these periods of history recur, not in the same form, but rather that they change according to circumstances and developments.

48 The phrase in Italian that Croce attributes to De Sanctis (see note 22) but does not directly quote is 'calati e dimenticati.'

49 Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Florentine statesman and patriot, political philosopher, historian, musician, poet, and playwright. His work had wide appeal because his style was both educated and popular. His most renowned treatises, *The Prince* (1513) – dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici in a vain attempt to regain his favour – and *Discourses on Livy* (1513–19?), were written with the aim of improving the condition of Northern Italian principalities, but soon became (universally) a manual, of sorts, for a new kind of politics. His *Mandragola* (1513?) is thought to exemplify the best of Italian Renaissance plays.

50 Dante's prophecy of the 'Veltro' (*Inferno,* I.101) alludes to the coming of an exceptional person who will free humanity from 'la lupa' (the she-wolf or greed, *Inferno,* I:49) and bring peace on earth, but whose identity was deliberately left obscure by the poet. Conventionally speaking, however, a *veltro,* a hound similar to the wolfhound (or greyhound), is a strong and swift hunter-retriever, which in Italy was historically used for catching bear and boar.

51 Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98), whose legacy is still debated (see, for example, Lauro Martines, *Fire in the City* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006]), was a Dominican preacher, reformer, and martyr – originally

brought to Florence by Lorenzo de' Medici – who later came to condemn the vice and decadence of the city, and also that same Lorenzo. In 1491, after having been named prior of San Marco, and after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici and subsequent exile of the Medici family (1494), Savonarola became the real spiritual ruler of the city. But the more rigid he became in his views, the more antagonistic Florentine citizens grew toward him. On 13 May 1497 he was excommunicated by Pope Alexander VI, and in 1498, he was simultaneously hanged and burned.

52 Aristotle (384–322 BC) is the author of *Metaphysics*; Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225?–74) the *Summa Theologiae*; Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) the *Scienza nuova*; Georg W. Hegel (1770–1831) the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*; Thucydides (460/55 – c. 400 BC) the *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*; and Gaius Suetonius (AD 69/70–122?) *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. The 'universal history' is a reference to the essay by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), 'The Natural Principle of the Political Order Considered in Connection with the Idea of a Universal Cosmopolitical History,' in *Kant's Principles of Politics, Including His Essay on Perpetual Peace: A Contribution to Political Science*, trans. W. Hastie (Edinburgh: Clark, 1891), 78–148.

53 Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) was a French socialist-anarchist who called for a complete reorganization of society and for the abolishment of most of its trappings – including money and the state itself. His *Système des contradictions économiques, ou Philosophie de la misère* (1846) prompted the young Karl Marx (1818–83) to respond with *La misère de la philosophie* (1847). Critical of Napoléon III, Proudhon was imprisoned from 1849–52, the experience of which became *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire* (1849). In 1858 his masterpiece, *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'église* (3 vols), was published but seized by the authorities. Proudhon fled to Belgium where he remained in exile until 1862.

54 Croce's reference may be to 'La canzone ad Angelo Mai,' (1820) by Leopardi, a poem written on the occasion of Cardinal Angelo Mai, renowned philologist, having discovered Cicero's *De Republica*: 'O caro immaginar; da te s'apparta' (O dear imagination; kept from you apart).

55 See page 76, note 18, in the Introduction by Remo Bodei.

56 See Virgil's *Aeneid* VIII.596: 'quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum' (the steed the crumbling with four-footed clatter); cf. *Virgil*, trans. John Jackson (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 305.

57 For Tasso, see note 14; for Ariosto and Leopardi, see note 26. Pietro Metastasio (Pietro Trapassi, 1698–1782) was a prolific Italian poet and

celebrated librettist (Mozart composed music for some verses taken from his book of 1717). For Alfieri see note 17; for D'Annunzio, see note 26. Giovanni Berchet (Riccardo Michelini, 1783–1851) was an Italian poet and patriot; Iacopone da Todi (Iacopone de' Benedetti, c. 1230–1306) was a Franciscan friar and a leading figure in the thirteenth century Franciscan school of Italian religious poets.

58 *Odium figulinum*, like *odium teologicum*, refers to the mutual antagonism within the same group or profession. See the Latin transposition of 'This strife is wholesome for men. And potter is angry with potter, and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is jealous of beggar, and minstrel of minstrel,' from 'Works and Days,' attributed to Hesiod (c. 800 BC). See *Hesiod: The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (London: Heinemann; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), 5.

59 Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–69), *Portraits littéraires*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, n.d.), 546. Sainte-Beuve was a French author, literary critic, and prominent literary historian known for his belief that one must first understand the author's or artist's life before their work could be understood. This set off impassioned responses, most notably that of Marcel Proust whose written reply then evolved into the novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27). The scholarship of Sainte-Beuve is shown in his monumental work *Histoire de Port-Royal*, in three volumes written between 1840 and 1848.

60 A reference to the ancient notion of the interface between 'story' and 'history' – Herodotus, for example, from the fifth century BC, the 'father of history, the father of lies,' or Thucydides. This interface appears in one of several definitions by Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet, 1694–1778) 'History is the recital of facts taken to be true, contrary to the fable, which is the recital of facts taken to be false,' *Histoire est le récit des faits donnés pour vrais, au contraire de la fable, qui est le récit des faits donnés pour faux.* See *Dictionnaire de la Pensée de Voltaire par lui-même* (1764/5–70) (Suffolk, UK: Éditions complexe, 1994), 517. Essayist, philosopher, social critic, and author, Voltaire was the leading figure of the French Enlightenment. A quote was later attributed to Napoléon Bonaparte (1769–1821): 'Mais qu'est alors cette vérité historique la plupart du temps? Une fable convenue, ainsi qu'on l'a dit fort ingénieusement' (But if this is so, what is this historical truth in nearly every case? An agreed-upon fiction, as has been most ingeniously said). See *Dictionnaire-Napoléon ou Recueil alphabétique des opinions et judgements de L'empereur Napoléon I^er^ avec une introduction et des notes par M. Damas Hinard,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Plon, 1854), 254; *The Mind of Napoleon: A Selection from His Written and Spoken*

Words, ed. and trans. J. Christopher Herold (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 50.

61 The reference is to Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered) (1850).

62 As apprehended by Leibniz (note 18), the universe is composed of elementary units that are self sufficient, 'windowless,' monads. A monad – acquired through Pythagoras (582–c. 500 BC), Plato (427–347 BC), Aristotle's (384–322 BC) *Metaphysics*, Euclid (325–265 BC), Augustine (AD 354–430), and others – is individual substance, an ultimate unit of real, of being (a person), indivisible as an absolute simple entity; that is, it is independent, and contains no parts. If it did have parts, it would be spatial, and what is spatial cannot be real.

63 A probable reference to 'poesia crepuscolare,' crepuscular poetry, a term coined by author and critic Giuseppe Antonio Borgese (1882–1952) – who was once friendly with Croce but later became increasingly critical of him – in an article written on certain Italian poets for the newspaper *La Stampa* (10 September 1910), in which he describes the tone of their poems as 'grey' and 'spent,' hence,'crepuscular.' It also alludes to 'crepuscularism,' which, rather than denoting a school or movement, is more descriptive of a literary current and point of view, of resignation and melancholy, of having arrived at the crepuscle or twilight of poetic production; it was critical of poets such as D'Annunzio, and akin to a decadent view on the death of art. Sergio Corazzini (1886–1907), Guido Gozzano (1883–1916), Marino Moretti (1885–1975) are names to be found among these poets; Aldo Palezzeschi (1885–1974), author (*Le sorelle Materassi*) and avant-garde poet ('L'incendario'), who knew Moretti, is marginally associated with them.

64 Croce is responding to the notion of the critic as *artifex additus artifici* (artist added to the artist) discussed by Gabriele D'Annunzio in his review – 'Note su Giorgione e su la Critica,' *Il Convito* 1 (January 1895): 69–86 – of the book *Giorgione* (1894) by the critic Angelo Conti (1860–1930). For Croce, the critic – whose task is thought, which can then shed light on creative expression – must judge (for example, poetry from non-poetry) and must therefore know philosophy. The critic must be 'philosophis additus artifici,' that is, a philosopher who is added to an artist – or better, a philosopher who possesses within himself the sensibility and the taste of an artist.

65 Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), German philosopher, literary critic, and theologian, whose ideas greatly influenced Hegel's.

66 'Risorgimento' (resurgence, rising again, revival) denotes the political and social movements in Italy, especially during the 1800s, dedicated to the

liberation and unification of Italian city states and kingdoms from foreign control (in the 1800s, Austrian). Specific dates for its social beginnings (some even assert the 1400s) and its end are still debated by historians, but are conventionally noted as 1815–70. After the defeat of Austria (1859–61) with the aid of France, the Kingdom of Italy was formed in 1861 under the house of Savoy. The Risorgimento is thought to have concluded, again as a convention, with the annexations of the Republic of Venetia (historical Veneto) from the Austrians (1866) and Papal Rome (1870), although others look further into the twentieth century, to Italian irredentism (*Italia irredenta*), and to 1943 with the fall of Fascism.

67 *Sic vos non vobis.* Tiberius Claudius Donatus (late fourth to early fifth century AD) in his *Interpretationes Virgilianae* XVII.70 writes that these words were the beginning of four of the five hexameters of the epigram Virgil (70–19 BC) wrote on Emperor Augustus Caesar (63 BC–AD14), who was so pleased by it that he asked the name of the poet. Virgil did not claim them, so Bathyllus – 'poeta quidam mediocris' (mediocre poet) – declared the work to be his own. Virgil allegedly wrote out a line, followed by the four that open with 'Sic vos non vobis,' which Bathyllus was to complete. He was unable to do so, but Virgil could: 'Hos ego versiculos feci, tulit alter honores' / Sic vos non vobis nidificatis aves; / Sic vos non vobis vellera fertis oves; / Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes; /Sic vos non vobis fertis aratra boves' (I wrote these lines, another took the honours./ Thus you not for yourselves build the nest, O birds; / Thus you not for yourselves bear the wool, O sheep; / Thus you not for yourselves make the honey, O bees; / Thus you not for yourselves pull the plough, O oxen). This is a variation on translations in Italian and English; see, for example, Frank J. Miller, 'On a Translation of Vergil's Quatrain, *Sic vos non vobis*,' *Classical Journal* 15 (December 1919): 174–5.

68 Giovanni Battista Niccolini (1782–1861), Italian, the author of poetry and popular patriotic tragedies, was a committed republican and opponent of church authority. Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi (or Guerazzi, 1804–73), Italian, was a 'fervid patriot,' writer, politician, and republican who sought unification for Italy. He wrote such patriotic novels as *L'assedio di Firenze* (1836) and *Beatrice Cenci* (1853).

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