

II

PREJUDICES RELATING TO ART

THERE can be no doubt that the process of distinction of art from the facts and the acts with which it has been and is confused, which I have summarily traced, necessitates no small mental effort; but this effort is rewarded with the freedom which it affords of handling the many fallacious distinctions which disfigure the field of æsthetic. These, although they do not present any difficulty in thinking out (indeed, at first they seduce by their very facility and deceitful self-evidence), yet imply the other and greater annoyance of preventing all profound understanding, and indeed of making it impossible to understand anything as to what art truly is. It is true that many people, in order to retain the power of repeating vulgar and traditional distinctions, voluntarily resign themselves to this ignorance. We, on the contrary, now prefer to throw them all away, as a useless hindrance in the new task to which the new theoretic position that we have attained invites and leads us, and to enjoy the greater facility which comes from feeling rich. Wealth is not only to be obtained by acquiring many objects, but, on the contrary, by getting rid of all those that represent economic *debt*.

Let us begin with the most famous of these economic debts in the circle of æsthetic: the distinction between *content* and *form*, which has caused a division of schools even in the nineteenth century: the schools of the æsthetic of the content (*Gehaltsæsthetik*) and that of the æsthetic of form (*Formæsthetik*). The problems from which these

opposed schools arose were, in general, the following: Does art consist solely of the content, or solely of the form, or of content and form together? What is the character of the content, what that of the æsthetic form?—It was answered, on the one hand, that art, the essence of art, is all contained in the content, defined as that which pleases, or as what is moral, or as what raises man to the heaven of religion or of metaphysic, or as what is historically correct, or, finally, as what is naturally and physically beautiful. And, on the other hand, that the content is indifferent, that it is simply a peg or hook from which beautiful forms are suspended, which alone beatify the æsthetic spirit: unity, harmony, symmetry, and so on. And on both sides it was attempted to attract the element that had previously been excluded from the essence of art as subordinate and secondary: those for the content admitted that it was an advantage to the content (which, according to them, was really the constitutive element of the beautiful) to adorn itself with beautiful forms also, and to present itself as unity, symmetry, harmony, etc.; and the formalists, in their turn, admitted that if art did not gain by the value of its content, its effect did, not a single value, but the sum of two values being in this case offered. These doctrines, which attained their greatest scholastic bulk in Germany with the Hegelians and the Herbartians, is also to be found more or less everywhere in the history of æsthetic, ancient, mediæval, modern, and most modern; and is what amounts to most in common opinion, for nothing is more common than to hear that a drama is beautiful in “form,” but a failure in “content”; that a poem is “most nobly” conceived, but “executed in ugly verse”; that a painter would have been greater did he not waste his power as a designer and as a colourist, upon “small and unworthy themes,” instead of selecting, on the contrary, those

of a historical, patriotic, or sociological character. It may be said that fine taste and true critical sense of art have to defend themselves at every step against the perversions of judgment arising from these doctrines, in which philosophers become the crowd, and the crowd feels itself philosophical, because in agreement with those crowd-philosophers. The origin of these theories is no secret for us, because, even in the brief sketch that we have given, it is quite clear that they have sprung from the trunk of hedonistic, moralistic, conceptualistic, or physical conceptions of art: they are all doctrines which, failing to perceive what makes art art, were obliged somehow to regain art, which they had allowed to escape them, and to reintroduce it in the form of an accessory or accidental element; the upholders of the theory of the content conceived it as an abstract formal element, the formalists as the abstract element of the content. What interests us in those æsthetics is just this dialectic, in which the theorists of the content become formalists against their will, and the formalists upholders of the theory of the content; thus each passes over to occupy the other's place, but to be restless there and to return to their own, which gives rise to the same restlessness. The "beautiful forms" of Herbart do not differ in any way from the "beautiful contents" of the Hegelians, because both are nothing. And we become yet more interested to observe their efforts to get out of prison, and the blows with which they weaken its doors or its walls, and the air-holes which some of those thinkers succeed in opening.—Their efforts are clumsy and sterile, like those of the theorists of the content (they are to be seen in a repulsive form in the *Philosophie des Schönen* of Hartmann), who, by adding stitch to stitch, composed a net of "beautiful contents" (beautiful, sublime, comic, tragic, humouristic, pathetic, idyllic, sentimental, etc., etc.),

in which very coarse net they tried to enclose every form of reality, even that which they had called "ugly." They failed to perceive that their æsthetic content, thus made to enclose little by little the whole of reality, has no longer any character that distinguishes it from other contents, since there is no content beyond reality; and that therefore their fundamental theory was thus fundamentally negated. These contradictory and ingenuous explosions resemble those of other formalistic theorists of the content who maintained the concept of an æsthetic content, but defined it as that "which interests man," and made the interest relating to man to lie in his different historical situations—that is, relative to the individual. This was another way of denying the initial assumption, for it is very clear that the artist would not produce art, did he not interest himself in something which is the datum or the problem of his production, but that this something becomes art only because the artist, by becoming interested in it, makes it so.—These are evasions of formalists, who after having limited art to abstract beautiful forms, void of all content and only to be summed up with contents, timidly introduced among beautiful forms that of the harmony of content with form; or more resolutely declared themselves partisans of a sort of eclecticism, which makes art to consist of a sort of "relation" of the beautiful content with the beautiful form, and, with an incorrectness worthy of eclectics, attributed to terms outside the relation qualities which they assume only within the relation.

For the truth is really this: content and form must be clearly distinguished in art, but must not be separately qualified as artistic, precisely because their relation only is artistic—that is, their unity, understood not as an abstract, dead unity, but as concrete and living, which is that of the synthesis *a priori*; and art is a true *æsthetic synthesis a priori* of feeling

and image in the intuition, as to which it may be repeated that feeling without image is blind, and image without feeling is void. Feeling and image do not exist for the artistic spirit outside the synthesis; they will have existence from another point of view in another plane of knowledge, and feeling will be the practical aspect of the spirit that loves and hates, desires and dislikes, and the image will be the inanimate residue of art, the withered leaf, prey of the wind of imagination and of amusement's caprice. All this has no concern with the artist or the æsthetician: just as art is no vain fancying, so is it not tumultuous passionality, but the uplifting of that act by means of another act, or, if it be preferred, the substitution of that tumult for another tumult, that of the longing to create and to contemplate for the joys and the sorrows of artistic creation. It is therefore indifferent, or a question of terminological opportunity, whether we should present art as content or as form, provided it be always recognised that the content is formed and the form filled, that feeling is figurative feeling and the figure a figure that is felt. And it is only owing to historical deference toward him who better than others caused the concept of the autonomy of art to be appreciated, and wished to affirm this autonomy with the word "form," thus opposing alike the abstract theory of the content of the philosophisers and moralists and the abstract formalism of the academicians,—in deference, I say, to De Sanctis, and also because of the ever active polemic against the attempts to absorb art in other modes of spiritual activity,—that the æsthetic of the intuition can be called "*Æsthetic of form.*" It is useless to refute an objection that certainly might be made (but rather with the sophistry of the advocate than with the acuteness of the scientist), namely, that the æsthetic of the intuition also, since it describes the content of art as feeling

or state of the soul, qualifies it outside the intuition, and seems to admit that a content, which is not feeling or a state of the soul, does not lend itself to artistic elaboration, and is not an æsthetic content. Feeling, or the state of the soul, is not a particular content, but the whole universe seen *sub specie intuitionis*; and outside it there is no other content conceivable that is not also a different form of the intuitive form; not thoughts, which are the whole universe *sub specie cogitationis*; not physical things and mathematical beings, which are the whole universe *sub specie schematismi et abstractionis*; not wills, which are the whole universe *sub specie volitionis*.

Another not less fallacious distinction (to which the words "content" and "form" are also applied) separates *intuition* from *expression*, the image from the physical translation of the image. It places on one side phantasms of feeling, images of men, of animals, of landscapes, of actions, of adventures, and so on; and on the other, sounds, tones, lines, colours, and so on; calling the first the external, the second the internal element of art: the *art* properly so-called, the other *technique*. It is easy to distinguish internal and external, at least in words, especially when no minute enquiry is made as to the reasons and motives for the distinction, and when the distinction is just thrown down there without any service being demanded of it; so easy that by never thinking about it the distinction may eventually come to seem to thought indubitable. But it becomes a different question when, as must be done with every distinction, we pass from the act of distinguishing to that of establishing relation and unifying, because this time we run against desperate obstacles. What has here been distinguished cannot be unified, because it has been badly distinguished: how can something external and extraneous to the internal become united to the internal

and express it? How can a sound or a colour express an image without sound and without colour? How can the bodiless express a body? How can the spontaneity of fancy and of reflection and even technical action coincide in the same act? When the intuition has been distinguished from the expression, and the one has been made different from the other, no ingenuity of terms can reunite them; all the processes of association, of habit, of mechanising, of forgetting, of instinctification, proposed by the psychologists and laboriously developed by them, allow the scissure to reappear at the end: on one side the expression, on the other the image. And there does not seem to be any way of escape, save that of taking refuge in the hypothesis of a mystery which, according to poetical or mathematical tastes, will assume the appearance of a mysterious marriage or of a mysterious psychophysical parallelism. The first is a parallelism incorrectly overcome; the second, a marriage deferred to distant ages or to the obscurity of the unknowable.

But before having recourse to mystery (a refuge to which there is always time to fly), we must enquire whether the two elements have been correctly distinguished, and if an intuition without expression be conceivable. It may happen that the thing is as little existing and as inconceivable as a soul without a body, which has truly been as much talked of in philosophies as in religions, but to have talked about it is not the same thing as to have experienced and conceived it. In reality, we know nothing but expressed intuitions: a thought is not thought for us, unless it be possible to formulate it in words; a musical fancy, only when it becomes concrete in sounds; a pictorial image, only when it is coloured. We do not say that the words must necessarily be declaimed in a loud voice, the music performed, or the picture painted upon wood or canvas; but it is certain that

when a thought is really thought, when it has attained to the maturity of thought, the words run through our whole organism, soliciting the muscles of our mouth and ringing internally in our ears; when music is truly music, it trills in the throat and shivers in the fingers that touch ideal notes; when a pictorial image is pictorially real, we are impregnated with lymphs that are colours, and maybe, where the colouring matters were not at our disposition, we might spontaneously colour surrounding objects by a sort of irradiation, as is said of certain hysterics and of certain saints, who caused the stigmata upon their hands and feet by means of an act of imagination! Thought, musical fancy, pictorial image, did not indeed exist without expression, they did not exist at all previous to the formation of this expressive state of the spirit. To believe in their pre-existence is ingenuousness, if it be ingenuous to have faith in those impotent poets, painters, or musicians who always have their heads full of poetic, pictorial, and musical creations, and only fail to translate them into external form, either because, as they say, they are impatient of expression, or because technique is not sufficiently advanced to afford sufficient means for their expression: many centuries ago it offered sufficient means to Homer, Pheidias, and Apelles, but it does not suffice for them, who, if we are to believe them, carry in their mighty heads an art greater than those others! Sometimes, too, ingenuousness arises from the illusion due to keeping a bad account with ourselves that, having imagined, and consequently expressed, some few images, we already possess in ourselves all the other images that must form part of a work, which we do not yet possess, as well as the vital nexus that should connect them, which is not yet formed and therefore is not expressed.

Art, understood as intuition, according to the concept that

I have exposed, having denied the existence of a physical world outside of it, which it looks upon as simply a construction of our intellect, does not know what to do with the parallelism of the thinking substance and of substance extended in space, and has no need to promote impossible marriages, because its thinking substance—or, better, its intuitive act—is perfect in itself, and is that same fact which the intellect afterwards constructs as extended. And inasmuch as an image without expression is inconceivable, by just so much is an image which shall be also expression conceivable, and indeed logically necessary; that is, which shall be really an image. If we take from a poem its metre, its rhythm, and its words, poetical thought does not, as some opine, remain behind: there remains nothing. The poetry is born, like those words, that rhythm, and that metre. Nor could expression be compared with the epidermis of organisms, unless it be said (and perhaps this may not be false even in physiology) that all the organism in every cell's cell is also epidermis.

I should, however, be wanting to my methodological convictions and to my intention of doing justice to errors (and I have already done justice to the distinction of form and content by demonstrating the truth at which they aimed and failed to grasp), were I not to indicate what truth may also be active at the base of the false distinction of the indistinguishable, intuition and expression. Fancy and technique are rationally distinguished, though not as elements of art; and they are related and united between themselves, though not in the field of art, but in the wider field of the spirit in its totality. Technical or practical problems to be solved, difficulties to be vanquished, are truly present to the artist, and there is truly something which, without being really physical, and being, like everything real, a spiritual act, can be meta-

phoricised as physical in respect to the intuition. What is this something? The artist, whom we have left vibrating with expressed images which break forth by infinite channels from his whole being, is a whole man, and therefore also a practical man, and as such takes measures against losing the result of his spiritual labour, and in favour of rendering possible or easy, for himself and for others, the *reproduction* of his images; hence he engages in practical acts which assist that work of reproduction. These practical acts are guided, as are all practical acts, by knowledge, and for this reason are called technical; and, since they are practical, they are distinguished from contemplation, which is theoretical, and seem to be external to it, and are therefore called physical: and they assume this name the more easily in so far as they are fixed and made abstract by the intellect. Thus writing and phonography are united with words and music, canvas and wood and walls covered with colours, stone cut and incised, iron and bronze and other metals melted and moulded to certain shapes by sculpture and architecture. So distinct among themselves are the two forms of activity that it is possible to be a great artist with a bad technique, a poet who corrects the proofs of his verses badly, an architect who makes use of unsuitable material or does not attend to statics, a painter who uses colours that deteriorate rapidly: examples of these weaknesses are so frequent that it is not worth while to cite any of them. But what is impossible is to be a great poet who writes verses badly, a great painter who does not give tone to his colours, a great architect who does not harmonise his lines, a great composer who does not harmonise his notes; and, in short, a great artist who cannot express himself. It has been said of Raphael that he would have been a great painter even if he had not possessed hands; but certainly not that he would have been

a great painter if the sense of design and colour had been wanting to him.

And (be it noted in passing, for I must condense as I proceed) this apparent transformation of the intuitions into physical things—altogether analogous with the apparent transformation of wants and economic labour into things and into merchandise—also explains how people have come to talk not only of “artistic things” and of “beautiful things,” but also of “a beautiful of nature.” It is evident that, besides the instruments that are made for the reproduction of images, objects already existing can be met with, whether produced by man or not, which perform such a service—that is to say, are more or less adapted to fixing the memory of our intuitions; and these things take the name of “natural beauties,” and exercise their fascination only when we know how to understand them with the same soul with which the artist or artists have taken and appropriated them, giving value to them and indicating the “point of view” from which we must look at them, thus connecting them with their own intuitions. But the always imperfect adaptability, the fugitive nature, the mutability of “natural beauties” also justify the inferior place accorded to them, compared with beauties produced by art. Let us leave it to rhetoricians or madmen to affirm that a beautiful tree, a beautiful river, a sublime mountain, or even a beautiful horse or a beautiful human figure, are superior to the chisel-stroke of Michelangelo or the verse of Dante; but let us say, with greater propriety, that “Nature” is stupid compared with Art, and that she is “mute,” if man does not make her speak.

A third distinction, which also labours to distinguish the indistinguishable, is attached to the concept of the æsthetic expression, and divides it into two moments of expression abstractly considered, *propriety* and beauty of expres-

sion, or *adorned* expression, founding upon these the classification of two orders of expression, naked and ornate. This is a doctrine of which traces may be found in all the various domains of art, but which has not been developed in any one of them to the same extent as in that of words, where it bears a celebrated name and is called "Rhetoric," and has had a very long history, from the Greek rhetoricians to our own day. It persists in the schools, in treatises, and even in æsthetics of scientific pretensions, not to mention in common belief (as is natural), though in our day it has lost much of its primitive vigour. Men of lofty intellect have accepted it, or let it live, for centuries, owing to the force of inertia or of tradition; the few rebels have hardly ever attempted to reduce their rebellion to a system and to cut out the error at its roots. The injury done by Rhetoric, with its idea of "ornate" as differing from, and of greater value than, "naked" speech, has not been limited solely to the circle of æsthetic, but has appeared also in criticism, and even in literary education, because, just as it was incapable of explaining perfect beauty, so it was adapted to provide an apparent justification for vitiated beauty, and to encourage writing in an inflated, affected, and improper form. However, the division which it introduces and on which it relies is a logical contradiction, because, as is easy to prove, it destroys the concept itself, which it undertakes to divide into moments, and the objects, which it undertakes to divide into classes. An appropriate expression, if appropriate, is also beautiful, beauty being nothing but the determination of the image, and therefore of the expression; and if it be wished to indicate by calling it naked that there is something wanting which should be present, then the expression is inappropriate and deficient, either it is not or is not yet expression. On the other hand, an ornate expression, if it

be expressive in every part, cannot be called ornate, but as naked as the other, and as appropriate as the other; if it contain inexpressive, additional, extrinsic elements, it is not beautiful, but ugly, it is not or is not yet expression; to be so, it must purify itself of external elements (as the other must be enriched with the elements that are wanting).

Expression and beauty are not two concepts, but a single concept, which it is permissible to designate with either synonymous vocable: artistic fancy is always corporeal, but it is not obese, being always clad with itself and never charged with anything else, or "ornate." Certainly a problem was lurking beneath this falsest of distinctions, the necessity of making a distinction; and the problem (as can be deduced from certain passages in Aristotle, and from the psychology and gnoseology of the Stoics, and as we see it, intensified in the discussions of the Italian rhetoricians of the seventeenth century) was concerned with the relations between thought and fancy, philosophy and poetry, logic and æsthetic (dialectic and rhetoric, or, as was still said at the time, the "open" and the closed "fist"). "Naked" expression referred to thought and to philosophy, "ornate" expression to fancy and to poetry. But it is not less true that this problem as to the distinction between the two forms of the theoretical spirit could not be solved in the field of one of them, intuition or expression, where nothing will ever be found but fancy, poetry, æsthetic; and the undue introduction of logic will only project there a deceitful shadow, which will darken and hamper intelligence, depriving it of the view of art in its fulness and purity, without giving it that of logicity and of thought.

But the greatest injury caused by the rhetorical doctrine of "ornate" expression to the theoretical systematisation of the forms of the human spirit, concerns the treatment of lan-

guage, because, granted that we admit naked and simply grammatical expressions, and expressions that are ornate or rhetorical, language becomes an aggregate of naked expressions and is handed over to grammar, and, as an ulterior consequence (since grammar finds no place in rhetoric and æsthetic), to logic, where the subordinate office of a semeiotic or *ars significandi* is assigned to it. Indeed, the logistic conception of language is closely united and proceeds *pari passu* with the rhetorical doctrine of expression; they appeared together in Hellenic antiquity, and they still exist, though disputed, in our time. Rebellions against the logicism of the doctrine of language have rarely appeared, and have had as little efficacy as those against rhetoric; and only in the romantic period (traversed by Vico a century before) has a lively consciousness been formed by certain thinkers as to the *fantastic* or *metaphoric* nature of language, and its closer connection with poetry than with logic. Yet since a more or less inartistic idea of art persisted even among the best (conceptualism, moralism, hedonism, etc.), there remained a very powerful impediment to the *identification of language and art*. This identification appears to be as unavoidable as it is easy, having established the concept of art as intuition and of intuition as expression, and therefore implicitly its identity with language: always assuming that language be conceived in its full extension, without arbitrary restrictions to so-called articulate language and without arbitrary exclusion of tonic, mimetic, and graphic; and in all its intension—that is, taken in its reality, which is the act of speaking itself, without falsifying it with the abstractions of grammars and vocabularies, and with the foolish belief that man speaks with the vocabulary and with grammar. Man speaks at every instant like the poet, because, like the poet, he expresses his impressions and his

feelings in the form called conversational or familiar, which is not separated by any abyss from the other forms called prosaic, poetic-prosaic, narrative, epic, dialogue, dramatic, lyric, melic, song, and so on. And if it do not displease man in general to be considered poet and always poet (as he is by force of his humanity), it should not displease the poet to be united with common humanity, because this union alone explains the power which poetry, understood in the loftiest and in the narrowest sense, wields over all human souls. Were poetry a language apart, a "language of the gods," men would not understand it; and if it elevate them, it elevates them not above, but within themselves: true democracy and true aristocracy coincide in this field also. Coincidence of art and language, which implies, as is natural, coincidence of æsthetic and of philosophy of language, definable the one by the other and therefore identical,—this I ventured to place twelve years ago in the title of a treatise of mine on *Æsthetic*, which has truly not failed of its effect upon many linguists and philosophers of *Æsthetic* in Italy and outside Italy, as is shewn by the copious "literature" which it has produced. This identification will benefit studies on art and poetry by purifying them of hedonistic, moralistic, and conceptualistic residues, still to be found in such quantity in literary and artistic criticism. But the benefit which it will confer upon linguistic studies will be far more inestimable, for it is urgent that they should be disencumbered of physiological, psychological, and psychophysiological methods, now the fashion, and be freed from the ever returning theory of the *conventional* origin of language, which has the inevitable correlative of the *mystical* theory as its inevitable reaction. It will no longer be necessary to construct absurd parallelisms even for language, or to promote mysterious nuptials between sign and image: when language is no longer con-

ceived as a sign, but as an image which is significant—that is, a sign in itself, and therefore coloured, sounding, singing, articulate. The significant image is the spontaneous work of the human spirit, whereas the sign, wherewith man agrees with man, presupposes language; or if it be wished, nevertheless, to explain language by signs, it recommends us to call upon God, as upon the giver of the first signs—that is, to presuppose language in another way, by consigning it to the Unknowable.

I shall conclude my account of the prejudices relating to art with that one of them which is most usual, because it is mingled with the daily life of criticism, namely, history of art: prejudice of the possibility of distinguishing several or many *particular forms of art*, each one determinable in its own particular concept and within its limits, and furnished with its proper laws. This erroneous doctrine is embodied in two systematic series, one of which is known as the *theory of literary and artistic kinds* (lyric, drama, romance, epic and romantic poem, idyll, comedy, tragedy; sacred, civil-life, familiar, from life, still-life, landscape, flower and fruit painting; heroic, funereal, costume, sculpture; church, operatic, chamber music; civil, military, ecclesiastic architecture, etc., etc.), and the other as *theory of the arts* (poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, art of the actor, gardening, etc., etc.). One of these sometimes figures as a subdivision of another. This prejudice, of which it is easy to trace the origin, has its first notable monuments in Hellenic culture, and persists in our days. Many æstheticians still write treatises on the æsthetic of the tragic, the comic, the lyric, the humorous, and æsthetics of painting, of music, or of poetry (these last are still called by the old name of “poetics”); and, what is worse (though but little attention is paid to these æstheticians who are im-

pelled to write through solitary dilettantism or academic profession), critics, in judging works of art, have not altogether abandoned the habit of judging them according to the genus or particular form of art to which, according to the above æstheticians, they should belong; and, instead of clearly stating whether a work be beautiful or ugly, they proceed to reason their impressions, saying that it well observes, or wrongly violates, the laws of the drama, or of romance, or of painting, or of bas-relief. It is also very common in all countries to treat artistic and literary history as *history of kinds*, and to present the artists as cultivating this or that kind; and to divide the work of an artist, which always has unity of development, whatever form it take, whether lyric, romance or drama, into as many compartments as there are kinds; so that Lodovico Ariosto, for example, appears now among the cultivators of the Latin poetry of the Renaissance, now among the authors of the first Latin satires, now among those of the first comedies, now among those who brought the poem of chivalry to perfection: as though Latin poetry, satire, comedy, and poem were not always the same poet, Ariosto, in his experiments, in his logic, and in the manifestations of his spiritual development.

It is not to be denied that the theory of kinds and of the arts has not had, and does not now possess, its own internal dialectic and its autocriticism, or irony, according as we may please to call it; and no one is ignorant that literary history is full of these cases of an established style, against which an artist of genius offends in his work and calls forth the reprobation of the critics: a reprobation which does not, however, succeed in suffocating the admiration for, and the popularity of, his work, so that finally, when it is not possible to blame the artist and it is not wished to blame the critic of kinds, the

matter ends with a compromise, and the kind is enlarged or accepts beside it a new kind, like a legitimated bastard, and the compromise lasts, by force of inertia, until a new work of genius comes to upset again the fixed rule. An irony of the doctrine is also the impossibility, in which the theoreticians find themselves, of logically fixing the boundaries between the kinds and the arts: all the definitions that they have produced, when examined rather more closely, either evaporate in the general definition of art, or shew themselves to be an arbitrary raising to the rank of kinds and rules particular works of art irreducible to rigorous logical terms. Absurdities resulting from the effort to determine rigorously what is indeterminable, owing to the contradictory nature of the attempt, are to be found even among the great ones, even in Lessing, who arrives at this extravagant conclusion, that painting represents "bodies": bodies, not actions and souls, not the action and the soul of the painter! They are also to be found among the questions that logically arise from that illogic: thus, a definite field having been assigned to every kind and to every art, what kind and what art is *superior*? Is painting superior to sculpture, drama to lyric? And again, the forces of art having been thus divided, would it not be advisable to reunite them in a type of work of art which shall drive away other forces, as a coalition of armies drives away a single army: will not the work, for instance, in which poetry, music, scenic art, decoration, are united, develop a greater æsthetic force than a *Lied* of Goethe or a drawing of Leonardo? These are questions, distinctions, judgments, and definitions which arouse the revolt of the poetic and artistic sense, which loves each work for itself, for what it is, as a living creature, individual and incomparable, and knows that each work has its individual law. Hence has arisen the disagreement between the

affirmative judgment of artistic souls and the negative one of professional critics, between the negation of the former and the affirmation of the latter; and the professional critics pass for pedants, not without good reason, although artistic souls are in their turn "disarmed prophets"—that is, incapable of reasoning and of deducing the correct theory immanent in their judgments, and of opposing it to the pedantic theory of their adversaries.

That correct theory is precisely an aspect of the conception of art as intuition, or lyrical intuition; and, since every work of art expresses a state of the soul, and the state of the soul is individual and always new, the intuition implies infinite intuitions, which it is impossible to place in pigeonholes as *kinds*, unless these be infinite pigeonholes, and therefore not pigeonholes of kinds, but of intuitions. And since, on the other hand, individuality of intuition implies individuality of expression, and a picture is distinct from another picture, not less than from a poem, and picture and poem are not of value because of the sounds that beat the air and the colours refracted by the light, but because of what they can tell to the spirit, in so far as they enter into it, it is useless to have recourse to abstract means of expression, to construct the other series of kinds and classes: which amounts to saying that any theory of the division of the arts is without foundation. The kind or class is in this case one only, art itself or the intuition, whereas single works of art are infinite: all are original, each one incapable of being translated into the other (since to translate, to translate with artistic skill, is to create a new work of art), each one uncontrolled by the intellect. No intermediate element interposes itself philosophically between the universal and the particular, no series of kinds or species, of *generalia*. Neither the artist who produces art, nor the spectator who contemplates

it, has need of anything but the universal and the individual, or, better, the universal individuated: the universal artistic activity, which is all contracted or concentrated in the representation of a single state of the soul.

Nevertheless, if the pure artist and the pure critic, and also the pure philosopher, are not occupied with *generalia*, with classes or kinds, these retain their utility on other grounds; and this utility is the true side of those erroneous theories, which I will not leave without mention. It is certainly useful to construct a net of *generalia*, not for the production of art, which is spontaneous, nor for the judgment of it, which is philosophical, but to collect and to some extent circumscribe the infinite single intuitions, for the use of the attention and of memory, in order to group together to some extent the innumerable particular works of art. These classes will always be formed, as is natural, either by means of the abstract imagination or the abstract expression, and therefore as classes of states of the soul (literary and artistic kinds) and classes of means of expression (art). Nor does it avail to object here that the various kinds and arts are arbitrarily distinguished, and that the general dichotomy is itself arbitrary; since it is admitted without difficulty that the procedure is certainly arbitrary, but the arbitrariness becomes innocuous and useful from the very fact that every pretension of being a philosophical principle and criterion for the judgment of art is removed from it. Those kinds and classes render easy the knowledge of art and education in art, offering to the first, as it were, an index of the most important works of art, to the second a collection of most important information suggested by the practice of art. Everything depends upon not confounding hints with reality, and hypothetic warnings or imperatives with categoric imperatives: a confusion which multiple and continuous

temptations are certainly apt to induce, whence it is easy to be dominated by them, but not at all inevitable. Books of literary origin, rhetoric, grammar (with their divisions into parts of speech and their grammatical and syntactical laws), of the art of musical composition, of metre, of painting, and so on, contain the principal hints and collections of precepts. Tendencies toward a definite expression of art are manifested in them either only in a secondary manner,—and in this case it is art that is still abstract, art in elaboration (the poetic arts of classicism or romanticism, purist or popular grammars, etc.),—or as tendencies toward the philosophical comprehension of their argument, and then they give rise to the divisions into kinds and into arts, an error which I have criticised: an error which, by its contradictions, opens the way to the true doctrine of the individuality of art.

Certainly this doctrine produces at first sight a sort of bewilderment: individual, original, untranslatable, unclassifiable intuitions seem to escape the rule of thought, which would seem unable to dominate them without placing them in relation with one another; and this appears to be precisely forbidden by the doctrine that has been developed, which has rather the air of being anarchic or anarchoid than liberal and liberistic.

A little piece of poetry is æsthetically equal to a poem; a tiny little picture or a sketch, to an altar picture or an *affresco*; a letter is a work of art, no less than a romance; even a fine translation is as original as an original work! These propositions will be indubitable, because logically deduced from verified premises; they will be true, although (and this is without doubt a merit) paradoxical, or at variance with vulgar opinions: but will they not be in want of some complement? There must be some mode of arranging, subordinating, connecting, understanding, and domi-

nating the dance of the intuitions, if we do not wish to bewilder our wits with them.

And there is indeed such a mode, for when we denied theoretic value to abstract classifications we did not intend to deny it to that genetic and concrete classification which is not, indeed, a "classification" and is called *History*. In history each work of art takes the place that belongs to it—that and no other: the ballade of Guido Cavalcanti and the sonnet of Cecco Angiolieri, which seem to be the sigh or the laughter of an instant; the "*Commedia*" of Dante, which seems to resume in itself a millennium of the human spirit; the "Maccheronee" of Merlin Cocaio at the close of the Middle Ages, with their noisy laughter; the elegant Cinquecento translation of the *Æneid* by Annibal Caro; the dry prose of Sarpi; and the Jesuitic-polemical prose of Daniello Bartoli: without the necessity of judging that to be not original which is original, because it lives; that to be small which is neither great nor small, because it escapes measure: or we can say great and small, if we will, but metaphorically, with the intention of manifesting certain admirations and of noting certain relations of importance (quite other than arithmetic or geometrical). And in history, which is ever becoming richer and more definite, not in pyramids of empirical concepts, which become more and more empty the higher they rise and the more subtle they become, is to be found the link of all works of art and of all intuitions, because in history they appear organically connected among themselves, as successive and necessary stages of the development of the spirit, each one a note of the eternal poem which harmonises all single poems in itself.