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THE PLACE OF ART IN THE SPIRIT AND
IN HUMAN SOCIETY

THE dispute as to the dependence or independence of art was at its hottest in the romantic period, when the motto of "art for art's sake" was coined, and as its apparent antithesis that other of "art for life"; and from that time it was discussed, to tell the truth, rather among men of letters or artists than philosophers. It has lost interest in our day, fallen to the rank of a theme with which beginners amuse or exercise themselves, or of an argument for academic orations. However, even previous to the romantic period, and indeed in the most ancient documents containing reflections upon art, are to be found traces of it; and philosophers of Æsthetic themselves, even when they appear to neglect it (and they do indeed neglect it in its vulgar form), really do consider it, and indeed may be said to think of nothing else. Because, to dispute as to the dependence or the independence, the autonomy or the heteronomy of art does not mean anything but to enquire whether *art is or is not*, and, if it is, *what it is*. An activity whose principle depends upon that of another activity is, effectually, that other activity, and retains for itself an existence that is only putative or conventional: art which depends upon morality, upon pleasure, or upon philosophy is morality, pleasure, or philosophy; it is not art. If it be held not to be dependent, it will be advisable to investigate the foundation of its independence—that is to say, how art is distinguished from morality, from pleasure, from philosophy, and from all

other things; what it is—and to posit whatever it may be as truly autonomous and independent. It may chance to be asserted, on the other hand, by those very people who affirm the concept of the original nature of art, that although it preserve its peculiar nature, yet its place is below another activity of superior dignity, and (as used at one time to be said) that it is a handmaid to ethic, a minister to politics, and a dragoman to science; but this would only prove that there are people who have the habit of contradicting themselves or of allowing discord among their thoughts: dazed folk whose existence truly does not call for any sort of proof. For our part, we shall take care not to fall into so dazed a condition; and having already made clear that art is distinguished from the physical world and from the practical, moral, and conceptual activity as *intuition*, we shall give ourselves no further anxiety, and shall assume that with that first demonstration we have also demonstrated the *independence* of art.

But another problem is implicit in the dispute as to dependence or independence; of this I have hitherto purposely not spoken, and I shall now proceed to examine it. Independence is a concept of relation, and in this aspect the only absolute independence is the Absolute, or absolute relation; every particular form and concept is independent on one side and dependent on another, or both independent and dependent. Were this not so, the spirit, and reality in general, would be either a series of juxtaposed absolutes, or (which amounts to the same thing) a series of juxtaposed nullities. The independence of a form implies the matter to which it is applied, as we have already seen in the development of the genesis of art as an intuitive formation of a sentimental or passionate material; and in the case of absolute independence, since all material and aliment would be want-

ing to it, form itself, being void, would become nullified. But since the recognised independence prevents our thinking one activity as submitted to the principle of another, the dependence must be such as to guarantee the independence. But this would not be guaranteed in the hypothesis that one activity should be made to depend upon another, in the same way as that other upon it, like two forces which counterbalance each other, and of which the one does not conquer the other; because, if it do not conquer it, we have reciprocal arrest and static; if it conquer the other, pure and simple dependence, which has already been excluded. Hence, considering the matter in general, it appears that there is no other way of thinking the simultaneous independence and dependence of the various spiritual activities than that of conceiving them in the relation of condition and conditioned, in which the conditioned surpasses the condition and presupposes it, and, becoming again in its turn condition, gives rise to a new conditioned, thus constituting a series of *developments*. No other defect could be attributed to this series than that the first of the series would be a condition without a previous conditioned, and the last conditioned which would not become in its turn condition, thus causing a double rupture of the law of development itself. Even this defect is healed if the last be made the condition of the first and the first the condition of the last; that is to say, if the series be conceived as reciprocal action, or, better (and abandoning all naturalistic phraseology), as a *circle*. This conception seems to be the only way out of the difficulties with which the other conceptions of the spiritual life are striving, both that which makes it consist of an assemblage of independent and unrelated faculties of the soul, or of independent and unrelated ideas of value, and that which subordinates all these in one and resolves them in that one,

which remains immobile and impotent; or, more subtly, conceives them as necessary grades of a linear development which leads from an irrational first to a last that would wish to be most rational, but is, however, superrational, and as such also irrational.

But it will be opportune not to insist upon this somewhat abstract scheme, and rather consider the manner in which it becomes actual in the life of the spirit, beginning with the æsthetic spirit. For this purpose we shall again return to the artist, or man-artist, who has achieved the process of liberation from the sentimental tumult and has objectified it in a lyrical image—that is, has attained to art. He finds his satisfaction in this image, because he has worked and moved in this direction: all know more or less the joy of the complete expression which we succeed in giving to our own psychical impulses, and the joy in those of others, which are also ours, when we contemplate the works of others, which are to some extent ours, and which we make ours. But is the satisfaction definite? Was only the man-artist impelled toward the image? Toward the *image* and toward *another* at the same time; toward the image in so far as he is man-artist, toward another in so far as he is artist-man; toward the image on the first plane, but, since the first plane is connected with the second and third planes, also toward the second and third, although immediately toward the first and mediately toward the second and third? And now that he has reached the first plane, the second appears immediately behind it, and becomes a direct aim from indirect that it was before; and a new demand declares itself, a new process begins. Not, be it well observed, that the intuitive power gives place to another power, as though taking its turn of pleasure or of service; but the intuitive power itself—or, better, the spirit itself, which at first seemed to be, and in a

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certain sense was, all intuition—develops in itself the new process, which comes forth from the vitals of the first. “One soul is not kindled at another” in us (I shall avail myself again on this occasion of Dante’s words), but the one soul, which first is all collected in one single “virtue,” and which “seems to obey no longer any power,” satisfied in that virtue alone (in the artistic image), finds in that virtue, together with its satisfaction, its dissatisfaction: its satisfaction, because it gives to the soul all that it can give and is expected from it; its dissatisfaction, because, having obtained all that, and having satiated the soul with its ultimate sweetness,—“what is asked and thanked for,”—satisfaction is sought for the new need caused by the first satisfaction, which was not able to arise without that first satisfaction. And we all know also, from continual experience, the new want which lurks behind the formation of images. Ugo Foscolo has a love-affair with the Countess Arese; he knows with what sort of love and with what sort of woman he has to do, as can be proved from the letters he wrote, which are to be read in print. Nevertheless, during the moments that he loves her, that woman is his universe, and he aspires to possess her as the highest beatitude, and in the enthusiasm of his admiration would render the mortal woman immortal, would transfigure this earthly creature into one divine for the time to come, achieving for her a new miracle of love. And indeed he already finds her rapt to the empyrean, an object of worship and of prayers:

*And thou, divine one, living in my hymns,
Shalt receive the vows of my Insubrian descendants.*

The ode *All' amica risanata* would not have taken shape in the spirit of Foscolo unless this metamorphosis of love had been desired and longed for with the greatest seriousness

(lovers and even philosophers, if they have been in love, can witness that these absurdities are seriously desired); and the images with which Foscolo represents the fascination of his goddess-friend, so rich in perils, would not have presented themselves so vividly and so spontaneously as they did. But what was that impetus of the soul which has now become a magnificent lyrical representation? Was all of Foscolo, the soldier, the patriot, the man of learning, moved with so many spiritual needs, expressed in that aspiration? Did it act so energetically within him as to be turned into action, and to some extent to give direction to his practical life? Foscolo, who had not been wanting of insight in the course of his love, as regards his poetry also from time to time became himself again when the creative tumult was appeased, and again acquired full clearness of vision. He asks himself what he really did will, and what the woman deserved. It may be that a slight suspicion of scepticism had insinuated itself during the formation of the image, if our ears be not deceived in seeming to detect here and there in the ode some trace of elegant irony toward the woman, and of the poet toward himself. This would not have happened in the case of a more ingenuous spirit, and the poetry would have flowed forth quite ingenuously. Foscolo the poet, having achieved his task and therefore being no longer poet, now wishes to know his real condition. He no longer forms the image, because he has formed it; he no longer fancies, but perceives and narrates ("that woman," he will say later of the "divine one," "had a piece of brain instead of a heart"); and the lyrical image changes, for him and for us, into an autobiographical extract, or *perception*.

With perception we have entered a new and very wide spiritual field; and, truly, words are not strong enough to satirise those thinkers who, now as in the past, confound

image and perception, making of the image a perception (a portrait or copy or imitation of nature, or history of the individual and of the times, etc.), and, worse still, of the perception a kind of image apprehensible by the "senses." But perception is neither more nor less than a complete *judgment*, and as judgment implies an image and a category or system of mental categories which must dominate the image (reality, quality, etc.); and in respect of the image, or a *a priori æsthetic synthesis* of feeling and fancy (intuition), it is a new synthesis, of representation and category, of subject and predicate, the *a priori logical synthesis*, of which it would be fitting to repeat all that has been said of the other, and, above all, that in its content and form, representation and category, subject and predicate, do not appear as two elements united by a third, but the representation appears as category, the category as representation, in indivisible unity: the subject is subject only in the predicate, and the predicate is predicate only in the subject. Nor is perception a logical act among other logical acts, or the most rudimentary and imperfect of them; for he who is able to extract from it all the treasures it contains would have no need to seek beyond it for other determinations of logicity, because consciousness of what has really happened, which in its eminently literary forms takes the name of *history*, and consciousness of the universal, which in its eminent forms takes the name of system or *philosophy*, spring from perception, which is itself this synthetic gemination: and philosophy and history constitute the superior unity, which philosophers have discovered, for no other reason than the synthetic connection of the perceptive judgment, whence they are born and in which they live, identifying philosophy and history, and which men of good sense discover in their own way, though they always observe that ideas suspended

in air are phantoms, are facts which occur—real facts—what alone is true, and alone worthy of being known. Finally, perception (the variety of perceptions) explains why the human intellect strives to emerge from them and to impose upon them a world of types and of laws, governed by mathematical measures and relations; which is the reason of the formation of the *natural sciences and mathematics*, in addition to philosophy and history.

It is not here my task to give a sketch of Logic, as I have been or am giving a sketch of Æsthetic; and therefore, refraining from determining and developing the theory of Logic, and intellectual, perceptive, and historical knowledge, I shall resume the thread of the argument, not proceeding on this occasion from the artistic and intuitive spirit, but from the logical and historical, which has surpassed the intuitive and has elaborated the image in perception. Does the spirit find satisfaction in this form? Certainly: all know the very lively satisfactions of knowledge and science; all know, from experience, the desire which takes possession of one to discover the countenance of reality, concealed by our illusions; and even though that countenance be terrible, the discovery is never unaccompanied with profound pleasure, due to the satisfaction of possessing the truth. But does such satisfaction differ in being complete and final from that afforded by art? Does not dissatisfaction perhaps appear side by side with the satisfaction of knowing reality? This, too, is most certain; and the dissatisfaction of having known manifests itself (as indeed all know by experience) in the desire for action: it is well to know the real state of affairs, but we must know it in order to act; by all means let us know the world, but in order that we may change it: *tempus cognoscendi, tempus destruendi, tempus renovandi*. No man remains stationary in knowledge, not

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even sceptics or pessimists who, in consequence of that knowledge, assume this or that attitude, adopt this or that form of life. And that very fixing of acquired knowledge, that "retaining" after "understanding," without which (still quoting Dante) "there can be no science," the formation of types and laws and criteria of measurement, the natural sciences and mathematics, to which I have just referred, were a surpassing of the act of theory by proceeding to the act of action. And not only does everyone know from experience, and can always verify by comparison with facts, that this is indeed so; but on consideration, it is evident that things could not proceed otherwise. There was a time (which still exists for not a few unconscious Platonicians, mystics, and ascetics) when it was believed that to know was to elevate the soul to a god, to an Idea, to a world of ideas, to an Absolute placed above the phenomenal human world; and it was natural that when the soul, becoming estranged from itself by an effort against nature, had attained to that superior sphere, it returned confounded to earth, where it could remain perpetually happy and inactive. That thought, which was no longer thought, had for counterpoise a reality that was not reality. But since (with Vico, Kant, Hegel, and other heresiarchs) knowledge has descended to earth, and is no longer conceived as a more or less pallid copy of an immobile reality, but remains always human, and produces, not abstract ideas, but concrete concepts which are syllogisms and historical judgments, perceptions of the real, the practical is no longer something that represents a degeneration of knowledge, a second fall from heaven to earth, or from paradise to hell, nor something that can be resolved upon or abstained from, but is implied in theory itself, as a demand of theory; and as the theory, so the practice. Our thought is historical thought of a his-

torical world, a process of development of a development; and hardly has a qualification of reality been pronounced, when the qualification is already of no value, because it has itself produced a new reality, which awaits a new qualification. A new reality, which is economic and moral life, turns the intellectual into the practical man, the politician, the saint, the man of business, the hero, and elaborates *the a priori logical synthesis into the practical a priori synthesis*; but this is nevertheless always a new feeling, a new desiring, a new willing, a new passionality, in which the spirit can never rest, and solicits above all as new material a new intuition, a new lyricism, a new art.

And thus the last term of the series reunites itself (as I stated at the beginning) with the first term, the circle is closed, and the passage begins again: a passage which is a return of that already made, whence the Vichian concept expressed in the word "return," now become classic. But the development which I have described explains the independence of art, and also the reasons for its apparent dependence, in the eyes of those who have conceived erroneous doctrines (hedonistic, moralistic, conceptualistic, etc.), which I have criticised above, though noting, in the course of criticism, that in each one of them could be found some reference to truth. If it be asked, which of the various activities of the spirit is real, or if they be all real, we must reply that none of them is real; because the only reality is the activity of all these activities, which does not reside in any one of them in particular: of the various syntheses that we have one after the other distinguished,—æsthetic synthesis, logical synthesis, practical synthesis,—the only real one is the *synthesis of syntheses*, the Spirit, which is the true Absolute, the *actus purus*. But from another point of view, and for the same reason, all are real, in the unity of the spirit, in the eternal

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going and coming, which is their eternal constancy and reality. Those who see in art the concept, history, mathematics, the type, morality, pleasure, and everything else, are right, because these and all other things are contained within it, owing to the unity of the spirit; indeed, the presence in it of them all, and the energetic unilaterality alike of art as of any other particular form, tending to reduce all activities to one, explains the passage from one form to another, the completing of one form in the other, and it explains development. But those same people are wrong (owing to the distinction, which is the inseparable moment of unity) in the way that they find them all equally abstract or equally confused. Because concept, type, number, measure, morality, utility, pleasure and pain are in art as art, either antecedent or consequent; and therefore are there presupposed (sunk and forgotten there, to adopt a favourite expression of De Sanctis) or as presentiments. Without that presumption, without that presentiment, art would not be art; but it would not be art either (and all the other forms of the spirit would be disturbed by it), if it were desired to impose those values upon art as art, which is and never can be other than pure intuition. The artist will always be morally blameless and philosophically uncensurable, even though his art should indicate a low morality and philosophy: in so far as he is an artist, he does not act and does not reason, but poetises, paints, sings and, in short, expresses himself: were we to adopt a different criterion, we should return to the condemnation of Homeric poetry, in the manner of the Italian critics of the Seicento and the French critics of the time of the fourteenth Louis, who turned up their noses at what they termed "the manners" of those inebriated, vociferating, violent, cruel and ill-educated heroes. The criticism of the philosophy underlying Dante's poem

is certainly possible, but that criticism will enter the subterranean parts of the art of Dante as though by undermining, and will leave intact the soil on the surface, which is the art; Nicholas Macchiavelli will be able to destroy the Dantesque political ideal, recommending neither an emperor nor an international pope as greyhound of liberation, but a tyrant or a national prince; but he will not have eradicated that aspiration from Dante's poem. In like manner, it may be advisable not to show and not to permit to boys and young men the reading of certain pictures, romances, and plays; but this recommendation and act of forbidding will be limited to the practical sphere and will affect, not the works of art, but the books and canvases which serve as instruments for the reproduction of the art, which, as practical works, paid for in the market at a price equivalent to so much corn or gold, can also themselves be shut up in a cabinet or cupboard, and even be burnt in a "pyre of vanities," *à la* Savonarola. To confound the various phases of development in an ill-understood impulse for unity, to make morality dominate art, when and so far as art surpasses morality, or art dominate science, when and so far as science dominates or surpasses art, or has already been itself dominated and surpassed by life: this is what unity well understood, which is also rigorous distinction, should prevent and reject.

And it should prevent and reject it also, because the established order of the various stages of the circle makes it possible to understand not only the independence and the dependence of the various forms of the spirit, but also the *preservation of this order* of the one in the other. It is well to mention one of the problems which present themselves in this place, or rather to return to it, for I have already referred to it fugitively: the relation between fancy

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and logic, art and science. This problem is substantially the same as that which reappears as the search for the distinction between *poetry* and *prose*; at any rate, since (and the discovery was soon made, for it is already found in the "Poetic" of Aristotle) it was recognised that the distinction cannot be drawn as between the metrical and the unmetrical, since there can be poetry in prose (for example, romances and plays) and prose in metre (for example, didascalical and philosophic poems). We shall therefore conduct it with the more profound criterion, which is that of image and perception, of intuition and judgment, which has already been explained; poetry will be the expression of the image, prose that of the judgment or concept. But the two expressions, in so far as expressions, are of the same nature, and both possess the same æsthetic value; therefore, if the poet be the lyrist of his feelings, the prosaist is also the lyrist of his feelings,—that is, poet,—though it be of the feelings which arise in him from or in his search for the concept. And there is no reason whatever for recognising the quality of poet to the composer of a sonnet and of refusing it to him who has composed the "Metaphysic," the "Somma Teologia," the "Scienza Nuova," the "Phenomenology of the Spirit," or told the story of the Peloponnesian wars, of the politics of Augustus and Tiberius, or the "universal history": in all of those works there is as much passion and as much lyrical and representative force as in any sonnet or poem. For all the distinctions with which it has been attempted to reserve the poetic quality for the poet and to deny it to the prosaist, are like those stones, carried with great effort to the top of a steep mountain, which fall back again into the valley with ruinous results. Yet there is a just apparent difference, but in order to determine it, poetry and prose must not be separated in the manner of

naturalistic logic, like two co-ordinated concepts simply opposed the one to the other: we must conceive them in development as a passage from poetry to prose. And since the poet, in this passage, not only presupposes a passionate material, owing to the unity of the spirit, but preserves the passionality and elevates it to the passionality of a poet (passion for art), so the thinker or prosaist not only preserves that passionality and elevates it to a passionality for science, but also preserves the intuitive force, owing to which his judgments come forth expressed together with the passionality that surrounds them, and therefore they retain their artistic as well as their scientific character. We can always contemplate this artistic character, assuming its scientific character, or separating it therefrom and from the criticism of science, in order to enjoy the æsthetic form which it has assumed; and this is also the reason why science belongs, though in different aspects, to the history of science and to the history of literature, and why, among the many different kinds of poetry enumerated by the rhetoricians, it would at the least be capricious to refuse to number the "poetry of prose," which is sometimes far purer poetry than much pretentious poetry of poetry. And it will be well that I should mention again a new problem of the same sort, to which I have already alluded in passing: namely, the connection between art and morality, which has been denied to be immediate identification of the one with the other, but which must now be reasserted, and to note that, since the poet preserves the passion for his art when free from every other passionality, so he preserves in his art the consciousness of duty (duty toward art), and every poet, in the act of creation, is moral, because he accomplishes a sacred function.

And finally, the order and logic of the various forms of the spirit, making the one necessary for the other and

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therefore all necessary, reveal the folly of negating the one in the name of the other: the error of the philosopher (Plato), or of the moralist (Savonarola or Proudhon), or of the naturalist and practical man (there are so many of these that I do not quote names!), who refute art and poetry; and, on the other hand, the error of the artist who rebels against thought, science, practice, and morality, as did so many "romantics" in tragedy, and as do so many "decadents" in comedy in our day. These are errors and follies to which also we can afford a caress in passing (always keeping in view our plan of not leaving anyone quite disconsolate), for it is evident that they have a positive content of their own in their very negativity, as rebellion against certain false concepts or certain false manifestations of art and of science, of practice and of morality (Plato, for example, combating the idea of poetry as "wisdom"; Savonarola, the not austere and therefore corrupt civilisation of the Italian Renaissance so soon to be dissolved), etc. But it is madness to attempt to prove that were philosophy without art, it would exist for itself, because it would be without what conditions its problems, and air to breathe would be taken from it, in order to make it prevail alone against art; and that practice is not practice, when it is not set in motion and revived by aspirations, and, as they say, by "ideals," by "dear imagining," which is art; and, on the other hand, that art without morality, art that usurps with the decadents the title of "pure beauty," and before which is burnt incense, as though it were a diabolic idol worshipped by a company of devils, owing to the lack of morality in the life from which it springs and which surrounds it, is decomposed as art, and become caprice, luxury, and charlatanry; the artist no longer serves it, but it serves the private and futile interests of the artist as the vilest of slaves.

Nevertheless, objection has been taken to the idea of the circle in general, which affords so much aid in making clear the connection of dependence and independence of art and of the other spiritual forms, on the ground that it thinks the work of the spirit as a tiresome and melancholy doing and undoing, a monotonous turning upon itself, not worth the trouble of effecting. Certainly there is no metaphor but leaves some side open to parody and caricature; but these, when they have gladdened us for the moment, oblige us to return seriously to the thought expressed in the metaphor. And the thought is not that of a sterile repetition of going and coming, but a continuous enrichment in the going of the going and the coming of the coming. The last term, which again becomes the first, is not the old first, but presents itself with a multiplicity and precision of concepts, with an experience of life lived, and even of works contemplated, which was wanting to the old first term; and it affords material for a more lofty, more refined, more complex and more mature art. Thus, instead of being a perpetually even revolution, the idea of the circle is nothing but the true philosophical idea of *progress*, of the perpetual growth of the spirit and of reality in itself, where nothing is repeated, save the form of the growth; unless it should be objected to a man walking, that his walking is a standing still, because he always moves his legs in the same time!

Another objection, or rather another movement of rebellion against the same idea, is frequently to be observed, though not clearly self-conscious: the restlessness, existing in some or several, the endeavour to break and to surpass the circularity that is a law of life, and to attain to a region of repose from movement, so full of anxiety; withdrawn henceforward from the ocean and standing upon the shore, to turn back and contemplate the tossing billows. But I have

already had occasion to state of what this repose consists: an effectual negation of reality, beneath the appearance of elevation and sublimation; and it is certainly attained, but is called death; the death of the individual, not of reality, which does not die, and is not afflicted by its own motion, but enjoys it. Others dream of a spiritual form, in which the circle is dissolved, a form which should be Thought of thought, unity of the Theoretical and of the Practical, Love, God, or whatever other name it may bear; they fail to perceive that this thought, this unity, this Love, this God, already exists in and for the circle, and that they are uselessly repeating a search already completed, or are repeating metaphorically what has already been discovered, in the myth of another world, where the very drama of the only world should be repeated.

I have hitherto outlined this drama, as it truly is, ideal and extratemporal, employing such terms as first and second, solely with a view to verbal convenience and in order to indicate logical order:—ideal and extratemporal, because there is not a moment and there is not an individual in whom it is not all performed, as there is no particle of the universe unbreathed upon by the Spirit of God. But the ideal, indivisible moments of the ideal drama can be seen as if divided in empirical reality, like an impure and embodied symbol of the ideal distinction. Not that they are really divided (ideality is the true reality), but they appear to be so empirically to him who looks upon them with a view to classification, for he possesses no other way of determining in the types the individuality of the facts that have attracted his attention, save that of enlarging and of exaggerating ideal distinctions. Thus the artist, the philosopher, the historian, the naturalist, the mathematician, the man of business, the good man, seem to live separated from one

another; and the spheres of artistic, philosophical, historical, naturalistic, mathematical culture, and those of economic and ethic and of the many institutions connected with them, to be distinct from one another; and finally, the life of humanity is divided into epochs in the ages, in which one or the other or only some of the ideal forms are represented: epochs of fancy, of religion, of speculation, of natural sciences, of industrialism, of political passions, of moral enthusiasms, of pleasure seeking, and so on; and these epochs have their more or less perfect goings and comings. But the eye of the historian discovers the perpetual difference in the uniformity of individuals, of classes, and of epochs; and the philosophical consciousness, unity in difference; and the philosopher-historian sees ideal progress and unity, as also historical progress, in that difference.

But let us, too, speak as empiricists for a moment (so that since empiricism exists it may be of some use), and let us ask ourselves to which of the specimens belongs our epoch, or that from which we have just emerged; what is its prevailing characteristic? To this there will be an immediate and universal reply that it is and has been naturalistic in culture, industrial in practice; and philosophical greatness and artistic greatness will at the same time both be denied to it. But since (and here empiricism is already in danger) no epoch can live without philosophy and without art, our epoch, too, has possessed both, so far as it was capable of possessing them. And its philosophy and its art—the former mediately, the latter immediately—find their places in thought, as documents of what our epoch has truly been in its complexity and interests; by interpreting these, we shall be able to clear the ground upon which must arise our *duty*.

Contemporary art, sensual, insatiable in its desire for enjoyments, furrowed with turbid attempts at an ill-un-

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derstood aristocracy, which reveals itself as a voluptuous ideal or an ideal of arrogance and of cruelty, sometimes sighing for a mysticism which is also egoistic and voluptuous, without faith in God and without faith in thought, incredulous and pessimistic,—and often very powerful in its rendering of such states of the soul: this art,—vainly condemned by moralists,—when understood in its profound motives and in its genesis, asks for action, which will certainly not be directed toward condemning, repressing, or rearranging art, but toward directing life more energetically toward a more healthy and more profound morality, which will be mother of a nobler art, and, I would also say, of a nobler philosophy. A more noble philosophy than that of our epoch, incapable of accounting not only for religion, for science, and for itself, but for art itself, which has again become a profound mystery, or rather a theme for horrible blunders by positivists, neocriticists, psychologists, and pragmatists, who have hitherto represented contemporary philosophy, and have relapsed (perhaps in order to acquire new strength and to mature new problems!) into the most childish and most crude conceptions of art.