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## The Allegorist and the Aesthetician

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This essay was first delivered as a lecture to a group of teachers gathered at the University of York in England, where, it seemed to me, my references to childhood classics might be appreciated, as I am happy to say they were. Subsequently I discovered that many persons in American audiences were unfamiliar with them. I have decided, however, not to adorn them with footnotes, which would not actually help very much.

During my early years at Princeton I encountered very determined opposition from scholars with definite "Crocean" views, mostly adherents of the then fashionable "New Criticism." Today such attitudes are less systematic, but are still pronounced in certain circles. It seems to me salutary to consider some of their logical implications and to emphasize the basic difference between the idea of "art" that developed during the eighteenth century and the craftsmanship of earlier periods. It was once fashionable to ask whether medieval writers were "conscious artists." This question has no answer, since in the modern sense they were not artists at all.



THE two characters referred to in the title to this essay, "The Allegorist and the Aesthetician," have been placed in that somewhat uneasy juxtaposition for the very reason that they frequently engage in altercation. Their voices raised in unmannerly contention may be heard in academic halls, in the pages of learned journals, and even occasionally in those of critical reviews. The undoubted brilliance of the Aesthetician has won many allies for his cause, and has even enabled him to acquire positions of honor in our universities. In fact, it has become fashionable recently for a third character, the Conventional Scholar, grown somewhat bored with his conventional pursuits, to join forces with the Aesthetician, or even to claim that he is himself, by nature, an Aesthetician *par excellence*, and that, moreover, he already knows all there is to know about allegory. All this leaves the Allegorist in a rather lonely plight.

We shall hear from these characters in person later, but to put the matter simply and in non-allegorical language, my own interests have

for a number of years centered on what medieval authorities call "allegory" in their discussions of medieval texts, and on what historians of art call "iconography," or the study of meaning, in the visual arts. At the outset, I had no intention of offending anyone. It simply seemed to me that in view of the extremely unsettled opinions regarding the meanings of medieval texts to be found in the writings of the Conventional Scholar, considerations of the kind I have mentioned might prove helpful. Like other human pursuits, the study of allegory and iconography is constantly subject to the enemies Error, Ignorance, and Stupidity; and I have not been able to avoid these enemies altogether. However, the reactions of both the Aesthetician and the Conventional Scholar to what I have said have been so violent, and at times so much more wrathful than anything required by the operations of the weaknesses above, to which they too are subject, that I feel that some answer to their attacks is appropriate. As a lonely Allegorist, I could quite properly retort, "You're another!" or words to that effect. But instead, I have decided to put on a new guise entirely. The retort suggested would only add fuel to the controversy and not resolve it. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, let me introduce a fourth character, the Stylistic Historian. It is in this august guise that I wish to address you here. Although my efforts in this direction have already provoked considerable animosity, I firmly believe that they offer the only suitable means of reconciling the Allegorist and the Aesthetician. Neither one is likely to regard the proposed solution with much sympathy at first, but I am determined to persevere, even though the result may be only a very lonely Stylistic Historian.

Let us begin with the Aesthetician. He has not been with us very long, but he has nevertheless made a very great impression, especially in academic circles, for which we must give him due credit. During the Middle Ages, he did not exist at all in his present form. When medieval authorities talk about the beautiful, and they are not simply talking about rhetoric: they seek to direct our attention to the realm of the intelligible, and they insist generally that the beauty of creation, whether natural or artificial, lies in a proportional order that is a reflection of the beauty of the Creator. On the infrequent occasions when they use a word related to the word *aesthetics*, they are obviously talking about mere sensory appeal. Thus John the Scot associates aesthetic sensitivity with effeminacy and sensuality, qualities that he regards with small patience, since they are unreasonable and misleading. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first modern discussion of aesthetics by Baumgarten, stemming from the mid-eighteenth century, should

have continued more or less in the same vein, using the word *aesthetics* to refer to an inferior sensory knowledge.

The change in attitude toward aesthetics, deprecated, incidentally, in the New English Dictionary, is actually a product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is, moreover, largely the work of one man, Benedetto Croce, although its antecedents, in spite of Croce, are clearly visible in the critical utterances of the romantics. Croce's great contribution was to make aesthetics a separate and distinct discipline, with a proper realm of its own, and to suggest a series of principles capable of producing what seem to be more or less objective analyses. To remind ourselves of the basic nature of the Aesthetician, since it is not only Christians who sometimes forget the tenets of their faith—Allegorists and Aestheticians do the same thing—I should like to cite a few principles from Croce's lecture "What is Art," written for the inaugural ceremonies at Rice Institute (now Rice University) at Houston, Texas, in 1912.

In the first place, the Aesthetician set about creating a new reality. Physical facts, he said, "lack reality." But "art," he affirmed, "to which so many devote their whole lives and which fills everyone with heavenly joy, is *supremely real*."<sup>1</sup> I doubt that many contemporary academic aestheticians would go quite so far. They tend, like most of the faithful elsewhere, to cling to the physical world a little. Nevertheless, most of them are inclined to assert that art has a reality of its own. The view is, after all, common in romantic criticism, the traditions of which are still very strong. Croce goes on to tell us that "art considered in terms of its own nature has nothing to do with the *useful*, or with *pleasure* and *pain*, as such."<sup>2</sup> Again, we may find here an echo of Gautier, who told us long ago that beauty has nothing to do with utility. And again, the romantics insisted that the intense feelings in art might be either pleasurable or painful, so long as they were feelings, and intense. Feeling, indeed, is the basic reality to which Croce refers us. The agent that reduces feelings to art in the first place is something Croce calls "intuition," not a Bergsonian intuition fruitful in concepts, but an intuition that arises from feeling. Let us listen to Croce a moment:

Intuition is truly such because it expresses an intense feeling, and can arise only when the latter is its source and basis. Not idea but intense feeling is what confers upon art the ethereal lightness of the symbol. Art is precisely a yearning kept within the bounds of representation. In art the yearning (for expression) is there solely for the

sake of representation, and representation solely for the sake of the yearning. Epic and lyric, or drama and lyric, are scholastic divisions of the indivisible. Art is always lyrical, or, if you like, the epic and drama of feeling.<sup>3</sup>

Aesthetics thus becomes a "science of expression," and the reality with which it is concerned is a reality based on feeling. It has, moreover, like Schlegel's romantic poetry, a "universal" character.

It is not difficult to see that this theory, in spite of Croce's attacks on romanticism, has clear romantic origins, and that it is essentially a rationalization for the style that has dominated a great deal of European thought, art, and politics since the mid-nineteenth century, the style usually called "Expressionism." One thinks immediately of Nietzsche and Wagner at the beginning of the expressionistic period, and of the variations on the same theme that have so far characterized twentieth-century thought. In the introduction to his little manual of *Twentieth-Century Painting* Hans L. C. Jaffé tells us that in the twentieth century painting "freed itself from all ties with religion, history, scholarship, and technical curiosity." Having lost, he says, "the security of religion, myths, and the hierarchic order," man is for the first time "confronted by reality." The artist, he continues, now views "the world in order to give an account of its reality content, its truth."<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, this bare reality has usually been found within the artist. Thus the variety of expressionism most popular between the two world wars, Surrealism, added the Subconscious Mind as a source of artistic material, a source that enabled the artist to think of himself as a kind of sacred magician, since he now had access to the innermost secrets of the psyche. To quote Wallace Fowle, one of Surrealism's staunchest advocates,

The artistic work might be compared to the "host" of sacramental Christianity which contains the "real presence." The poet then is the priest who causes the miracle by a magical use of words, by an incantation which he himself does not fully understand. And the work, thus brought into being, is a mystery which can be felt and experienced without necessarily being comprehended.<sup>5</sup>

My readers may recognize a certain affinity between this theory and the techniques displayed in one of the most celebrated poems of the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*.

Being a poet, however, Eliot does make use of myth, but in a magical way that supposedly taps certain reservoirs of the collective unconscious. If a myth of this kind is stripped of its surface features it be-

comes an archetype, and this in turn, like an electron, can be thought of as an essential universal reality. Let us listen for a moment to one of the greatest of our abstract painters, Mondrian:

We desire a new aesthetic based on pure harmonies of pure lines and pure colors, since only pure harmonies among constructive elements can produce pure beauty. Today, not only is pure beauty necessary to us, but it is for us the only medium manifesting purely the universal force that is in all things. It is identical with that which is unveiled in the past under the name of Divinity, and it is indispensable to us, poor humans, so that we may live and find an equilibrium; for things in themselves oppose themselves to us, and the matter most outside of ourselves makes war upon us.<sup>6</sup>

A great deal of abstract painting has been produced on the basis of similar ideas, and one can well understand why certain painters wish to use drugs to explore even more deeply that inner reality which is presumably a key to universal truth. We should notice that in Mondrian the physical world, dismissed by Croce as being "unreal," has become actively inimical.

Expressionism is, of course, not a style confined to literary and visual art. Croce's philosophy was, indeed, not simply an aesthetic, but had a certain claim to being a general system. Our friend the Aesthetician has cousins among philosophers, psychologists, and even theologians. For example, Bishop John A. T. Robinson recently made quite a stir by re-locating God. He expressed dissatisfaction with St. Paul for putting God "up there." Because the universe has changed considerably since the days of St. Paul, most of us, Bishop Robinson says, tend to locate God rather vaguely "out there." "Up and down" make little sense astronomically, and the old "three-decker universe," as the Bishop calls it, where Heaven is "up," Hell is "down," and we are "in between" has vanished. Bishop Robinson wishes to get God out of the interstellar spaces altogether and to put Him "in the depths," not in the depths of the earth, but in the depths of the personality. He tells us that "personality is of ultimate significance in the constitution of the universe," and that "in personal relationships we touch the final meaning of existence as nowhere else." What we are supposed to do in these relationships is, the Bishop assures us, taking a sentence from St. Augustine out of context, love and do what we will. I need not, perhaps, belabor the point that Bishop Robinson's God is located in exactly the same place that Croce's or Mondrian's reality is located, deep within ourselves, and that if this God is to be approached in any way, we shall have to use something very like Croce's "intui-

tion" to get at Him. There is no indication that He will be conceptually fruitful. Meanwhile, we do not have to search far to find similar tendencies among thinkers of other kinds. Heidegger, for example, has sought very hard to "objectify" what is essentially subjective space, and the phenomenological psychologists, taking hints from Husserl, are daily uncovering more and more objective reality in realms heretofore considered to be purely subjective.

The Aesthetician thus has, like Rabbit, many friends and relations all pulling together. Together, they seem to have the world in hand, so that the poor Allegorist has small chance in it. Indeed, the Aesthetician rather easily brushed him off at the outset. "The insurmountable difficulties of allegory," said Croce, "are well known; so is its barren and anti-artistic character known and universally felt." He even takes away from it any real function in medieval art:

Allegory met with much favor in the Middle Ages, with its mixture of Germanic and Romanic elements, barbarism and culture, bold fancy and subtle reflection. However, this was owing to a theoretical prejudice, and not to the actual reality of medieval art itself, which, wherever it is art, ejects allegorism from itself and resolves it from within.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, whenever medieval art is really art, it is not allegorical. Croce hastens to make a distinction between allegory and symbol, a distinction that appears in more familiar form in the pages of *The Allegory of Love* by C. S. Lewis:

In symbol the idea is no longer thinkable by itself, separable from the symbolizing representation, nor is the latter representable by itself without the idea symbolized.<sup>8</sup>

That is, the idea and the material of the symbol fuse to form a new reality, irreducible to its components. As Lewis says, quite correctly, "the poetry of symbolism does not find its greatest expression in the Middle Ages at all, but rather in the time of the romantics; and this, again, is significant of the profound difference that separates it from allegory."<sup>9</sup> The symbol, then, is the product of the kind of intuitive magic of the feelings that produces what Croce described as the reality of art. Allegory, on the other hand, points to a conceptual realm that is alien to art.

At this point the meditations of the Stylistic Historian were interrupted by the Allegorist, who exclaimed,

"You *have* done it all with charms and incantations, and this, moreover, is a practical joke, and you have *not* made me very much

run after!" He noticed, however, with some satisfaction, that neither one of his legs had grown any longer.

"You should talk about charms and incantations!" replied the Aesthetician. "If you had been more skilful with yours, I should not have had to make mine."

But the Stylistic Historian quickly and quietly calmed them, pointing out that it was now time to begin talking about the Allegorist, who, he hastened to add, was not really involved with Romanic and Germanic elements. Adjusting his mortar-board, and giving both the Aesthetician and the Allegorist a severe look, the Stylistic Historian resumed his discourse.

The Allegorist, unlike the Aesthetician, has been with us for a very long time. Indeed, he began talking about Homer as early as the sixth century B.C., and not without some justification. For it seems quite unlikely that either Homer or the members of his audience had any expectation of meeting characters like Pallas Athena in person wandering through the vineyards or among the goats on the hillsides. Nor is it likely that they had any nineteenth-century ideas about "myth." Claude Lévi-Strauss has recently suggested, or seems to have suggested, that even among primitive peoples what we call "myths" exist for very practical purposes. We should not expect the ancient Greeks to be any less practical. In the *Odyssey* it is obvious that careful attention to Pallas is desirable, and that this is what enables Odysseus to enjoy his success; but it is also obvious that devotion to Pallas implies the use of one's head to control both one's own passions and other men. The goddess serves to personify a kind of wisdom, which, in Homer, includes a certain wiliness; and devotion to her serves to protect men from something called the "wrath of Zeus." This rôle is even more pronounced, and considerably refined so as to remove the wiliness, when we come to the *Oresteia*, where Athena is able to transform the vengeful passions into instruments of civic tranquility. On the other hand, Athena is not a psychological attribute. Her wisdom is something outside of her worshipers that can be reflected in them only when they love her. The Greeks seem to have been deeply moved to create a world of conceptual realities thought of as existing outside of themselves, independent of them. Behavior was felt to be based on the manner in which one regarded those realities, rather than on the peculiar attributes of the personality. The Greeks, in fact, had no concept of personality. In Plato the realities become abstract, but there is a sense in which this means simply that they were divested of their human attributes and arranged in an abstract hierarchy of forms culminating in what Socrates, in the *Symposium*, calls "beauty absolute." Although

Plato seems to have felt that poetry is allegorical, he preferred the Naked Truth.

Plato's followers, however, were not quite so restrictive. As Jean Pepin has shown, there was considerable emphasis on allegorical interpretation, as well as on rhetoric, in classical education; and it is well known that the practice of allegorizing poetry reached a kind of climax in what might be called the Renaissance of the First Century B.C., when Platonists, Pythagoreans, and others set about interpreting Homer to support their own philosophical systems. Christianity, which substituted the Wisdom of Christ, *Sapientia Dei Patris*, for the wisdom of Pallas, born from the head of Zeus, brought with it a new realm of conceptual, and external, realities: the *invisibilia Dei*. At the same time, it introduced a new allegorical method. The *invisibilia Dei* were to be found, not in fabulous narratives, but in "the things that are made." This meant that not only the historical materials in the Old Testament were allegorical, looking forward to the New Testament, but that the created world itself could be turned into a vast allegory. Thus, in the twelfth century, Hugh of St. Victor can say that created things are "the voice of God speaking to man."

The nature and history of Scriptural exegesis during the Middle Ages need not concern us here. We have available at last a historian of the subject who understands it and regards it with some sympathy, Henri de Lubac. His monumental *Exégèse médiévale* (Paris, 1959-1964) is not only an indispensable guide to its special subject, but also an indispensable adjunct to the study of medieval culture generally. However, we might pause to consider a minor aspect of the subject briefly, its aesthetics, although this aesthetics is not a real aesthetics and will not have much interest for our friend the Aesthetician, who is concerned with a beauty that originates in feeling. The exegete, on the other hand, was concerned to discover a beauty outside himself, in the conceptual realm of the *invisibilia Dei*. It is true that if the exegete happened to be an Augustinian—and quite a few exegetes were—this beauty might indeed be found within; for the higher part of the reason was regarded as the *Imago Dei*, an image thought to exist in any man. However, it must be remembered that this inner illumination was a part of God, or at least a clear reflection of Him, and not a feature of the individual psychological make-up.

When St. Augustine himself talks about the attractiveness of the Scriptures, he does so in terms of their obscurity, as well as in terms of their rhetorical effectiveness. Perhaps the best statement of the principles involved appears in the second book of *On Christian Doctrine*. I shall quote the statement in full:

But many and varied obscurities and ambiguities deceive those who read casually, understanding one thing instead of another; indeed, in certain places they do not find anything to interpret erroneously, so obscurely are certain sayings covered with a most dense mist. I do not doubt that this situation was provided by God to conquer pride by work and to combat disdain in our minds, to which those things which are easily discovered seem frequently to become worthless. For example, it may be said that there are holy and perfect men with whose lives and customs as an exemplar the Church of Christ is able to destroy all sorts of superstitions in those who come to it and to incorporate them into itself, men of good faith, true servants of God, who, putting aside the burden of the world, come to the holy laver of baptism, and, ascending thence, conceive through the Holy Spirit and produce the fruit of a twofold love of God and their neighbor. But why is it, I ask, that if anyone says this, he delights his hearers less than if he had said the same thing in expounding that place in the Canticle of Canticles where it is said of the Church, as she is being praised as a beautiful woman, "Thy teeth are as flocks of sheep, that are shorn, which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them"? Does one learn anything else besides that which he learns when he hears the same thought expressed in plain words, without this similitude? Nevertheless, in a strange way, I contemplate the saints more pleasantly when I envisage them as the teeth of the Church cutting off men from their errors and transferring them to her body after their hardness has been softened as if by being bitten and chewed. I recognize them most pleasantly as shorn sheep having put aside the burdens of the world like so much fleece, and as ascending from the washing, which is baptism, all to create twins, which are the two precepts of love, and I see no one of them sterile of this holy fruit.<sup>10</sup> (2.6.7)

Now from the point of view of the Aesthetician all of this sounds very curious indeed. There seems to be nothing emotional about the process at all. The picture of a beautiful lady biting and chewing men who suddenly become sheep being dipped and bearing lambs is neither "terrible"—a favorite Aesthetician's word—nor sublime. Why did St. Augustine like it? He himself says,

But why it seems sweeter to me than if no such similitude were offered in the divine books, since the thing perceived is the same, is difficult to say and is a problem for another discussion. For the pres-

ent, however, no one doubts that things are perceived more readily through similitudes and that what is sought with difficulty is discovered with more pleasure. (2.6.8)

In other words, we are tempted to say, St. Augustine liked to solve puzzles. But there is a great deal more to it than that. To solve a puzzle does give one a sense of achievement, but once the puzzle is solved we are left empty-handed. On the other hand, at the conclusion of his puzzle-solving St. Augustine had a cherished principle, a conceptual reality. As he tells us in one of his letters, those things that are stated figuratively, or allegorically, in the Scriptures move the mind from the terrestrial things used to make up the enigmatic statements to invisible things, and this motion, from a lower realm to a higher, inflames the mind with love for the invisible things so discovered. The solving of the puzzle thus leaves one not empty-handed, but moved toward the solution one has discovered by love.

We are accustomed in modern times to love our feelings, and, on occasion, the feelings of others, whose manifestations assure us that they are, like ourselves, human. But during antiquity and throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages men of all kinds loved ideas, not ideas regarded as being products of individual human cogitation, but ideas regarded as having a reality of their own, a reality stemming ultimately from God. This is, after all, the lesson of that favorite medieval book, *The Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius, which inspired King Alfred, John of Salisbury, Dante, Chaucer, and even Queen Elizabeth I. When Jean de Meun, the author of a much maligned continuation of the *Roman de la rose*, sought to sum this book up in the preface to his French translation, he explained that sensible goods, or good things that appeal to the senses, attract man first. But since he is human, and a reasoning creature, his true good lies in the realm of the intelligible. *The Consolation of Philosophy*, he assured his royal patron, Philip the Fair of France, is the best among all books ever written to teach men to despise the false goods of Fortune, or goods available to the senses, and to seek instead true and immutable goods that will lead to happiness. This is indeed a fair summary of the *Consolation*, in spite of anything said about it in more recent times. It is a fable, not a piece of confessional autobiography, whose figurative devices as well as its explicit statements are designed to lead exactly to the end Jean de Meun described. To understand this is to understand also why Petrarch thought Horace to be a better teacher than Aristotle. Aristotle tells us very well what a virtue is, but Horace can lead us to love it.

In view of this attitude toward the nature of reality and its location, it is not surprising that medieval authorities insist from very early

times down to the days of Boccaccio and Salutati that poetry is allegorical. What they mean by this is simply that poetry says one thing and means another. Poetry still does this. When Burns wrote "My love is like a red, red rose," he did not mean that the lass in question had petals like a flower. The difference lies in the kind of "other meaning" intended. During the Middle Ages, the "other meaning" is usually conceptual, whereas in modern times it usually belongs to the realm of feeling.

This fact is apparent in some remarks on poetry by that distinguished scholar Richard de Bury, whose influence, spread by his circle of friends, permeates much English thought during the second half of the fourteenth century. He is addressing lovers of Naked Truth like Plato or St. Bernard:

All the various missiles by means of which those who love only the naked Truth attack the poets are to be warded off with a double shield, either by pointing out that in their obscene material a pleasing style of speech may be learned, or that where the material is feigned but a virtuous doctrine is implied, a natural or historical truth is enclosed beneath the figurative eloquence of fiction.

Although almost all men by nature desire to know, not all of them are equally delighted by the process of learning; indeed, when the labor of study is tasted, and the fatigue of the senses is perceived, many throw away the nut unadvisedly before the shell is removed and the kernel obtained. For a double love is inborn in man, that is, a love of liberty in his own guidance, and a certain pleasure in work. For this reason no one subjects himself to the rule of others or willingly pursues a labor that involves any effort. For pleasure perfects work, just as beauty perfects youth, as Aristotle most truly asserts in the tenth book of the *Ethics*. Concerning this matter the prudence of the Ancients devised a remedy by means of which the wanton will of man might be captured as if by a certain pious fraud, when they hid away Minerva in secret beneath the lascivious mask of pleasure. We are accustomed to lure children with rewards so that they will wish to learn those things to which we force them, though unwilling, to apply themselves. For corrupted nature does not migrate toward virtues with the same impetus with which it supinely thrusts itself toward vices. Horace tells us about this in a little verse, when he is speaking of the art of poetry, saying,

Poets wish either to teach or to delight.

He implies the same thing in another verse of the same book more openly, writing,

He hits the mark who mingles the useful and the sweet.<sup>11</sup>

The mask of pleasure that hides Minerva, or wisdom, is exactly the same thing that Petrarch described as the "poetic veil." If a man does not admire the beauties of Naked Truth, she can be usefully clothed in attractive garments. When the labor of removing these, revealing her charms one by one, is presented to the reader, he can be led to embrace her with more avidity.

The reaction to modern poetry is direct and spontaneous, but the labor of unveiling Truth might, in the Middle Ages, be considerable. Thus Boccaccio says that poetry makes "truths which would otherwise cheapen by exposure the object of strong intellectual effort and various interpretation, that in ultimate discovery they shall be more precious." This, he says, quoting St. Augustine, is the method of the Scriptures. If we wish to understand poetry, he says, we must "put off the old mind, and put on the new and noble," implying that only those who put off the Old Man with his fleshly lusts and put on the New Man as St. Paul admonishes will be able to understand it properly. The lessons of poetry are thus regarded as adjuncts to what John of Salisbury called "true philosophy," or the love of Christ. The intellectual effort involved in discovering these lessons may be very great indeed: "You must read, you must persevere, you must sit up nights, you must inquire, and exert the utmost power of your mind. If one way does not lead to the desired meaning, take another; if obstacles arise, then still another; until if your strength holds out, you will find that clear which at first looked dark. For we are forbidden by divine command to give that which is holy to dogs, or to cast pearls before swine."<sup>12</sup>

At this point the Conventional Scholar interrupted.

"It is just this sort of nonsense that has upset all my labors in the past. The Allegorist here has even been at *Beowulf*, which everyone knows is simply a convenient collection of three folktales about monsters, and at *Piers the Plowman*, which has nothing to do with that old business of 'four levels' I disposed of long ago, and now he is casting his eye on Chaucer, whom everyone recognizes as being a supreme realist. Just read my books!"

"Bah for books!" retorted the Allegorist. "All you do is repeat the same old platitudes originally cooked up in the nineteenth century, never looking again at primary sources or paying any attention to what we have learned about the few primary sources you once used long ago! With the aid of the Aesthetician here, you polish up the old ideas for the younger generation, decorating them with myths, archetypes, and other ghosts and fancies, borrowed, once they have become slightly stale and outmoded, from the pseudo-sciences."

The Aesthetician, who had not heard the remarks of Boccaccio because he was asleep, woke up upon hearing his name, yawned, and said ponderously, quoting the author of a mildly allegorical tale, "I had rather see the portrait of a dog I know than all the allegories you can show me."

"Tut, gentlemen," said the Stylistic Historian. "I have not quite finished, and since I have not much time left, you had both better listen carefully." He then resumed as follows.

What I have been discussing is actually a change in style, a change that has taken place in the course of the centuries both in the nature of reality and in its location. This change implies many concomitant changes in the arts, in philosophy, in political theory, and in thought and action generally. It is consistent with changes in the structure of the human community, and, as psychological historians like J. H. van den Berg have shown us, it implies changes in what we think of as "human nature." I shall have time for only a few brief points.

Perhaps the general idea may be made clear if we return for a moment to Bishop Robinson. I have no quarrel with his theology, which is good Expressionistic doctrine, but he should not have criticized St. Paul. The "up," "down," and "in between" of St. Paul and his successors have reference to an ideal hierarchy of conceptual realities, and nothing whatsoever to do with anything that may be seen through a telescope. Bishop Robinson has simply been rather naively literal-minded about this, although it is true that St. Paul was referring literally to conceptual realities. Again, the "personality" in which the good Bishop wishes to locate God is a modern invention. It was not until the latter eighteenth century that the word *personality* came to mean the sum of the peculiar traits of an individual, and "personality" did not acquire such things as "force" and "depth" until much later. No one in antiquity or the Middle Ages, or even in the Baroque period, either had a personality in this sense or accused anyone else of having one; and we should not look for personalities either in the artists of these periods or in the characters they portray in their works. The rise of the concept of personality is a part of the general shift of reality from a position outside of ourselves to a position within ourselves. When reality became firmly entrenched within, during the romantic period, it could be either a realm of ideas, as it is among German romantics and modern positivists, or a realm of feeling, as it is among aestheticians and some philosophers. This inner reality logically implies solipsism, whether it is a matter of ideas, of feelings, or of indistinguishable "reactions." But Rabbit and his friends and relations are uneasy solipsists desperately seeking a way out of the solipsistic bur-

rows to which they have retreated to find contacts with others, or proclaiming in disillusionment that the others, if they are really there, are all enemies.

Hence the prevalence of the theme of loneliness in modern art. Wallace Fowlie has described the situation very vividly:

The experience of solitude probably explains more about modern literature and art than any other single experience. . . . In his solitude, which is his inheritance, the modern artist has had to learn that the universe which he is going to write or paint is in himself. He has learned that this universe which he carries about in himself is singularly personal and unique as well as universal. To find in oneself what is original and at the same time what can be translated into universal terms and transmitted, became the anxiety and the occupation of the modern artist. The romantics held this belief partially and intuitively. The surrealists made it into a creed and a method.<sup>13</sup>

We may add that the existentialists have carried the creed even further. The melancholy solitude of Rousseau, the lonely dreamer, has spread and deepened with the years. Wordsworth wanders "lonely as a cloud," Coleridge's *Mariner* is "all, all alone"; lonely figures in vast seascapes or on monstrous barren mountains fill the canvases of the romantic painters; and today characters in existentialist films are lost in long, empty corridors with doors leading nowhere, or ascending interminable spiral staircases. We are alone in a lonely crowd, lodged on a minuscule planet fixed precariously in an arm of a whirling spiral of countless stars. If reality is to be found in human terms, it must be found within. It is not surprising that one of the most discerning of our philosophers, Ortega y Gasset, should have said, "Reality is my life."

As the locus of the real changed, the locus of the beautiful changed with it. The beautiful is that which is desirable and worthy of worship. Today, we worship ourselves, proclaiming a kind of humanistic piety, and regard art as the free expression of the personality; during the Middle Ages, art had nothing to do with personality. This difference has led some scholars to say simply that medieval art is not art at all. Thus, writing of the cathedral builders, Jean Gimpel, who admired medieval cathedrals very much, wrote, "the word 'artist' is deliberately not used here, since it adds nothing to the greatness of the cathedral builders and because its current meaning is essentially foreign to the spirit of the Middle Ages."<sup>14</sup> The word *artist*, in a modern sense, he adds, first appears in the Dictionary of the French Academy in 1762. The date is significant, for the traditions of ancient and medieval art ended with the downfall of the Rococo style. The

delightful little allegory of Sylphs and Gnomes in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, an allegory that Dr. Johnson and most of his successors failed to understand, is one of the last manifestations of the true allegorical manner in English.

Just a word in reply to the Conventional Scholar about "realism." It is obvious that the nature of "realism" depends on what one considers to be "real." But the term *realism* as an artistic criterion is a product of the mid-nineteenth century. The great romantic painter Delacroix, whose works look much more "realistic" than anything produced during the Middle Ages, said that he thought realism to be "the antipodes of art." But he nevertheless lived to see the first great realistic painting, Courbet's *The Artist's Studio*. The characters on either side of the artist in the painting, some of them very unsavory, and some of them making up a kind of Vanity Fair, represent types of the society that the artist, disillusioned by the middle-class triumph of the French Revolution, wished to criticize. They seem unaware of two figures immediately behind the artist, a child and a nude woman, who represent Innocence and Truth. Courbet's naked Truth, however, is not the Naked Truth represented in the famous statue by Bernini, an inviting wench who sits with her left foot on the globe of the world and a medallion of Apollo in her right hand. This is the same truth as that described by Richard de Bury, but Bernini has tried, quite successfully in his Italian Baroque manner, to make her look attractive without much of a poetic veil. Courbet's Truth is a sentimental Truth suggesting unsullied Nature, pure Womanhood, and the Eternal Feminine, regarded mystically. Meanwhile, the realistic figures in the remainder of the picture are true types, realities that we can recognize on the surface in the streets and drawing-rooms of his time.

Chaucer's portraits, on the other hand, are not "types" at all. The Friar, for example, as he appears in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* is not a "typical" friar. He is instead an exemplar of the weaknesses and vices commonly attributed to friars in the late fourteenth century. This or that friar on the streets of London might have one or two of them, but a great many friars had none of them. It is true that Chaucer's little portrait, which is essentially a collection of attributes, has considerable verisimilitude on the outside, just as the other collections of attributes we call "characters" in the General Prologue display a similar verisimilitude. But the verisimilitude simply serves to give the underlying concepts a local habitation and a name. The reality of these portraits is a conceptual reality, the reality of the virtues and vices depicted in them. In the fourteenth century, when people lived together in small tightly knit groups, this kind of reality was very practical indeed, the immediate and daily concern of



everyone in Chaucer's audience. Perhaps I need not add that the friar and his companions do not have "personalities."

With the shift in the position of reality, time has changed also. Just as Heidegger's space, which, for all its technicality, reflects rather common attitudes, is different from the space of Gothic art, so also are there differences that have come with the years in human attitudes toward time. During the Middle Ages the cycles of time on earth were regarded as reflections of eternity, an idea that we can see implied, for example, in the Labors of the Months or the Signs of the Zodiac as they appear on the great cathedrals. This conception gave to the span of time confronting any man during his life a firm reality that he could contemplate with equanimity. Hence the popularity of the pilgrimage in life, in art, and in literature. Everyone had an opportunity to "stand upon the ways," as Chaucer's Parson advises, and to choose in leisurely fashion the best way for his journey. The flux of events approaching from the future could be read slowly and carefully; and the present, that imaginary point glimpsed fleetingly between the future and the past, rested firmly on a solid and stable foundation. An artist, a poet, or an architect had no need to present a configuration to his audience that could be gulped down in a moment. He could adorn his Truth with figures and icons to be contemplated at leisure.

As the years passed, however, and the Truth of eternity became more indistinct as men busily immersed themselves more and more in what Boethius called the realm of Fortune, the time line began to break down into segments. At first these are segments given meaning by sentiment. In Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, or even in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, where the framework of the sequential pilgrimage is preserved, the authors concentrate on moments of sentiment and feeling. The old taste for the patient unraveling of a fruitful puzzle disappeared, and men found themselves moved instead by sentimental tableaux. The romantics shortened these segments of time even further so as to produce art in which the feelings and sensations of the eighteenth century gave way to deep emotions, emotions to be transformed by the Victorians into crises of sentimentality. Today, sentimentality has been refined still further to become intensity. We have little patience with time, but seek desperately in our art to plunge into the depths of the moment as though we had no confidence at all either in the past or in the future except as they may be used as adjuncts to our precipitous descent. Hence the instantaneous appeal of abstract art. The depths of the moment are also the depths of the personality. The symbol, the frozen archetype of Truth, has replaced the ancient Lady adorned with puzzling attributes.

"Sir," said the Stylistic Historian to the Allegorist, "henceforth I hope that you will confine yourself to areas usually referred to as Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo, leaving what has happened since strictly alone. Those ages may be somewhat musty, but they suit your disposition. And as for you," he continued, addressing the Aesthetician, "you have no business in those areas at all. If you tried to make a robe for Naked Truth, in whom you most emphatically do not believe, with those symbols of yours, which are truths themselves, you would only confuse matters horribly. And if you treat the old icons and attributes as symbols, you will simply be talking nonsense. Therefore, I urge you most seriously to keep to your own time."

At this point the Stylistic Historian turned abruptly away, saying, "I am the Stylistic Historian who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me." The tassel on his mortar-board waved disconcertingly from side to side as he strode toward the trees.

The Allegorist, the Aesthetician, and the Conventional Scholar, each remembering himself to be a Proper Man, promptly took off their shoes and threw them after him. Then the Scholar and the Aesthetician walked off arm in arm down the road, intent on a learned discussion of Freudian aspects of courtly love in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. The Scholar was seen to reach into his pocket and take out a small object which he handed to the Aesthetician. The latter polished it a little with his magical puce-colored handkerchief and gave it back. It seemed to the Allegorist as he sat watching them depart that the object was a chestnut.

"Well," said the Allegorist to himself as he sat alone, looking owl-ish, on an old stump covered with fading ivy, "I am really getting too old for all that intense feeling advocated by the Aesthetician anyhow. Moreover, I cannot bring myself to believe in his magic, except, that is, when I have had a few drinks and am feeling most sentimental. And moreover, that expressionism of his has entered politics. I know that Croce did not like Mussolini, but the Duce's intuitive reactions and vigorous emotional expressions inducing intuitive responses in his followers put him firmly in Croce's camp. Much the same can be said for Hitler and Stalin, and even for the more benevolent Roosevelt. In any event, I have had enough of it, and of the later existentialists, who are among Rabbit's more dubious relations, and of all other varieties of moment-plunging as well."

With that, he reached for his copy of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, nodded for a few minutes over the long double columns of Latin in small print, and then, with the book open before him, fell asleep.