

Croce and Collingwood on 'Primitive' and 'Classical' Aesthetics

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'What an extraordinarily beautiful valley!' I exclaimed at the edge of a ridge overlooking the Wahgi River, near Kup, in highland New Guinea. 'Ah, Garry, yes', responded my companion Kai, an undergraduate at the University of Papua New Guinea, 'but we don't really talk about it that way, or in the way whites usually do'. For the first time in my life I was being asked to think about the anthropology of aesthetics. For the Wahgi people the valley was not, at least traditionally speaking, scenically beautiful, not even conceived of as a 'joy to the senses'. It was *ka*—from the most commonly used adjective in the Wahgi language and usually translated 'good'—or in other words it 'pleased' in bringing the benefits or 'riches' that the local people needed from it.¹ But apparently it was not an object of aesthetic appreciation, and certainly, Kai insisted, no one would ever have thought of either painting it or evoking the whole scene in art.

The Wahgi clearly possessed art. Characteristic designs were found on their shields; they skilfully painted the *geru* boards which marked the names and numbers of the beasts they were giving to the great *Kongar* (or pig-killing ceremony), and they made much of self-decoration, of feathered headdresses for field-battles and grand ceremonies.² In evocative singing and dances and other musical compositions they were rich, groups sometimes testing their knowledge of mesmerising song repertoires all through the night. Yet did this people have aesthetics? When they said that their songs—which incidentally usually focussed on a type of bird or animal, or on love towards one of the opposite sex, or on warrior achievement—were *ka*, they did not seem to mean beautiful so much as fine or 'rich' for the 'powerful effect' that they wanted their singing to achieve, especially for bonding people together: family to family, ally to ally, lover to lover. Wahgi designs, moreover, even face decorations and headgear, conform to traditionalist expectations because what is good has had the right effects in the ancestral past. Things and bodies painted, or words taken into their drone-songs, are signs of power, and because visual manifestations of greater human power always betoken access to

power from favouring spirits, art is ritualised in form, in 'con-formity' with what has 'always been done' and what the ancestors have recognised as 'always working'.

What looks good, then, is the achievement of this traditional effectiveness. Michael O'Hanlon summed it up when reflecting on the quest of Wahgi warriors (and also women dancers) for better and better ceremonial headpieces: 'handsome is as handsome does'.³ The feathers worn are above all special valuables, signalling the prestige that has rightly come to oneself and one's lineage for having given generously to the whole clan and placed many people in one's debt.⁴ Among the Wahgi, art itself seems subjugated to the concerns of the collective: the tribal security circle and the world of the dead as well as the living. *Ka*, we might presume, can never be used to articulate a strictly 'aesthetic' judgement, for any possibility of art's genuine independence is precluded while a 'total, traditional life-way', the 'religion of the solidary group', is triumphant.

Like so many small-scale traditional cultures the Wahgi live out a culture of warriorhood. Certainly, before 'contact' in the 1930s, they used to invest an extraordinary amount of time decorating their weaponry, artefacts intended as objects of fear for the enemy. If it was art—and not 'just craft', say—it was not meant to be pleasing; it was *ka* once it was fearsome. Intriguingly, the latter-day Wahgi did not carve stone, and yet the 'amateur archaeologists' among them occasionally alighted on severe looking faces engraved in large pebbles, some black and smoothed like the stones that were taken to be the 'eggs of the sun' in highland cultures further west. For the various clans possessing them, these finds were not reckoned the products of human hands, not even the great art of their long distant ancestors (*kip^embang*). The latter day Wahgi, moreover, hardly had the means of modern excavators to associate them with the earliest signs of humanity's Agricultural Revolution in their very own valley.⁵ For them, these objects were made by more than human power. So remarkable and so isolated were they, being thrust up into view within bamboo stands, they were 'appreciated' as manifestations of spirits—of some *kukoinamb*, as the Kumai clansmen put it: a 'power behind the stone' usually turned into a supportive war god with a smear of pig's blood. What might strike us as severe or crude, even as ugly, was *ka* if it served its purposes in warrior culture.

However eagerly we extol the beauties of rock art from Lascaux to Kakadu, then, most of what is usually classified as 'primitive art' does not seem to be intentionally beautiful in our commonly received sense.

Mud-caked Sepik masks, bedecked with hairy grass and with their haunting eyes of shell or mysterious hollowness, are meant to worry and jolt, not to amuse or convey pleasure and success as many indigenous creations nonetheless surely do. I believe that over half of the collected items of so-called primitive art in Western *Kunstmuseen* have been ripped from their frightening contexts within a warrior ethos. Consider the wide-eyed, tall effigy of Musumus, for example, standing with his large-earrings as a warning to strangers on Roviana boundaries or at burial grounds in the western Solomon Islands.⁶ Or contemplate the carved and painted spherical boards called *gopi* and their like, sitting under racks of skulls to mark a given clan's achievements at headhunting in the great cathedral-like *eravo* temples of western Papuan Gulf societies.⁷ When the Trobriand Islander specialist carves the prow for a seagoing canoe, the motifs are neither to celebrate the joy of trading nor to beautify a vessel, but are designed—and bespelled—to ward off dangerous spiritual forces and avert possible attack.⁸ The eyes and faces of the 'formalized likeness' of a recently dead male, carved by 'artists' of the Middle Anoram along the lower Sepik and striking in charcoal black and orange ochre, betray no delight. The figure lies sternly in the ill-lit recesses of the mighty *tambaran* house, guarded by other dark figures with faces of a similar warrior intensity and with elongated penises of generative power, never to be looked on by women and children and first shown to young men at initiations to instil the survivalist regimen of tribal law.⁹ Such creations are consistently deemed 'good' when they 'do' what is expected of them according to *pasim bilong tumbuma* (pidgin: 'the way of the ancestors').

Can we trace a distinct, 'primal aesthetic' in what most would agree to be art—given that the aesthetic in Western culture looks to be ordained as a mode of high reflection? For Vico, the ages of the gods and heroes yield no such reflectiveness, but rather 'a robust imagination' that is both ontologically and historically prior to any universalising rationality.¹⁰ Thus Vico would expect that for the 'savage' or 'primitive', just as for the immediate post-diluvian ancients, spontaneously created images *are* gods; that smooth black stones are 'powers' indeed, and unbidden poetic oracles the actual voices of spiritual beings. Religion, for Vico, follows upon this imagining to tame its savage tendencies and direct it towards the tough social order of 'heroic times'.¹¹ Pressing such idealist historicism to its extreme, Hegel put the dialectic more forcibly, if rather differently: history is a *Fortgang* from Art through

Religion to Philosophy; 'the first work of art is immediate, abstract and individual', waiting for the history of consciousness to separate the 'indwelling god' from 'the Black Stone that disguises it' until finally modern artists 'realize in their work that they do not produce beings in any way like themselves'.¹² Aesthetics is possible as philosophic *reasoning* about art precisely because the aesthetic 'has vanished' and completed its 'definite circle of truth'.¹³ For different reasons and in rather distinct ways, Vico and Hegel both concede that art is in some sense truer and/or more sublime in prereflective times.

According to Croce, on the other hand, the aesthetic cannot make an appearance until a 'precise [conceptual] mode' of imagination, representation, or expression is formulated.¹⁴ Not only must the aesthetic be absent from primal, 'primitive' or prehistoric thought, but Croce disallows it for classical thought as well. Not even Plato's theory of beauty can account for the aesthetic, because for Plato creative art and its images deal with 'appearances' rather than 'reality', and because 'the beautiful' is disengaged from creative mimesis and imaging to become a means to an end: that which is 'useful' or 'instrumental' or 'helpful'.¹⁵ (We can all imagine attentive highland Wahgi nodding knowingly, measuring up their *ka* against the Greek *kalon*, and deciding that this is not so unlike the way they have approached matters all along.) Croce will not allow the aesthetic to have an existence until the 'two divided territories of the beautiful as notion and art as material creation are united and *fused into a single concept*'—which they are in Plotinus, for whom 'Beauty resides in things visible'.¹⁶

For the neoPlatonic Plotinus, however, 'the arts do not limit themselves to imitating what the eyes see, but go back to those reasons or ideas from which nature itself is derived'. Art does not strictly belong to nature at all, but adds beauty where it is wanting in nature. Though Croce misses the fact, and though our Wahgi would be quite dismayed, Plotinus writes out much that is useful in their art and half of what would customarily be *kalon*. For Plotinus, art that does not reflect the good form or archetype of the divine Intelligence or Soul would be ugly, reflecting as it would only that 'host of passions, full of fears, envy ... a longing for vile and perishable things, impure wishes' from which ugliness arises.¹⁷ Farewell to Sepik effigies, not to mention the eerie masks of those Arcadian priests who, as Pausanias tells us, smote the 'Underground Folk' in rites at the mysterious pool of Pheneus, a century before Plotinus' own time.¹⁸

Croce is, however, aware of the problems that his rather too formalist strictures have created. On the one hand, he avers, 'there is no

such thing as an aesthetic progress of humanity ... Egyptian, Babylonian, Etruscan and even prehistoric art, are being more profoundly studied every day', with 'the savage' proving to be just as much *uomo intero* as so-called civilised humans; there is no reason to deduce that 'we are more spiritually alert than the contemporaries of Pericles'.¹⁹ On the other, his moderns are in a transcendent position, for since the artistic awakening (*risveglio artistico*) in Italy—from the *Trecento*—there has grown a 'greater abundance of artistic achievements and a smaller number of imperfect or inferior works which one epoch produces in respect of another'.²⁰

By 1938, R. G. Collingwood considered himself in a better position to grasp the difficulties when, in his *The Principles of Art*, he curtails talk about aesthetics as something 'concerned with dateless realities lodged in some metaphysical heaven', and opts instead to deal with 'art' and 'artists', mainly in historical context.²¹ Where his earlier *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (1924) had shown the decisive effects of Vico, Hegel and Croce on the conceptualisation of the issues,²² in *The Principles of Art* an 'Anglicisation' occurs, the model providing the cue for this reorientation being John Ruskin's *Lectures on Art*.²³ According to Collingwood's *Principles*, philosophers will have to abandon their attempt to monopolise the term beauty because they no longer have the right to assert that 'grilled steak' is not beautiful. 'Aesthetic theory' must then become 'the theory not of beauty but of art'.²⁴ The autonomy of aesthetic experience and judgement is still being defended, and the shadows of Croce and even of Kant and Hegel are lurking behind Collingwood's caveat that the aesthetic response 'arises from within' rather than being a 'specific reaction' to an external 'stimulus'—an anti-behaviourist intuitionism that forecloses on the root meaning of *aisthetikos* as 'received from the senses' in a workaday sense. Neither does Collingwood do justice to Ruskin's 'pre-Raphaelite perceptions', always wanting to turn him into a good Hegelian (when the Victorian sage read no German philosopher at all), and preferring to privilege Ruskin's 'intellectual lens' over 'the argument of the eye' (and thus 'educated' over 'naive and knowing' apprehensions of a kind closer to Ruskin's predilections).²⁵

In Collingwood's mature views, moreover, art ought not to be lost in some unitary vision of culture (like Ruskin's). Art has to be 'an end in itself' and a good part of *The Principles of Art* is designed to ensure art's independence to realise its proper condition *sui generis*. Art is thus not craft, for this is a 'means to an end'. Significantly in the light of Croce's assessments of the primitive and the classical, art is not

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'art proper' when it is magic, 'magical practices' invariably acting as 'means to a preconceived end', with this end being 'the arousing of emotion'. Collingwood extrapolates by making magic include religion here (albeit in no unfriendly or reductionistic way) as the use of art to keep charged the 'dynamo ... of practical life'—a use that is as evident in mediaeval iconography, for instance, as it is in the ritual art of 'primitives' at Lascaux or in Oceania. He admits (perhaps in a concession to Ruskin) that 'magic is a necessity for every sort and condition of man, and is actually found in every healthy society' and that 'a society which thinks, as our own thinks, that it has outlived the need of magic, is either mistaken' or else 'a dying society'²⁶. Art as magic, nonetheless, is not art proper; neither is art as amusement, which is merely a response to the demand 'for an increased provision of leisure'. In fact, art as amusement is the especial symptom of the contemporary decadence which in the mid-nineteenth century had brought in Bowdler as 'king' and which for Collingwood recalls the bread and circuses of a declining Rome. He holds up in contrast 'the artists, who had struggled from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century to work out a new conception of art, detaching it from the ideas of amusement and magic alike, and thus liberating themselves from all service, whether of church or of patron'.²⁷ For him it is this struggle to pursue art proper, as expression and imagination and as end in itself, that is worth honouring, and the reason why artists deserve public and political support.

This is all very pertinent and certainly a good warning against such functionalisms then current as the view that art should serve a socio-political purpose. For our purposes, on the other hand, in his inclinations towards individualism, anti-traditionalism, secularity and a process of emancipation characteristic of only Western artists, Collingwood is overly keen to hold out for principles of freedom that reflect the 'Enlightenment Project'. Collingwood at no point denigrates primitive and classical art as unacceptable or inauthentic, seeing it rather as bound in the service of ritual and 'a team-spirit', as well as alien to our world of greater possibilities. 'Admiring as we do the art of the ancient Greeks', he writes, 'we naturally suppose that they admired it in the same kind of spirit as ourselves'; however, 'we can be perfectly certain that the Greeks did not admire it in any such way'. And we ourselves can be reasonably certain that Collingwood would prefer to move on and admire the Panathenaic Frieze in his liberated context rather than within 'the original Phidean frame'.²⁸

In summary, then, the responses by both Croce and Collingwood

to so-called primitive and classical artistic sensibility or aesthetic apprehensions remain implicitly dismissive. At all costs, Croce wants to disallow that 'primitive art ... could ever be converted into a criterion for the interpretation of art in general', or 'have anything whatsoever to do with aesthetic science'. Even while affirming that artistic achievement or genius can manifest itself in any age or place, he cannot say that primitive art has ever been 'expressive', only 'decorative'.²⁹ He had read and perhaps been influenced by the idea of art as expressionist in Eugène Véron's *L'Esthétique* (1878),³⁰ but the opportunity to wrestle with the diversity, formidableness, and even apparent ugliness of primitive creations, *come espressione*, was apparently foreclosed by his method.

What are we left with, then, from the judgements of these two great philosophers of art on the matter of a primal or 'primitive' aesthetics? Certainly, we have to face up to their Western contextuality; neither Croce nor Collingwood escape the charge of Eurocentrism, since they do not avail themselves of works about Indian, Chinese, Japanese, or for that matter Islamic principles of art, and in what little they wrote about the primitive and the classical they did not achieve a genuinely cross-cultural outlook, as did Collingwood's near contemporary, A. L. Kroeber, for example.³¹ But then, can anyone escape his or her own cultural crucible of sensibility? Gadamer would seem to have won out over Habermas,³² and aesthetic judgements would seem to be made only from within traditions and not from any transcendent cosmic *étroit*. In this light, Croce and Collingwood have exposed their flanks for being putatively universalist when they never really could escape from Eurocentrism or even 'colonising' mentalities.³³ Their dismissing so-called primitive and classical art results from their aspiring to an aesthetic of transcendence, rather than one rooted and self-confessedly placed in a tradition.

As something of a 'traditionist' myself, I hold it to be very important to discern what the assumed or enunciated 'rules of the game' are that affect art and aesthetics within a 'broad' or 'component' tradition. Is the proscription on the representation of animate beings in Sunni Islamic art, for instance, a case of religion enslaving art, or is it a refining of art for the unsurpassable glories of Samarkand's *Tillya-Kari Madrasah*? If Christianity's greater permissions allegedly liberated Western art, are we beyond addressing moral restraint in representation, or for that matter beyond the need to reflect on the so-called Puritan 'fear of beauty' and its temptations?³⁴ If for the Eastern European

sensibility it is 'the radiant and eternal beauty of nature that stimulates the aesthetic feeling',³⁵ what would be the implications of arguing that nature can be ugly? What determines over time 'acceptable expressions' of and appropriate responses to the imaginary? The Homerically heroic or the vulnerable Sita of the *Ramayana*? The human body or the environment, the ordered or the wild, the sublime or the fantastic, the sensuous or the call to *askesis*? And how do such determinants subtly modify tastes through changes in the history of societies and modify consciousness through 'movements of that nimbly-shifting ... *Zeit-Geist*' (as Pater once put it)?³⁶

These are all important questions to do with the influences of tradition, and I pose them here in a cluster as a challenge to Croce and Collingwood and in order to help capture what it means to be an artist powerfully embraced within and by a tradition. Even a preliminary understanding of this will deter us from denying the presence of the aesthetic to another tradition-world because of the apparent absence of what is aptly called 'theoretic aestheticism'.³⁷ It will also warn us against the presumption that art locked into tradition is intractably subservient to prior 'specification', as if to produce art 'the artist' has to have 'no idea what the experience is which demands expression until he has expressed it'.³⁸ Scholars are only now beginning to grasp the indigenous meanings and nuances of 'primal' artistry and to arrive at a more critical comprehension of the 'classical' than was possible during those cultural periods, from the Renaissance to Neoclassicism, when the claims of a classical inspiration were felt to be so compelling.

As custodians of ancestral tradition, artists are 'creative participators'. I certainly dispute neo-Freudian charges that Melanesian artists were slaves to the 'instinctive impulses' and a 'crude unconscious', because set 'aesthetic standards' were obviously crucial for them,³⁹ but I would also want to counter any neo-Collingwoodian assertions that Melanesian artists were slaves to convention. Apart from maintaining a traditionist view that their visual and auditory expressions passed down cultural *vitalities* that allowed some manoeuvrability or *bricolage* within group-accepted restraints, I am tempted to assert that what are consensus 'rules of the game' have been equivalents to aesthetic principles. Indeed, if Edward Schieffelin is on the right track, Melanesian ritual has equivalence to philosophy, but danced rather than written out, incorporating within it visual expressions, song and mythic sub-text.⁴⁰ As the appreciation of so-called primitive art has increased and widened in our own generation, moreover, there is a growing recognition of the claims of

the 'integrity' and 'authenticity' of indigenous *tradition* over and against those of emancipated artists whose work has been to some extent informed by the expectations of Western aesthetics, or who are even affected by 'expatriate tutelage' (like Kauagi in Papua New Guinea).⁴¹

With reference to the classical, it has become necessary to unlearn old preconceptions deriving Greek (even Graeco-Roman) artistic achievements from a falsely imagined civic freedom.⁴² It is of course a common mistake to read the greater flexibility, sensibility and occasional flamboyance in Hellenistic sculpture back into the archaico-classical tradition of representation in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. In fact it is measured restraint and a formal stylisation reflecting Asian concerns for a stability or serene solidity that prevail in the high-point of 'Phidean times', with some room also allowed for the monumentally grotesque (as with the tongue-poking Medusa dominating the tympanum of Artemis' temple on Corfu, or the unpleasantly fearful *xoanon* rating as the most precious object in the Parthenon and the Nike).⁴³ Strict rules also applied in connection with nudity, which was read more as 'costume', distinguishing Greeks from barbarians, and extolling the possibilities of youth in a warrior culture (as much on vases as in sculpted form).⁴⁴ Notions about archaic and classical poets being caught up in a frenzy to 'discover' their metres and myths, moreover, are later constructions and idealisations; the earlier and foremost poets were astounding bearers of information, not only passing down tradition through 'a vast and complex system of [rhetorical] formulas and word groups', but even memorising minute details that pertained to past happenings (as with the ship-lists of the *Iliad*).⁴⁵

To remind readers of a culturo-religious tradition behind 'the classical'—of the proportions of Aegina's Aphaia behind the Parthenon, for example, or of the conservativeness of the latter's Athena statue; of the strange archaic paraphernalia kept within the Erechtheum or of the archaic subject matter behind Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* or the Sophoclean Theban trilogy, for that matter—to remind people of such things is in no sense to depreciate but rather the better to elucidate the aesthetic strengths and perfected proportions of ancient creators. I suspect one should also be rereading Aristotle and [pseudo-]Longinus, who are rather neglected Hellenistic figures in Croce's and Collingwood's accounts, to see what marks are left of traditionist and more distinctly classical insights about creativity that point to 'classical aesthetics'. This 'classical', as Longinus implies, did not entail 'that eager pursuit of novelty' so prevalent in his 'own

day' (the third century AD), but a reverence within 'proper bounds', with creators assimilating 'patterns of beautiful characters from the genius of the "ancients" [old ones, ancestors]' and emulating them, even 'vying with Homer himself for first prize'.⁴⁶ Here art assumes for its practitioners a metaphysic of the demanding *traditio*; by assimilating the putative best of craft, utility and public enjoyment, it becomes inseparable from religion.⁴⁷

Dissatisfaction with Croce and Collingwood on 'primitive' and 'classical' art and aesthetics has compelled us to reconsider the status of tradition as the incubus of aesthetic value. It remains to reflect more broadly upon what has been done within the Western tradition *vis-à-vis* the primal and classical, so as to 'place' Croce and Collingwood more clearly in the history of European art theory. The 'classical', we recognise, though perennially compounded with the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman complexes, has been of recurrent importance in Western artistic endeavour. In one way or another it has been 'rediscovered' since Antiquity itself—in Romanesque, the Renaissance, in revolutionist and neo-classicist movements. Problems of discerning its true character have been created by later generations' tendencies to recreate it in their own images, as well as by the ongoing, incessant dialectic between the Christian and Graeco-Roman wellsprings of Western culture.⁴⁸ The rediscovery of the primitive, in contrast, has been late coming, at least as a major effect on the Western cultural sphere (and later than influences of the so-called 'Oriental'). In terms of macro-cultural history, all societies have their 'rude and savage' beginnings, including the ones we choose to identify as Western, but the rediscovery of these beginnings only came through the encounter with many other traditional, small-scale societies with apparently more elementary 'cultures' than the West's.

At this point we detect a colonial hangover in Croce's and Collingwood's outlooks; they are certainly 'privative towards primitives' because they both imbibed general European assumptions about apparently less evolved human groups and because they were ignorant of a thousand and one nuances in the societies of 'first peoples'. Wider knowledge might have made Collingwood think twice about the nature and integrity of 'primitive art' that Croce at least (with Vico and Hegel influencing him) goes some way towards conceding. Wider investigation, and less Vichian and Hegelian theory, might have led Croce to credit the possible existence of 'primitive aesthetics'.⁴⁹

In any case, contemporary Westerners will have to be very wary about reading primitivity in their own terms, a problem that already has a history—from Willam Hodges' romanticisation of Easter Island, through Gaugin's would-be childlike rendering of Tahitian women pining for the lost freedoms they never had, to the consumerism that now busily gathers around indigenous art forms.⁵⁰ Obviously one way of approaching primitivity is to see how it affected and has been incorporated into the incurably prehensile and colonising Western tradition, which has come to feed on 'cultural divergence', consequently providing the verisimilitude of a 'secure place of objectivity' from which all styles and expressions can be assessed, and thus the possibility of asserting a universal, anti-relativist judgement.⁵¹

Other Western positions, however, offer more promise for allowing primitivity to speak on its own terms. Perhaps because he witnessed the vigorous drumming and dancing of blacks beneath his very own university windows, the Brazilian philosopher Jose Rodrigues Valle first suggested some kind of a mass socio-cultural return to the primitive. Adopting and deliberately misapplying Vico, Valle projected a *ricorso* that anticipated the massive influence of the African beat in the history of twentieth century popular music, and the rampant rejection of institutionalised forms in favour of an apparently 'spontaneous' indigeneity.⁵² Compared to the European 'archaic' and 'folk cultures', the cultural vitalities of the unchained African Americans were to have the more decisive, longer lasting impact on the Western, indeed global popular culture of our time. I can think of a few other developments pointing in the same way—the full frontal qualities of *l'art brut* (or 'raw art') on the Continent, or even some aesthetically-focussed photographic encounters with barely-touched traditional peoples.⁵³ But nothing substitutes for indigenous expressiveness itself, one entering arrestingly and unpreluded into the world of inter-communication, speaking for itself like Kai on the ridges of the Wahgi valley, and refreshingly 'creating its own audience'.⁵⁴ And that expressiveness may include sounds and figures which fly in the face of Western or other mainstream aesthetic prejudgements; sounds and figures which, because of tradition, evoke awe out of the apparently horrific and surprise us by being songs amid drones, screeching or wails.

Considering Croce and Collingwood on the primitive and the classical in art and aesthetics, then, leads us to confront a cluster of difficult though key issues. Without accounting for traditions, cross-cultural and contextual problems in aesthetics will never be

adequately addressed; the imagined force of the ostensibly ugly or non-beautiful *vis-à-vis* the beautiful will be harder to comprehend; the nature of art and aesthetics as such more difficult to fathom. And yet a traditionalist does not have to reside in a world of free-floating relativism. I, for one, choose to fall back on the absoluteness, the *mysterium*, of the unconscious. As Jung rightly intuited it, all humanity shares access to archetypes that lie behind (and are thus never 'purely presented' in) their instantiations through expressed images and sensible symbols within a multitude of various culturo-religious traditions. Absolutes thus seem at once to lie beyond the relativity and contextuality of each expression-world and yet, paradoxically, still to be 'consubstantially' present: manifest and incarnate.

An ambiguity also belongs to this shared structuring influence from the *Unbewusstsein*, however, an ambiguity that accounts for the tension between shadow and enlightenment, the formidable and the concessive, the ugly and the fair, the obscene and the pure, though such dichotomies may be felt and named differently across different societies.⁵⁵ My old teacher Sir Herbert Read would wish to add, in his analysis of Western painting and sculpture, that such dichotomies are felt differently *within* a tradition, or community, even within individual life-spans.⁵⁶ In the inner recesses of individual and collective psychic life this tautness creates the interface between aesthetic and ethical judgements, issuing in distinctive lines of responses that are discernible *traditiones* all the more because rightness and wrongness will apply to behaviour generally, not just to artistic expression. With such ideas, though, and the hint of some covert cosmic conflict, I edge on to impenetrable-looking theological questions. More is the pity that neither in the metaphysical interests of Croce nor the intuitionism of Collingwood do we stop long enough at this awesome threshold.

Notes

- 1 See E. M. Ramsay, *Middle Wahgi Dictionary*, Mount Hagen, 1975, p.87.
- 2 See M. O'Hanlon, *Reading the Skin: adornment, display and society among the Wahgi*, London, 1989, chs. 5-7.
- 3 M. O'Hanlon, "'Handsome is as Handsome Does": Display and betrayal in the Wahgi', *Oceania* 53/4 (1983): 317-33.
- 4 On wealth expressed more through generosity than acquisition in Melanesia, see my *Payback: the logic of retribution in Melanesian religions*, Cambridge, 1994, pp.101-16.
- 5 Trompf, *Payback*, p.58, cf. J. Golson, 'The Remarkable History of Indo-Pacific Man', *Search* 3.1-2 (1972): 13 ff.

- 6 For historical photographs, see G. Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians*, London, 1910, esp. p.234, pl.1; Garry W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge, 1991, pl.3 (although Roviana sculptures included mother-and-child figures along with models and effigies connected with war).
- 7 For some of the intricacies, D. Newton, *Art Styles of the Papuan Gulf*, New York, 1961.
- 8 See T. Swain and G. W. Trompf, *Religions of Oceania* (Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices), London, 1995, p.152. Cf. G. M. G. Scoditti, 'The Use of Metaphor in Kitawa Culture', *Oceania* 54.1 (1984): 52-3.
- 9 Fieldwork, 1981, relying especially on the oral testimonies of Hermen Leny and Daniel Gurem. Cf. A. Forge, 'Art and Environment in the Sepik', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute for 1965*, London, 1966, pp.23ff., on the extraordinary and highly decorated facades of Sepik *haus tambaran*, which again warn of the spiritual power within the temple.
- 10 For the basic texts, G. B. Vico, *La scienza nuova*, Naples, 1744 edn, 'Idea' (sect.34, after T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch), I[11], xxxvi (sect.185), cf. also xl (191); xlvii (204); lii (216); liii (218), and *passim*.
- 11 *La scienza nuova*, esp. I[11],xxxii, in a crucial passage against Thomas Hobbes.
- 12 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [1807], ed. J. Hoffmeister (Philosophische Bibliothek 114), Hamburg, 1952, ch.7B, sects.705-09 (translated quotations); and on the principle of *Fortgang*, T. Litt, *Hegel, Versuch einer kritischen Erneuerung*, Heidelberg, 1961, p.66.
- 13 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. H. Schneider (Hegeliana 3), Frankfurt am Main, 1995, pp.32-8. For Hegelian aesthetics more fully considered, G. Markus, 'Hegel and the End of Art', *Literature and Aesthetics*, VI (Oct.,1996): 7ff.
- 14 Benedetto Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione: e linguistica generale: teoria e storia*, G. Glasso's Adelphi edn. (Classici 56), Milan, 1990, [pt.2], p.193 (in D. Ainslie's trans. under the title of *Aesthetic*, London, 1922 edn, p.155. I have partly followed Ainslie in speaking of Croce's sense of aesthetic as theoretic concept, see *infra*).
- 15 Plato, *Hippias Major*, considered in *Estetica*, pp.204-05, cf. pp.196-207 (Ainslie, p.164, cf. pp.158-66).
- 16 Plotinus, *Enneads*, V,viii,1, considered by Croce, *Estetica*, p.207, cf. 209 (Ainslie, p.166, cf. 168).
- 17 Plotinus, *Enneads*, I,vi,5, cf. also I,viii on evil.
- 18 Pausanias, *Descriptio Graecia*, viii,44, cf. S. Casson, *Ancient Greece: a study*, Oxford, 1939, p.50.
- 19 *Estetica*, pp.174-75 (Ainslie, p.138).
- 20 *Estetica* (Ainslie, pp.138-39).

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- 21 R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, Oxford, 1938, p.325 and *passim*.
- 22 R. G. Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, Oxford, 1924 esp. pp.3; 102.
- 23 *Lectures on Art: Delivered before the University of Oxford* [1870], London, 1910.
- 24 *Principles*, pp.40–41. The Ruskinian equivalent to the banal beefsteak would be the 'merely domestic passion' infecting art from Raphael onwards (*Lectures*, p.227). Compare *The Outline* on 'all ugliness' consisting 'of a beauty ... in some way frustrated or spoilt' (p.20).
- 25 See his 1919 lecture *Ruskin's Philosophy*, Chichester, 1971. Cf. R. Hewison, *John Ruskin; the argument of the eye*, London, 1976, pp.204–12.
- 26 *Principles*, pp.65, 69.
- 27 *Principles*, pp.96, 100–1. Cf. also p.6, and see Ruskin's *Time and Tide*, London, 1867 and *Modern Painters*, London, 1843, vol.1, pp.35ff. But above all the influence of Ruskin's 'argumentative structures' shows up in Collingwood here, for in the *Lectures* Ruskin deals in turn with the relations of art to 'religion', 'morals' and 'use' (chs.2–4).
- 28 *Principles*, p.6.
- 29 *Estetetica*, p.513 (Ainslie, p.401), against Carl Bücher and Andrew Lang, cf. ch.1.
- 30 See *Estetetica*, pp.525–26 (Ainslie, p.410), and for claimed influence, A. B. Gibson, *Muse and Thinker*, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.47. Véron's work was published in Paris.
- 31 A. L. Kroeber, *Style and Civilizations* [1957], Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963 (a later work). On India, see K. C. Pandeya, *Indian Aesthetics*, Varanasi, 1970.
- 32 Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. W. Glen-Doepel, London, 1975; J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. J. Schapiro, London, 1972. Comparable to Gadamer but more within the study of religion, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, New Delhi, 1974.
- 33 See S. G. Harding, ed., *Can Theories Be Refuted? essays on the Duhem-Quine thesis*, Dordrecht, 1976, on other issues arising from intellectual contextualisation.
- 34 See M. Champneys, 'The Christian Concept of Beauty', *The Church Quarterly Review* 161.338 (1960): 13.
- 35 Ivan Goncherov, *Oblomov*, St. Petersburg, 1859, iv, 8.
- 36 Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, London, 1901, p.256.
- 37 Itself 'traditionally' or 'contextually' rooted; see R. V. Johnson, *Aestheticism* (The Critical Idiom), London, 1969.
- 38 Collingwood, *Principles*, p.29.

- 39 See R. Firth, *Art and Life in New Guinea*, London and New York, 1979, pp.30–31, for the first two quotations; for the last quotation, see R. Piddington, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, London, 1957, vol.2, p.517.
- 40 See Swain and Trompf, *Religions of Oceania*, pp.152–54, and my *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge, 1991, pp.26–28, cf. *Payback*, p.101 (Schieffelin). For *bricolage*, see C. Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, trans., London, 1972, pp.16–21.
- 41 See Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, p.253. For debate concerning Aboriginal art, see H. Morphy, *Ancestral Connections: art and an Aboriginal system of knowledge*, Chicago, 1991, and L. Thompson, 'Contemporary Dreamtime', *Geo* 14.4 (1992–3): 90. In Africa, questions of genuine tradition are affected by age and archaeology; in the case of sculpture, see J. Laude, *Les arts de l'Afrique noire*, Paris, 1966, esp. ch.1. 'Expatriated indigenous art'. For the more complex case of the Americas, see C. Dover, *American Negro Art*, London, 1960.
- 42 See J. K. Davies, *Wealth and the Power of Wealth in Classical Athens*, New York, 1981.
- 43 Following J. Charbonneaux, *Le sculpture greque archaïque*, Lausanne, 1938 (see pls.25, cf. 23 on Medusa figures), cf. on the *xoanon*, G. van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Art*, trans. D. E. Green, London, 1963, ch.4.
- 44 L. Bonfante, 'Nudity as Costume in Classical Art', *American Journal of Archaeology* 13.4 (1989): 549–65.
- 45 P. Murray, 'Poetic Inspiration in Early Greece', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101 (1981): 87–100 (94). Homer, *Iliad*, II, 484ff. It is thus not a question of discovering rather than inventing myths, but of whether the poets were relaying and in the process adapting them (as Vico was first to suggest, *Scienza nuova*, *op. cit.*, pt. III); see J. Harrison, *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, 1921, p.32; C. P. Watson and A. C. Reynolds, 'Introduction' to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, London, 1968, p.10; K. K. Ruthven, *Myth* (The Critical Idiom), London, 1976, pp.70–71.
- 46 Longinus, *Peri Hypsous* [*On the Sublime*], 5, 9, 13–14; cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1418a ff. For a better placement of Longinus in the history of aesthetic theory, see E. de Bryne, *Historia de la Estetica*, trans. A. Suarez, Madrid, 1953, esp. pp.352–55; and for other relevant matters arising, W. Tatarkiewicz, 'The Classification of Arts in Antiquity', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963): 231–40.
- 47 See E. J. Coleman, 'On the Inseparability of Art and Religion', *Religious Traditions* 15–17 (1992–94): 83–111.
- 48 See my *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought*, Berkeley and London, 1979, vol.1. For important new reflection on art and Christian theology, see H. Küng, *Kunst und Sinnfrage*, Zürich, 1980; J. R. Barth, 'The Cross and the Albatross: a Coleridgean and Ignatian View of Theology and the Arts', *Theology Digest* 40.4 (1993): 337–46;

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- M. C. Nahm, 'The Theological Background of the Theory of the Artist as Creator', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 8 (1947): 363ff.; R. Harries, 'Christianity and the Arts' in *Christian Thought in the 20th Century*, ed. C. Brock, J. Muddiman and P. Morgan, Reading [forthcoming].
- 49 On Melanesia, see Schieffelin, *The Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of the Dancers*, New York, 1976; S. Feld, *Sound and Sentiment*, Philadelphia, 1982; N. D. Munn, 'An Essay on the Symbolic Construction of Memory in the Kaluli *Gisalo*', in *Cosmos and Society in Oceania*, ed. D. Coppet and A. Iteanu, Oxford, 1995, pp.83ff. Other authors sensitive to questions of aesthetic concepts in Melanesia are Cecil Abel; Anthony Forge; Phillip Gudemi; Simon Harrison; Jadran Mimica; Erik Schwimmer; Paul Sillitoe; Andrew Strathern.
- 50 See Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, Oxford, 1960, pls.48, 51 and (on Gaugin) W. Orpen, *The Outline of Art*, London, [1923], p.592.
- 51 See F. Berenson, 'Understanding Art and Understanding Persons' in *Objectivity and Cultural Divergence* (Supp. to *Philosophy*: Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series 17), ed. S. C. Brown, Cambridge, 1984, pp.43-60 and C. Ball, 'The Aesthetic Hypothesis [1931]' in *Modern Art and Modernism*, ed. F. Frascina, C. Harrison with D. Paul, London and San Francisco, 1982, p.69 and ff. For Pacific art in particular, see N. Grabum, 'Art, Ethno-aesthetics and the Contemporary Scene', in *Art and Artists in Oceania*, ed. S. M. Mead and B. Kemot, Palmerston North, 1983, p.76.
- 52 J. Rodrigues Valle, *Nova concepção da história*, Rio de Janeiro, 1933. See also P. Kundtson and D. Suzuki, *The Wisdom of the Elders*, Sydney, 1992.
- 53 Cf. F. Motley, 'Raw Art', *Réalités* 199 (1967): 54-58; J. L. Anderson, *Cannibal, a photographic audacity*, Sydney, 1970.
- 54 H. Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, London, 1970, p.65. I am only too well aware that audiences come into being through social status, as against a work's own 'magnetic attractions', yet a bigger problem regarding the creation of audiences for primitive art is the conscious expatriate inspired revival of traditional art; see, for example, A. L. Crawford's glossy *Aide: Life and Ceremony of the Gogodala*, Port Moresby, 1981. On spontaneous, independent artistic responses to white intrusion, see J. E. Lips, *The Savage Hits Back*, London, 1938.
- 55 C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* and *Answer to Job* (*The Collected Works*, vols. 9.1, 11: Bollingen Series 20, 22), Princeton, 1968.
- 56 See Herbert Read, *Education through Art*, London, 1953.