

been shewn to be true or false by reason of the fact that the process of investigation had not been completed. At all events, it does seem unwarranted to treat of three-valued logic as supplanting a more primitive two-valued logic. Thus, the late Sir Arthur Eddington, in his book *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, writes: 'It is a primitive form of thought that things either exist or do not exist'.

To conclude, it would appear that modern statistical physics is not inconsistent with the acceptance of Nature as necessarily rational according to the principles governing spontaneous reasoning. In particular, the universality of the principle of causality implicit in spontaneous reasoning is in no sense compromised. On the other hand, if the principle of causality is regarded as a generalisation from experience, then it is a generalisation from molar experience, not from molecular experience. Thus, modern statistical physics does not greatly affect either of these diametrically opposed views as to the origin of the principle of causality. But it seems to me that the position of the majority of natural philosophers is not fixed in either of these views. Rather it has been an attempt to build a philosophy of science on the assumption that the basic problems of epistemology are irrelevant. To these natural philosophers the absence of manifest causality in individual actions appears as a disturbing influence.

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## THE IDIOM OF SACRED ART

IF we seek the reason why Renaissance art touches modern man far less deeply than, for instance such creations of the XIIth century as the Christs in majesty over the great French west porches, awe-inspiring at Moissac, pentecostal in the narthex at Vézelay, apocalyptic at Chartres, will it not prove that the emotion of awe they awake in us corresponds to something transcendent in them, which we may perhaps label *numinous*? The makers were not interested in showing what they thought our Lord looked like, nor even what they would like him to look like, but only what they knew him *to be*. They lay hold on us not so much by appearances as by a two-fold reality, on the one hand concrete and aesthetic (the essence of the artefact itself) and on the other ideal and noetic (the essence of the concept it conveys). This second, ideal reality is expressed analogically by the essential perfection of the material work. Thus there is no inconsistency, as some have wrongly supposed, between Maurice Denis's famous axiom: 'se rappeler qu'un tableau—avant d'être un cheval, une femme nue ou une quelconque anecdote—est essentielle-

ment une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées', and that great catholic artist's life-long practice of making his craft a vehicle for Christian truth.

This analogical character is most manifest in symbolic art, though all art is to a certain extent symbolical and sacred art more than most. A pomegranate, by tradition, symbolises eternity. How can the craftsman best convince us of eternity? By making his pomegranate more and more perfect *in itself*, not (the very notion is absurd) by making it more like eternity. For we know more or less what eternity is, but in no wise what it is like. Hence indeed the pomegranate, hence too the whole convention of using signs and symbols to express transcendent concepts. If few they be in this world of post-belief who bend the knee to the truth therein enshrined, fewer still are those who will not doff their cap to the maker's skill. The idiom once universal in Christian Europe is no longer current; like all dead languages, it has achieved a pseudo-immortality, perpetuated by a disproportionate cult among the pundits: worship without faith or works.

We are spectators of a strange phenomenon today: the divorce of ethics and imagination; religion moves as deeply as ever many an individual soul; it no longer kindles the collective imagination. Accepted as faith, it produces virtue. But no amount of faith will produce art. To create art, religion must act not only on the individual soul but on the collective consciousness. History shows that art is more easily produced by mass-consciousness without personal conviction than by conviction without social agreement.<sup>1</sup> In order to colour the collective imagination, religion must function not only as faith but also as *myth*. Religion today has utterly lost its *mytho-poetic* power.

It is often maintained that what is essential for a rebirth of Christian art is faith and yet more faith. In a sense, that is true; true indeed in two senses: first, insofar as, art no less than religion having been degraded to the status of a private idiosyncrasy, personal (in the lack of social) conviction is the only fount of inspiration left; and secondly, insofar as the greater the number of believers (not the greater the amount of faith, but the greater the number of consciousnesses in which it is found), the nearer will be brought an eventual state of collective religious awareness. It is however not true in the sense in which it is commonly intended. For no depth of conviction or height of virtue will produce art, either sacred or profane: were the contrary true, the most orthodox theologian would

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<sup>1</sup> Quite recently, some work picked out as having a particularly sacred character was found to have been done by a convinced communist.

*ipso facto* be the best stylist, and so on. Reflect how frigid and inept was the art of the Catacombs. Yet did ever faith more abound?

Eric Gill, when asked why our churches are so ugly, used to retort with another question: 'Why are your drawing-rooms ugly?', implying that art is a *social phenomenon*: not a root, but a fruit. We cannot have the fruit without the tree. Forty years ago, J. M. Synge wrote: 'In these days poetry is usually a flower of evil or good; but it is the timber of poetry that wears most surely, and there is no timber that has not strong roots among the clay and worms'. What is lacking to our churches is the timber of art. And timber cannot be improvised. What afforestation is to timber, preaching the Gospel is to art. Individual piety may give us occasional religious art. Only a lived liturgy can give us sacred art. For as art is a social expression, so liturgy is social prayer.

If sacred art is to be reborn among us, we must breathe the faith; spread the Gospel; live the liturgy, ponder the rubrics; test the needful; eschew the superfluous; reject the unworthy; bear with the inadequate; discipline the useful; consecrate the good.

'L'art', wrote Maurice Denis, 'est la sanctification de la Nature' Art is the hallowing of Nature. Sacred art is the hallowing of society

DESMOND CHUTE.

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## OBITER

THE CENTENARY OF THE LONDON ORATORY is an event of much more than local or even of ecclesiastical importance. The church itself, a walk round which, it has been said, is an adequate substitute for a trip to Italy for those unable to find the fare, is an oasis in the wilderness of Kensington. But more substantial even than the marbles is the achievement of the Fathers who, in a hundred years, have enriched English Catholic life with their special grace, their lightness of touch which by no means excludes a complete firmness of grasp. Indeed of all Catholic motives of credibility offered to public view in London the Oratory remains the most manifest, and yet its secret, rooted in the exquisite spirit of St Philip Neri, escapes the casual observer. The fashionable weddings and the intricate music give place to the popular nightly services, to the exercises of the Little Oratory, to the ceaseless care for souls which makes the Oratory the most accessible of havens for awkward converts and for penitents who seek absolution out of hours. A hundred years so immensely rich in spiritual reward deserves acknowledgment, and this is now available in *The London Oratory, 1849-1949* (distributed by the C.T.S., 7s.6d.). Embellished with decorations baroque and nostalgic, this illustrated record has all the Oratorian