criticism in translation

Legend: From *Einfache Formen* ("Simple Forms")

ANDRÉ JOLLES

TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION BY PETER J. SCHWARTZ

Introduction

WHO WAS ANDRÉ JOLLES?[1] BORN IN DEN HELDER IN 1874; RAISED IN AMSTERDAM; IN HIS YOUTH A SIGNIFICANT PLAYER IN THE LITERARY Movement of the Nineties (Beweging van Negentig), whose organ was the Dutch cultural weekly *De Kroniek*; a close friend of Aby M. Warburg's and Johan Huizinga's—Jolles studied art history at Freiburg beginning in 1902 and then taught art history in Berlin, archaeology and cultural history in occupied Ghent during World War I, and Netherlandic and comparative literature at Leipzig from 1919 until shortly before his death, in 1946. A man of extraordinary intellectual range—his publications include essays on early Florentine painting, a dissertation on the aesthetics of Vitruvius, a habilitation thesis on Egyptian-Mycenaean ceremonial vessels, literary letters on ancient Greek art, and essays in German and Dutch on folklore, theater, dance, Boccaccio, Dante, Goethe, Zola, Ibsen, Strindberg, and Provençal and Renaissance Italian poetry—he was also an amateur playwright and an outspoken champion of modern trends in dramatic art and stage design. To his friends, he could be something of an intellectual midwife, helping Warburg to formulate what would become a signature notion, the "pathos formula,"[2] and Huizinga to conceive *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919).[3] Jolles's chief work, the one for which he is best known, is *Einfache Formen* (1930; "Simple Forms"), a collection of lectures he had delivered in German at Leipzig in 1927–28 and revised.

Einfache Formen has been called a significant precursor to structuralist and narratological literary theories, although it lies outside their main lines of development; it is often mentioned alongside the work of the Russian formalists, especially Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), with which it shares a debt to Goethe's ideas on morphology (Beekman).

The book's aim is to describe the nine elementary narrative structures underlying, as Jolles thought, all literary production: legend, saga, myth, riddle, proverb, case, *memorabile*, folk or fairy tale, and joke. He viewed these "simple forms" as structuring principles operative in language before their "actualization" in specific legends, sagas, folktales, and so on, or as

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components of more complex narrative types. He construed each form as the reflection in language of a particular mode of human engagement with the world: the *legend* as a response to the human need for ideals of conduct; the *saga* as an approach to problems of family, blood ties, and inheritance; the *myth* as a form of cosmological inquiry; the *riddle* as a matter of social inclusion through sharing of special knowledge; the *proverb* as a way of transmitting folk experience; the *case* as a form that relates human action to norms and values; the *memorabile* as a way of representing history in its concrete factuality; the *folk* or *fairy tale* as an image of a just world unlike the real one; the *joke* as a dissolution of what we find inadequate or reprehensible.[4]

Einfache Formen (which is extensively discussed in specialist genre studies and in reflections on genre and narrative, though less so in English than in other languages) is sometimes called a brilliant and wrongfully ignored work. Critics have, however, made several objections to it: that it is grounded on a metaphysics of language inherited from German idealism; that it has been superseded by later theories; that its claim to comprehensiveness as a theory of literature is questionable; and that its descriptions of genres are unsatisfactory to specialists. On the other hand, several scholars, including Hans Robert Jauss,[5] have defended Jolles or worked to develop his project, while many genre specialists simply avail themselves of his definitions. The question of the work's value is complicated by Jolles's enthusiastic and principled decision to join the National Socialist German Workers' Party in May 1933, which was followed by years of active commitment to the reorganization of scholarship at the university in Leipzig along Nazi lines.

This is not the place to criticize or defend Jolles or *Einfache Formen*. Instead, I would like to describe one use to which I have put his work. I initially translated parts of the chapter on legend—the book's second chapter but the first in which Jolles applies his model to a particular simple form—for an undergraduate course I teach on the Faust tradition. I found the text useful in two respects: one, it helped me to make the point that any reworking of legendary or mythic material (*Stoff*) involves selecting it and adapting it with an eye to current concerns; and, two, it marked a formal difference between legend (what Faust starts as) and tragedy (what Marlowe made of him). It has proved useful as well in calling attention to the metamorphoses that occur when other forms—fairy tales, ballads, myths—migrate and change to suit a new audience.

Jolles derives each simple form from a particular mode of engagement with the world. He calls such an engagement a *Geistesbeschäftigung* ("mental disposition"). Legend, for instance, arises from a *Geistesbeschäftigung* that Jolles calls *imitatio*—a concern with producing models of virtue for emulation, as a response to the human need for ideals of conduct. The often historical figure about whom a legend is made—such as a saint—is cast by the form as a model of conduct. Faust enters the picture with Jolles's construction of a reverse type, the "antisaint," with whom the criterion of imitability appears as a warning *not* to imitate. Indeed, in Johann Spies's *Faustbuch* of 1587, Faust's damnation is clearly a warning. Not so with Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe pilfers Spies for the Faust material, but what he makes of it is a tragedy. Unlike Spies, he casts his protagonist not as a warning but as a paradigmatic example of a moral and psychological conflict. Faust is no longer an *imitabile*: he has become, so to speak, a problem. Given this distinction, we can read the *Faustbuch*'s ambivalence as a *symptom* of the conflict between Renaissance religiosity and Renaissance humanism and Marlowe's play as a *thematization* of the same conflict. That is, I think, a useful distinction—and one independent of metaphysics.

Notes

This translation is based on André Jolles's *Ei me : Legende, Sage, Mythe, Rätsel, Spruch, Kasus, Memorabile, Märchen, Witz* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1958; print) and is published by kind permission of Walter de Gruyter GmbH.

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1. On Jolles generally, see Thys, "Uit het leven" 129–37, 199–208, and *André Jolles*; Bodar, "Jolles"; Hinskens.

2. Gombrich 105–27; Roeck 229–41; Contarini, "'Botticelli.'"

3. Bodar, "Clio"; Contarini, "Huizinga."

4. Scholes provides a good summary of the book as a whole (42–49).

5. See esp. Jauss and the recent revision of Jauss in Langbehn.

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Legend

[I]

[. . .] Summaries of stories with testimony about the lives and deeds of the saints have been available, in large and small collections, since the first centuries of the Christian era. We find *Acta martyrum* and *Acta sanctorum* throughout the Middle Ages, and not just as books that people read but also as ones that had a substantial effect on literature and the visual arts. In this regard the *Legendae sanctorum* or *Legenda aurea* of the bishop Jacobus de Voragine, where we encounter the word *legend* for the first time—a collection compiled in the middle of the thirteenth century and for centuries the prototype of a certain kind of artful construction of legends, as well as a source of great influence on the Italian novella—is of particular importance.

The first large collection proper of the vitae of all the saints recognized by the Catholic Church dates from the seventeenth century, an era significant in other ways for the definition of the saint. The collection was begun by a Jesuit, Father Heribert Rosweyde, of Flanders, and was continued after his death by a member of the same order, whose name the collection bears: Jean Bolland. It is generally called the *Acta sanctorum* and its compilers the Bollandists. [. . .] The two volumes prepared by Bolland [. . .] appeared in 1643. By

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1902 the edition comprised sixty-three volumes. Several more have been added since then; the undertaking is now managed by a commission that since 1882 has also published a journal, the *Analecta Bollandiana*. The collection today includes roughly 25,000 saints' lives, though one must keep in mind that there are often several lives of the same saint, all of which are edited by the Bollandists. [. . .]

[II]

What is the saint, what are the saints, whose lives are portrayed in a special way in the sources mentioned? Although they can be viewed as individuals, together they form a community by virtue of an inner fellowship and because collectively they represent the liturgical year.

The saint is thus bound to the institution of the church, and because the question, what is a saint? can be answered only in relation to this bond, it turns into a broader, more profound, and methodologically primary question: how does one become a saint? The question thus stems not from the person but from the institution by which the saint is recognized.

This recognition is accomplished in a historically developed and established form—the form of canonization standardized by Pope Urban VIII (1623–37, the same era in which the *Acta sanctorum* originated). [. . .]

Canonization occurs through the Congregatio Rituum, in which several cardinals and other dignitaries of the church have seats, and it is undertaken on the initiative of people convinced of the sanctity of the person in question, usually with the mediation of the local clergy. As a rule, a fairly long time (fifty years) must elapse between the death of the candidate for sainthood and the opening of the proceedings. The process takes the form of a trial—a court trial. It must be proved by witnesses that the person (who as soon as the trial opens is called *servus Dei*) demonstrated heroic virtues, first, and, second, performed miracles. The investigation begins under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the place where the *servus Dei* lived and is then reviewed by the Congregatio Rituum. If the examination is passed, the case can move on to the phase of beatification.

Once the beatification is completed, the matter moves on to a higher court—but for this to happen, new miracles must occur. They are verified once again, the process is reinitiated, witnesses are interrogated, objections presented, until finally, when all that has been carried out, the pope declares ex cathedra the *beatus sanctus*: "decernimus et definimus N. sanctum esse et sanctorum catalogo adscribendum ipsumque catologo hujusmodi adscribimus statuentes ut ab universali ecclesia . . . festum ipsius et officium devote et solenniter celebretur." [. . .]

The treatises that discuss the *beatificatio* and *canonisatio* place special emphasis on the trial form of the proceedings. The grounds for beatification and canonization, it is asserted, must be handled just as strictly as evidence is in a criminal trial; the facts must be proved as exactly as they are when a crime is to be punished. There is even the equivalent of a public prosecutor at the Congregatio Rituum; he is called—not officially, to be sure, but routinely—the *advocatus diaboli*.

This, then, is the procedure by which saints have been recognized since the time of Urban VIII. Were there no saints before then? On the contrary: what we see happening in the seventeenth century under the influence of the Counter-Reformation, the Tridentine Council, and the Jesuits is but a final, firm, and possibly superficial regulation of a process that had been taking place in the Christian church, internally and of its own accord, up to the time of the Reformation. The precise, juristically organized trial form is the consummation of a cultural process. What the ecclesiastical authority decrees by the power of its office is the formula of a form, and this formula is composed in such a way

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that we recognize the form in it and can derive the form from it. [. . .]

[III]

In a small, geographically limited area, there lives a person who attracts attention on account of his uncommon behavior. His way of life, his manner of living are different from those of other people; he is more virtuous than others, and his virtue also differs qualitatively. The meaning of this is made clear by the fact that the valuation of a saint occurs in and through the trial form, and we begin here to understand the significance of the trial form, the comparison with criminal law.

A person can be much more wicked than his neighbor, and yet there will be no occasion for criminal law to concern itself with this person and his wickedness. Not until this wickedness shows itself in an act, translates itself into action—let us say, *becomes active*—does he become punishable through and in this act: we call the act *crime* and define crime in the broader sense as a punishable wrong. In the crime, the criminal differentiates himself *qualitatively* from all other wicked people. It is the crime that is punished, and if we punish the criminal, it is because our justice system identifies him, as an individual, with his crime.

Accordingly, the criminal trial investigates not whether the defendant is wicked but whether a crime occurred.

If we reverse the issue, we have the process of canonization. But then we encounter the difficulty that we do not possess a word that expresses the opposite of crime and also that we cannot change the definition *punishable wrong* into its opposite. We must be satisfied with the expression *active virtue*, or *activated virtue*. And we will define the conduct of the person, described above, whose virtue differs qualitatively from that of others as active virtue.

Now, in our penal law we have the provision "nullum crimen sine lege": the written law is the norm of the act to be punished, just as in the continuation "nulla poena sine lege" the law becomes the norm of the punishment. There can be no such law in the ecclesiastical reversal of the form, and thus another norm must be sought, in a twofold manner.

First, the process of canonization, like the criminal trial, relies on witnesses. However, whereas in the criminal trial the witnesses are expected to testify solely to the facts of the case, leaving it up to the bench—however constituted—to establish whether a crime was committed, in the process of canonization the witnesses, who are in a sense also experts, must declare to what degree they believe that the *servus Dei* can stand as an instance of active virtue.

Second—and much more important—a higher norm is applied. The active instantiation of virtue is confirmed from on high—confirmed by the *miracle*, "quod a deo fit praeter causas nobis notas." And once again it is the witnesses who must not only testify to the facts of the case but also voice their conviction that miracles really happened. In the end, of course, it is up to the ecclesiastical judges to decide whether miraculous power—sanctity—is present.

We have thus examined the first phase of the saint's trial, up to *beatification*. As we have noted, a good number of years must pass between the death of the *servus Dei* and his beatification and often many more yet before the case of the *beatus* is again taken up, by a second authority, in a canonization trial. During this time, divine confirmation must again manifest itself in a miracle, independently of the *beatus* as an individual.

How and where do these posthumous miracles happen, to which local witnesses must again testify? At his grave, in the place where he lived, through clothing he wore, through objects he touched or that touched him, through his blood, through parts of his body.

And what do they mean? It was once said, with a certain naïveté, that "a truly Catholic

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people values dead saints more highly than living ones." Many a tale from the Middle Ages confirms this statement. We read in the vita of the Italian saint Romuald by Petrus Damianus that the inhabitants of Catalonia, where he was living, sought to keep Romuald—whom they regarded during his lifetime as a saint—in their country. When that failed, they sent out assassins to kill him so that if they could not retain him alive, they could at least keep him as a corpse: "pro patricinio terrae." This story and similar ones show what is meant by posthumous miracles.

Active virtue must perfect itself. It is conceivable only when detached not simply from the living person but altogether from life. Only after active virtue has gained autonomy through the death of the person does it really stand by itself, acquire a force of its own. Active virtue has objectified, instantiated, itself.

Our penal code has a statutory period of limitation: after a certain time, the criminal can no longer be punished for his crime. The crime has lapsed. Here again we see how our penal legislation is predicated on identifying the criminal with the crime. There have been times, however, when the body of a murderer who had managed to avoid punishment during his lifetime was exhumed and hung on the gallows or bound to the wheel: the crime lived on and could be punished, had to be punished, even if the criminal was no longer living. This is how we have to imagine the virtue of the saint after his death. It endures—only now does it really come fully to life, only now is it really confirmed, not in the individual but in and of itself. We can compare the statutory period of limitation of our penal code with the statutory period of perpetuation in the process of canonization.

After the confirmation period, in which active virtue begins to live its own life and during which the *servus Dei* and his active virtue separate from each other, the latter is joined again to its personal vehicle by a new authority, and in a different way. This reunion is what is meant by the process of canonization, by *sanctification*. The *servus Dei* has become *venerabilis*, *beatus*; he is now in the beyond, among the blessed. There his virtue—now independent, objectified—returns to him. *Beatus* and active virtue take on a new quality: he becomes *sanctus*, and his festival and his cult are celebrated in the entire church, "devote et solenniter"; he has acquired his divine personality. What was once his *virtue* is, however—now that he has rejoined it—his *power*. Recall that *virtus*, which to the Romans already meant "virtue" and "strength" or "power," can mean *miraculum* in medieval Latin and that the German word for virtue (*Tugend*) is related to *taugen*, meaning "to be useful for something." If at first the miracle worked as a confirmation of virtue, now it is a sign of power. If in the beginning the miracle happened through God to indicate the saint, now it occurs through the saint, so to speak on God's behalf and with his consent, on behalf of another person or thing. One can place oneself or another under the protection of the saint, one can call on him, one can ask him to perform miracles.

Now, this power also reveals itself in another place, one detached from the person of the saint, if not entirely independent of it.

The posthumous miracle attaches itself to an object—garment, grave, instrument of martyrdom—that testifies to the sanctity of the *servus Dei*, just as the miracle did. This object is indispensable when his person is dead but his active virtue is living. The object—which we, of course, call a *relic*—has to represent him in his absence. How else can one know whose virtue is being confirmed in a given context by a miracle; how else can one understand that God's incomprehensible acts have something to do with this person specifically? Now, just as the relic stands in for the *servus Dei* in his absence as a vehicle for the miracle, so too can it stand in for him once he enters heaven as a *sanctus*. It can absorb everything that is connected with the

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saint and his saintliness and then emit it; in a certain sense, it can itself be holy and become a vehicle of power.

Let us summarize these connections once again clearly:

> The meaning this saint acquired as a person, after having been perceived, in a human context, as a doer of virtuous acts, and having had his virtue confirmed by miracles,
> having then had the efficacy of his virtue experienced and confirmed again after his death, independently of his person,
> having then been reunified with his virtue and endowed with power in a newly formed divine shape:
> all this can also be construed as a property of an object—this is what a relic can mean in and of itself.

[IV]

Having surveyed how the saint becomes a saint, both in the formulas of the canonization process and in the forms achieved on Earth and in heaven, we are faced once again with the question, what does this all mean? What drives people to see others in this way? What train of thought, what way of life, what mental disposition [*Geistesbeschäftigung*] gives birth to this world of forms, in which people become saints and objects relics and in which we speak of miracles—the world form posited by the canonization process as a hierarchical parallel to a mode of life conduct?

What is especially striking in the way a saint is—so to speak—realized is that he himself participates so little in the process.

Not that he is passive as a personality—not at all! Sometimes he is prophesied to his mother before his birth; she sees a shining light or a similar vision. And as soon as he enters into life, his entire being is centered on action. There are saints who in the cradle already join hands in prayer. As a boy, as a girl, they stand out from other children their age by virtue of their piety, their good works. And their active strength constantly manifests itself later; they are continuously in action. There are courageous saints, who confront temptations, satanic enemies, the Devil, or a heathen tyrant. There are industrious saints, who write countless godly books or who travel continuously from land to land, preaching to convert the heathen. There are saints who joyfully bear the tortures imposed on them and heroically desire worse. They are active, certainly, and yet they do not participate in the process of sanctification that begins in their lifetime and is completed in the procedure carried out by the Congregatio Rituum. We could say that although they are the principals in both trials, that of life and that of canonization, they are still tried in absentia in both.

To be more precise, we have the sense not that the saint exists in himself and for his own sake but that he is created by the community and is there for the sake of the community, first in the small circle where his deeds are observed, later for the *ecclesia universalis*, and even when he is walking among the blessed in heaven or standing above the altar, adorned with his attributes.

But what does he mean to the community?

Good and evil can perhaps always be judged but they are not measurable until they have acquired form—that of active virtue in the saint and punishable wrong in the criminal. Not until we have seen them thus in persons can we detach them, in their measurable autonomy, from their vehicles: saints and criminals are thus *persons in whom good and evil instantiate themselves in a particular way*.

This is the reason the community does not ask how the saint feels when he is being pious, when he acts, when he suffers. To the community he is in this sense not a man like other men; rather, he is a means of seeing virtue objectified, objectified to the highest degree, to the point of becoming divine power. This is why the saint is absent from his own trial, why we have witnesses and

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yet more witnesses voicing their conviction, as representatives of the community, that the objectification occurred, that it was confirmed by miracles—witnesses whose conviction is then certified as correct by the ecclesiastical authorities.

What is gained by virtue's becoming measurable, palpable, in this way? How exactly does virtue objectify itself in the saint?

Here we arrive at what will show us the *mental disposition* that forms the saint. We can do good and evil without knowing precisely how we are to be evaluated, how we are to be judged in so doing. Not until virtue has become measurable, tangible, palpable, not until it stands before us, unconditionally and without qualification, in the saint, do we have a reliable standard. For us the saint brings to consciousness what we would like to do, to experience, and to be on the road to virtue. He himself is this road to virtue; we can follow the saint.

To characterize the mental disposition that gives rise to what I am calling a form—in this case, the form *legend*—I find myself obliged to introduce code words: words that do not fully "signify" but that "suggest," words that only indicate a direction.

Since neither of the German words *folgen* ["follow"] and *nachahmen* ["imitate"] suffices to indicate this direction, I will resort to the Latin word *imitatio*, commonly used in the Middle Ages.

Etymologically, *imitor* is connected with *aemulus* = *nacheifernd* ["emulating"] (*aemulor*, to seek to equal) and with *imago* = *Abbild* ["image, likeness, copy"]. Alongside the etymology, however, we have the concept *Eindeutung* ["a sharing of the sense of an experience in empathy"]. Thus did the Middle Ages bring *imitari* into connection with *immutare*: to be transformed in such a way that one enters into something else.

The saint, in whom as a person virtue instantiates itself, is a figure in whom his immediate and extended environment experiences *imitatio*. He represents in actuality that which we can seek to emulate, and at the same time he provides proof that insofar as we imitate him, the activity of virtue is actually happening. Being at the highest stage of virtue, he is unattainable, yet in his objectivity he remains at the same time within our reach. He is a shape in whom we perceive, experience, and recognize something that appears to us universally worthy of being striven for and who at the same time allows us to visualize the possibility of practice—in short, he is, in the formal sense, an *imitabile*.

From the saint, whose development we have surveyed so precisely, our eye turns to the world that formed him in his specificity. We look about the Middle Ages and find the same pattern everywhere. On a steep rise there stands a church, and the path leading to it is divided into fourteen stations. Each station signifies a particular stage in the Passion of Christ. The pious man follows this road, and at each of these stations he experiences the scorn, the scourging, the bearing of the cross. He experiences them not only as a reminder of things that happened—he experiences them literally, he enters into them, he participates in the Passion, he too is scorned, scourged, he helps to carry the cross. To the degree humanly possible, he enters into a union with the inimitable; he becomes an *aemulus Christi*; in the church up above, which is in turn an *imago Christi*, he is taken up into Christ. A pilgrimage to a site where a saint lies buried or is represented by a relic is nothing other than an actual repetition of the path to sanctity—naturally, to the degree this is possible for a nonsaint. If at the end of the journey the saint should grant what the pilgrim has traveled to him in the hope of obtaining—for example, being cured of a disease—this happens because the pilgrim has, in a limited sense, become the saint.

The Crusades also have this sense of a pilgrimage. They undoubtedly have some connection to the great Germanic

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displacements of peoples by which the Occident was formed; they are as much migrations as the later voyages of discovery. But they differ from both the earlier and the later migrations by virtue of their imitative character, which reveals itself both in their aim and in their means. Whether directed toward the East, toward Spain, or toward Palestine, they stand in the sign of the imitation of Christ: "and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" is the motto. The knights sew the cross on their shoulders and in the grand, martial style make a pilgrimage whose final goal is the greatest relic of all, the grave of Christ, which in turn signifies Christ himself.

We can understand the highest actions and persons of Christianity in this manner, without exhausting their religious significance: the Eucharist, Mary, and Jesus himself. Certainly, Jesus means more besides this, but he is also the "highest saint," whose *aemuli* are the other saints. And the events in the life of Jesus can in turn be understood imitatively, if one comprehends this life, as the Gospel of Matthew does, as the fulfillment of an earlier one—if one says, "Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying . . . ," or if one regards these events in the New Testament as repetitions of events in the Old Testament, seeing, for example, the sacrifice on the cross as prefigured by Abraham's sacrifice.

We would come face to face with a large piece of the world of the Middle Ages if we were to demonstrate in detail how deeply the mental disposition of *imitatio* is embedded in the life of medieval humanity, this disposition of *aemuli*, of *imagines*, that in no way restricts itself to religious life. And it is always the case that in a person, a thing, an action, another completes itself, objectifies itself in them—and that, in becoming objective, this new person or thing or action gives others the possibility of entering into and being absorbed by it.

[V]

Now, this form that realizes itself in life also realizes itself in language. We have the *saint*, we have his *relic*, we have his *legend*: we have the *person*, we have the *thing*, we have *language*. This mental disposition, this world of *imitatio*, fulfills itself in all three.

In the Christian Occident, the legend has a closed form, thanks to the care with which the ecclesiastical authorities observed and interpreted the entire process hierarchically. It recounts the life of the saint, or—to speak broadly—his history: it is a vita.

As a linguistic form, however, this vita must proceed so that it corresponds in every way to events in the life—that is, so that in it this life once again fulfills itself. It is not enough to record events and actions; the vita must permit them to achieve the form in which they can be properly *realized*. For readers or listeners, the vita must represent precisely what the life of the saint represents; it must itself be an *imitabile*. This is why, in this vita, the life of a man looks different from how it looks in what we call a "historical" biography. In such a biography—and we shall have to say later what we mean by "historical" in relation to questions of form—we tend to understand the life of a man as a continuum, as a movement that flows from a beginning to an end and in which everything that follows has a relation to things that precede it. If the saint's vita were to follow that pattern, it would not achieve what it sets out to do. Its task is to realize the process by which virtue becomes active and to show how the activity of virtue is confirmed by a miracle. Here the overall context of human life is unimportant; important are only the moments in which the Good instantiates itself.

The vita, the legend in general, decomposes the "historical" into its component parts; it fills these components with the value of imitability and rebuilds them in a sequence determined by its logic. The legend is com-

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pletely unfamiliar with the historical in this sense; it knows and recognizes only virtue and miracles. Where the saint is not a means of seeing virtue instantiated, where he cannot be valued as an *imitabile*, there he is not a saint, and there the linguistic form that represents him as a saint simply cannot grasp him. [. . .]

Language would not be language and linguistic form not linguistic form if that which happens in life could not be fulfilled independently in the form. The linguistic form thus not only is capable of representing the life of a saint in a commensurate way but also *makes* saints.

Having surveyed the process of sanctification in life and linguistic form, I would like to dig deeper and illustrate, with an example, how a form—*legend*—becomes, and is, language.

[VI]

We read in old acts of the martyrs roughly the following:

A man descends from a Christian family living in a western district of the Roman Empire at the end of the third century; he enlists in the Roman army, achieves distinction in war, and rises to the highest ranks of the military. The emperor resolves to persecute the Christians, those around him agree with him, and only this man opposes him. The emperor, furious, has him taken prisoner and tortured on a wheel with sharp blades. A voice from heaven calls out to the tortured one, "Fear not, I am with you," and a heavenly apparition in white garments reaches out its hand to him. Many people convert, including some of his fellow soldiers. He is tortured anew, new miracles occur. He is led into the temple of Apollo and is obliged to offer a sacrifice to the god. But he says, "Will you accept sacrifices from me?" while making the sign of the cross. Thereupon a voice answers from the image of the god, "There is no god apart from the god that you preach." The martyr says, "Then how dare you remain in my presence? Go and pray to the true god." From the mouth of the idol there escapes a wild and heartrending howl, and the images explode into pieces. The Christian is beaten and tortured again by the pagan priests and finally beheaded by order of the emperor.

The above is clearly a report of active virtue, miracles, a saint. We shall set beside this report—which reproduces schematically what we find, with minor variations, in many acts of the martyrs—a short overview of the contemporary events out of which it emerged and to which, in its fashion, it corresponds.

We find ourselves in the era of Diocletian's persecution of the Christians. Diocletian, who sees in the growing Christian community a threat to his extensive reorganization of the Roman Empire, decides in 303, pressed by those around him, to issue severe decrees criminalizing the adherents of Christianity. Christians, however, are to be found in all circles, even among the highest officials of the army and the court; we know that the *praepositus cubiculi* Dorotheus and his comrade Gorgonius were executed. It goes without saying that the more courageous among the Christians oppose the emperor. The church historian Eusebius tells how in Nicomedia, where the persecution began, a higher official, whose name he withholds, tore down the posted edict while deriding it. In all parts of the empire there follow arrests, torture, executions; these continue under Diocletian's successors, Galerius and Maximinus Daja. Churches are burned to the ground, church property confiscated. Thousands break away from the church, though many remain faithful. But even before the death of Diocletian, who abdicates in 305, Constantine intervenes. In 313 comes the toleration edict of Milan; by 325 the first council of Nicea is under way. Christianity has won, and the Roman state religions are disappearing.

Let us observe further in what special way our report emerged from these events, in what special way it corresponds to these events, to these proceedings, to these facts, so

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that we can gather that what we have named by the neutral word *report* must in reality be called a *legend*.

The complex phenomenon of the persecution, imprisonment, and torture of Christians is summarily characterized and expressed, reduced to a common denominator. It is called *a wheel with sharp blades*. The contrast, running through all social circles and levels of rank, between the variety of the Roman state religions and the unitary new religion is called *the martyr is led into the temple with many idols*. The resistance of the Christians is called *he speaks to the false gods; they answer and submit to him*. The uselessness of the persecutions and the victory of Christianity are called *the idols explode*. When the Christian survives the persecution and the torture, it is called *a heavenly voice calls to him* or *a heavenly apparition in white garments reaches out its hand to him . . .*

It is as if the variety and multiplicity of the events condensed and formed themselves, as if events of the same kind were stirred up together and then rearranged in the vortex so that they issued in a concept, described a concept. When one says *a wheel with sharp blades*—well, it is not entirely clear how one might torture a person with that, but it is impossible to express the concept of all mental and physical tortures put together better than with the phrase *a wheel with sharp blades*. How much is implied in a *god that explodes*!

But what happens in this process of recomposition? What divides that which has occurred into units that are somehow not further divisible and imbues these units with meaning? What reaches selectively into the vortex of events and binds these events to concepts? It is language; this *wheel with sharp blades*, this *god that explodes* are linguistic formations, linguistic images. A process occurs in which the two functions of language—pointing to something [*Auf-etwas-hinweisen*] and representing something [*Etwas-darstellen*]—are combined. There occurs a sudden coincidence and a complete intermerging of intending [*meinen*] and signifying [*bedeuten*].

We thus see a repetition, at a second level, of a process that first fulfilled itself when language itself took shape. Language jells with the event units into a first, rudimentary literary form. Something is born for a second time that will be born once again on a third level when, in a singular and unrepeatable process, the form will congeal into an artwork, into an artist's creation, and thus reach its definitive fulfillment.

Hence, where under the sway of a mental disposition the variety and multiplicity of being and of events condense and take form, where language lays hold of events in their ultimate, indivisible units and, in linguistic formations, intends and signifies at the same time, we shall speak of the emergence of *simple form*.

It is not easy to name these creations, which we have called, up to now, "event units" [*Einheiten des Geschehens*] and which are registered by language. Using a vague terminology, literary history tends, where it touches on these things without fully understanding them, to speak of *Motiven* ["motifs"]. But with this term literary historians tend also to mean given units of subject matter, or material already "preformed" in some complex in the artwork. *Motiv* is a dangerous word. *Motiv* means, first of all, motive, determinant, something that catalyzes something else. In this latter sense one could, in a pinch, use the word. Our creations certainly catalyze something, insofar as through them events become imaginable as a consequence of a mental disposition. But this is not their primary or most profound sense. This expression derives from the field of music, where *Motiv* signifies "the final characteristic unit" of an artistic formation. [Wilhelm] Scherer first used the term in this sense, in his poetics. But here we cannot accept this usage. Nietzsche defines the musical *Motiv* as "the individual gesture of the

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musical affect." Indeed, what we have called till now events grasped in concepts, charged units, is *an individual gesture of language*.

In the following, we will use the term *individual linguistic gesture*, or *linguistic gesture* for short, in this sense.

In our example the individual linguistic gestures are a wheel with sharp blades, a heavenly voice, an apparition in a white garment that helpfully extends its hand, gods that are spoken to and that submit to the sign of the cross, idols that explode, and so on.

These linguistic gestures, collected thus all together, produce not a particular saint but only some pious Christian in an era of persecution, a holy martyr in general, and so we see in a number of acts of the martyrs the same linguistic gestures recurring in the same fashion. They are, however, stored up in such a way that at any moment they can be directed and bound in a determinate manner so that they achieve a present significance. In our case what jumps out of the gestures (so to speak) into which the events of the era of Diocletian's persecution condensed is not *a holy martyr* but *Saint George*; that is to say, the gestures are organized in such a way that they become present in their totality in an individual person, that in their realization they create a particular saint.

This shows us that a form is doubly present, one mode relating to the other like a chess problem to its solution. The problem contains and presents a possibility; the solution realizes this possibility with a specific event. What we have called *legend* is at first nothing but a particular disposition of gestures in a field. What we call the vita of Saint George—exceptionally, we possess a particular term for the genre—is the realization of a possibility given and contained in the legend. Using Scholastic terminology, we could say that what is present in legend *potentialiter* is given *actualiter* in the vita. We can clarify the relation of both modes in which we perceive the form by transposing them momentarily into life. From the perspective of a certain mental disposition, a legend *had* to arise from the way Diocletian acted against the Christians; at the point where this legend became connected with a suitable personality or of its own accord created such a personality, it became the vita of that particular person.

We will see with the other forms also how necessary it is to distinguish between these two modes. I call the first *simple form*, the second *actualized* or *present simple form* [*Gegenwärtige Einfache Form*]. And I will repeat once more that I am speaking of a *simple form* where linguistic gestures—in which, on the one hand, life situations have condensed themselves in a particular way under the sway of a mental disposition and which, on the other hand, are themselves also led by this disposition to generate, create, and represent life situations—are stored up in such a way that they are able, at any moment, to take a particular direction and become meaningful in the present. In this case, where it has achieved a particular direction and has become meaningful in the present, it is an *actualized* or *present simple form*. Legend is simple form; a legend, or—as we could say—*the* vita of Saint George, is present simple form.

[VII]

Let us turn now to this particular individual saint, to Saint George, about whose historical existence nothing is known.

As a consequence of the mental disposition that we have called *imitatio*, linguistic gestures were condensed out of life events: each of the gestures was stored up in such a way that one could follow them, enter into them, and be assimilated by them. They were all arranged in such a way that they could be made present, actualized, by being joined with a personality. It does not matter whether they referred to a particular living person or whether a particular person was created by

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them. The fact is that the person who came into being meant and signified all people who had found themselves in such a situation and that this person made it possible for one to follow him. He was an *imitabile*.

That is how the soldier as Christian, the Christian as soldier, the Christian knight Saint George came into being. Wherever the two concepts warrior and Christian, the duty of courage and the duty of faith, reveal themselves together in any manner, this saint is there; he stands before us, worthy of imitation, inimitable—in short, as a figure who corresponds perfectly to the need to imitate. Thus does he make his way from late antiquity into the West. Constantine is the first to build him a church. And when—not two hundred years after Diocletian's death—armed struggle and Catholicism enter into relation in France, the militant youth appears there. The Catholic Burgundian Clotilde prevails upon her husband, Clovis, a convert to Christianity, to introduce his cult. Saint George comes personally—that is to say, his relics are carried from the Orient to Paris; now he is there, and it is as if the churches of Palestine and Byzantium had come over with him.

Slowly, at the end of the millennium and at the beginning of the new one, his shape changes. His tasks change too: he acquires new characteristics. The relation of the duty of the soldier to the duty of a Christian has changed. The warrior—who, when it was a question of coming forward as a confessor, delivered himself, suffering, to the executioner—becomes a fighter who defends his belief, who physically attacks the enemies of his faith, who defeats them. Saint George is no longer a martyr; he becomes a dragon killer and the rescuer of the virgin.

To explain this fully, we would have to set beside the reports of the acts of the martyrs, which we outlined, the other literary tradition of Saint George. This tradition is widespread and extensive; [Karl] Krumbacher recently collated it in a posthumously published treatise, *Der heilige Georg in der griechischen Überlieferung* (1911; "Saint George in the Greek Tradition"). Though the prospect is tempting, that would take us too far afield. We can only indicate the most important aspect of this remarkable phenomenon. The holy martyr, who emerged from events of the era of Diocletian as a *miles christianus* at the end of antiquity, must have already merged, at an early stage, with figures adapted, in their own way, from antiquity by a new era. The city of Lydda (in Judaea; Gk., Diospolis) was connected with Georgios at an early stage; it was said that after his birth in Cappadocia, his mother had raised him in Lydda. On the coast, not far from Lydda, lies Joppe; and in Joppe, according to Greek tradition, the hero Perseus had killed a man-eating sea monster and freed the virgin Andromeda. Thus, our martyr appears to have absorbed (several elements in the tradition suggest this), along with much else, the character of Perseus, as it was reshaped in late antiquity. Saint George, who was realized anew in the era of persecution, was at the same time the continuation and the representative—*aemulus* and *imago*—of an older figure. As such, he was now no longer a steadfastly suffering hero but an actively liberating hero. For a long time in the West, he made no use (so to speak) of this actively liberating capacity. Not until the West needs him as a knight, as a Christian warrior, does he reveal his militant powers; the old figure of Perseus returns, represented by him, newly realized in him; he shows how this knightly virtue too becomes active in him: *he kills the dragon*, *he frees the virgin*—two linguistic gestures condensed from the new events at the time of the Crusades, then just beginning.

This recasting begins soon after 1000; in the legend and in the vita, as presented by Jacobus de Voragine, it is already complete.

Now Saint George rides in advance of the Crusaders, carrying their banner. He appears to Richard the Lion-Hearted, just as the ancient gods had appeared to the heroes

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in battle. He is the savior of knights, the patron in the holy war; where soldiers march to battle, he is called upon, and he grants victory. No fewer than thirteen knightly orders place themselves in his charge, choosing him as their precursor. The best known are doubtless the Bavarian Order of Saint George and the English Order of the Garter (Edward III, 1350). Thus does he become the national patron of militant Old England during the Hundred Years' War, and the war cry is, England and Saint George!

All this together is what we will again call *legend*. It is a linguistic, literary process. Naming, producing, creating, interpreting, under the sway of a mental disposition, language forms a shape that emerges from life and intervenes everywhere in life. It does not need a work of art for the purpose: the form did not condense anywhere into an image created by an artist in a singular, nonrepeatable process; we have no epic of Saint George. Yet he is there, we can make a picture of him, and when we see his image, in which now the linguistic gesture is objectified as an attribute and he is represented with a wheel, dragon, banner, and horse, we recognize him, and to us, to the degree we need him, he is an *imitabile*, a person who concretely brings to consciousness what we would like to experience and what we must do in a particular life situation.

[VIII]

We have surveyed the development of the form that arises out of the mental disposition of *imitatio*, which we call legend, in the context in which it became completely itself and came to dominate the world. For the sake of completeness, we must now survey it in other places, where it is diluted and less clearly recognizable. Let us now consider legend as a more general phenomenon.

Before we proceed with this, I would like to do something like a countercheck.

When we discussed the process of canonization, we saw that active virtue is a concept that is dependent on and complemented by a counterconcept. The opposite of virtue is crime, and the way in which virtue was ascertained resembled the way in which a crime was ascertained.

Now, if in the mental disposition of *imitatio* the saint is a figure in whom virtue becomes measurable, tangible, and palpable; who brings to consciousness for us what we would like to do, to experience, and to be on the way to virtue; and who enables us to follow virtue's example by presenting it to us as a practical standard, then in the same form there must also be figures in whom crime becomes measurable, tangible, and palpable and in whom evil, punishable wrong, is objectified in the same manner. Some figure must permit itself to be contrasted with those who are both worthy of being imitated and inimitable, a figure that we should not follow under any circumstances, one that gives us a concrete awareness of what we should not imitate. The saint must be faced with an antisaint, the legend with an antilegend.

Do such antisaintly antipodes exist? It is clear that the ordinary criminal will not suffice here; he is as little an antisaint as the man who is virtuous in the usual sense is a saint. We must see him before us, like Saint George.

One could begin with the highest by pointing to the Antichrist; the Antichrist, however, belongs as a figure originally to a different form. He represents evil in a manner unlike the one we have thus far described—not as punishable wrong, not as that which is not to be imitated. Only in the period when Christ becomes the highest saint, the ultimate *imitabile*, does the Antichrist acquire traits of unholiness, which are, however, not very pronounced.

But other figures stand beside him.

Christ carries the cross and, exhausted, stops to rest before the door of a cobbler's shop. But the cobbler pushes him away: "Go!"

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The Savior answers, "From now on you shall walk without rest." And it comes to pass. From then on, the cobbler wanders from land to land, without pause, without rest—even the rest of death, the *requies aeterna*, for which one asks God, is denied him. Wherever he goes, he presages trouble.

This is a counterpart to the legend, in every way.

Here a life situation—that many could accept the new doctrine but nonetheless reject it—condenses itself into a linguistic gesture. It is called *the Savior, weary of bearing the cross, rests; the Jew says, Go!* The fact that punishable wrong has become active, that it is objectified in this Jewish cobbler, is confirmed—*quod a deo fit praeter causas nobis notas*—by a miracle. It would not have been a miracle had this man been compelled, like other sinners, like Judas himself, to atone for his wrong in hell; the miracle is that he does not die, that he continues to wander, living eternally, in the sight of all. Just as in the process of canonization, this miracle is confirmed by witnesses: he has been seen here, he has been there, this person spoke to him, that one has heard tell of him. Just as in the saint active virtue becomes beneficial power, so in the Wandering Jew does punishable wrong become a baneful power; naturally, not a power one calls on him for, and not a power that he can grant as the saint can, but nonetheless a power: wherever he appears, plague, war, and calamity follow.

The attitude of scholars, of humanists, who, with a greedy thirst for and an overbearing pride in knowledge, attempted to fathom everything, even that which is unfathomable, and whom one suspects of having strayed from Christian humility and from submissiveness to God's decrees is condensed into the shape of Doctor Faust and actualizes itself with the linguistic gesture *alliance, pact with the Devil*. The Devil is, of course, the representative of evil—he is evil itself—but he is not the one who gives us the objectification of punishable wrong; he is not the realization of that which is not to be imitated. On the contrary, in a certain sense we must admit that he is within his rights. After all, he is the Tempter, the Devil. But Faust is the antisaint, the bringer of ill fortune, whose magic money transforms itself into muck, who performs further inverted miracles, whom dozens of people have seen and have spoken to, and who in the end does not die as other people do but is taken instead by the Devil himself.

Thus, we could compile a calendar of the great antisaints, among whom were counted, in an earlier age, Simon Magus and later Robert the Devil, Ahasverus, Faust, the Flying Dutchman, Don Juan, the count of Luxemburg. They too are there; they too stand before us as Saint George did before the Crusaders—only here the *imitatio* is transformed into its opposite. All of them are attested to; the countermiracles are pinpointed geographically in every case.

And next to the great stand the small. Just as the saint first appears in a small circle, so also can the unsaintly appear and remain in a small circle. From a certain point onward, crime can be instantiated in a criminal as active wrong; it can be detached from him and then reconnected with him. Then he becomes condensed into a form, the linguistic gesture lays hold of him, and the wrong that has become active in his person remains alive, even after as an individual he has completed his sentence or been executed. He is no longer there, and yet he *is* there: he walks about, he haunts, he brings trouble, he is geographically bound to the scene of his crime. People avoid these places—a regular reversal of the pilgrimage. He receives his relics, the stone where he murdered, the wheel on which he was broken, the instruments with which he was executed. His prison, his cell are named after him, just as the church is named after the saint.

In the mental disposition of inverted *imitatio*, punishment itself is in many respects an inverted miracle. Gallows, wheel, and execu-

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tioner's sword are confirmations that wrong has become active, that it has objectified itself in someone unholy. This is why at an execution it is not the criminal that is primarily targeted but rather the crime, which here too is conceivable and was conceived as detached from the individual who committed it.

We have to keep this in mind to understand a series of cruel and more or less symbolic punishments or forfeits known to us from the Middle Ages, as well as the crowds that attended their execution. To our modern sensibility, these punishments or forfeits affect a person and are evaluated as actions performed by people against people. This is why we find them cruel. In the world of *imitatio*, neither the punished nor those punishing are "people" in this sense. In the punished, wrong has objectified itself as a crime—the fact that this has occurred is confirmed by the punishment, as we have said: by an inversion of the miracle. In a time as preoccupied as ours with the concept of the death penalty, this is perhaps worthy of mention.

There are only a few places where we cannot, even today, find traces of such local antisaints, and wherever we find them they belong to legend; they are born of this mental disposition. From the perspective of this mental disposition, they make us conscious of what we should avoid doing, what we prefer not to experience, in a particular life situation.

The Catholic Church has not established any procedure that corresponds to the process of canonization either for the great antisaints or for the small ones. The unsanctification was performed unofficially in the community by means of language, which normally led to legends and very seldom to vitae. And where there was a legend, it often transformed the characters so that they remained within the mental disposition of *imitatio* but were marked with a different valence.

The saint's life too knows such transformations. It is not rare for a saint to begin his life as an antisaint; indeed, it is almost the surest sign that virtue has become active by God's grace that one who begins by murdering his father and mother or living in incest nonetheless ends his days, like Gregorius, as a saint. It may be that these are the saints who stand closest to ordinary mortals.

Where the vita of an antisaint arises, it sometimes produces a similar transformation, if in a different sense—Rinaldo Rinaldini, Fra Diavolo, Schinderhannes lose their noxious character and cease to represent a crime.

The same thing can happen when in a work of art such a figure achieves new fulfillment: when Goethe's Faust becomes Faust II.

This shows us that the simple form, where it is present, by this token forfeits something of its essential character. Methodologically—that is, when we define literary forms—this means it is best to grasp them not where they have become fixed in a certain direction but where they are wholly themselves: as simple forms. [. . .]

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