

terrible scourge liable to loose the basest passions in man. As such it must be avoided and proscribed by all legitimate means. Sincere realization of this truth seems to be the source of a variety of attempts, direct and indirect, to outlaw war. The motive is certainly laudable, as is also the end desired. But neither the one nor the other is a justification for employing specious or fallacious arguments.

Therefore, even though war be at times a necessary means to restore peace, it ought never to be forgotten that peace is the fruit not of war and its treaties, but of charity and justice. Wars will never be exiled by proscription, but by the eradication of antecedent injustice: in the words of Pius XII, *pax opus justitiae*—peace is the function of justice.

Imitation and the Object of Art

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IF WE are honest with ourselves and bring our entire knowledge of fine art to our philosophical speculations about it, there is an initial difficulty in treating of imitation which it would seem impossible to overcome. For imitation must have to do with form, and form is precisely that by which we know, that principle of material things which can be introduced into our minds, the intelligible element in the world about us. And yet, if we take the instance of a piece of music, as, for example, Mendelssohn's E-minor violin concerto—but it must be something that we know thoroughly—and examine that which makes it a *one thing*, we find that, while we know the music in an act which we are certain is intellectual, the wholeness and completeness of the work, when we try to put our finger on it, when we try to name it, is and will always remain unexpressible in philosophical statement. It is entirely true that the only way to *know* our concerto is to listen to it. It will not do merely to be told about it. Criticism will help prepare us to know the whole thing, but it can never give it to us.

What is true of music in this sense is true of all the other fine arts.¹ What is it that makes a play of Shakespeare's *one*? What is it that we take away with ourselves when we have seen *Othello* beautifully performed? It is a one thing, somewhat variable for different individuals, but approaching more and more to a definite and unvariable one thing for individuals whose perception and discrimination (what I mean is simply taste, but this word has suffered dry rot) are more and more trained.

And yet, since form is in itself entirely cognoscible, and since we signify forms that we know by means of words, why is it that this thing which is a work of fine art defies adequate expression in any other than an artistic medium? If a work of fine art as a whole—and that is ultimately the only way we can consider it—is an imitation in the sense that it is an expression of a form, and if we must know the form in order to express it, why can we not

express it, as we do other things, by a proper word? There is not this difficulty about the products of the useful arts. What architects and carpenters make can very satisfactorily be divided into houses, or hotels, or filling stations. If it is said that, similarly, what Millet painted was men, one may counter by asking what it was that the orchestra played. We have no specific words to answer with. It did not play horses, or clouds, or paved streets. We can name the selection, but that is mere pointing. We cannot assort musical creations in function of their final causes in the way that we can assort houses, hotels, and filling stations—the creations of the useful arts. Division into waltzes, minuets, and mazurkas is not the same kind of thing, and comes as something extrinsic to that which we have known when we have heard a number played with which we are entirely familiar. Of course, we can say that the orchestra played sounds. But if we gave this kind of answer to the question, What did Millet paint? we would have to say that he painted colors. Similarly, Shakespeare wrote words (or Maurice Evans speaks words, makes motions). But answers like this are not what we want, and, if we take ourselves back to music to make clear the nature of the problem posed by the question, What did Millet paint? we find that we can only answer, "Come and see." As for the men—well, it is obvious that he used them as instruments to help convey what he wanted to convey.²

A Difficulty with "Form"

Hence we must repeat the earlier question, If a work of fine art is an imitation of form, and if we can signify forms that we know by means of words,³ why is it that this thing which is a work of fine art defies adequate expression in anything other than an artistic medium? For our answer we must examine the way in which it imitates form and the kind of form it imitates.

This is not intended to be a disquisition upon what Plato or Aristotle meant by imitation as applied to fine art, or a

¹ Music is in itself the best basis for such a discussion as the present, since what we may call its matter is not meaningful: the notes do not stand for concepts. But it would seem that poetry or drama, though discouragingly fecund in already meaningful material, are, as a matter of fact, better for extrinsic reasons: more persons respond adequately to them than respond adequately to any music which demands a really precise response.

² Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 202.

³ Cf. Aristotle *Poetics* 4. 1448b. This passage can be understood in the sense that the pleasure in contemplating a work of fine art is a cognitive one, rather than in the sense that the essential value of a painting lies in knowing whom it represents.

discussion of the related question as to why the Greeks called what we call fine arts "imitative arts" (τέχνη μιμητική).⁴ But let us start with the fact that at least a vague notion of imitation has established itself in the philosophico-aesthetic tradition of the Western world. Now until fairly recently Scholastic investigators were little concerned with a formal aesthetic, but by this time they have worked the field so well that we are in a position to see whether there is a deeper and more fundamental meaning to imitation than is ordinarily given it. It may be that someone can demonstrate that such a meaning was likewise Aristotle's. That we would not question, certainly not without investigation, for besides his philosophical astuteness, Aristotle brought to the fine arts a keenness, freshness, and delicacy of perception which is rare enough in an age as brow-beaten as ours is—with the dishonest and make-believe attitudes of a world dominated by advertising.

The Point of Departure

The present discussion is advanced rather to indicate the existence of a problem which is basic for a philosophy of art⁵ than to propose a too definitive solution. Our point of departure must remain that which constitutes the work of fine art as we know it when we know it most thoroughly: to take a particular instance, that particular something that we take away with us from a performance of *Othello* and which we do not know from any other play, but from *Othello* alone. This thing is the very heart of the work, and literary or artistic criticism, as well as philosophical discussion of a work of fine art, which is not concerned in some way with this kind of thing could as well be written off the books.⁶ We must not allow our discussion to become entangled in the more proximate truths which the words of such a play represent to us: the truths of the individual judgments which make up the actors' speeches, or even the truth which is the story itself, but we must cling to this deeper principle of unity which makes the work a one.

The present treatment concerns only the cognoscitive question and prescind from the appetitive problems, rational or sensory, for it looks primarily to the being and truth of this ultimate, and to the good only in so far as truth itself can be considered good in being the object of the natural appetite of the intellect.

The distinctive kind of act whereby we apprehend this one that is the play or picture or piece of music Gilby has called "poetic experience," which he describes as "knowl-

edge that seems in immediate contact with the real."⁷ Waiving in our present treatment a discussion of this description, we can note with the same author the fact that this particular kind of knowledge can come not only from a work of art, but from something in nature as well. Not that it can be had as often from the latter, nor as consistently (though even in the case of works of art it is not had with perfect consistency at every attempted contemplation); but, for all that, it is quite possible that, in contemplation centering about a particular sunset, I can have a knowledge which I recognize as the kind of knowledge that is distinctive also of works of fine art.

We must honestly face the fact that the object of this kind of knowledge which I may try to reproduce in a work of art in order that poetic knowledge of it may be more easily and certainly had, remains unnamed in the process. I am not trying merely to convey knowledge of a sunset, for the way to convey that knowledge, even knowledge of this particular sunset, would be to write a scientific disquisition upon it. Yet, if I have a trained sensibility, the whole which I know and wish to reproduce will come to me as something very definite, but in itself unnamed and unnamable—capable of only a kind of analogous reproduction by means of scientific (philosophical) language, and properly rendered only in an artistic medium. This is why, to know the meaning of a poem, we must read and reread the poem: this process alone can give it to us. Criticism will help by supplying analogies. It will never reproduce the work itself.

Similarity of Activity: Imitation

But in any event, this thing which is the artistic whole, elusive as it may be in scientific expression, is a thing which is met with originally in nature. From nature the same characteristic kind of knowledge is had.⁸ Thus the work of art, even with reference to its own elusive wholeness, in the completeness of its activity, inasmuch as it is capable of exciting the kind of knowledge which we have called "poetic," does something which nature can and does (sometimes) do, and to produce it is in the last analysis to imitate nature since nature has produced similar things.

Now form is the principle of distinctive activity in things, and is co-extensive with their cognoscibility by beings which are moved from potency to act in the order of cognition. Hence, an explanation of the nature of the existent, whether natural or artificial, which is known in the way described must be given in terms of form. And here precisely, as has been mentioned above, lies our diffi-

⁴ S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 121.

⁵ Some important aspects of this problem have been given an excellent summary treatment by Albert J. Steiss, "Outline of a Philosophy of Art," the *Thomist*, II (1940), 14-58, though his discussion of logical and ontological truth is not quite clear. Here, however, we are concerned principally with the aspect of imitation.

⁶ Cf. Charles Morgan, "The Nature of Dramatic Illusion," *Essays by Divers Hands*, ed. R. W. Macan (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), XII (new series), 61-77. The better critics, such as Coleridge and Mr. T. S. Eliot, have at least implicitly concerned

themselves with this ultimate, though, for want of a philosophical explanation of what this thing is, they have been handicapped. A philosophy of being alone can give the answer, and in the absence of such a philosophy, discussion of this ultimate is likely to bring Scholastic philosophers to level charges of anti-intellectualism, emotionalism, and the like against the critic.

⁷ Thomas Gilby, *Poetic Experience* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1934), p. 11.

⁸ That is, given the proper conditions. Steiss (*op. cit.*, p. 40) cites mountain climbing as an activity where the proper conditions are often found.

culty; we have names for the forms we know. Why not then for this form? The most common attempt to explain away the difficulty is by resort to a theory of "idealization." Certainly, if we say that art idealizes in the sense that it manages to represent, let us say, a horse on canvas which is somehow or other a *better* horse, a more perfect manifestation of "horseness" than an ordinary flesh-and-blood horse in three dimensions, we will find ourselves involved in difficulties,⁹ and when we come to treat of music, "the most imitative of the arts," we will have to own defeat.¹⁰ A musical selection would represent precisely a better what?¹¹ If we say that art idealizes in the sense that it gives us forms which are more easily detachable from their individuating matter than they are in nature, we are in a much more defensible position. But, since "idealization" has at least an etymological connection with the word "idea" and the loose and colloquial "ideal," it is subject to certain torsions which make it a clumsy instrument of speech in philosophical discussion, and we will not use it here.

In considering the question of form with relation to the human intellect, we must remember that the intellect of man is potentially all things: it can be actuated by the forms which actuate other beings. Thus there is a thirst in the human intellect for knowledge and for as much knowledge as it can lay hold on. Only in the act of knowing can this thirst, or natural appetite, be perfectly satisfied.

Further, the proper and proximately proportioned object of the human intellect is sensible being; formally considered, the object is the quiddity of sensible things. It is from the wells of sensible being that the human intellect must slake its thirst for knowledge. But, because of the infra-cognoscible condition in which such being exists, the intellect must attain to a knowledge of it through abstracted forms.

Explanation of Similarity of Activity

Now it is drawn strongly toward as complete actuation by these forms as is possible. But actual logical truth, the truth existing in the mind, is often unsatisfactory because, materially considered, it exists in varying grades of perfection. The intellect is directed to a knowledge of all being, and finds itself knowing it only piecemeal. It knows the horse is black, but it does not know how much he weighs, nor what his pedigree is, nor whether he placed in the last race. The things it knows, even about any given individual, are disappointingly few when compared with the things it is capable of knowing even about the same individual. Hence, if the intellect is confronted with a situation accidentally prepared in nature or calculatingly

set up by an artist in which objects of sense, from which it naturally works, are presented to it in a way or under conditions that will facilitate the knowledge of very many forms almost simultaneously,¹² it is to be expected that a special joy would issue somehow from the resulting unusually full exercise of its own particular kind of activity, especially if the forms proposed to it can be inter-related and thus made to explain one another.

Furthermore, since the intellect ultimately desires to know not forms, but things, individuals, supposites, wholes, and since it can refer the universal to the individual only by bringing in some kind of sense-reference—*This man* (pointing) *is tall*—it is to be expected that this joy, to be full, would have to involve in some way the senses, not only as giving satisfaction in their own proper exercise, but as supporting the activity of the intellect.

Such a situation as here pictured for an unusually full exercise of the intellectual powers will be found to exist in those instances which Gilby cites as "knowledge that seems in immediate contact with the real."¹³ Each substance, or supposite, provides for contemplation not only its substantial form, but also a manifold of accidental forms and, indirectly, other substantial forms, each of which, as it becomes known, assimilates a greater body of truth to the intellect—brings it about that the manifold of forms in the mind approaches more and more to the limit which is the whole of existent truth presented to it at the time. When I have poetic knowledge in the presence of a beautiful sunset, the working about in this total manifold is intimately connected with the kind of pleasure which is characteristic of "poetic experience."¹⁴ For one reason or another, the particular situation in which I find myself has lent itself to easy cognoscibility, and to a kind of concentrated cognoscibility. The mind is busied in knowing, for example, in establishing relations: the significance of this particular shade of blue, the multiplicity of things to which this red, this cloud-shape is related. There is a riot of truths, of forms which are stimulating the intellect to an intensity of activity which it cannot always enjoy. And, beyond a doubt, there are certain bodily dispositions which condition this extremely active functioning of the intellect. An apple pie with too much of the wrong kind of cheese can easily interfere.

Thus, in the course of natural events themselves, situations will arise in which the intellect finds itself confronted with an existent or with existents which provide it with a great number of forms which, for one reason or another, it can easily abstract from the concomitant matter and thereby know. It would seem that in the case of the peculiar kind of knowledge designated as "poetic experience" the manifold of these forms, the totality of the mixture itself, determines somehow that ultimate which is

⁹ Cf. Butcher's treatment, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹⁰ Butcher (*op. cit.*, p. 129) admits that we cannot test the truth of music by concordance with any original. But should not a theory which purports to explain what the Greeks meant by "imitation" apply to what they regarded as the *most imitative* (Butcher, *op. cit.*, p. 129) of the arts, namely, music?

¹¹ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas *In I Perih.*, lect. 7, on the two ways of using words.

¹² See Steiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33, for a well worked out example of how this can come about.

¹³ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁴ The relation of this kind of activity to the traditional *splendor veritatis* and "unity in variety" cannot be developed here. It appears rather evident.

known. This is why I cannot adequately tell another what I have had knowledge of under a certain set of circumstances merely by stating, "I saw a beautiful sunset," for it is not merely "sunset" which I have apprehended but many truths which gravitated around this particular sunset. If I wish another to share in my knowledge, I must produce a thing in which he can himself find the concentrated manifold, this particular *splendor veritatis*, and that is precisely what I do in creating a work of fine art. Thus it is not quite correct to say that my purpose, to take a particular instance, is the reproduction of a sunset; if we look to the process itself, we will recognize the fact that the end is not conceived under the aspect of a single concept such as this. Surely the sunset is included in what I wish to create; it may even be a kind of focal point; but it is by no means all that I wish to do. It is not quite accurate to say that my purpose is essentially to paint a sunset, and accidentally to draw in by connotation many other truths. But in this particular sense, we must conclude, the fine arts imitate nature; they produce a thing constructed of a manifold of forms, a truth arising out of a richness of truths, enabling the mind in a very imperfect way to approximate the ultimate knowledge of all truth for which it is destined.¹⁵

It is quite right to say that the forms are more eminent, more easily abstracted, in a work of art, at least by virtue of our acquiescence to the illusion. The artist has deliberately catered to our capabilities and calculatingly seeks to bring out certain forms which he knows will produce the desired effect and to suppress others which are irrelevant. He need not, of course, and cannot do all this with full consciousness of all the means he is using; he judges by the effect and by a kind of experimentation whether the work is properly done or not.

It will be noted that the present explanation has no direct recourse, as far as it goes, to a mystical knowledge nor to a close analogy with mystical knowledge.¹⁶ Certainly in the case of poetic knowledge of natural things there is a more than ordinary contact with truth, and reference to the individual is prominent by reason of the concomitant activity of the senses. Likewise in poetic knowledge there is a single reality which is cognized. It is precisely this thing that is the imitation in the case of fine arts: just as in nature real substances provide us the wherewithal for abstraction and a synthesis, so in a work of fine art a quasi-substance provides us the wherewithal for a kind of abstraction and a synthesis.

But direct and unabstracted knowledge of this thing is

¹⁵ Steiss (*op. cit.*) develops this explanation. Cf. also Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁶ For various stands on this question see: Henri Bremond, *Prayer and Poetry*, trans. Algar Thorold (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, Ltd., 1927), pp. 106 ff. and *passim*; Gilby, *op. cit.*, pp. 59ff.; Steiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 24.

another question, which cannot be considered here. We may note that it is at least debatable how much the thing is really "felt" as singular; i. e., whether the singularity enters into this act any more than it does in any activity involving a strong inclination of the will. Further, as has been shown, inexpressibility outside an artistic medium may be due to accidental uniqueness as well as to unabstracted knowledge.

Corollaries

In the light of the present discussion several interesting phenomena can be explained. For instance, our explanation helps us to understand how it is that persons with trained sensibilities will to all intents and purposes each get the same thing from, let us say, Hindemith's *Kleine Kammermusik*: their training enables them to get the composer's exact references in all their richness, delicacy, and definiteness of relations. Two such persons who know the work thoroughly can talk about it in the necessary analogies and be sure that each knows what the other is speaking of. Further, our explanation throws light on the value of metaphor in poetry; metaphor, which not only states a similarity between two objects, but allows the mind to establish a multiplicity of bases for this similarity. Our explanation serves to explain the necessity of a rich tradition for a great work of art and the difficulties under which the serious artist labors today. It serves to explain the effectiveness of certain kinds of ambiguity in poetry (double or multiple reference).

There are further problems with which the present discussion does not concern itself. For instance, what is the fuller nature of this accidental whole that is created? Why and how does it lend itself to poetic knowledge? What is the nature of the act by which it is apprehended? The present discussion is not to be interpreted to mean that in the presence of the manifold of which we have spoken the mind merely moves rapidly from one of the subordinate truths out of which it is constructed to another in successive acts. There may be more than that. Given the fact that poetic knowledge is concerned with an accidental whole constructed out of a manifold, and the further fact that works of fine art are properly denominated imitations of nature in that they produce a thing which provides the manifold of forms together with some kind of unity, what is the nature of the act whereby these things are gathered up into a complex one? It has been suggested that the act by which the work of art is perceived is a judgment in which the intellect "considers existence in the manifold and flux of the sense."¹⁷ In this event, the same explanation would evidently apply to the poetic knowledge arising from natural objects. But these matters must be left for another and a different consideration.

¹⁷ Bernard J. Muller-Thym, "Music," *Fleur de Lis* (St. Louis University), XXXVIII (Nov., 1938), 50-52.