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MARITAIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART AND POETRY

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One of the pressing problems about art in our times is the relation between art and human life. Perhaps few have expressed the question better than Ortega y Gasset, in his essay, "The Dehumanization of Art." There he points out the desire of modern art for renewal and assertion of itself as pure art, as the creation of objects of interest in their own right, and attacks in the process certain worn out preoccupations of past art. That is, past art is often determined to present us simply with the lived world and its familiar human concerns.

Paradoxically, however, this very striving for art's pure essence, with its progressive elimination of the human element, is, at the same time, a turning against the nature of art as historical. Art must possess some intelligibility, which ultimately derives from lived reality. It appears that neither an art totally devoid of human reality nor one absorbed in it, to the detriment of purely artistic values, is able to realize to any great extent all that art can be. Ortega concludes his essay by saying that objections to modern art must be "supplemented by something positive: a suggestion of another way for art different from dehumanization and yet not coincident with the beaten and worn out paths."¹

Perhaps the alternative to complete dehumanization which

Ortega seems to be inviting can actually be found exemplified in the creative advances to be discovered in modern artists themselves. The work of some of these artists while dehumanized to the extent that it is of interest in and for itself, and for the aesthetic values it displays is profoundly human in another way, which gives it a richness and depth of meaning not to be had by mere copying either of past art or of human realities. In other words, the meanings attach to the works themselves and not to the real world. I shall call this property of works of art to be objects of interest in their right, or focal points of meaning, autonomy.

Certainly, Jacques Maritain thought that modern art could be both human and creative, or autonomous; and his philosophy of art, with the epistemology and metaphysics it presupposes, is an attempt to give a philosophic account of it. We can think of his philosophy as looking to a kind of middle way in art. In his view, there will be art - that is, fine art at its best - a measure of dehumanization, and, with it, autonomy and creativity. At the same time, this tendency will never be totally fulfilled. The human element will be present also, perhaps radically transformed, and not as reality to be copied or as a stimulus to the emotions of daily life felt for such realities.

To develop this notion, let us look first of all to some things Maritain has to say about art, any art, whether useful or fine art. We shall see that art essentially tends toward autonomy, and, thus, toward a kind of dehumanization. Our inquiry will draw us rather quickly into thinking about

certain epistemological and metaphysical doctrines put forth most fully in The Degrees of Knowledge.

For Jacques Maritain, art, in its essence, is a virtue of practical intelligence. I take this to mean that it is a qualitative disposition or habitus, a kind of knowledge, sometimes in a state of virtuality and at other times fully actualized when its possessor is actually intending its object. In the case of art, the object is a work to be made well, usually a work in matter, not something to be known for the sake of knowing. Because art in its fundamental nature tends to make a thing, usually in matter, it also tends to produce something which has its own qualities and which can become independent both of artist and perceiver. This means that not only cognitive, but also operative intentions directed toward the thing made can be described as a union of person (either artist or perceiver) with the thing made, in its otherness. Thus anything produced by art broadly understood as above will possess a degree of autonomy, even works most subservient to the satisfaction of human biological needs.

As Maritain points out in Art and Scholasticism, art qua art "stands ... outside the human sphere; it has an end, rules, values, which are not those of man, but those of the work to be produced."² Even though it bears the stamp of the human who made it, the work delivers one from the human; it establishes the artifex "in a world apart." This, says Maritain, is true of all art. Consequently, to the extent that art tends to the making of a thing, it is

already dehumanized, if not in mode of operation, at least in the end it pursues.

From the standpoint of perception of the made thing, it is not a matter of perceiving that which is merely an object-before-the-mind, be it aesthetic object or any other kind of object. Jacques Maritain's epistemological realism leaves no doubt that there is no separation between thing and object in any cognitive context. As he writes in The Degress of Knowledge, objects are not given simply as objects, but, rather, as aspects of knowability in things. The thing, then, is not an I-know-not-what, but is given with the object as its meaning, a discovery we can make for ourselves through reflexive intuition. Instead of cognizing an intermediary, a presumed likeness or mental image of some real thing, I am aware of achieving the thing itself. The notion of esse intentionale provides a metaphysical explanation as to how it is that I can surpass my physical boundaries to live the other, to become the other in an immaterial way, without loss of identity on the part either of myself or of the thing known. Maritain does not hold simply that esse intentionale supervenes on the being that I have my own nature, i.e., esse naturae. To complete the explanation, he suggests in The Degrees that a quality can pass through a medium which does not in its own being possess that quality.³ This means that the perception of sounding or colored things is not simply to be accounted for by the way in which we are affected by the medium. The presence of the qualities themselves, in the medium, through an intentional mode of being, must also be considered. (One

might maintain that there is a relation between the modulation of the medium and the really existent quality, such that the latter is the meaning of the former.) One consequence of this doctrine is, of course, that the primary-secondary quality distinction so dear to the foes of realism loses its philosophic impact.

There begins to emerge here, then, a firm epistemological basis for understanding interaction, or "dialogue," between an artist and his work as a thing, he transcends his own private qualitative states and attains direct awareness of things with their own thinglike qualities - present to him as other than himself.

However, if this dialogue is actually to be such, it obviously must be bilateral. How is it that the intentions of the artist can be realized in matter? Just as purely physical accounts of light and sound fail to explain how a quality can escape the simple location it would have as entombed in matter, so also, any purely physical account of production, of efficient activity, would fail to explain how the intentions of the artist can pass into the work. That is, it would fail to explain how these intentions can pass through the body of the artist, through whatever material instruments he may be using, and how they can come to dwell with all their "intelligible brilliance," or spirituality, in the physical painting or sculpture - or, for that matter, in any product of human making. A higher or spiritual, tendential mode of being, therefore, esse intentionale, must be posited as supervenient on the physical

motions of hand and brush to explain the experience of the "spiritual values with which the picture is charged" and how they came to be present. Without a doctrine of intentional being in all its applications, a philosophy of art would have to focus on the experience of creating or perceiving certain kinds of objects considered purely as objects, and not upon real things.⁴ Such a philosophy would necessarily regard the fabrication of things as of little importance. The real creative achievement would be the attainment of a certain perception, and spectators, as well as those who are called artists, in fact, would be creating art. To think of art and its objects in that way would be to jeopardize the kind of autonomy and purity an art object would have as a really existing thing over and against its human creator and perceivers.

Thus, the epistemological-metaphysical doctrine of intentionality, including that of the operative intentionality of the lived body and its instruments, which will later occupy such an important place in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment, can explain the possibility of externalization of the artist's vision in a realm not entirely human.

So much for the first point, namely, that Maritain's philosophy does acknowledge an essential dehumanization in the workings of art, intent as art is only on the work and the proper good of the work. This tendency of art provides a basis for conceiving of any work of art as having, to one degree or another, some autonomy. At the same time, any work of art, whether in the domain of useful or of fine art,

will bear that stamp to the degree that what Maritain calls poetic knowledge is present in the work. Here, of course, we enter squarely into the realm of the fine arts.⁵

My second major point, then, will have to do specifically with the fine arts. If we considered art in general earlier, it was mainly for the light it could shed on fine art specifically, the kind of art to which Ortega was referring. I shall explore the way in which, for Maritain, art, at its best, can reflect the human, can take up into itself human meanings, without its product becoming merely a vehicle for the re-presentation of the real world. In other words, I want to examine how, for Maritain, a work of art can be both creative and autonomous and, at the same time, how it can have a richness of intelligibility which belongs to it, and not to something else which is only mirrored by the work.

Here it will be necessary to touch on what seems to me to be the very heart of Jacques Maritain's mature philosophy of art. I refer to the highly original and ingenious way in which Maritain constructs a theory of poetic knowledge out of epistemological doctrines found in the medieval schoolmen and which he elaborates in The Degrees of Knowledge.

Suppose we consider the works of art of our civilization in terms of the presence or absence in them of the human, as Ortega seems to conceive of it. That is, we will think of them in terms of the presence of signified or represented meaning. We might map out the inter-relations of these works of art, in the regard mentioned, by conceiving of them as lying along a continuum. At one extreme would be

those which have the least possible degree of human meaning - the most dehumanized work, as construed in Ortega's terms. Some of Jackson Pollock's things, or Malevich's, or much of minimalist sculpture and painting come to mind as approaching this limit. Works on this end present only themselves; they have no other meaning and can be characterized, therefore, as opaque. We could also say that they are autonomous. At the other end of this continuum are works which are completely absorbed in the human world; it is their vocation to present to us in some aspect or another this world as realistically as possible. In addition, they often strive to evoke the emotions which one would feel in daily life toward these same aspects or elements of the real world. The work of illustrators like Norman Rockwell approach this limit, as do the pretty landscapes and seascapes comprising most of what is exhibited in local New England village art-festivals. These works do not present themselves; they are not autonomous; their meaning lies entirely in something outside of them, namely, in what they represent. Using the light metaphor again, these can be characterized as transparent. They are, as Ortega puts it, like windows through which one looks.

So while the one end of the continuum is the domain of the most dehumanized art work possible, this other end is the realm of the familiar, worn out, seemingly very human kind of work, against which, as Ortega tells us, modern art has rebelled and is still rebelling.

In Jacques Maritain's view, the works of art at either extreme of the spectrum do not amount to very

much; they have very little to say to us. The products of imitation of things, whether real or ideal, are in his works, "deaf-mute melting shapes, imprisoned in themselves and mirroring nothing...." On the other hand, purely abstract art tends "of itself to the most limited form of beauty, the mute beauty, with almost no echoing power, of the best balanced objects produced by mechanical arts."⁶ In rejecting the existential world of things, abstract art, for Maritain, has unwittingly rejected poetic intuition through which alone art has something to say.

The foregoing obviously suggests that we might expect to find works of art which lie somewhere in between the extremes of our continuum. Human meaning will be available and relevant to an experience of such works as works of fine art. At the same time, these works will be ends-in-themselves, or autonomous, not mere copies or vehicles with respect to some other reality. We might characterize works in this region as translucent, rather than as either opaque or transparent. It will be in this middle region that works of art may be found to be animated by poetry, or poetic intuition, or creative intuition, and thereby may be found, as well, to speak to us with voices of their own. It is this possibility which opens up, I think, an alternative to the choices Ortega had mentioned in his essay, an alternative of the sort Ortega thought one would need to mount a criticism of the dehumanizing tendency in modern art. In fact, it will be through creative intuition that Maritain will show how a work of art can be both autonomous and humane, how it

can have qualities which have often been assumed to be incompatible.

The key to this claim lies in the role played by the creative subjectivity of the artist. In connection with art, if we are to use the word "creative" in anything but an equivocal sense, we must see the work as born out of the inner selfhood of the artist. Maritain is thinking of the way God creates, not with already existing elements, but, rather, ex nihilo and in contemplating His own essence. In the case of the human artist, however, he simply cannot bring something new, something unique, out of nothing at all. He must use pre-existent materials, meanings, images, and the like. But these will be radically transmuted, and the result will be novel, unique, creative, autonomous to the degree, in the depths of his subjectivity, that he transforms and is present in those worked-over elements.

Time does not permit going into Jacques Maritain's poetic theory in detail. I shall mention only a few of the salient features. First of all, the theory is meant as explanatory of such facts as the inexpressibility of works of fine art in concepts or sets of concepts; they cannot be summed up or adequately paraphrased. There is intelligibility in the work, however, works of fine art have an expansiveness of meaning which belongs not to things taken in isolation, but to concrete existing things, as set within the whole tissue of a world as it is felt by an artist. Maritain, in fact, refers to a work of art as a "world of its own." Artists often acknowledge these facts and add,

as well, that they themselves do not really know what the meanings are; they do not really know what they are attempting to express in advance of their having done it.

Such facts point to the involvement in fine arts of a kind of cognition through which the work has intelligibility, but not primarily of a sort that can be expressed in concepts. Instead, this "knowledge" will be more concrete. Maritain theorizes that it will have something to do with emotion and will come to expression or consciousness only in the making of a work. This "knowledge" will structure or form the work, giving it its identity or being, its uniqueness and autonomy. At the same time, this form will gather up meanings, so to speak, or intelligibilities, which derive from the world. But this knowledge or form cannot be disengaged from the feeling subject. The form of the work and object of poetic knowledge will be the self of the artist in union with things or the self as affected by things.

The germinal elements in the theory made clear from these considerations are the utilization of the Aristotelian notion of agent intellect, which Jacques Maritain espouses in such places as The Degrees, as well as Creative Intuition, and the extension of the doctrine of intentionality of consciousness in such a way as to include a type of knowledge by connaturality called poetic knowledge. This latter development appears in The Degrees and in various essays dealing with poetry.⁷

The theory of agent or illuminating intellect is

designed, as you will recall, to explain how the intelligible content of images imbued with materiality can be brought from a state of potential intelligibility to actual intelligibility in a spiritual form (species impressa) which specifies the activity of intellectual cognition in its expressing or objectifying of an intellectual vision. This inner fruit is labelled the species expressa.

In Creative Intuition, after summarizing the doctrine, Maritain refers the reader to The Degrees, where a fuller treatment of it can be found. In connection with the theory, he also goes on to develop a notion of the unconscious of the spirit. He points out that since we are not aware of illuminating intellect in ourselves, it must be there in a concealed state. The process of its illumination of the images from which concepts are drawn is also unknown to us. Moreover, he says, the images themselves from which the intelligible content of our thought is educed often "remain also unconscious or scarcely perceived in the process, at least for the most part."⁸

Having shown reasons for the existence of a preconscious or spiritual unconscious with regard to the abstractive function of intelligence, Maritain then takes perhaps the most important step in his whole theory. He writes,

Well, if there is in the spiritual unconscious a nonconceptual activity or preconceptual activity of the intellect, such a nonrational activity of reason, in the spiritual unconscious, plays an essential part in the genesis of poetry and poetic inspiration. Thus a place is prepared in the highest parts of the soul, in the primeval

translucid night where intelligence stirs the images under the light of the Illuminating Intellect, for the separate Muse of Plato to descend into man, and dwell within him, and become a part of our spiritual organism.⁹

In a footnote to this whole matter, Maritain claims that St. Thomas did not limit the role of illuminating intellect to the process of abstraction and concept formation. For Thomas, illuminating intellect is, rather, the "activator of intelligence in all its operations."¹⁰ Maritain supports this contention with references to the Questiones Disputatae de Anima and Summa Contra Gentiles.¹¹ However, these texts, as he explains, have to do only with the continuance of illuminating intellectual function in souls separate from the body, where abstraction from images does not occur. It seems to me, therefore, that to Jacques Maritain must be given the credit for seeing in this doctrine of illuminating intellect a basis for a theory of poetic knowledge.

How, then, is illuminating intellect involved in the opening up of poetic knowledge? First of all, emotion is the means by which such knowledge arises, not ordinary, blind emotion, not a depicted emotion nor an evoked thrill. Rather, it is meaning-laden feeling, bearing within it the things which have impressed this emotion on the soul, and, along with them, all the deeper, invisible things, as Maritain describes them, contained in or connected with these things which have been suffered. This preconscious emotion energizes all sorts of latent "images, recollections, asso-

ciations, feelings, and desires." In short, the emotion penetrates to some of the deepest levels of a subjectivity which is thereby "awakened," as it were, to itself. What is contained in the emotion corresponds with the soul thus affected and resounds or echoes within it.

However, none of the meaning content of the emotion arising from the singular and contingent things of the world is actually knowable unless - like abstract knowledge previously discussed - it is rendered so by the spiritualizing power of illuminating intellect. One might say that the irradiated emotion is as a species impressa to poetic knowledge. However murky the theory may become at this point, what does seem clear is that under the influence of illuminating intellect, the emotion becomes intentional, both of the things suffered and the self which suffers. Poetic knowledge is not a disengagement of the one from the other. The self is known in the experience of the world and the world known in the experience of the self through affective union. It is a kind of knowledge by connaturality.

In The Degrees, Maritain touches on knowledge by connaturality as it relates to poetry. There he stresses, it seems to me, the internal or cognitive aspects of this kind of knowledge. In later works, which focus more directly on poetic intuition, one finds a fuller development. In Creative Intuition, for example, he tells us that poetic knowledge "essentially relates to the creativity of the spirit and tends to express itself in a work."¹² The object created through poetic knowledge plays the same part in this knowledge

as concepts and judgments do in ordinary knowledge. In short, the object created is the expression or species expressa of poetic knowledge. It is only when the created work comes into existence, through this tendency or inclination toward expression, that the artist himself knows what his poetic intuition amounts to.

Here in the act of expression there is a separation between subject and object, between artist and creative work. Yet even so, creative emotion is the form of the work, which work thereby signifies a fusion between creative artist and world. The work of art becomes a world of its own, the ultimate form and meaning of which is the selfhood of the artist, even though, in a more immediate sense, it signifies the things which resound in subjectivity. (As Mikel Dufrenne will write, the apex of meaning and source of unity in a work of art is the atmosphere of a world as radiated by the arts.)¹³ One might say that in Maritain's theory the feeling self as capable of being meant by the work is the very condition for the possibility of a work of fine art as a unity, as a world of its own.

For Maritain, at any rate, because poetic intuition does not fructify in abstract, conceptual knowledge; it is free to expand through a myriad of existential connections indefinitely far-reaching, even to the Infinite. But also, since there are no parcelled-out meanings through abstraction, there is no separation of creative artist and the world as joined with him in affective union.

Several things follow from the above:

1. Since the form comes from the self of the artist, the work will be creative in a very real sense. That is, the form is not borrowed from the real world; and for this reason, the work is not merely a copy or imitation of some part of such a world. Jacques Maritain's theory, as we have already seen, is conceived in terms of an analogy with Divine creation.
2. Since the work of fine art as formed by creative intuition is not merely an imitation of the real world, it is not simply an intention of that world. It cannot be characterized metaphorically as transparent. The work has its own form and being; consequently its meanings belong to it. Rather than extending itself to point to the world, the work borrows elements of meaning from the world, which it takes up into itself.
3. Art which is vivified by poetic intuition will be human in a far deeper sense than work which is not so animated. And it is clear why this is so, since, at the intersection of art and poetry, the expression in a work of the very depths of human personhood occurs.

While a merely naturalistic work, even one depicting a human world and evoking ordinary human emotions, may be thought of as a human or humanized affair (as Ortega thinks of such a work), it actually falls short in this regard. It focuses only on things of the world, in terms of their

imitable aspects or appearances, and hence has form and meaning which is only superficial. The self is not present and neither are the existential secrets of things which are revealed only through feeling. Consequently, for Maritain, it is only when art moves away from the domination or control by naturalistic concerns, toward abstraction and distortion, toward what some might regard as dehumanization, that it can actually become truly human. It is only under such liberating conditions that the work-to-be-made is open to the movements of the free creative self, that is, of creative intuition.

Yet human artists, as we have already noted, are not gods; there is a limit to how far one can move away from naturalism. Maritain tells us that it would be a mistake to look at progress in art only as a flight from naturalism. We can now see why a completely abstract work - if such a thing were possible - would also have nothing much to say. It is for the very reason that the degree to which such a work could express the selfhood of the artist as revealed by the resounding in him of infinitely expansive reality would also be minimal.

Moreover, such a movement is not really required by the need for constant renewal in art. Poetic intuition demands to be expressed in a work, but the primary rule to which the art through which it is expressed must adhere is simply the release of free creativity, not the will to make anything of some particular type.

Works of fine art, then, exist where art and poetry

meet. There is a tension involved in that meeting of these two kinds of knowing. As works of art, things have a kind of thickness, an element of the alien, the inhuman, the totally objective, the mute and opaque. They demand from the artist-as-maker only their own good. They are, in that sense, at least, autonomous. But as receiving form through poetic intuition, works take on a very different degree of autonomy as a result of becoming subjective and humanized in the way already discussed.

The really fascinating aspect of Maritain's philosophy of art, as it proceeds from its epistemological basis, then, is the extent to which he regards these products of art and poetic knowledge as similar to and connatural with their creators. Like us, these works are things within the world, entities having an address in space and time, materiality. But, given Maritain's understanding of intentionality in its many ramifications, there is an important sense, I think, in which such human products are like us in having an interiority or subjectivity about them as well. It is not just that they are made by human subjects. The depth that they have is truly theirs; under the guidance of poetic intuition, the work with its material basis, has also become spiritualized. Its meanings dwell within it awaiting our glance. If works of fine art move us so powerfully, it is because they reflect back to us who we are. We have met artistic beauty, and it is us.

This understanding of the humanization of art is perhaps mostly what Maritain's philosophy of art and poetry is

all about. The depth of that understanding in relation to what Ortega y Gasset seems to have been working toward concerning art and its relation to the world can be attributed, in large part, to Maritain's insights in epistemology and metaphysics. Without them, the philosophy of art we have examined simply could not have been.

NOTES

1. José Ortega y Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art, Culture, and Literature, trans. Helene Weyl, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 54.
2. Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry, trans. Joseph W. Evans, (New York: Scribner, 1962), p. 9.
3. Jacques Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge, Trans. under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 93, 115. Hereafter referred to as Degrees.
4. Degrees, p. 114.
5. I have used Ortega's word "dehumanization." In trying to understand Maritain's thought about the sense in which art is nonhuman or closed off from human life, one must keep in mind the fundamental sense in which art is human or humanized. It is crucial that the ideas in the paragraph of the text here being annotated not be understood separately from another.
6. Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 20-219. Hereafter referred to as Creative Intuition.
7. Degrees, pp. 281-2.
8. Creative Intuition, p. 98, footnote 37; p. 99.
9. Creative Intuition, pp. 99-100.
10. Creative Intuition, pp. 98, footnote 37.
11. St. Thomas Aquinas, De Anima, a. 15, ad 9; Summa contra Gentiles, III, 45.
12. Creative Intuition, p. 118.
13. Mikel Dufrenne, Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience, trans. Edward S. Casey and others, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 177.

COMMENTARY ON
"Maritain's Philosophy of Art and Poetry"
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Professor Hanke shows that Jacques Maritain was "highly original and ingenious" in the way he constructed a theory of poetic knowledge out of epistemological doctrines found in medieval schoolmen. One cannot read Professor Hanke's paper or his book, Maritain's Ontology of the Work of Art,¹ without being impressed by Maritain's contribution to aesthetic speculation, even when he is not saying something "startling or new."

What is especially significant about Professor Hanke's paper is that it demonstrates Maritain's living contribution to the concrete problems of our day, because of his capacity to integrate tradition with modern realizations in a way that neither condemns the new nor consecrates it. Such an approach makes it possible to synthesize elements of truth that, in a given period, are seemingly irreconcilable. Maritain once said: "I have been riveted to the most dogmatic, keenest thought, the least capable of conciliation and softening, to a doctrine that is absolutely hard, in order to try, while contemplating our times, as they pass, not to scatter, but to take on, to reconcile."² The Thomist, according to Maritain, must defend not only the true elements of tradition against "the prejudices of minds revolutionary on principle," but also the renewal and growth of tradition against "the prejudices of minds conservative on principle."³

What is wrong about such prejudices is that the mentality supporting them thinks it need only date an idea in order to discredit it. But be the milieu art and poetry, or even politics, Maritain held that "a philosopher would be a coward who left the eternal for the changing."⁴

He also held, however, that in developing Thomism in the new ways required by modern problems, one must combat the thinking of conservatives who fail to grasp its essentially progressive nature. Such thinkers mistake the eternal for "fragments of the past" and thereby "compromise divine truths with dying forms."⁵ Although it is cowardly to let go of the eternal for the ephemeral, it is likewise cowardly to hold on to a dead past. "A coward flees backward, away from new things. The man of courage flees forward, in the midst of new things."⁶

The fundamental principles of Thomism must, therefore, be applied in new ways, "without detriment to fixity of principles" which allow for a "vital assimilation" and an "immanent progress" in the service of a living tradition.⁷

Maritain's openness to modern art is widely acknowledged. Nevertheless, because he always cautioned against the moral danger of worship of the neoteric as such, a form of worship he later called "chronolatry,"⁸ his aesthetic theory has sometimes outraged critics. Typical of their condemnation is the tone of one critic who wrote:

I find no compulsion to believe that the spiritual bottom has suddenly dropped out... Another Maritain, born after 1900 might not have closed the door so irrevocably on our brave new world.⁹

such critics have failed to appreciate Maritain's refined effort to "distinguish in order to unite."

Professor Hanke's paper exemplifies precisely the refinement of Maritain's contribution to aesthetics as demonstrated by its application to a contemporary concrete problem, namely, the problem posed by Ortega y Gasset at the opening of Professor Hanke's remarks. In addressing this problem in art of purely abstract dehumanization, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of dead forms of imitation or representation, Professor Hanke shows how Maritain's position can resolve this problem in a way that retains both the autonomy and the humaneness of art. What is striking about Maritain's solution is that it is in itself a creative solution, not a hide-bound one. That is, his own creative intuition led him to develop an original insight in view of tradition, and also in view of the present times. His synthesis is his own ongoing one, open to tradition, and open also to the world around him.

Professor Hanke convincingly shows the originality of Maritain's contribution of a theory of poetic knowledge out of traditional doctrines, an originality that lends vitality to a progressive Thomism. Beyond this, Professor Hanke himself breaks new ground by applying Maritain's thought directly to a problem that Maritain addressed only indirectly. Here is an excellent example of creatively addressing a new problem of the present in the light of Maritain's thought. What is significant about this application of Maritain's thought in our day is not that Professor Hanke tells us

what Maritain said, but what he might have said, were he addressing specifically the given problem. One might take exception at a particular point to Professor Hanke's suggestion that, for Maritain, there will be in fine art "a measure of dehumanization." This particular choice of expression seems to me, in fact, alien to the thrust of Maritain's aesthetic, and unnecessary, even within the perspective of Professor Hanke's own analysis. Be that as it may, however, the point is that Professor Hanke approaches the problem at hand with his own application of Maritain's insights. No doubt such an application of principles is what Maritain had in mind when he spoke of a "living tradition."

Professor Hanke has been true to this sort of tradition. To appreciate his contribution fully, one needs also to read his book mentioned above, in which he argues at length the case of art's being both autonomous and humane. He applies Maritain's insights on the nature of representation and signification in the existential context of the artist and his world, as expressed in the artist's work, in which signification is the expression of the artist's self at the deepest level of poetic knowledge. This humanizes the work and at the same time gives it autonomy. What is significant about Professor Hanke's contribution is that he creatively approaches the problem set for us from the standpoint of current semiotic controversy, in which he applies directly, in

light of the doctrine of signs of John of St. Thomas (more commonly known in semiotic circles as John Poin-
sot - see references) what Maritain addresses only in-
directly. Professor Hanke thus approaches this contem-
porary problem in the light of an on-going Thomistic
synthesis appropriate to the living tradition that Mari-
tain himself both followed and developed.

Finally, taking Maritain's philosophy of art and po-
etry altogether out of the analytic realm, let me try to
direct attention to the source of his originality, which
is at the same time the transporting source of his draw-
ing power even at the simplest undergraduate level. For
example, this past semester a freshman art major was fail-
ing a course in the philosophy of human nature. She said
it was all "too abstract." So, the professor assigned her
Jacques and Raissa Maritain's book, The Situation of Po-
etry.¹⁰ The student could not understand the technical
terms, but she suddenly understood. These are some of the
passages that broke through her discouragement with their
illumination:

The source of poetry and of all creative
intuition is in a certain experience which
one can call an obscure and savory "know-
ledge," with a thoroughly spiritual flavor,
for at these depths all is spirit and life,
and every poet knows that he penetrates there
by a concentration of all his senses into
unity - however fleeting it may be - and that
this is a primary condition of poetic concep-
tion. We are taking concentration here in
the sense of voluntary and active concentra-
tion. (pp. 14-15)

The poet ... cannot express his own substance in a work except on the condition that things resound in him, and that within him, in a single awakening, those things and his own substance rise together out of sleep. It is thus as if all that he discerns and divines in things he discerns and divines as inseparable from himself and his emotion, indeed as himself, and so he grasps obscurely his own being, with a knowledge which will only come to fruition in being creative. (p. 51)

For if at the source of the poetic act there is the experience which I have tried to describe, in which the obscure grasping of the real, resounding in the creative subjectivity, is at the same time an obscure grasping of the soul of the poet, it will be necessary that the work made be a manifestation of both at once. (p. 84)

This work is an object, and must always maintain its consistency and its proper value as an object, and at the same time it is a sign, at once a "direct" sign of the secrets perceived in things ... and a "reverse" sign of the substance of the poet in the act of spiritual communication and revealing itself to itself. (p. 84)

The fact is that when the poet passes from the state of withdrawal, the source of images and forms, to the mystical sleep, images and forms are lost, drunk up by the silence of the soul as rain is drunk up by the sea. The poet has perhaps lost his poem, but in the scale of absolute values that is an inestimable gain. (p. 19)

Maritain's writing on art and poetry rests and soars at the same time. It was once said that he had the soul of an artist. He was married to a poet and contemplative. Such was the context of his own creativity in giving renewed life to the Thomistic tradition.

Professor Hanke's presentation verifies the observation once made by a young scholar (John Deely, 1972) who said:

In a way, Maritain's thought is very traditional, but, by a wonderful paradox of genius, it is precisely because of its traditional character that it achieves its deep penetration and interior illumination of modern concerns as an enduring reality.¹¹

NOTES

1. John W. Hanke, Maritain's Ontology of the Work of Art, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).
2. Jacques Maritain, Art and Faith: Letters Between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau, trans. John Coleman, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 114. Hereafter referred to as Art and Faith.
3. Jacques Maritain, A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), p. 19. Hereafter referred to as Preface.
4. Art and Faith, p. 118.
5. Jacques Maritain, "Religion and Culture," in Essays in Order, ed. C. Dawson and J. F. Burns, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 52.
6. Jacques Maritain, The Range of Reason, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 193.
7. Preface, pp. 9, 20.
8. Jacques Maritain, The Peasant of the Garonne, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 22.
9. S. Lane Faison, "Maritain's Guide to Greatness," in The Nation, CLXXVI (April 11), 1953, p. 311. See also Harold Rosenberg, "The Profession of Poetry, or Trials Through the Night for M. Maritain," in Partisan Review, IX (September-October), 1942, p. 394.
10. Jacques and Raissa Maritain, The Situation of Poetry, trans. Marshall Suther, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955).
11. John N. Deely, "To Be and To Know," opening address for the October 6-7, 1972 Philosophy Symposium held in honor of Jacques Maritain at St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana.