

AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND REALISM

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The choice of this topic is a curious one, perhaps, for art seems to be such a personal creation that even its appreciation may be relative and most of the time considered as subjective or reliant on impressions. Whether this idea is rightfully founded or not is reviewed in this paper: Is art's meaning simply an impression? Does it come to exist merely because of whims and ecstasies? Is the experience of art such that it cannot but be dominated by personal ideas? In answering these questions, I present a synthesis of some of the works of Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), a Thomist who has important insights concerning aesthetic experience.

Since the experience of art starts from its causes to the work's appreciation by other people, the progression of this discussion is presented as follows: first, the concept of inspiration, to which artists usually attribute their creations, is assessed; then the aesthetic experience is reviewed to understand art's qualities; and finally, the purpose and meaning of the artwork are examined.

RECOGNISING REALITY THROUGH CREATIVE INTUITION

Most of the time, if not always, artists tell us that they need inspiration for them to create an artwork. And when they choose to describe it to us, we usually find it hard to get a full picture of what they are saying. Yes, we may understand better as the explaining goes on, but it may seem that our understanding is only asymptotic to the actuality of the inspiration, that our understanding cannot grasp the inspiration in its totality. But one thing is for sure, artists will tell us that they feel something when they are inspired. This feeling urges them to create their works. Inspiration, then, is so personal that it may be deemed as too subjective. We might even be led to immediately dismiss it to be solely dependent on the artist. But is this the only assessment that we can make on inspiration? What is this "inspiration"?

In Maritain's writings on aesthetics, we are told that poetry is what urges the human person to translate this experience into an expression, such as an artwork. The urge usually follows because, according to him, "the intellect [of the human person] is by its nature *expressive*" ("Poetic Experience," 388). This poetry is not received by way of reasoning but by way of affection, for it is "the divination of the spiritual in the things of sense, and which expresses itself in the things of sense" (*Art and Scholasticism*, 128). It hints that the experience of poetry is not a material connection; it is, rather, spiritual. This does not resolve our question just yet, but it makes us see that Maritain's concept of poetry is somehow similar to the inspiration to which artists associate their artworks. To note,

the descriptions of both match each other: both are received by way of feeling and they pave the way for the creation of the work of art.

So far, we see a general connection, showing us that inspiration is poetry and that poetry is a glimpse of the spiritual dimension of life. The trajectory of this investigation is now led to an inquiry on the spiritual aspect of things that are sensed. Here, we seem to be faced with a dilemma: How can an object of sense, which is supposed to be material and which may include inanimate things, be capable of bringing spiritual experiences to the human person? A deeper immersion into Maritain's philosophical inquiries, particularly on the existence of God, can guide us to see that this is possible and rationally explainable. We can find this answer in one discourse where Maritain reviews and continues the discussion of St. Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways.

In his book *Approaches to God*, Maritain leads us to consider that the Five Ways are not separate arguments. Rather, they comprise a continuous line of reasoning that makes us better appreciate the presence of the Supreme Being and, after we read Maritain, the existence of the world as well. This is the fresh contribution of Maritain. Intentional or not, he somehow makes the discussion reflexive: that the more we go out of ourselves to understand God, the more we understand our existence in the world. This resounds particularly when Maritain proposes his addition to the Five Ways: "a Sixth Way."

In explaining the Sixth Way, Maritain focuses on the concept of intuition, which is "the ultimate object to be attained by the intellect, which it attains at the summit of natural knowledge" (*A Preface to Metaphysics*, 43).¹ This is significant because Maritain pulls our attention to knowledge, and consequently, to the human person. Here we see that the human person is prominently placed in the equation of understanding some of the aspects of the existence of God, including the beings that emanate from His presence. For Maritain, acquired knowledge follows the Ways, especially the argument of final causality. But as we see in his Way, he focuses on intuition, a kind of knowledge which is at the very beginning of the process of knowing. Let us remember that the Five Ways are also a key in understanding existence in general. So, what follows from the arguments of the Five Ways: of act and potency, of causation, of necessity and contingency, of degrees of perfection, and of final causality? How do we know all of these? Maritain answers "with knowledge" that is gained by the human person.

In the tradition of Thomism, knowledge can either be acquired through the natural capacity of a being – which brings natural knowledge – or through divine revelation, which brings supernatural knowledge.² The distinction between the two has particular significance at this point. It has previously been stated that Maritain considers intuition as a natural knowledge. However, it must also be noted that he declares it to be "at the summit," thereby implying or acknowledging other kinds of natural

knowledge aside from intuition.³ Perhaps, this explains his decision to call his addition to the discussion as only “a Sixth Way.”

Now, we come to examine intuition. As has been said, Maritain was deeply influenced by Aquinas. For Aquinas, intuition is an understanding that is proportionate to the nature or quiddity of the rational being (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, bk. 3b ch. 91). This is too general, still. However, it may be noted that, through most of his works, Aquinas uses the term “intuition” when he discusses the knowledge possessed by angels.⁴ He mentions it to pertain to human knowledge only when he discusses revealed truths.⁵ He writes that the knowledge of the divine emerges within the human person “when the human mind is raised to the perfect intuition of things revealed” (Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, bk. 4 ch. 1.) With this, it is understood that Aquinas regards intuition as more appropriate for angels rather than for lower rational beings; intuition for the human person is dependable only if revealed truths are fully understood.

Meanwhile, considering his statement cited earlier which states that intuition is at the peak of natural knowledge, Maritain is proposing a slightly different concept of intuition. This means that the intuition of a person, which is still maintained as a knowledge of the divine, may also be known through the contingent world. With reason, we may understand this because everything possesses qualities of the Supreme Being but only in varying degrees, and the attributes aid to fulfill an activity directed toward a final end; this reasoning reminds us of Aquinas’s Fourth and Fifth Ways. Indeed, we recognize this synergy among temporal beings because of our capacity to know some of the natures of things, which come from the Supreme Being. We are capable of knowing it because we also have nature, and we are part of the design by which everything operates. This can be understood further with Maritain’s concept of connaturality,⁶ which he draws from Aquinas.⁷ With this explained, Maritain’s proposition of having intuition as “the ultimate object to be attained at the summit of natural knowledge” can be interpreted as a knowledge of nature, which is constituted by some degrees of divine attributes, that reaches the intellect through sense experience. It is through immediate experience or connaturality that the human person acknowledges that one is part of the greater scheme of things. This perhaps moved Maritain to declare: intuition “sets out from being, but from being as it is immediately apprehended when the mind first awakes in the sensible world. That is its starting point.” (*A Preface to Metaphysics*, 43).

It is clear that Aquinas and Maritain consider intuition a little differently. But their views are not far apart from each other. While Aquinas puts intuition as angelic knowledge, which gives a more perfect understanding of existence, Maritain places it at the point where natural knowledge and supernatural knowledge meet; where the knowledge from experience leads the intellect to ascend to acknowledge higher realities.⁸

To set our perspective, it must be noted that Maritain identifies two levels of intuition: the pre-philosophic and the philosophic. When intuition

reveals itself, it is first felt at the pre-philosophic level, which is concerned about connaturality or the “intellectual *perceptions* of a trans-physical and analogous commonality... and the *esse* (act of existing) of things.” (Knasas, “How Thomistic is the Intuition of Being,” 84). However, intuition reaches the philosophic level when the subject is inspired to translate the feeling into action. This emerges from the appreciation of the manner of existence of beings, which inspires the person into an active participation in the movement of the world. Strictly speaking, the two levels are distinct from each other. However, the link between them cannot be dismissed.

At the pre-philosophic level, the first intuition is said to be that of consciousness. Maritain explains that one does not reason out that he is conscious. Rather, the person immediately uses consciousness because he *feels* that he is conscious. The feeling asserts an impact on the person, an immediate impact that compels him to think. Thus, Maritain considers this as the primitive or wild state of intuition, which “sprung at the same time as [the person’s] birth.”⁹ (*Approaches to God*, 72–73). He also traces the origin of the intellect and its property of being conscious to understand where, from the moment of birth, the mind begins to reach understanding. But he does not disregard the observable reality with which the human person, as he grows older, deepens his understanding of the world.

Thus, Maritain reflects further and leads us to a review of the development of the consciousness based on two proportions. Following Aquinas and Aristotle, Maritain explains the development of the consciousness as proportionate to the intellect and to the physical senses of the human person. The development in proportion or according to man maintains that, as the human person progresses with his engagement with the physical world, his understanding of existence also develops; hence, his better participation in the activity of the world (73–74). The knowledge gained here “are for the most part operations of sense and imagination,” which later on will be “sustained and illuminated by the intellect” (Knasas, “How Thomistic is the Intuition of Being,” 87–88). Meanwhile, the second aspect of the development of the intellect points to being conscious of the spiritual nature of the intellect. Thus, the activity of the mind withdraws into the realm of ideas; its acquired knowledge is purely intellectual and it rises above what are physically sensed and imagined. The developed consciousness reaches some ideas on the Supreme Being and His relations with the contingent beings.

The pre-philosophic intuition, therefore, is the knowledge from feeling the world. But what now is intuition in the philosophic level? For Maritain, the knowledge from feeling is still refined by the human person because of his intellect. The feeling is developed into thinking. This intuition moves the consciousness by way of examined knowledge to further think beyond physical perceptions. Maritain demonstrates this proposition by leading us to questions that are logical. This is evident when he asks: “Is it possible that that which is thus in the process of thinking... should once have been a pure nothing, once did not exist?” (*Approaches to*

God, 74). The metaphysical question, to which his answer is 'No,' signals that Maritain tries to trace the cause of the existence of the human person, and how persons have been caused to operate as such. Observe Maritain's response: "I, who am thinking, have always existed, but not in myself or within the limits of my own personality" (*Approaches to God*, 76). Both the question and the answer show that Maritain thinks the rational being has been a part of another being with a higher level of existence, a being with which all share a certain form of resemblance, but not in the same degree.¹⁰ Understandably, this pre-temporal existence of beings needs to be elaborated. But we must already note that Maritain's question and answer already resemble the tendency of the intellect of the human person to advance into the intellectual realm to better understand the human person's consciousness. For while the initial bases of knowledge may have been physically observable, the realization, which the consciousness reaches, has its origin from another being, and indeed belongs to the philosophic level of intuition. Hence, the philosophic level of intuition is borne out of the natural tendency of the human person to ask, as if he already knows that there is still more to understand in reality. In this progression of knowing, the tendency of the human person to understand his world and himself is to find the rational cause. This observation justifies Maritain's previous claim that intuition is the highest form of natural knowledge, for it is in this level that the knowledge of natural beings directs the person to ascend from the curiosity of the world to the acknowledgment of higher levels of being.

At this point, perhaps, we already have an ample amount of information to answer our question on what inspiration is: it is an intuition, a knowledge from feeling which comes not from the self but from other beings in the world. With this perspective, we see a dialectical relation between the self and the world, which allows the human person to interpret the world as it reveals itself and not as how he wants it to be.

BASES OF AESTHETIC QUALITIES

This interpretation of existence can, of course, be expressed by the human person through artwork. We have already seen that inspiration, which compels the human person to create an artwork, is a kind of intuition. Maritain calls it "poetry." Let us now observe the creation of an artwork and what it is. In "Poetic Experience," Maritain outlines several considerations to appreciate art. He starts with the human person and his capacity to create the factors that lead to the creation of an artwork, and concludes with the assessment of the being of a work of art.

The first consideration is for poetry to be expressed through art. When one experiences poetry, an urge is born in him to translate what is drawn from his experience into something concrete. This is our natural inclination to have our ideas overflow into external expression. Admitting that the human person has the affinity to communicate, the intention of art then is to present a message that is communicable to other human beings.

However, we must note that human beings “have a legitimate and autonomous transcendental drive for creating and searching for beauty, along with, and distinct from, the other human drives to understand the truth.” (Kerr, “Deconstruction and Artistic Creation,” 119). This is because of the different ways by which the consciousness of each human person develops. But it does not mean that art is egotistic since it expresses the self.

As has been understood, the human intellect is limited and can only be conscious of a few aspects of the world. The experience of material things also causes moments of *feeling*, such as suffering and joy. Yes, they are personal experiences. However, they do not convey only the being of a subject. They also connote the environment, which is not reliant on the person. When a person encounters a joyous experience, that person intends to prolong the experience by placing his memory into something that is not fleeting. The memory definitely is not limited to that person alone. Other people, places, and other things are, of course, in it.¹¹

What, then, is intended to be communicated in an artwork? This poetic knowledge, Maritain states, “involves the whole of man, and which gives the world to man, which can let him suffer the whole world within himself!” (“Poetic Experience,” 392). This means that when poetic knowledge occurs in a person, it urges him to express the experience. But he cannot own it. Rather than being defined by the artist, art actuates the subject as subject. This indicates that this knowledge is so immense that it is impossible to be totally expressed. Here, the premium of the possibilities brought about by poetry is expressed. It must be understood that, although poetry is spiritual in nature, it may cause suffering and joy by way of the knowledge that it gives to a person. Maritain reminds us that poetry makes the human person exercise his capacity to create or, following the line of thought from the Five Ways, to participate in the motion of life.¹² But again, an artwork can only express poetic knowledge in a limited sense. Its meaning appeals first to the intellect of the artist, not by way of logical reasoning but by way of inspiration. When the person responds to the appeal, he creates art, which for Maritain is reminiscent of the original inspiration. This occasion is the natural tendency to return, according to Maritain, to art’s origin. With this, it is understood that poetry considers the existence not only of consciousness but also of what it is conscious about during the experience of poetry.

Furthermore, the characteristics of this poetic experience, according to Maritain, can only be visible during “sleep,” which he refers to as the instance when the consciousness escapes the grasp of the physical senses and enters the borders of the “sufficient universe” of poetry. (“Poetic Experience,” 398-399). His concept of “sleep” does not refer to dosing off during the night. Rather, it is the state where the consciousness, still aware of the physical realities of the world, reaches farther into the knowledge of the spiritual. Indeed, Maritain maintains that poetic knowledge owes its birthing to the immediate experience of the sensible realm by way of emotion. This emotion, evoked when poetry is translated into art, gives life

to the artwork. To explain further, “creative emotion is not a *matter* of the work of art, it is, on the contrary, the *form* forming this work; it is not emotion as a thing, as a given object, but an intuitive and intentional emotion, which bears in itself much more than itself” (“Poetic Experience,” 399-400). This means that the artwork does not convey itself as how it materially exists. Rather, it shows us the emotion with which it was made.

Works of art, then are signs. They lead to a realization of a brimming of meanings, as if they were a key to secrets that are not meant to be told. This is the promise of artworks.¹³ This eventual awareness of the self is inevitably imperfect, but it is still inspiring, for it can motivate the human person to be a better version of himself. Finally, we see the artwork as one of a person’s natural expressions of knowledge, in this case, poetic knowledge, which does not come from him. This is not his original idea because he gets it from something that reveals itself to him. What are unique are his perspective and approach to the thing, which are built through the development of his consciousness.

WHAT ART GIVES

Maritain writes: “To put forward the misdeeds of the spirit Poetry when it has gone astray as a pretext for refusing to acknowledge its rights in the line of art, to claim to bring it back to mere technique or to amusement or pleasure, would be an unpardonable mistake, and altogether fruitless besides.” (*Art and Scholasticism*, 134). Simply put, Maritain means that the intuition of the beauty of life in general should translate into the artwork. This indeed is a reminder when we try to look into the purpose of an artwork.

Several considerations still need to be underscored here. Maritain stresses that the idea of the artist “is *formative* of things and not *formed* by them” (*Art and Scholasticism*, 121). This means that the idea, insofar as it is for the creation of art, is not produced by the artist. Instead, artists are indebted to other things, particularly to the experience of the spiritual, for these ideas. These ideas are formative because they comprise only the framework of the process of artistic creation, but not the meaning of it. The imperfection of creative ideas is also congruent to the scarce glimpse of divine perfection that the artist has. The artwork also has matter, or the body, limiting it, making the greater meaning obscure to the eyes, its essence ungraspable by the human senses. Thus, the meaning is thwarted by the condition of the individual and the creation. This means that a work of art can be understood in one way at a certain time, and understood differently (e.g., better) at another time.

The human person must be reminded of his limitations. Art, then, must espouse reflection, for the person to struggle to make sense of its meaning. The truths that it gives, however limited they may be, must be embraced by the person. If we stop and let artworks be understood only in the limits of their temporality, this will lead to the “suicide of art” (*Art and*

Scholasticism, 124). For an artist, there is one way to avoid this danger – that is, to transcend the temporal conditions. By doing so, he will be able to destroy the barriers of materiality, which will induce a new energy to the artwork.¹⁴

Meanwhile, for the artist to rightfully create art, he must subscribe to a certain kind of asceticism or noble sacrifice. As Maritain avers: “[the artist] must pass through spiritual nights, purify his ways ceaselessly, voluntarily abandon fertile places for barren regions full of insecurity” (*The Responsibility of the Artist*, 99). Hence, artists must possess humility, magnanimity, prudence, integrity, fortitude, temperance, simplicity, and ingenuousness – all which are needed for a person to be an artist of the world because no human person is meant to be a subject of conceit. With this note, it is fitting to underscore Maritain’s forewarnings in the creation of artworks: the sin of materialism and artistic morality.

The sin of materialism subscribes to the problem of imitation. The spiritual nature of art is in contrast with “the servile imitation of the appearances of nature, since art’s deepest exigency is that the work manifest not another thing already made, but the mind itself from which it proceeds” (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* and *The Frontiers of Poetry*). In other words, the artwork must not be a mere reproduction of reality. Instead, it must reveal the relational nature of the human person with the world. The artist must be cautious to avoid the temptation to subscribe to artistic morality, which is “depicted as forcing upon man [false] moral obligations” (Maritain, *The Responsibility of the Artist*, ch 5). This means that the artist realigns the criterion of beauty to a selfish intention of glorifying himself and his work. This is notorious in the circles or communities of artists. This morality usually revolves around three perverted virtues, namely, sincerity, purity, and curiosity.

While there is a genuine kind of sincerity, the sincerity in artistic morality glorifies the artist making him incapable of making sound ethical judgments. But, of course, the artist is not what art is for. Consider here movie stars, who no longer own their lives which they eventually owe to the fans and media critics. Another interesting point here is Maritain’s scepticism toward sentimental art. He is candid in expressing his disgust with the idea that art is boxed within the limits of sharing one’s personal thrills and ecstasies, for that violates human nature. Let us remember inspiration as something gained through the natural inclination of the intellect to gaze out of itself. Thus, to confine the meaning of the artwork to the artist is to deny human experience of the world.

Meanwhile, corrupted purity is the intention of limiting of the artwork to the literal portrayal of external realities and occasions. No prudence is exercised here, for what is considered pure is the obvious and observable in the temporal realm. Here we may be reminded of pornography, of which explicit exposures are more inclined to scandal rather than to inspire. We should consider that the artist must see beyond the facts of the world and see how crude they appear.

Lastly, curiosity in artistic morality is curiosity in the extreme sense because the tacit belief of people subscribing to this is to have a taste of everything to feed their creativity while putting themselves at risk. Those artists, who succumb to addiction from the various vices the world has to offer, is an example of this.

In sum, we see that the artwork is a human reaction, a response to being conscious of the interrelations of things in the world. This response is also meant to communicate a meaning that is not drawn from the artist. We realize that the human person is only one aspect of artistic creation, and he must never think that he is the one who creates the meaning of artworks. For works of art are always a mystery; their message unveiled only bit by bit.

CONCLUSION

I have discussed how the human person is an artist and how his craft comes to be. But how is this related to our theme? As I have mentioned earlier, this paper discusses a hermeneutic perspective on the relation of the person and the world, using a philosophical lens in the tradition of Thomism. This is clearly shown when we investigated the phenomenon of inspiration as a principle of artworks. We had seen in this part that inspiration comes not from the human person but in his experience of other things in the world – and notably, the existence of things that are independent of him and his consciousness. In aesthetic experience, this means that the human mind should not dominate over other beings in the world; it must not impose meaning, neither should it claim that it gives meaning to art. One compelling way to appreciate this relation, and to reasonably justify beings that are independent of the human intellect, is through the acknowledgment of an Ultimate Cause. By understanding how the Supreme Being has produced the world, we find a rational explanation for the interrelatedness of things in the world: there is connaturality, the intelligent design of things, and the power of the human person to recognize all this. All of these have bearing in the creation of art, for they are bases for the ethical guidelines in aesthetic experience. This marks the relevance of this perspective to our time. Remember that art is also a communication, and its message – that should reach its audience – must not be contrary to its inspiration, i.e., to the feeling that we have a connection to a world whose meaning we cannot manipulate.

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NOTES

¹ Maritain gives only descriptions and distinctions of intuition, and no definition, in *Approaches to God*. However, we may also consider that *Approaches to God* immediately came after the release of *A Preface to Metaphysics*. Hence, it may be safe to assume that there is in fact a continuity in the discussion of intuition in the two publications.

² Natural knowledge and supernatural knowledge are both pursued by the human person because, as Aquinas writes, "the natural desire for [knowledge] has nevertheless been instilled into the mind of man by [the Supreme Being]." See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1, chs 3 and 7.

³ In *Approaches to God*, these other kinds of natural knowledge are rarely cited, if not unmentioned at all. But since Maritain has grounded his philosophy on Thomism, using Aquinas's distinctions of knowledge is beneficial in understanding Maritain's position. According to Aquinas, the other kinds of natural knowledge are discursive, common sense knowledge, and instinctive. Discursive knowledge are our ideas of contingent beings, insofar as the latter's causes are considered (See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1, ch 57). This knowledge is understood through a demonstrative discussion of the causes, as premises, and effects, as conclusions. Meanwhile, the knowledge, borne out of common sense, is what we have from our ability or power, as rational beings, to process those that are perceived by the "proper senses" – or the physical senses of sight, olfaction, taste, touch, and hearing – for them to be identified to a being. The common sense "knows everything apprehended by the five outward senses, and some other things which no outer sense knows" (See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 57). To illustrate, the color of the skin of a

person is proper to the sense of sight; the scent of his perfume is proper to the sense of olfaction; his temperature to the sense of touch; the quality of his voice to the sense of hearing; and so on. However, the physical senses do not provide the knowledge of attribution of all these qualities to a person. Rather, it is the common sense of the intellect that links all these to the human being. The third kind of natural knowledge, for Aquinas, is instinctive knowledge or the common judgment that the human person shares with the brutes. It is anchored on the animals' sentient power, which tells them what is helpful and what is harmful. The difference, however, with the rational being and the other animals is that the person can refine judgment with the use of reason, which the brutes do not have (See Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 2, q. 18).

⁴ Discussions of Aquinas on intuition can be reviewed in *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Book 3b, 91; vol. 1, qq 2, 4, 8, 9; vol. 2, q 12; vol 3, q. 24; in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, chs 1 and 55; also in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 59; I-II, q. 74; II-II, qq 9, 49, 180; and in *Questions on the Soul*, 7.

⁵ On the contrary, supernatural knowledge or revelation is that which escapes the grasp of natural reason, but which the human person comes to know because they are offered "not as shown to him that he may see it, but as expressed in words so that he may hear it." This may be considered as direct infusion of knowledge, like when a teacher tells his student of his knowledge. See Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 2, q. 18.

⁶ This connaturality explains the tendencies of beings to recognize or react to other beings: like plants that grow toward the direction of the light source and like the human person who feel sympathy for others. See Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 86; 88.

⁷ When he explains, for example, that love for someone or something is possible because of a certain connaturality between the sensible appetite of the lover and the thing loved. See Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, Lecture V. In the same text, Aquinas explains that connaturality is a cause of pleasure.

⁸ With regard to the knowledge of the Supreme Being, Maritain cites Aquinas when the latter underscores that divine knowledge is experienced not only by the mystics who have been identified as those who vividly see the divine nature of things. See Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* and *The Frontiers of Poetry*, 23–24. He is also fast to clarify that one need not be a mystic to have intuition that comes from connaturality. In proposing that intuition is possible for all, Maritain also suggests an approach to God. It is interesting to stress at this point that Maritain leads us to observe activity. He explains that for the human person, this approach starts from pre-rational intuition, which may come to operate even before thinking starts. Maritain emphasizes this approach as a "feeling" (Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 73) or the subject's immediate recognition of his relation to the other contingent beings by way of, again, connaturality (86; 88). This signals that Maritain gives intuition a space for imperfection, since the person's faculty for knowing is prone to fallibility.

⁹ To demonstrate his point, Maritain reminds us that when the human person begins his life as an infant, the very basis of his activity is feeling. This

feeling, as has been said earlier, is not just the perception of the sensory organs. Maritain argues that this feeling is possible because of the infant's the recognition of "same-ness," which occurs when the infant starts to identify with his environment; he finds those which are similar to him and those which are not. Maritain illustrates this phenomenon by citing the immediate closeness of an infant to his mother.

¹⁰ The statement is also tantamount to saying that the human person before his conception did not have his own nature. Only when the person starts to be contingent that he acquires his own personality. Nevertheless, the human person still retains some aspects – but only to a certain degree – of the being with whom it shared its existence.

¹¹ However, in reading Maritain's works, we see that he puts more emphasis in the art emanating from suffering. Indeed, most of the important artworks have been borne out of suffering. To be true, according to Maritain, "[the world] has nothing great but its suffering; but this suffering I respect... Our business is to find the positive in all things; to use what is true less to strike than to cure." (Maritain, *Art and Faith: Letters between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau*, tr. John Coleman, New York: Philosophical Library, 1948, 114-115). This statement is in itself poetic as it gives emphasis in that there is still something to be appreciated in suffering. The stark contrast may seem difficult to accept. But the wisdom in this thought finds its justification in personal experiences, such as when one strives hard for a higher goal. Remember that sacrifices are also sufferings but they are done to attain something better. Even suffering is not dependent on the person, other external factors need to be considered. This also explains why the audience of an artwork may perceive other meanings in artworks, which are not intended by the artist.

¹² Consider here the fact that all beings have a nature, which not only gives personality to each being but also direction. Following Aquinas's explanation on design, this nature allows each being to participate in the existence of the world. For Maritain, man comes to learn of the principles of nature when he realizes his actuations in relation to the beings apart from him. Maritain writes: "The substance of man is a darkness to himself; it is in receiving and suffering things, it is in awakening himself to the world that man awakens himself to himself." (See Maritain, "Poetic Experience," para. 32).

¹³ Maritain further notes that when the artwork leads to greater realities of the spiritual dimension, it also signifies that the natural capacity of the human person to communicate is exercised and the yearning to be aware of oneself is appeased. (See Maritain, "Poetic Experience," para. 32).

¹⁴ We can consider this new energy in the light of metaphors. With this, artists unleash another form of inspiration, even emotion, when they bend and blend the rigidity of mediums to provide new levels of meanings. For a constant reader of poetry, it will also be easy to learn that there is such a death to metaphors, which are commonly known as "clichés." This particular phenomenon attests to the challenge to the artist of struggling to reach higher and further explorations of the artistic realm. It resembles a journey of the "perfecting of the spirit."