

INTELLECTUAL INTUITION AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE
IN THE REALISM OF JACQUES MARITAIN

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

September, 1977

MASTER OF ARTS (1977)
(Religious Sciences)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Intellectual Intuition and Mystical Experience
in the Realism of Jacques Maritain

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. G. Vallée

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 116

ABSTRACT

In this thesis we are examining intellectual intuition and mystical experience in the realism of Jacques Maritain. We discern two major degrees or levels of human knowing in his realism, one natural and the other supra-natural. Although essentially distinct, these two levels of human knowing are mutually compatible. Maritain seeks to establish a synthesis of the various modes of human knowing, and he attempts to accomplish this through the recognition of what distinguishes them from each other. In fact, Maritain argues that without the recognition of what distinguishes the various modes of human knowing from each other, serious error can occur. Intellectual intuition here designates a mode of knowing which is associated with conceptualisation and strictly confined to the natural level of human knowing, and mystical experience (as distinguished from God's disclosure of Himself to man through communicable revelation) denotes a mode of knowing which is strictly supra-natural and incommunicable on the natural level of human knowing. In examining the distinction between intellectual intuition (primarily the intellectual intuition of being, which is for Maritain the human intellect's highest achievement on the natural level of human knowing) and mystical experience, as well as their mutual compatibility, we are attempting to comprehend Maritain's realism as a unified whole through

what must necessarily be distinguished within it--intellectual intuition (especially the intellectual intuition of being) and mystical experience functioning as polar points in our discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Gérard Vallée, whose warm concern since the beginning of my undergraduate studies at McMaster University, and supervision of this thesis during what was a very busy period for him, are acknowledged by me with sincere appreciation. I would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the encouragement I have received from Dr. J. C. Robertson and Dr. J. G. Arapura. And certainly, I sympathise wholeheartedly with my wife, Susan, who typed this thesis while caring for our three children and myself. For her, and for all that I have received, I can after all only thank that tremendously close (and yet so very distant) Other Who enables all our work to be.

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INTRODUCTION

Jacques Maritain was born on November 11, 1882. His mother, Geneviève, was the daughter of the eminent Jules Favre. She divorced Jacques' father, Paul Maritain, after having been married to him for only a few years and apparently her liberal Protestantism was the dominating feature in Jacques' early environment. Charles A. Fecher, in his lengthy study, The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain, questions the motive behind Geneviève's having had Jacques and his sister baptised by a minister in the traditional Protestant way.¹ And perhaps we should after all agree with William J. Nottingham, who, in his Christian Faith and Secular Action, openly challenges what he sees as Fecher's narrow view of liberal Protestantism in the nineteenth century.² Nevertheless, the "free" atmosphere in which the philosophical inclinations of the young Jacques emerged, only nourished questions and problems. In such an atmosphere, Jacques was compelled to avoid any certitude which would destroy the enigmas fostered by the prevailing mood of "generosity."

¹See Charles A. Fecher, The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953), pp. 13-14.

²See William J. Nottingham, Christian Faith and Secular Action: An Introduction to the Life and Thought of Jacques Maritain (St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1968), p. 26.

University studies at the Sorbonne augmented what was becoming Jacques' disquiet in the face of what we might call "laissez faire intellectualism," and with his future wife (the young Jewess, Raïssa Oumansoff) he made a suicide pact in the Jardin des Plantes. If in a short time they were unable to find any meaning for the word truth, both Jacques and Raïssa agreed that they would deliberately take their own lives. However, in abandoning the fruits of skepticism and relativism, their situation was not in fact so very dim. In her published memoirs, We Have Been Friends Together, Raïssa herself indicates the hope that was behind such a desperate committment:

. . . we decided for some time longer to have confidence in the unknown; we would extend credit to existence, look upon it as an experiment to be made; in the hope that to our ardent plea, the meaning of life would reveal itself, that new values would stand forth so clearly that they would enlist our total allegiance, and deliver us from the nightmare of a sinister and useless world.³

Happily for both Jacques and Raïssa (and for the world which would have lost the contributions of a great philosopher and contemplative), Charles Péguy (one of their many famous friends at the time) ushered them into the lecture hall of Henri Bergson. As Raïssa writes: "It was then that God's pity caused us to find Henri Bergson."⁴ Although

³Raïssa Maritain, We Have Been Friends Together: Memoirs, trans. by Julie Kernan; Golden Measure Books (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1942), p. 77---hereafter referred to as Friends.

⁴Ibid., p. 79.

Jacques would later ardently reject much of what Bergson had taught, it was Bergson who indicated at least the possibility of a metaphysical solution to the liberal enigmas which plagued both Jacques and Raïssa:

Bergson assured us . . . that we are capable of truly knowing reality, that through intuition we may attain to the absolute; and we interpreted this as saying that we could truly, absolutely, know what is. It mattered little to us whether this might come through intuition which transcends concepts or through intelligence which forms them; the important, the essential thing was the possible result: to attain the absolute. By means of a wonderfully penetrating critique Bergson dispelled the anti-metaphysical prejudices of pseudo-scientific positivism and recalled to the spirit its real functions and essential liberty.⁵

Shortly after their marriage, having been strongly and permanently influenced by the uncompromising pen of Léon Bloy,⁶ Jacques and Raïssa Maritain (along with Raïssa's

⁵ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁶ "We had decided to extend existence credit, in the hope that it would reveal new values to us, values which could give a meaning to life--and here is what life brought us! First Bergson, and then Léon Bloy. Bergson who traveled uncertainly toward a goal still far off, but the light of which had already reached both him and us, and without our knowing it, like the rays of a star across a desert of unimaginable skies; Léon Bloy who for many years had lived united to his God by an indestructible love which he knew to be eternal in its essence. Life cast him upon our shores like a legendary treasure--immense and mysterious." (ibid., p. 120)

The respect of Jacques and Raïssa Maritain for Léon Bloy is further indicated by an amusing testimony which Bloy himself offers us, in a letter he wrote to Pierre Termier concerning their baptism:

"They were at the uttermost limit of the desert and they asked for Baptism! In their ignorance of liturgical forms, they thought that I could baptize

sister, Vera) were baptised into the Roman Catholic Church on June 11, 1906. At this time Jacques thought that he would be compelled to give up philosophy,⁷ but eventually both Jacques and Raïssa discovered St. Thomas Aquinas.

Having become a Thomist, Jacques Maritain sustained a remarkable loyalty to what he perceived as the correct interpretation of the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas; he accomplished this throughout a long and demanding career (he died in 1973 at the age of ninety). Indeed, we agree wholeheartedly with Sister Helen James John, when she writes in her book, The Thomist Spectrum:

Although he has on occasion been attacked by fellow Thomists as a radical innovator, Maritain has in fact kept strictly to the interpretation of St. Thomas which he embraced in the first years of his conversion to Catholicism; his creativity lies in his untiring application of principles already established to new areas of thought, thus offering the timeless truths of the 'Common Doctor' to the changing needs and interests of our century.⁸

For this reason, we will not be anxious over chronology in

them myself, Raïssa not having received this Sacrament at all and Jacques having received at best a counterfeit. I had to explain to them--and with what rapture!--that since they were not in danger of death and since it was easy to obtain a priest, they must receive Baptism as it is conferred by the Church and not the simple rite administered in extremis by a lay person. . ." (ibid., p. 173).

⁷"Jacques remained despite everything so persuaded by the errors of the 'philosophers,' that he thought that in becoming Catholic he would have utterly to forswear the intellectual life" (ibid., p. 174).

⁸Helen James John, S.N.D., The Thomist Spectrum, The Orestes Brownson Series on Contemporary Thought and Affairs, No. 5 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 16.

this thesis.

We must also agree with Joseph Amato, when in his excellent study, Mounier and Maritain, he states simply that the mature Maritain ". . . was born out of reaction."⁹ In his liberal environment, Maritain had found two sources of strength, rationalistic socialism and poetic symbolism.¹⁰ Amato points out that these two trends (i.e. socialism and symbolism) were in fact unable to be reconciled with each other by those of Maritain's contemporaries who, like he, were caught up in what the historian, Eugene Weber, has called "fin du siècle socialism."¹¹ This was a sporadic, and after all an essentially emotional manifestation of discontent. It grasped at rationalistic and collective truths, while at the same time embracing the instinctual and individualistic insights of thinkers like Frederick Nietzsche, and poets like Charles Pierre Baudelaire. Since the turn of the century, many young intellectuals have been caught up in a reaction against the stagnation of nineteenth century bourgeois liberalism, and two of them have been

⁹Joseph Amato, Mounier and Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World, Studies in the Humanities No. 6 Philosophy (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1975), p. 30---hereafter referred to as Mounier and Maritain.

¹⁰Indeed, according to Raïssa, the impetus of the former enabled Maritain to resist the temptation to despair for a longer period than herself (see Raïssa Maritain, Friends, p. 76).

¹¹See Amato, Mounier and Maritain, p. 31.

Jacques and Raissa Maritain.

According to Amato, the reconciliation of rational with instinctual, and communal with individualistic verities, within Maritain himself, would mean for him the solution to the crisis of our age:

Within him there inhabited two conflicting visions, poetries, of the world: a socialism based on a rationalistic and collective optimism about man's future, and a symbolism which proposed that man was alone and without ultimate purpose. If Maritain, thus, were to find himself, it meant not only a resolution of his crisis as a young man but also an interior resolution of the cultural crisis of his times which in good measure had become part of himself.¹²

Indeed, Maritain felt that he had found the solution in Thomism, which was for him the synthesis of every rational and instinctual truth, of faith and reason, and even of orthodoxy and rebellion.¹³ For Maritain this Thomistic

¹²Ibid., p. 33.

¹³"For Maritain, Thomism was the 'philosophy of philosophies.' Maritain considered it as the crowning philosophy of man and nature, and the most perfect philosophical expression of the unity that exists between faith and reason. Maritain proposed Thomism to believer and non-believer alike as equally being the perennial philosophy of man, the critical philosophy of human knowledge, and the highest intellectual synthesis so far achieved between classical thought and Christian faith. For Maritain, Thomism offered essential truths about man's nature and human knowledge, while preparing man's spirit for those sacred truths of his creation and redemption. To teach Thomism, for Maritain, was to speak of what was most eternal within man's meaning and destiny.

Maritain's Thomism also had political and temporal dimensions; in fact, Thomism shaped Maritain's philosophy for his times. Resembling, in fact substantially anticipating Mounier's Personalism, Thomism was the center of Maritain's

synthesis rests upon the compatibility of what we will in this thesis refer to as two great levels of human knowing, one natural and the other supra-natural. The natural level of human knowing simply refers to all that man is capable of achieving without the grace of God, and the supra-natural level of human knowing refers to everything man is able to attain precisely because of God's grace. We feel that this major distinction is in strict conformity with what Maritain himself suggests.¹⁴

world view. From the perspective of Thomism, Maritain attempted to survey the make-up and the origins of the modern world. As a Thomist, Maritain believed himself able to speak of what was most permanent and worthwhile in man, as well as what was most transitory and aberrant in the world of contemporary man. Serving Maritain as it served the Vatican in the second half of the nineteenth century, Thomism provided him with a measure of theological orthodoxy as well as a counter-world view" (ibid., p. 59).

¹⁴ "There is a spiritual, metaphysical order beyond sensible nature wherein dwells not only the metaphysician, but the poet as well, and it is above all the mechanism and all the laws of the world of bodies. To this order belongs what is in the most hidden recesses of personality, namely, moral and free activity, and, more generally, voluntary activity, inasmuch as a spirit thereby envelops itself. As such, a spirit is no part of this universe (and that is why the angels do not naturally know the secrets of the heart); it emerges above the whole created universe (both sensible and suprasensible), taken precisely as an artefactum, that is, as a work of art. But this world of spirits and liberty, far from enclosing within itself any formal participation in Deity, is of itself the very peak of nature understood in the quite general sense of that which has its own proper consistence insofar as it is other than God, yet it remains itself a merely natural world as long as it is not elevated gratuitously. There is still an infinite distance between that order and the order of grace which is not only above sensible nature, but above all created and creatable nature and any merely natural exercise of liberty. Charity is

Our concern in this thesis will be to discern both the meaning and importance of intellectual intuition and mystical experience in the realism of Jacques Maritain, for we feel that these two notions of his are crucial in attempting to understand how Maritain finds the natural level of human knowing to be compatible with the supra-natural level. In other words, we feel that intellectual intuition and mystical experience are the keys which will enable us to unlock the Thomistic synthesis as it is interpreted by Maritain. Our ultimate goal will be to understand that synthesis, i.e. to understand the bond between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing in Maritain's realism.

We have explained that Maritain's thought grew out of a reaction against nineteenth century bourgeois liberalism. Maritain has always been preoccupied with a concern for relevancy in a troubled age, and in his writings he often expounds what he sees as true while dismantling what he perceives as false. He has always been determined to avoid

infinitely higher in relation to the highest created spirit than the latter is in relation to body. An act of faith or of love of a little child goes infinitely farther and is something incomparably more precious, more full of vigour and more effective than the most brilliant natural act of the highest of the angels. Pascal's famous phrase about the three orders expresses an elementary truth of Christianity. Bonum gratiae unius majus est, quam bonum naturae totius universi" (Maritain, Distinguish to Unite or the Degrees of Knowledge, trans. under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 256---hereafter referred to as Degrees).

dangers which, according to him, many of his contemporaries have in fact failed to avoid. We are simply stating that, due to the way in which he expresses himself, Maritain's position is best understood when juxtaposed with the positions he himself is critical of. For this reason, throughout this thesis we will indicate Maritain's criticism of other philosophical positions, without necessarily professing allegiance to that criticism or claiming to be an expert on the position criticised.

In the first chapter of this thesis, we will be concerned with what Maritain is trying to avoid philosophically, although in this chapter we will be primarily concerned with explaining Maritain's notion of intellectual intuition (especially the intellectual intuition of being, which we hope to exhibit as the highest achievement of intellectual intuition, and the most important intuition of this type within the context of this thesis). The second chapter will concern us with the analogical apprehension of God, which is for Maritain the highest achievement on the natural level of human knowing (although he does reserve a place for natural mystical experience). In the third chapter we will attempt to explain Maritain's understanding of mystical experience. And in the fourth chapter we will concern ourselves with the compatibility between metaphysics and mysticism, and in a broader context with the compatibility between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing, in Maritain's

realism. In this way we hope to show in this chapter what Maritain is trying to accomplish through his criticism. Finally, having already dealt with the meaning of intellectual intuition in the first chapter, and of mystical experience in the third, in conclusion we will state what we consider to be the importance of these two notions in the realism of Jacques Maritain. In the conclusion we will also indicate what we perceive as problematic in Maritain's thought.

CHAPTER I

INTUITION AND INTELLIGENCE

In this chapter an attempt will be made to explicate the reconciliation of intuition with intelligence which occurs in the realism of Jacques Maritain. The distinctive feature of intuition has been defined succinctly by Maritain in his very first book, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, as ". . . an immediate knowledge or perception, a direct knowledge or perception, in which the act of knowing terminates upon the thing known without any intermediary, without the interposition of a middle term, . . ." ¹ On the other hand, the distinctive feature of the human intelligence (the intelligence with which we are here concerned) is the process of intellectual abstraction, which culminates in the formation of the concept through which man attains knowledge. As it is Maritain's understanding of intuition which has been presented here, so it is his understanding of intelligence which has been described. And in spite of the apparent disparity between intuition and intelligence so conceived, it is (as we shall see) precisely because of his explanation

¹Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison and J. Gordon Andison (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 149.

of ~~the~~ concept, that Maritain is able to argue for the reconciliation of intuition with intelligence in the particular intuition he calls intellectual.

In criticising what he terms the irrationalism of Bergson,² Maritain argues that there is an authentic intellectual intuition, a truly human intuition, occurring within the context of intellectual abstraction and not rising above it. According to Maritain, Bergson failed to distinguish between the proper operation of the intellect and the rationalist creation of an artificial terminology and technique, and for this reason Bergson failed to arrive at a proper understanding of the concept:

. . . the concept was made the normal vehicle of rationalism, -- therein lies the crucial error; the affirmation of the ontological value of the intelligence and of its statements was confused with the helplessness of a sterile intellect eager to submit all things to its own level.³

Indeed, Maritain himself strongly condemns artificial technique. It is a plague which threatens the scholastic. However, Maritain argues that it is accidental to the intellect. In fact, it is his position that the intellect alone can save us from the shallowness of mere technical verbosity:

It is true this essential life of the

²See Maritain, Redeeming the Time, trans. by Harry Lorin Binsse (London: Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946), pp. 57-61; and Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, pp. 11-60.

³Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, p. 17.

intellect is, in us, constantly threatened. The very machinery it creates for itself runs more risk of dulling it the more it develops, and of intellect above all must it be said, according to a characteristically Bergsonian formula, that life must always defend itself against the mechanisms it has itself set up: separated from intellection, the whole apparatus of concepts (but then they are no longer concepts, they are words, and extinct words) is no more than a material mechanism, so many dry bones. It is the old conflict between technique and inspiration. That is how the scholastics perish. We may denounce this evil as much as we like! Intellection alone can recover from it; it remains accidental to intellect.⁴

For Maritain, conceptualisation accompanies intellectual intuition: ". . . there is no intellectual intuition without concepts and conceptualisation."⁵ Maritain argues that the Bergsonian intuition of duration is an attempt to engender an immediate encounter with being, by plunging into the concrete perceptiveness of sensual experience.⁶ Although Maritain clearly acknowledges the indispensable value of sensual experience, nothing could be further from his own position than the view that there is an immediate encounter with being on the empirical level.

The intellectual intuition of being, which is for Maritain the foundation of metaphysics, lends itself to conceptualisation, and precisely because of this it is able to bear abundant fruit. According to Maritain, intellectual

⁴Ibid., p. 34.

⁵Maritain, Redeeming the Time, p. 51.

⁶See Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, pp. 26-30.

abstraction presents us with a far more profound disclosure of being than sensual experience can afford. However, it is not Maritain's position that being is disclosed to man only in the intellectual intuition which is the foundation of metaphysics. Although the knowledge of being is thematized in metaphysics alone, for Maritain being is present to the intellect in disciplines other than metaphysics. In fact, it is Maritain's position that being is directly attained in every act of knowing.

In order to explicate properly the reconciliation of intuition with intelligence which occurs in Maritain's realism (and it will be shown that the acme of this reconciliation occurs in the intellectual intuition of being and metaphysical conceptualisation), we feel that it is necessary to deal first with the preliminary disclosures of being, i.e. with the presentation of being to the intellect outside metaphysics. Only then will we be in a position to deal comprehensively with intellectual intuition and metaphysical conceptualisation, which will be attempted next. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, an attempt will be made to determine more exactly the metaphysical danger which Maritain is trying to avoid.

1. The Formal Object of the Intellect
in Its Preliminary Disclosures

Being, according to Maritain, is the formal object of the intellect, and therefore he argues that in every act of knowing the intellect directly attains it.⁷ However, this does not mean that in its first movement or primal activity the intellect attains that intuition of being which lends itself to conceptualisation in metaphysics. On this point Maritain is quite clear.⁸ In order to avoid possible

⁷The formal object is that which differentiates the particular power reaching to it. It is distinguished from the material object, which is the stuff with which a power may be occupied:

"Although it may happen that the material object of philosophy and science are the same--for example, the world of bodies--nevertheless, the formal object is essentially different in each case; and it is this that determines the specific nature of intellectual disciplines" (Maritain, Degrees, p. 46).

In maintaining that being is the formal object of the intellect itself, Maritain is arguing that being enables the intellect to become active in its own proper life; it is that through which the intellect attains everything else, and therefore it cuts across all the other formal objects of the various disciplines. Being is the very first object that the intellect in itself attains (see Maritain, A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being (London: Sheed & Ward, 1945), pp. 17-27---hereafter referred to as Preface; and An Introduction to Philosophy, trans. by E. I. Watkin (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1947), pp. 185-188).

⁸"In the first place the Thomists, and in particular Cajetan, enquire what is the object first attained by the human intellect, an object therefore which every man attains the instant he begins to think as a rational being, an object presented from the outset to the human mind. They answer with Cajetan: it is being as enveloped or embodied in the sensible quiddity, being 'clothed' in the diverse natures apprehended by the senses, ens concretum quidditati sensibili [sic]

..... The object of metaphysics--and we now pass to an

confusion and misunderstanding later in this thesis, it is necessary to distinguish the various ways in which, according to Maritain, we can come to apprehend being without having that intuition of being essential for metaphysics.

Maritain discusses epistemology as a branch of metaphysics, in the sense that it does not for him precede ontology as a condition for it, but rather grows in and with ontology, our knowledge of being and the critique of that knowledge supporting each other in a reciprocal relationship.⁹ In fact, it is our knowledge of being which is by nature prior. In The Degrees of Knowledge Maritain expresses in a succinct dictum, his reason for so categorizing epistemology: "Knowledge comes before reflection just as nature precedes knowledge."¹⁰ According to Maritain, being is simply the inescapable, primary datum of the intellect. The nature of the intellect itself makes this inevitable. Prior to any act of reflection,

altogether different level, an entirely different phase in the process of human intellection--is, according to the Thomists, being as such, ens in quantum ens, being not clothed or embodied in the sensible quiddity, the essence or nature of sensible things, but on the contrary abstractum, being disengaged and isolated, at least so far as being can be taken in abstraction from more particularized objects. It is being disengaged and isolated from the sensible quiddity, being viewed as such and set apart in its pure intelligible values" (Maritain, Preface, pp. 18-19).

⁹This expression of the reciprocal bond between epistemology and ontology comes from Etienne Gilson, whom Maritain quotes in Degrees, p. 80. For Maritain's understanding of epistemology see the same work, pp. 79-80; and An Introduction to Philosophy, pp. 178-188.

¹⁰Maritain, Degrees, p. 83.

the intellect already knows being, although at first this knowledge is (as we shall see) only implicit and not yet sufficiently purified for adequate metaphysical explication. For Maritain, although not necessarily first in chronological order, the knowledge of being is the first act of the intellect in the order of nature, and therefore he argues that reflection yields the principle of identity as the starting point for epistemology, and not the cogito as Descartes would have it: ". . . in attempting to formulate, on reflection, the experience that serves as a starting point for critique, one would have to say: I am aware of knowing--I am aware of knowing at least one thing, that what is, is; not: I think."¹¹

In the very first act of knowing, the intellect directly attains being. However, in its primal activity being is not all that the intellect attains, and herein lies the reason for the original obscuring of the knowledge of being. We see that in Maritain's suggested replacement for Descartes' famous starting point in epistemology there is something other than the being qua being which is properly

¹¹ Maritain, Degrees, p. 76.

Corresponding to the knowledge of being, which is the first act of the intellect in the order of nature, the principle of identity is the first evidence for the intellect in the order of nature, as Maritain writes in the same work: "Inasmuch as the intellect primarily bears neither on itself, nor on the ego, but on being, then the very first evidence (I mean first in the order of nature, I am not talking about the chronological order, in which, what is first in itself is often only implicit), the evidence that is first in itself for the intellect, is that of the principle of identity 'discovered' in the intellectual apprehension of being or the real (p. 77).

investigated in metaphysics. It includes that thing which is presented here under the defining designation what. The principle of identity maintains that what is, is; and what is, argues Maritain, approaches the intellect for the first time through the organs of sense. It is in conjunction with the body that the intellect first attains being. This is what Maritain considers to be the stance of the orthodox Thomist, and he attributes the explication of this insight to the great sixteenth century Thomist, Cajetan, in particular.¹² The operation of the mind begins with sensual experience. This is not to suggest that the intellect does not have a proper operation of its own, distinct from sensual experience, but rather that the initial stimulation of the intellect comes from sensual experience, and that the intellect terminates in the object first encountered through the organs of sense.

Modern idealism, argues Maritain, began with Descartes, and its fundamental blunder has been the separation of object and thing:

Descartes clearly saw that the known object is known within thought; his capital error was to have separated the object from the thing, believing as he did that the object is in thought, not as an intelligible entity rendered present to the mind through an immaterial form--and with which the mind is intentionally identified--but as an imprint stamped on wax. Henceforth, the intentional function disappears; the known object becomes something of thought, an imprint

¹²See Maritain, Preface, p. 18.

or portrait born within it; understanding stops at the idea (looked upon as instrumental sign). This idea-portrait, this idea-thing, has as its double a thing to which it bears a resemblance but which is itself not attained by the act of understanding. They are two separate quod's, and the divine veracity is needed to assure us that behind the idea-quod (which we attain), there is a thing-quod corresponding to it. Of itself thought attains nothing but itself.¹³

For Maritain, the object enables the intellect to attain the thing. The reason for this is that the intellect always intends the existence of a particular thing. In other words, the intellect affirms being through judgment, declaring the apprehension of being where being alone can reside, in a subject exercising it. In judgment, the intellect joins two otherwise separate notions. When we say that Paul is lean or Peter stout, we are in either case bringing together two distinct notions, and we are able to accomplish this solely because we apprehend the extra-mental existence, whether actual or possible, of a substantial existent--Paul who is lean or Peter who is stout.¹⁴ In this way, the judgment indicates that our objects of thought point to the existence,

¹³Maritain, Degrees, p. 128.

In fact, although clearly acknowledging its intellectual might and value, Maritain argues that modern idealistic speculation is not even true philosophy, but rather "ideosophy" (see Maritain, The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time, trans. by Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), pp. 98-102--hereafter referred to as Peasant).

¹⁴For Maritain's views on judgment see his Existence and the Existent, trans. by Lewis Galantieri and Gerald B. Phelan; Image Gooks (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1957), pp. 25-28; and especially Degrees, pp. 96-99.

whether actual or possible, of a particular thing:

If it is not admitted that our objects of thought are aspects (or 'inspects') of actual or possible things; if it is not admitted that each of them contains, if I may say so, an ontological or meta-logical charge, then the proper function of judgment becomes unintelligible.¹⁵

It is Maritain's position that the actual existent comes first, manifesting itself to man through the organs of sense, and precisely as object.

Maritain criticises Descartes for having introduced the passivity of the intellect, and praises Kant for having established once again the active nature of the intellect. However, according to Maritain, Kant also was guilty of separating object and thing, failing like Descartes to appreciate the intentional nature of the intellect.¹⁶ Maritain finds himself in disagreement with both Descartes and Kant. It is his position that beginning with sensual experience, the actual thing itself becomes present in us in an intentional way.

According to Maritain, the object exists in the mind of man as well as in the actual thing itself. The thing becomes present in us in an intentional way, and the process through which this occurs is discussed by Maritain on sensual and intellectual levels. On each level he apprehends a

¹⁵Degrees, p. 97.

¹⁶See ibid., p. 129.

unitive impression followed by an intentional expression. On the sensual level, there is the formation of a species impressa through the organs of sense, and from this impression a species expressa of imagination is formed. The species expressa of imagination is what is left over from the original impression. It is the sensual expression which is the phantasm of imagination and memory. Then, on the intellectual level, through the effort of the active or agent intellect (intellectus agens), comes the debut of the thing as object in the uniquely human process of intellectual abstraction. There results, abstracted from the sensible phantasm, the immaterial species impressa of the intellect. Finally, the species expressa of the intellect (i.e. the inner word or concept by which we come to know the thing) is formed from this immaterial impression. This is Maritain's understanding of intellectual abstraction,¹⁷ a process which enables the intellect to become the extra-mental thing intentionally, the intellect being informed by the external thing.¹⁸

The object in itself is for Maritain a neutrality which is to be found in both the abstract universal and the concrete particular. As the outcome of intellectual abstraction, the concept is in itself universal, although always relating back to the particular. The actual existent, on the other

¹⁷See ibid., pp. 116-117, and the diagram on p. 119.

¹⁸See ibid., pp. 84-90.

hand, is in itself particular. It is concrete singularity, and Maritain refers to it as the transobjective subject--

. . . not, certainly, because it is hidden behind the object but, on the contrary, because it is itself grasped as object and yet constitutes something irreducible in which the possibility of grasping new objects always remains open (for it can give rise to an endless series of necessary or contingent truths).¹⁹

Now the object in itself is neither exclusively universal, nor exclusively particular:

It is essential to the concept to be abstract and universal. It is essential to the extramental thing to be singular and concrete. The object, on the contrary, existing as it does in the thing with an existence of nature (singular and concrete, and proper to the thing), and also existing in the concept with intentional existence (abstract and universal, and proper to the concept), is in itself indifferent to one state or the other.²⁰

According to Maritain, the object is in one sense identical with the thing, and in another sense identical with the concept. The object is identical with the thing, because it exists in the thing with the very existence of nature itself. It is identical with the concept, for the concept's sole function is to make the thing known. The concept does not exist as a thing in its own right. It is for Maritain a pure or formal sign, in itself transparent

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 93-94. For a discussion of trans-objective being see Joseph J. Sikora, S.J., The Christian Intellect and the Mystery of Being: Reflections of a Maritain Thomist (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 111-114, and 117-121---hereafter referred to as Christian Intellect.

²⁰Maritain, Degrees, p. 123.

and revealing the thing as object:

As a matter of fact, it is the very relation of sign which, in order to possess the purity and effectiveness demanded in this incomparable universe, the universe of knowing, requires the relation of 'identity' (in respect to the intelligible constituent). . . It is because an instrumental sign is not a pure sign, because its primary and essential function is not to make known, that we refuse to look upon the concept as a simple instrumental sign. For the instrumental sign is itself first and foremost a thing, and only secondarily does it function as a sign; it is known first as object and only after that does it 'make known.' The concept must be a formal sign, i.e., precisely as species it must be nothing but sign; it is a pure 'maker-known.' It therefore must consist in being a pure representer or vicar of the object, possessing no trait of nature, no quidditative note, that is not a note and trait of the object. There is the relation of 'identity' demanded by the relation of sign itself. We have never affirmed anything but that sort of identity, . . . 21

Unlike Descartes, who according to Maritain interpreted the concept as an instrumental sign, Maritain comprehends the concept as a formal sign, i.e. as a vital link with extramental being.

Maritain, following the scholastic tradition, distinguishes three degrees of abstraction,²² and within these three degrees various disclosures of being can be discerned. First, we encounter the realm called physica, which gleans from the individual matter of particular bodies a knowledge of sensible nature. In physica itself, Maritain recognises

²¹Ibid., p. 388.

²²See ibid., pp. 35-46; and Philosophy of Nature, trans. by Imelda C. Byrne (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), pp. 111-114.

two classes of knowledge:

. . . we can distinguish, within this Physica, two classes of science as opposite extremes: sciences of observation (sciences which are above all inductive and which we may call empirical sciences of sensible nature), and a properly explanatory science of corporeal being (the philosophy of sensible nature).²³

Second, we confront the realm of mathematica. Although he discusses mathematica as a degree, and in this sense the realm of mathematica is depicted as an advance over the first degree of abstraction, Maritain nevertheless considers mathematica to be a unique plane of conceptualisation. Differing from the other two degrees of abstraction, both of which are specifically concerned with beings having existence (whether actual or possible) outside the mind, mathematica is specifically concerned with quantity, it deals with common matter and bears upon a being of reason (ens rationis).²⁴ The third degree of abstraction is metaphysica. According to Maritain, metaphysica is an advance over both physica and mathematica, although he argues that there is a special hierarchical affinity between physica and metaphysica, because they, unlike mathematica, deal with extra-mental being:

. . . empirical science, philosophy of nature and metaphysics are along the same hierarchical line. Although specifically different, the light of the

²³Maritain, Degrees, pp. 37-38.

²⁴See ibid., pp. 35-36, and 38-40.

first degree of abstraction is, as it were, a participation in that of the third degree. It is lower and divided light, but still capable, in the case of the philosophy of nature, of penetrating inside things, but in the case of empirical science, halted on the surface and at signs.²⁵

Only in the third degree of abstraction is being qua being attained, and the knowledge of that existence which can exist without sensible matter.²⁶

Maritain argues that all three degrees of abstraction disclose being. He insists that being is the formal object of the intellect, and therefore that the intellect attains being directly again and again, in every act of knowing. It is also his position, however, that prior to the intellectual intuition of being and the conceptualisation of being in metaphysics, knowledge of the formal object of the intellect is never thematized--the only discipline which

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

²⁶ For even the ens rationis of mathematica cannot exist without sensible matter:

" . . . the mind can consider objects abstracted from, purified of, matter insofar as matter is the general basis for the active and passive sensible properties of bodies. In this case, it considers nothing more than a certain property which it isolates within bodies--a property that remains when everything sensible is left aside--quantity, number or the extended taken in itself. This is an object of thought which cannot exist without sensible matter, but which can be conceived without it. For, nothing sensible or experimental enters into the definition of the ellipse or of square root. This is the great field of Mathematica, knowledge of Quantity as such according to the relations of order and measure proper to it--the second degree of abstraction" (ibid., pp. 35-36).

attains being as its proper object is metaphysics. Maritain argues that a special place must be reserved for the philosophy of nature, the proper object of which is transcendental being as found in the corporeal world, although the philosophy of nature is limited, in that its proper object is mutable being (ens mobile).²⁷

According to Maritain, the confusion of the disclosure of the formal object of the intellect in any other discipline with its more purified disclosure in the philosophy of nature or the science of metaphysics, is a great source of error. We may, for example, get trapped in the realm of mathematica, ". . . and the danger is that before arriving at ontology properly so-called, (philosophical ontology) the mind may stop at this pseudo-ontology built of beings of reason and constituting a closed universe."²⁸ Maritain argues that

27". . . for the philosophy of nature, the accent must be on ens in the expression ens sensible. As a science of explanation, it discovers the nature of its object and the reasons for its being. And, since it is true that the nature of substances below man is not clearly accessible to us in its specific diversity, it must be said that the proper object of the philosophy of nature does not extend to that specific diversity of bodies, nor to the whole multitude of their phenomena, and is constituted only by transcendental being as determined and particularized in the corporeal, mobile and sensible world. We thereby note two things: First, that the philosophy of nature is in a certain continuity with metaphysics, in spite of the essential difference separating them, and that, on this score, it is above mathematics. Second, we note that philosophy does indeed provide a deductive science of corporeal being, but that it is incapable of providing a deductive science of the phenomena of nature" (ibid., p. 38).

Also see Maritain, Preface, pp. 28-29.

²⁸Maritain, Philosophy of Nature, p. 107.

this was the error of Descartes, who confused the realm of mathematica with the philosophy of sensible nature in the realm of physica.²⁹ Or we may, like Hegel, confuse the being of logic (which like the realm of mathematica has a being of reason for its proper object) with the transcendental being of metaphysics.³⁰

Another disclosure of being outside metaphysics occurs in common sense (i.e. the everyday form of knowledge of the average man).³¹ Before we can discuss this preliminary disclosure of being, it is necessary to note another distinction.

²⁹See ibid., pp. 41-44.

³⁰See Maritain, Preface, pp. 33-37.

³¹It is unlikely that a better definition of common sense, in strict accord with the way in which Maritain himself uses the term, could be formulated than this one offered by Father Sikora:

"By common sense knowledge we mean the spontaneous, unreflective judgment of the undisciplined intellect in the presence of the real. Such knowledge is about reality, but it has certain imperfections. We see things in a kind of global way; we cannot give reasons for what we know to be true; when argumentation is directed against our positions we tend to become confused; this knowledge is most obscured by the fluctuations of our emotional states; if a mistake is made, it can remain undetected, since this knowledge is unreflective, uncritical; common sense remains an unorganized mass of truths, unfounded beliefs, mere opinions, prejudices. There is truth attained, but it remains to be extracted from this mixture of truth and non-truth by critical reflection. Here is our most imperfect knowledge" (Sikora, Christian Intellect, p. 65).

Maritain, following Cajetan, distinguishes between abstractio totalis and abstractio formalis.³² We have been discussing abstractio formalis. It is the abstraction operative in the various sciences. Now each science is concerned with a particular domain of reality. Nevertheless, every science, to the extent that it employs abstraction, is concerned with rendering the object intelligible and therefore immaterial. And, what is most significant, by doing so science discovers the type with which it is dealing. In other words, abstractio formalis is concerned with lifting the form from its matter in order to discern the specific type of object with which a particular discipline is occupied. On the other hand, abstractio totalis, although presupposed and used by the sciences, is also pre-scientific. Unlike abstractio formalis, it is not concerned with extracting a type, but rather moves from the basic recognition of similarity amongst parts to the recognition of the universal whole.³³ Whereas abstractio formalis is the concern of the

³²See Maritain, Philosophy of Nature, pp. 15-24.

³³"I use the same words but the act of thinking I perform is different in the one case and the other. In the first case, the case of abstractio totalis or extensive visualization, I simply abstract the universal whole from the parts. I could just as well say, instead of rational animal, 'featherless biped' or 'monkey-metaphysician.' If I disengage the essence exactly so much the better for me, but it is not precisely the essence as such that I would attain to in this sort of abstraction; I am simply trying to reunite the common traits, to set up a simple notional framework common to such and such individuals, Peter, Paul or John. In the second case on the contrary, (abstractio formalis or typological visualization), when I say 'rational

various disciplines, abstractio totalis is the abstraction operative in common sense.

According to Maritain, it is the notion of being attained by common sense (even though common sense in itself is man's most imperfect mode of knowing) which is the closest to the knowledge of being attained in metaphysics. Arrived at by abstractio totalis, the notion of being attained by common sense is clearly vague and in itself insufficient:

. . . we perceive the notion of being to be the most extensive, the widest of all notions. But we have not yet disengaged the properties of being as the primordial source and focus of intelligible mystery and have not yet seen its distinctive countenance.³⁴

And yet, being so close to nature, common sense possesses a certain intuitional power:

Insofar as common sense is natural, i.e., as it conforms to an intellect's essential inclinations, it is naturally right, agile and intuitive, it goes towards being and God with a sort of spiritual phototropism. And in that sense, philosophy should be its continuation.³⁵

Trusting his organs of sense and what he perceives as the

animal' this same word corresponds to a wholly different act of thought. Here I am trying expressly to attain to the nature, the essence, the type of being, the locus of intelligible necessities; in brief to the object of science discernible in these individuals, Peter, Paul or John. So you see, although I have been using the same word 'man' or 'rational animal' in both cases, I have been dealing with two very distinct acts of thought" (ibid., pp. 18-19).

³⁴ Maritain, Preface, p. 31.

³⁵ Maritain, Degrées, p. 84.

natural perspective of mankind (i.e. the common sense point of view which is not ignorant of being), Maritain is prepared to assert that there exists a fundamental continuity between common sense and metaphysics:

The knowledge of common sense is a natural and spontaneous growth, the product so to speak of rational instincts and has not yet attained the level of science. It is an infra-scientific knowledge. Nevertheless this infra-scientific knowledge is more universal than that of the various particular sciences of which I have just spoken. It possesses a certain metaphysical value in as much as it attains the same objects as metaphysics attains in a different fashion. Common sense is therefore, as it were, a rough sketch of metaphysics, a vigorous and unreflective sketch drawn by the natural motion and spontaneous instincts of reason. This is why common sense attains a certain though unscientific knowledge of God, human personality, free will and so on.³⁶

2. The Intellectual Intuition of Being and Metaphysical Conceptualisation

Intuition, for Maritain, is the foundation of human knowledge, and it begins at the very basic level of sensation itself:

There is first a primary intuition, an intuition on which rests the whole of human knowledge, it is the intuition of the external world, sense perception. In sensation, the object, by its action, produces in us a psychic likeness (species) of itself by means of which we perceive it directly, not in its essence but in its accidents, in its sensible qualities, and in the very action it exerts upon us. The living organ of sense therefore knows the concrete object immediately, in the materiality of its existence and of

³⁶Maritain, Preface, p. 29.

its individual and contingent action.³⁷

However, this sensual knowledge is not the product of intellectual intuition. In itself, the primary intuition which is sense perception cannot yield the intellectual knowledge which man is capable of. It is, although the foundation of all human knowledge, in itself what one might call a brute intuition, incapable of disclosing even the perceiving subject.³⁸ The intuition which grasps intellectually, on the other hand, is in itself purely immaterial. It is the proper function of the intellect, and it can yield a knowledge which rises above sensation. Maritain argues that in the human intellect this intellectual intuition is expressed precisely through conceptualisation.

Although the knowledge of being is absolutely primary by way of nature, it is disclosed only in conceptualisation. Existing in itself only as transparency, the concept terminates

³⁷Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, pp. 149-150.

³⁸"... our senses (external senses aided by memory and the 'estimative') give us, for example, the image of this lamp, as of a certain ensemble acting upon our eyes by certain colours, a certain brilliance, according to a certain figure, 'certain dimensions, extremely variable moreover according to the changed position of ourselves or the object, and strictly determined by circumstances of time and place, by the hic et nunc. Were we to stop there, we should possess materially, organically, a knowledge impregnated with materiality: we should see this lamp (without being able to name it), we should not think it; what this lamp is, we should not know; and we should not know that there is an I perceiving it, for the sense does not turn back upon itself" (ibid., p. 156).

in the object, and therefore every concept is in a general sense intuitive. It engenders an immediate and direct encounter with the thing as object. However, the preliminary disclosures of the formal object of the intellect present being only in a confused way. Sensation in itself, giving rise to the species impressa of external sense and the species expressa of imagination, offers nothing that is adapted to the human intellect. It is the intellectus agens which enables sensation to bear fruit in the mind of man, and this fruit contains only the seed of being buried within it. Thus the empirical sciences and the philosophy of nature deal with what Maritain refers to as particularised being.³⁹ It is being cloaked in what is sensible and mobile. Mathematics and logic deal with beings of reason (entia rationis). And common sense is concerned only with vague being. In metaphysics, however, the intellectual intuition of being, what one might call the primary intuition of the intellect as opposed to the primary intuition of sensation, is expressed in the concept of being qua being.

Father Sikora distinguishes between objective and non-objective presence,⁴⁰ and his distinction is indeed helpful here, for it introduces the notion of knowledge by connaturality. Knowledge by connaturality is the most impor-

³⁹See Maritain, Preface, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁰See Sikora, Christian Intellect, pp. 56-73.

tant notion in the realism of Jacques Maritain, for it is the supra-sensual foundation of all our intellectual (metaphysical and otherwise) knowledge, and (as we shall see in chapter three of this thesis) the supra-natural foundation of our mystical knowledge. It is knowing (not merely feeling in a purely sensual way) without conceptualisation. It is instinctual, but humanly so. It is the instinctual, non-objective grasp of reality, either through the intellect or will. Non-objective presence does not mean that the relation of something external to a perceiving subject is discarded, but rather, that something external is apprehended by a subject without objective notions. An intellectual connaturality, which allows the instinctual grasp of external reality without conceptualisation, is the very foundation of conceptualisation itself.⁴¹

The intellect apprehends being (the very being qua being of metaphysics) in the intellectual intuition of the intelligible value of the thing, and it can do so only because the thing is already connatural to the power of human knowing.

⁴¹"A knowledge by intellectual connaturality with reality as conceptualisable and rendered proportionate in act to the human intellect. It goes along with the development of the habitus of the intelligence; and it is from this knowledge that comes the intuition--intellectual and expressible in a mental work--of the philosopher, the scientist, of him who knows by mode of knowledge" (Jacques and Raissa Maritain, The Situation of Poetry: Four Essays on the Relations between Poetry, Mysticism, Magic, and Knowledge, trans. by Marshall Suther (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 66---hereafter referred to as Poetry).

In this way, being is not different from other objects of thought. However, as the formal object of the intellect itself, being is a transcendental object of thought (i.e. an object of thought not confined to any particular species or genus):

When things become the object of our intelligence, they do not merely deliver to us their determinate specific or generic nature, whether in itself or in an empiriological substitute. Before knowing that Peter is a man, I have already attained him as something, as a being. And this intelligible object 'being' is not the privilege of one of the classes of things that the Logician calls species, genus, or category. It is universally communicable. I find it everywhere, everywhere itself and everywhere varied. I cannot think anything without positing it before my mind. It imbues everything. It is what the scholastics called a transcendental object of thought.⁴²

And (as we shall see) this understanding of "object" refers to the being which is the actual existent (ens), as well as to the being which is the act (esse) of a particular existent.

As a prerequisite for conceptualisation, that which is to be conceived must be connaturally present to the perceiving intellect, and as a transcendental, the being attained in intellectual intuition is not present in any particular species impressa alone, but rather in them all. Being is not beyond conceptualisation; for in its transparency the formal object of the intellect reveals the

⁴²Maritain, Degrees, p. 210. And for this reason Sikora refers to metaphysical concepts, beginning with the concept of being, as "meta-concepts" (see Sikora, Christian Intellect, p. 117).

thing, although the thing only in so far as it is. The intellectual intuition which is the foundation of metaphysics reaches ens in quantum ens.⁴³

In the first chapter of his brief but powerful book, Existence and the Existent, Maritain expresses succinctly his understanding of the intellectual intuition of being and the conceptualisation of being in metaphysics. First, in simple apprehension, the intellect comprehends the nature or essence of a thing. This is the intelligible object which is first conceptualised in the human mind by way of abstraction. It is the what initially delivered to the human mind through the organs of sense. Next, in judgment, the intellect attains being, not the notion of being but the very act of being itself. In judging the data which the mind receives through the organs of sense, the intellect joins what has been abstracted to the very fact that this something abstracted is. And certitude rests upon the primary intuition which is sense perception:

At the instant when the finger points to that which the eye sees, at the instant when sense perceives, in its blind fashion, without intellection or mental word, that this exists; at that instant the intellect says (in a judgment), this being is or exists and at the same time (in a concept), being.⁴⁴

Indeed, it is the act of existence which is the

⁴³See Maritain, Preface, pp. 43-45.

⁴⁴Maritain, Existence and the Existent, p. 34.

object of the intellectual intuition of being.⁴⁵ However; the act of existence cannot in fact be separated from essence. The act of existence and essence coalesce in the concept of being:

. . . the concept of existence cannot be detached from the concept of essence. Inseparable from each other, these two make up one and the same concept, simple although intrinsically varied; one and the same essentially analogous concept, that of being.⁴⁶

In this way, Maritain points back to the subject exercising existence (i.e. the concrete singularity which is ens, without which there could be no act of existence or esse):

. . . this concept of existence, of to-exist (esse) is not and cannot be cut off from the absolutely primary concept of being (ens, that-which is, that-which exists, that whose act is to exist). This is so because the affirmation of existence, or the judgment, which provides the content of such a concept, is itself the 'composition' of a subject with existence, i.e., the affirmation that something exists (actually or possibly, simply or with such-and-such a predicate). It is the concept of being (that-which exists or is able to exist) which, in the order of ideative perception, corresponds adequately to this affirmation in the order of judgment. The concept of existence cannot be visualised completely apart, detached, isolated, separated from that of being; and it is in that concept of being and with that concept of being that it is at first conceived.⁴⁷

The produce of metaphysical abstraction always relates back to some concrete or, to use a very crude but highly effective metaphor, "embodied" act of existence,

⁴⁵See ibid., pp. 28-31.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 33.

i.e. the act of existence coupled with essence in an actual or possible existent (ens). For this reason, Maritain refers to esse as the super-intelligible⁴⁸ source of intelligibility:

. . . the concept of existence cannot be detached from that of essence: existence is always the existence of something, of a capacity to exist. The very notion of essentia signifies a relation to esse, which is why we have good grounds for saying that existence is the primary source of intelligibility. But, not being an essence or an intelligible, this primary source of intelligibility has to be a super-intelligible. When we say that being is that which exists or is able to exist, that which exercises or is able to exercise existence, a great mystery is contained in these few words. In the subject, that which, we possess an essence or an intelligible--in so far as it is this or that, in so far as it possesses a nature. In the verb exists we have the act of existing, or a super-intelligible. To say that which exists is to join an intelligible to a super-intelligible; it is to have before our eyes an intelligible engaged in and perfected by a super-intelligibility.⁴⁹

Although discussing the possible existent, Maritain argues that every judgment is in fact ultimately resolved in the senses. At this point we encounter the Thomistic existentialism of Maritain, for even the most immaterial of scientific disciplines (i.e. metaphysics) relies upon the apprehension of an actual or concrete existent through the organs of sense. As Maritain writes in his A Preface

⁴⁸Maritain does not mean that the act of existence is unintelligible, but rather that it is outstandingly so. For Maritain, super-intelligibility and eminent intelligibility are synonymous (see ibid., p. 33).

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 43-44.

to Metaphysics:

The part played by the senses is you see, absolutely indispensable. Every judgement must in one way or another be finally resolved in them. In other words, the res sensibilis visibilis, the visible object of sense, is the touchstone of every judgement, ex qua debemus de aliis judicare, by which we must judge of everything else, because it is the touchstone of existence. A metaphysician deprived of the senses or their use, a metaphysician asleep or dreaming, is for St. Thomas a sheer impossibility, a monster, an absurdity. And this not only because ideas are derived from the senses, but because the senses, which possess a speculative value, though it is obscure, are indispensable to science, and even to the supreme science, the science most disengaged from the material, if it is to reach the actual existence which it may neither ignore nor neglect.⁵⁰

Being is the formal object of the intellect, attained directly--albeit confusedly--in every act of knowing. In metaphysics being-in-itself⁵¹ is arrived at by abstractio formalis,⁵² and therefore being-in-itself is the specific object of this discipline alone. The intellectual intuition of being engenders the transcendentals wrapped up in being-in-itself (i.e. one, true and good),⁵³ and beginning with the principle of identity, the intellectual intuition of

⁵⁰Maritain, Preface, p. 23.

⁵¹For the sake of clarity we are introducing the term "being-in-itself" in order to designate both esse and ens in their fully abstract and transcendental dimension, for it is the act of existence never factually detached from essence which is the subject matter of metaphysics,

⁵²See Maritain, Degrees, p. 217.

⁵³See Maritain, Preface, pp. 66-67.

being engenders the principles of metaphysics--the enumeration and explication of which stretches beyond the scope of this thesis.⁵⁴

3. Only the Intellectual Intuition of Being
Can Be the Foundation of Metaphysics

As pointed out in the beginning of this chapter,⁵⁵ Maritain argues that the Bergsonian intuition of duration is an attempt to reach being by way of immersion in the concrete perceptiveness of sensual experience. Maritain insists that ". . . no matter how much Bergsonian intuition is presented to us, as 'supra-intellectual' or 'ultra-intellectual' we still must recognize that in point of fact, in reality, it can be only infra-intellectual."⁵⁶ And not only does Maritain criticise the intuition of Bergson, but the intuition of modern existentialism as well. Besides the Bergsonian intuition of duration, Maritain also criticises Martin Heidegger's encounter with anguish and Gabriel Marcel's experience of fidelity.⁵⁷ However, Maritain is critical of Heidegger and Marcel in the way he is critical of Bergson, i.e. with deep respect. All of these men, argues Maritain, have had a legitimate encounter with reality, and

⁵⁴See ibid., pp. 90-152.

⁵⁵See supra, p. 13.

⁵⁶Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, p. 28.

⁵⁷See Maritain, Preface, pp. 49-54.

for that reason are not to be dismissed. However, each of them has, according to Maritain, taken but a preliminary step in the direction of the intellectual intuition of being. They are all yet involved in the empirical:

. . . the most serious danger which all these methods of approaching being involve is the danger of remaining imprisoned in one or other of the concrete analogues of being, whichever one has chosen as a path to it. The experience in question gives information only of itself. This is indeed the drawback of pure experience in philosophy and the pitfall of every metaphysical system which attempts to be empirical. The experience, though valid for the domain covered by the particular intuition, cannot, save by an arbitrary procedure, be extended to a wider province of the intelligible world, and be employed to explain it.⁵⁸

Indeed, sensual intuition is for Maritain the very foundation of human knowledge. However, in itself it attains only concrete singularity. It cannot attain being-in-itself (i.e. being in its transcendental dimension). Being-in-itself, although always apprehended in concrete singularity, is not in itself a thing. This is very important, for the value of being-in-itself apprehended in things exists in an analogical way, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This is why, according to Maritain, one simply cannot stop at one of the concrete analogues of being. To make being-in-itself into a thing in its own right, would lead--depending upon one's inclination--either to "pure ontological (monism" or

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 52.

"pure phenomenalist pluralism":

If being were the object of a concrete intuition like that of an external sense or of introspection, of an intuition centred upon a reality grasped concretely in its singular existence, philosophy would be compelled to choose, as it gave this intuition an idealist or a realist value, between a pure ontological monism and a pure phenomenalist pluralism.⁵⁹

According to Maritain, experience is simply not sufficient on the natural level of human knowing. Any exclusive attempt to construct philosophically upon an empirical foundation is of necessity doomed to remain a prisoner of that foundation. Such an attempt is an endeavour to reconcile metaphysics with the empirical sciences. It is in effect being-in-itself which is made into a thing in its own right, and Maritain argues that the penalty for replacing transcendental being with an empirical counterfeit is either ontological monism or phenomenalist pluralism. If one gives an idealistic value to an encounter with a concrete analogue of being, then one will choose ontological monism. If, on the other hand, one gives a realistic value to an encounter with a concrete analogue of being, then one will choose phenomenalist pluralism. The modern idealistic blunder can be attributed to Descartes' separation of object and thing. And the realistic blunder can be attributed to an ignorance stemming from the maya which is empirical science.⁶⁰ Indeed, Maritain acknowledges the valuable

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁰"In order to reach physical reality in its own

contribution of empirical science to the edifice of human knowing on the natural level. However, the contribution of empirical science is not philosophical. Metaphysics must be based on the very pinnacle of the human process of intellectual abstraction. It must be based on a transcendental object of thought.

Maritain extends an invitation to listen. Beginning with common sense, where the nature of human intelligence instinctually attains being, although in an obscure and philosophically inadequate way, Maritain would have us listen to what he apprehends as the song of being. According to Maritain, the modern philosopher fails to listen. In his proud impetuosity, the modern philosopher experiments with the gross density of empirical clamor rather than make the effort to recover the ethereal simplicity of a fine intellectual harmony.

Because modern philosophers cannot forgive Thomistic metaphysics for what they perceive as its scholastic pedantry, Maritain is unwilling to forgive them for what he perceives as their sensual impetuosity:

A deep vice besets the philosophers of our day, whether they be neo-Kantians, neo-positivists,

enigmatic way and to conquer the world of phenomena, our science has become a kind of Maya--a Maya which succeeds and makes us masters of nature. But the sense of Being is absent from it" (Maritain, Approaches to God, trans. by Peter O'Reilly; World Perspectives, Vol. I, ed. by Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 8).

idealists, Bergsonians, logisticians, pragmatists, neo-Spinozists, or neo-mystics. It is the ancient error of the nominalists. In different forms, and with various degrees of awareness, they all blame knowledge-through-concepts for not being a supra-sensible intuition of the existing singular, as is Spinoza's scientia intuitiva, Boehme's theosophic vision, or that of Swedenborg, which Kant so regretfully denounced as illusory. They cannot forgive that knowledge for not opening directly upon existence as sensation does, but only onto essences, possibles. They cannot forgive it for its inability to reach actual existence except by turning back upon sense. They have a basic misunderstanding of the value of the abstract, that immateriality which is more enduring than things for all that it is untouchable and unimaginable, that immateriality which mind seeks out in the very heart of things. But why this incurable nominalism? The reason is that while having a taste for the real indeed, they nevertheless have no sense of being. Being as such, loosed from the matter in which it is incorporated, being, with its pure objective necessities and its laws that prove no burden, its restraints which do not bind, its invisible evidence, is for them only a word.⁶¹

According to Maritain, the intellectual intuition of being, although dependent upon the primary intuition which is sense perception, is nevertheless in itself an eidetic intuition.⁶² The true metaphysician, argues Maritain, apprehends the intelligible value inherent in every particular thing, as a transcendental object of thought. Not in itself a thing, being-in-itself is the purely intelligible value of every particular thing in so far as it is, and it is apprehended in the transcendental concept of being qua being.

⁶¹Maritain, Degrees, p. 1.

⁶²See Maritain, Preface, pp. 58-61.

In other words, it is Maritain's position that the intellectual intuition of being cannot be separated from conceptualisation. In his first attempt at ponderous explication as a metaphysician, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, Maritain expresses his position:

The answer that should have been given against Kant is that intellect sees by conceiving, and conceives only to see. Its operation does not consist in subsuming a sensible content beneath an empty form, --nor in cutting out the real according to ready-made forms. In an inner word whose content escapes the eye and the touch and transcends in itself all order of sensation, but has greater density and fullness the more purely intelligible is the sound it gives out, --the intellect attains reality itself brought to the level of our mind. In short, there is indeed a philosophical intuition, but it is in the concept and by the concept that this particular intuition, which is intellectual intuition, intellection itself, takes place.⁶³

In this chapter we have seen how Maritain attempts to reconcile intuition with intelligence, by explaining the concept as a transparency which allows the intentional presence of the actual thing itself in the mind of man. In every discipline, and in the world of common sense (a realm which, as we have noted above, Maritain considers to be especially close to the domain of metaphysics), intellectual abstraction is the very vehicle of intuition (i.e. intellectual intuition, for in this chapter we have also seen that Maritain is trying to avoid any attempt to construct philosophically upon an empirical foundation alone).

⁶³Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, p. 30.

Being is the formal object of the intellect, and although it is always being which is attained directly in every act of knowing (through the concepts which enable the thing to become present in us in an intentional way), being-in-itself is the specific object of metaphysics alone. In metaphysics, where being-in-itself is attained in an intellectual intuition as a transcendental object of thought, the reconciliation of intuition with intelligence reaches its highest point. This is so, because in metaphysics intuition and intelligence work together to disclose being in its transcendental and (as we shall see in the next chapter) analogical purity.

CHAPTER II

TRANSCENDENCE AND ANALOGY

Within the context of this thesis, analogy is mentioned only to indicate what Maritain considers to be the epitome of natural knowledge. It is mentioned here, because the natural knowledge of God, stemming from the intelligent unraveling of the implication inherent in the natural intellectual intuition of being, is in no way to be confused with mystical experience--an experience which cannot be achieved, but only received as a gift above nature or supra-natural. Maritain's understanding of the intellectual intuition of being, and the consequent ananoetic knowledge of God, is opposed to any form of monism, pantheism or panentheism. Maritain affirms the absolute transcendence of God, and claims a natural knowledge of Him only by way of a direct apprehension of the being of sensible things.

In attaining being-in-itself the intellect apprehends what is there in so far as it is. Now what is there shares with every other thing the common fact that they all are. A single particle of sand blown about by the wind on a sandy beach has this much in common with even the most acute of created intellects, and even with God Himself--the very fact of its existence. Although abstracted from a particular

thing, being-in-itself is not a thing. Being-in-itself is supremely unimaginable, and by its very nature it is analogical.

Only particular things actually exist; as the transcendental object of metaphysics, being-in-itself is the abstracted analogical value of a particular thing in so far as it is. Being-in-itself; then, is never realised apart from what is, and it has meaning only in so far as its analogues actually are. In itself transcending all of them, being-in-itself refers to the being of every one of its analogues.

As stated in the previous chapter,¹ common sense (i.e. the everyday form of knowledge of the average man) has a certain metaphysical value. Although in its own way, common sense attains the same objects as metaphysics. Common sense intuits being and apprehends in a vague way the analogical character of being, and for this reason (as we shall see) common sense is able to attain "a certain though unscientific knowledge of God."

Being-in-itself is for Maritain a transcendental and analogical object of thought, and the implications of this for man's knowledge of God on the natural level of human knowing will be our concern in this chapter. According to Maritain, we encounter the transcendental and analogical aspects of being: first, through the vagueness of common

¹See supra, pp. 29-30 (the quotation which appears on this page is taken from a longer quotation on p. 30).

sense; and then, through the precision of metaphysical science, where being-in-itself is attained. In this chapter we will discuss transcendence and analogy in common sense first, and then we will discuss transcendence and analogy in metaphysics. In this way we will arrive at the epitome of knowledge on the natural level of human knowing (i.e. the analogical apprehension of God in metaphysics).

1. Transcendence and Analogy in Common Sense

It is clear, and Maritain certainly does not desire to dispute the fact, that what might be called the transcendental-analogical verity of being is present in the world of common sense only in a confused way. Common sense attains no properly articulated knowledge of either being or God. And yet, Maritain argues that a genuine intuition of being is indeed operative in common sense; in his Approaches to God, where he articulates his profound respect for what he perceives as the natural perspective of mankind (i.e. the common sense point of view), Maritain writes:

Here [in the world of common sense] everything depends on the natural intuition of being-- on the intuition of that act of existing which is the act of every act and the perfection of every perfection, in which all the intelligible structures of reality have their definitive actuation, and which overflows in activity in every being and in the intercommunication of all beings.²

Not to be confused with the natural intellectual

²Maritain, Approaches to God, p. 3.

intuition of being, this "natural intuition of being" is the infra-scientific grasp of what Maritain refers to as the vague being of common sense. On this infra-scientific level, the object (i.e. being) of this intuition is not yet abstracted as the specific object of a particular discipline (i.e. the being-in-itself of metaphysics). As already stated in the previous chapter,³ it is by way of abstractio totalis that common sense attains being. Nevertheless, Maritain insists that the notion of being attained by common sense is the closest to the knowledge of being attained in metaphysics. Maritain argues that on this infra-scientific level the transcendental nature of being is apprehended (although confusedly) in conjunction with the as yet unspecified analogical reasoning which discloses the reality of God.

Because it attains the transcendental nature of being in a confused way (i.e. in conjunction with analogical reasoning), the natural intuition of being is divided by Maritain into three stages: first, one becomes aware of the independent existence of things beyond the sphere of one's own unique existence; second, one realises one's own existence as fragile and threatened with extinction; and third, one recognises the necessity for Being free from nothingness-- not a personal and transcendent Being explicitly, but rather, in view of the inability to account for one's own existence

³See supra, pp. 28-29.

through the merit of that existence alone (being-with-nothingness and therefore only possible, liable to destruction and not having in itself the power to be), the need for Being (Being-without-nothingness and therefore necessary, not liable to destruction and having in Itself the power to be).⁴ These are not three stages in a segmented process or progression, but three artificial stages, developed by Maritain for the purpose of clarifying what takes place in the single flash of certitude which is the natural intuition of common sense:

These three leaps--by which the intellect moves first to actual existence as asserting itself independently of me; and then from this sheer objective existence to my own threatened existence; and finally from my existence spoiled with nothingness to absolute existence--are achieved within the same unique intuition, which philosophers would explain as the intuitive perception of the essentially analogical content of the first concept, the concept of Being.⁵

Maritain argues that even in the world of common sense, the analogical implication inherent in the natural intuition of being is further developed, and with this development the apprehension of the transcendental nature of being in common sense becomes clear. Through ". . . a prompt, spontaneous reasoning, as natural as this intuition [the natural intuition of being] (and as a matter of fact

⁴The terms "being-with-nothingness" and "Being-without-nothingness" are Maritain's (see Approaches to God, pp. 5-7).

⁵Ibid., p. 5.

more or less involved in it), . . . ,"⁶ one ascertains that not only one's own existence is fragile and threatened with extinction, but also the fact that the universal whole of which one is a part lies beneath the shadow of nothingness. In this way, Maritain argues, common sense, unable to account for the existence of the whole of nature through the merit of that existence alone, is actually able to glean from the intelligible (and implicitly transcendental) value of the vague being it attains the necessity for the existence of an absolutely transcendent Being, which Maritain does not hesitate to call God:

Thus the internal dynamism of the intuition of existence, or of the intelligible value of Being, causes me to see that absolute existence or Being-without-nothingness transcends the totality of nature. And there I am, confronted with the existence of God.⁷

2. Transcendence and Analogy in Metaphysics

For Maritain, everything begins with (and must always adhere to) substantial reality (i.e. the concrete singularity which is a particular thing). Attained through sensual experience, the actual existent is the source of all our knowledge. Already attained on the level of sense perception, the actual existent is grasped by intuition and judged to be when it confronts the intellect. A transcendental and analogical object of thought, being-in-itself is abstracted

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., pp. 6-7.

as the intelligible value of the actual existent; and the analogical value of being once released, according to the Thomist position of Maritain, can carry the metaphysician beyond what is intelligible for us in any direct way, to what is in itself supremely so. In a more exact way than in common sense, the analogical value of being released in metaphysics can lead the metaphysician to the indirect and analogical apprehension of that existence which can exist without sensible matter.

What Maritain refers to as the "transobjective subject"⁸ is the actual thing in its particularity. It is concrete singularity and in itself inexhaustible. It is unquenchable; and although our intellects attain it through the concepts we form (even its very actuality in the metaphysical concept of esse), we never touch it in the profundity of its particularity. Indeed, this God given uniqueness, one might wish to say personhood, which is the very actuality of every single being, is for Maritain a mystery deserving our respect.⁹

⁸See supra, pp. 21-22.

⁹For Maritain's distinction between problem and mystery see Preface, pp. 2-12.

It is interesting to note that Maritain's metaphysical appreciation of mysterious, inexhaustible particularity is the basis of his political thought, when realised in the proper personhood which in the sensible world is the goal of man alone. For Maritain's distinction between mere individuality and true personality see his brief but excellent work: The Person and the Common Good, trans. by John J. Fitzgerald (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948).

In itself, the transobjective subject is inexhaustible and therefore remains a mystery to us; and yet, through intellectual abstraction we apprehend the transobjective subject in itself, although never completely and all at once, in a species expressa of the intellect which is derived from it. All subjects which can be brought over to us through intellectual abstraction constitute for Maritain the world of transobjective intelligibility, as he writes in The Degrees of Knowledge:

We have called the transobjective intelligible the infinite (transfinite) ensemble of subjects which it [the human subject referred to by Maritain as the cisobjective subject] can subject to its intelligible grasps, or which can be delivered to it as objects. To be very precise, we mean by these subjects those whose essence or first intelligible constitutive can itself (even though only in its most universal notes) become object for it in a concept. Let us say they are by definition subjects which are knowable to it in some degree 'in themselves' or by dianoetic intellection. They are corporeal things which, since they can fall under the sense, can fall also under the light of the agent intellect, and so deliver their essence to grasps of abstraction, at least to the extent that there appears in its intelligibility some determination of being.¹⁰

Transcendental, because it is above every species and genus, being-in-itself is the acme of transobjective intelligibility. Being-in-itself is supremely unimaginable and essentially analogical. Attained directly "or by dianoetic intellection" in the sensible things which confront

¹⁰Maritain, Degrees, pp. 202-203.

us through our organs of sense, being (as the object of metaphysics) can carry us to an analogue beyond what is sensible and intelligible for us.

In The Degrees of Knowledge, Maritain distinguishes between dianoetic, perinoetic and ananoetic knowledge.¹¹ In order to articulate the close correspondence between direct or dianoetic intellection and analogy in Maritain's thought, it is necessary to explain these distinctions.

As already indicated above, dianoetic knowledge is that knowledge by which the human subject attains in some degree the actual thing itself, in so far as the transobjective subject is attained directly through intellectual abstraction. According to Maritain, being-in-itself is actually attained in this way, through a direct apprehension of the analogical value of the actual existent. However, although the analogical value of being is realised at this stage, dianoetic knowledge attains directly only the being of sensible things, in that the very notion of being-in-itself is abstracted from the things which confront us through our organs of sense. Dianoetic knowledge rests on the certitude of sensual experience, although in itself designating the intuition and judgment which belongs to the intellect.

In dianoetic knowledge, intelligible values are

¹¹See ibid., pp. 202-226.

attained through what Maritain refers to as the proper accident or property:

When the mind holds a property in the strict and philosophical (ontological) sense of this word, a difference of being is attained, an accidental form is seized in its intelligibility, and by it, the essence (as human nature by rationality, or animal nature by sensitivity).¹²

And what is most important in the context of this thesis, being-in-itself is attained in this way:

As the first object grasped by the intellect, it is clear that being is not known in the mirror of some other previously known object. It is attained in sensible things by dianoetic intellection. Just as a generic or specific nature is known in itself by the property which reveals its essential difference, so an analogue (analogum analogans) is known in itself by that one of its analogates (analogata analogata) which first falls under the senses.¹³

In perinoetic knowledge (i.e. the peripheral knowledge of common accidents or properties) only the phenomenal is attained:

. . . the properties in the strict sense of the word remain inaccessible. Clusters of sensible accidents (common accidents), grasped exclusively as observable or measurable, are taken in their place (like the descriptive 'properties,' density,

¹²Ibid., p. 206.

¹³Ibid., pp. 214-215. The Latin has been corrected from the sixth French edition of this work, published by Desclée De Brouwer, 1958.

In The Degrees of Knowledge, for clarity of expression, Maritain uses the word "analogue" to designate transcendental being (i.e. the being qua being which is the proper object of metaphysics and not in itself confined to any particular being), and he uses the word "analogate" to designate the concrete singularity which is a particular being. In this thesis, the word "analogue" has been employed to designate the particular being.

atomic weight, melting point, boiling point, spectrum of high frequency, etc., which serve to distinguish bodies in chemistry). These descriptive characters are given the name 'properties,' but the import of the name is here quite different and no more philosophical (ontological) than that of the word 'substance' in the usage of chemists. They are at once exterior signs and masks of the veritable (ontological) properties. They are empiriological properties, substitutes for properties properly so called. The mind cannot decipher the intelligible in the sensible, it makes use of the sensible itself in order to circumscribe an intelligible core that escapes it. It is then that we say that the form is too immersed in matter to fall within the grasp of our intelligence. It is impossible by such properties to attain in any degree whatever the substantial nature in itself or in its formal constitutive. It is known not by signs which manifest it, but by signs which hide it.¹⁴

Maritain's third distinction, ananoetic knowledge, simply designates knowledge by analogy. It is the intelligent use of the analogical value of being attained already in dianoetic knowledge. Ananoetic knowledge is the means by which the metaphysician can attain that existence which can exist without sensible matter, and yet ananoetic knowledge is closely related to dianoetic knowledge, in that analogy is based on the direct apprehension of being-in-itself in sensible things alone.

In the world of common sense, through the direct apprehension of the being of things which do not have in themselves their own explication, the natural intuition of being leads men to God, as the necessary Transcendent Being. In metaphysics, where the intellectual intuition of being

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 206-207.

reveals the transcendental and analogical aspects of being-in-itself, God is apprehended in a more precise way as the necessary Cause of all being. We need not here be concerned with explicating the various ways¹⁵ of approaching God philosophically. However, we must be concerned with that which enables such argumentation to take place. We must be concerned with the analogical potential of being-in-itself, for it is this which enables Maritain to argue for the existence of God from the existence of sensible things below God.

In the metaphysical parlance of Maritain, analogy¹⁶ is associated with transintelligible reality. Transintelligible reality is that reality which lies beyond the realm of sensibility. It is not connatural to the power of human knowing, and is not directly attained through transparent concepts abstracted from it. Transintelligible reality can therefore be known by us only through analogy,¹⁷ and that analogy means

¹⁵The five ways of St. Thomas Aquinas, and a sixth proposed by Maritain himself (see Maritain, Approaches to God, pp. 16-83).

¹⁶In this chapter we are concerned with analogy only in so far as it attains the invisible existence of the angels and God (i.e. of created being beyond the realm of sensation and uncreated Being beyond all else). Maritain also speaks of the "superanalogy of faith" (see Maritain, Degrees, pp. 241-244, and infra, pp. 66-71).

¹⁷"This universe on which metaphysics opens out, and the knowledge of which requires that it have recourse to a whole art of deciphering the invisible in the visible, we are calling transintelligible. We do so not, certainly, because it is unintelligible in itself (on the contrary, it is the domain of absolute intelligibility), nor because it is unintel-

a proportionality based on the transcendental object of thought, being-in-itself, an object in itself divested of every particular, specific or generic limitation, and therefore engendering proportion amongst those particulars exercising it. Precisely in so far as they are, all beings have something in common. In that being qua being signifies the act of existence (esse) of a particular being (ens), without designating the specific essence or what is being referred to, it implies the participation of all beings in the transcendental and analogical value of being-in-itself (i.e. the purely abstract, transcendental and analogical object of thought). In this supremely analogical way, the transintelligible world (the universe of angels including the very God they either adore or despise) becomes the world of metaphysics.

In A Preface to Metaphysics, Maritain defines the analogical value or potential of being-in-itself as follows:

Being presents me with an infinite intelligible variety which is the diversification of something which I can nevertheless call by one and the same name. It is something that I find everywhere and call by the same name, because it is in all cases made known to me by the similar relationship which the most diverse objects possess to a certain term essentially diverse, designated in each by our concept of being, as being present formally and intrin-

ligible for us, but because it is disproportionate to our human intellect. It is not intelligible for us in an experimental nor in a dianoetic way. In other words, it is not connatural to our power of knowing. It is intelligible to us only by analogy" (ibid., p. 219).

sically in it. And this analogical character, an example of what is called the analogy of strict proportionality, is inscribed in the very nature of the concept of being. It is analogous from the outset, not a univocal concept afterwards employed analogously. It is essentially analogous, polyvalent. In itself it is but a simple unity of proportionality, that is, it is purely and simply manifold and one in a particular respect.¹⁸

Especially when we are talking about God, there is an aspect of ananoetic knowledge or knowledge by analogy which must be stressed, and this is its negative side. Even when we discuss the angels, according to Maritain, we are discussing realities which in their creaturehood are far closer to us than they are to God. Maritain's Thomistic realism argues for the separability of essence (essentia) and existence (esse) in every creature including the highest amongst angelic natures. The essence (essentia) of any creature depends upon an external source for the existence (esse) which establishes a particular being (ens) in actuality. For this reason, every creature is merely possible: dependent upon an external source for its very existence, the creature does not have sufficient reason in itself for being there. And because man abstracts being-in-itself only from sensible creatures, Maritain argues that our very mode of conceiving reality chains us to that reality which is contingent and invested with nothingness. "The way in which I conceive being is absolutely deficient in relation to

¹⁸Maritain, Preface, p. 64.

God."¹⁹

For Maritain, angels and God exist in the trans-intelligible world, but God is beyond all His creatures, in that His absolute simplicity admits no distinction in Him:

All the divine perfections are strictly identified in God. When I say being of God, the word continues to signify being and does not signify, does not present to my mind, goodness or knowledge, and yet the being of God is His knowledge and His goodness, His mercy and His justice.²⁰

Only in God are essence and existence identical. And God alone is Being, Knowledge and Love:

There is possession of the self by the self in the pure state, since His existence is His very intellection and His love. Thus He not only exists and grasps Himself by intelligence and love, as do created minds. Uncreated Spirit, to exist is for Him to grasp Himself.²¹

Based upon the intellectual intuition of being, which is the direct or dianoetic apprehension of being-in-itself in sensible reality, the human intellect can attain transintelligible reality only by analogy or ananoetic apprehension. As distinguished from supra-natural knowledge, the natural power of human intellection attains God only in the poverty of its metaphysical riches:

The multiplicity of these distinctions of reason,

¹⁹Maritain, Degrees, p. 227.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 234.

We note the similarity between this view and the position of Advaita Vedānta (i.e. the school of non-dualism in Hindu Vedānta), which states that Brahman is Sat (Being), Cit (Consciousness) and Ananda (Bliss).

demanded by the very eminence of the reality to be known, attests nothing except the humility of such a knowledge. It is not the Divine Simplicity that we divide; it is our concepts that we adapt and work over in order to submit our intellect to it and to know the Almighty according to the mode of our poverty.²²

In order to avoid straying beyond the scope of this thesis, which is concerned with the meaning and significance of intellectual intuition and mystical experience in the realism of Jacques Maritain, we have in this chapter attempted to attain what is for Maritain the epitome of knowledge on the natural level of human knowing, without discussing the philosophical ways of approaching God. We have shown that, according to Maritain, common sense attains the transcendental and analogical character of being, and from this arrives at a certain knowledge of God. In metaphysics, where the transcendental and analogical character of being is apprehended in the specific object (i.e. being-in-itself) of this science, the knowledge of both being and God is more precise. What is most important within the context of this thesis, however, is that the implication of the analogical apprehension of God (in both common sense and metaphysics) for knowledge on the natural level of human knowing be clearly understood. Maritain argues that knowledge on the natural level of human knowing is strictly confined to the direct apprehension of sensible being. Even the epitome of knowledge on this level

²²Maritain, Degrees, p. 231.

of human knowing directly apprehends being-in-itself only in sensible things. According to Maritain, the metaphysician only attains God analogically, and therefore indirectly; in attaining this knowledge, the metaphysician reaches the highest peak on the natural level of human knowing.

CHAPTER III

AFFECTIVE CONNATURALITY AS MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

In our discussion of the supra-natural level of human knowing in the realism of Jacques Maritain, God (i.e. God as He actually is in Himself) and mystical experience will be the two most important items on the agenda.

In this thesis we are using the term "supra-natural" to refer only to God's disclosure of Himself to man,¹ and by knowledge on the supra-natural level of human knowing, we mean the knowledge by which God knows Himself. Such knowledge is not connatural to the intellect of man, and is above the natural level of human knowing. The knowledge God has of Himself can be attained by man only through God's disclosure of Himself. Such a disclosure takes place in revelation, which is (as we shall see) God's communication of Himself to man precisely through what is natural for man. God's disclosure of Himself to man also occurs in mystical experience, which is, during his earthly existence, man's purest apprehension of what we might conveniently label "God-in-Himself".

God-in-Himself is the formal object of theological

¹ See supra, pp. 7-8.

faith. Every act of theological faith, although never directly attaining God-in-Himself, directly attains what God discloses of Himself by firmly assenting to it as such. The function of theological faith on the supra-natural level of human knowing can be compared to the operation of the intellect on the natural level of human knowing, for acts of theological faith and intellection are means whereby knowledge is attained. God-in-Himself, besides being the formal object of theological faith, is also the source of all knowledge on the supra-natural level of human knowing, and for this reason might be called its foundation. God-in-Himself can be compared to the sensible existent, which is the source of all knowledge on the natural level of human knowing. Mystical experience, which is, during his earthly existence, man's purest apprehension of God-in-Himself, can be compared to the intellectual intuition of being, which is, on the natural level of human knowing, the purest apprehension of being (i.e. the formal object of the intellect).

The intellectual intuition of being and mystical experience, comparable as parallel functions on the two distinct levels of human knowing, are in themselves distinct in their respective modes of apprehension. Because God-in-Himself is not only the formal object of theological faith, but also the source of all knowledge on the supra-natural level of human knowing, God-in-Himself is not an abstraction. Whereas the intellectual intuition of being is connected with

abstraction, rational speculation and demonstration, mystical experience is beyond conceptualisation, and therefore incapable of being employed as a philosophical tool. Mystical experience does not lend itself to the precision of an exact terminology, and its expression is therefore obscure and seemingly paradoxical. Rational demonstration, as the natural outgrowth and articulation of the intellectual intuition of being, aims at precision, and therefore thrives on the clarity of its concepts. Whereas the intellectual intuition of being is a consequence of the natural conceptualising power of human intelligence, mystical experience is (as we shall see) a form of affective connaturality.

The distinction between intellectual intuition and mystical experience is not the distinction between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing. We have described revelation as a supra-natural disclosure communicable on the natural level. And on the natural level, there is a mode of knowing which is not conceptual, and yet above the level of brute sensation. It is a natural, supra-rational intuition. Supremely practical, it is the connaturality which is a natural mode of human knowing. The distinction between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing amounts to the distinction between the active ascending of human intellection from sensible being toward God and the passive reception of the descending movement of God's disclosure of Himself.

In this chapter our primary purpose will be to explain Maritain's understanding of affective connaturality as mystical experience, although in order to clarify the distinction between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing in Maritain's realism, it is necessary to discuss Maritain's notion of the superanalogy of faith and theological ratiocination, as well as connaturality as a natural mode of human knowing. Only then will we approach that form of affective connaturality (i.e. mystical experience) which Maritain considers to be the beginning of man's beatific vision in his earthly existence.²

1. The Superanalogy of Faith and Theological Ratiocination

Although faith (and it is theological faith, which has God-in-Himself for its formal object, with which we are here concerned) can move mountains, it begins, according to Maritain, by presenting its content (i.e. the knowledge by which God knows Himself) in the most humble array (i.e. the everyday language of men in communication with each other). Because the content is supra-natural, coming down to man through the descending movement of God's disclosure

²"Eternal life begins here and now. It begins here below and should grow unceasingly till the dissolution of the body in such a way as to realize by mystical experience and infused contemplation themselves, as far as possible on this earth, in the night of faith, . . . that possession of God to which sanctifying grace is essentially ordained" (Maritain, Degrees, p. 258).

of Himself (i.e. revelation), it is able to speak to man through a transformation of his everyday language. It is the creative touch of God Himself which enables everyday language to reveal what the most accurate and profound metaphysician could never hope to uncover.

Maritain argues that this transformation of the mundane by the creative touch of God employs analogy. Indeed, because it is an analogy used by God Himself, Maritain feels more comfortable with the term "superanalogy," as he writes in The Degrees of Knowledge:

Let us say it is a superanalogy. The mode of conceiving and of signifying is just as deficient in it as in metaphysical analogy, but what is signified--revealed, i.e., stripped of the veils proper to our natural knowledge, but presented or shown under other veils--is this time the deity as such, God as He sees Himself, and who gives Himself to us--obscurely and without our laying hands on him yet, since we do not see Him.³

In fact, the superanalogy of faith is even more deficient than the analogy of metaphysics, for it employs notions which are not transcendental. The superanalogy of faith is God's transformation of everyday language:

In the Apostles' Creed itself do we not say 'and sitteth at the right hand of the Father'? Thus, the whole of poor human language is redeemed as it were by revelation: all the images of inspired Scripture, all the symbols of the Canticle of Canticles are brought in to bear witness to the uncreated Glory.⁴

God communicates the knowledge He has of Himself to man

³Ibid., p. 242.

⁴Ibid., p. 243.

through the common notions of father and son, husband and wife. God discloses Himself to man through metaphors which are analogical.

According to Maritain, God's disclosure of Himself to man, although essentially supra-natural, comes to man in revelation through what is natural for man, i.e. through the superanalogy of faith, which is a transformation of man's everyday language. Theology (i.e. the theology which is based on God's essentially supra-natural disclosure of Himself in revelation) also comes to man through what is natural for man. Indeed, in that it requires human reason, theology even utilises the ascending movement of human intellection. However, the ascending movement is, in this case, based upon the passive reception of revealed truths-- these, and not the principles arrived at through intellectual effort, are the premises upon which the edifice of theological science is built.

The fundamental distinction between what we are calling the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing in Maritain's realism becomes clear, when, in The Degrees of Knowledge, Maritain distinguishes three forms of wisdom (i.e. metaphysics, theology and mystical theology), of which only the first exists on the natural level of human knowing.⁵

For Maritain, wisdom is ". . . a supreme knowledge,

⁵See ibid., pp. 247-253.

having a universal object and judging things by first principles."⁶ Metaphysics, the basis and final achievement of which have been discussed in the two preceding chapters, is the very acme of the natural, intellectual potential of man, and the first form of wisdom which Maritain distinguishes. Indeed, Maritain argues that metaphysics (culminating in the analogical apprehension of God, and therefore meriting the Aristotelian appellation, "natural theology") engenders in man a profound natural yearning for a direct glimpse of the world's transcendent Cause, which it perceives only as necessary in the analogical mirror of created effects. According to Maritain, this metaphysical yearning can only be satisfied by the descending movement of God's disclosure of Himself.

Theology (i.e. the theology which is based on God's revelation) is the second form of wisdom which Maritain distinguishes. Based on God's communication of Himself to man through the superanalogy of faith, theology exists on the supra-natural level of human knowing. Theology deductively demonstrates (i.e. discloses through ratiocination) what is to be concluded from divine principles as virtually revealed. Theology, the first principles of which are assented to in faith, has God-in-Himself for its proper object, but actually employs a mode of knowing which is deductively demonstrative (i.e. discursive and therefore in itself a mode

⁶Ibid., p. 247.

which is natural for man) to attain its conclusions.

The superanalogy of faith, although certainly beyond the ascending movement which is metaphysical analogy, keeps man at a distance from God. Maritain argues that, even in man's earthly existence, the distance between man and God which exists in the superanalogy of faith can be surmounted.⁷ Under the tutorship of grace, theological faith can call man forth, beyond the superanalogy of faith, to the progressive closing of the gap which exists between human nature and God-in-Himself:

To become wisdom and contemplation, knowledge by faith must, under a divine grace of inspiration and illumination--and yet always in a transluminous obscurity, which will remain as long as God is not seen in Himself--progressively leave behind this from afar and at a distance.⁷

This brings us to mystical theology, the third form of wisdom which Maritain distinguishes. In mystical theology, not only is the content supra-natural, but the mode of knowing as well:

. . . above metaphysical wisdom there is theological wisdom. Above it, there is infused wisdom which is also called mystical theology and which consists in knowing the essentially supernatural object of faith and theology--Deity as such--according to a mode that is supra-human and supernatural.⁸

The fundamental distinction between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing is the difference between their respective sources of knowledge. The source

⁷Ibid., p. 244.

⁸Ibid., p. 253.

of knowledge on the natural level of human knowing is the sensible existent. The source of knowledge on the supra-natural level of human knowing is God-in-Himself. We now turn to the various forms of connaturality which Maritain considers to be natural modes of human knowing. It is hoped that such an exposition will further the argument that the difference between the two levels of human knowing is the difference between their respective sources of knowledge, and not their respective modes of knowing, by showing that just as there is a discursive mode of knowing (i.e. theological ratiocination) operative on the supra-natural level of human knowing there is an instinctual, non-objective or non-conceptual mode of knowing operative on the natural level.

2. Connaturality as a Natural Mode of Human Knowing

In this thesis, knowledge by connaturality denotes man's grasping of that reality which he is capable of attaining by nature. In other words, knowledge by connaturality indicates man's apprehension of certain realities through an instinctual (one might wish to say inborn or even a priori) disposition which enables him to do so.

Maritain recognises two distinct fields of knowledge by connaturality, one intellectual and the other affective. Intellectual connaturality denotes the instinctual, non-conceptual grasp of reality by the intellect alone. Affective

connaturality, on the other hand, denotes the instinctual grasp of reality by the intellect through the will. In The Situation of Poetry, which he compiled in conjunction with Raïssa, and in his Redeeming the Time, Maritain distinguishes two types of intellectual connaturality and three types of affective connaturality.⁹

One type of intellectual connaturality has already been discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.¹⁰ It is the connaturality which is the foundation of conceptualisation, and there is no need to repeat here what has already been said there about it.

The other type of intellectual connaturality, which can also be affective, is, as Maritain writes, "a knowledge by either intellectual or affective connaturality with reality as non-conceptualisable and at the same time contemplated, in other words as non-objectifiable in notions and yet as a terminus of objective union."¹¹ When this type of connaturality is affective, it is the supra-natural mystical experience of God. In so far as it is intellectual and natural, this type of connaturality is, according to Maritain,

⁹See Maritain, Poetry, pp. 65-67; and Redeeming the Time, pp. 225-233. Also, for other enumerations of the three types of affective connaturality, see Existence and the Existent, p. 78; and The Range of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 22-29.

¹⁰See supra, pp. 32-33.

¹¹Maritain, Poetry, p. 66.

best exemplified by the immediate, non-conceptual presence of self to self. Maritain argues that the self naturally experiences the self through its own operations in the phenomenal world. However, this apperception can be pushed, through a strenuous, ascetic effort going against the grain of nature, to a profoundly intimate apprehension of the self by the self. Maritain insists that such an apprehension, although intellectual, is absolutely ineffable. In the absence of everything imaginable, this form of intellectual connaturality grasps reality (i.e. the very esse of the self) in a negative way, "as non-objectifiable in notions and yet as a terminus of objective union." It does not attain any knowledge of essence, but rather a profound encounter with the concrete singularity of the self in its existential act. According to Maritain, the yogic technique of Hindu asceticism¹² can lead to such an experience:

In short, the idea I am proposing is that they [the Hindu ascetics] attain not at all the essence of their souls, but the existence thereof, the substantial esse itself. And how do they do this? They do it by drastically purifying and pushing

¹²In his discussion of this occurrence, which for him may (as we shall see) lead to a natural mystical experience, Maritain does not really specify any particular darsana. It appears that he purposely leaves the door open to various possibilities (he even mentions heterodox Buddhism as a specimen of natural mystical experience). He is convinced that the purest forms of natural mysticism dominate India, and yet he admits the inevitability of a mixed experience (between natural and supra-natural mystical elements), so that a truly pure specimen is difficult to come by (see Maritain, Redeeming the Time, pp. 248-249).

to the extreme limit that ordinary experience of the existence of myself to which I have alluded. This ordinary experience, taking place by means of operations and acts, usually remains immersed in their phenomenal multiplicity; and it remains veiled because of this multiplicity. Now, on the contrary, risking everything to gain everything, and thanks to assiduous exercise reversing the ordinary course of mental activity, the soul empties itself absolutely of every specific operation and of all multiplicity, and knows negatively by means of the void and the annihilation of every act and of every object of thought coming from outside--the soul knows negatively--but nakedly, without veils--that metaphysical marvel, that absolute, that perfection of every act and of every perfection, which is to exist, which is the soul's own substantial existence.¹³

According to Maritain, this knowledge by way of a type of natural, intellectual connaturality, can engender a natural mystical experience. In this way, God may be apprehended in His creative immensity or ubiquity. Through the negative apprehension of the esse or act of existence of the self, the Act of all acts may be apprehended.¹⁴

¹³Maritain, Redeeming the Time, pp. 241-242.

¹⁴"In the experience here analyzed, the divine absolute is not, Himself, properly speaking an object of possession. It is the substantial esse of the soul which is the object of (negative) possession; and by this negative experience of the self God is attained at the same time, without any duality of act, though attained indirectly. God being, then, not known 'by His works,' that is to say by His effects as by things known beforehand and which discursively make us pass to the knowledge of their cause, but God being known (1) by and in the substantial esse of the soul, itself attained immediately and negatively by means of the formal medium of the void; (2) in the negative experience itself of that substantial esse. (just as the eye, by one and the same act of knowing, sees the image, and in the image the signified)--all this being the case, I think it is permissible in such an instance to speak of a 'contact'

In natural mystical experience, God is not apprehended analogically, for knowledge by connaturality is not arrived at discursively. The natural mystical experience attains God, but God enveloped in the immediate experience of the self. Furthermore, Maritain argues that knowledge of the self through intellectual connaturality, along with the natural mystical experience of God which it engenders, is not based on the passive reception of the descending movement of God's disclosure of Himself, but rather is the achievement of an intellectual ascending:

Coming at the end of a very long ascetic process in which the intellect more and more connaturalizes itself with silence and negation, it can happen that in certain instances this actuation finally surges up after so spontaneous a fashion that it seems altogether a gift from without and passively received; and that it can from the psychological point of view lose every active and voluntary appearance. Nevertheless, it in reality finds its source in an ascending movement which is fundamentally active and in a supreme tension of the forces of the soul!¹⁵

with the absolute, and of an improperly 'immediate' experience (that is to say, one wrapt up in the very act of the immediate experience of the self) of God creator and author of nature" (ibid., pp. 246-247, footnote 18).

¹⁵Ibid., p. 243. Also see by the same author, Science and Wisdom, trans. by Bernard Wall (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954), pp. 7-10. Although Maritain is concerned here with a form of natural mysticism, he certainly does not wish to exclude the possibility of grace being operative in the non-Christian religious world (see Degrees, pp. 272-277). However, according to Maritain, such an operation of grace can only be explained by stating that these non-Christians, and even non-Catholic Christians, who receive the grace of God, are in fact recipients of the grace of Jesus Christ by being invisibly present in his visible Church, the Roman Catholic Church (see Maritain, On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and Her Personnel, trans. by Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), pp. 100-108).

And again, as stated in the first chapter of this thesis concerning intuition in the views of Bergson, Heidegger and Marcel,¹⁶ any attempt to articulate philosophically the ineffable experience, is according to Maritain, a fatal mistake:

And since therein is attained no content in the 'essential' order, no quid, it is comprehensible that philosophic thought reflecting upon such an experience [the natural mystical experience] fatally runs the danger of identifying in some measure one absolute with the other, that absolute which is the mirror and that which is perceived in the mirror. The same word 'atman' designates the human Self and the supreme Self.¹⁷

It is Maritain's position that the natural mystic (like Bergson, Heidegger and Marcel) remains a prisoner of his own unique, and indisputably valuable, experience. Maritain argues that the natural mystic has had a legitimate encounter with reality. However, he also argues that the natural mystic confines his attention to one of the concrete analogues of being (i.e. the very esse of the mystic himself), and for this reason does not attain the transcendental and analogical object of metaphysics (i.e. being-in-itself). In attempting to articulate philosophically his experience, the natural mystic does so without the transcendental and analogical value of being-in-itself, and is therefore (like Bergson, Heidegger, Marcel and any other philosopher who fails to attain the proper object of metaphysics) at least

¹⁶See supra, pp. 39-40.

¹⁷Maritain, Redeeming the Time, pp. 247-248.

susceptible to the danger of ontological monism or phenomenalist pluralism.¹⁸

Turning to the three types of affective connaturality which Maritain distinguishes, of which the first two dealt with here are natural and the third supra-natural, we note first the type which he considers to be most prevalent. This type of affective connaturality does not end in contemplation, but rather in action. It is the instinctual tendency toward the performance of a proper act. Just as the truly competent workman knows his job from experience in a way far more profound than mere technical training can foster, so true morality itself is based upon an instinctual tendency toward the performance of a good act (not depending upon any code, one instinctually tends toward the accomplishment of good in the unique, existential situation). We can call this type of affective connaturality prudential.

The second type of affective connaturality is the non-objective grasp of the reality of things as they are whirled about in the creative impulse of the perceiving subject. This is the artistic connaturality of the poet. Both internal and external realities are grasped in the moment of an emotive inclination toward expression. Indeed, this type of connaturality tends toward action, but not an action determined by the moral bond of mankind as a whole

¹⁸See supra, pp. 40-44.

or a job to be done, but rather an action which surges forth from the creative depth of a free subject, disclosing to the world what is so precious and unique. Self expression is the goal of the internal and external knowledge which this type of affective connaturality attains, as Maritain writes, ". . . it does not have its goal and its fruit in itself, it does not tend toward silence, it tends toward utterance ad extra, it has its goal and its fruit in an external work in which it objectifies itself and which it produces."¹⁹

The third type of affective connaturality, which is supra-natural, is that grasp of reality through contemplation which is not intellectual but affective. This type of affective connaturality will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter. At this stage it is necessary only to point out that there is a form of natural, affective connaturality which Maritain does not specifically include in his enumeration of the various types of connaturality. This form of natural, affective connaturality enables a particular man to attain knowledge of the inconceivable uniqueness, the personhood, of those sensible beings (especially other men) which populate the world. It is mentioned here, because, as Father Sikora notes, this inter-subjective, affective connaturality is similar to both the receptive side of artistic connaturality and the supra-

¹⁹Maritain, Redeeming the Time, p. 231.

natural, affective connaturality which is mystical experience.²⁰ Artistic connaturality engenders knowledge of the self and things other than the self, and if we concentrate on this non-conceptual awareness apart from the creative surge toward the production of a work of art, we have something similar to knowledge by intersubjective, affective connaturality. And revelation itself, through the superanalogy of faith, offers man the self's love for others (i.e. intersubjective, affective connaturality on the natural level of human knowing) as an image of God's love for man. In the love between father and son, husband and wife, shepherd and flock, we experience something like the supra-natural, affective connaturality which is the experience of love between God and man.

3. Affective Connaturality and the Vision of God

Every form of affective connaturality yields knowledge by way of an inclination of the will. In other words, affective connaturality does not yield knowledge because something is non-conceptually present to the intellect, but rather because something is present to the will as the hidden goal of desire. However, this does not mean that the intellect goes to sleep. If it did, there would be no knowledge through affective connaturality. On the contrary, the

²⁰See Sikora, Christian Intellect, pp. 87-88.

intellect grasps, but precisely through an affectional or emotional inclination of the will. Maritain is quite adamant on this point. In The Range of Reason we read:

In this knowledge through union or inclination, connaturality or congeniality, the intellect is at play not alone, but together with affective inclinations and the dispositions of the will, and is guided and directed by them. It is not rational knowledge, knowledge through the conceptual, logical and discursive exercise of Reason. But it is really and genuinely knowledge, though obscure and perhaps incapable of giving account of itself, or of being translated into words.²¹

In the form of affective connaturality which is mystical experience, what occurs in the will is the loving desire for God, and the desire itself is supra-natural. Coming down to man as part of God's disclosure of Himself, this supra-natural love is given to man by grace. It is not arrived at, but rather passively received. One can (as we shall see) remove obstacles to it, but one cannot thereby engender it. Supra-natural, affective connaturality rests, according to Maritain, on the augmentation of that

²¹ Maritain, The Range of Reason, p. 23.

We also read, concerning the affective connaturality which is mystical experience:

". . . charity, as it increases, transforms us in God, whom it attains immediately in Himself, and since this increasingly perfect spiritualization cannot be achieved without its repercussions in knowledge, because spirit is interior to itself, the Holy Spirit uses this very loving transformation in God, this supernatural connaturality, as the proper means to delectable and penetrating knowledge which, in turn, renders the love of charity as possessive and fruitful as is possible here below" (Maritain, Degrees, p. 338):

theological faith into "wisdom and contemplation," a transformation which engenders union with God:

Because this love flows from faith which alone, in its superhuman obscurity, unites our intellect to the abyss of Deity, the supernatural Subsistent, we must affirm that faith, i.e., living faith 'formed' by charity and enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is the very principle of mystical experience, the sole 'proximate and proportionate' means of divine union.²²

Moulded by the supra-natural love which comes from Love, and educated by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (i.e. understanding, counsel, wisdom, knowledge, piety, courage and fear of the Lord), and not by the superanalogy of faith alone; theological faith attains the purest apprehension of God-in-Himself which man is able to receive in his earthly existence. Through the augmentation of theological faith by grace the will receives the supra-natural love which discloses to the naturally deficient human intellect, in a purer way than in the superanalogy of faith, that most precious and intimate knowledge which God has of Himself.

Adequate explication of how Maritain understands the operation of various theological elements in mystical experience lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Such an explication would involve an elaborate discussion of the three theological virtues (i.e. faith, hope and charity), the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the notion of the indwelling

²²Ibid., p. 339. Also see supra, p. 70.

of the Persons of the Trinity, and Maritain's interpretation and extensive use of St. Thomas Aquinas and the sixteenth century Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross. What is important here, is to note that mystical experience is for Maritain the beginning of the vision of God on earth, i.e. the beatific vision which culminates in the vision of His essence in heaven alone.

Indeed, the knowledge of God available through affective connaturality (and here we mean precisely what the intellect grasps through the loving desire of the will) is so immediate that Maritain compares supra-natural love to the transparency which is the formal sign.²³ This knowledge is more obscure than the knowledge which comes to man through conceptualisation, and yet, it is the purest knowledge of God-in-Himself which man can have in his earthly existence. Unlike natural mystical experience, which attains God only as a consequence of an encounter with the self through the void, supra-natural mystical experience attains God-in-Himself through the supra-natural gift of love. However, the negative side of even supra-natural mystical experience is (as we shall see) stressed by Maritain.

²³"... we would say that infused love and the touches of connaturality of which we have been speaking are not of themselves 'formal signs', or pure in quo's of understanding, as the concept is, but that under the illumination of the Holy Ghost, they find themselves actually playing a rôle quite comparable to that of a formal sign,..." (ibid., p. 261, footnote 3).

Besides the passive reception of God's disclosure of Himself, there is an active side to supra-natural mysticism as well. This is the removal of obstacles to the penetration of God's grace, and this negating activity is inextricably bound to the negative side of supra-natural mystical experience. Maritain's primary source in this area is St. John of the Cross, and we will approach this topic from an ontological and ethical standpoint.

In the bond of love between God and man, emerging through mystical contemplation and culminating in the beatific vision of eternity, the ontological distinction between the two remains. Maritain is convinced that God's greatest gift to you or I is precisely you or I--that inexhaustible, mysterious core of subjectivity, the person who is. According to Maritain, what is accomplished in the bond of love between God and man is that the two become one, in an undivided act of loving.²⁴

According to Maritain, the human person is indeed a whole, but an absolute given by God not only to itself but to the society of others like it as well. Now what enables the sharing to take place is precisely the act of loving. Through loving, the person exists ontologically for another; and intentionally even as the other. However, in order to attain the supreme height of loving, man must become sub-

²⁴See ibid., pp. 368-372.

missive to the grace of God. Man must in fact enter into communion with Him in order to love as He does. Maritain argues that we must be transformed, in order to love God, ourselves and others as He loves Himself, us and others like us. God loved man to the point of becoming nothing on the cross for him, and in turn man is called to do the same. In order to approach God, and through Him our neighbours, we must first become nothing; we must first die as He did. This is the great teaching of St. John of the Cross. And in the beginning of this transformation by grace, man can do something also. In cooperation with the grace of God, man can remove the obstacles to the penetration of that grace. Everything must go! Eventually, according to St. John of the Cross, even the desire for consolation in mystical experience must be abandoned.

"Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing: this is the path of St. John of the Cross. Understanding and repose,--not this, nor that. Consolations and knowledge,--not this, nor that. Glory and enjoyment,--not this, nor that. Nothing.

Upon the mountain, nothing."²⁵

At the end of man's spiritual pilgrimage there is nothing, both St. John of the Cross and Jacques Maritain would tell us, except Love.

²⁵Ibid., p. 357.

The removal of obstacles to the penetration of God's grace does not only engender the moral perfection of man, although it certainly does accomplish that. The negation of everything save God alone also engenders the intuitive grasp of God-in-Himself through the will's loving desire for Him. In pure natural mystical experience (which Maritain admits is rarely if ever actualised) God-in-Himself is not attained, but only the reflection of God in what Maritain refers to as the "mirror" which is the self.²⁶ In supra-natural mystical experience, however, God gives Himself to man through love (in a way which surpasses God's disclosure of Himself to man through the superanalogy of faith, and man's expansion of that disclosure through the virtual revelation arrived at by theological science). In supra-natural mystical experience, the intellect does not directly apprehend God's essence, as it will in the vision of the blessed beyond man's earthly existence, but it nevertheless apprehends God-in-Himself through the supra-natural gift of love which is part of God's disclosure of Himself to man. Such intuitive knowledge by a form of affective connaturality cannot be understood by the intellect, however, and it remains non-conceptual and incommunicable on the natural level of human knowing:

. . . contemplation itself is a night wherein the

²⁶See supra., p. 76.

soul forgoes the use of distinct ideas and all formulated knowledge, passes beyond and above the human mode of concepts to undergo divine things in the infused light of faith by means of love and all the effects God produces in the soul united to Him by love. And this is, as Dionysius says, like a ray of darkness for the intellect.²⁷

For Maritain there is no disparity between the communicable wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas, whom he refers to for this reason as the Doctor of Light, and the incommunicable wisdom of St. John of the Cross, whom Maritain refers to in this context as the Doctor of Night.²⁸ Maritain notes that St. Thomas

. . . distinguishes within faith the reality in which it terminates (namely, God Himself in the interiority of His essence, the same God who is seen by the blessed), and the mode of knowing (which is proportioned to our nature and reveals this divine reality to us only through the appearances of objects that are first attained by the concepts and names which are our natural means of knowing, and which God, through the ministry of His Church, uses to tell us of Himself in human language).²⁹

God-in-Himself is the object of theological faith, and for this reason the third form of wisdom (i.e. mystical theology) completes the second form of wisdom (i.e. theological ratiocination based on revelation assented to in faith):

Mystical theology's whole impetus and desire is to grasp, by freeing itself of the human and imperfect mode of multiple ideas, this same object, this same divine reality to which the light of faith unites us by using these ideas as a means proportionate to

²⁷Maritain, Degrees, p. 339.

²⁸See ibid., pp. 310-351.

²⁹Ibid., p. 325.

our nature. Thus contemplation on this earth is essentially knowledge by faith, since only supernatural faith attains to divine reality in its proper life; and it is knowledge in a supra-human mode, wherein faith surpasses its natural mode of knowing, beyond distinct ideas, to experience its object. And how could this be done except by love, which inviscerates us within things divine and itself becomes the light of knowledge, in that purely and ineffably spiritual awareness given by the Holy Spirit acting through His gifts?³⁰

In this chapter we have seen that what distinguishes the natural from the supra-natural level of human knowing in the realism of Jacques Maritain, is the difference between their respective sources of knowledge. Whereas the source of knowledge on the natural level of human knowing is the sensible existent, on the supra-natural level the source of knowledge is God-in-Himself. Man cannot attain God-in-Himself through ascending intellection. God-in-Himself, although never directly attained by man in his earthly existence, can nevertheless be accepted by theological faith as a gift bestowed on man by God through God's disclosure of Himself to man. This disclosure takes place in revelation, where God communicates the knowledge He has of Himself to man through the superanalogy of faith. It is upon this revelation that theological ratiocination is based. God also discloses Himself to man (and in the context of this thesis this is what is most important)³⁰ through mystical experience, which is, in his earthly existence, man's purest apprehension of

³⁰Ibid.

God-in-Himself. Mystical experience is a form of affective connaturality, by which the intellect intuitively grasps God-in-Himself through the will's loving desire for Him. This desire is planted in man by the grace of God, and it engenders so pure an apprehension of God-in-Himself, that Maritain compares it to the formal sign and speaks of it as the beginning of man's beatific vision in his earthly existence.

In this chapter we have also seen that Maritain is critical of any attempt to articulate philosophically the natural mystical experience, and that for him the supernatural mystical experience itself is ineffable. Maritain is consistent in his criticism of any attempt to construct philosophically upon an empirical foundation alone. In the following chapter we will be concerned with both metaphysics and mysticism, in an attempt to establish what Maritain is trying to accomplish through this criticism.

CHAPTER IV

METAPHYSICS AND MYSTICISM

In The Degrees of Knowledge, Maritain captures what he considers to be the proper motivation behind our quest for knowledge, and he does so succinctly, with penetrating profundity and disarming simplicity: "What we need is not truths that serve us but a truth we may serve."¹ Although the human intellect is active on the natural level of human knowing, such activity is comparable to the exertion of someone drawing water from a well on a hot day, the thirst quenching draughts filling the retriever with an attitude of appreciation. For someone drawing water from a well in the hot sun, the construction of a sound bucket and the possession of a sturdy coil of rope are not about to engender pride in the achievement of human technology. Jacques and Raïssa Maritain experienced the suffocating heat of metaphysical aridity, almost to the point of despair and death, and Jacques is unable to forgive modernity for what he sees as its failure to become submissive and humble before reality. He is unable to forgive the modern philosophers for failing to listen to the internal resounding of something from

¹Maritain, Degrees, p. 4.

without, i.e. the reality which is the universe stretching beyond them and telling them through its intelligible value about the Source of all becoming.

Maritain argues that man must submit his intellect to reality, and it is Maritain's position that reality first manifests itself to the human intellect in empirical data on the level of sensation itself. Experience is compatible with metaphysics and vice versa, for it is experience which feeds the conveyor belt of abstraction. Even the supra-natural gift of mystical experience, an experience truly above the natural level of human knowing and not below it, is (although in an altogether different way than empirical data on the natural level of human knowing) compatible with metaphysics. And here we encounter the inclusiveness of Maritain's realism. The two great levels of human knowing, the natural and supra-natural, do not cancel each other out. Just as metaphysics is the firm grasping of something slippery and unmanageable in the world of common sense, mystical experience is the supra-natural satisfaction of a metaphysical desire. The intelligible value of what our senses experience leads us through common sense and metaphysics to an analogical awareness of a greater Other. Yes, our appetite is thereby aroused and our very will desires to experience this Other.

According to Maritain, not only does metaphysics inspire man to desire contact with the Cause of being, but God-in-Himself (through His disclosure of Himself in revela-

tion and in the intuitive knowledge which is a consequence of mystical experience) actually aids the philosopher in his specific task. In this chapter we will attempt to explain what Maritain is trying to accomplish through his criticism of any attempt to construct philosophically upon an empirical foundation alone; we will attempt to do this through an analysis of the compatibility between metaphysics and mysticism in Maritain's realism. We will concern ourselves first with metaphysics as an inspiration to the desire for mystical experience, and then, in a discussion of Maritain's understanding of Christian philosophy, with the influence of God's disclosure of Himself upon the metaphysician.

1. Metaphysics as Inspiration

Maritain is quite willing to acknowledge that metaphysics in itself beckons us toward the encounter which is far more real than any analogical apprehension through creatures alone. In fact, Maritain insists on it: if metaphysical discovery does not lead to the desire for something greater than the knowledge which can be gleaned from creatures, it inevitably abandons the will to the creature. It is not that experience in itself is not profound, but that man must distinguish between the empiricism of the natural level of human knowing, which he can in fact transcend through the use of his reason, and the intuitive grasp of God-in-Himself on the supra-natural level of human knowing, which

far surpasses anything his reason can attain. Maritain argues that if man does not allow metaphysics to beckon him toward an existential encounter with God, through the loving desire for that encounter, then his desire will carry him toward the bestial sensuality which is below man and his reason:

It is the problem of Faust. If human wisdom does not spill upwards into the love of God, it will fall downwards towards Marguerite. Mystical possession in Eternal love of the Most Holy God, or physical possession, in the fleetingness of time, of a poor fleshly creature (for, great wizard as one may be, that is where it all ends up)--there lies the choice that cannot be avoided.²

However, it is the task of metaphysics to awaken a yearning which can be satisfied only beyond metaphysics. Man must transcend metaphysics, for the wisdom attained through the loving embrace of God-in-Himself lies far beyond the fruits of discourse:

We preach a different wisdom--scandal for the Jews, madness for the Greeks. This wisdom, far surpassing all human effort, a gift of deifying grace and free endowments of Uncreated Wisdom, has as its beginning the mad love that Wisdom Itself has for each and all of us, and as its end, the union of spirit with it. Only Jesus crucified gives access to it--the Mediator raised up between heaven and earth.³

Maritain tells us that metaphysical conceptualisation cannot attain the knowledge God has of Himself. The meta-

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid.

physician can attain the Cause of all becoming, but he cannot attain the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Only the believers (including of course those believers who are also theologians) can, and even they glimpse Him at first only from afar. But theological faith can lead to something greater than what is communicable on the natural level of human knowing. Although not clashing with metaphysical truth--and even tested by it, since it cannot be contrary to it--mystical experience is God's supra-natural giving of Himself to those who believe.

Despite the apparent irony, we must conclude that Maritain is trying to avoid the use of intuition in metaphysics (i.e. empirical intuition). According to Maritain, even Bergson's encounter with duration, Heidegger's with anguish and Marcel's with fidelity are at best experimental preludes to the intellectual intuition of being. Maritain argues that the metaphysician must leave experience behind, and embrace the purely thinkable world of abstraction and conceptualisation. The metaphysician must discover being as the transcendental value of those concrete analogues of being which confront him sensually. The metaphysician must avoid both ontological monism and phenomenalist pluralism, and he can do this only through the transcendental object of thought (i.e. being-in-itself) which enables him to analogically apprehend that otherwise invisible world lying beyond the horizon of natural human experience.

Distinguishing between God and creation, uncreated Being and created being, Maritain argues that there is indeed an intellectual intuition of transcendental being, but only through created being. And here the beauty of analogy presents itself: uncreated Being, God-in-Himself is only analogically related to the sensible being which is alone connatural to the power of human knowing. In metaphysics, man moves from the experience of sensible things to the intellectual intuition of the intelligible value of those things in so far as they are. The metaphysician sees only the sensible world, which he shares with the man of common sense and the physicist, and he intuits only the intelligible value of that world in so far as it is, formulating precise terminology where common sense remains vague and physics as a discipline need not be concerned. By analogically indicating the Cause of being, metaphysics itself inspires the desire to transcend metaphysics.

We see then one way in which metaphysics is after all compatible with mystical experience in the realism of Jacques Maritain, by instilling in man the desire for an existential encounter with God-in-Himself, a desire which metaphysics in itself cannot possibly satisfy. Maritain distinguishes between rational and experiential knowledge (i.e. between knowledge arrived at by abstraction and conceptualisation, on the one hand, and knowledge gleaned from the immediacy of an empirical encounter, on the other).

Precisely because metaphysics is a rational mode of knowing, it is able to attain that transcendental and analogical purity which, by engendering an indirect apprehension of the absolutely transcendent Other, inspires in man the desire to transcend metaphysics through a direct encounter with this Other. Maritain seeks to avoid philosophical construction upon an empirical foundation alone, because such construction can never attain transcendence and analogy. Reason and experience remain distinct (although mutually dependent) modes of attaining truth in Maritain's realism. Experience cannot be used to defeat the conclusions arrived at by the legitimate process of intellectual abstraction and conceptualisation. Even mystical experience, precisely because it is a mode of knowing different from reason, does not invalidate the work of the philosopher. According to Maritain, a problem arises only when the empirical and rational modes become confused.

We now turn to Maritain's consideration of the influence of mystical experience (and in a broader context, to the influence of the entirety of God's disclosure of Himself to man) upon the essentially rational life of the metaphysician. Indeed, we shall be concerned with the influence of the whole supra-natural level of human knowing upon the most exalted quest of human intellect on the natural level of human knowing. It is Maritain's position that instead of invalidating the work of the philosopher, mystical experience (as well as the

remainder of God's disclosure of Himself to man) can in fact aid the philosopher in his specific task. In this sense, in that it clearly establishes the universality of all truth (i.e. that there can be no conflict between what the various modes of knowing apprehend as true), Maritain's realism is inclusive.

2. Christian Philosophy

If we are to locate the ultimate source of Maritain's realism (the primary foundation upon which his realistic mansion with its two stories of unique and decorative chambers rests) we must not look to the existential encounter with the mundane world stretching before us (even though it is precisely this encounter which engenders abstraction, conceptualisation and analogy), but rather we must after all look to the existential encounter with God-in-Himself through the Incarnation.

This introduces a topic which in itself stretches beyond the scope of this thesis. It introduces Maritain's notion of Christian philosophy.⁴ However, in view of the central importance of Christian philosophy in Maritain's thought, we must acknowledge it here. We must agree with Edward H. Flannery, when he writes in the foreword to his

⁴See Maritain, An Essay on Christian Philosophy, trans. by Edward H. Flannery (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. ix-xi, and pp. 3-51.

English translation of Maritain's An Essay on Christian Philosophy, that this work of Maritain's is ". . . the key which unlocks the doors leading to the interior of his massive synthesis of modern Thomism, for it deals with the inner springs of his thought or, we might say, with his philosophical 'founts of revelation.'"⁵ And Flannery goes on to direct us to this passage from Maritain's Science and Wisdom: "The more I think about this problem of Christian philosophy the more it appears a central point of the history of our time since the Renaissance: and probably as the central point of the history of the age to come."⁶

Indeed, the notion of Christian philosophy is a key one in the realism of Jacques Maritain. However, here it is necessary only to point out his distinction between the nature and state of philosophy. Maritain argues that the nature of philosophy is rational: it is of the essence of philosophy to attain discursively those truths which are available to the natural power of human knowing. However, nature or essence in itself remains an abstraction, and in order for it to exist in concrete actuality it must possess an individual act. According to Maritain, the actuation of philosophical nature takes place in the state or condition of philosophy, which is the embodiment of philosophical

⁵Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

⁶Ibid., p. viii.

nature in a particular personality (i.e. the philosopher).

Christian philosophy is simply the essence of philosophy operative in a Christian thinker. Maritain admits that Christian philosophy can be either good or bad philosophy, but he argues that when it is good it is very good, for we now encounter a man thinking well in the supra-natural state of grace:

. . . the Christian believes that grace changes man's state by elevating his nature to the supernatural plane and by divulging to him things which unaided reason would be unable to grasp. He also believes that if reason is to attain without admixture of error the highest truths that are naturally within its ken it requires assistance, either from within in the form of inner strengthening or from without in the form of an offering of objective data; and he believes that such assistance has in fact become so much an established part of things under the New Law that it has ushered in a new regimen for human intelligence.⁷

And according to Maritain, because it is essentially philosophy, the worth of Christian philosophy can be determined by the rules of reason alone.⁸

According to Maritain, metaphysics is compatible with mysticism, not only because metaphysics inspires a natural yearning for an existential encounter with the

⁷Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁸"This regimen directly involves functions higher than philosophy; nevertheless, with Mr. Gilson, I think that its results are written in the pages of the history of philosophy itself. It is also my view that purely rational norms empower us to pass a value-judgment on these philosophic results" (Ibid., p. 18).

Cause of being but because metaphysics itself can be infused with the spirit of contemplative wisdom. The Christian state of a philosopher can aid reason in its search for its own proper goals. Maritain argues, for example, that the philosophical exploration of human nature is aided by the revelation of the Trinity, and that an indispensable contribution to ethics has been made by the disclosure of the fall and redemption of man. Maritain argues that philosophy is not to be confused with theology. And yet, he maintains that Christians cannot brush away the helping hand of grace when it comes to their aid in solving purely philosophical problems. Maritain contends that no philosopher is simply a philosopher--as if the nature of philosophy could avoid becoming concrete in a particular situation--and the Christian philosopher is for him an actual state of philosophy.

In The Peasant of the Garonne, Maritain states that it is impossible for a Christian to be either a relativist or an idealist. Why? Because revelation itself tells us that it is impossible. Concerning the impossibility of idealism, Maritain refers to the same biblical texts⁹ he uses to show how, according to revelation, relativism is impossible:

The truth of which these texts speak, and which sets us free, does it push us back into the inner prison where we supposedly would be confined in company with the ideas of our mind? In fact,

⁹For example: 1Jn 5:6 and 3:19; 1Jn 3; 3 Jn 4 and 8; Rom 1:18; 2 Thess 2:10 and 2:12; 1 Tim 2:4; 1 Cor 13:6; Eph 4:24 (for the entire list, see Maritain, Peasant, pp. 87-89).

the truth of divine revelation throws us to the heart of He who is--and of what is, with an absolute violence which pulverizes any claim to make our mind the rule of what it knows, or to make what it knows a product of its own innate forms organizing phenomena (or indeed, as is readily believed in our days, simply a phenomenon which makes sense for us through our experience of ourselves). The Bible and the Gospel radically exclude any kind of idealism in the philosophic sense of the word.¹⁰

Indeed, whatever Maritain tells us in his post Vatican II harangue, The Peasant of the Garonne, might be susceptible to criticism (though we must remember that according to what Maritain himself tells us in the preface to this work, he is speaking to us here as a peasant rather than as a philosopher, a peasant whose expression of the truth is sometimes refreshing even if tactlessly expressed). However, as early as 1931, Maritain tells us that, precisely because of their affective contact with uncreated Truth, the medieval philosophers were able to attain such a lofty height of rational subtlety:

. . . it was the Scholastic doctors who, by distinguishing in most rigorous fashion the order of knowledge from that of affectivity, by regulating their thought exclusively in accordance with the objective exigencies of being, taught Western civilization the value of truth and what speculative purity, or chastity, ought to be--a complete detachment from every biological consideration and all urging of the appetites, a sheer disinterest, even in those concerns which man holds most sacred. Is it not precisely for this too thorough speculative indifference to subjective propensities and tastes, for its too pure objectivity, that many thinkers cannot see fit to forgive Thomism? It was the devotion of the Christian era to the Incarnate Truth

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 98-99.

which enabled the intelligence to rise to the superior level of purity which was to serve science itself so well when it came to work out its own distinctive methods. The medieval intelligence was, as it were, infatuated with objectivity by the very fact that it was fixed on a superhuman object.¹¹

We are now in a position to determine what Maritain is trying to accomplish. He is trying to expound a realism, which he considers to be the continuation of what St. Thomas Aquinas began in the thirteenth century,¹² where the flowers of every experiential and rational growth are allowed to bloom, where the rich contributions of empirical science and metaphysics, on the one hand, and theology and mystical experience, on the other, are allowed to remain unique and yet grow together in a single garden of truth. It is a realism which respects the distinction between two levels of human knowing, one natural and the other supra-natural, one achieved and the other received, while acknowledging their compatibility. It is a realism which allows God to remain the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the fully transcendent Other who is known by man through His disclosure of Himself alone, and a realism in which God's disclosure of Himself completes an edifice of human endeavour.¹³

¹¹Maritain, An Essay on Christian Philosophy, pp. 47-48.

¹²For Maritain's appreciation of St. Thomas see Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas: Angel of the Schools, trans. by J. F. Scanlon (London: Sheed & Ward, 1948).

¹³We note that in the realism of Jacques Maritain, the most practical thirst for justice in the political arena goes hand in hand with more abstract realisations (i.e. the objects of thought operative in the scientific disciplines). And this also stems from the existential encounter with God-

In his criticism of any attempt to construct philosophically upon an empirical foundation alone, Maritain shows that he is unwilling either to submit reason entirely (although he does maintain that human rationality is based upon experience) to the exigencies of experience or to distort the mystery of ineffable experience with the demands of reason. Maritain wishes to avoid what he perceives as the errors of ontological monism and phenomenalist pluralism, and he feels that the only way to accomplish this is by respecting the distinction between experience and reason, on the one hand, and between the natural and supra-natural levels of human knowing, on the other.

Maritain also argues, however, that experience on the natural level of human knowing, empirical science, the intellectual intuition of being and metaphysics are mutually compatible. Maritain contends that they are also compatible with revelation, theological science, mystical experience and even the vision of the blessed on the supra-natural level of human knowing.

According to Maritain, there are essentially different modes of attaining truth; but he also argues that all truth indicates its Source (i.e. God Who is Truth). For

in-Himself through the Incarnation: because Truth died for man on the cross, man cannot turn his back on so many images of Truth, so many wonderful persons actually existing, who fail to achieve recognition in an age which has ceased to adore.

Maritain there can be no contradiction between what experience and reason achieve on the natural level of human knowing, and what faith and experience receive on the supra-natural level of human knowing. Maritain argues that there is no contradiction between what the intellectual intuition of being enables man to attain analogically through the use of his reason, and what mystical experience enables man to attain as a gift through faith. According to Maritain, both the pinnacle of wisdom achieved on the natural level of human knowing and the greatest gift of wisdom received on the supra-natural level of human knowing, focus on the absolutely transcendent Other Whom men call God.

In this chapter we have seen how Maritain considers metaphysics to be compatible with mysticism. Metaphysics inspires a longing for mystical experience, and both revelation and the infused wisdom of contemplation (i.e. the intuitive knowledge which comes through the supra-natural gift of affective connaturality with God-in-Himself) can aid the metaphysician in his specific task. In a broader context, this has enabled us to see how Maritain considers the natural level of human knowing to be compatible with the supra-natural level of human knowing. We have seen how, in trying to avoid what he perceives as the failure to distinguish between essentially different modes of attaining truth or reality,¹⁴

¹⁴We must remember that in the Thomism of Maritain,

Maritain attempts to accomplish the unity of human knowledge.

one, true and good, as transcendentals themselves, are wrapped up in the transcendental, being-in-itself (see supra, p. 38). And we must remember that this transcendental ensemble is abstracted from an actual existent in so far as it is. In other words, the transcendentals are convertible with each other, and with what actually is (i.e. reality), although only in so far as it is (i.e. the transcendentals are not convertible with the specific essence of an actual existent).

CONCLUSION

We conclude that the importance of intellectual intuition and mystical experience (and here we are concerned solely with supra-natural mystical experience) in the realism of Jacques Maritain, is that they enable him to avoid a purely empirical foundation in philosophy, while at the same time enabling him to accomplish the unity of human knowledge. Every intellectual intuition, which is an intellectual grasping through a concept, allows human intelligence to rise above the sensual level. We see this most clearly, however, in the intellectual intuition of being, where intuition and intelligence (i.e. the process of abstraction and concept formation) harmoniously disclose being in its transcendental and analogical purity. It is the intellectual intuition of being, precisely because it is the apprehension of a purely immaterial or thinkable value, which enables Maritain to proceed toward the analogical apprehension of the absolutely transcendent God. And it is supra-natural mystical experience, because it is--like revelation--confined to the supra-natural level of human knowing, which enables Maritain to argue for the unity of human knowledge. Why is this so? This is so, because by confining mystical experience to the realm of the supra-natural, i.e. not allowing it to be available on the natural level of human knowing,

there is no contradiction between what the intellectual intuition of being enables man to attain analogically through reason, and what mystical experience enables man to attain as a gift through faith, i.e. the absolutely transcendent God Who is known both analogically and as a gift.

We discern two problematic notions in Maritain's realism: the first is his notion of the conceivability of esse, which enables him to speak about possible existence in metaphysics; and the second is his notion of natural mystical experience. Indeed, we are not claiming an allegiance either to Maritain's position concerning these two notions, or to the criticism of them which is to follow; we are merely raising questions in order to establish a basis for further research.

According to Maritain, the human process of intellectual abstraction emerges as the disclosure of intelligible values inherent in actually existent things. However, because these intelligible values are attained through conceptualisation as abstractions, they may be merely possible (i.e. not related in any immediate way to an actual existent, although having had their origin in an intellectual intuition of the intelligible value of an actual existent). And because Maritain does not hesitate to speak about the abstraction and conceptualisation of esse, the very act of existence itself (although never called an essence) is

nevertheless discussed by him in a fashion similar to his treatment of essence:

There is a concept of existence. In this concept, existence is taken ut significata, as signified to the mind after the fashion of an essence, although it is not an essence. But metaphysics does not treat of the concept of existence; no science stops at the concept; all sciences proceed through it to reality. It is not of the concept of existence, it is of existence itself that the science of being treats. And when it treats of existence (it always treats of it, at least in some fashion) the concept of which it makes use does not display to it an essence but, as Etienne Gilson puts it, that which has for its essence not to be an essence. There is analogy, not univocity, between such a concept and the concepts of which the other sciences make use. They use their concepts in order to know the realities signified by those concepts; but those realities are essences. Metaphysics uses the concept of existence in order to know a reality which is not an essence, but is the very act of existing.¹

Indeed, we must never allow ourselves to forget that for Maritain "metaphysics uses the concept of existence in order to know a reality which is not an essence, but is the very act of existing." And neither must we forget that for Maritain every judgment is ultimately resolved in the apprehension of an actual existent through the organs of sense.² Nevertheless, his notion of the concept of esse enables him to speak about abstract and merely possible existence. It is his notion of the concept of esse which enables Maritain to say that existence and essence together

¹ Maritain, Existence and the Existent, p. 43.

² See supra, pp. 37-38.

make up the same analogous concept of being; we feel that it is this assertion of his which has justified our use of the term "being-in-itself," to refer to both esse and ens (in their fully abstract and transcendental dimension) as the specific object of metaphysics.³ In view of this, there does appear to be a confusion between essence and existence in Maritain's realism, and we acknowledge the legitimacy of Sister Helen James John's criticism of what she refers to as the "essentialism" of Maritain's position.⁴ But if the act of existence is not an abstraction, how then is the metaphysician able to rise above empiricism and attain a purely thinkable or immaterial certitude?

Gilson offers a solution in his Being and Some Philosophers, where he states that the act of existence is not an abstraction. According to Gilson, there simply is no concept of esse, and he is even willing to accept Kant's assertion that the concept of the real contains nothing more than the concept of the possible:

It is not enough to say that being is conceivable apart from existence; in a certain sense it must be said that being is always conceived by us apart from existence, for the very simple reason that existence itself cannot possibly be conceived. The nature of this paradoxical fact has been admirably described by Kant in the famous passage of his Critique of Pure Reason which deals with the so-called ontological proof of the existence of God: 'Being,' Kant says, 'is evidently not a

³See supra, pp. 35-38.

⁴See John, The Thomist Spectrum, pp. 19-21.

real predicate, or a concept of something that can be added to the concept of a thing.' In this text, in which being obviously means to be, Kant wants us to understand that there is no difference whatsoever between the conceptual content of our notion of a thing conceived as existing and the conceptual content of our notion of identically the same thing, not conceived as existing. Now, if the 'to be' of a thing could be conceived apart from that which exists, it should be represented in our mind by some note distinct from the concept of the thing itself. Added to our concept of any one thing, such a note would make it represent that thing plus existence, whereas, subtracted from it, this note would make our concept represent the same thing, minus existence. In point of fact, it is not so. There is nothing we can add to a concept in order to make it represent its object as existing; what happens if we add anything to it is that it represents something else. Such is the meaning of Kant's assertion, that the concept of the real does not contain more than the concept of the possible. If we mentally add a cent to the concept of a hundred dollars, we will turn it into the concept of another sum of money, namely, a hundred dollars and one cent; on the contrary, let us analyze the concept of a hundred possible dollars and a hundred real dollars: they are identically the same, namely, the concept of a hundred dollars. In Kant's own words: 'By whatever and by however many predicates I may think a thing (even in completely determining it) nothing is really added to it, if I add that the thing exists.' In short, actual existence cannot be represented by, nor in, a concept.⁵

For Gilson, metaphysics is able to rise above empiricism, precisely because certitude comes through the intellectual act of judgment:

To judge is precisely to say that what a concept expresses actually is either a being or the determination of a certain being. Judgments always

⁵ Etienne Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), pp. 3-4.

affirm that certain conceived essences are in a state of union with, or of separation from, existence. Judgments unite in the mind what is united in reality, or they separate in the mind what is separated in reality. And what is thus united or separated is always existence, either how it is, or that it is. In this last case, which is that of the judgment of existence, my mental act exactly answers the existential act of the known thing. Let us, rather, say that such a judgment intellectually reiterates an actual act of existing. If I say that x is, the essence of x exercises through my judgment the same act of existing which it exercises in x. If I say that x is not, I mentally separate the essence of x from actual existence, because existence does not actually belong to x. This is why, while abstraction can correctly conceive apart what is really one, judgment cannot separate what is one in reality. It cannot do it, at least in this sense that, when it does, it betrays its own function and defeats its own purpose. In other words, whereas abstraction is there provisorily to take parts out of their whole, judgment is there to integrate or to reintegrate those same parts into their wholes. True judgments are normal judgments, and judgments are normal when they unite what is actually united or when they separate what is actually separated.⁶

Through the intellectual act of judgment (as opposed to the intellectual act of abstraction) Gilson seeks to establish his Thomistic existentialism. Like Maritain's Thomistic existentialism, Gilson's is wrapped up in the life of the intellect and the discernment of essences, although according to Gilson's position, the act of existence is always apprehended in (i.e. never abstracted from) an actual existent. Like Maritain, Gilson argues that existence and essence are in fact inseparable; but for Gilson the tendency is decisively toward what we might call the

⁶Ibid., p. 203.

"existentialising" of essence, as opposed to the "essentialising" of existence, which appears to be the case with Maritain. Although Gilson acknowledges the abstraction of essentia, he speaks of this process as a temporary disjunction of the concrete act.⁷

We are proposing that Maritain, in speaking about the conceptualisation of esse, appears to be leaning toward essentialism, which allows him to consider merely possible existence in the science of metaphysics. We feel that Maritain thereby endangers the Thomistic existentialism which he espouses. We ask then, if there is no conceptualisation of the act of existence, how is the metaphysician able to rise above experience and attain an intellectual certitude? In his Being and Some Philosophers, Gilson answers that we attain intellectual certitude in the intellectual act of judging. Indeed, Gilson himself certainly does not abandon the notion of an intellectual intuition of being;⁸ but it appears to be the case, that by confining the intellectual articulation of esse to the human act of judging the particular, concrete reality to be (as he does in his Being and Some Philosophers) Gilson is decisively more existential than Maritain.


⁷See ibid., pp. 203-204.

⁸For a brief exposition and critical appraisal of Gilson's understanding of the intellectual intuition of being, see Bernard Lonergan, "Metaphysics as Horizon," in Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, S.J., ed. by F. E. Crowe, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 202-220.

We also note that Maritain's notion of natural mystical experience presents us with a problem. It is a problem which is intimately connected with his notion of connaturality. If nothing can be experienced or known by man unless it is connatural to him in one way or another (and this does appear to be Maritain's position), then how can man have a direct experience or knowledge of God without that grace which (again, according to Maritain) alone enables him to become connatural to God? Indeed, Maritain states that the natural mystical experience is "improperly" immediate or direct,⁹ but why then does he insist upon calling it mystical experience (which is purported to be a direct encounter with God)? Is not the natural mystical experience after all merely a pseudo-mystical experience? Perhaps the evidence of mystical experience properly so called, in the various religious communities of India, is too overwhelming for Maritain to simply dismiss as counterfeit, and yet he is cautious lest he spread the operation of God's grace too thin. Although Maritain himself acknowledges that there is a "mixture" of natural and supra-natural elements in mystical experience,¹⁰ we feel that it might be possible to extend the recognition of God's disclosure of Himself to

⁹ See supra, pp. 74-75, footnote 14.

¹⁰ See supra, p. 73, footnote 12.



include what Maritain attempts to define as a valid but somehow natural encounter with God.¹¹

¹¹We note that such a recognition would not necessarily exclude Maritain's contention that every reception of God's grace comes from Jesus Christ through the Roman Catholic Church (see supra, p. 75, footnote 15).

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