

others.⁷⁰ An outside worker, as the moralist or the theologian, may have occasion to call upon all three procedures to furnish data for the solution of his problems. But in themselves the three procedures have no intrinsic interdependence. Yet to have a well-rounded view of the sensible universe, the view of a truly educated man, the expert in each of these three spheres will be broad enough to acknowledge fully the competence of the others in their respective domains, and will have a general acquaintance with their conclusions and their authority. In this way one avoids falling victim to the illusion that one's own specialty is the only properly scientific knowledge of nature.

J. OWENS, C.S.S.R.

Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies,

Toronto Canada

OUR POETIC KNOWLEDGE

SHELLEY, in his "Defence of Poetry," defended it to the extent of saying: "Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the center and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought . . ." ¹ In a similar vein, Wordsworth wrote: "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. . . . Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge." ²

Philosophers, on the other hand, have been less enthusiastic about the claim of poetic knowledge. Plato seems to have set the tone followed by many philosophers: "And now we may

⁷⁰ Cf.: Dicit enim quod una scientia est altera ab alia, quarum principia sunt diversa; ita quod nec ambarum scientiarum principia procedant ex aliquibus principiis prioribus, nec principia unius scientiae procedant ex principiis alterius; quia sive procederent ex eisdem principiis, sive alia ex aliis, non esset diversa scientia. *In I Anal. Post.*, lect. 41, no. 10 (ed. Leonine).

¹ Percy B. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," *English Critical Essays, XIX Century* (London, 1950), p. 131.

² William Wordsworth, "Poetry and Poetic Diction," *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

fairly take him (the poet) and place him by the side of the painter, for he is like him in two ways: first, inasmuch as his creations have an inferior degree of truth . . . and he is also like him in being concerned with an inferior part of the soul . . . he indulges the irrational nature . . . he is a manufacturer of images and is very far removed from the truth."³

Who is right, the poets or the philosophers? Or are both at extreme positions? Is there some other view which approximates more the correct position?

As a preliminary point, let us make it clear that any discussion of what sort of knowledge poetry is must be a philosophical discussion, in the sense of an analytic treatment. Poets, of course, as well as philosophers, may discuss the question of poetic knowledge, but whoever discusses it must do so in terms of a literal analysis of knowledge itself. Such an analysis is philosophical or scientific as opposed to poetic or artistic.⁴ It is the question of poetic knowledge, thus understood, that I shall discuss in this paper, subject to limitations of time. The many other important topics connected with this question, even so related a one as the role of the artist as maker or creator, will have to be passed over, except incidentally.

My procedure will consist simply in taking the notion of fine art (and specifically poetry) as that kind of art which imitates delightfully and, by analyzing it briefly, show how this notion provides an answer that does justice both to the poetic and philosophical side of the question. In the course of this exposition, I hope to indicate that certain references in Aristotle and St. Thomas give an answer that is more comprehensive than a casual reading would suggest.

The notion of fine art as imitating delightfully is the beginning of a definition; it is, in fact, the genus. If I were to give

³ Plato, *Laws*, Book IV, 719 A. It is always difficult to establish the authentic view of Plato. However, it is clear that the view expressed here is at least one view Plato maintained about the poet and poetic knowledge.

⁴ Shelley's "Defence of Poetry," however valuable it may be from the standpoint of poetic insight, is not a poetic work but a critical evaluation of poetry, and hence must be judged accordingly. For an admirable analysis of Shelley's work, that also does justice to Shelley's poetic insight, see: Fr. Anthony Durand, "Shelley on the Nature of Poetry," in *Laval Theologique et Philosophique*, 1948, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 110-155; No. 2, pp. 185-251.

a difference, I would immediately specify one of the several kinds of fine art. I shall keep, however, to this generic notion so as to comment on fine art generally although always referring to poetry primarily. By "poetry," I mean not only poems, but plays and novels as well.

It seems odd that the statement "art is imitative" has to be explained and even defended. Anyone who has read current critical literature on fine art, however, knows that relatively few grant that art is imitative, and that fewer still acknowledge that all fine art is imitative. Hence, before we examine how art imitates delightfully, we must see the imitative character of art, just as we cannot see what poetic knowledge is without first knowing that fine art means delightful imitation. I hope, in the course of this brief exposition, to remove an erroneous notion of artistic imitation that has led, I believe, to the rejection of the primacy of imitation in art.

In an imitation or an image of any kind, there are two necessary elements: the original and the representation of the original.⁵ For example, the clouds in the water represent the clouds in the sky. These two elements are linked by a resemblance based upon some common quality. However, although these two elements are necessary for any imitation, they are not enough to produce imitation properly. They may produce only resemblance, but resemblance is not necessarily imitation.

Take the example of drawing a circle on a piece of paper. It can be said to resemble a number of things, from a human head to a baseball, but it can hardly be called an imitation of anything. Insert three dots and a line in certain places and the resemblance to a human head becomes an imitation. A resemblance thus becomes an imitation when something distinctive is revealed about the original, such as figure, shape, or expression. Is it enough to say, then, that imitation is significant resemblance?

Twins certainly resemble each other significantly, and yet we would hardly call one twin an imitation of another. The two eggs, about which St. Augustine speaks, resemble each other significantly but, as St. Augustine remarks, one egg is not an imitation of another.⁶ He might have spoken of a chick as an

⁵ Cf. St. Thomas, I, *Sent.*, D. 28, Q. 2, A. 1; *Summa Theol.*, I, Q. 35, A. 1.

⁶ St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book VII, Chap. 1.

image or imitation of a hen. Why could the chick be called an imitation of the hen? It is for the reason St. Augustine gives that one egg is not an imitation of another: in an imitation, one thing must be derived from another; the chick is an image of the hen in that it proceeds in its very likeness from the hen by way of origin.

However, while the example of the resemblance of the chick to the hen brings out the note of dependence that must be present in an imitation, it fails to characterize precisely imitation in art, since the imitation in the case of the chick is natural, and not artistic. To distinguish artistic imitation from natural imitation, we must add that the representation must be something made by man. An artistic imitation, then, is a representation formed in the imagination of a human being with a resemblance to and dependence upon the original.

Do we now have a sufficient notion of artistic imitation? I think not. The impression could still remain that imitation is first and foremost a matter of copying things as they are in reality. This is the notion many contemporary artists and critics associate with artistic imitation, and if such a notion were proper to artistic imitation, they would be right in rejecting art as imitative. We must be sure to see that artistic imitation is far removed from the impoverished notion of imitation as mere copying.

Let us return to the notion of artistic imitation as a significant resemblance with dependence of the image upon the original. In what does the significant resemblance consist? It can be *any* revealing attribute or quality in the original. To take an instance from painting, where the examples are often as concrete as they are subtle, it may be only a suggestion of a certain expression in a face that the painter uses as a point of departure in the original to transform into his own representation of that face.⁷ If we see the extraordinary range of representative pos-

⁷ Most persons, in understanding imitation, rely upon a visual example for illustration, and hence painting provides the most ready examples. However, the danger in using such examples is they leave the impression that artistic imitations must *look* like the original in the sense of a copy. In such an understanding, a photograph would be the perfect artistic representation. But there is, of course, a vast difference between a photograph of a man and a portrait of a man. The portrait will bring out a significant attribute that escapes the photograph entirely.

sibilities open to the artist, we shall radically distinguish artistic imitation from copying. Makers of maps should copy literally, but not those who seek to reproduce an artistic map of some aspect of human life. On the other hand, we should not suppose that artistic imitation is so independent that it bears no significant resemblance to some original. No artist can create in the sense that God can; those who are under such a delusion bring forth monstrous distortions.

A diagram may bring out something of the mean that artistic imitation holds between two extremes. Imagine a bell-shaped curve. Let one end of the curve represent resemblance by sheer copying or exact reproduction, and the other end represent no significant resemblance at all. An arrow suspended above the curve, standing for artistic imitation, would not point toward the limit of exact reproduction; such a notion confuses artistic imitation with copying. The arrow also would not point toward the opposite end; such a notion not only denies all imitation, but art as well.⁸ The arrow would point toward the middle, not as a dead center, but as a perfection rising between two defective extremes. The arrow would point *toward* the middle, but not *at* an *exact* middle, for there is considerable flexibility in the realization of the mean of perfection in art. But to appreciate this perfection of art, we must consider the delight which is engendered by and through artistic imitation.⁹

The delight or delectation that is appropriate to artistic contemplation arises precisely from the knowing of some object as imitated or represented.¹⁰ It is not the knowing of the original object that is delectable,¹¹ but rather the knowing of the imitation of the original that is delectable. The finest tribute, in fact, as well as the most fundamental observation that can be made

⁸ To go to painting again: "naturalism" tends toward the extreme of exact reproduction without ever reaching it; some tendencies in "abstract painting" tend toward the opposite extreme without ever reaching it.

⁹ For a fuller treatment of imitation, cf. Durand, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-117; J. Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York, 1953), pp. 223 et. seq.

¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, Chap. 4, 1448 b 9-24.

¹¹ If this were so, no tragedy would be possible, for murder or moral violence of any kind is, as such revolting, but not the artistic imitation of such action.

about the artist is that he is the originative maker of marvelous imitations. Now this delight that is peculiar to fine art, and which is caused by imitation, is the basis for the intelligibility of fine art. It is here that we must look to determine what sort of knowledge artistic or poetic knowledge is.

In approaching this matter, let us ask the following question. What delights the human intellect in contemplating a work of fine art? What makes the artistic imitation delightful? The delight is caused when the human intellect sees in the imitation a more perfect object than the original is. What makes the object as imitated more perfect than the original? The imitated object has an intelligibility and a universality lacking in the original. The action of the play is more intelligible than ordinary action in human life; the sound of music is better formed than ordinary sound; the portrait brings to full actuality traits of character that are only virtually present in the original.

Granted that the imitation is finer in some respect than the original, nevertheless the imitation always retains its relation to what it is an imitation of, not only as to a point of origin, but also as a term. To return to the original *through* the imitation is to see the original anew, in the intelligibility of the imitation. Let us take an example. This or that human action is the original from which the play proceeds as an imitation. Many human actions as such seem pointless and even irrational; they never do in the play (at least in a good one). In the play, human actions which formerly seemed inconsequential take on a meaning and intelligibility in the light of their dramatic representation.¹² As a consequence, we understand reality anew and, in a sense, more comprehensively precisely because of the intelligibility artistic representation introduces into reality.

It is in this respect that artistic representation, the art of delightful imitation, takes on the formality of doctrine and of knowledge. The common note of any doctrine is that we are led from something known to the knowledge of something previ-

¹²In the providential order, we know all actions are significant; if we lose sight of the providential order, human actions often seem dull and inconsequential, sometimes to a point of existential despair. But all the world is a stage in a providential setting, and the good play is a delightful reminder that even the most insignificant human action is still for the sake of something. This point will be considered again later.

ously unknown. In poetic representation, we are led from the original itself, which we know to some extent, to the imitation of it through which we gain an intelligibility and universality that we did not know. We are thus led, finally, to see the original in a new light. This experience is a pleasing one.

If, then, we grasp the notion of artistic imitation, properly and if we see how artistic imitation is delectable, we can then affirm that poetic knowledge is truly knowledge and, moreover, that it is doctrine formally. On the other hand, if we were to approach art primarily from the standpoint of the artist, attaching undue importance to his activity of making, to a point where we would consider a work of art to be expressive merely of the artist himself, we would then lose all objective basis for establishing the valid claim of poetry as knowledge in any legitimate sense of the term.¹³

But what sort of knowledge is it that we acquire through the artist's representation? Let us first assign it a place in the gradation of knowledge. St. Thomas, as we know, assigns it the last place in his Commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*.¹⁴ It is "infima doctrina."¹⁵ This pronouncement no doubt chills the poetic soul, and might lead one to place St. Thomas at the opposite extreme from the eulogizing poets. Let us be sure, however, that we understand what the expression means.

Poetic knowledge is placed last in an order that goes from demonstrative, through dialectical and rhetorical, to poetic argumentation. All of these comprise *rational philosophy* and, indeed, within this framework, there can be no serious quarrel over the placing of poetic doctrine last. For, in contrast to the other parts of rational philosophy, there is in poetic knowledge "only

¹³ The making role of the artist, which we can describe as creative in a secondary sense, is of course of prime importance in fully evaluating the whole production of a work of fine art. There could be no work of art without that special gift of imaginative understanding and emotional intensity that is peculiarly the poet's. But if we are considering a question of knowledge, the poet is bound as any other human knower is bound: he must take his knowledge from things. However, the poet takes his knowledge from things only as a point of origin. His production of a work, as a term, brings knowledge of another kind, an "idealized" knowledge, as we shall consider shortly.

¹⁴ St. Thomas, *Comm. on Post. Anal.*, I, Lectio 1.

¹⁵ St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, I, Q. 1, A. 9.

a judgment inclining to some part of a contradiction because of a certain representation;" and poetry "is ordered to this kind of reasoning, for poets lead us to something virtuous through a becoming representation."¹⁶

This gradation of knowledge can be observed by noting the difference between what is grasped in truly scientific knowledge and what is grasped in poetic knowledge. The scientific universal is attained by abstraction inasmuch as it is removed from matter. Indeed, the more universal,¹⁷ the more necessary, the more removed from material singularity, the more scientific knowledge is. In this respect, the universal of poetic knowledge is inferior. It is a universal that does not, in a sense cannot, depart from matter, from the singulars of sense. It is a universal wedded to matter; under no condition could it be divorced from singular matter as known by the senses.

Furthermore, the scientific universal is indifferent to the mode by which it is expressed; verbal language, at best, is an imperfect means of communicating scientific knowledge. Such knowledge would fare better if it could by-pass the ambiguity and inadequacy latent and inevitable in verbal expression. In poetic communication, however, the form of verbal expression matters completely. The very imperfection of language turns out to be a condition of poetic excellence and charm, by the skillful use of that indispensable poetic instrument, the metaphor. Yet the metaphor seduces the human intellect, in so far as it seeks scientific knowledge, by turning it aside from its quest for the literal grasp of truth.

We must conclude, then, that from the standpoint of a literal analysis of knowledge, poetic knowledge is indeed "*infima doctrina*." In the literal conception of truth and doctrine, it stands on the threshold of knowledge: it is barely universal knowledge, and it is necessary knowledge only in the derived sense that it induces assent through an appropriate representation.

Is this the only conclusion that we can reach? It is the only one to reach from the standpoint of a philosophical or scientific analysis of knowledge. The poet may well feel, however, that

¹⁶ St. Thomas, *Comm. on Post. Anal.*, I, Lectio 1.

¹⁷ More universal according to causality, not according to the universal as predicable.

the cards are stacked against him, and in a certain sense he is right.

Does not the poet have something to offer that wholly escapes the approach of the philosopher and the scientist? Does not the poetic image have extraordinary power of its own to stimulate a far greater number of persons to acquire knowledge than philosophy? Let us begin to answer such questions by noting that the very weakness of poetic knowledge, as knowledge, is, in another respect, its strength and appeal.

If we view poetic knowledge only as an understanding of the real world, in the sense of that which *is*, it is admittedly inferior as knowledge. But this is not at all what poetry seeks to achieve. Poetic knowledge is a grasp of the world artistically, that is to say, in an ideal order. The poet transforms the world as it is into the world as it *ought to be*. This "ought to be" is not a moral notion, nor is the poetic "ideal" an arbitrary scheme devised by the poet without reference to reality. The poet, after all, never loses touch with reality. It is an "ought to be" in the sense that the poet supplies a man-made intelligibility to things which are more or less devoid of intelligibility. The poet confronts reality, not by expressing literal statements about it verifiable as true or false in a scientific context, but by interpreting it, by *making over* reality into as perfect a conception as the human mind can fabricate. Perhaps this is as near as we can get to explaining the "ought to be" of the poet, the "what should be" that Aristotle refers to in the *Poetics*.¹⁸ Herein lies the strength and appeal of poetic knowledge, a knowledge peculiarly appropriate to artistic conception.

David may not have looked as Michelangelo represents him in the statue in the Galleria dell' Academia in Florence, but he could have, and in the ideal sense proper to art, *should* have. No person like Oedipus or King Lear ever actually lived; yet there could be such a person and incidents could happen to such a person in such a way. Moreover, given the dramatic construction of the poet in his plot, such a person should act in the way he does. The poet, then, without ever losing his own type of

¹⁸ In the *Poetics*, Chap. 9, 1451 a 36, Aristotle remarks that the function of the poet is to describe that kind of thing that "might happen," but he immediately qualifies this possibility as one that is "probable or necessary." The poet introduces something inevitable into the contingent.

reference to reality, nevertheless does not explain reality; in a sense, he does more: he interpretes reality. He gives us a world, not with scientific understanding, but with impassioned, imaginative understanding; not a world understood in terms of itself, but in terms of human art. And with respect to a certain aspect of the world, the aspect of human contingent events occurring in the world, nature itself would make over the world in this way if it could.¹⁹ And with respect to this part of the world, the poet achieves something the philosopher never does: the poet masters the irrational and the purely contingent that pervades life.

St. Thomas remarks: "Poetic knowledge concerns things which, because of a defect of truth, cannot be seized by reason; whence it is necessary that reason be seduced as though by certain similitudes."²⁰ We have seen the sense in which this is a seduction of reason: similitudes and figures of speech turn the intellect aside from its ordering to scientific truth. Nevertheless, it is an achievement of another kind to supply, imaginatively, an intelligibility that is lacking. Now what especially lacks intelligibility for the human mind is the fortuitous circumstances constantly surrounding singular human actions. That this bottle should fall on my head when I reach in the medicine cabinet for aspirin for a headache, and moreover, that this bottle should contain rubbing alcohol, is not only fortuitous but decidedly irrational. In the poetic world, such actions are not without meaning, however.²¹ The poet can take any singular human act, any singular human trait, any singular thing at all capable of human significance, and read intelligibility and meaning into it. The flick of a cigarette ash can be the turning point

¹⁹ Cf. St. Thomas, Comm. in *Politics*, Book I, Prologue: "And hence it is that the Philosopher says that if art could work the things of nature, art would make them just as nature does and, conversely, if nature could make works of art, nature would make them as art does."

²⁰ St. Thomas, *I, Sent.*, Prolog., Q. I, A. 5, ad 3.

²¹ "Even matters of chance seem most marvellous if there is an appearance of design as it were in them; as for instance the statue of Mitys at Argos killed the author of Mitys' death by falling down on him when a looker-on at a public spectacle; for incidents like that we think not to be without meaning." Aristotle, *Poetics*, Chap. 9, 1452 at 6-10 (Random House Edition).

in a whole chain of events in a play or story. The most trivial incident or characteristic, in the hands of a good artist, can convey a world of meaning.²²

From this general point, two others follow that give the poet claim to an excellence that is uniquely his. The first is that this meaningful grasp of the inconsequential is the key to the universal enjoyment of art by all persons. The "escape from reality" (an escape from trivial and monotonous reality) that art offers to all of us need not be an escape to unreality, but an elevation to the concrete realization that all human actions matter after all. Art presents life as better, more intelligible, more significant than it often seems to be. Life, in short, is often so unpoetic that we need poetry to live it. This achievement of art is not illusory nor deceitful; it portrays human action, passion, and thought as it could be and ought to be.²³

²² The following conversation appears in Henry James' short story, "The Pupil":

"I hope you don't mean to dismiss me," said Pemberton.

Morgan considered a moment, looking at the sunset. "I think if I did right I ought to."

"Well, I know I'm supposed to instruct you in virtue; but in that case don't do right."

"You're very young—fortunately," Morgan went on, turning to him again.

"Oh yes, compared with you!"

"Therefore, it won't matter so much if you do lose a lot of time."

"That's the way to look at it," said Pemberton accommodatingly.

Here appears to be a trivial, almost insignificant conversation between Pemberton (the *tutor*) and Morgan (the *pupil*) although in this bit of conversation the roles seem switched. Yet in this bit of conversation, every phrase is significant to a high degree and summarizes the whole complex situation of the story. Cf. Mr. Clifton Fadiman's analysis in *The Short Stories of Henry James* (New York, 1945), pp. 268-72.

²³ Even the exploitation of the irrational, the morbid, and the frankly distorted representation that some artists give us serves its purpose. We know this part of human action, passion, and thought for what it is; it too *can be*, but no great artist represents it as what ought to be. And it seems fair to add that an exclusive or primary concern with the ugly and the morbid goes contrary to the contemplative enjoyment we seek in fine art.

Cf. George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York, 1936), p. 167: "All subjects, even the most repellent, when the circumstances of life thrust them before us, can thus be observed with curiosity and treated with art. ... We are not pleased by virtue of the suggested evils, but in spite of them; and if ever the charm of the beautiful presentation sinks so low,

This first point leads to the second. The poet, whether knowingly or not, reminds us concretely that what he represents as "ought to be", is in the providential order. All events are significant, providentially considered. There is no irrationality, no inconsequential action, no mere triviality, in human action, passion, or thought as related to God's ordaining plan for the common good of the universe. In the good work of art, there is likewise nothing inconsequential, trivial, or insignificant. True enough, the best of human reconstruction of time, place, and deed is only a flickering shadow of the working out of Divine Art; yet, the human artist does capture effectively the working out of human events in a manner that imitates remarkably and persuasively the working out of Providence. The illumination of things in their concrete significance comes especially from art. The philosopher remarks truly that all human actions are for an end. The artist convinces the majority of us by reconstructing how it happens. Hence it is that the majority of men learn more from art than from science.

This last sentence reminds us of one more special quality that poetic knowledge has. However limited and inferior it is from the standpoint of knowledge as such, poetic knowledge for most persons is the most satisfying knowledge and the knowledge most proportionate to the human mind.

Midway between the proper or scientific universal and the singular known by sense lies the universal of poetic knowledge. The human intellect does not move with ease and facility on the level of proper universals even though its object is something universal. The more removed the universal is from individuality and materiality the less competent is the human intellect in grasping it. On the other hand, the singular of sense cognition is too inferior to draw the human intellect except reflexively.

The universal of art is a mean between these extremes. It is not, like the scientific universal, a universal without the singular, but a universal in the singular. It is not, like the sense singular, only a material singular, but the singular universal-

or the vividness of the represented evil rises so high, that the balance is in favor of pain, at that very moment the whole object becomes horrible, passes out of the domain of art, and can be justified only by its scientific or moral uses."

ized.²⁴ The universal of art is a union of the singular and the universal in the fashion that human nature is a union of body and soul. Poetic knowledge, then, is the knowledge most proportionate to human knowing, not to the human intellect as such, but to human knowing as a composite of sense and intellectual knowing. Philosophical contemplation, it is well to recall here, is not proportionate to the human mode of knowing.²⁵

The universality of poetic knowledge as knowledge is limited, but the universality of appeal that poetic knowledge has is almost unlimited. It is the avenue of knowledge open to most men most of the time. Because of its appeal to the "whole man," to use an abused phrase, it is the most enjoyable and profitable mode of knowledge for man generally. The philosophers who tend to be contemptuous of poetic knowledge are so, I think, because they overrate the capacity of human knowing and underrate the universality appropriate to art and to man.

In conclusion, I should like to summarize in three paragraphs the main points I have tried to establish. The limitation of time prevents adequate elaboration of these points as well as the inclusion of others that deserve attention.

The poetic claim that poetry is the "first and last of all knowledge," that poetry is "the center and circumference of all knowledge," cannot be substantiated. Nor does it seem accurate to treat poetic knowledge as some mysterious intuition of reality, above and beyond the grasp of normal human reason. Mystery there may be, poetic insight there certainly is, but poetic knowledge is first and foremost the work of human reason, for art of any kind is essentially *recta ratio factibilium*. The poet is a maker as well as a knower, and poetic knowledge flows from his poetic construction. We who contemplate the work of art enjoy it because we see, through the representation, the marvellously made likeness of reality. At the same time, it must be stressed that poetic knowledge, primarily on the part of the artist, is that special product of human reason which I

²⁴ Othello, for example, is a universal character singularized or, to state the same thing the other way around, Michelangelo's David is a singular universalized.

²⁵ Hence the inevitable tendency to reduce philosophical contemplation to poetic contemplation.

think is aptly described as imaginative impassioned understanding.²⁶

From the standpoint of doctrine, poetic knowledge consists essentially in convincing man through pleasing representation. This doctrinal aspect of poetic knowledge can be seen only by understanding poetry as the art of delightful imitation. Consequently, it seems necessary to me to reiterate and develop the notion of imitation and the delight that is appropriate to imitation. Poetic knowledge, then, is *infima doctrina* in the sense that it convinces by similitudes generally and metaphors in particular.

Nevertheless, poetic knowledge has the strength of its weakness, because it appeals so strikingly to the human mode of knowing. The metaphor²⁷ is especially pleasing to the human mode of knowing, and the universal realized in art is especially well proportioned to the union of sense and intellect in man. I have stressed one aspect in particular of poetic knowledge, the poetic reconstruction of the world as it *ought to be*, because I think this is an excellence only poetic knowledge has, and because through this genuine poetic insight we can learn much that would otherwise be denied to us.²⁸ It is no small tribute, either, to note that in poetic knowledge we are removed from, and temporarily freed from, the burden of the inconsequential and the irrational that plagues us in our daily life²⁹ and that, in a special and delightful way, poetry imitates the providential order wherein is God's Power and Wisdom "reaching from end to end mightily and ordering all things graciously."³⁰

JOHN A. OESTERLE

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

²⁶ "The essential point is that poetry is the expression of a dual nature, so that neither the power of feeling itself nor the power of thought by itself can produce it." A. Durand, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

²⁷ Though it is the death of logic, the metaphor is the life of poetry.

²⁸ Cf. Louis Arnaud Reid, *A Study in Aesthetics* (New York, 1954), p. 282: "In poetry—and in their own ways other 'representative' arts—life is seen from an angle unusual in ordinary experience. In the ecstasy of imagination we see things together as new wholes. From this vision the philosopher and even the scientist may learn much."

²⁹ There is even a sense in which fine art as imitating human action transcends moral action, for it raises us above and frees us from the contrarieties of human life.

³⁰ *Wisdom*, Chap 8, verse 1.