

confusion when he says: "The excellence of Aristotle's method cannot make up for the outstanding weakness of his study, namely, his indifference to the meaning of tragedy and his consequent failure to trace the general outlines of the tragic view of life" (p. 30). The remainder of Myers' study serves only to show the extent to which one can try to reduce all knowledge to affective knowledge.

In general, then, these works exhibit the lack of preparedness in their authors for discerning the object of tragedy; and since teaching presupposes knowledge in the teacher, these authors are far from being capable of teaching the truth about tragedy. Their vagaries, however, do suggest that the most accurate view of the tragic object is had, not within the field of poetry, nor even within the whole field of philosophy, but only in theology. This does not mean that Aristotle's tract on tragedy is defective. As St. Thomas has frequently noted, Aristotle examined all things inasmuch as these things can be known by reason. Original sin and its aftermath are among the truths revealed by God. Thus, while the Stagirite could and did define the object of tragedy to the extent that this object can be known by reason unaided by faith, he did not even attempt to discern in this object that specific determination which is recognizable only through faith; and yet his analysis of poetics enables the Christian to appreciate how the mystery of human redemption can be communicated poetically.

Inasmuch as both works contain many passages like that cited from Muller's book (pp. 26-28), it seems that we are obliged, too, to mention that these books are probable dangers to the true faith.

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***Problems of Art.* By Susanne K. Langer. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957. Pp. 184, with index. \$3.50.**

The work of Susanne Langer in aesthetics is now well established. Recently, the third edition of her *Philosophy in a New Key* appeared, a book significant enough in itself, and yet it assumed more the character of an introductory study once her *Feeling and Form* appeared. The present book, *Problems of Art*, does not presume to present a comprehensive theory of fine art in the manner of either of her preceding

books, since it is constituted of ten lectures of which only three were given as a unit. The present book, accordingly, is a looser, more informal discussion of various topics connected with Mrs. Langer's understanding of aesthetics as the theory of expressive form.

The topics covered include the dance as dynamic image, deceptive analogues, imitation and transformation, creative devices, the art symbol, and poetic creation. In an appendix she discusses abstraction in science and abstraction in art. This informal grouping of lectures into a single book should not mislead one into thinking that matters are lightly discussed; all of them testify to the extraordinary ability of Mrs. Langer to penetrate in many illuminating ways the nature of art and to combine the analytic spirit of the philosopher with the imaginative understanding of the artist.

The tenth lecture is on poetic creation. Mrs. Langer notes the widespread acceptance of the division of language into the strictly conceptual use exemplified in such sciences as mathematics or physics and the emotional use presumably exemplified in poetry, and often extended to theology and various branches of philosophy, especially metaphysics. Mrs. Langer is concerned with the problem this somewhat simplistic division raises for poetry. "In reading such semantical studies of poetry one may be left wondering why poetic language is often referred to as 'creative' and its product as 'poetic creation.' What is created?" (p. 143).

The author begins to resolve this problem by stating that every art creates a special sort of appearance; for example, the appearance of space in painting or the appearance of time in music. The case of poetry is more complicated. Although, in a sense, poetry is made up of words, the poet does not create words; rather, the appearance created by the poet is brought about by the way words are handled. Nevertheless, Mrs. Langer holds that contrary to popular assumption the poet is not lending a created appearance to things in the actual world. This leads her to say: "Language is the material of poetry, but what is done with this material is not what we do with language in actual life, *for poetry is not a kind of discourse at all.* What the poet creates out of words is an *appearance* of events, persons, emotional reactions, experiences, places, conditions of life; these created things are the elements of poetry. . . . What is created is a composed and shaped apparition of a new human experience" (p. 148, author's italics).

In thus maintaining that poetic creation is a creation of sheer appearance by means of words, Mrs. Langer seeks to establish a distinctive use of words for poetry, a use that will not be restricted to merely the communication of one's feelings to another. She refers to this poetic use of words as the formulative function of language, which has its own primitive and advanced levels. It is not only found in poetry but it has its most spectacular exhibition there. Mrs. Langer is thus led to assert: "Poetry is not beautified discourse. . . . Poetry as such is not discourse at all, it is the creation of a perceptible human experience which, from the standpoint of science and practical life, is illusory . . . the poetic use of language is essentially formulative, and per se not communicative" (p. 151).

Mrs. Langer is effective, first of all, in manifesting the inadequacy of the purely semantic approach to the study of poetic language. The positivistic bias of sharply dividing language into narrowly conceptual and narrowly emotional uses is an untenable philosophy of language, for this simplified division hides more than reveals the varied functions of language. Moreover, "conceptual" and "emotional" are not proper differentia of human language since language necessarily involves concepts in the mind whether emotion is expressed or not. In any case, to regard poetry merely as the expression of feelings is to ignore an intellectual dimension that is essential to poetry.

Mrs. Langer is right, too, in regarding the work of poetic art as a constructed form. One may thus understand, with her, that what the poet creates is a "composed and shaped apparition of a new human experience." She sometimes uses the word "illusion," but it seems to me this word conveys something foreign to the intent of the poet. True enough, there is an illusory aspect to all art, and in *Feeling and Form* she took pains to try to clarify the artistic meaning of the term; yet what constitutes art is still not illusion so much as a highly imaginary representation, a quite different thing. Her word "semblance" may seem more apt by way of characterizing what the poetic image is that is realized in the work of art.

It is not altogether clear, however, precisely how Mrs. Langer understands "semblance" and applies it. Her statement that the created poetic semblance "need not be a semblance of corresponding actual things, facts, persons, or experiences" is not devoid of ambiguity. If she means that the poetic image is not a more or less literal reproduction of real things, she is certainly correct, thereby eliminating the copyist theory of art often unfortunately confused with the meaning

of artistic imitation. On the other hand, if she means there is no correspondence between the poetic image and the world of human action and passion, the statement would seem to eliminate the very basis for speaking of a poetic image and of a semblance. At times, Mrs. Langer seems to intend this latter meaning, for she speaks of the poetic semblance as being normally a "pure appearance, a sheer figment" and as "entirely created." But even a "pure appearance" must be an appearance of something and the work of art, if it is an appearance and especially if it is a semblance, must at once refer to something other than itself as well as be the work of representation itself.

It would seem, consequently, that Mrs. Langer is inconsistent with respect to the very nature of a work of art. In her concern to bring out, quite rightly, some character of semblance present in any work of art, she appears to be led to a position that in fact denies this very character of art by attempting to make the work of art so entirely created that it could not be a semblance. Her "pure appearance" would no longer be an appearance at all, for there would be nothing of which it is an appearance.

In brief, while the work of art need not, and indeed should not, merely reproduce actual things, events or persons—and in this sense be the appearance rather than the reality—still it cannot avoid being an appearance or a semblance of things, events, or persons as experienced by man. The work of art is, as Mrs. Langer insists, a constructed form; at the same time, being a semblance as well, it will also be an imaginative representation of things and events as man knows and experiences them. No one should confuse the appearance with the reality, but on the other hand no one should suppose there is no connection between appearance and reality. The poet interprets reality and reconstructs it; therein lies the force of created semblance in poetry. And because the good poet is an able interpreter of what reality as we experience it might be, the appearance the poet creates is normally better than the reality from which it originates. The perfection which the artist achieves in his poetic work would not be intelligible nor appreciated without taking into account, however implicitly, the reality of which his work is a semblance and an appearance.

The word "semblance" may not turn out to be too fruitful a term for poetic analysis. It has a breadth of meaning that exceeds a poetic context. It is true that in her other works, Mrs. Langer has identified "semblance" with what Aristotle means by "imitation." But if she really intends an identification, she would not be inclined to isolate a

work of art from its intelligible and imaginary relation to human action and passion. Actually, the word "semblance," being a synonym for "likeness" or "image" is more remote than imitation in the artistic sense. Semblance stands more as a remote genus of art, whereas imitation is intrinsic to art. It could be said that every artistic imitation is a semblance or likeness but not every semblance is an artistic imitation, for a semblance may range from something so illusory as a mirage to something so purely reproductive as a photograph or one's reflection in a mirror; in either case there is a semblance but not an artistic imitation. As an allied point, it might be noted that a more precise notion of artistic imitation would enable Mrs. Langer to see how music is an imitative art—not in the quite inadequate sense of the "imitative stunts of program music" she refers to on page 97—but in the sense in which music imitates in melody, harmony and rhythm the flow of the passions. This notion of artistic imitation in music would be quite in harmony with Mrs. Langer's excellent grasp of music as an art form which she first developed in *Philosophy in a New Key*.

Limitations of space prevent investigating at least two other fundamental and interesting points Mrs. Langer raises in her tenth chapter: 1) the poetic use of language is essentially formulative and per se not communicative; 2) poetry as such is not discourse at all. Perhaps a brief comment will substitute.

In both statements, Mrs. Langer is concerned to explain poetry in terms of itself and not to impose a semantic or a psychological analysis; "the real question is what the poet *makes*." She is most able and perceptive in establishing that the task of poetic criticism is an evaluation of the poetic work as an art form. Yet it seems to me that she overstates the case in the two propositions cited above. In order to preserve a formal understanding of poetry it is neither desirable nor necessary to maintain that in being formulative, poetic language cannot also be communicative; these two uses are not opposites but complementary functions of language in its poetic use. What is communicative about the poem is not essentially the poet's personal morality or life history or psychosis (it is such matters Mrs. Langer associates with communication), but the type of emotional experience, knowledge and truth peculiar to poetic art as manifested through the poet's skillfully constructed art form. Her brief reference to Keats' sonnet on pages 152-153 is unintelligible without taking into account both the formulative and communicative use of poetic language. As a consequence, the denial of discourse to poetry is also extreme. Perhaps Mrs. Langer's

notion of discourse is univocal. Poetic discourse is not the discourse of syllogistic argumentation, but it is a discourse in an analogous sense of the term, for the poet seeks to induce assent to a truth in terms of his poetic image. The appropriate delight we experience in the *understanding* of a poem comes from our being led to accept in the pleasing representation the sort of knowledge the poet is singularly capable of communicating. The poetic image is still in the rational order, and the rational order for man involves discourse, however analogously.

It is customary for a reviewer to conclude by saying, in effect, that despite certain reservations the book being reviewed is excellent, outstanding, and worthy of serious attention. All this is true in the present case, but I wish to conclude more forcefully. I have touched on certain matters only because I think that they are particularly fundamental and would contribute to a fuller understanding and appreciation of art so far as a philosophical evaluation permits. What I have tried to say, in my opinion, adds to rather than detracts from Mrs. Langer's exposition. What I am more confident of is that Mrs. Langer is in the very foremost rank of writers on philosophy of art. In all of her books, one's understanding and appreciation of fine art is notably advanced and enriched. *Problems of Art* is further proof if it were needed.

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***Studies in Human Time.* By Georges Poulet. Translated by Elliott Coleman. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956. Pp. 363, with index. \$5.00.**

A general theoretical statement (Introduction) precedes seventeen dialectic or dramatic studies in modern French literature—chapters ranging from Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal to Baudelaire, Valéry, Proust. Human time! The author, I take it, would scarcely be interested in the physical statement by a Wisconsin scientist recently quoted in the newspapers: that a passenger in a space rocket moving at nearly the speed of light around Beta Centauri on a trip of eight years would return to the earth only one year older. For somewhat the same reason, Poulet, though he writes chapters on three classic French dramatists, shows complete indifference to such literary problems as the unities of time and place. His theme is time as experienced on the inside, by the