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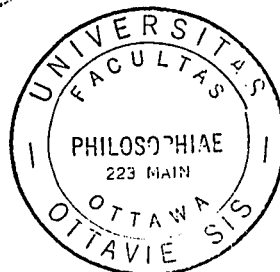
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AN EVALUATION
OF
THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART
OF
LEWIS MUMFORD

by John H. Ford

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Ottawa as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Ottawa, Canada, 1958

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis an attempt will be made to evaluate the philosophy of art of Lewis Mumford, one of the most versatile of modern American critics. His basic positions will be exposed and, where possible, those of his ideas which seem to have roots in others' thoughts will be traced to their possible source.

Mumford's ideas will then be evaluated in terms of the Philosophia Perennis. The evaluation will be a positive one in that if there is disagreement with Mumford, an effort will be made to do more than contest a particular stand. Since this but creates something of an intellectual vacuum, conclusions based upon Thomistic principles will be offered, but only after some of the reasoning involved in arriving at these ideas has been developed.

Since this thesis does not pretend to develop a philosophy of art based upon Thomistic principles, it is obvious that a complete examination of the traditional approach will not be feasible. It is hoped that sufficient evidence will be given so that the arguments which are proposed are not simply from authority.

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After a chapter which gives a brief but necessary statement of Mumford's general philosophy and a short biography, the thesis will be divided into three sections: the source of art, the signification of art, and the end of art.

This division properly covers the problem in terms of the four causes of the artefact, the first section considering the efficient cause, the second the formal and material causes, and the third the final cause. In each section there will be two chapters. The first will state Mumford's thoughts and, where possible, the roots of those thoughts. The second will discuss the points raised by Mumford in terms of traditional principles.

It will be evident that Mumford's thought is not always original, nor does he use the technical jargon of the philosopher. Further, he does not always arrive at conclusions by a deliberate discursive method. But he is a great force in present day American criticism, a force which deserves attention.

Certainly one of the roles of the Catholic philosopher is that he be constantly alert to the activity in the market place. It follows that the regulative nature of philosophy with respect to the arts and sciences must be

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recognized, and that the application of philosophical principles to other areas of thought be one of the chief duties of any who would follow the intellectual beacon of the Angelic Doctor, a man who was immersed in the problems of his day. It is hoped that this thesis will enter into this activity of the market place by discussion with one of the more vocal moderns found there.

CHAPTER ONE

MUMFORD'S LIFE AND WORK

Since one of the points that this thesis will hold is that there is a definite relationship between art and philosophy, it seems proper that a beginning would involve a brief exposition of the life of Lewis Mumford and a short account of the main influences upon his life.

By understanding something of his position in American letters, by knowing something of his philosophy, by recalling something of the highlights of his life, it should be possible to approach the problem of his esthetic with more assurance. For while it is true that a judgment concerning his philosophy of art should be based on this philosophy and not on preconceived notions, it nevertheless seems that the subject matter of an esthetic can only be properly viewed against a backdrop of other ideas and influences. And while those ideas and influences are not the direct object of this study, they are important in that they may help reveal some of the sources and meaning in Mumford's writings.

Certainly no competent critic would inquire as to the moral conduct of an artist before he would make a

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judgement concerning his work; the artefact is to be judged on its own merits, or lack. Similarly, one must judge the principles a man proposes in a philosophy of art, on the soundness of the principles. But a fact too obvious to demand development remains: knowledge of the artist and his background, or of the philosopher and his, will better enable us to understand the work of art or the esthetic.

LIFE

It has been said, perhaps without exaggeration, that Lewis Mumford "is today one of the most stimulating and far-ranging of American critics...his field of vision embraces most of the seven arts: indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that it encompasses most of life."¹

Since his birth some sixty-odd years ago, Mumford has written some twenty-one books and hundreds of magazine articles, all of which attempt to evaluate the artistic and sociological accomplishments of America and the great tradition of western civilization which has influenced this art and this life.

¹C. I. Glicksberg, "Lewis Mumford and the Organic Synthesis," Sewanee Review, Vol. 15 (1937), p. 34.

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It has been an evaluation which has met with high praise and no little abuse. It has been hailed on one hand as being unprecedented in American letters.¹ It has been ridiculed on the other as the work of a man fighting with windmills, of a quixotic dreamer who has removed himself from reality.² George Santayana has gone so far as to say that Mumford's book, The Golden Day, an historical approach to American culture and art which attempts to evaluate beginnings in this country and to trace roots to European civilization, is "the best book about America if not the best American book that I have ever read."³ Others are inclined to view all of his books with a casual indifference. So that the reaction as to the merit of his works has been divided. The fact that he has been significantly influential is undisputed.

Mumford's genre has been amazing, for he has attempted to paint upon a canvas so broad as to be almost

¹Waldo Frank, "Views on Human Nature," Saturday Review, Vol. 34, (Sept 22, 1951), p. 17.

²Scott, Buchanan, "Mumford Tilts at Windmills," Virginia Quarterly, Vol. 22 (1934), p. 51.

³Quoted by E. D. Duff, "Lewis Mumford--Post Christian in an Anti-Christian World," Commonweal, Vol. 37 (Oct. 30, 1942), p. 38.

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unique in an age of high specialization. His field of vision and of endeavor has been broad, if not deep. And if he has not always been accurate in his interpretations or correct in his conclusions, it should not cause one to ignore the gigantic task he has so ambitiously attempted. He has commented on art, politics, sociology, philosophy, education, city planning and religion. And if it be objected that no man is able to become an expert in all of these fields, Mumford's followers can insist that he has not pretended to be an expert in all of these areas but that he has investigated them as a philosopher, hoping to find the elements which will enable him to complete his modern synthesis. And they may very well point out that he has indeed become an expert in some of these fields in spite of it all.

Lewis Mumford was born on October 19, 1895, in Flushing, Long Island, New York, the son of Lewis and Elvina Mumford. He grew up on the west side in New York, where he spent most of his life until 1939.¹ His home was one of extreme poverty and he speaks little of his early home

¹ Stanley Kunitz, Twentieth Century Authors, H. W. Wilson, 1942, p. 995.

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life or of any influence his parents may have had upon him. Mumford does not speak of such things as love or religion as having influenced his early years; perhaps such influences were present, but neither he himself nor his biographers have mentioned them.

He was a reasonably good student until the last years of high school when his interest in the purely academic wavered and he independently began the voluminous reading which would aid him later on. In those early years he was an imaginative child, interested in nature and the natural sciences.

Most of Mumford's higher education was received at City College in New York and at Columbia University. Though he accumulated enough credits for a degree, he never formally applied for it.

As early as 1915, Mumford came across the writings of Professor Patrick Geddes, a Scottish biologist who trained under the famous anthropologist, Thomas Huxley. Geddes, who was knighted before his death in 1932, was especially interested in sociology and city planning, but fondly hoped to be able to achieve a modern intellectual synthesis. There is no question that it was Geddes who

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most influenced the life of Mumford; through correspondence and occasional meetings they built a close friendship.¹

Mumford hails Geddes as a "philosopher of life and its fullness and unity," and says that the Scottish biologist proposes a doctrine that rests on the perpetual capacity of life to renew itself and transcend itself.² If other biologists have described life in terms of assimilation and responsiveness, of sensitiveness and growth, Geddes is praised by Mumford for adding the note of insurgence, a capacity to overcome, by power or cunning, by plan or dream, the forces that threaten the organism.³

After his formal education, Mumford worked as an investigator in the dress and waist industry, became a cement tester in the U. S. Bureau of Standards, and during World War I he served in the U. S. Navy as a radio operator.⁴

Though he had several magazine articles published while he was employed in the above-mentioned positions,

¹Time, Vol. 27 (April 18, 1936), p. 96.

²L. Mumford, The Human Prospect, Beacon Press, 1955, p. 99.

³Ibid. p.101. ⁴Ibid., Vol. 43 (June 5, 1944), p.112.

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Mumford's literary career more properly began when in 1919 he became editor of the Dial.¹ This event and his marriage two years later to Sophia Willenberg, who later bore him two children, became great stabilizing forces in his life and gave his ambitions something of permanent direction.

During the early twenties, he continued as editor of the Dial and began contributing to numerous publications. It was in 1922 that the first of his books appeared.

The Story of Utopias, a study of the literary utopias of the past, also revealed Mumford's longing for the ideal and offered an introduction to his humanistic philosophy.

Certainly his most ambitious endeavor and the one which best reveals his scope is his tetralogy: Technics and Civilization (1934), Culture of Cities (1938), The Condition of Man (1944), and The Conduct of Life

¹The Dial--now defunct--has been called "one of the best advance guard critical magazines that ever existed in America." It was a magazine of liberal criticism that explored the American literary heritage for its ideas, attitudes, and philosophies. Hoffman, Allen, Ulrich, The Little Magazines, Princeton University Press, 1946, p. 196.

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(1951).¹ In these volumes one is likely to discover both the range and depth of Mumford's thought. He has sought in these volumes to deal in a somewhat unified way with man's nature, his work, and his life dramas. It was an attempt to develop a new synthesis and project a new pattern of life which Mumford has felt has been emerging for over a century. All the books fall into a common frame: they seek to exemplify in method and plan the doctrine of organic humanism.

Mumford has also had noteworthy experience in education. From 1931 until 1935, he was professor of art at Dartmouth College. He was a member of the Board of Higher Education in New York (1935-37), a member of the Commission on Education of the American Council of Education (1938-44), professor of humanities at Stanford University (1942-44), visiting professor of architecture, North Carolina State College (1948-52), and visiting

¹It seems unnecessary at this point to mention all of Mumford's books or relate any details concerning them. They will be more properly dealt with later on. It should be sufficient to point out here that the works deal with such subjects as city planning, architecture, literary criticism, art, cultural history, politics, and biography.

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professor of land and city planning, University of Pennsylvania (1951--). ¹

It becomes, then, rather obvious that Lewis Mumford has, both as a writer and as an educator, been in a position to be a great influence. Now it is important to briefly review the ideas with which he would influence.

They are ideas which are seldom clothed in technical language and they are often obscure because they are not refined nor sufficiently developed, but they are all significant if one do nothing else but recall their popularity.

GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

Philosophically Lewis Mumford must be classified as an eclectic. It is certain that he cannot be specifically identified with any of the schools distinguishable in the historic stream of philosophy; indeed he does not even concern himself with some of the problems which have seemingly tormented all the great thinkers of the past. However, this does not mean that influences of philosophers

¹Stanley Kunitz, Twentieth Century Authors, 1955 Supplement, H. W. Wilson, p. 697.

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are not discernable, though Mumford seldom acknowledges an intellectual debt to specific men, except, of course, to Patrick Geddes.

Perhaps it is because he feels he has so absorbed the ideas of others, only to reconstruct them in his own intellectual synthesis, that he feels his ideas are peculiarly his. Yet, there are certain areas where influences are unmistakable: it is Kant who has helped him form his ideas concerning the problem of knowing; it is Hegel's thoughts that are often mirrored in his ideas of becoming; it is Freud and James who have given him tools with which to construct a psychology. But Mumford cannot be classified as a Kantian, a Hegelian, or a Freudian.¹

There is also little doubt that Mumford cannot be classified as a speculative thinker in the traditional sense of the notion. He is actually suspicious of what he calls abstract, analytical thinking, which, he feels, "is one of the great achievements of the race," but which

¹Since this work is concerned with Mumford's philosophy of art, thoughts of others will be specifically cited more properly there than here, where only a very brief review of his general philosophy is desirable.

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"is misleading and mischievous unless it takes place in a synthetic environment."¹

Within the norms of society, every man must find his own living philosophy. This is more than the sum of one's beliefs, judgements, standards, axioms, put together in an orderly style: it is rather a resolution of one's abstract plan of living with the circumstances and emergencies of actual existence. An adequate philosophy ought to bring together one's scheme of living, one's conscious reflections, and the inner go [sic] of the self.²

Actually the credo of the humanist as stated by Bernard Berenson, expresses well a position that is probably the key to an understanding of Mumford's thought:

"History is the story of how man is being humanized. No history can be written without axiomatic values, consciously manufactured or unconsciously assumed. Values cannot exist without a valuer. We know no valuer but man."³

To this Mumford would say amen, and it is through understanding such a contention that we must come to an understanding of Mumford's intellectual principles.

¹L. Mumford, in Living Philosophies, World Publishing Co., 1942, p. 216.

²L. Mumford, Living Philosophies, pp. 205-6.

³Bernard Berenson, Aesthetics and History, Doubleday, 1948, p. 271.

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Mumford's world is primarily one of becoming, a world which measures the progress of man by social progress, the progress of the universe in terms of evolution, and the progress of God in terms of time. It all becomes a sort of Hegelian dialectic which can only speak of tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. And in the center of it all, the measure of it all, stands man.

The answer for a search for truth cannot be found in the universe, for the universe becomes intelligible only when referred to man. "The Universe," he says, "is inscrutable, unfathomable, malicious..."¹

Men are sustained, in faith and work, not by what they find in the universe, but by what man has built there. Man gave the word: he gave the symbol: he gave the form: he believed in his ejaculations and created language: he believed in his symbols and created myth, poetry, science, philosophy. Deny this initial act of faith, tear aside the veil man has thrown between his own experience and the blank reality of the universe and everything else becomes meaningless.²

¹L. Mumford, Herman Melville, Harcourt, 1929, p. 187.

²L. Mumford, The Golden Day, W. W. Norton, 1934, p. 150.

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Mumford points out that in his philosophy there is no sanction for any single set of ends or goals. Too often, he maintains, a philosophy is formed around an abstract end, and then the universe is reproached because it appears indifferent to the goal which has been established. "It would be wiser to begin with the nature of life itself, and to observe at what point one good or another does emerge from it."¹

It is, then, man's interpretation of the world which gives it its determination. It is not the intellect of man which is determined by a reality which exists in an objective world exterior to self. This, of course, only emphasizes the role of man in the drama of creation.

It is, however, not the individual man who is exalted, but man as an integral part of society. This should not be misinterpreted to suggest that Mumford has ignored individual dignity. Far from it. But the individual in his philosophy is definitely subordinated to society.

"The end of practical activity is culture: a maturing mind, a ripening character, an increasing sense of

¹L. Mumford, in Living Philosophies, p. 207.

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mastery and fulfillment, a higher integration of all one's powers in a social personality."¹

If man is able to find himself it must be by identification with his fellow men. Indeed, life itself is spoken of not in terms of the individual but the social person, which is the group. "Whereas life is eternal and he who has faith in it and participates in it is saved from the emptiness of the universe and the pointlessness of his own existence therein."²

Man comes into the world not only to live and to die and to perpetuate his species but to give to it a new destiny. For man existence is a continued process of self-fabrication and self-transcendence.³ The individual's dignity is derived from his relationship to this large organism, humanity, which is a living force, constantly changing.

¹Ibid., p. 213.

²C. I. Glicksberg, "Lewis Mumford and the Organic Synthesis," Sewanee Review, Vol. 15 (1937), p. 35.

³L. Mumford, Condition of Man, Harcourt Brace, 1946, p. 11.

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Lost in a universe which gets meaning only from what he imposes upon it, man constantly struggles to dominate the forces around him. If life has no absolutely definite meaning it is because there is no such meaning. Man can know victory only in the struggle, the struggle well fought contains the victory.

"Not tame and gentle bliss, but disaster, heroically encountered, is man's true happy ending; and in this spirit one can face with equanimity both life itself, and its tragic and ambiguous rewards."¹

And the thing which is sacred and which gives meaning to everything else is human life.²

The goodness in the world of Mumford is not an absolute good, but again something which can be measured with respect to man, for no intrinsic goods exist apart from his purpose and needs. Mumford, like Kant, believes

¹L. Mumford, Living Philosophies, p. 219.

²L. Mumford, Values for Survival, Harcourt Brace, 1946, p. 80. "This means that there is no part of our modern world that we must not be ready to scrap, if the need to scrap it is the price of mankind's safety and continued development...Nothing is sacred but human life."

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that the "only unconditional good is the will to goodness."¹ When one further considers that the process of becoming on the part of man involves change, the need for an ethics which is pragmatic seems almost a necessity. Yet it must be stressed that Mumford's goals are high for man; there is no attempt to make a complete mockery out of objective morality.

Perhaps Mumford's presentation of the problem of good and evil is one of the most interesting in a not extremely well ordered or classified philosophy. It also reveals some significant highlights.

Mumford sees evil as something positive and demonstrates a knowledge of St. Augustine when he holds that the Bishop of Hippo was wrong in holding that evil is a lack of good. He suggests that other Orthodox Christians have known better than to hold such doctrine. In fact, he goes

¹L. Mumford, Values for Survival, p. 31. Kant himself contends that "nothing in the world--indeed nothing even beyond the world--can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will." Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, in Immanuel Kant: Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy, ed. L. W. Beck, University of Chicago Press, 1949, p. 72.

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so far as to suggest that St. Augustine's opinion is not held by the Church today.

Actually this is but one of a number of occasions where Mumford has revealed that while his extensive reading has permitted him to become familiar with many writers, he has not always exerted the care, nor proved his ability, to penetrate the meaning of the writer. Some other of his positions concerning the problem of evil are worthy of note.

He is certainly aware of the "goodness" of evil. He points out that he would no more destroy evil, if he were able, than he would destroy shadow in a world of light. He sees both good and evil as necessary for the proper development of life. "Which," he asks, "is a better teacher? The very forces which would destroy life are needed to season experience and deepen understanding."¹ The virtuous man is not one who aims at the abstract condition of goodness, but at life abundant: his success lies, not in escaping evil,...but turning it to the account of the

¹L. Mumford, Living Philosophies, p 207.

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vital process itself.¹

The evils of life have a large capacity for good; and the mature person knows they must be faced, embraced, assimilated; to shun them or innocently hope to eliminate them altogether is to cling to an existence that is both false to reality and essentially lacking in perspective and depth. Like arsenic, evil is a tonic in grains and a poison in ounces. The real problem of evil, the problem that justifies every assault upon war and poverty and disease, is to reduce it to amounts that can be spiritually assimilated.²

Not only are good and evil measured in terms of man, but the universe and God Himself are not independent of this process of becoming in which man is involved. For Mumford, the universe does not issue out of God in conformity with His fiat. It is rather God who emerges from the universe, as some far off event of creation. "God exists, not at the beginning, but at the end."³

The thought of a personal God is completely repugnant to Mumford.

¹L. Mumford, Living Philosophies, p. 207.

²Ibid.

³L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, Harcourt Brace, 1951 p. 5.

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Plainly, if there is a loving God he must be impotent: but if he is omnipotent, truly responsible for all that happens within his domain, capable of heeding even the sparrow's fall, he can hardly be a loving God. Such contradictions drive honest men to atheism; the empty whirl and jostle of atoms become more lucid to human reason than such a deity.¹

It becomes obvious that some of the basic tenets of organized religion could not be held by Mumford. In fact most of the religious activity of man is classified as closely as possible to myth. Christ is portrayed as myth, not that his existence is denied nor his work ignored. But his followers are accused of having distorted his teaching and of making Jesus a God.²

Yet it must be pointed out that Mumford does not deny that religion has value; but if it has value it must be maintained by development and expansion that would necessarily meet the demands of a given age. Religion, no more than anything else, cannot remain static. One could, then, be no more certain of absolute truths in religion than he could in natural knowledge.

¹L. Mumford, Living Philosophies, p. 207.

²L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 52.

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In most cases, Mumford has reserved his criticism to something of an historical analysis, giving, of course, his own interpretation of the facts. In several cases where he has deemed it wise to speak against Catholicism in the modern era, he has within a short time been faced with his own words and the humiliation they suddenly contained. As late as 1946 he accused the Catholic clergy of encouraging fascism by playing up a fictitious threat of communism.¹

THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIMES

Any reader of Mumford's philosophical position would be quick to agree that he is not a great speculative thinker. But most of his readers would insist that he does not pretend to be a speculative thinker in that he has a well organized system, complete with technical vocabulary. Mumford, therefore, cannot be ridiculed any more than he can be praised in terms of speculative thought. It is a goal which he has never set for himself. This does not imply that he has not accepted principles and proposed

¹L. Mumford, Values for Survival, p. 15.

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others which by their very nature are theoretical; it simply means that his end has not been the theoretical.

What, it seems, most of Mumford's readers could agree upon concerning his philosophical endeavors, is that he desires philosophy, as well as all other types of knowledge, to serve man in his ever changing role of giving meaning to things by discovering self.

He insists that a knowledge of the past is a necessity and that it would be folly for man to turn his back upon the great heritage of wisdom which his ancestors have passed on to him. But he also insists that this knowledge of the past must get new meaning from the present and gain even more meaning when applied to the future.

What is happening to man and what will happen to him is the chief concern of Mumford. And perhaps one of the main reasons he has gained a prominence in American thought is for his work as what could possibly best be termed a social diagnostician. He is a man who is keen in directing attention to symptoms which he interprets as being indicative of social and intellectual maladies. In such a role, he has met with applause and ridicule.

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Actually, Mumford, as a thinker, is concerned primarily with the challenge of our times. Even his intensive study of the past has been accomplished because he feels it will better illuminate present problems and aid in their solution.

According to Mumford we are living off the fragments of old cultures, or on an abortion of a new.¹ Our culture has been formed principally by two events: by the breakdown of the medieval synthesis in the centuries that preceded America's settlement and by transferal to the new soil of an abstract and fragmentary culture formed by the Protestants of the Sixteenth Century, by the philosophers and scientists of the Seventeenth, and the political thinkers of the Eighteenth.²

These are critical times, times which demonstrate that man has forgotten his dignity and purpose. Leaving aside the moral factors involved, Mumford believes that the greatest threat to our age is from the machine-conditioned culture which has become a monster which man

¹L. Mumford, Golden Day, p. 267.

²Ibid., p. 275.

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created to serve him but which instead has actually enslaved its creator.

Now our machine-conditioned culture with its machine-centered personalities, has had only a short life-span. It was conceived in the seventeenth century by Bacon and Campanella, intellectually brought to birth by Galileo, Newton and Descartes, warmed and nourished by generations of able inventors and engineers, rigorously moulded and disciplined by a succession of strenuous industrialists, eulogized, indeed adored and worshipped, for the last century, alike by utopian idealists and hard-headed businessmen. Today this culture is still generally acclaimed, as the ultimate hope of man, both by the totalitarians who call themselves communists and the totalitarians who call themselves free enterprisers. But this wholesale triumph of the machine does not stand up under critical examination. The glossy perfection of this new world is matched only by the inner disintegration, indeed, the outright demoralization, that has attended its highest performances--and now threatens completely to nullify them. Our very advances in technics are imperiled, because, as our scientific means become more perfect our human ends too often become more trivial, more barbarous, more irrational, more massively life-frustrating and life-defeating.¹

In much of his writing Mumford has tirelessly reiterated a warning to his time concerning the threat of the

¹L. Mumford, "The Transformation of Man," an address delivered Oct. 8, 1956, at the Great Hall of Cooper Union in New York; printed in the Catholic Worker, November, 1956.

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machine which he feels "has multiplied the new physical means of living and lost sight of the purposes and ends which make those means significant."¹

Man stands at the mid-point of the twentieth century faced with the possibility of self-annihilation. It is a possibility which is very real. He must look to the past thirty years and the millions who have met death through war and genocide. He must look to confusion in the arts and education where all sign posts have been ignored. According to Mumford these are dark days, days in which the fate of humanity hangs, waiting to be rescued by a new order based upon a unified approach or a metaphysical approach, if you will, to man and the future.

There must be drawn, Mumford feels, a blueprint designed to be a guide to a new culture, one based upon the primacy of the human personality and the human community. There must be a substitution of life-values for those of a power and profit economy, a reorganization of society as a whole toward the achievement of the best life possible.

¹L. Mumford, "Unified Approach to Knowledge," The University and the Future of America, Stanford University Press, 1941, p. 110.

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Many of the great individual advances of the past era remain to be done over again, this time not for individual gain but the gain of the whole community. Many of our past dogmas must be abandoned, many of our past beliefs have become irrelevant and must be ignored. Our present culture must be reworked into a more comprehensive and organic pattern.¹

Simply, Mumford believes there must be a new synthesis of life. In looking to the past he can find one which approaches what he would like to see in our time: medieval Europe and the world of Thomas Aquinas.

At a time when actual living was still often brutal, harsh, foolish, and cruel, the Church embodied rationality and ideal purpose: it gave collective dignity to human life at large as no other institution had ever done for so large a part of the Western World before.²

The thing which made this synthesis possible, Mumford holds, is that system of philosophy known as scholasticism and its most prominent proponent, Aquinas.

¹L. Mumford, "Unified Approach to Knowledge and Life," p. 115.

²L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 150.

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St. Thomas is highly praised by Mumford.¹ But it is his logic, the form of his synthesis which attracts Mumford. He sees the Angelic Doctor as an intellectual giant, one who could take the best of thought and beliefs that the world had known and weave them into a sound structure which would protect men from the forces of disunity and chaos. But it is Thomas, the thinker, who does this, not Thomas, the saint.

For the point is that Mumford's praise for the middle ages can be reduced to the fact that he admired what had been done and how it had been done. What he cannot take seriously is why it had been done.

He can look back to medieval Europe and say that though its production or even the interest in the production of the atomic bomb, was unlikely, that in all the history of the world this probably would have been the best time so far as humanity's safety was concerned for it to be produced.²

¹L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 130.

²L. Mumford, Values for Survival, p. 147.

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But the one thing certain about Mumford's ideas concerning the middle ages would be this: he would not go back to them. The myth which made them possible cannot be taken seriously in our modern world. Then it was God made man which became the force strong enough to give the Western World one mind because it had one purpose. Now it must be man made God who is the answer to our problems. And the new synthesis, which must come if man is to survive, must be based upon this credo.

While America urgently needs a new synthesis, according to Mumford the cultural climate offers significant opportunities for developing it.

The American tradition...is a tradition that is opposed to any fixed or final status, in knowledge, in belief, in doctrine, other than the belief that men themselves have individually and collectively the responsibility of guiding their own destiny, and working out their own salvation. Such a tradition is favorable to cooperative endeavors in art,...its synthesis must remain an open one, always subject to new truths...¹

These brief observations concerning Mumford's philosophy could not be concluded without two observations.

¹L. Mumford, Values for Survival, p. 9.

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First of all, it must be pointed out that Mumford has undergone a marked change in his humanism throughout the years. His latest writing reveals a different Mumford than the optimistic youth who looked to the future and its problems with the conviction that man, though still capable of error, could look to the horizon with the knowledge that he could solve his problems. It was an optimism which captured the imagination of similar men at the turn of the century to the extent that a slogan was even invented: "Every day in every way man is getting better and better."

Two world wars, the stench of the prison camps in Germany and Russia where man's inhumanity to man was unparalleled in the history of the world, America's destruction in seconds of 150,000 Japanese civilians with the atomic bomb, the death of his own son in World War II, Korea-- these things and the disorder which the arts reflected, the unrestrained zeal with which men accepted automation, all had much to do with changing much of Mumford's untarnished hope for mankind.

Certainly the unrestrained optimism was gone, replaced by a genuine fear that man could destroy himself, that he could return to the barbarianism from which he had

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evolved. But there was also hope. And in his later works one begins to get a hint, hardly more than that, that perhaps this hope must be nourished by more than a belief in man. The following words are from one of his latest works:

The change in the direction of our civilization has long been overdue; and the proof that it is overdue lies in the wholesale miscarriage that has caused the Century of Progress, as people fondly called the nineteenth century, to give way to a half-century of savage regression...We now begin to realize perhaps why the very signs that the nineteenth century took as proofs of the inevitable progress--men shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased--were regarded by the writer of the Book of Daniel as a sign of the last days. The fact is that it is not ignorance and poverty and weakness, those old enemies of mankind which threaten Western civilization; just the reverse: it is knowledge of Godlike dimensions, wealth on a scale that mankind has never enjoyed before, and power of the most titanic order...that have brought this civilization to the brink of destruction... We must reexamine man's needs and reestablish more human goals than those we have mistakenly pursued: we must choose the road to life, which of old was called the road to salvation, and which now is also the road to survival.¹

The second point to be made is this: despite some unsound principles which is not our task to criticize here,

¹L. Mumford, "From Revolt to Renewal," The Arts in Renewal, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951, p.3.

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it must be said in all fairness, that Mumford has made some rather remarkable diagnoses of the modern world's ills.

Nor can we dispute the fact that some of his suggested remedies are to be reckoned with, even though it is a symptom rather than a disease which will be cured.

Mumford has been and continues to be a moral and intellectual force to be heard and respected. Yet ultimately, even his good points must be tempered with a fact that T. S. Eliot has his hero St. Thomas Becket, of Murder in the Cathedral recall: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."¹

¹T. S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, ll. 675-6.

CHAPTER TWO

MUMFORD'S POSITION

CONCERNING THE SOURCE OF ART

An ideal exposition of principles concerning art would demand that the beginning be concerned with ends. For it is for the sake of the end that all things are done.¹

However, such an arrangement does not seem satisfactory in an exposition of Mumford's principles. This is true for several reasons. First of all, Mumford does not accept in his philosophy the traditional notion of end, rather his purpose is lost in the haze of his dialectic of becoming. This does not mean that he does not consider art as having a specific function. It does mean that a necessary exactness in goal is lost because the nature of man and his end is obscure, something that cannot be exact because it is not yet fulfilled.

No less important is the fact that Mumford, in relating his principles of aesthetics, prefers to deal more

¹Aristotle, Ethics, 1094a. (All quotations from Aristotle are from The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, Random House, 1941. References are to passages in the Bekker text.)

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systematically first with the source of art, then with the purpose.¹ Since it is Mumford's principles which are to be criticized, it is but fitting that his plan of development be accepted when at all possible.

THEORY OF KNOWING

Because of its importance in approaching the problems involved in the discussion of artistic imitation, it seems necessary that Mumford's theory of knowing and its possible sources be briefly discussed.

Mumford denies that we know the world of extra-mental reality. The world that we know comes to us by interpretation and not by direct experience. It has only been by a process of reasoning and inference that man has established the neutral realm of nature.²

What was once called the objective world is for Mumford a sort of Rorschach ink blot and that each culture, each type of person, reads a meaning only remotely connected

¹Especially is this true in Art and Technics which is the most precise and complete development of Mumford's position.

²L. Mumford, Man as Interpreter, Harcourt, 1950, p.2.

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with the blot itself.¹

As has been pointed out, Mumford does not have a detailed program of philosophy, nor does he always have clear reasons for his contentions, or sources of his thought. Yet it seems in all probability that the roots for his position can be found in Kant. One need only recall the following brief outline of Kant's position to see the similarity.

In the preface to his second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant says: "It has been hitherto assumed that our cognition must conform to the object...Let us make the experiment whether we may not be more successful... if we assume that the objects must conform to our cognition."²

In the Dissertation of 1770, acting on a suggestion from J. H. Lambert, Kant revived the old Hylemorphic doctrine, as an explanation not of extramental bodies but of human cognition. He suggests that all cognition involves

¹L. Mumford, Man as Interpreter, Harcourt, 1950, p. 27.

²Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952, p. 7.

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the union of form and matter, an organizing principle and a formless content. The materials for knowledge come from without; the cognitive subject gives them their form or determination.¹

Mumford seems to vary little from these rather basic positions of Kant. These facts are mentioned here, only briefly to be sure, because it is important to see that when the notion of imitation is discussed, Mumford will of necessity divorce himself from an objective world which many thinkers will hold to be the key to any problem in aesthetics. He must be bound to a subjective world, a world determined by the ego.

The world established by the process of the synthesis a priori at the perceptual level is, on Kant's own testimony, purely phenomenal. In the first place, the positive sense of phenomenal is presence of a subject. The objects of nature, the whole realm of natural objects as established by the process on the synthesis a priori at the

¹I. Kant, "Dissertation on the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World," III, 13-15, in Inaugural Dissertation and Early Writings on Space, Open Court, 1929.

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perceptual and conceptual levels, stand in function to a subject. These objects cannot on these principles of synthesis be conceived as they are or might be in themselves, that is, as hypothetically existing without relationship to a subject of knowledge or science, for which they exist and into the presence of which they enter as constitutive elements. There is a second and negative side of the term phenomenal. It is the denial of any reference to this hypothetical order of the objects themselves such as they might be were it possible to conceive them in absolute independence of their presence to a subject. The objects of pure reason are only phenomenal. This, in a general way, expresses Mumford's views.

Mumford strengthens the subjective approach to the esthetic experience by saying that environment will condition a man to seeing such and such as beautiful. Kant proposed the same theory long before him.¹

One further point deserves consideration here. Mumford does not in any way hold that the knowledge which the

¹I. Kant, "The Sense of the Beautiful and of the Sublime," The Philosophy of Kant, Random House, 1949, pp. 3-18.

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scientist, philosopher and artist might seek might be of a markedly different kind. The way of knowing is not different, one's impression is simply organized in a different way.

It is a position very similar to that of I. A. Richards who holds that objects do not have qualities such as beauty in themselves. It is a projection of the effect which the object causes in us. He holds that when we look at a picture, or read a poem, we are not doing something quite unlike what we did on the way to the art gallery or when we dressed in the morning. The fashion in which the experience was caused in us is different but our activity is not of a fundamentally different kind.¹

IMITATION AND CREATION

For Mumford the source of art must primarily be understood in terms of the individual person. What becomes the central problem connected with this section of this work, is the relation of the notion of imitation, which

¹I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, Kegan, 1926, p. 15.

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seems to be a common notion in any system of esthetics, to the individual. For the distinguishing marks between different philosophies of arts seem to be, in most cases, the idea of imitation as related to what is imitated and how the imitative art develops.

If one were to ask a general question concerning the source of art, Mumford would state that the interior states of the individual are pools which feed the springs of artistic endeavor. If the universe about us has any role to play in the production of art, and Mumford believes it does, it is a universe which has received its determination from man. The artist, then, must not only give meaning to a work of art, but to an exterior world which triggers responses in both the conscious and subconscious of the artist. While one does not exclude the exterior world if a follower of Mumford, it is not the objective world of Aristotle; it is the world of Kant. Says Mumford:

Now one does not have to be a follower of Benedetto Croce to see that all art is fundamentally expression by means of aesthetic symbols. Art stands as a visible sign of an indwelling state of grace and harmony, of exquisite perception and heightened feeling, focused and intensified by the very form into which the artist translates his inner state. This kind of expression is fundamental

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to man's own sense of himself; it is both self-knowledge and self-realization.¹

Man may arbitrarily define nature as that part of his experience which is neutral to his desires and interests: but he with his desires and interests, to say nothing of his chemical constitution, has been formed by nature...Once he has picked and chosen from this realm...the result is a work of art--his art...external nature has no finally independent authority: it exists, as a result of man's collective experience and as a subject for his further improvisation by means of science, technics and the humane arts.²

It must be concluded, therefore, that for men in general and artists in particular, subjective values and interests are more "real" than the so-called objective world which we say we experience. "The artist, of all men, is driven by an inarticulate necessity, which is none the less real or responsive to the environment around him, because it is not 'realistic'..."³

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 21.

²L. Mumford, Technics and Civilization, Harcourt, 1934, p. 329.

³L. Mumford, "The Heritage of Impressionism," The New Republic, Vol. 52 (May 18, 1927), p. 356.

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Certainly if the world of the extra-self is stabilized by the ego, if it is not an objective thing which we know directly, then it is obvious that the role it could play in the esthetic theory of Mumford could be a minor one. Such a position will, of course, enable him to better reenforce his position as having man the measure of all things. If it is man who determines, if it is man who is the measure of things, then little debt will be owed to exterior nature.

However, it must be pointed out that Mumford does hold that art must have attributes of form and proportion which are similar to those which attract him in natural forms.¹ But this is rather an inconsistency in his position rather than an essential part, because his theory of knowledge suggests that natural forms get their significance from the intellect.

"If we try," he says, "to castrate the organs of subjectivity, we reduce man to impotence: a creature, not a creator, the sport of random forces in a meaningless

¹L. Mumford, Man as Interpreter, p. 27.

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world."¹

From what has been said it might be suspected that Mumford would have as the source of his imitation the ideas of the artist, but it is not quite so simple as that. He does not see a work of art as a direct result of an intellectual operation. He does not even insist that the intellect have the main role in the artistic creation. Art stands for the inner and subjective side of man. Its symbolic structures are so many efforts to invent a vocabulary by which man can externalize and project his internal states, and most particularly, give a concrete and public form to his emotions, feelings, intuitions.²

Nor is the source of imitation the individual response that contact with the outside world evokes, but rather the total of the responses which are part of a chain reaction that form a pattern with other experiences. And this is not a completely studied thing because the artist employs not only his intellect, but also his subconscious desires and urges. Mumford suggests that long before man

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 124.

²Ibid., p. 32.

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had achieved any causal insight or rational order, long before he had conceived of the operation of impersonal forces, he had developed in the arts a special means of perpetuating, of recalling, of sharing with others his own essential experience of life.¹

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF ART

Mumford throws special illumination on his theory with his exposition of what he calls the three stages in the development of art: the self-enclosed or infantile stage, the social or adolescent stage, and a personal or mature stage.

Every person, he maintains, has a rather naive interest in himself. In infancy he lives in a world of wonder which is concerned with the potentialities he finds for expression in his organs. It is this self-preoccupation which is the fundamental ingredient of art. The child at this stage is interested in drawing attention to himself. A child who is lovable at this stage will understand this to be because of beauty in his own person. The original

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 17.

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desire to ask for attention to self becomes a bit more complicated. Now he wants to say not only "look at me," but look at what is precious in me, what makes me different from every other creature in the world. The individuated, the personable--these are the essential characteristics of the esthetic symbol.¹

The second stage goes further than this primitive expressionism and self-glorification. Now the artist says, "I have something to show you." The artist is no longer content to simply satisfy his own vanity. Now he is interested in the responses of other persons. Now the work becomes a bond or union. The artist discovers his work must have a form or proportion of which he gets a certain hint in nature. He realizes that his work must gain a certain significance, a significance which is not too definite in the sense that it says exactly what it means but that it must be a little mysterious. It must leave something to the spectator to do or to add to the work, so that the spectator in some way participates in the creative act. It must be capable of stirring hidden depths in the beholder,

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 26.

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making him conscious, through the understanding of the artist's secret, of a similar secret in himself. This stage involves more than self-disclosure. It involves courtship. Here there must be a responsive audience. The second stage, then, marks the passage from exhibitionism to communication, from the sensational to the emotionally significant and shareable.¹

The third stage is the transition from self-love and exhibitionism, from technical virtuosity and courtship, to mature love, which is capable of bringing forth something of a new life. In this stage the artist tells us through his symbols that he wishes to give unselfishly what he has. He wishes to depict the worst as well as the best; there is nothing to hide. By sharing the gift of the artist with the spectator, the work will be able to grow. At this stage the esthetic symbol becomes detached from the immediate life of the artist, after draining his vitality. It becomes something of an independent career of its own. The artist's self dissolves into the work of art and transcends the limitations of his personality and culture.

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 28.

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It is then that the artist feels he is an instrument of a higher force; he loses himself in the creative act.¹

We can now see that Mumford does not explain the source of art in simple terms. The artist does not imitate the world of extra-mental reality or even his idea of this reality, but rather recalled experience which is triggered by a given contact with reality, and more directly states which have their origin in rivers which are buried deep within the personality.

Some further attention must be given to Mumford's ideas concerning symbols and their source, for he says that "without dwelling on the function of symbolization, one cannot begin to describe the nature of man or plumb the deepest spring of his creativeness."² However, since such stress is laid upon the symbol and its use as a means of signification, it will be more properly dealt with in another chapter.

According to Mumford man has used two great sources for the symbol and consequently art: conscious experience

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 29.

²L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 40.

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and the dream.

THE DREAM AND ART

It has already been pointed out that through the medium of symbols man is able to communicate much of his conscious states, but Mumford holds that they are just as important in revealing another great source of art: the dream. And any discussion of the dream must include a reference to our heritage from primitive man.

From what we know of the present nature of man, we must infer that the spontaneous babblings out of which is shaped the word were accompanied by another primitive and unlearned trait, likewise welling up through that capacious, over-excitabile organ, the brain: the habit of dreaming. Babble and dream imagery are perhaps the raw stuff out of which man fashioned all his symbols, and consequently, most of his meaningful life: music and mathematics and machines: social patterns of behavior and the culture of cities.¹

Mumford continues by pointing out that while man usually associates dreaming with sleeping, that the dream state is actually something which often displaces one's

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 45.

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immediate sense of the exterior world. Indeed, he contends, that in some cases one may dream progressively from night to night and become a bit confused as to which is the waking state. He alludes to the case of Chuang-Chou who dreamed he was a butterfly and then asked himself whether, in waking life, he was not perhaps a butterfly dreaming he was a man.¹

Even in the most highly organized and controlled personality, some time is spent in acting an interior drama with conduct surprisingly different from overt conduct. These associations which appear to be spontaneous have many characteristics of the dream. In daydreams mild men often become murderers. Half the sins and crimes men commit, Mumford contends, come about because they pass too easily, without prudent reflection, from what they consider to be a securely hidden inner state to the public performance of their fantasy.

It is his further contention that in childhood and in adolescence day dreaming may occupy a large part of the day, actually rivaling night dreaming in its absorption.

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 45.

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Primitive man is believed to have had far less a gap between waking consciousness and sleeping consciousness than there now is.

Against the current tendency to over-value the externalized and objective, Mumford offers the words of John Butler Yeats as a corrective:

My theory is that we are always dreaming--chairs, tables, women and children, our wives and sweethearts, the people on the streets, all in various ways and with various powers are the starting points of dreams. As we fall asleep we drift away from the control and correction of facts into the world of memory and hope...Sleep is dreaming away from the facts and wakefulness is dreaming in closer contact with the facts and since facts excite our dreams and feed them, we get as close as possible to the facts if we have the cunning and genius of poignant feeling.¹

Mumford continues by maintaining that we usually think of our waking consciousness as being more rational, more directed, more rigorous, more conventional than the imagined behavior that takes place in sleep and he agrees that such is the case but not before contending that while man is now rational, he still has many of the primitive urges that became part of him when the dream may well have

¹Quoted by L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 46.

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occupied the greater part of his energies.¹

More primitive than speech, the imagery of the dream became the source and foundation of many other symbolic activities. Man, while he is asleep, is an artist, according to Mumford. He is creating shapes that his hand may not yet know how to execute, and dream work may be the earliest form of work, in that it was perhaps the most simple way of remaking the environment and reorganizing purposive activity. This creativeness that is displayed in the dream, first under the pressure of anxiety caused by the threats that primitive man had to face on all sides, and then more freely, in response to obvious needs that man could become aware of--these may be the main source of man's enduring activities in symbolization, indeed in his own humanization.²

It is through the dream, both directly and as elaborated in the arts, that man has been able to surpass his simple biological self. "Long ago he departed from his ancestral home, in order to spend most of his life in two resorts of his own choosing: heaven and hell. Man's very

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 49.

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deviltry is a product of the same imagination which first produced his utmost potentialities in the image of an all wise and infinitely loving God."¹

Through the dream, man offsets his sense of guilt and anxiety, caused by his wilful departure from his animal destiny, by his effort to set himself up in rivalry with nature and to put forth an independent creation, more responsive to his nature and desires than the actual world. So it is not an accident, but the very essence of human life, that some of its best and its worst moments are lived exclusively in the mind: anxiety and anguish, joy and fulfillment, are never so pure as they are when represented in art: "emotion recollected in tranquillity."²

Mumford concludes by suggesting that literature, music, and religion are artful by-products of man's subjective life, and are no less an integral part of man's existence than the natural world and the ingenious instruments which he has devised for mastering it. Only the pragmatists and totalitarians, he maintains, have insisted upon a conformity to an external pattern for the artist.³

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 49

²L. Mumford, Man as Interpreter, p. 11.

³L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 124.

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Indeed, it is when the real world becomes unbearable, it is when we must take refuge in another world, that of art, and there find something which is more in accord with our deeper interests and desires that we know the value of the artefact.¹

Mumford has made it clear that he considers one of the sources of art to be the dream. "Babble and dream imagery are perhaps the raw stuff out of which man fashioned his symbols."² And again, "Every man while he is asleep is an artist."³

The role of the dream as an influence upon the life of man and the origin of the dream have been sources of much speculation in the early days of philosophy, but it would not be an exaggeration to say that undoubtedly the greatest amount of speculation concerning the dream and the greatest amount of scientific investigation involving it has been accomplished in modern times. Mumford could have been influenced by a number of modern thinkers.

¹L. Mumford, Story of Utopias, p. 32.

²L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 45.

³Ibid., p. 49.

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The history of dream interpretation begins with an effort to understand the meaning of dreams, not as psychological phenomena but as experiences of the disembodied soul or as the voice of spirits or ghosts.¹

In contrast to the early and unrealistic interpretation of dreams, which takes the dream as the expression of "real" occurrences or as messages from powers outside of man, the more modern interpretation and the one obviously followed by Mumford, tries to see the dream as an expression of the dreamer's own mind, and to understand this relationship between the psychological and reality.

Whereas all psychologists do not agree as to the interpretation and meaning of dreams, there is general agreement concerning the constitution of the dream. It is generally held that a dream may have both an organic and intellectual basis.

Henri Bergson expresses very well the obvious concerning the dream:

¹Eric Fromm, The Forgotten Language, Rinehart, 1951, p. 109.

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A dream is this. I perceive objects and there is nothing there. I see men; I seem to speak to them and I hear what they answer; there is no one there and I have not spoken. It is all as if real things and real persons were there, then on waking all has disappeared, both persons and things.¹

Camille Flammarion suggests that during the hours of sleep our intellectual faculties remain unconsciously in activity, and thus we dream.²

Jung believes that the dream is a series of images which are apparently contradictory and nonsensical, but which arise in reality from psychological material which yields to a clear meaning.³

Hollingworth holds that the mechanism of simple dreams are the same as that of ordinary day-time illusions, a process which he calls redintegration.⁴

¹Henri Bergson, Dreams, B. W. Huebsch, 1914, p. 15.

²Camille Flammarion, The Unknown, Harper, 1900, p. 310.

³C. G. Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, Routledge & Kegan, 1915, p. 5.

⁴H. L. Hollingworth, The Psychology of Thought, Appleton, 1926, pp. 91, 92.

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Freud understands the dream as an expression of unconscious strivings and assumes that the essence of dreams is the hallucinatory fulfillment of irrational wishes.¹

A simple and easily understood definition of the dream is expressed by Eric Fromm, one which is broad enough to be held by all scientists. "Dreaming is a meaningful and significant expression of any kind of mental activity under the condition of sleep."²

Mumford has, in all probability, not been influenced by the thought of any one of these psychologists, so it becomes difficult to trace the roots of some of his contentions to a very specific source. On some other points it is not so difficult to find marked similarity between a given doctrine and a position by Mumford.

Jung, Freud and Fromm, all stress the importance of the symbolic representation in the dream and note that the dream is comparable to the myth. Fromm refers to dream-symbolism as "symbolic language" and explains it thus:

¹Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams in Great Books of the Western World, Encyclopedia Britannica Company, 1952, p. 188.

²Eric Fromm, The Forgotten Language, p. 25.

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Symbolic language is a language in which we express inner experience as if it were a sensory experience, as if it were something we were doing or something that was done to us in the world of things. Symbolic language is language in which the world outside is a symbol of the world inside, a symbol of our souls and minds.¹

Fromm also holds that there are universal symbols which are rooted in the very properties of our bodies, senses and minds. These are common to all men, they are not restricted to individuals or specific groups. Actually, the language of the universal symbol is the one common tongue developed by the human race.²

Mumford, of course, believes in these universal symbols and actually sees their source as a common inheritance which all men receive. Two rather famous contentions by Freud and Jung could very well have influenced him.

Jung believes that the human mind contains archaic remnants of the long history of the evolution of man. These "thought feelings," as he calls them, are unconscious and shared with others. He explains this collective psyche

¹Eric Fromm, The Forgotten Language, p. 18.

²Ibid. p. 18.

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in this way:

In the same way as the individual is not only an isolated and separate being, but also a social being, so also the human mind is not only something isolated and absolutely individual, but also a collective function. And just as certain social functions or impulses are, so to speak, opposed to the egocentric interests of the individual, so also the human mind has certain functions or tendencies which, on account of their collective nature, are to some extent opposed to the personal mental functions. This is due to the fact that every human being is born with a highly differentiated brain, which gives him the possibility of attaining a rich mental function that he has neither acquired ontogenetically nor developed. In proportion as human beings are similarly differentiated, the corresponding mental functions are collective and universal. This circumstance explains the fact that the unconscious of far separated peoples and races possess a remarkable number of points in agreement.¹

Freud holds a similar theory with certain distinctions. He believes that the individual brings with him at birth fragments of phylogenetic origin, an archaic heritage. This heritage "includes not only dispositions, but also ideational concepts, memory traces of the

¹C. Jung, Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology, edited by C. E. Long, Balliere, Tindell, and Cox, London, 1920.

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experiences of former generations."¹

Freud makes another interesting comment on the artist and the daydream, one which is interesting to relate to Mumford's position.

There is, in fact, a path from phantasy back again to reality, and that is art... the way back to reality is found by the artist thus: He is not the only one who has a life of phantasy; the intermediate world of phantasy is sanctioned by general human consent, and every hungry soul looks to it for comfort and consolation. But to those who are not artists the gratification that can be drawn from the springs of phantasy is very limited; their inexorable repressions prevent the enjoyment of all but the meagre day-dreams which can become conscious. A true artist has more at his disposal...he understands how to elaborate his daydreams, so that they lose the personal note which grates upon strange ears and become enjoyable to others; he knows how to modify them sufficiently so that their origin in prohibited sources is not easily detected.²

It is obvious from what has been said so far that Mumford has many opinions from which he could construct his theories concerning the dream and art. He has added little,

¹S. Freud, Moses and Monotheism, Knopf, New York, 1939, p. 74.

²S. Freud, A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1952, pp. 600-601.

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if anything, by way of originality to the theories which he proposes. Any newness to his theory seems to result from a selection and combination of positions which are held by others.

Briefly summarized, the main points which Mumford proposes in connection with the source of art seem to be these:

The world we know comes to us by interpretation and not by direct experience.

The origin of the source of imitation is the inner state of the artist. For the artist especially the subjective is more "real" than the so-called objective world which is actually colored by self.

The artist's work is an outlet not only for his ideas but for his emotional and unconscious states.

The artist benefits from some primitive urges which he has inherited and the dream is considered a great source of art.

CHAPTER THREE

EVALUATION OF MUMFORD'S POSITION

ON THE SOURCE OF ART

THEORY OF KNOWING

Since it is not within the scope of this paper to investigate epistemological problems in Mumford's philosophy, certainly an exposition of the Thomistic principles concerning the acquisition of knowledge, explicitly developed, is unnecessary. But it is important that it be recognized that the artist can know exterior reality.

The problems which arise in Kant's position, and consequently Mumford's, involve some rather obvious difficulties. The peculiarity of the ideas in the critical system is that they represent for Kant modes of synthesis whose reference would fall outside the range of possible experience, whose objects would be beyond experience. And an object which is beyond experience seems to be contradictory.

It does not seem that this contradiction can be escaped. If we hold that the reality of the extramental

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world does not exist as an objective fact, then it would seem that we must hold that it is unknowable and therefore cannot know if it exists. If we do not know that it exists, then how can we know it as an agent that gives significance to our thoughts? How can we say that an object is contacted by our senses and at once deny that it exists and has a certain causality?

More pertinent to our problem here could be a further objection. If there are no realities which are knowable in the world about us, if we are lost in a world of subjectivity, how can we explain the communication in art? How does the artistic symbol which is so important to Mumford get its communicative principle if the source is purely subjective? Artistic appreciation is not a completely learned activity. (This will be discussed in detail in the section on imitation and the chapter on signification.)

For the Thomist there must be a ready admittance to the fact that the human mind can know reality. How the artist knows it and how he can be said to create can be understood only by properly understanding artistic imitation to which attention must now be turned.

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IMITATION

In developing the arguments concerning imitation several points must be kept in mind, points which would take issue with Mumford's doctrine. It must be admitted that the objective world, the extramental reality which Mumford denies, does exist and does play an important part in the creation of a work of art. Yet, at the same time, the role of the artist as creator cannot be ignored. Finally, the aesthetic experience for both the artist and the perceiver must be recognized to be unique, a different way of knowing.

In proposing a doctrine of imitation based on traditional principles, each of these points must be handled as part of a whole. They will be dealt with, but not individually as was done in the exposition of Mumford's position.

The much quoted, and often misunderstood, passages written by both Aristotle and St. Thomas concerning art imitating nature certainly do not suggest that the chief function of art is to copy the forms found in the world about us. Aristotle and St. Thomas following him certainly

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had more subtle distinctions in mind and while there has been disagreement as to the exact meaning, responsible scholars have been quick to insist that such passages do not mean that the artist is simply a copyist.¹

Imitation of Nature, in both St. Thomas and Aristotle has double meaning. The first is Imitation of Natural Beings, *μιμήσις τῶν ὄντων*. The second is Imitation of the Process of Nature, *μιμήσις τῆς φύσεως*. The imitation in the first sense may be considered imitation of specific natural forms in their esse. In the second sense one may look on it as imitation of the motive process, the universal modus fiendi of all natural forms.²

It would seem, then, that artistic imitation might well be considered from two aspects. In the first place that art does in some way seek to copy what is in nature, as if from nature the artist had received a hint of reality that he seeks.

So because it is subjected to the mind of a man, the law of imitation, of resemblance, remains constant for our art, but in a sense purified. It must transpose the secret rules of being in the manner of producing the work, and it must be as faithful and exact, in

¹S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, Dover, 1951, pp. 116 ff.

²James Torrens, "Poetry, An Imitation of Nature," The Thomist, Vol. 18 (1955), p. 26.

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transforming reality according to the laws governing the work to be done, as science in conforming thereto. What it makes must resemble not the material appearance of things, but some of the hidden significances whose iris God alone sees glittering on the neck of His creatures--and for that very reason it will also resemble the created mind which in its own way discerned these invisible colors. Resemblance, but a spiritual resemblance. Realism, if you like, but transcendental realism.¹

Secondly, it must be seen that art proceeds in an orderly fashion, adopting proper means to attain a desired end.²

St. Thomas well observes both types of imitation in the artistic act:

The argument for the statement art imitates nature is as follows: The principle of artificial operation is knowledge; but all our knowledge is drawn from sensible and natural things through sense: thus we produce a likeness of natural things in artificial things. Therefore natural things are imitable through art because all of nature is ordered to its end by some intellectual principle so that thus the work of nature seems to be the work of intelligence to the extent that it proceeds towards definite

¹J. Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, Scribners, 1949, p. 96.

²L. Callahan, A Theory of Esthetic, Catholic University, 1957, p. 99.

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ends by determined means: which art also imitates in its operation.¹

Granting the similarity between art and nature, and recognizing a difference which essentially seems to be that natural bodies do something (grow, decay, manifest activity), while artificial compositions merely exist as an expression of an idea, attention can now be turned to the artist's contact with nature and the subsequent production of an artefact.²

First of all, it becomes important to see that artistic knowledge is a unique way of knowing. A proper understanding of this fact is necessary in approaching the problem of imitation.

Although the image has an essential role in philosophic contemplation, the object of thought for the philosopher is divested of its materiality. Though it is by matter that the individual is known as this such and such, the

¹St. Thomas, Commentaria in VIII Libros Physicorum, Liber II, lec. 4. (All works of St. Thomas used in this thesis are from the Omnia Opera, Parmae, 1852-1873, Vol. 25.)

²J. A. Weisheipl, "The Concept of Nature," New Scholasticism, Vol. 28 (1954), p. 390.

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philosopher abstracts from this matter, the abstracted nature being the thing he seeks and the thing which the mind by its very nature contemplates. But it is the image itself which is the subject matter of art.

Thus, while philosophic contemplation seems to be of the universal, the artistic seems to be bound up with the individual since it does not seem to abstract from the sensible signs of the individual. Yet artistic contemplation is not real in the sense that Paul is the subject of human art. What, it seems, we delight in in a work of art is a likeness of Paul, for it is in the likeness of an individual that we find the image produced by the artist.

Artistic contemplation differs from philosophical, then, in that it is in some way concerned with the individual, while philosophy deals with the universal concept. Yet it is important that we do not make a common error by suggesting that it is the individual which the artist imitates. Nor should we hold that the artist copies the individual things found in nature and believe we are following Aristotle who says art imitates nature. This is not what

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happens nor is this what Aristotle means.¹

For when we say that art imitates nature we do not mean that the artefact proceeds from pre-existing natural things. Even though an artist will sometimes produce a work of art that is a likeness of an individual, such as a portrait, it is not a slavish copying which is a work of art, but the artist's idea of the individual which is going to be more pregnant with significances than an exact duplication of a phantasm which the artist may have. Indeed, the portrait will try to explain in terms of something else concrete what cannot be learned from a single look at the individual. It will endeavor to capture something of the essence of the person. If it is only a duplication of appearances in the ordinary sense of the term, then it will be dismissed by critics as unworthy of the name art. For the artist can never be considered a mere copyist.

So it seems that we can hold that the thing which is imitated is not found actually in the nature of things. Yet when we say that something is imitated we seem to

¹S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, Dover, 1951, p. 116 ff.

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suggest that the something must have existed before the imitation, and we admit that there is a direct relation to the object imitated. For example, the much publicized portrait of Sir Winston Churchill which was recently hung in the House of Commons, does not attempt to approach photography in portraying what the artist considers to be a likeness of the venerable gentleman. Yet without the person of Winston Churchill it is unlikely that there could have been such a portrait.

So it seems that we must recognize that we are using imitation in more than one sense when we say that art imitates nature. In one sense we refer to the general object, that is, the universal nature, of which the artefact's form is a likeness, as being composed of matter and form, or, more specifically, as the likeness of a human being. This, it seems, is what Aristotle meant when he said that what is imitated is something human.¹ For, of course, it is human actions which we do imitate in art, and this would be true even of a painting of a vase of flowers, for the good artist has not simply copied a real vase of

¹Aristotle, Poetics, 1448a.

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flowers but has actually recorded a human's impression of it.

At the same time we must recognize the fact that it is evident that Sophocles originated the character of Oedipus. But he did not originate human nature as such.

Therefore, it seems we must recognize two objects of imitation (a) men as they actually exist outside the mind of the artist, and (b) the idea of a certain kind of man which the artist produces in his own mind, having previously abstracted the concept of human nature from the real world, as well as the different characteristics of real men. The object of imitation as something proper to the work of art does pre-exist, but only as an idea in the mind of the artist.¹ In his mind it is actual, but with regard to real experience it is only possible. A work of art, then, is not an imitation in the sense that it presupposes the thing imitated as actually existing in reality, but it is an imitation of an idea of an individual as it exists in the mind of the artist logically prior.

¹St. Bonaventure, De Reductione Artium Ad Theologiam, Franciscan Institute, 1955, p. 32. "Si consideremus egressum, videbimus, quod effectus artificialis exit ab artifice, mediante similitudine existente in mente..."

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Art, it would seem, imitates nature in producing something like an individual--a drama of a certain man, not one who exists necessarily, but one who could exist. Nature produces the actual individual.

Nature, it would follow, is not the adequate principle of production, since what is produced is an individual thing. What nature does is make it possible that this individual man exist; it does not, however, mean that this particular man must exist. Art, when considered universally then, does seem to imitate nature in this that it does embody a form in matter, a union which in art is accidental and in creation substantial.¹

In this way it is wrong to make the point that all the artist does is copy. True enough he imitates in that the nature he finds in the world of reality is the source of his work, but he can also be called a creator analogously in that the nature found in this individual is implanted by the artist.

¹M. Adler, "Creation and Imitation," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1935, p. 155. See also: Aristotle: Metaphysics, 1033b.

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For this reason we do not call the mechanic creative because the mechanic does not originate, for all he does is bring about a union of matter and form, neither of which he has originated.

The proper object of imitation, therefore, seems to be in the mind of the artist. The object of imitation being not the individual who exists but who could exist and whose existence actually is in the mind of the artist.¹ And as such, it is, as Aristotle suggests, a kind of universal.² It is unlike the universal which philosophy considers this essence proportioned to an image, and it is individuated as it is conceived. It is not a universal logically conceived--something understood that can be multiplied in many--for what is individuated cannot be multiplied. It is unlike the universal of the rational order. But in its relation to actual existence, it partakes of the nature of the universal. It is akin to the universal taken

¹M. Dewulf, Art et Beaute, Wamey, 1943, p. 30.
"L'oeuvre existe dans la tête de l'artiste comme représentation, comme "idéal", avant d'exister dans les matériaux sensibles où son talent l'incarne."

²Aristotle, Poetics, 1451b.

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metaphysically not logically. For this reason each work of art may be considered a kind of species. As M. Adler has pointed out: As each angel is a separate species, differing only essentially from all other angels, so a work of fine art is like a species in that its essence is its individuality.¹

A certain difficulty arises because of this individuation of which we have spoken. For whereas a natural essence is distinguishable from the material things embodying the essence in that such an essence abstracts from the individuating principle (Peter adds something to the notion of man, e.g., he is distinct from Paul). In the case of art both the essence and the imitation itself are individuated.

This problem, then, seems to confront us: If the work of art is to be distinguished from the idea of Hamlet, what does the work add to this idea?

We are not to understand "added" here in the sense that we mean it when we say that man exists as something to

¹M. Adler, "Creation and Imitation," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1935, p. 168.

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which an individuating principle is added, thereby producing Peter. But we distinguish in this whole which is Peter, a universal principle or essence, humanity, and an individuating principle which is proper to Peter alone. In a work of art we are seeking a similar distinction.

The human conception of an individual thing in either the real order or the artistic, requires an image. If we abstract from the sensible order, we abstract from the individual at the same time. Thus if I am to think of a certain individual, precisising from his appearance, his manner, his voice etc., all of which are known through the sensible, the notion seems indeterminate. I could not recognize the individual in question from it. I could say that he has a character of a certain kind, that he had certain virtues, but these things could belong to any number of men. Such a concept then seems to be universal rather than individual.

If, then, the object of imitation abstracts from the image, it would seem to be universal, and universal not only metaphysically in the way that has already been suggested, but even logically. On the other hand, if it does not abstract from the image, there will be no distinction

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between the idea or essence, between the object of imitation and the imitation itself. The second possibility seems to be unlikely in that every work of art embodies an idea. We must face the probability, then, that the artistic object of imitation is a universal in a way which is different from the universal of a real essence.

We must at once admit that an image is necessary to a conception of an individual, and this in just the same way that the mind conceives an individual in the corporeal order.¹ For in a work of fine art, the form or idea is opposed to matter as idea to image: it is the idea which is embodied in the image, and the work of art as a whole is just this, the imaged idea. And this image is to be understood as a sensible image. Therefore it would seem that the individuation of the idea entails a sensible medium analogous to the individuation in the natural order which demands sensible matter.

To resolve the difficulty we must see that the term individual can be used in two ways. For in one sense the

¹St. Thomas, De Veritate, II, 6. "...intellectus noster...halut quamdam cognitionem de singulari secundum continuationem quamdam intellectus ad imaginationem."

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term 'individual' signifies as something universal, and therefore predicable of many, as we could say of Peter that he is an individual. But in another sense the term is taken to be what is opposed to the universal, as when it signifies what is inseparable from the being of Peter; and this is the basic meaning of the term, as it signifies that which is an ultimate subject and predicable of nothing else. Yet because of its nature, the intellect seeks the universal nature of material things. The mind always, it seems, regards the essences it attains as multiple. We can only attain the notion of the individual by a negation of this universality.¹ But again we must recognize that even the terms constituting the definition of the individual are universal.

In the end the difficulty is in the imperfect intelligibility of the singular, the singular of the material order. For singulars of this kind are constituted such by matter, matter which is proper to this man alone. But

¹St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 86, a. 1. "Quod autem a materia individuali abstrahitur, est universale. Unde intellectus noster directe non est cognoscitivus nisi universalium. Indirecte autem, et quasi per quamdam reflexionem, potest cognoscere singulare."

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matter, as matter, is not intelligible. Therefore, since it is matter as matter which is constitutive of the material singular as singular, we can know such singulars only in so far as we can know matter.¹

This should make it clear that we do have some concept of an individual, granted that it is imperfect. Indeed, its imperfection shows how it is properly supplemented by an image, for it is in the image that those determinations of quality arising from the material individuating principle are manifested. The image, in a sense, is added to this idea. But we can distinguish in the whole artefact, the idea, or object of imitation, which is the form, and the matter in which the form is embodied (colors, tones, or words which constitute the image). Further, the idea as it is the completed idea, cannot for the reasons given, be precised from the matter. So that the artistic idea, as it is artistic, has only an imperfect abstract existence. Thus Oedipus, apart from the words of the play which embody the

¹St. Thomas, II Sent., D 3, q. 3, a 3. "Si ergo forma per quam fit cognitio sit materialis non abstracta a conditionibus materiae, erit similitudo naturae speciei aut generis, secundum quod est distincta et multiplicata per principia individuantia."

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idea, is only an approximation of the artistic reality.

And it seems that here it will be necessary to digress briefly in order to make an important point. Does speaking of art mean that we speak of something made? Plotinus says:

Now it must be seen that stone brought under the artist's hand to the beauty of form is beautiful not as stone...but in virtue of the form or idea introduced by the art. This form is not in the material; it is in the designer before it ever enters the stone; and the artificer holds it not with his equipment of eyes or hands but by his participation in his art. The beauty, therefore, exists in a far higher state in the art; for it does not come over integrally into the work; that original beauty is not transferred; what comes over is a derivative and a minor: and even that shows itself upon the statue not integrally and with an entire realization of intention but only insofar as it has subdued the resistance of the material.¹

Maritain also points out that actually the artistic virtue has been exercised in the artist's intellect, independent of its imposition in matter.²

¹Plotinus, Fifth Ennead, VIII, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952.

²Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 10-11.

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Considering art as an intellectual virtue, these positions are quite clear and correct. Aristotle says that "arts arise when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgement about a class of objects is produced."¹ But he also sees that art must also be concerned with making.² Actually the matter must be seen from two viewpoints.

While it is true that art considered as an intellectual virtue can be exercised in the intellect, it is also true that the ultimate end of the virtue seems to be in the thing made. It is the making, which takes into consideration the matter, which must concretize the form the artist wishes to communicate. It is for that reason that here art has been considered with reference to the matter involved in the making.

To return to our discussion, it seems we may say that a work of fine art corresponds in the order of human making to the divine idea of an individual to be constituted in the nature of things. The act of artistic creation consists in the realization of that idea in its appropriate

¹Aristotle, Metaphysics, 981a.

²Aristotle, Ethics, 1140a.

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matter, just as the divine art constitutes an individual in the order of nature in its proper matter.

Of course, an important distinction is to be made between the creation of God and that of the artist, as has already been suggested. Yet here another point must be recognized. We must see that when we speak of a work of creation or art being "brought into existence" that we do not suggest that nothing of the thing existed before its production. For the idea of all things has existed in the mind of God from all eternity; and an idea must exist in the mind of the artist. Perhaps this is why Dante could so beautifully say, "Art is as it were a grandchild of God."¹

What, of course, the artist must do is reduce this idea to an image. The work of art can exist in the mind of the artist, distinct from realization in the object, and before it can be realized it must be reduced to an image.

The object of imitation in the fine arts, we may conclude, partakes of both the singular and the universal.

¹Dante, Inferno, Canto XI, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952, p. 16.

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Of the singular as determinate and proportioned to the accidents of matter which signify the individual. Universal, not in the logical sense, nor even as a natural essence considered metaphysically, but universal in its intelligibility, an intelligibility which is the work of the artist.

It would seem that this notion of artistic imitation retains both the dependence which the artist has on nature and at the same time does not violate the integrity of the artist. It does not make the artist a slavish recorder nor does it go to the extreme that Mumford would have one hold, that of making the artist's role more independent than it really is. It has accepted the fact which experience seems to bear out: nature and the artist contribute to the work of fine art.

Of course, the position suggested here would hold that there are both subjective and objective elements. Since Mumford's position is predominantly subjective, and since he feels that a work of art like the world around us can be compared to a Rorschach ink blot, some explanation must be given to an objection that can be quite logically raised by Mumford. If there is an objective element in a work of art, how can there be such a divergence of opinion

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about the meaning of a work of art? Indeed, in some cases, it is often difficult to find agreement as to the exact meaning of a work of art.

Any answer to this problem will include the position of both the artist and the viewer. A brief recollection of the role of each will aid us in answering the objection.

It is by viewing the forms of nature around him that the artist acquires the matter which he is to ultimately use in his creation.¹ But, then, his individuality becomes a kind of filter through which his experience passes to become a reservoir from which his art may draw.

"As a man is," says St. Thomas, "so does his end appear to him."²

Different artists could very well share a common experience. Yet since that experience would at once become

¹Picasso has said: "There is no abstract art. One always has to begin with something. One can then remove all appearance of reality; one runs no risk, for the idea of the object has left an ineffaceable imprint." Christian Zervos, "Conversation With Picasso," in The Creative Process, ed. Brewster Ghiselin, Mentor, 1955, p. 57.

²St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, 83, a 1, ad 5. "Sic igitur qualis unus quis que est secundum corpoream qualitatem, talis finis videtur ei."

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part of the pattern of the life of each of the artists, it is inevitable that each would produce a different work of art, perhaps remarkably different, perhaps so slightly different that only a trained observer could distinguish the difference. But the difference, marked or little, in no way changes the fact that there was originally a common experience. This Mumford does not hold.

The fact that so many viewers are able to interpret a work of art in so many different ways, could be used by Mumford to support his contentions.

In a remarkable book Hamlet and Oedipus, Ernest Jones, a disciple of Freud, lists a number of critics and their interpretation of Shakespear's play about the melancholy Dane.¹ Mentioning but a few of these opinions will serve our purpose here.

Thus Gerth sees the play as an elaborate defense of Protestantism; Gerkrath an expression of revolt emanating in Wittenberg against Roman Catholicism and feudalism; Rio, Spanier, and Tucker, see it as a defense of Roman

¹Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus, Doubleday, 1955, p. 28.

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Catholicism. Meisels sees Hamlet as a typical Jew; John Owen treats the play as an exposition of Montaigne's scepticism. Stedefeld regards it as a protest against the scepticism of Montaigne; Feis as one against his mysticism. Mercade says it is an allegorical philosophy of history.¹

After arguing quite convincingly that such wide difference in the interpretation of a play would indicate that we must be cautious in any allegorical analysis, and after dismissing the mentioned opinions and others, Jones says that the play must (ital. mine) be understood in terms of the Oedipus Complex.

Now if a play written by a competent artist could evoke from so many critics so many different interpretations could not Mumford be right in holding that there is nothing really objective to be perceived in the play?

Yet this does not seem to be the case. It must be remembered, first of all, that one who views a work of art brings not only his senses or his intellect and emotions to a work of art. He brings himself.

¹Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus, Doubleday, 1955, p. 28-30.

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However, it does not seem exact to say that a drama serves only as some undetermined reality which gets its significance only from the viewer. Actually, it is doubtful that few people, if any, would deny that Hamlet is a play about a young prince who couldn't make up his mind as to how and when to avenge his father's murder. The actions on the stage reveal this to us and permit us to enjoy.

Disagreement about the play comes when we discuss what the play means. It is then that the play's actions enter our personalities and it is measured in terms of our own feelings, ideas and beliefs. And while this step is almost inevitable, it may not be a step that the artist could possibly know that we could make.

T. S. Eliot, one of the great living artists, has consistently refused to interpret his plays. He holds there is actually a danger involved in assuming that there must be just one interpretation of a poem.¹

It seems that any artist would have a right to reason something like this: I said what the play was about in

¹T. S. Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism," a lecture delivered at the University of Minnesota, April 30, 1956, published by the University of Minnesota, 1956.

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the play. If you are looking for hidden meanings, and if I hid them, you would have to know my personality and obviously you cannot do this. You know the artefact which I have set before you. What you must realize is that one of the things about a work of art is that something of its greatness lies in the fact that it leaves something unsaid. It leaves every symphony a bit unfinished, even the most complete painting not quite complete. What we dare not forget is that there had to be a symphony or poem or painting or play to begin with.

If a young woman views Hamlet and identifies herself with Ophelia and has Joe, her sweetheart, become Hamlet, the action of the play will certainly become heightened for her. But she has thereby added to Shakespeare's work. But seeing the drama of the Bard of Avon was necessarily prior to her own involvement in the play.

Some interesting clinical psychology work has been done which seems to support the view held here that a certain emphasis must be placed on the objective element in the esthetic experience.

Edward Podolsky, M. D., has gathered together from over a dozen reliable medical journals in the United States

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alone, articles by psychiatrists and psychologists who have used music in therapy for the mentally disturbed.¹ What each of these articles points out with some conviction is that music has a role in curing mental illness because it acts as a kind of ordering principle. Because good music has an order of its own, it imparts to the listener something of this order. When the mentally ill listen to this music, they conform to its pattern through their emotions and their irregular or disordered emotional patterns are slowly broken down.

It is unnecessary to go into details here concerning types of music and kinds of emotional disorders which were involved in these studies. What is important to our purpose here is that we see that the music therapy became possible because there was conformity to the music. The art became the measure.

Similar work has been done in color research which seems to confirm what has been said. The normal individual

¹Edward Podolsky, M. D., Music Therapy, Philosophical Library, 1954.

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is supposed to react in a given way to certain colors.¹ It seems the color becomes the measure. Other work has been done in simple color perception which points out that the colored object has certain evocative qualities which demand a given response.²

It would seem, then, from the point of view of the Thomist, as contrary to Mumford's, that the origin of the artistic imitation is the objective world of reality which exists independent of the artist. This is said recognizing full well that the role of the artist as a kind of creator must not be denied; he does not simply copy what he sees but portrays what he sees to be significant in the objective world. This significance will be unique.

It must be further seen that the knowledge of art is of a special kind, distinct from the discursive knowledge of scientific knowledge.

¹Michael Engel, "Reading Minds Through Color," Design, Vol. 10, (March 1953), p. 21.

²Robert W. Burnham, in a speech delivered at Meeting Inter-Society Color Council, April 6, 1955, privately printed.

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THE DREAM AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

In discussing the dream there can again be agreement with Mumford, but only partial agreement. Admittedly the dream may influence the production of a work of art, but this is not the same as saying, as does Mumford, that a man may be an artist while asleep. Too much stress can be put on the role of the dream.

St. Thomas makes some interesting comments concerning the matter. He points out that reason's apprehension is not hindered during sleep, though the judgement itself is not altogether free. Reason can turn to the sensible objects of the dream, however, because these are the first principles of human thought. Nothing, he says, prohibits a man's reason from apprehending anew something arising out of the traces left by his previous thoughts and phantasms presented to him.¹

The Angelic Doctor further states that the dream can also be the cause of a future occurrence, when, for example, a person's mind becomes anxious through what he

¹St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. Theol., II.II, Q. 154, a.5 ad. 3. "...quod apprehensio...cogitationum et phantasmatis oblati..."

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has seen in a dream and is thereby led to do something or to avoid something.¹

It is also possible, St. Thomas holds, that a man may while asleep judge that what he sees is a dream, discerning between things and their images. Nevertheless, the common sense remains partly suspended. Therefore, while asleep, just as sense and imagination are free, so is the judgement of his intellect unfettered, though not entirely. So that if a man syllogizes while asleep, when he wakes up he invariably recognizes a flaw in some respect.²

Aristotle holds that "dreaming is an activity of the faculty of sense-perception, but belongs to this faculty qua presentative."³

Nay, indeed, it is not improbable that some of the presentations which come before the mind in sleep may even be cause of actions cognate to each of them. For when we are about to act (in waking hours), or engaged in any course of actions, we often find ourselves concerned with these actions, or performing them in a vivid dream, the cause whereof is

¹St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., II.II, Q. 95, a. 6. "Sunt autem somnia futurorum eventum..."

²Ibid., I, Q. 84, a. 8, ad. 2.

³Aristotle, On Dreams, 459.

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that the dream movement has had a way paved for it from the original movements set up in the daytime; exactly so, but conversely, it must happen that the movements set up first in sleep should also prove starting points of actions to be performed in the daytime, since the recurrence by day of the thought of these actions also has had its way paved for it in the images before the mind at night. Thus, then, it is quite conceivable that some dreams may be tokens and causes (of future events).¹

One need only accept the testimony of many artists to know that the dream can possibly be of influence in developing a work of art.² Nor can we limit the possibility of the dream being of aid to art, for other creative thinkers have testified to remarkable dreams which have been instrumental in aiding them with their work. The famous account of the final discovery of the Benzene ring in chemistry is a case in point. The chemist who had been working on the problem quite intensively for some time actually "saw" the correct formula in a dream.³

¹Aristotle, On Prophesying By Dreams, 463a.

²See: The Creative Process, ed. Brewster Ghiselin, New America Library, 1952, pp. 16, 45, 204-208.

³Eric Fromm, The Forgotten Language, p. 45.

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From what has been said, it seems that there could be no quarrel with Mumford concerning the point that it is possible for the dream to have a role in artistic production. But this given fact does not mean we are able to conclude that a man is an artist while he is dreaming. In fact it seems possible that we can actually fall into error concerning the role of the imagination in artistic production if we hold this.¹

We must remember that the imagination, while having an important role to play in the creation of an artefact, is a passing instrument in the production of a work of art. It is the intellect which is the father of a work of art; the imagination is the womb. Certainly there can be no artistic birth without both. But the predominant role of the intellect cannot be denied or else one is forced to

¹Raïssa Maritain, The Situation of Poetry, Philosophical Library, 1955, p. 10. "And as for poetry, their error was to believe that its substantial truth is expressed by that psychic automation, taken as a synonym of the real functioning of thought, and that the image is all-sufficient." (Ibid., p. 11.) "In a more simply human and more simply poetic order, it could be shown that a certain obscurity follows on an inspiration which proceeds essentially from sentiment or from dreams..."

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talk nonsense like John Dewey who suggests that animals are artists.¹

The whole scholastic tradition holds that art is a right reason about things to be made. While this contention does not solve the whole problem of the artistic process, it clearly indicates that the most important element in the art is the intellect.

This does not deny the role of the imagination nor does it underestimate the possibility of a phantasm initiating a movement which could become artistic.

It would seem, then, that in a dream there could be a possibility of having a phantasm which could initiate an artistic act in the same way that seeing an object in nature could be the source of an artistic act. In a dream there could be a unique arrangement of parts that one would not always experience and this could give rise to a proper execution of a work of art. And these events would be or could be common enough to seem quite natural. But if there is to be an execution of a work, a judgement will be

¹John Dewey, Art as Experience, Minton, Balch, 1934, p. 18.

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involved and inevitably the intellect.

The function of the virtue of art is twofold: it facilitates an immanent operation of the mind, insofar as contemplation and identity of intellect with an ideal must precede artistic creation; but its special influence is exerted in directing transient activity involved in the production of a concrete representation of ideas.¹

It is, of course, also possible that a man who is not in deep sleep can make a judgement about how a work can be done. But if such a judgement be a sound one, one which is actually equal to or superior to an artistic judgement he would make while awake, it would have to be held that while such an activity is possible there is something of the coincidental or accidental about it.

As to the source of the dream and the possibility of primitive urges being responsible for some tendencies in these dreams and consequently, it does not seem that a sound judgement can be made in this matter since there is not sufficient evidence to prove there are such evidence.

However, Maritain suggests that the unconscious can have a very definite role in the production of the work of

¹Sister M. Rose Emmanuella, The Intellectual Virtues According to St. Thomas, Catholic U. Press, 1941, p.55.

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art.

My contention, then, is that everything depends, in the issue we are discussing, on the recognition of the existence of a spiritual unconscious, or rather, preconscious, of which Plato and the ancient wise men were well aware, and the disregard of which in favor of the Freudian unconscious alone is a sign of the dullness of our times. There are two kinds of unconscious, two great domains of psychological activity screened from the grasp of consciousness: the preconscious of the spirit in its living springs, and the unconscious of blood and flesh, instincts, tendencies, complexes, repressed images and desires, traumatic memories, as constituting a closed or autonomous whole. I would like to designate the first kind of unconscious by the name of spiritual or, for the sake of Plato, musical unconscious or preconscious; and the second by the name of automatic unconscious or deaf unconscious--deaf to the intellect, and structured into a world of its own apart from the intellect; we might also say, in quite a general sense, leaving aside any particular theory, Freudian unconscious¹.

Maritain does not, of course, in any way suggest that the intellect is eliminated but recognizes that it is possible for this unconscious to be part of the creative process.

¹J. Maritain, Creative Intuition In Art and Poetry, (Pantheon, 1953), p. 92. (Ital. Maritain's.)

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It does not seem, therefore, that the Thomistic could be in complete disagreement with Mumford as to the possibility of the dream and the unconscious affecting the artistic act. There is an obvious disagreement as to the type of influence and the degree. For Mumford both the dream and the unconscious urge are immediately involved in the artistic act; for the Thomist there is the possibility of influence, but it is the intellect which is directly responsible for the production of the artefact.

CHAPTER FOUR

MUMFORD'S POSITION ON SIGNIFICATION IN ART

One of the salient problems which has seemed to enchant the minds of many modern estheticians has been a problem which has naturally arisen in a time beset with epistemological difficulties. It is the problem of signification in art. And no little speculation has been concerned with symbolism.

Certainly the sign has been studied and discussed for centuries and the symbol itself has been part of the history of every civilization. Yet some modern thinkers have suggested that we know little of the sign and that the symbol and a proper understanding of its origin and meaning hold promising new intellectual rewards for those who are willing to chart new maps of mental investigation. Mumford is one of these people.

Yet strangely enough, while Mumford stresses the importance of understanding the use of the symbol, he spends little time actually setting forth any definite principles concerning symbolism. He makes statements and

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develops some ideas but considering the importance he places upon symbols, he has done little original thinking on the matter. He is willing enough to give what he considers to be an interpretation of the symbols used by certain writers. Especially has he been concerned with Herman Melville and his famous Moby Dick. But he has speculated little in his own right on the symbol and signification in art. However, this does not mean that he has not by associating himself with others made something of a recorded statement which will permit an investigation that will enable one to go beyond his writings and yet be assured of Mumford's acceptance of certain facts.

This is not an unique instance in Mumford's work. Often he will make a statement without defending it; he will suggest principles without proof. In some cases his position may be a synthesis of the opinions of several thinkers whom he may not mention. In the case of symbolism, however, he specifies that he follows the thought of Ernest Cassirer and Susanne Langer.¹ Yet ultimately it is Miss Langer who becomes the measure and it is she who becomes

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 22.

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Mumford's authority in this matter.

Besides, then, giving a brief outline of Mumford's thought, it will be necessary to clarify it with some of Miss Langer's opinions if a proper understanding is to be reached concerning signification in art.

Mumford holds that "without dwelling on the function of symbolization, one cannot begin to describe the nature of man or plumb the deepest spring of his creativeness."¹ He believes that human society was actually made possible because of the invention of symbolization and the development of language.

Primary stress must, of course, be laid upon speech. It is by the vocal sign of the word that man is said to have finally distinguished himself from the brute. Speech, Mumford feels, was at first probably inseparable from gesture, purely emotive. Later more complex mechanisms of abstraction demanded a structure of language itself.

In time language lent itself to other uses besides communication and fellowship. It was a means whereby subjective reactions became externalized, and objective facts

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 40.

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became internalized. Speech was man's prime instrument for sharing his private world with his fellows and for bringing the public world home to himself. It was only a matter of time before the symbols of language would be supplemented by the symbols and significance of other arts.¹

Without symbols, man's life would be one of immediate appetites, immediate sensations; limited to a past shorter than his own lifetime, at the mercy of a future he could never anticipate, never prepare for. In such a world out of hearing would be out of reach, and out of sight would be out of mind. By means of symbols man builds a coherent world out of patches of sense data and gleams of individual experience.²

Mumford feels that essentially symbols function as expressions of inner states, as externalizations and projections of attitudes and desires, sometimes in response to inner promptings, sometimes external ones. By symbolic representation man has been able to free himself from his immediate environment. He not only has found a way to recombine past experiences in a symbolic representation, but he has been able to project new potentialities for life. Art,

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 48.

²L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 8.

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therefore, can disclose hidden meanings.¹

It tells more than the eye sees or the ear hears or the mind knows. With the aid of the symbol man not merely united time past with time present, but time present with ideal possibilities still to emerge in the future... It is only at a very late stage of history that the symbol becomes useful as a device of abstract thought, in the services of science and eventually of technics. The mythic and poetic punction of the symbol...antedated its rational and practical uses.²

All symbolism is not art, Mumford insists, and he even maintains that a commonplace work of art cannot really be considered a symbol in the way which he would understand it. For the commonplace work of art simply acts as an obvious sign to communicate an ordinary thought, while the symbol shows the viewer something of the new person he may become. The work of art is not only to say something but to do something for the viewer. If it communicates an emotional experience, it also is evocative in that it is to lead the viewer to other experiences, to new emotional depths.³

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 18.

²Ibid.

³L. Mumford, The Golden Day, p. 130.

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Obviously much will then depend on the viewer in the esthetic experience, for a work of art is not simply something which is seen or heard but lived. Yet remembering this evocative quality of a work of art, Mumford also points out that even in the artistic symbol there is a signification which must be learned, much as the meaning of words must be learned.¹

Because man has such a need for symbols Mumford feels that he has throughout recorded history used the symbol in greater or lesser degrees, but that he has used them without understanding them so far as their origin and need are concerned. It is only in our own day that we are beginning to understand the real function of the symbol. But the need for symbol has always been there and he gives an interesting illustration which pretends to show the effects of excessive and insufficient symbolism.

The middle ages, which owed so much of its successful growth to an imposing symbolic structure, in the dogmas, the ritual, in the daily pattern of conduct promoted by

¹L. Mumford, "The Child As Artist," New Republic, Vol. 47, (June 30, 1926), p. 18.

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the Church, actually had the effort at symbolization become so excessive that there had to be a revolt. Mumford holds that finally nothing was itself or existed for itself, it was always a point of reference for something else whose ultimate habitat was another world.

The mechanical world which was a revolt against this condition actually fell into the opposite excess and in getting rid of excessive symbols and other worldliness, man became so absorbed in the mechanical that he allowed a large part of his personal life to be displaced and disordered. Man lost the value of the symbol and much of himself.¹

The symbol, then, is valued as much for what it is as for what it indicates.² Artistically considered it is more than a mere sign; it is a projection of inner states which become an entity in the artefact and which will cause a response in the viewer which will be an exceptional personal experience.

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 57.

²L. Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 334.

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As has been pointed out, Mumford did not develop much of his thought on the symbol, but since he has made it clear that he considers the work of Susanne Langer to be authoritative in the matter, it may be necessary to relate some of the salient points in her doctrine to make Mumford's position clear.

Miss Langer holds that it is only by understanding symbolism that we can have any accurate knowledge of knowing. In her work Philosophy In A New Key, she says that all knowledge must now be re-evaluated in terms of a new idea of symbolism, an idea which is not completely clear but which will develop into something quite wonderful, a kind of lens which will suddenly enable man to enter a whole new field of knowledge.

In the fundamental notion of symbolism... we have the keynote of all humanistic problems. In it lies a new conception of "mentality," that may illumine questions of life and consciousness, instead of obscuring them as traditional "scientific methods" have done. If it is indeed a generative idea, it will beget tangible methods of its own, to free the deadlocked paradoxes of mind and body, reason and impulse, autonomy and law, and will overcome the checkmated arguments of an earlier age by discarding their very idiom and shaping their equivalents in more significant phrase. The philosophical study of symbols is not a technique borrowed from other disciplines...it has arisen in the fields that

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the great advances of learning have left fallow. Perhaps it holds the seed of a new intellectual harvest, to be reaped in the next season of the human understanding.¹

Miss Langer recognizes a distinction between sign and symbol, even though they are knotted together in the production of those realities which we call facts. But, she holds, "between the facts run the threads of unrecorded reality, momentarily recognized, wherever they come to the surface, in our tacit adaptation of signs; and the bright, twisted threads of symbolic envisagement...the whole creative process of ideation metaphor, and abstraction that makes life an adventure in understanding."²

There can be a distinction made between the sign and the symbol in that the symbol has meanings which are capable of indefinite growth, connotations, not simply significations.³ The sign is a direct means of knowing. The symbol is a sign but it also has marked connotative value.

¹Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy In A New Key, Mentor, 1942, p. 19-20.

²Ibid. p. 228.

³Ibid. p. 228.

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A work of art is, for Miss Langer, a single, indivisible symbol. It is not analyzable into more elementary symbols. Language, spoken or written, is a symbolism, a system of symbols, while a work of art is always prime symbol.¹

"The import of an art symbol cannot be built up like the meaning of a discourse, but must be seen in toto first; that is, the 'understanding' of a work of art begins with an intuition of the whole presented feeling."²

What must be remembered is that a work of art should not be considered a message. Its symbolic function is more concerned with intuition than with any type of discursive symbols. The question is not what the artist is saying but what he is showing. The art lover enters into a direct relation not with the artist but with the work of art and what he must bring to the work is a responsiveness, which is a natural gift related to creative talent.³

¹S. Langer, Feeling and Form, Charles Scribner's, 1953, p. 369.

²Ibid., p. 379.

³Ibid., p. 394-96.

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Time and time again both Miss Langer and Lewis Mumford make it clear that the knowledge of a work of art is acquired by a kind of intuition.

Reviewing briefly Mumford's position regarding the artefact as a sign, it seems the following main points may be recognized.

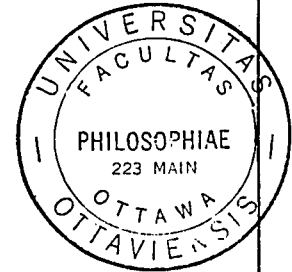
A work of art has something of the conventional sign about it because there is a process of learning connected with art's communicative powers.

The artefact is, however, primarily symbolic. It primarily reflects the inner emotional and imaginative states of the artist.

Symbolism is known for its connative powers. The artist begins the aesthetic communication by concretizing as best as possible something he wishes to "say", but the viewer must, after he sees the work, consider it a starting point for further development by himself.

A work of art cannot be spoken of as simply containing a message, a discursive argument. The artist does not tell something so much as he shows something.

Understanding art and its symbolism may eventually permit man to formulate a whole new concept of knowing.



CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION OF MUMFORD

ON SIGNIFICATION

There seems to be little doubt that one of the great problems in esthetics, one which has evoked violent disagreement and wide interpretation and definition, is the problem of signification. The problem as to what a work of art means is obviously enough to demand lively discussion from all sides, widely diversified opinion, and even contradictory opinion. Yet the disagreement here will very often be resolved not by individuals becoming convinced of another's opinion, but rather by a recognition that if there is anything certain about a work of art it is that there will be no universal agreement as to what it means.

But another problem must be met with a greater hope of success and that is how it means, the nature of the artistic sign. It is in this area principally that Mumford must be evaluated. And while, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter, he has not written extensively, he has some thought-provoking ideas and some which can interestingly be compared to traditional views.

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Perhaps it may be wisest to begin with a recognition that Mumford agrees to an important and too often forgotten point: it is a mistake to speak of art as containing a "message" in that it is something which can easily be translated into another means of communication. It is a mistake which is often made and the philosopher, because he is concerned with universals and their signs, words, is often tempted to fall into this snare.

One can understand something of the impatience of the artist who hears a conversation between two persons looking at a picture punctuated by such statements as: "I wonder what it means?" or "Here's the title at the bottom. That will tell us what it means."

The first thing that must be said about the arts is that they are unique ways of saying something. The individual arts are not simply different ways of saying something which can be said by words in the first place. A work of art says something that can be said exactly only by the medium involved. One does not look at a picture or listen to a symphony and imagine that he has penetrated the meaning of the works if he is able to translate what they

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mean into words.¹

These works do mean something, but the medium involved gives us the meaning, a meaning which simply cannot be translated into words. The artist does not create a work of art to say something which he did not choose to say in ordinary prose; he chose to use his particular medium because what he desired to say could not be said any other way.

It has become the goal of some modern mathematicians to endeavor to explain the arts in terms of mathematical symbols. Let us take one of these formulas to make a point. One writer holds that the esthetic measure is determined by the density of order relations in the esthetic object and is represented by $M = \frac{O}{C}$. M equals the esthetic measure which is the reward; harmony or symmetry is represented by O, and C represents the acts necessary for

¹Maurice de Vlaminck says, "When a picture can be explained, when it can be made to be understood, or felt, by means of words, it has nothing to do with painting." Portraits avant décès, Paris, Flammarion, 1943, p. 177. Quoted by E. Gilson in Painting and Reality, Pantheon, 1957, p. 209.

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attention to the complex object.¹

Now all of this can tell us something about a work of art; a geometrician might very well speak of lines and balances in such a picture as the Mona Lisa. But only the most naive could dare hold that the Mona Lisa could be explained by lines and balances or any mathematical formula. Only the most superficial knowledge of art would permit any person to believe that he can translate the meaning of any work of art into either formulas or words.

It is, of course, inevitable that works of art be discussed in words, but the important point is that it be recognized that we cannot completely translate into words works of art that do not actually use words as the matter for the artistic form. It is all well and good to have a critic or commentator inform an audience that a certain symphony is about such and such just so long as the audience (and the critic) does not really believe that it is being told very much. Perhaps a verbal "explanation" could prepare one for the proper attention and attitude necessary to

¹George David Birkhoff, "Mathematics of Aesthetics," The World of Mathematics, Simon & Schuster, 1956, p. 2185-86.

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grasp the musical form, but words could never be considered a substitution--or else why would there be an art of music.

Nor do we explain a work of art by simple mechanical definition or appreciation. Leonard Bernstein has written an interesting little dialogue in which he discusses several of Beethoven's works in terms of what could be called the mechanics of music, the measurable. With other eminent musicians he comes to the conclusion that if one analyzes the melodies, fugues, rhythms of these works that they merit no special acclaim and can even be highly criticized in some instances. But the undefinable form, the thing which makes these works be, the vital principle which manifests the genius of Beethoven, this is the art!¹

So that we must remember that an artefact is a simple sort of sign which cannot be simply translated into other artistic media exactly.

So far as signification concerning a work of art and the knowing object is concerned, Mumford, of course, holds that while there is an element of the conventional in the

¹Leonard Bernstein, "Why Beethoven?" 7 Arts #2, ed. Fernando Puma, Permabooks, 1954, p. 33-40.

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artistic, it is primarily symbolic.

While there can be no denying that there are elements of both the conventional and symbolic, Mumford seems to oversimplify a classification which seems to be not only difficult from the philosophical standpoint but one which cannot expect to be complete if what has been held about meaning in art and its translation is true. But certainly philosophy will enable us to see much finer distinctions than Mumford has suggested.

It seems that the symbol must be recognized as a sign, but for the purpose of this thesis, after having made this point, the notion of the symbol will be set aside to be discussed separately from the logical sign as such.

THE SIGN

The most obvious role of the sign is that it serves as a means of communication between the artist and the perceiver. So far as traditional philosophy is concerned, there is a somewhat sharp division as to types of sign.

So far as the cognitive powers are concerned, signs are either instrumental or formal. Our concepts are formal signs, for a formal sign is one which, without previous

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knowledge of itself, represents something other than itself.¹

An instrumental sign is a sign which is known itself beforehand but is used to make another thing known.

With regard to the relation of the sign to the thing signified, the sign is divided into natural, conventional, and customary.

A natural sign is one which represents something by its very nature, without being arbitrarily imposed by public authority or custom. A conventional sign is one which represents something by common agreement. A customary sign represents something because of usage only.

With regard to the cognitive powers, it seems that the artefact is an instrumental sign. It does actually draw attention to itself as an object, and this is an important point which must not be forgotten, but obviously its ultimate end is beyond the mere object.

When we examine the artistic sign with the relation it has to the thing signified, our task becomes more

¹J. Maritain has an interesting essay on the sign as related to art in "Sign and Symbol." Ransoming The Time, Scribners, 1946, p. 217-p. 254.

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complicated. It does not seem that it can be classified as either a natural or conventional sign exclusively, and when we investigate some phases of symbolism, there are obvious relations to the customary sign.

St. Augustine makes an interesting observation which will be of help here:

For if those signs which the actors make in dancing were of force by nature, and not by the arrangement and agreement of men, the public crier in former times would not have announced to the people of Carthage, while the pantomime was dancing, what it was he meant to express...even now, if anyone who is unaccustomed to such follies goes into the theater, unless someone tell him what the movements mean, he will give his whole attention to them in vain...

But in regard to pictures and statues, and other works of this kind, which are intended as representations of things, nobody makes mistakes...¹

There seems to be two general observations which St. Augustine makes which deserve attention as a means of clarifying our problem.

First of all, the exclusively spatial arts traditionally have been akin to the natural sign, but exceptions

¹St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, Bk. II, 25, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1952. p. 649.

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especially in modern art which is absorbed in abstraction have made even this classification completely acceptable.

Secondly, it would seem that the dance and other arts which by their nature are temporal, do have certain forms of expression which have been agreed upon to mean certain things. There must be some knowledge of these signs before there will be a proper communication between the viewer and the artist. For example, so far as the dance in its higher and more classical form is concerned, it seems evident that there must be a knowledge of the meaning of certain movements which are conventional in that men have agreed that they mean such and such. And these movements or a series of them, would be practically impossible to understand completely without some training.

Yet it also seems evident that even the most accomplished types of classical dancing will elicit from even the untrained observer some natural response, because while some movements are veiled in a technical jargon peculiar to a given genre, the basic movements are akin to expression which is naturally understood. In other words, even the untrained would be apt to be given some impression as to the obvious emotion or idea expressed. Just as the

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dance of the primitive springs from the need to express something so basic that it usually is understood in a general way, so even the dance in its classical form has something by way of obvious import.

One need only to review the origin of the dance to see how it sprang up as a practically natural display of emotion.¹

In music, as another example, the sonata-allegro form follows a definite pattern based upon convention. There is in the exposition, development and recapitulation, a form which, while varied in the individual sonata, is kept within certain conventional bounds. It will take a trained listener, one acquainted with the language of the form, to fully grasp the meaning. Yet here again, the untrained perceiver will unquestionably get something of the emotional content of the music. When we remember the automatic response that a march brings to the most untrained musical ear, the point becomes even clearer.

¹See: Curt Sacks, World History of the Dance, Ch.I, W. W. Norton, 1937.

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Perhaps poetry employs the conventional sign more obviously than any other art form because it actually needs the most conventional of all signs, the word, to convey meaning. But even here, a certain rhythm is required, a certain sound of the words is very important. And the need for the rhythm and sound which naturally convey impressions become so great at times that poets even feel the need to coin words. (G. M. Hopkins is a significant example.)¹

And so we could proceed with other art forms. But this should be sufficient to show that while it is undoubtedly true that the artefact is in some way a conventional sign, we cannot ignore that there seems to be something of the natural sign in all of art, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the form. Indeed, when we consider folk dancing and music, even elements of the customary are introduced.

If we are able to arrive at any conclusion concerning the sign in art, we must see that labeling an artefact

¹See: W. H. Gardner's, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Penguin, 1953, p. xxxiv. e.g.

"The heaven-flung, heart fleshed, maiden-furled
Miracle-in-Mary-of-Flame,
Mid-numbered He in three of the thunder-throne!"

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as a conventional, natural or customary sign, would permit us to oversimplify a complex signification which the artefact is in terms of these classifications.

It seems unnecessary for present purposes to discuss the types of sign which are involved in abstract works of art and the work of certain schools where the sign becomes highly specialized to the point of developing a new "language."

What is important is that we see that a work of art is a sign which man uses to communicate a special type of knowledge to his fellow man. It is a signification which varies.

So far as his contentions concerning the symbol and signification are concerned, again there can be some general agreement with Mumford but some important distinctions must be made.

THE SYMBOL

When discussion concerning the sign and art is extended to include symbolism, additional facts must be taken into consideration, because while there is general agreement that every symbol is a sign, there is equal

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agreement that the symbol carries with it certain characteristics that do not belong, in turn, to the sign.

It is this difference which fascinates Mumford and it is also on this point that some rather sharp distinctions must be made in evaluating him. If for the time we simply say that the symbol is a concretized image, we can begin an evaluation of Mumford's position.

Certainly Mumford is not alone in our time in seeing the significance of the image in art and life. During the twentieth century artists and critics have devoted more and more time to the image, though the interests are only one manifestation of a revived interest in the symbol. The last century has seen an ever-increasing image consciousness in religion, philosophy, anthropology and related sciences, as well as in the fine arts.

Yet the symbol, which may not be so mysterious as Mumford suggests so far as its origin is concerned, because it derived its efficacy from the composite nature of man, has played an important role in the life of man from primitive times. And although attacks on the image as a mode of apprehension and expression were made from time to time, notably in the iconoclasm of the eighth and ninth centuries,

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the image remained securely established in Western man's society, religion and art until the seventeenth century. At that time it suffered a severe dislodging. Writers have, of course, tried to explain this attack on the symbol and its banishment. Mumford saw it as a revolt against the over-use of the symbol and the reference of all symbolism to the next life. Others have suggested as some of the possible causes Bacon and the new sciences, the renunciation of ritual, the rebirth of skepticism, the mechanistic view of the world which proceeded from the philosophy of Descartes, the social and political revolution with its trend toward democracy and the abandonment of ceremonial. Malcolm Mackenzie Ross has recently suggested another solution. He believes that the Reformation did more than simply reject liturgical ceremonial and traditional symbolic art. In the Protestant revision of Eucharistic dogma, he says, the whole sacramental grip on reality and the idea of sanctification of natural things were repudiated. The result was the destruction of the analogical validity of the

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poetic symbol.¹

At any rate, the seventeenth century saw a "disassociation of sensibility," as Eliot calls it.² For two hundred years the image held the back seat in the life of Western man. But the nineteenth century called it to the fore again, and the twentieth century has given it even more prominence.

Actually, then, Lewis Mumford or Susan Langer have done nothing original in recognizing the importance of the symbol, or its use. Where there must be an evaluation of their position, however, is in the nature and source of the symbol. To do this the symbol must be defined more accurately.

What we are able to recognize about a work of art is that in serving as a sign it does not simply wish to draw attention to something else. The work itself is intimately involved in the reference in such a way as it is a

¹Malcolm Machenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma: The Transfiguration of Eucharistic Symbols In Seventeenth Century English Poetry, Rutgers University Press, 1954, pp. vii-viii.

²T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays, Harcourt, 1932, p. 247.

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meeting place for the thing signified and the joy of the beholder. It is able to speak in a tongue that is more than conventional; it is universal.

Aristotle made a reference to the metaphor which will aid in clarification.

Strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey what we know already; it is from the metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh. When the poet calls old age "a withered stalk," he conveys a new idea, a new fact, to us by means of the general notion of "last bloom," which is common to both things.¹

Actually the poet has made us see because he has concretized in a dramatic way something abstract, i.e. old age. Maritain has defined poetry in its broadest sense, the intuition underlying creative work in all the arts, as the "divination of the spiritual in the things of sense, which also will express itself in the things of sense..."²

With the notion of likeness, then, it is obvious that so far as the symbol is concerned there is no visual resemblance. What is imitated is something invisible. And

¹Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1410b.

²J. Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 75.

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perhaps this is the key to the basic worth of the symbol. Thus symbolism becomes a kind of universal language primarily because it is connected with what man knows first and most easily, sensible data.

The poetic universe responds, therefore, to a natural desire to reconcile the two opposing tendencies by a fusion in some fashion of sense and intellect, through the creation of an object in which we shall be able to apprehend the universal with the directness of a simple sensation. It is an attempt by man...to enjoy the result of his power of intellectual abstraction without the sacrifice of sensation which it usually entails.¹

When scripture speaks of Christ standing on Mount Sion as a lamb, the visual image will convey dramatically what the writer intends. No one stops to debate whether God can take the form of a lamb.² Even a child (perhaps best a child) understands what is meant. Shakespeare has put it well:

¹Anthony Durand, "Shelley On The Nature of Poetry," in Laval Theologique et Philosophique, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1948) pp. 125-6.

²Apocalypse, 14:1.

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...as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.¹

It is symbolism so understood which has been important to man in some way or another throughout history. There can, therefore, be agreement with Mumford concerning a general importance of symbolism. But from what has been said so far objections to two points must be raised, both of which have been dealt with in part in the section on the source of art.

It does not seem possible that the symbol's source can be man and his interior life for two reasons. First of all, since analogies are basically rooted in nature, it does not seem that they can be products of particular artists. Secondly, a universal language seems to be evident because of this foundation and not because of interior states of the artists. This does not deny the original contribution of the artist; it simply recognizes the fundamental source of the symbol to be in nature, for it is the objects found in nature which become symbols.

¹William Shakespeare, Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, ll. 14-17.

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The normal human creature while he makes things, imitates God's making. He parallels in some fashion God's creation of the universe.¹

Another point which Mumford raises concerning the symbol is its connative power. It too has merit but must be distinguished.

Perhaps by viewing a symbol, such as a flag, which is not an artistic symbol, a better beginning may be made. The United States flag composed of thirteen alternating red and white stripes and forty-eight white stars on a field of blue, is a symbol to all Americans. Feeble attempts to "explain" the symbol could include such notions as, "The flag stands for the privileges that citizens enjoy and the political structure which makes them possible." But what others would call the "real" meaning of the flag are actually results of the connative powers of the symbol.

What America means to the midwestern farm youth who is close to the soil and the rhythm of nature, to an aged coal miner in eastern Kentucky, to a negro in the South,

¹Graham Carey, "Symbolism," Catholic Art Quarterly Vol. 7, (1943), p. 4.

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and to a New York banker--what the American flag means to each of these will depend not on the symbol that they view with pride and devotion but it will in a large extent depend upon what they are.

This does not mean, as Mumford would hold, that it is the individual who gives a Kantian determination to the symbol. It means that the symbol exists in such a way as to permit, or even demand, a personal act on the part of the viewer. This is but another illustration of men agreeing that a work of art is great and yet disagreeing on its "meaning." The esthetic experience depends on the artefact but it also depends upon what a man brings to a work of art in order to appreciate it.

Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem The Windhover, is a good artistic example of what is meant here. Critics enthusiastically praise the poem, yet they will very often disagree with what it means.¹

There are many reasons for this disagreement, the most important of which will be dealt with in the section

¹See: Raymond V. Schroder, S.J., "What Does The Windhover Mean?" in Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, editor: Norman Weyand, S.J., Sheed & Ward, 1949, p. 275-307.

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on the end of art, but for now it is enough that it be seen there must be a conformity between the intellect, emotions, and personality of the perceiver and the poem. Any man can get something from the poem. But how many men except Catholics could penetrate the symbolism of Hopkins sufficiently to get to the core of the work. Yet more than Catholics enjoy it.

Symbolism, then, is tremendously important in art. But it is based on the objects of nature, not on the whims of the artists. It has tremendous connotative powers not because the work is determined from without, but because the artefact begins the esthetic experience which is completed by the perceiver.

CHAPTER SIX

MUMFORD'S POSITION ON THE END OF ART

Up to this point when art has been discussed it has been fine art that has been under investigation. This has been done for two reasons. In the first place, we have been more properly concerned with the fine arts as such, rather than simply objects made. In the second place, Mumford has carefully distinguished between the fine arts and the practical arts to such an extent that the division in this thesis at once became automatic. In fact in our time, Mumford feels, it is more proper to speak of technics than simply practical arts.

The distinction is of further importance to Mumford because he sees technics as a serious threat to humanity, a threat which arose when the proper balance was lost between man's use of the fine arts and technics.

The distinction has been referred to here because a reference to the end of art demands that this distinction be made. For if we understand the problems relating to the end of art as being problems which include art in its broadest sense, as a thing made, a cursory examination of the

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principles involved would lead us to believe that there would be little opportunity for confusion or disagreement. For the average man will think first of the practical order because it is the thing which he knows best.

Since the things of the practical order take their origin from a conception of their purpose (e.g. a knife is designed to cut and actually is defined in terms of this end), in this order the answer to any question concerning the end of art would be as simple as defining it.

But anything beyond a cursory examination indicates that the problem is not quite so simple, for when we at once recognize the fact that there is a distinction, and an important distinction, between the end of the practical arts and the fine arts, we see that any simple answers are impossible. For while men are in general agreement about the ends of the practical arts, there is wide disagreement, for reasons which will be discussed in the next chapter, between philosophers and critics concerning the end of the fine arts. Let it be sufficient at this point to recognize that this disagreement exists.

Mumford, too, has his opinion concerning the end of art. It is complicated in that he does not reduce the end

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of art to any simple or even primary end. Most theories or esthetics at least share the common principle that pleasure in some way or another is inevitably involved with the end of art. Yet one of the most striking observations which can be made concerning Mumford's position is that in his voluminous writings he but rarely discusses art in terms of pleasure. Delight as a response to a beautiful object may be something which he insists is taken for granted. Yet in all of his writing he does not discuss the end of art in terms of pure pleasure. Again it must be said that this does not necessarily deny that the aesthetic experience is in some way to be pleasurable, but it does seem to clearly indicate that there are other ends which he considers more important. And here it can very well be said that the ultimate worth of Mumford as a critic in our time may very well be because he has been so severe in evaluating the arts in terms of their ends.

For him there can be no simple end for art. He discusses it in terms of the needs of the individual, of society; he sees it as a social barometer indicating the values of an age, as a tonic which will encourage men to set new goals and ideals. These are awe-inspiring goals. But

these, Mumford feels, are the basic goals of art.

ART AND THE INDIVIDUAL

For Mumford art is primarily in the domain of the person and with relation to the individual its important purpose is to widen the province of the personality so that individualized feelings, emotions, attitudes and values can be transmitted to other persons.¹

Sympathy and empathy are the characteristic ways of art: a feeling with, a feeling into, the innermost experiences of other men. The work of art is the visible, portable spring from which men share the deep underground sources of their experiences. Art arises out of man's need to create for himself, beyond any requirement for mere animal survival, a meaningful and valuable world: his need to dwell on, to intensify, and to project in more permanent forms those precious parts of his experience that would otherwise slip too quickly out of his grasp, or sink too deeply into his unconscious to be retrieved.²

Obviously, then, for Mumford it is as a means of communication, not as a special object of delight that we must hold the artefact in esteem. Art permits by a special

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 16.

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language a concretization of significant moments of experience. It permits the artist to communicate his interior states, be they conscious or unconscious, good or bad.

Through art man's deepest desires and impulses, his ability to enjoy and bestow love, to give life and receive life from his fellowmen, can be possible. It permits him to free himself from a limited here and now, to discover hidden meaning in himself and the world about him. It tells more than the eye sees or the ear hears or the mind knows.¹

Art permits as nothing else the organic expression of the artist. It permits him by means of symbols to project as much of his individuality as is possible. It is not, of course, the only means of communication, but certainly it permits the most basic communication.

Mumford, quoting a mythical but typical artist, says:

I am here and in me life has taken a certain form. My life must not pass until I master its meanings and value. What I have seen and felt and thought and imagined seems to me important: so important that I will try to convey it to you through a common language of symbols and forms, with something of

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 18.

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the concentration, some of the intensity, some of the passionate delight that I carry to the highest pitch in myself through the very act of expression. With the aid of art I give you in the present, the experience of a lifetime: the potentialities of many lifetimes. These esthetic moments endow life with a new meaning; and these new meanings heighten life with other esthetic moments.¹

For the perceiver art in its many forms is as essential to man as his daily bread.² If he is to mature properly as a human he must eat at the table of the artist.

One can see, therefore, that for Mumford one of the chief ends of art is that it become a means of communication for the individual. It is a kind of language, different from ordinary discourse, one that is more personal and intimate.

ART AND SOCIETY

It may very well be that the individual and his esthetic needs are of primary concern to Mumford, but he spends much more time and many more words stressing the importance of art in society. Indeed, as an American

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 139.

²L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 9.

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critic, it is probably in this area that Mumford has exerted his greatest influence. Not only is he concerned with the need for art in society, but he is concerned with the history of art as a commentary upon an age and with contemporary art not only as a commentary but as both an admonition and a hope.

Socially, therefore, the function of the artist may be that of mirroring the philosophy of a given age, flattering both the philosophy and the age. Or the artist may become a diagnostician who discerns symptoms of social or moral decay in a given era, shocking perceivers into catching a glimpse of the real under the disguises of popular thought and sentiment. Or the artist may become a source of integration for an age, permitting it to see a hoped-for order which might lead it to a better realization of the dignity of man.

Different artists will have different functions to play in the drama. The majority of them will be mirrors reflecting the tenor of the times--social, economic, political and spiritual. They will, without consciously knowing why, reveal through their art the gods of the people. This does not mean that there will be conscious study or

deliberation on the part of the artist to determine the tenor referred to, nor does he actually become a student of the times, penetrating in an intellectual manner the influences exerted upon his society. Rather this will be a subtle, perhaps even an unconscious realization, brought on by a kind of sensitivity to an environment. The subject matter of the artist need not be social, intellectual, economic or religious to reveal these philosophical implications of which Mumford speaks. In perhaps one of the most dramatic illustrations which he uses, Mumford points to three nudes. He refers to these nudes and maintains that we are not looking at three different artists' conceptions of different nude women. Rather, he maintains, there are different kinds of personality, different philosophies, different cultures, not just different women.¹

Mumford spends no little effort illustrating his belief that the art of an age will often reflect the spirit of that age. If one could not agree with his interpretation of the facts involved, it seems necessary to assent to the fact that Mumford has not made an idle suggestion to be

¹L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 214.

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taken with the proverbial grain of salt. Though his examples as scattered throughout much of his work are quite extensive, it will be sufficient here to give but a few examples.

He sees, for example, the order in Greek art as mirroring an order in Greek thought. Here in a civilization concerned with the abstract and universal in thought, one finds an art abstract in the sense that it is an idealized form which is imposed upon matter and not simply a direct copying of what is found in nature.¹

When, after the Peloponnesian War, uncertainty, trouble, and disaster crowded in on the cities of the Aegean and violence seemed to break out everywhere, art became "psychological," portraying anguish, pain, terror.²

During the first thousand years of Christianity, Mumford holds, religious art is preoccupied with the figure of Jesus because the Christian imagination is preoccupied with Him. But during the Middle Ages, with an increased sense of humanity, art now depicts not only Jesus but His

¹L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 34.

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mother. Now the painter depicts life in warm, human terms.¹

The Medieval dissolution was best depicted by Pieter Brueghel who mirrored Medieval democracy, while the post-Medieval world, a period of rising appetites and over-reaching powers, saw painting depicting sensual joy.²

When modern capitalism and the industrial revolution permitted starvation in the midst of plenty, it was works like that of Van Gogh's "Potato Eaters," which reflected the spirit of that age.³

Later, when organized religion's impact was no longer felt, when Freud reinstated the dream as a key to man's unconscious urges, the artist began to reclaim subjective impulses, nightmares became visible again, pointing to deeper psychological and social disintegration. Here surrealism had its birth.⁴

It should, of course, be unnecessary to point out that Mumford in no way limits this mirroring to a particular

¹L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 102.

²Ibid., p. 183.

³Ibid., p. 311.

⁴Ibid., p. 374.

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art form. He would hold that all art forms, each in its own way, reflect the spirit of the times, except for those artists who because of personal integration are able to sweep aside the convictions of an age and propose another "reality" as they see it.

In a way, then, each age will propose a philosophical measure of all things by what it feels is the most significant thing in existence. It will be inevitable that this measure will in some way be reflected in the arts.

However, it is of his own time that Mumford has written most and actually his position as a critic seems to have been established by his evaluation of the American scene and especially the contemporary American scene.

His concern with modern art has lead him to warn that it is in many instances a symptom of a sick civilization but he also looks to modern art with hope, suggesting that it is one of the ways that modern man must find a means of integration.

This modern era of art begins for him, not at the turn of the century but at the beginning of World War I-- "an era in which we have encompassed as many terrible changes as the Romans did between the period of the Antonines

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and the foundation of the Benedictine Order.¹

No one can understand the literature of the last half-century, its contradictions, its dehumanization, its preoccupation with violence, its increasing unintelligibility, who does not understand the great breach that the first World War effected in the human mind.²

"We were born into the cocky, confident world of Bernard Shaw; and we have lived to understand sympathetically the plight and confusion of St. Augustine."³

By the end of the period following World War I, Mumford holds, all the great landmarks in arts and thought were either defaced or reduced to mere dust and rubble. Actually, he says, one can go back to the eighteenth century to see that life had been on the side of the revolt in all the arts. The past, the traditional, the established, the historic, was suddenly assumed to be bad. The future, the new, the revolutionary was always good. This created a simple canon of judgement: what was new was considered

¹L. Mumford, "Mirror of a Violent Half Century," New York Times Book Review Section, January 15, 1950, p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 1.

³Ibid.

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to be progressive and what was progressive was considered to be good. If one accepted change, novelty, and innovation, one rejected stability, continuity and tradition.¹

Before World War I, the greater part of Western civilization was still inflated by the profound optimism that had buoyed up the nineteenth century--the century of progress. Man could find the secret to his happiness by turning to the quantitative solution of his problems. Men could bury their doubts about what mattered in productive work.

Confused by the word, they sought certainty in the deed. 'In the beginning,' says Goethe, turning his back on the Gospel of St. John, 'was the act.'... 'Let us work,' said Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, fleeing from frustration, boredom and morphine.²

If Mumford hopes to find the whole man represented in art, he seems to have realized that the present century has not been able to afford it. For it has, he believes, created a sort of inverted hypocrisy, substituting blackened for whitened sepulchers.

¹L. Mumford, Arts In Renewal, p. 15.

²L. Mumford, "Mirror of a Violent Half Century," p. 1.

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Instead of the whole man, our writers have created only a surrealist man, disembowled like a Dali figure, kicking his own severed head across a blasted landscape. Certainly the whole man is not included in the popular tallies of the Naked and the Dead, from John Dos Passos to Norman Mailer.¹

Of course, as has already been pointed out, Mumford does not hold that all artists simply function as mirrors. There will be others who will react against inconsistencies or evils of an age. The prevalent "values" will be cherished by most artists, but this second group will have in some way revolted against these values if they are sensed as blights upon a civilization.

Again it must be emphasized that this is not always a conscious thing, a result of a discursive process, but in a rather unique way it is something sensed by these artists.

The first type of artist will reinforce the health of a society when that society is healthy; but when it is ailing, he will likewise reinforce the ailments. Mumford makes the significant illustration that this might be the reason that poets and artists are looked upon with suspicion

¹L. Mumford, "Mirror of a Violent Half Century," p. 1.

by moralists like Plato, who wrote in a time of decay.¹

The second type artists will take the evils of an age to their logical extreme or will isolate abuses with satire or another type of exaggeration. The art is meant to simply shock people into searching for true values.

Yet a certain caution must be used with even this group insofar as Plato also reminds his readers that deterioration in the arts can be caused by too much wealth as much as poverty. A society which is without struggle to reach new heights must soon see its arts in decay.²

Then there will be the third group of artists, those who will do more than simply reinforce either the health or ailments of a society. This will be the greatest type. He will be a man apart, a man with a private philosophy, who will have built a system of standards for himself, who will have values based upon principles that will enable man to reach new heights. Mumford includes in this group such men of our own times as William Butler Yeates, T. S. Eliot, Waldo Frank, Marlach, Mailloit, Robert Frost, and

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 14.

²L. Mumford, Story of Utopias, p. 37.

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John Marin.¹

The really great artist, then, must be more than a recorder; he must be a maker, a creator, an interpreter of possibilities. He must look to himself to find a sound philosophy which will enable him to see man in his wholeness. In seeing this wholeness and through a proper interpretation of life and its fullness, the artist is able to portray the dramatic role which he has in the epic of life.²

While Mumford is insistent upon stressing the importance of the artist acting as an individual, he also maintains that there is great advantage in artists having a common philosophy and approach to life in its fullness. Otherwise, he feels, the artist must manufacture out of his own limited tastes and experiences what a common tradition could give him.³

¹L. Mumford, Arts In Renewal, p. 29.

²L. Mumford, "Mirror of a Violent Half Century," p. 1.

³L. Mumford, "American Taste," Harper's Magazine, Vol. 154, (October, 1927), p. 510.

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MORALITY AND THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF ART

Mumford is against making purely moral judgements on a work of art.¹ Yet even a casual reading of his writings would reveal that this cannot be interpreted to mean that he does not feel there is some relationship between art and morality. Indeed, he demands that art be an important influence upon man in such a way as it will enable him to acquire a fullness, a proper knowledge of what he ought to be.

Mumford has been aghast in the past because of the lack of public protest of such plays as Tobacco Road and Of Mice and Men, which became popular dramas some years ago. There is no doubt on his part that what such dramas portray really exists. But the way in which it is portrayed shows that for the writer and his public, despite all their good intentions and social interests, nothing else really exists. Murder, incest, adultery, sacrilege, have been perpetual themes of human drama from Aeschylus to Shakespeare. What Mumford challenges is not the subject, but

¹L. Mumford, "Letter to a German Writer," Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. 28, (December 8, 1945), p. 7.

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the method and the attitude. "Only by a cleansing greatness of spirit," he warns, "only by the sure possession of a scheme of values, can a writer treat these subjects without degrading both himself and the spectator."¹

If he (the artist) is not to betray his art as well as his humanity, he must not think that nausea and vomit are the ultimate realities of our time...The artist too, has the responsibility to be sane, the duty to be whole and balanced, the obligation to overcome or transform the demonic and to release the more human and divine elements in his soul.²

It would seem, then, that if Mumford does not speak of actual moral judgments he is concerned with what might be called a moral climate for art, an atmosphere which will give a tone to art which will harmonize with what Mumford holds to be the ultimate realities. There is nothing that man can become involved in which will not in some way be determined by the wholeness which is sought for man.

If one is to speak of the whole man, ultimate realities, and ideal values relative to art as Mumford does,

¹L. Mumford, "The Passive Barbarian," Atlantic, Vol. 166, (Sept. 1940), p. 275.

²L. Mumford, "Irrational Elements In Art and Politics," New Republic, Vol. 130, (April 12, 1954), p. 18.

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one must inevitably speak of principles, of sources of integrity, of reality, of value. It is precisely here that the general philosophy of Mumford must be injected into the picture. Otherwise his esthetics will become a matter of taste. Art is not free to pursue its own course independent of everything else. It is bound by principles without losing its integrity because Mumford sees it independent in its own realm but bound by certain rules.

"Without a scale of values," he says, "the choice between cannibalism and vegetarianism becomes only a matter of taste."¹

The ultimate question which must be asked, then, is what is the ultimate measure of art? Mumford's answer would come unhesitatingly: man!²

"There are no intrinsic goods apart from the purposes and needs of men: only in relation to him do some goods become absolute."³ And if man searches for absolutes

¹Quoted by E. Duff, op. cit., p. 39.

²L. Mumford, "On Judging Art," New Republic, (March 20, 1929), p. 130.

³L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 127.

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or pretends to find them anyplace else, it will only be because absolutes have been projected by man because of certain fears of disruption prevailing in society.¹

The role of art in society becomes a significant problem because art has a definite and practical role to play in the social development of man. It is not something that may or may not concern us as if art is something that may or may not become a problem in society. Art is inevitable if man is to properly mature. And whereas man is the ultimate measure of things, art must contribute to his proper development.

What becomes an inescapable fact, then, in Mumford's theory of esthetics is that he must insist that any theory concerning the philosophy of art cannot escape the general philosophy which he holds. If man is to become the measure of all things, man must become the measure of art and the standards used to judge this art will be directly influenced by what Mumford considers to be the end of man.

This does not mean that art does not have an integrity of its own. Mumford would insist upon this. But it

¹L. Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 42.

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does mean that while it may in a sense keep its individual dignity it must be seen as a pattern of many needs which make man whole and it is this wholeness which matters.

Mumford's theory of art must fit into his goal for man, a wholeness which is lost in the hazy, inscrutable future of tomorrow when we must find a new integration. Then tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...

ART AND TECHNICS

If Lewis Mumford has been an influence on the present criticism in America, and this seems to be a fact which can hardly be disputed, perhaps he has raised his voice to its highest pitch and attracted the greatest attention by warning America of a divorce which has caused a drastic injury to the personality of modern man. The separation of art and technics has resulted in cultural chaos, but it has also set man the maker and man the artist in opposition, when there is a need for both to grow together.

Mumford does not deny that if man is to develop properly he will need both art and technics. Indeed, he has pointed out that it is sometimes difficult to say exactly where work leaves off and art begins. Drama, he

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holds, is in origin, the significant rehearsal of the thing done, the planting of and the gathering of harvest, for example. Song and dance rhythmically recapture the ecstasy of courtship or martial triumph; painting and sculpture visualize in more perfect composure the forms of men and landscapes. To live is to experience art.¹

Yet Mumford fears that today man has actually created a machine-conditioned society of which he has become victim, one which has witnessed man relinquishing much of his personality in order to worship at the shrine of the machine.

Mumford holds that the machine has actually been developing for the past seven centuries, long before the change that took place during the industrial revolution. He believes that men had become mechanized long before they perfected complicated machines to express their new bent and interest. The will-to-organize had appeared once more in the monastery and the army and the counting house before it finally manifested itself in the factory. Behind all the

¹L. Mumford, "Art and the Machine Age," Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. 5, (Sept. 8, 1928), p. 102.

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great material invention of the last century and a half was not merely a long internal development of technics, but also a change of mind.¹

"The machine age came forth as the new demiurge that was to create a new heaven and a new earth: at the least as a new Moses that was to lead a barbarous humanity into the promised land."²

Mumford does not hold, of course, that man has not realized marked benefits from the use of the machine, but he does maintain that these fruits have cost man a price that has been too high to pay. It has caused him to forfeit something of himself and has kept him from developing a part of his personality which only the arts could enrich, because in giving so much attention to technical development, he has had to often ignore a proportionate need for cultural development.

Though we have succeeded brilliantly in the transmutation of matter, far beyond the wildest dreams of the alchemist, who would pretend that we have any equivalent success in the transformation of man? Or

¹L. Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 58.

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rather, we are succeeding fabulously, provided only that we accept the machine as the final goal and sole beneficiary of the transformation. During the last few centuries, Western man has become more standardized, more regimented, more dependent upon the machine's care of him; while machines have become more intelligent, more independent, more self-governing, in a word, more life-like and more ominously human. But if they are merely exchanging roles, who will be the gainer? Certainly not man.¹

If it be objected that the machine has given man more time for leisure and consequently more time for developing himself culturally, Mumford is quick to point out that because he has separated himself more and more from personal accomplishment in work by the tools he uses, he has become less inclined to seek the cultural.

He contends that labor saving devices have but permitted the average man to know an abyss of boredom that only the privileged classes knew in earlier civilizations. The minor initiatives and choices, the opportunity to use one's wits have disappeared from the daily tasks of the common man. Big organizations now think for him. The present

¹L. Mumford, "Transformation of Man," Catholic World, November, 1956.

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work is simply not humanly interesting.¹ Further, much of the leisure time that the individual does have is spent in an unhealthy absorption of the process of mechanization.²

"In his esthetic consciousness, the medieval craftsman, even the dumb peasant, lived on a higher level than his modern counterpart," Mumford maintains.³

He recalls that Samuel Pepys, a man who in many respects was not uncommon in his time, selected the servants in his household partly on the basis of their having a good voice. They were expected to sit down with the family in the evening to enjoy domestic signing. This was to be considered in its own way as important as any activity in the house. Such activity was considered to be part of the proper development of any man. People did not just want to listen to music. They wished to produce it within their modest capacities.

Yet in our time, Mumford points out, people are interested in listening passively to music, wandering in a

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 14.

²L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 6.

³L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 150.

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park listening to a portable radio, not daring to sing or even hum.¹

Mechanization has affected not only the personality of man but has even victimized the arts themselves. Any hope for a proper use of the machine and a re-evaluation of the arts will demand that a new culture be established which can take cognizance of man's totality and the importance of a properly integrated society. The effects are to be seen around us; the hope lies in a future that can offer a new revival in the arts. It can also bring a further dehumanization of the arts.

In the early history of mankind, Mumford holds, much effort was directed to the production of the artefact.

One has only to compare the cave paintings of the Aurignacian hunters with tools that they used to see that their technical instruments, even if eked out with wood and bone instruments that have disappeared, were extremely primitive, while their symbolic arts were so advanced that many of them stand on par, in economy of line and esthetic vitality, with the work of the Chinese painters of the Sung dynasty.²

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 39.

He further points out that a civilization of great complexity arose in Egypt and Peru before the invention of the wheel as a means of transportation. If man were predominantly the tool-using animal, he contends, this long backwardness would be hard to account for.¹

But in our time even a philosopher so concerned with creativity as Henri Bergson, suggested that we should drop the Linnaean classification of man and call him not Homo Sapiens but Homo Faber.²

Mumford also recognizes that the arts and technics have at times in the past enjoyed periods of effective unity. He cites the fifth century Greeks who used the word technics to apply to both fine arts and utilitarian practices, to both stonecutting and sculpture. It is as if men then believed that pure making and decoration should be considered together and vital to the development of man.³

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 40.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid., p. 32.

...for in actual history the development of language, art and politics are as early as technological developments that secure man's physical existence: in society, these aspects are organically related and neither precedes the other. Marx was correct in saying that all of man's ideal creations have a material basis: he was wrong in confusing "basis" with "cause," and he was doubly wrong in not realizing that all of man's material achievements have, likewise, an ideal basis.¹

Mumford readily admits that the arts have greatly benefitted from technology and points to the nineteenth century and cites the specific example of the art of music. He recalls that the little clavichord became the piano, that instruments were scientifically calibrated, and even new ones invented.²

But with the one-sided development of the machine, even the "good fairy who presides over machines" did not forestall the curse that accompanied the overemphasis of technics. Our inner life, Mumford believes, has become impoverished--in our factories and throughout our society. The automatic machine tends to replace the person, it

¹L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 331.

²L. Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 203

anesthetizes every part of his personality and will not easily conform to mechanical needs.¹

The reaction of the predominance of the role of technics can be seen in the arts themselves. The artist has been driven to cultivate his inhumanity, or to ally himself with that part of our life which we call practical.²

By our preoccupation with the practical we often condemn the artist, who wishes to gain our attention, to sheer exhibitionism.

The Salvador Dalis and Ezra Pounds are obvious examples of artists who use infantile means to recapture the normal status of an artist in a balanced society. And just because the world is now unwilling to meet the artist half way, it either forces him to make his secret more impenetrable, causing him to invent a private language, even a private theology...or its rejection has the effect of turning his love into hate. In that mood, the artist spoils the possibility of union by committing symbolically, acts of sadistic violence, defying his fellows to have anything to do with him...³

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 10

²Ibid., p. 31.

³Ibid., p. 30.

Mumford holds that what was masked as strict functionalism during the last generation was actually a sort of psychological if not a religious fetishism, an attempt to make the Dynamo instead of the Virgin serve as an object of love and devotion. Since both the true functionalist and the fetishist have used the same kind of technical means, it sometimes is difficult to distinguish one from the other. With a little further acquaintance with the building itself one readily discovers whether it actually stands up well and works well, or whether it is only an esthetic simulacrum of structures that do such things. In short, those who devaluated the human personality, and in particular subordinated feeling and emotion to pure intellect, compensated for their error by overvaluing the machine. In a meaningless world of sensations and physical forces, the machine represented the purposes of life.¹

So that much of modern art now accepts the fashion of idealizing mechanical order as the accepted academic form.²

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 122.

²Ibid., p. 108.

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Even the fact that the machine has permitted a much greater distribution of art is not always seen as a blessing by Mumford. The machine has been compared to the Sorcerer's Apprentice which floods us with a series of images far beyond our capacities to digest or enjoy. "Expressive art, just as in proportion to its value and significance, must be precious, difficult, occasional, in a word aristocratic."¹

It is better, Mumford feels, to look at a real work of art only once a year or even in a lifetime, and really see it, feel it, assimilate it, than to be content with seeing its reproduction daily.²

Mumford seeks to remind man that the function of work is to permit him a means of livelihood, to allow him to enlarge his capacities to create.³ Yet he finds himself, this modern man, in an age which regards scientific knowledge and its production methods as absolutes.⁴ Yet, if modern man is to regain his integrity, we must be ready, if

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 108.

²Ibid.

³L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 125.

⁴L. Mumford, Values For Survival, p. 81.

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necessary, to destroy the assembly line, in order to re-assemble the human personality.¹

Mumford's basic assumption is that life has become increasingly split up into unrelated compartments, whose only form of order and interrelationship comes through fitting into the automatic organizations and mechanisms that in fact govern our daily existence. We have lost the essential capacity of self-governing persons. Though we have vastly augmented our powers, through the high development of technics, we have not developed the capacity to control those powers.

Consequently, our technic has become compulsive and tyrannical, since it is not treated as a subordinate instrument of life. At the same time, our art has become either increasingly empty of content or downright irrational. The images of the abstract painters do justice to the blankness and disorganization of our lives; the images of the surrealists reflect the nightmare of existence in an age of catastrophes. If they are not so pure as forms of art as the admirers contend, they at least tell us more about the

¹L. Mumford, Condition of Man, p. 192.

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current state of affairs than the radio or the newspapers. Such paintings are of value as documents, even if they are sometimes worthless as art.¹

Any consideration of the end of art, therefore, must take cognizance of the fact of its role in society and, in our time, the threat art faces from technics. If society, and consequently man, is to attain a wholeness which is necessary for proper development, it must recognize that the role of art must not be usurped by a lust for the benefits of a technic dominated society.

Briefly Mumford's theory concerning the end of art can be summarized as follows:

Mumford suggests that art has ends which will involve both the needs of the individual and society. So far as the individual is concerned, art should enable him both to communicate his inner states as a creator, as it will also enable him to enrich his personality as a perceiver.

He further suggests that art will be the mirror of the intellectual, moral, and social values of an age. The

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, pp. 36, 37.

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majority of artists will inevitably produce this kind of art. There will be others who will diagnose the ills of a period with their art. A third group of creative men will be men independent of their time, men who aspire to lead others to higher good through their art. They will have values which will transcend any age.

Mumford does not feel that there can be a direct moral judgement made concerning a work of art, but he insists art must be produced in a morally good climate if it is to be good art. This climate cannot be divorced from a general philosophy, stated or implied. For Mumford, this will be a man-centered society, humanistic in its roots.

Finally, in our own age, he sees technics as a tremendous challenge to society's artistic and cultural life in general.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EVALUATION OF MUMFORD'S POSITION

CONCERNING THE END OF ART

Lewis Mumford contends: "The ultimate measure of art is man. There are no intrinsic goods apart from his needs."¹

St. Thomas has said: "All the arts and sciences exist to perfect man."²

It would be easy to assume, after reading the above quotations, that there could be a great deal of similarity between the end of art as proposed by St. Thomas and as suggested by Mumford. And indeed there are similarities--but not basic ones. There are many points of agreement concerning the relationship between art and the individual and art and society, but the answer to the important questions concerning the principles underlying these relationships must leave Mumford and a Thomist separated by a wide gulf. It

¹L. Mumford, Conduct of Life, p. 127.

²"Omnes autem scientiae et artes, ordinantur in unum, scilicet ad hominis perfectionem, quae et ejus beatitudo." In XII Met., Proemium in Meta.

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will be as wide as the separation of a universe made to the image and likeness of man, and one made to the image and likeness of God.

As was suggested in the last chapter, when one considers the end of art he must inescapably become involved in principles which involve more than art. He must ask the eternal questions which have to do with the nature of man and with his purpose. Mumford makes his position clear. He unfurls the flag of humanism and mounts atop a fort built from the eclectic stones he has gathered from the quarries of modern thinkers, especially the one of Kant. It is here that the Thomist must ultimately do battle with him.

This does not mean that the good in Mumford must be ignored. Indeed it must be recognized that he has contributed much to the contemporary scene. He has commented clearly and accurately on the role of art in history; he has been a conscience in an age where conscience is not expected to become involved in art.

But considering the good that comes from Mumford and accepting it gratefully as one must accept truth from any source, this still does not alter the fact that although

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some of his conclusions are acceptable, his basic principles cannot be accepted. For if they were accepted, it seems one could draw conclusions from them that would not only be different from the ones Mumford has drawn, but actually at variance with them. For if man is the measure, if he is the ultimate, is not any reason that he may offer concerning a position on the end of art the reason. What man is right? What reason better?

In the following exposition concerning the end of art which must be the answer to Mumford, an effort will be made to incorporate some of his opinions so as to illustrate the fact that they are the same or close to being the same as observations and opinions which a Thomist can hold. Indeed it is hoped that it can be demonstrated that it is only within the framework of Thomism that such opinions can be properly explained.

INTRINSIC END OF ART

Because Lewis Mumford usually deals with principles in a general way, declining to make distinctions that would be important to proper philosophical development, it seems necessary to point out here that Mumford ignores many points

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concerning the end of art that would demand the attention of a Thomist.

It is obvious that Mumford contends art can be best described as a means of communication of the subjective states of an artist, states which will elicit a subjective response from a perceiver. The artefact considered as a symbol receives little attention as an objective fact. Its function as a sign seems to completely overshadow the fact that a work of art is a thing which will evoke a certain response from an individual, a response which will be distinct from other ways of knowing and enjoying.

It becomes important, then, that the artefact be first examined with reference to the artist and the perceiver, as it is an object, a thing of beauty.

Traditionally, art has been defined as a right reason about a thing to be made.¹ It makes little difference whether what is made is a statue or a pair of shoes.

St. Thomas makes no distinction between fine arts and mechanical arts, but only between certain speculative arts, such as construction of fitting speech, correct

¹Sum. Theol., I-II, q. 57, a. 5.

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sylogisms, and the like, and those belonging to the practical intellect, requiring mechanical skill. The first, which he terms liberal, are really only arts in an analogical sense.¹ The servile or mechanical arts--which comprise the true arts such as painting, sculpture--include all things made.²

It is necessary, then, to recognize two things. Firstly, art, as a virtue, is before all intellectual and its activity consists in impressing an idea upon matter. It resides in the mind of the artist, as a quality.³

Secondly, "all art is concerned with coming into being...considering how something may come into being..."⁴

We may say, therefore, that while art is primarily a virtue of the mind, it is also concerned with skill and dexterity required of art; but while these manual operations

¹Sum. Theol., I-II, q. 57, a. 3., ad. 3.

²St. Thomas, in XII Meta. Liber 7, 1. 3. "Unde et illae solae artes liberales dicuntur, quae ad sciendum ordinantur; illa vero quae ordinantur ad aliquam utilitatem per actionem habendam, dicuntur mechanicae sive serviles."

³Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 8.

⁴Aristotle, Ethics, 1140a.

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are required, they are needed only to remove the impediments to the expression of the artist's idea. It does not produce the work.¹

Here a digression becomes important because implications inherent in the point just developed are important in judging art criticism today. For much of present day criticism is concerned with judging only the technique of an artist. (This is said recognizing that even technique will involve something of the intellectual virtue involved in art.) It is a problem which concerns Mumford.

One could speculate that the very notion of relativism which underlies much of modern art and the sciences arises from the idea that it is painful for men to think that any principle which is not their own is the measure of what they do. So history is interpreted in such a way that they make their own purposes the measure of everything else. Of course, it seems likely that the principle would never be stated in just this way because this seems proud and

¹Joannes a Sancto Thoma, Curs. Phil. Log. II, q. 1 a. 5, ed. Reiser, Turrin, 1820. "...non generat novam artem, sed tollit impedimentum exercitui ejus."

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even unsophisticated. So talk of relativism is substituted with the hope that it will hide the presumption.

Reflection upon what is actually judged in a work of today will better establish the point. It is the technique, the most relative principle in art which the critic evaluates. The concern is with how a work of art is done, seldom with what is done. How a painting is accomplished, the arrangement of its line and color, how the musician performs the composition, the dramatic device in creating a play--these are the points which are often held to be the soul of the art.

The acceptance that technique is the only element to be judged in a work of art completely ignores the fact that there is another element in a work of art to be judged and that is what is done. An acceptance of this fact demands, of course, a recognition of objectivity and essences, both of which are likely to be ignored in modern thought.

Eric Gill has seen the point clearly and commented:

If we put a painting of the Madonna in our art gallery it is not because the painter has succeeded in making a specially clear view of her significance but simply because he has succeeded in making a specially

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pleasing arrangement of the materials. A Raphael Madonna! But it is as a 'Raphael' that we honor it and not as a Madonna; for Raphael is, or was until recently, helped by the pundits to be particularly good at making pleasing arrangements and we are no longer concerned with meanings.¹

Strangely enough Lewis Mumford comments on the matter in such a way as to contradict his own philosophy. He criticizes Leonardo DaVinci for painting both his famous John the Baptist and Bacchus with identical faces. Mumford believes that the color and line of the paintings cannot be the only thing which should concern the artist and that the significance which should be seen in the face of John the Baptist and Bacchus can hardly be the same.

An example of a kind of moral principle can be deduced from the modern position that says art must be judged according to technique, how a work of art is done, and that what is done in a work cannot be judged according to artistic standards. Art is technique for these moderns. But men who delight in art according to this principle, have accepted this premise in moral doctrine, that power is

¹Eric Gill, "Art," Catholic Art Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1940), p. 6.

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the principle virtue. So that where, in traditional doctrine, each art takes its specification from its proper and proximate end, and all of these together manifest God as the End of ends, this modern principle would permit the arts to manifest, not God, but man. It becomes quite natural that those who maintain that art is technique are actually in a position to deny the ends of each art.

This position implies that an art does not have an ordination to one end as, for example, the end of medicine is health and not disease, although the physician in virtue of his art can bring about disease "artistically", and as the painter might be expected to produce the ugly with skill, although the beautiful is, in some way, the end of painting.

However, investigation reveals that this opinion rests on what is a truth, namely, that the same art has dominion over contraries.¹ So that disease may be said to be a contrary of medical art just as the ugly may be said to be a contrary of fine art. But such works are called artistic only as we precise from the proper end or object

¹St. Thomas, Com. Physics, Bk. II, 1. 5, 7.

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by which the art is specified. Thus, the end of medicine is to bring about health and save life. But, by the very art which gives him a knowledge of how to bring about these good ends, the doctor is still able to bring about disease. It is quite possible that a surgeon could use a particularly skillful technique in performing an abortion. But as a work of art it is not proper to medicine because the end of medicine, as has been said, is to save life.

Men are pleased by technique because they think that the function of art is to display the power of the artist. Yet men can only hold such an opinion when they believe that the human appetite is the ultimate principle determining what men should do. Actually this notion did not come about until the "freedom" of men in general and the artist in particular had been elevated to something of a first principle. For if man's freedom is an ultimate principle, unmeasured, that is, by anything else, then everything he does has as its end the manifestation of himself. In the same way, if one assume the existence of God, then everything in the universe is ordered to manifest Him.

The artist is, of course, free to make what works he pleases, as the human agent is free to do good or evil.

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But he is not free to determine what shall be the proper nature of the thing to be made, any more than the human agent is free to determine what is a good act. For in both the moral and the esthetic orders, what is to be done (not merely what can be done) has its roots in the proper object of the art (or of prudence) and in human nature itself.

Returning to our discussion concerning the production of a work of art, it seems that we can summarize what we have been saying by quoting Maritain:

...art concerns only the formal element in the operation, that is to say the regulation of the work by the mind. If the hand of the artist falters, if his tool proves inferior, if what he is working upon gives way, the defect thereby introduced into the result, into the eventus, in no way affects the art itself and is no evidence that the artist has fallen short of his art: as soon as the artist, in the act of judgement made by his intellect, determined the rule and proper disposition applicable to the particular case, no error, that is to say no misleading direction, occurred in him. The artist who has the habit of art and the quivering hand, produces an imperfect work but retains a faultless virtue.¹

What the artist seeks to do, then, is to symbolize in matter something which he feels is beautiful. It is his

¹Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 11.

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hope that the devotion that he has for making and the respect he has for his medium, will enable him to produce an artefact which will speak a universal language to his fellows.

This new being, like all created things, has as its intrinsic end the realization of its nature.¹ "Its intrinsic aim, the only aim worthy of it, is the beautiful, the conception and the expression of the beautiful."²

For St. Thomas this means that the beautiful object must possess "first, integrity or proportion, for defective things are for this reason ugly; secondly, due proportion or harmony; and, finally, clarity."³ And these three elements which St. Thomas says are necessary for beauty are intimately connected with being. Integrity or perfection,

¹M. DeWulf, *Art et Beauté*, p. 126. "Comme toute chose, elle a pour finalité interne la plénière réalisation de sa nature. Elle exprime le beau, comme le feu brûle, comme l'aumône soulage."

²Mercier, "Du Beau dans la nature et dans l'art," *Rev. Neo-Scol.*, Vol. I, p. 346. "Du beau dans la nature..."

³St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 39, a. 8. "Nam ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas, sive perfectio; (quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt), et debita proportio, sive consonantia; et iterum claritas; unde quae habent colorem nitidum, pulchra esse dicuntur."

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in its primary meaning, signifies being itself. Proportion concerns order to an end; clarity pertains to intelligibility and truth.¹

These qualities, then, will exist in each work of art, enhancing matter which has enabled the beauty to be. This is the intrinsic end of the artefact, existing because of the artistic virtue of the creator, but existing now as an object with a nature of its own, real and distinct.

There seems little question but that Mumford would disagree with the important point that the work of art has this significant end of being beautiful. Too much stress must be put on the subjective for him to dwell on the objective role of the art object. His concern is more with the experience of the artist and the perceiver to which attention must now be turned.

EXTRINSIC END OF ART

M. DeWulf has pointed out that when one begins an inquiry into the extrinsic ends of art he faces a complex

¹T. C. Donlan, "The Beauty of God," The Thomist, Vol. 10, (1947), p. 212.

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problem, for he will be able to fix no limitation to the subordination that the will of man has the power of assigning to his works.¹ It is, of course, possible to see a work of art having as many purposes as an artist would intend. But for all practical purposes there can be a limitation of purpose by accepting what has been generally held by men, what is particularly held by Mumford, and to evaluate these positions.

There are, of course, entirely too many schools of thought in aesthetics to enumerate the distinct ends of even a portion of the number. There are those like Tolstoi who have held that the function of art is to inspire men to reflect something of the kingdom of God here upon earth by inspiring charity in the hearts of men. This is to be

¹M. DeWulf, Art et Beauté, p. 126. "A côté de leur finalité interne, les choses ont, ou, peuvent avoir, d'autres finalités, superposées à la première en vertu d'une volonté de l'homme, et que, de chef, on appelle externes, extrinsèques (finis operantis). C'est de ces finalités étrangères que se préoccupe le problème de la mission de l'art. Problème complexe, car on ne peut fixer de limite aux subordinations que la volonté de l'homme à le pouvoir d'assigner à ses oeuvres."

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done by transmitting from the realm of truth that well-being which can come from Christian love.¹

There are those like the British critic Clive Bell who say that one of the purposes of art is to free men from the entanglements of religious dogma. For him it is art which is a religion, which will give men an inspiration by which to live.²

There are others like John Ducasse who maintain that only hedonistic values can be the measure of art. Some agree with Henry James who believed that the chief end of art is to be interesting, a few with Zola who believed that art must be gloomy because in the human scene there is more filth than flowers.³

However, if one should seek a common principle in which all these theories, and indeed practically all aesthetic theories, agree, it seems that they all agree at least in this that art is meant to give pleasure.

¹Leo N. Tolstoi, What is Art, Scribner's, 1904, p. 184.

²Clive Bell, Art, Chatto & Windus, 1921, p. 277.

³James Kobel, "Literature and Morality," Report Twenty-Second Annual Meeting Franciscan Educational Conference, 1940, p. 266.

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Certainly Aristotle would agree with this.¹ And unquestionably the most quoted statement of St. Thomas' concerning the beautiful is that it is "that which pleases upon being perceived."²

Actually, St. Thomas' words are a description of the effect of beauty rather than the definition of its essence. And yet it is a comment that is more directly related to the fine arts than other references to art, for other references are concerned with art in general. The Angelic Doctor's words are a clue to the problems which must be solved to have a proper understanding of the extrinsic ends of art. The pleasure of art must be distinguished from other pleasures; the objectivity of art must be discussed; and the likes and dislikes of perceivers explained in some way.

For it seems inaccurate to simply dismiss the matter by saying pleasure is the end of art. For this would leave the end of art vague and would permit all sorts of poor art to masquerade as truly great works because their

¹Aristotle, Metaphysics, 981b, 982b; Politics, 1339b.

²St. Thomas, Sum. Theol. I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1; I-II q. 27, a. 1. "...id quod visum placet."

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creator could point to the fact that they perhaps had pleased some people. Yet what seems to be more important for our purpose here is to see that if we are to understand the end of art properly we must have the notion of pleasure more specified as well as the nature of the artefact which gives rise to the pleasure.

A very simple act of reflection will reveal that unless our notion of pleasure is more specified we will not be able to distinguish the end of art from other disciplines or even our sense appetites. For it can at once be said that a man may derive pleasure from eating a steak, as well as delighting in the contemplation of a mathematical principle or a philosophical axiom.

For Mumford it does not seem that the pleasure arising from a work of art is of a particular kind. Perhaps his position can best be described as being similar to one expressed by I. A. Richards:

When we look at a picture, or read a poem, or listen to music, we are not doing something quite unlike what we were doing on our way to the gallery or when we dressed in the morning. The fashion in which the experience is caused is different, and as a rule the

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experience is more complex and, if we are successful, more unified. But our activity is not of a fundamentally different kind.¹

To begin with it seems that reflection upon what happens when a person enjoys a work of art indicates that the pleasure involved does not evolve from one factor. So that in the very beginning we must see that actually the end of art may very well be concerned with two principles from which pleasure flows.

In the first place, pleasure seems to begin in our very contemplation of a beautiful work. "The beautiful is that which is the source of pleasure by its very apprehension."² At the same time we are aware that our passions are affected by a work of art.

The distinction between philosophical and artistic contemplation may be seen from what has been said concerning the matter of fine arts. (This was done in the chapter on imitation.) For the artistic form, for example, of painting, is embodied in the arrangement of colors and lines.

¹I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, Kegan, Trench, Trubner, London, 1926, p. 15.

²St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I-II, Q. 27, a. 1.

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What is contemplated is the object as it is in reality, as identified with the substance which permits it to be. Philosophical contemplation, on the other hand, is of forms which certainly exist in reality but as abstracted from this matter in which it adheres.

For although an image is present in philosophical contemplation, as the condition of human thought, the object is actually conceived in its immateriality. The philosophical contemplation is of the universal, not the individual. "To the reason triangularity is a more congenial object than a triangle."¹

Therefore, while philosophical contemplation is of the universal, artistic contemplation would seem to be of the individual in some sense, since it does not precise from the sensible sign of the individual. Yet artistic contemplation is not of the individual as a real and actually existing entity; for the real individual, Peter, is not a work of human art. Nevertheless, what we must say is that what is contemplated in a work of fine art is the

¹Thomas Gilby, Poetic Experience, Sheed and Ward, 1934, p. 6.

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likeness of an individual; for it is in the individual that we find the sort of images produced by the artist.

Actually it seems possible to speculate that the impulsion to fine art arises from the very imperfection of human speculative knowledge. For philosophic science gives us the power to resolve conclusions to their first principles. The art of science, then, is a certain motion of the mind inasmuch as we cannot attain principles, conclusions and their relation in a single act. Yet, to do this would, clearly, be a more perfect way of knowing. In fact, as the habit of science becomes more perfect it approaches, but never reaches, this single act. This is why a skilled mathematician can lead a beginner to believe he has "skipped" steps in a problem.

Speculative science, then, not only relinquishes the singular because of the abstraction involved, but it also forfeits a mode of knowing which is more perfect. Of course, this must be understood as to how an object is known; it still remains that the knowledge of universal essence is the most perfect for man in the order of nature. As a way of knowing, the intuitive is more perfect than the discursive; and the intellect as it operates through

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sense works in this way. Thus, if an individual sees a friend, or even his picture, he grasps all the things he admires in that single image, not in a prolonged discourse on his virtues. This intuitive mode, that of the intellect operating in and through sense, is the mode proper to fine art.¹ It is more perfect than the discursive mode of knowing, not because it is sensible, in this it is less perfect, but as it is intuitive, as apprehending a multitude of perfections in a single act. And thus we see that artistic knowing, with respect to its contemplative purpose, attains a special intelligibility of the singular.

When we reason discursively there is a deliberation involved, but the esthetic experience is spontaneous.

"Ordinary rational activity is within our power to produce and control. It is considered and measured, not

¹J. Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 19. "The beautiful is what gives joy, not all joy, but joy in knowledge; not the joy peculiar to the act of knowing, but a joy superabounding and overflowing from such an act because of the object known. If a thing exalts and delights the soul by the lone fact of its being given to the intuition of the soul, it is good to apprehend, it is beautiful."

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unconfined and flowing. There may be satisfaction in pondered thought, but not ecstasy."¹

Once the thing is known discursively, a certain satisfaction can be had because of this knowledge. But with the beautiful there is a joy upon the immediate perception of the beautiful, for "the beautiful is that which gives joy, not all joy but joy in knowledge; the joy peculiar to the act of knowing, but a joy superabounding and overflowing from such an act because of the object known...."²

So there will be a certain joy springing from the artistic imitation, an imitation which secures an object most-perfectly conformed to human cognition. For, as Aristotle pointed out, men delight in imitation because they are creatures of reason.³ It is actually by a certain act of reason that we apprehend an imitation, since it bespeaks a relation to what is imitated, is unintelligible apart from what it imitates.

¹Thomas Gilby, Poetic Experience, p. 6.

²J. Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 23.

³Aristotle, Poetics, 1448b.

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Attention can now be turned to the relationship of the fine arts to the beautiful, for a proper understanding of this relationship seems to be necessary to a proper understanding of the nature of the end of art.

As has been pointed out it seems that there will be something of a general agreement with St. Thomas' contention that the beautiful is that which pleases upon being perceived. It is evident that when men speak of the beautiful they do so with reference to an object, as if the beauty is always to be clearly understood to be in the object.

Yet when the different theories concerning the notion of beauty are viewed, most propose the theory that beauty is something relative. (Certainly this is Mumford's position.) It is suggested that beauty does not really exist in the object but consists in the relation of an object to the one contemplating it. It seems necessary, then, to explain the notion of relation and yet to hold fast to the fact that the beautiful is in the objective order.

Experience seems to establish the fact that beauty has a relation to the one contemplating it. And St. Thomas

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insists upon this relationship, as has been stated above. For if the beautiful is that which pleases, precisely as it is beautiful, not as it exists or is good or true, then it seems that beauty entails, and that in its very essence, the notion of relation. In this respect it is one with the good and the true. For we mean by the true that which exists as an object of the intellect; by the good we mean that which is the object of desire.

For a thing to be in rerum natura, its form must exist in a physical mode of existence; to be known as true, (by any mind but the mind of God) its form must possess an intentional mode of existence; to be loved as good, its form must have a tendential mode of existence...; may we therefore conclude that, to be admired as beautiful, the form of the thing beautiful must exist in a special mode of existence which may perhaps be called an aesthetic mode?¹

The beautiful is that whose very contemplation is a delight. The form by which a beautiful thing pleases when it is seen does not consist in the relation to the one seeing, as those who would hold a strict relativistic position would maintain, any more than the truth consists in an

¹G. B. Phelan, "Beauty In Nature and Art," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1935, p. 177.

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analogous relation. But relation is formally constitutive of one and the other.

Of course many suggest that beauty must be entirely relative because this is the only way that the great diversity in taste in artistic matters can be explained.

However, this would ignore the true definition of beauty and the relation just spoken of. The beautiful is that which can please and this does not mean that it will necessarily please everyone. A mathematical truth can very well be known but this does not mean that all will actually know it. If a man is to penetrate this mathematical truth, in the ordinary course of events he will have a proper formation in mathematics. So too, a certain ordination will be necessary in the esthetic order. The cognitive faculties must be capable of penetrating the artistic form, besides the existence of a connaturality between the work and the moral nature of the viewer which was spoken of in an earlier chapter. It was also pointed out that as men are malformed in their artistic taste, they will formulate false doctrines of art.

So we can see that a work of art has something of an objective beauty about it, a beauty which will be

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revealed to the perceiver in a unique way of knowing. Furthermore, as was suggested in the chapter on imitation, while this beauty springs from the form imposed upon matter by the artist in his attempt to imitate his idea which is based upon the universals which he has constructed from the world of reality, his art, then, becomes measured in some sense by the world of creation. It is from this world that the artist gets his notion of order. It is from this world that he comes to know a reality which he must interpret but never deny.

The artist, then, cannot insist that his freedom as an artist is actually a license to do what he pleases. He is certainly not free to distort the real or lie about it. He is not to become the measure of creation, determining the objective world as the scientist does with his measurements.

So because it is subjected to the mind of a man, the law of imitation, of resemblance, remains constant for our art, but in a sense purified. It must transpose the secret rules of being in the manner of producing the work, and it must be faithful and exact, in transforming reality according to the laws governing the work to be done...What it makes must resemble not the material appearances of things, but some of the hidden significances

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whose iris God alone sees glittering on the neck of His creatures--and for that very reason it will always resemble the created mind which in its own way discerned those invisible colours.¹

In other words, the artist is not simply free to do what he pleases. He is bound in some measure by the world which God has created, the world which is not copied in his art but which is the source of his imitation and which presents to him the realities whose significance he tries to interpret with the light of his individual talent.

Any art, therefore, which proposes that man is the measure of its principles seems to miss one of the fundamental purposes of art.²

¹J. Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 96.

²E. Gilson emphasizes this point in discussing the revolt in modern poetry which has ignored the true source of art: "Poetry has attempted to achieve the purity of its own essence by expelling from itself all that belongs to that other essence prose. In order to be pure of prose, it has purified words, first from their visual meaning, then from all meaning and having thus become senseless it is not beginning to wonder if, after all, the essence of poetry does not include another one, that of intelligibility... Since what makes it to be an art is what the artist himself adds to nature, why would not painting eliminate the whole contribution of nature and keep only what it owes to art... where it achieves its nonrepresentative purity... pure poetry dissolves into an impure verbal music." Being and Some Philosophers, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1952, p210.

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From what has been said in the chapter on imitation and in this chapter it seems that the first step concerning the end of art can be summarized in this way: Pleasure arises in one in the esthetic experience from the contemplation of a beautiful object. This contemplation is unique, a distinct way of knowing, one which involves the entire cognitive faculties. The object itself possesses certain qualities which when related to the perceiver will evoke a pleasurable response. The artist in creating his work imitates his own idea but an idea which is an imitation of reality or, more properly, the significance of the reality he knows.

Imitation, properly understood, imitation which gives rise to an esthetic experience seems to be an end of art. But is this imitation and the pleasure it evokes the only end?

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Besides having the contemplative end of which we have just spoken, it seems that art has a further end in that it inevitably has an effect on the passions. This is a fact which is clearly borne out in all esthetic experience.

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Says Aristotle: "Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of action and life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality."¹

Maritain continues to develop the idea by pointing out that this concept of action is an analogous concept, which is valid in the whole field of art.² It is not peculiar to drama or even to poetry in its limited sense, but even to painting and the other arts as well. "Action is a quality immanent in the work. The work does not only exist, it acts, it does."³

This action, of course, Aristotle recognized to involve the passions as well as the intellect.⁴ And even the senses must be recognized to be involved in the aesthetic experience.

¹Aristotle, Poetics, 1450a.

²J. Maritain, Creative Intuition In Art and Poetry, Pantheon, 1953, p. 358.

³Ibid., p. 357.

⁴Aristotle, Poetics, 1453a, b.

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The senses enjoy whatever is suitably proportioned to them by means of the pleasure principle that agreement always produces pleasure, and disagreement its opposite displeasure. Sense derives pleasure from things duly proportioned as being similar to itself; for sense having its own members and being in a way measure and proportion, is a kind of reason.¹

Therefore, "artistic beauty...must address itself to the eye, the ear and the imagination as well as to the mind."²

ART AND SOCIETY

Besides having extrinsic ends which involve the individual, it seems that the influence of the arts upon society is a fact which cannot be ignored. Mumford is especially aware of this fact. He insists time and time again that the art of a given age will in many respects reflect the age itself; for him, art will often be a mirror held up by the creator in which a people will be permitted to view itself by understanding its aesthetic pleasures.

¹E. Chapman, St. Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty, Sheed & Ward, 1939, p. 3. Also see: St. Thomas, Sum. Theol. I, q. 5, a. 4.

²L. Callahan, A Theory of Esthetics, p. 84.

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There are a number of writers in the scholastic tradition who would certainly agree that a society will find itself and its idea of the good reflected in works of art.

St. Cyprian, third century Bishop of Carthage, commented: "The mimes are our instructors in infamy, and each spectator delights to see repeated on the stage what he has done at home, or hear what he may do on return."¹

St. Augustine points to the opinions of ancient Romans on this matter and refers to Cicero's work De Republica, in which Scipio, one of the interlocutors says, "The lewdness of comedy could never have been suffered by audiences, unless the customs of society had previously sanctioned the same lewdness."²

Mortimer Adler has pointed out that the popular theme of the Restoration comedy was l'amour. It usually made fun of the dullness and sobriety of matrimony by magnifying the sport and cleverness of the adulterer and the rake.

¹St. Cyprian, Treatise I On The Grace of God, Addressed to Donatus, Library of the Fathers, Oxford, 1890, Vol. III, p. 6.

²St. Augustine, City of God, Fathers of the Church Inc., II, 9.

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The dramatists claimed, in defending themselves, that it was necessary for them to cater to the tastes of their audience. If a play failed to exhibit the antics of the engaging but licentious fop, it failed to succeed in a theater patronized predominantly by the upper classes, a society of fops and dandies.¹

Fulton J. Sheen has offered an opinion which though not scientifically exposed, merits consideration in that it provokes reflection:

In that period of Grecian history, for example, when Plato and Socrates and Aristotle were giving eternal truths to men, the clear lines of the Parthenon and the airy Ionic of the Erechtheion served as so many purified incarnations of their thought. Closer to our own times, when Rousseau set loose his exaltation of the ego and theromanticism of sense-passion, artists were found drinking at his fountain the shallow drafts of hatred for academic tradition, a license of inspiration, and a glorification of fleshy sensibilities. And now in our own day, what is the philosophical inspiration of Futurism and its wild love of novelty and "absolute commencements", motion for motion's sake, but the thought of Henri Bergson? What is the philosophical inspiration of modern art but a subjectivism introduced by Kant and his school, the heritage of which is a belief that no work of art is of itself beautiful, but that

¹M. J. Adler, Art and Prudence, Longmans, Green, 1937, p. 62.

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it is our psychic or mental states that are beautiful, either because we project these states to the object, which is the Einfuhlung theory, or because they harmonize with the tastes and commandments of society, which is the sociological theory, or because they produce interesting reactions, which is the pragmatic theory?¹

At a time when the precision of the machine was a source of wonder, when men saw progress fulfilled in the natural, they could even see God centered in nature:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you there, root and all, in my hand.
Little flower--but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.²

When men began to look to time for salvation, "not the time of common sense; but that lived, experienced, intuited flux, in which the subject and object became one like the poet and flower in the crannied wall," in which time is identified with destiny, Gertrude Stein could write:

¹F. J. Sheen, Old Errors and New Labels, Garden City, 1931, p. 120.

²F. J. Sheen, Philosophy of Religion, Appelton, Century, Crofts, New York, 1948, p. 49.

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I wrote a story called Melanchtha. In that there was a constant recurring and beginning, there was a marked direction of being in the present, although naturally I have been accustomed to past, present, and future, and why, because the composition of a prolonged present is a natural composition in a world as it has been these thirty years. I created then a prolonged present, naturally I knew nothing of a continuous present, but it came naturally to me to make one, it was simple it was clear to me and nobody knows why it was done like that, I did not know myself although naturally to me it was natural.¹

Perhaps one of the most exhaustive works ever accomplished which aims at revealing the type of art preferred in eras and countries, P. A. Sorokin's Social and Cultural Dynamics, proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Mumford's contention concerning artistic spirit of certain ages, is true.² Sorokin examines our one hundred thousand works of art and concludes that a great percentage reflect the spirit of the age.

Any explanation of the facts as they stand would seem to demand that, in general, it seems a principle can be formulated which holds that men will be pleased, in some

¹F. J. Sheen, Philosophy of Religion, p. 93.

²P. A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, Vol. I, American Book, 1937.

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way, by an art which is connatural to them. Both experience and reason seem to bear this out.¹

God could be pleased by seeing His beloved Son, transfigured.² An adulterer could hardly rejoice in a play in which the virtue of chastity was portrayed as delightful. A play written for a group of thieves would best find success by being about a clever thief.

Thus, the history of art as seen from many viewpoints, shows the connection between artistic and moral orders. Men are actually going to be pleased by what is in conformity with themselves, by works which portray what they think should happen. For it is not the photographic in art which delights men, it is the artist's interpretation of reality. So that an artist not only suggests that this is the way that things are in a work of art, but rather that this is the way that things should be.

¹"For as their enjoyment is in excess, they seek an art which produces the excess of enjoyment; and, if they are not able to supply their pleasures by the art or getting wealth, they try other arts, using in turn every faculty in a manner contrary to nature." Aristotle, Poetics, 1258a.

²Matthew, 17:5.

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Of course, the above suggestions must be understood as generalizations which are contingent upon several things. It must be assumed that the perceiver has intellect sufficient to penetrate the matter. Secondly, it must be remembered that there can never be greater certitude than the matter itself. There can, therefore, never be any exact explanation as to why people like what they do in art. Taste, like genius, is partially inexplicable.

The fact that art of an age will usually cater to an age is, of course, a fact which Mumford readily admits, but he is also quick to insist that art should have an ennobling effect. He sees clearly the social end it has. This, too, is something with which the scholastic tradition would hold.

Plato was very conscious of the role of art in society. (Many feel he was over-conscious.)¹

We must order and compel our poets to print images of noble character in their poems, if we allow them to write at all, or must we not instruct our other craftsmen too, and prevent

¹Catherine Rau argues convincingly that Plato has been often misinterpreted in the last two or three centuries and suggests his theories must be understood in their context to be properly evaluated. See: Art and Society, Smith, 1951.

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them from exposing the debauchery and meanness and vulgarity of an evil nature either in figure or buildings or in any other work of art? And if they cannot comply, they must be forbidden to work among us. For otherwise our young rulers, nourished on images of vice, as on some poisonous pasture, nibbling and browsing their fill, little by little, every day from so many sources, before they know it will suffer a malignant growth to gather in their souls. Rather we must seek out another kind of artist, who by their very virtuous nature can divine the true nature of beauty and grace...Surely one so nurtured would, beyond others, welcome reason, when it comes to him, and know it for his own.¹

Aristotle follows this same idea:

Indeed, there is nothing which the legislator should be more careful to drive away than indecency of speech; for the light utterances of shameful words leads soon to shameful actions. The young especially should never be allowed to repeat or hear anything of the sort...And since we do not allow improper language, clearly we should also banish pictures or speeches from the stage which are indecent.²

St. Thomas also sees the social implications involved in a work of art.

¹Plato, Republic, in Basic Works, Random House, 1937, Vol. I, p. 665.

²Aristotle, Politics, 1336b.

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If art produces objects which men cannot use without committing sin, the artist producing such works himself commits sin, since he directly offers his neighbor the occasion to commit sin; as if one were to make idols for idolatry. As for the arts whose products can be put to good or evil use, they are permissible (for their works can of course be sequestered in libraries, unavailable for the morally unfit, old or young, accessible to those who can use them understandingly and constructively); but nevertheless, if the products of some of them are put in the majority of cases to an evil use, they must, though permissible in themselves, be driven out of the state (though, obviously this need not entail destruction) by the intervention of the Prince, in accordance with the warnings of Plato.¹

It becomes obvious that any consideration of the social aspects of a work of art will lead to a discussion of art and morality. While Mumford denies that there should be moral judgements made concerning a work of art, he does suggest that a definite moral atmosphere is desirable. Attention must now be turned to this problem.

ART AND MORALITY

The function of the virtue of art is twofold: it facilitates an immanent operation of the mind, insofar as

¹St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., II-II, q. 169, a. 2, ad.4.
"...quod si qua ars...secundum documenta Platonis."

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contemplation and identity of intellect with an ideal must precede artistic creation; but its special influence is exerted in directing the transient activity involved in the production of a concrete representation of ideas.

As distinguished from prudence, the other virtue of the practical intellect, art is primarily concerned with the production of things with the perfection of external objects made by man, rather than with action which is self-perfecting on the part of the agent.

The function of prudence as an intellectual virtue is to dispose and perfect the practical reason for the election of proper means for the leading of a good life. Moral virtue disposes man to choose proper ends, but does not determine the means for attaining the goal; consequently, an intellectual virtue is needed in order that the reason be rightly directed in its acts of deliberation concerning possible means for attaining the goal.¹

¹St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I-II, q. 57, a. 5. "... ad debitum finem homo convenienter disponitur per virtutem quae perficit partem animae appetitivam, cujus objectum est bonum et finis. Ad id autem quod convenienter in finem debitum ordinatur, oportet quod homo directe disponatur per habitum rationis: quia consiliari et eligere quae sunt eorum quae sunt ad finem, sunt actus rationis."

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Eric Gill has summarized the matter very well:

Skill in making and skill in doing are both loosely called art.

Doing is an activity directed to an end in view-- the end in view being man's good, his last good, Heaven.

But when a man's deeds are directed not to his own good simply but to the good of a thing, then doing becomes making.

An act that is good, or thought to be good, with regard to oneself is called a prudent act.

An act that is good, or thought to be good, with regard to a thing to be made is called art.

A man whose acts are conformed to his own good is called a prudent man.

A man whose acts are conformed to the good of things is called an artist.

In both cases skill in doing is required.

Skill in doing good to oneself is called prudence.

Skill in doing good to things is called art.¹

From this it is clear that the artist is not concerned with morality in any direct way when he is acting as an artist. When the artist is working "it makes little difference whether he be in a good temper or in a rage."²

¹Eric Gill, "Art and Prudence," A Century of the Catholic Essay, Lippincott, New York, 1946, p. 209.

²St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I-II, q. 57, a. 3. "... quorum tamen bonum non consistit in eo quod appetitus humanus aliquo modo se halut, sed in eo quod ipsum opus quod fit, in se bonum est. Non enim pertinet ad laudem artificis, inquantum artifex est, qua. Voluntate opus faciat, sed quale sit opus quod facit."

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In other words it does not mean that the artist must moralize in his work, or teach, or spiritually influence his audience in a direct way. His virtue of art has its own autonomy. There is no question about that.

The morally good, then, is formally distinct from the beautiful; and for this reason critics are right to deny that moral principles per se can be applied in matters of fine art...It is clear that art is not good art simply because a good man is imitated. As Newman has pointed out, "One cannot have a sinless literature anymore than one can view life as sinless."¹

But both the production of a work of art and the perceiving of a work of art are human acts and precisely as they are human acts they will of necessity in some way come under the rule of prudence.

Since according to the testimony of both Plato and Aristotle and observation throughout the history of art, fine art can influence the conduct of man for better or worse, and, therefore, will affect his final end, it seems

¹J. H. Newman, Idea of a University, American Press, 1951, p. 329.

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we can conclude that prudence must be a guide in both the production and viewing of artistic works.

And to that which is suitably ordained to the due end man needs to be rightly disposed by a habit of his reason. Consequently an intellectual virtue is needed in the reason, to perfect that reason, and make it suitable affected towards things ordained to the end; and this virtue is prudence.¹

If, then, there is sin in literature, it must be depicted as the privation which it is. And neither the making nor the viewing must distort this so that pleasure will arise that may permit a man to delight in evil and perhaps become disordered in his intellect or his passions.

The works with which fine arts are concerned, the things which fine art makes, cannot precise altogether from the moral order. This is because the object of imitation in fine art differs from that of servile art. All fine arts have as their proper object of imitation human action, suffering or thought, as is evident inductively and analytically. But human action, suffering and thought, precisely as human, fall within the moral order and therefore, under the ordering of prudence. That is to say, every human act as human is a moral act and since the proper object of imitation in fine art is some human act, and

¹St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I-II, q. 57, a. 5.

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since no human act in the concrete is indifferent morally, then all fine arts are concerned with an object of imitation which necessarily involves also a moral principle.¹

Actually the artist is more than a reporter, so that his duty is more than a skillful recording of privations which are portrayed as "things as they are." What is ignored is that this is not things as they are but things as they seem, for an understanding of privation demands more than a fact recognized and stated but a realization of what really is or ought to be. Reality yes! But a reality seen with the eye which knows order; not only the order demanded by technique, but order based upon the world created by God, seen by a man properly ordained to that order.²

Pius XII has summarized it very well. He has said: "'art' and 'immoral' are two words in blatant contradiction."³

¹Philip Haggren, "Beauty, Art and Prudence," The Thomist, Vol. II (1940), p. 170.

²"Every novel is a mirror borne along before the futuribilia and before the laws of divine government, and the novelist who does not believe in moral values destroys in himself the very matter of his art." J. Maritain, Art and Poetry, Philosophical Library, 1943, p. 58.

³Pius XII, Speech to Artists on September 3, 1950, quoted in Catholic Art Quarterly, XIV, 2, p. 56.

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It is, of course, one of the most amazing positions which Mumford holds which becomes involved here. For he at once says that man is the ultimate measure of all things, and then rebels when modern art uses the very principle which he has established to permit man's appetite to run wild and create some of the art which he so strongly rebels against. If man is the measure of art, who can criticize anything that he does?

On the other hand, if one can expect something of objective standards in a work of art, from where do these standards come? If man is free to do what he pleases, from where does restraint come?

If it be objected that the prudent man will be the ultimate measure of art, the question must then be put: what is the measure of man's prudence?

It would seem that although all theories concerning art agree in a general way concerning a pleasure principle, and for the reasons given, that the end of art as defined in any exact way has changed radically from time to time as have the theoretic accounts supporting these ends.

One need only look at a few examples to make the point clear. There is a current belief that art can be

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defined in terms of expression. But expression can only become intelligible in terms of an expression of this or that. Again one hears of significant form. But none of the proponents of this position ever make it clear what this significant form is significant of. As the expression in the first can be understood to consider the expression as an absolute, the second can be understood to mean significance as an absolute significance. Any specification of one or the other in any way would vitiate the doctrine by introducing an element of limitation.

There is a further theory that art is instrumental, or expedient. But again, no one says what it is instrumental to.

It is evident that all of these theories make a certain infinite out of a work of art. That explains why they must remain unclear. For if art were instrumental to something else as to an end, then art would be limited by that something else. And so with the other doctrines.

Yet it is not that art does not express, nor is not an instrument, but that both its expression and instrumentality are limited. What it eventually amounts to is that these theories would make art something divine. And though

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it is never stated in such a matter, one cannot help but draw such a conclusion.

The doctrine, as proposed, is usually lost in a vagueness which will prohibit drawing any definite conclusions, yet it does not seem that if these theories are to be carried to their logical conclusions, the position as stated can be denied.

Besides flattering men by the virtual if not the actual denial of God, these theories are made plausible by a certain specious universality, a universality which is taken as a sign of wisdom. For they seem to embrace the whole history of art at once. All "authentic" works of art, the ones enjoying public prestige, are shown to be instances of this universal expression or significant form, or something else of this kind. For it is indeed true that all works of art are expressions, that they are expressions of significant form.

No one could quarrel with such statements properly understood. Yet are we not able to say as much for anything if it be work of art or not? It could very well be said of an apple that it has significant form or that it is instrumental. But these properties do not tell us what

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characteristics the work of fine art must have as a work of fine art. The only way they would be proper to fine art would be that they be considered as absolute measurements.

It is evident, then, that the real difficulties of our investigation are not those which are proper to fine art as such. Rather the conflicting artistic theories are only so many attempts to justify and to manifest a false metaphysics and a false conception of man. For once we grant that there is no God, and no spiritual substance whatsoever, it follows simply enough that there is no objective measure of any being. Hence art becomes entirely free, because man is entirely free. The artist becomes like the scientist who is limited only by what he wants to do and by his physical instruments. Since man does not have a determinate nature, therefore any theory of art as measured by human nature is only hypothetical and tentative, a mere instrument for further investigation.

It would seem, then, if what has been said is true, that Lewis Mumford is confronted with an amazing dilemma. If he is to be consistent philosophically, then he must accept the metaphysics which he has proposed in which man becomes the measure of all things, as it is applied to the

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fine arts as well as all the arts and sciences. Such a step would demand that he recognize that this would be saying that man has license to do what he pleases. There seems to be no other conclusion possible.

But in his criticism, in his proposal for certain standards by which we may judge art, Mumford demands that there be principles which are elevating involved in artistic judgement. He sees art as leading man on to more and more noble moments of life.

One cannot help but recall a certain passage in Plato's Symposium to get something of the feel of what Mumford seems to be trying to say:

But I will do my utmost to inform you... For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor right, to love one such form only--out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms...

He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when

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he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)-- a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in a likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being... but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things.¹

There is, of course, no room in Mumford's philosophy for such words. Yet as has been said, in his discussion concerning the beautiful, it seems he is searching for such words.

If Mumford is to be faithful to his philosophy, then he can have no quarrel with modern artists who can say they do such and such work because they so desire and feel no obligation to conform to any principles but their own.

If he would reach those goals which he seems to desire for art, then Mumford will have to find a more

¹Plato, Symposium, 11. 210-11.

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permanent measure of art than man.

ART AND TECHNICS

When, in the latter part of the eighteenth century James Watt altered Necomen's steam pumping machine in such a way as to have it produce rotary motions capable of supplying power for machinery, the world was to witness in the next hundred and fifty years the greatest metamorphosis in industry that the world has ever known.¹

Machinery of a sort had been employed even during the middle ages but the dramatic progress that followed upon Watt's invention coupled with other scientific discoveries ushered in an age that permitted an economic advancement that has never been paralleled in the history of the world. Never before have so many people had so many of their material desires fulfilled.² The significant increase in the standard of living for so many people seems obvious enough that it need not be stressed.

¹"Industrial Machinery," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Macmillian, Vol. X, 1937, pp. 4, 5, 20, 26.

²John U. Nef, The United States and Civilization, University of Chicago Press, 1942, pp. 24, 84.

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But equally obvious is the fact that side by side with these material benefits there have grown up physical and moral snares. There has seemingly been greater effort on the part of man in perfecting the machine than his own human natures.¹

There are, consequently, more than a few who hold that the virus of materialism which has attacked the moral fibres of our culture, education and art, can be traced to the rapid growth of the machine and its products.²

Certainly Mumford's role in protesting the mechanization of man is neither original or new. Actually it may very well be that the opposition to the machine was far more intense in the earlier days of Industrialism than now. Then a very spirited antagonism was nurtured by the writings and speeches of such famous men as Lord Byron, Carlyle, Ruskin and Kingsley. In 1863, at Erewhon, England, Samuel

¹J. U. Nef, The United States and Civilization, pp. 24, 84.

²See: Pitrim A. Sorokin, The Crisis of Our Age, E. P. Dutton, 1942, pp. 131, 163, 243-46, 260.

H. E. Barnes, Society In Transition, Prentice Hall, 1939, pp. 13, 14, 18.

J. W. Marx, Mechanization and Culture, Herder, 1941, p. 201.

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Butler was instrumental in rousing the sentiments of the workers to such a pitch that they destroyed all the machines in sight.¹

Ruskin formulated the problem very clearly:

And observe you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cogwheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them.²

A spirit of hostility to machine production, non unlike that of the early antagonists, is now being spread about Europe and America by individuals and organized groups.³

¹A. B. Brown, The Machine and the Worker, Ivor, Nicholson and Watson, 1934, pp. 7-15.

²John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, Alden, 1885 Vol. II, p. 162.

³Eric Gill, Autobiography, Devin-Adair, 1941, pp.140, 298. It All Goes Together, Devin-Adair, 1944, p. 25. Work and Property, J. M. Dent, 1937, Chap. II.

R. A. Freeman, Social Decay and Regeneration, Constable, 1921, p. 109.

Otto Spengler, Man and Technics, Knopf, 1932, numerous references throughout this book.

J. W. Marx, Mechanization and Culture, Herder, 1941, p. 177.

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But just as the charges of these people are sincere, there are others who hold the opposite opinion with equal conviction. They are militant advocates of more mechanization and a greater use of technocracy in industry. Their contention is that man has not properly adjusted to the evolution of the machine and they suggest that the cure for social maladjustments must come from man recognizing that he must adjust to the machine. Society, it is held, will benefit greatly. Man must adapt himself for the sake of the common good.¹

Actually, both positions seem to be extremes that miss practical points. First of all, even the most rugged type of individualist who may be preaching that all men find their Walden Pond and develop as persons, would be reluctant to relinquish all of the benefits we enjoy in this age of technics. Indeed, we have so identified our way of life with the fruits of the machine that our

¹Walter Meakin, The New Industrial Revolution, Coward-McCann, 1929, p. 241.

J. T. Merz, A History of European Thought in the 19th Century, 1928, mechanism often praised.

A. Slater, "Obsolete Jobs Not Obsolete Men," Fortune, April, 1933.

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economies could never withstand a marked change in production. Certainly there could not be so many people who enjoy so many comforts of life. It would seem that we must recognize that the machine has benefitted man. Indeed, even if we are to ignore the many luxuries that the average man has come to enjoy because of the machine, we are brought face to face with the problem of feeding and clothing populations which are largely urban, problems which could hardly be solved without mechanization.

Mumford, of course, is not against the machine as such; rather his quarrel seems to be more directly with some of the by-products of our highly industrialized society. If one cannot agree with all of his conclusions, it is still possible to recognize that his concern is enough to draw our attention to what may be an evil but what is certainly a threat.

It does not seem that we have really come to grips with the problem by viewing it historically. Current effects of the machine upon society must be evaluated, even the future must be anticipated. And as in all things both the present and the future are difficult to weigh.

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Certainly the future seems awe-inspiring enough if the hopes of the late John vonNeumann are ever realized. Before his death, vonNeumann, who was one of the most brilliant pure mathematicians in the world and outside of scientific circles almost unknown, was working on a concept shedding new light on the function of the human brain. In principle, he reasoned, there is no reason why some day a machine might not be built which not only could perform all the functions of the human brain but could reproduce itself, i. e. create more supermachines like it.¹

It is such awe-inspiring statements, coupled with the cry of some who wish to return to the more simple way of life that existed before industrialism became an economic, cultural, and moral force to be dealt with, that make many view the machine with suspicion.

But if there are those who maintain that because of the machine and a highly concentrated population, man has been stripped of his opportunities to be a creator, to become nothing more than a cog in the machine which he daily tends, there are others who feel that there is sufficient

¹Life, February 27, 1957, p. 102.

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evidence to show that the problem is not quite so simple as all that. For actually modern man has more free time with which to turn to cultural activities than any working class in the history of the world.

August Hecksher, former chief editorial writer for the New York Herald-Tribune, in a recent speech at Kenyon College, made some significant points which deserve mention. He contends there are disturbing evidences of flight from freedom in our time. It hardly seems possible that even a machine-conditioned society can be blamed for all of the reasons for his disturbances.

First, the move to the suburbs. Here is Twentieth Century man escaping from the anonymity and purposelessness of the great city, owning his own plot of land, cultivating his own garden. But what is the result? Instead of being more independent, he is the slave of the most belittling social pressures, imparting to the suburban life the tone of great anxiety and dull uniformity which hangs over its growing expanse more heavily than our city smoke.

Second, the extension of leisure time. Here is our free man having at his disposal the gift of the gods, time to be himself, time to invite his soul, to indulge his fancy in humorous or eccentric expression. But again, the result is not liberation. It is the spectacle of millions listening to the same television programs, crowding the highways in search of some means of escape.

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Take, finally, the immense abundance of goods with which the modern citizen has been showered. Is this wide choice a means of confirming and expressing the personality, or giving a sense of ease and freedom in daily living? Too often it is merely a source of fresh anxieties, with the consumer looking upon material things more as symbols of prestige and acceptance--badges of belonging--than as reflections of what he is and what he values.¹

Can the machine be blamed for all of this? Can we go so far as to say that machine production inevitably causes the spirit of creativeness to atrophy in the machine tender? When we consider the fact that the worker of today has more leisure time with which to make the artistic become a part of his life, are we to say that his work at his machine has so absorbed him that he cannot develop and exercise his artistic talents in his leisure time? Or are we possibly missing some deeper reason for the average man's lack of initiative in developing himself culturally?

In simpler language, the objection against the machine might be expressed thus: since man was born to do creative work, anything that stifles this tendency or saps the strength of man's creative spirit is evil; but modern

¹Quoted by Barry Bingham, "Is Odd Man Out One of the Rules of Life," The Louisville Times, April 21, 1957.

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machines do this, have this effect; therefore, they are evil.

Evaluation of such an argument might very well revolve around the notion of creative spirit. The use of it must be understood properly as was pointed out in an earlier chapter. The word "creation" is not unlike an orphan who is given the name of his adopting parents.

We speak of creating works of art--masterpieces in painting, sculpturing, literature, and music. And there is nothing really wrong with using the word "create" so long as it is properly understood. Strictly speaking, of course, creation presupposes nothing from which or upon which an effect can be produced. In a word, it is nothing less than the emanation of the total substance of an entity from non-being.¹ St. Thomas wisely points out that the chief wonderment about creation is how God creates, not what is created.² It is an action which is as effortless as it is divine. So when we, as humans, make something stamped with originality, it is always wise to remember we speak analogously.

¹St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 45, a. 1, 2.

²Ibid., ad. 3.

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Yet, in a very real sense there is a spirit of creativeness in man. But this creativeness is rooted in his intellectual powers. As long as man can and does think, and as long as his thoughts are healthy, his creative spirit can hardly be impaired or stunted. But unless men think they will not be creative in any art, for ideas must be conceived before artefacts are born. Masterpieces are only the external manifestations of ideas existing in the minds of the artists. They are physical symbols imitating psychological forms.

Human creativeness is an intrinsic perfection of man, and like everything good, it tends to diffuse itself, to express itself externally.

Actually, it seems undeniable that the machine has benefitted man. It cannot be held that it is bad in itself, so it seems unreasonable to maintain that something good can by its very nature enervate or stultify a perfection in man's soul. Yet this does not mean that it can be denied that there is a dearth of creativeness in the world, or more properly creativeness that reflects the true nature of man.

Certainly there are more than those who are hostile to technocracy who admit this serious lack of creativeness

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in the modern world. But it seems superficial to place the blame exclusively or even primarily upon the machine or the cultural lag which has grown up in our industrialized society.

But is our lack of cultural development due to our pre-occupation with things mechanical or our intellectual aridity? We seem to be intellectually barren, despite all the books that are published and the prestige given education. Too many minds, like the stomach of a starving man, have shriveled up, because of the lack of intellectual food that possesses nourishing ingredients. The diet of empiricism and scientism, on which we have fed too long, has caused this malnutrition in our intellect whose staple food consists, not in sense perceptions, but in knowing the essences of things.¹

Ultimately, then, we must return to the same point we have had to repeat so often throughout this thesis. We can discuss nothing as being good or bad for man until we know what man is, what his purpose is. Ignorance of these

¹St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., II-II, q. 8, a. 1. "Objectum enim intellectus est quod quid est,..."

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facts or wrong conclusions concerning them will leave us involved in a pragmatic maze that will leave one like Mumford--filled with aspirations for man but with no practical blueprint for fulfilling these aspirations. We can answer no questions about the nature of what culture should be, until we have answered questions as to what the nature of man is.

The prophets of pessimism see little or no hope for human culture. With them St. Thomas would not agree. For him the cause of culture is human nature, tending towards goods that perfect it in the acquisition of knowledge, in the cultivation of moral habits, in the conquest of the forces of physical nature. He is perfectly aware of the effects of original sin which manifest themselves in the inherent laziness of men and in their strong predilection for evil pleasures. Yet, he staunchly maintains that the human intellect is naturally designed to recognize truth and that error is only incidental to it. He is also a firm defender of the natural tendency of man towards good. So true is that that when a person chooses an evil course of action he always does so under some aspect of goodness. Culture, therefore, cannot be blamed if men decline into evil ways. At most, it can only furnish an occasion for the false pretenses that drag men down, in its name, to bestial levels of luxury.¹

¹Robert E. Brennan, O. P., "The Thomistic Concept of Culture," The Thomist, Vol. 5, (1943), p. 25.

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St. Thomas, himself, gives us the type of blueprint that must be understood if culture proper to human beings is to be realized.

Therefore,...man's end is already determined for him by nature;...whereas the things that lead to his end are not thus determined, but must be discovered by his reason. It is manifest, then, that rectitude of appetite in regard to end is the measure of truth for the practical intellect. From this point of view, the truth of practical intellect is determined by its concordance with right appetite. On the other hand, the truth of practical intellect is the measure of rectitude of appetite in regard to the things that lead to the end.¹

It seems, therefore, that we can conclude that if we find in our culture certain lags or abuses, it is an oversimplification to point to the machine as to insist that the evils have sprung up because of industry.

Monsignor Angelo Dell'Acqua, writing in behalf of His Holiness, Pius XII, has said:

In our day, in fact, the power of technology--whose irreversible progress it would be utopian to wish to check--combines with population growth and the aspirations of people for a better life to lead nations along the path of economic expansion, with all the efforts of

¹St. Thomas, Com. X Libros Ethicorum ad Nicomachum, Blk. VI, 1. 2.

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investment, equipment, reorganization and land regulation that it involves.

Undoubtedly this situation should be considered with prudence and healthy optimism. Is not growth the normal sign of the economic health of a nation? Would it be reasonable or even Christian to shackle the future by holding it back? The Church, on the contrary, asks the faithful to see in the astounding progress of science the realization of the plan of God, who has entrusted to man the discovery and exploitation of the wealth of the universe.¹

Yet the Holy Father also issued a warning:

...the more exclusively and more constantly one increases the tendency to consume, so much more does the economy cease to have as its object the real and normal man, the man who subordinates and measures the demands of earthly life according to his final end and to the laws of God.²

Of course, those who have written against the machine have done so in a society highly industrialized. As we look to the future and the age of automation, it is easy to see how their fears can become greatly intensified. It will be the age of the thirty hour week, an age where the

¹Part of the text of a letter written by Msgr. Angelo Dell'Acqua, Vatican Substitute Secretary of State to Charles Flory, President of the Annual French Social Weeks. The letter was written in behalf of Pope Pius. Quoted in The Catholic Messenger, Davenport, Iowa, August 23, 1956.

²Quoted in above.

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average man will have more leisure time at his disposal than at any time in the history of the world. How he uses this leisure time will be of great importance to the future of society, to the natural and supernatural destiny of man.

Mumford's position, then, is not without merit. The machine is to be feared. But not always for the reasons which Mumford gives. Not for what it can do to man, but for what man will do to himself with it. Indeed, it could be a Frankenstein monster; it could become a golden calf. But it need not be either. It is not, then, the machine which we must fear but man's use of it.

Some of Mumford's more specific fears concerning the machine and its influence upon the arts seem to be more groundless than his general thesis. In more than one case he falls into the snare of looking to the distant past and surrounding it with an aura of greatness which it may never have had.

Mumford's contention that the peasant of the Middle Ages was more culturally sensitive than his counterpart today seems far fetched. It is easy enough to visualize the noble working man who stamps his personality upon his creations, who though poor is dignified and sensitive to

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the arts. But is this the peasant of the Middle Ages?

One historian of the Middle Ages paints a very different picture:

He (the peasant) was untouched by any civilizing influences, since he had no time for rest or recreation. He could neither read nor write, ate a limited and monotonous diet, and, lacking any knowledge of elemental cleanliness, smelled vilely... Ordinarily, however, the peasant knew nothing of the outside world beyond what he saw in his cramped, wretched quarters and on the fields of the manor and in the village.¹

Mumford's concern that machine produced art has lowered esthetic standards is another point that is difficult to accept. He contends that art must be "aristocratic." This is a contention which has been developed at great length by Jose Ortega y Gasset.²

Actually it seems too early to judge what may happen to the arts in what could be called the age of the common man. The average man has a much greater opportunity to improve himself culturally, because he has more time to do

¹Louis L. Snyder, A Survey of European Civilization, Stackpole Sons, 1941, pp. 276-77.

²See: Jose Ortega y Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art, Doubleday, 1956, p. 1-50. The Revolt of the Masses, W. W. Norton, 1932, pp. 11-21.

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it, because inexpensive reproductions may permit him to own objects that can uplift him.

If it be objected that many entertainment media, i. e. the motion picture, television, radio are measured by the taste of the common man instead of the aristocrat of esthetics, it must be remembered that this is not the wish of the common man. It is the wish of the producers of the art form who want to make money or sell soap by having the largest possible audience view their offerings.

A writer by the name of Theodore L. Shaw quotes a passage from Mumford and makes an amusing observation.

Mumford comments in Art and Technics:

Novelty, adventure, variety, spontaneity, intensity--these are all very essential ingredients in a work of art; and a great work of art, like El Greco's Toledo at the Metropolitan, is one that presents this feeling of shock and delight, or new things to be revealed, at every encounter with it. Such works are inexhaustible in their meaning. But with one proviso: one must not go to them too often.¹

¹L. Mumford, Art and Technics, p. 104.

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"Consider," says Shaw, "those last two sentences which, when taken together, say: such works are inexhaustible provided you don't exhaust them."¹

One final objection against Mumford's stand. He condemns the machine because it has been made an absolute. He holds that a machine-conditioned society has permitted irrational elements to creep into art. Again it seems that the blame is being placed where it does not belong.

A skeptic was one time heard to remark that if man did not have a God that he would create one for himself. What was meant as an insult contains a vivid truth. Why should a society, even Mumford's humanistic society, need a God? If there is a vacuum created by the denial of the True God, there must be a substitute--why not the machine? But let us not blame the machine but man who has turned his back upon his true goal and who can judge the value of nothing because he has lost sight of everything.

¹Theodore L. Shaw, Precious Rubbish, Stuart Art Gallery, 1956, p. 78.

CONCLUSION

Etienne Gilson has pointed out that there has always been a great deal of disagreement in matters of art appreciation. But he makes a further observation: "What seems to be proper to our times is a much deeper kind of disagreement, no longer about certain works of art, but about the nature, object, and functions of art itself."¹

If there is any obvious conclusion which can be reached from what has been said in the previous chapters, it would seem to be that disagreement with the position of Lewis Mumford is not with the many ramifications that are identified with the peripheral problems concerned with aesthetics, such as opinion about schools of art or techniques. The disagreement is a basic one that has its roots deep in metaphysics.

Yet it is equally obvious that Lewis Mumford stands as something of an enigma. He aspires to noble ends for the artist and his work, only to have these aspirations come into conflict with some of the tenets of his own

¹Etienne Gilson, Painting and Reality, Pantheon, 1957, p. 241.

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philosophy. These are conflicts which Mumford would obviously deny. Yet, given his metaphysical presuppositions, it seems likely that every evil which Mumford abhors in modern art, can actually be justified by his philosophy.

Mumford's position, the plight of many sincere modern humanists, that of realizing that something has gone wrong not only with art but with society itself, is indeed tragic. The problems inherent in the abuses of many disciplines, art included, disturb many, but what these humanists have failed to see is that the very seeds of these abuses were sown in a philosophy which makes man the measure of things.

Our time has been too reluctant to see the power of ideas, too shallow to see that man cannot live without absolutes, even if man himself must become that absolute. The kind of relationships between the harmless Frederick Nietzsches and the terrifying reality of Dachaus has not stung our consciences nor jarred our intellects enough.

So Mumford can enclose himself in the subjective world of Kant, deny the reality of God and His world, set man and his intellect up as the measure of all things, and then wonder at the abuses of modern art. This is amazing.

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And yet it hardly seems that the matter has been overly simplified.

Mumford has been a voice crying in the wilderness of modern intellectual abuses. His gospel warns society of the dangers which threaten to destroy it. But when one examines his dogma, Mumford becomes a heretic in his own house.

Yet there is another side to the matter. It should not be overlooked that Mumford has done a great amount of good in that he has served as a potent gadfly in reminding the artist and the public that there must be more to art than hedonistic values, mere reporting, or simple reflection of the contemporary scene. But as was suggested at the end of the first chapter, he has done the right thing for the wrong reason.

There is another observation which must be made which is independent of Mumford and his problems. Since this thesis was also concerned with art as seen through traditional principles, any conclusion must indicate that there is much to be done by Catholic philosophers in the field of aesthetics. This does not suggest that the principles for such work are not to be found in St. Thomas, but

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it does suggest that application of those principles to modern problems in art and the evaluation of modern artistic theories leave much to be desired. With the exception of a few modern writers, notably Maritain and Gilson, the writing has been simply a rehash of the same basic principles, principles which have not been tested enough in the fire of application.

The late Cardinal Mercier saw a danger:

Exclusive preoccupation with truth, the constant tendency to consider all things solely in their relation to the intelligence, results in derangement of the law of harmony which should direct our powers...One will not understand how to submit with impunity to this intellectual regime (characteristic of all scientific method.) It trains and perfects only one part of our nature, a fundamental and essential part, it is true, but which is by no means the whole man. When such a tendency dominates the mind it gives it too much of a speculative turn, and obscures its understanding of the complexity of things.¹

This thesis began with the admission that the writer was venturing into the market place; it could not close without the hope that more interest in modern aesthetics and its problems be discovered in the followers of the

¹Mercier, Logique, 4^{ème} éd.), Louvain, 1905, p. 386. (Translation mine.)

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Angelic Doctor who was so acutely aware of the problems of his time.

Application of the principles of Philosophia Perennis in the area of the fine arts is a great need in our present culture. It may very well often begin with a kind of dialectic between the philosopher and the artist. The influence that each could have on the other could be of immeasurable worth to both art and aesthetics.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to evaluate the philosophy of art of Lewis Mumford, in terms of traditional principles.

Mumford, a contemporary American critic, is an eclectic thinker, seldom original in terms of principles, but important because he has constructed something of a synthesis of the ideas of others. His influence on modern American thinking is undisputed.

This thesis has been divided into three sections in an attempt to approach the problem of the artefact in terms of its four causes. The first section, on the source of art, analyzes the efficient cause; the second, on signification of art, analyzes the formal and material causes; the third, on the end of art, analyzes the final cause.

One of the most marked differences between the position of Mumford and that of the Thomist, one that has implications in many facets of the problem, is that of the origin of the artistic impulse. Mumford insists it is the subjective approach to the problem which must be maintained.

Since he champions Kant's theory of knowing, Mumford has denied the influence of the extra-mental world upon the

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artist and he has insisted that the dream, subconscious impulses, and certain unsearched areas of the personality are the chief sources of the imitative act of the artist.

While the follower of St. Thomas would not deny the possible influence of the dream and the unconscious on the artistic act, he would insist that the intellect has the most important role in the creation of the artist. Further, he would insist that while the role of the artist should not be underestimated, it should not be ignored that the creative mind is dependent upon the world of reality both for the initiation of the imitative act proper to art and for a kind or order of production that can be followed in the artistic creation.

Because of his refusal to recognize the possibility of accurate knowledge of the extra-mental world, Mumford suggests, in dealing with the problem of signification, that here too the personality of the individual artist is the source of the artistic symbol. He sees the symbol as a highly personalized means of communication of feelings that cannot be conveyed with conventional language. He maintains that the diversity of opinion about individual works of art proves that art is entirely subjective.

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Mumford's position does not seem to be tenable in several respects. While the symbol may acquire individual meaning as a work of art, the forms found in nature will still be used to clothe these ideas. Unless this be recognized it seems impossible to explain how communication can be established. All men share the world of reality and this fact permits communication. How could there be universal meaning to works clothed in signs completely individual in origin? Furthermore, the difference of opinion about a work of art can be explained if one recognizes the connotative value of the artistic symbol. This permits a recognition of the objective nature of the symbol and yet allows the perceiver to participate in the esthetic experience more properly.

Mumford approaches the end of art with concern as to how the work will affect both the individual and society. Most of the time, he holds, the artist will simply mirror his time, sensing the direction of a given culture that the ordinary man cannot realize. But there are greater artists who can make both individuals and society realize that they have both noble natures and goals. Mumford has been especially vocal in warning our culture of what he calls the

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threat of technics. The machine and the civilization it has produced can destroy man, he maintains, unless there is a revival of the arts to remind man of his real dignity and purpose.

Though the Thomist would insist on a more precise approach to the problem of the end of art than does Mumford, with a demand that the object itself not be ignored when discussing ends, there would be agreement that the arts should ennoble man.

But because of Mumford's position concerning the nature of man, these ends are not so similar as they might seem. For Mumford, the humanist, is caught in a dilemma. He desires noble ends for art; yet, if he is true to his philosophy, which makes man the measure of all things, how is he to make demands of the artist who says he is the measure of his art so far as both its means and ends are concerned?

It is only in the Thomistic tradition where the nature of man is subordinated to the source of all beauty that there can be found a sound exposition of the role of the artist.