

# Reality in Literature

---

Eliseo Vivas

1

In this paper I am asking whether, and in what sense, we can speak of the reality of works of literature—works to which I shall refer hereafter by the generic term of “poetry.” We have before us two problems, both of which need to be treated with circumspection. Therefore, I must treat them in an abstract, purely theoretical way. The problems are of two quite different kinds: one is psychological, and the other ontological. But although distinct, they are, nevertheless, intimately related, as I hope to show towards the end of the paper.

In representative art the psychological problem does not seem to present extraordinary difficulties. In poetry, representative painting and sculpture, the object of the work—what the work is about—bears some sort of resemblance to the furniture of the daily world: to men and their actions, to the things they use, and to the ambient medium, artificial and natural, in which they live. For this reason we have to say in the case of poetry and of representative art, that their objects symbolize the same kind of reality as that actually possessed by mental objects. Insofar as this is true, we have no unique problem. A problem arises when the claim to perception is seriously entered. Sometimes our transactions with poetry convey a heightened feeling of reality, a feeling that the ordinary world does not usually convey. It is an experience difficult to give an account of. It may be a close relative to the mystical experience—I do not know. At its peak, the reader disappears, and all there is, is the “thereness” of the object of the poem. I call the event a revelation, in the etymological meaning of the term: a tearing of the veil, a presentation of intense vividness of what the poem is about. The work before us stands out radiantly, with an effulgence that claims that we have taken a step upwards, into a reality that is usually hidden from us in our daily world. The semi-transparent film that stands between us and the furniture of the world in which we live daily has dissolved. We move up, to yield with anticipation to the increasing radiance that shows itself to us. The claim that the revealed object makes—and I am using my words with some care—cannot be disregarded, however we choose to interpret it. Let me press into use for our purposes a vivid phrase that William James used in his discussion of the sense of reality in a slightly different context: “a man’s soul will sweat with conviction” when “his entire faculty of attention is absorbed” by a poem. Its object seems, as he puts it, more “utterly utter” what it is, than at other times. Thus James is one of our witnesses for the fact that poetry can convey on the occasion of total absorption in it a sense of superior reality. And kindly note that

while I have modified slightly some—not all—of James's words, I claim to be swimming, so to speak, in the mainstream of his thought on this matter.

The actuality of this sort of experience has been denied by some writers and ridiculed crudely by others. But in addition to the testimony of William James that of many other writers could be added: That of Vernon Lee for instance, and of Henri Delacroix. Indeed, except for some critics, whose exclusive interest in poetry seems to be to make it raw material for their professional activity, the experience is not totally uncommon, although rare, to readers of poetry and people interested in the other arts.

In view of the evidence, then, the question does not seem to me to be about the actuality of the heightened sense of reality. Are we faced, let us ask, with a claim somewhat similar to that made by Plato in *The Symposium* and in *The Seventh Epistle*? Or with that made by Rudolph Otto when he writes about the experience of the numinous? In still different terms, is the claim that in rare aesthetic transactions poems disclose to us ontologically different kinds of reality than that possessed by the stones that the cultivated philistine kicks? Or can the experience be explained psychologically? My answer is that while much of the "utterly utter" sense of reality of the object of the poem can be explained successfully by the same means used by James to explain the results of intoxication with nitrous oxide, the claim cannot be exhaustively explained, in the case of poetry, by this means. Otherwise stated, I am going to show that the ontological problem cannot be altogether dismissed, however far psychology can go towards an explanation of the sense of reality given us by the poem. If we pursue the problem of the informed substance of poetry far enough, without regard to regnant philosophical orthodoxies, and come at the problem from a different standpoint, we shall run into complications that call for a metaphysic or ontology that is forced to posit at least one realm besides that of existence or the spacio-temporal realm—the only realm allowed us today by the dominant climate of philosophical opinion.

## 2

I wish I had not found it necessary in the past to reiterate what I am going to say again. The iteration cannot be avoided, since it is at the heart of my doctrine. When a poem functions as poetry, it functions as a presentation, which is to say that it does not refer explicitly beyond itself. It is autonomous because the privileges that govern it—or if you prefer, the loose conventions that guide its making—are not imposed by external authority but are the result of intrinsic exigencies acknowledged by the maker and his readers. Besides being autonomous, the poem is also self-sufficient, but in a qualified sense. The qualification may appear to be a silly tautology. But the failure to consider it leads to the misinterpretation of the nature of poetry. To read a poem with full enjoyment calls for an arduous preparation. This should go without saying it. One needs to know first the language of the poem. But this demand is not one that is easily met. Consider that most of you have taken a lifetime to learn the language, and those who have not learnt it at their mothers' knees can never compete in some

important respects with those who did. Learning the language of a poem will often include learning special languages—that of Shakespeare, for instance. It includes a full, concrete, detailed knowledge of whatever is to be found on a page. Indeed, adequate knowledge of a language can hardly be distinguished from knowledge of the culture for which the language is a medium of apprehension, communication, and communion. Given knowledge of the language, a poem can be there, for the reader, to enter into a poetic transaction with it, that may lead to the poem's taking full possession of him. His grasping it thus needs lead to no other act than that of his dwelling on it, as we may dwell on a bouquet of flowers or a stalking cat. Stendhal left us a phrase that, however interpreted, is false: "Beauty is a promise of happiness." But beauty is not a promise, but a bestowal, not to be enjoyed elsewhere, later, but here, now. This holds for the poem when read as poetry.

This is to say that a poem is a complicated tissue of meanings and values expressed in and through the language by means of straight denotation, psychological connotation, imagery, allusions, and the large number of devices critics have studied, not the least important of which are the theme's organization and the aural quality of its language. To say "expressed in and through" is to utter a pleonasm for, at least in my *papiamento*, the word "expression" refers to the use of language not merely to point to things external and independent of the language, but to present things that are dependent on the language.

That the meanings and values expressed by the poem do not make external reference seems to be an offensive notion to some critics. Years ago a very logical logician objected to Mrs. Langer's notion of a presentational symbol because it was a contradiction in terms. Of course it was, and so was Kant's disinterested interest. C. W. Morris borrowed the term "icon" to convey the same notion, but failed to do what he set out to do. Linguistically odd also is Dewey's notion of immanent meanings. These are all efforts—call them desperate if you will—to draw attention to the essential peculiarity of poetry, its capacity for possessing exclusively internal reference. Read as poetry it is intrinsically meaningful, but denotation external to the poem is not encountered in it. This is not peculiar to poetry. We frequently look for the sake of seeing, as when we fix our attention on the stalking cat just mentioned. And pure mathematics is a body of knowledge, the noblest of them all, some think, that does not refer to a world outside itself.

### 3

Although what I have just sketched is a repetition, as I said, of doctrine that is to be found in print, I had to review it here, in order to ground the statement that the self-sufficiency of poetry accounts in part for the sense of reality it conveys to the captive reader. His captivity is made possible by a number of factors analyzed by critics when they focus on the poem's unity. But also, and most importantly, by the nature of symbolic language. In the chapter from which I quoted James's vivid phrase, Chapter XXI, Vol. II, of *The Principles of Psychology*, he points out that we live in several worlds. James described seven of them, but pointed out that the number is of no importance, nor does he expect

us to agree with his list. What is of importance for us is his comment. He wrote: "Every object we think of, gets at last referred to one world or another of this or some similar list" (II, 293). In the list, under No. 5, he places the worlds of poetry. Compressing the account, No. 5 reads as follows:

(5) The various supernatural worlds . . . Each of these is a consistent system of definite relations among its own parts . . . The various worlds of deliberate fable may be ranked with those worlds of faith—the world of the *Illiad*, that of *King Lear*, of the *Pickwick Papers*, etc. (292)

At this point he attaches a footnote that is, for our purposes at least as important as the text. He writes:

Whilst absorbed in the novel [Ivanhoe] we turn our backs on all other worlds, and for the time the Ivanhoe-world remains our absolute reality.

■

Note that it is James who writes "absolute reality." The statement needs qualification. The Ivanhoe-world is our absolute reality if we are absolutely absorbed by it. But while absolute absorption is common, I suspect, with children of bright minds, in adults it occurs along lines of specialized training, and our capacity for it diminishes with age. We have ample evidence that the feat of absolute absorption in art or an absorption close to it, is apparently one that the majority of people are incapable of. Even for those who can perform it, the realization of it depends on many external factors that I cannot pause to enumerate here. In the same footnote to which I have just referred, James goes on to say that

When we wake from the spell . . . we find a still more real world, which reduces Ivanhoe and all things connected with him to fictive status, and relegates them to one of the subuniverses grouped under No. 5.

So far as his explanation goes, James is right when he implies that the sense of reality conveyed by the absorption in a poem does not give the poem an ontological status identical with the status possessed by the ordinary world. But while, for his purposes, this is all that James needs to say about the worlds of poetry, as contrasted with the world that for James and for the great majority of mankind is "a more real world," if we label the worlds of poetry "fictive," we shut the gate on the inquiry, precluding much needed enlightenment.

For us, the problem does not arise from the fact that absorption in the poem yields a sense of superior reality. My acknowledgment, a moment ago, that there are those who sweat with conviction, does not give me the right to say that the poem, or something in it, has or does not have a status in being, similar or different from that which the objects of language have. Again, for James's pur-

poses, all he needed to do was to distinguish the conviction with which the poem makes us sweat from the greater reality of the world when the sweat ends. Our purposes, however, demand of us that we indicate that we are faced with two different senses of reality. The conviction of reality with which we sweated a few moments ago, is to a large extent accounted for by our total or close-to-total absorption in the poem. The senses of all other realities have been effectively excluded while we were sweating in the captivity of the poem. The only world there was, then, for us, was that of the poem. But how can we sweat with the conviction of the reality of the object of the poem one moment and immediately upon escaping from its captivity, dismiss that reality cavalierly by calling it a "fictive" world? The world of the poem made us sweat. Dripping with sweat, we step out of it without trouble and enter the ordinary world, which James calls "the more real" world. But although more real, it does not put us to any strain whatever; in it we are as cool as if we were in an over-refrigerated room. Note, however, that the psychologist's hand has been quicker than our eye, for James switched from the puddle of conviction created by our sweating—a conviction that may or may not be correlated to knowledge—to a more real world, but one that in spite of its greater reality does not even cause our collars to wilt.

Put in different terms, the word "fictive" is not self-explanatory. And this is one of the reasons we have a problem. We want to know what it is that makes the worlds of poetry "fictive." But there are some kinds of answers that I, at least, have rejected after analysis. I do not want to be told that fictions are the work of the imagination. This old gimmick of inventing faculties to explain phenomena—the dormitive virtue of Montpelier, the explanation of the obscure by the more obscure—leads to interesting verbal disputes that graduate students must be acquainted with, but that throw no light on the problems by which we are puzzled. Another answer I cannot accept is one in the other direction, given us by The Philosopher, when he tells us that poetry is more true than history because the former is about universals. This statement is inadmissible for a number of reasons. I'll mention one: It can only be advanced by a man who believes that all of us think abstractly and that what a poet does is to dramatize, put concrete dramatic flesh on the conceptual abstractions that he originally thought of.

Poetry has also been said to be appearance and illusion. But neither of these characterizations advances our quest, since for a phenomenon to be an appearance there must be a reality of which it is the appearance, and the same holds for illusion. It is fairly obvious that what these theories assert is what is more clearly asserted by the theory of imitation. Not that I do not know that there are a number of interpretations of the view expounded by The Philosopher in the *Poetics*. But I believe we can finally reduce these to two. The sophisticated view of imitation includes creativity as one of the powers of the maker and, hence, novelty in the thing made. I fail to see anything in the pages of The Philosopher that warrants such *ad hoc* patching. In any case it turns the theory into an attenuated form of the expression theory. The other version is true imitation, copying. This is the meaning that The Philosopher had in mind. A contemporary Aristotelian has stated it as follows:

The artist separates some form from the matter with which it is joined in nature—not, however, the ‘substantial’ form, but some form perceptive by sensation—and joins it anew to the matter of art, the medium he uses.

All that needs to be said about this account of the making of a poem is that its crudity is incredible: all the more incredible, when we remember that it was proposed by one of the three or four greatest philosophers that our civilization has produced, and has been transmitted to us in the above words, at this date, without a warning about its crudity, by a man with a scholarly reputation. This account, I would suggest, applies to what I imagine is the making of a death mask: it also applies to the work of Rosa Bonheur and, specially, to the work of Nazi and Socialist realists. It also applies to the type of reportage that the demilitarates of our society take to be genuine novels. I argued some time ago that when it is said to apply to music, all it does is expose the fatuity of one who believes that the pattern of our great compositions is like the pattern of human emotions prior to their information by the musical composition. Nor does any interpretation of imitation that I have ever come across apply to architecture. But that it applies to the making of a genuine poem—whether great or small—is inconceivable, and can easily be shown to be seriously in error. But it is not here possible to pursue this topic further.

4

While I have been considering imitation, I have been suggesting in passing—as the reader has already realized—what the various theories of expression seek to emphasize, each in its own philosophical context. We have long known that the act of expression is not a pressing out, as squeezing toothpaste from a tube. It is a synthesis in which the experiential matter that goes into the creative act, and the form or forms that inform it, are completely altered in their natures by interaction among themselves and with that which the creative mind adds out of its own spontaneity. The experiential matter is the stuff of life as the poet has lived it, including of course his experience with art and in our case, especially with poetry. A. C. Bradley analyzed this problem in his famous lecture, “Poetry for Poetry’s Sake,” but his terminology is somewhat fluid, and for this reason I have adapted to my own needs Dewey’s term, “the matter for art.” This is transmuted into what I call the informed substance, that is the finished poem, the public object that the poet and his readers read. Since the informed substance is the product of the creative activity, it is of course unlike any of the ingredients that made it up. The result, then, is a work of art, a poem that contains a modicum of genuine novelty.

On this view, what I must examine is not the status in being of those ingredients of the poem that are left more or less untouched by the creative activity of the poet. These, as already indicated, have whatever status in being is claimed by ordinary mental objects. The ingredients of the poem that require examination are the genuinely novel ones. At the outset, however, I should call your attention

to the fact that I believe that all symbolization, however ordinary or commonplace, is constitutive.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to the nature of symbols, for everything depends on our understanding them. The word "symbol" is used in Cassirer's sense. To do so, we must first distinguish symbols from signs. This usage can be taken as stipulative, but the distinction is real. Symbols are constitutive, and they never function in isolation; they always function as members of a system to which they usually have explicit relationships, but always have deeply rooted implicit ones. Signs denote that to which they refer in an extrinsic relationship, which is to say, that we can apprehend, or believe we can, the thing denoted, independently of the sign by means of which we refer to it for the purposes of apprehension and communication. But symbols and what they symbolize are inseparable from one another, and not fully distinguishable. That is what was meant above when I said that the poem expresses its object in and through itself. One can speak of expressing what is symbolized—but the phrase is pleonastic. That what the poem expresses is expressed through its language creates no trouble, or seems not to. When it is asserted that the poem also expresses its object in the language, the statement gives trouble.

Let us turn our attention therefore to what is expressed in the language of poetry. Here we face the central question. But a sufficient elucidation of it would call for a long discourse on the theory of constitutive symbols. Beyond the *ex cathedra* statement that symbols are constitutive, which is to say that the world is what it is for us because of the symbols we use to constitute it, here I can say no more. I can call attention to the fact that, in very general terms, this is a well known hypothesis, advanced by psychologists, ethnolinguists, and philosophers other than the one in whose footsteps I am, at this point, following, Cassirer. But since there are those who refuse to believe that the language of poetry expresses the object of the poem in as well as through itself, two tests can be suggested to show that those who reject the constitutive nature of symbolic structures are in error.

The first test is to compare a poem, an English one for us, with a translation of it. I shall not undertake the analytic comparison here since it would lead us off on a road I do not want to travel, away from a purely theoretical, abstract, exposition. But it is one of the commonplaces of our day, and a true one, that poetry cannot be translated satisfactorily. We can give the argument of the original poem in a foreign language, but over and beyond this we cannot successfully go. To try it turns the *traduttore* into a *traditore*. We can also create a new language, as was done by Urquhart and James Mabe. But the Rabelais of the one and *La Celestina* of the other, can only "convey the spirit" of the originals. We put it in this way to be kind to the *traditori* and let them off with a suspended sentence. This is very, very old hat. What has not been indicated is why this is the case. And the reason is that regnant theories of meaning have been theories of signs and not of symbols, and have failed to make clear why and how language, all the more so the language of poetry, is constitutive.

The other test works on the same principle: Try to alter radically a piece of English verse, by changing the informed substance while sticking closely to

the argument. You may come up with something better than the original, but not with anything that can be called an exact equivalent of the original. Old hat again.

5

We return to our question: What is the status in being of those ingredients of the poem that are contributed to it by the creative act? If one denies genuine spontaneity, novelty, the question was answered in the second paragraph of this paper. If one affirms spontaneity, one is in deep trouble, because the only solution to the problem—at least the only one I can see—is one that is profoundly repugnant to the majority of our contemporary teachers of philosophy.

In broad strokes, the solution runs something like this: The symbolic medium of language presents to us the informed substance of the poem. Like all media, language is ephemeral. But the informed meanings and values that constitute the object of the poem, in one sense are not ephemeral, for they do not have their source in existence, in the spacio-temporal realm. We all know that Galileo banished from what he called the real world—the world of classical mechanics—those qualities that later came to be known as secondary and tertiary. They have been kept out of this so-called real world by strong philosophical traditions. If we believe that values are functions of human life and can be explained exhaustively in psychological terms, the only kind of creativity that we can accept is that which comes from shuffling the components of experience. We are thrown back on John Locke's notion of mind—a *tabula*, before the birth of the child, so *rasa* that the fingerprints of an angel can be seen on it. On this view the dignity of poetry and the other arts is denied, for they are denied indispensability and, to come to our problem, on this view we cannot fully account for the sense of superior reality imparted to some of us by a poem.

It is desirable to state candidly that, with Croce and Cassirer for guides, what I propose is to point the way back to some sort of platonism. I have written "some sort of" and write "platonism" in small case, because I do not want to make the greatest philosopher of our civilization, who also was one of its great poets, responsible for my views; and that, for two reasons: the first is that I have neither the learning nor the temperament to be a Platonist in capitals; and the second is that I cannot accept the psychology on which Plato—insofar as I understand him—grounded his theory of our knowledge of the forms. Plato believed that we are endowed with the faculty of Reason, which trained in the proper moral and cognitive manner, could be brought to apprehend forms in their immaculate purity. Note that the platonic theory of forms that I am alluding to here is a simplified travesty. It is mentioned only to make the point that while I believe it is necessary to assert that forms have status in being that is more than nominal, I cannot agree with Plato that all forms can be apprehended by us in their full purity. When we come upon them, we find them informing matter. It is the substantiated form, or the informed substance, that the poet offers us for our perception. Neither can a philosopher get at any other kind of poetry. The beauty of the *Iliad*, *King Lear*, and not to quarrel with James's taste, even *Ivan-*



*hoe*, is the only kind of beauty that we'll ever be able to grasp. Or perhaps I should say, that the majority of men are ever able to grasp: for Plato seems to have been capable of an experience not given to the majority of men. Pure forms, untainted by matter, pure intelligible objects, are objects fully accessible to men. But ordinarily we would hardly call them beautiful. If, as it seems, such objects were for Plato the highest form of beauty, ordinary men would say they can hardly be expected to emulate such severity. But you have already noted that this is too rough and simplifying a way of disposing of the difficult and unyielding problem of the beauty of intelligible objects—whether in mathematics, metaphysics, or wherever they are to be found. That beauty can be claimed for them I do not wish to deny; indeed, I affirm it. But they do not fall within the purview of ordinary aesthetics because they lack what Prall called aesthetic surface.

## 6

The critic may reply: informed substance as an object of contemplation is not something over which there needs be quarrel. The question that is going to divide us is the source of the forms that do the informing and of the substance that is informed. How did they come about? In short, what do you have to say about the creative experience, to make us take seriously the claim you make for genuine spontaneity in the mind and genuine novelty in the object?

I am going to tell you a story about the act of creation. At present, I believe, that is the best that can be done in non-mechanistic terms. And it is because little is known about that aspect of the act of making a poem, as distinct from copying, or of anything else for that matter, that takes place below the level of consciousness. It is below this level where I believe the genuinely creative part of the act takes place. If for any reason, we do not like the notion of the unconscious, we will have to say that the creative act—or that part of it hidden from inspection—takes place in our organism, chiefly perhaps in the brain. I believe much is lost and little gained—if anything at all—by pushing the act of creation from the psychological to the physiological level. For all the troubles we have with the notion of the unconscious, it does help to tie up a lot of phenomena that before its Freudian meaning came into use, remained uncorrelated. But the unconscious I have in mind is, if you like, a bastard unconscious, not the pure-blooded, rigidly deterministic, nineteenth-century notion Freud left us. The creative act is an act that involves some spontaneity, genuine creativity. Below the reach of self-awareness, the miracle takes place. And if anyone charges that the dirty word I just used, the word “miracle,” puts me among the obscurantists, I will ask him to give us a non-mechanistic explanation of the creative act. When he does, I shall withdraw the word “miracle” and apologize for using it. In the meantime, I beg you to remember Freud's words: “Before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms.” Freud of course meant psychoanalysis, but the statement applies to behavioral analysis all the more, or any kind of analysis so far known.

It should be noted that I have been considering the creative activity and not its occasion. A poet may undertake to make a poem on order, or be-

cause "the germ of the story," in Henry James's phrase, is suggested to him at a dinner party; or because a friend dies by drowning or is killed in the bull ring; or quite accidentally, it is suggested to him as he dips a bit of cake. Nor do I want to convey the idea that the act takes place entirely out of the reach of consciousness and somehow free from the trained skills, the accepted conventions, the rules if you allow the word, and the rest of the multitude of guiding habits formulated or not, that direct the poet in his choosing and rejecting forms, themes, images, and the rest of the components that criticism tells us make up the finished object. But the conscious process is not wholly unknown, as I believe the unconscious is. I have referred to the conscious activity in passing, under the rubric of the labor of the file, because I am chiefly concerned with emphasizing the unconscious activity in order to focus on the status in being of the meanings and values that the creative act discovers. The thesis, if I may repeat, is that if we take the creative act seriously, the values and meanings that in one sense must be said to be the product of discovery are in another sense the product of genuine creativity. It is the novelty imported by creativity that in part elicits the conviction of reality with which we sweat. Thus, if status in being at the spacio-temporal level, at the level of existence, were the only realm of being, my problem would not be susceptible of solution.

The poet creates meanings and values, since before the act of making the poem, he knew nothing about them, or very little, and what he knew, if anything, was obscure and inchoate—which is to say he did not really know them. But to create them he had to dive to the very bottom of his mind, way below the level of awareness, in order to discover them. A better metaphor than that of the diver would be the following: The creative mind somehow stirs its own bottom, roiling what has been turbidly settled on it, thus seeking to bring up to the surface of awareness what it has disturbed. It wants something although it does not know, or does not know clearly, what it wants. But the other metaphor is easier to handle in a succinct manner. The poet dives into the darkness. He feels what he is looking for but does not really know what it is; it is something, matter without form, and forms free from the substance they are always found informing at the level of awareness. Stuff without shape and shape without stuff: here are two basic ingredients of the creative act. But we have to add the power of the poet's mind that we may assume brings about the synthesis. We call it his creative energy, or the primary imagination. I would not talk about the act by saying it was a rehearsal of the primordial act of creation, but there is no objection to saying that it is a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation. This language has been used, not to conceal our thought, but to camouflage our ignorance. There is no objection to using language in this way as long as we keep vividly before our minds just what we are doing. The trouble begins when we take these verbal disguises to be genuine explanations.

Much more light is needed on the most puzzling aspect of creativity. To the mechanistic mind, of course, the light is not considered anything but obscurantistic darkness. Again, I do not claim the following remarks to be an explanation. Like Coleridge's words, they represent an effort to catch a bird that is not there by putting salt on its tail with an empty saltshaker. Let us imagine a spider

that has been forced to produce thread beyond its capacities by the food we have given it. Such is the creative mind. It produces out of itself beyond the matter and forms for art that it has taken in. What it finally produces comes both from formal and material resources that have been imported and also from that which is contributed by the poet out of his own private, home-made resources. The spider has been fed, but the food it took does not account exhaustively for the amount and quality of the thread it produced. It is this, the poet's own, totally idiotic, contribution, that gives his product the brilliant power of absorption that is its novelty. The feeling of reality turns out to be more than mere feeling. It comes to the object not merely because of the subject's near absolute absorption in the object, but also because the object possesses, as the result of a genuinely creative act, much more than is available to the rest of us prior to the poet's making of his poem.

Nominalistic and scientific minds will find this story ridiculous because John Locke did his job so well that in spite of Leibniz, who demolished the first book of the *Essay*, Locke convinced the empiricists, British and French, that the notion of innate ideas was philosophically deplorable. And why? It does not take close reading to see that Locke's theoretical argument against innate ideas was in error, because he did not understand what the term "innate idea" meant, and that the gravamen of his criticism was purely ideological—innate ideas were the refuge of absolutism. But Leibniz's answer was the basis of a more adequate notion of the mind than that of the British empiricists. There is nothing in the mind other than that which comes from experience, said Locke. Yes, nothing said Leibniz, except the mind itself.

We all know that the guards of the *tabula rasa* orthodoxy have kept in line a large number of thinkers in England, the United States, and at least in the eighteenth century, in France. The faith in it is strong and the sanctions against those who stray from the orthodoxy are harsh. The contrary belief has recently been called "disgusting" by a reputed teacher of philosophy. Nor is he the only one confronted with heresy, to display the irenic temperament of a rational mind. However, at this very moment, as you know, the faith in the *tabula rasa* is threatened by a few rebels from a discipline from which, I dare say, the regime expected no trouble—the linguistic. But I feel that while in philosophy one can't look gift horses too closely in the mouth, and that the help against the entrenched orthodoxy brought us by some linguists is welcome, we did not really need this help. Long before it arrived some of us were confident that the *tabula*, even John Locke's own baby *tabula*, had never been entirely *rasa*, but had many scratches on it before old Locke let out his first baby wail. It is however gratifying, if to nothing else, to one's vanity, to be able to greet the linguistic volunteers who are helping us push the *tabula rasists* into the cave of paleo-empiricism.

Concerned with advancing a theory of the genesis of the "matter for art" used by the human mind that was not mechanistic, Jung told a different kind of story than the one I sketched above. He was interested in the philogenetic side of the problem. And to make some headway into the puzzle he had to introduce some weird characters into his story: a collective unconscious, a racial memory, and numerous archetypes. Why these characters should have brought down on

Jung's learned head the implacable contempt that has been heaped on it, is a story that does not exactly belong here. Enough to say that it is one of the many proofs we have of the open mind of contemporary thinkers.

I have introduced Jung, not to declare my agreement with him but to point out that we are faced with a genuine problem. Stories do not solve it. But at least they indicate with some clarity where mechanistic, scientistic, explanations fail.

We must still ask the question: Does the diver, of whom I was speaking above, use ingredients that he did not create in the making of his poem? I return to this question to emphasize strongly that the creative act does not create altogether out of nothing. Probably the largest amount of informed substance is discovered. But the poet manages to alter what he finds or discovers, as well as what he creates. In the making of a poem there is creation and there is discovery. The individual talent does not work outside a tradition.

I hope that this story has done what stories sometimes do, that is, throw light on the act of creation, by pointing out why genuine creativity remains so far unexplained. Trusting that it did, we are now able to finish our discussion.

We have seen that a psychological explanation accounts to some extent for the conviction of reality that a poem sometimes elicits. But this conviction arises also from the revealed meanings and values that the reader grasps. These are, to some extent, at least, new for the reader. And to that extent they lend radiance to the object of the poem. The object of the poem, more "utterly utter," is the product of genuine creativity.

We have arrived at the end of the tour. I do not claim originality for the views I have presented to you. In philosophy, originality is somewhat suspect. I can easily name some of the sources from which I have helped myself generously. Croce, the Bradley of the inaugural lecture, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," Samuel Alexander, and other thinkers, the majority idealists, like the John Dewey of *Art As Experience*. The doctrine I have put before you is offered as a sort of Platonism. It may not be the real Plato, for scholars are still fighting as to who is in possession of the true mummy. But there is something about my Plato that gives me confidence that I have presented to you a somewhat recognizable portrait, and that is his bushy beard. If you remember how that formidable philosopher, Quine, as he was recently called, and a large majority of contemporary teachers of philosophy, cordially detest the bushy beard of Plato, and with hands devoid of piety would shave it off, I flatter myself that the beard is bushy enough for my picture to be true Plato. May I close by claiming with diffidence that whether I have presented to you the real Plato, or a pseudo-Plato, or no Plato at all but the product of my ignorance exclusively, it has been with the aid of someone I have taken for Plato that I have tried to get at the complexities of poetry that neither the defenders of the *tabula rasa*, nor the champions of positivistic philosophy of science, nor nominalists, nor linguistic analysts can approach.

---