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Dear Father Menten:

May I trespass on your time with a comment on a phrase sentence or two in your Notes on Aed, which I have seen the current issue of the Newsletter (Vol. 14, No. 3, an issue published from Conception Seminary, Conception, Mo.)? The sentences are "Primarily a factum means what it is. It is interesting primarily for itself, not for its subject or its relation to its subject." }

These two sentences are concerned with the relationship of formal & final causes, and one way of assessing their truth or usefulness is to consider the nature of final causes. Another way is to appeal to the repeated assertions of the proponents of progressivist fine arts, who have accustomed our ears to this assertion.

A formal cause is that condition in a thing which establishes its nature as the kind of thing it is. It is a specifying principle, and at the same time a pattern. The parts of which a thing is made, its molecules, atoms & subatomic particles, are held together in an order which makes the thing what it is rather than something else. This order is its formal cause. This is true of course of both natural & artificial things, the main difference between these classes being the difference between the ways in which the specifying patterns are generated. In nature their origin is wrapped in mystery, whereas in artifice we can know something of how creative patterns, & their corresponding imaginative mental images, and embodied shapes, come to be produced. But in every case the formal condition for a thing (the formal cause is a notoriously increased translation of actus) is a condition of orderly arrangement of its material particles.

A final cause is the good which a thing comes into being to serve or effect ~~in~~ either in itself or in ^{an} other being or being.

A chain, as you say, is made to be set in, a ^{cup} ~~chain~~ ^{held} ~~be~~ ^{clunk} ~~be~~ ^{clunk}
 out of ~~and~~ ~~held~~, and a picture to serve some less material
 purpose through being looked at. It is to provide some service to
 some human being. From the teleological point of view, the whole
 of the vast creation is a neat complicated ~~whole~~ system of chains of
 ends + means. Every creature both serves other creatures and is served
 by them, working upward to man, whose purpose in life is to
 serve God and his neighbors, and thus achieve the final good for
 which he was created. The ^{infant} ~~young~~ science of ecology is timidly
 attempting to study this ~~the~~ vast system of mutually services
 + goals at the natural level. Every traditionalist thinker regards
 artificial as the extension of this natural system to the mental
 world of human beings. ~~Plants~~ Plants and animals ^{+ other services} provide food for
 each other in an ascending scale, which is taken up by man
 the artist who supplies services to his brethren in obedience to
 the will of God. He is serving the artist must create new
 beings and these have their own patterns on formal conditions
 — are something, as they say, in their own right. But
 they only are ^{something} because it is their purpose to exist —
 long to do or effect something. The final is the Causa Causa-
Reum, the first ^{element} ~~step~~ in the artistic process.

We can thus see (final + formal) causes as transcendent-
 al relationships. The formal is a relationship of a thing to its
 parts, for it is the pattern of its parts that make it what it is,
 iron rather than gold, dog rather than cat, man rather than
 monkey. And the final is a relationship of a thing to the
 environmental pattern of which it is a part, + in which it plays
 its part, in the last analysis to the entire cosmos. Thus what a
 thing is depends on a relationship of parts to whole inwardly, +
 what it does depends on a relationship of parts to whole outwardly.
 And these are transcendental relationships, because they exist in

every conceivable object. Even in a chaotic universe, there would be relationships inwards & outwards of some kind, as long as the chaos was so incomplete that anything like the discrete & individual objects could be discerned in it.

Everything both is and does. If this is true, why should we allow the extreme moderns who are certainly confused about their work if anyone in the world is confused to brand us their pleasure and respect it for them? The picture "is interesting primarily for itself, not for its subject, or for its relation to its subject." Pictures are made for many reasons, many good reasons and some bad ones. ~~All~~ All these pictures are something. They only stop being something when they are so discarded as to stop being pictures. A very large number of pictures have subjects, and these subjects are intimately related to them. A portrait of my father helps me to try to live up to the principles for which my father stood, and for which in my mind he stands. An icon of the Holy Mother & the Divine Child, helps me to pray better than I could without it. The landscape in the dining room reminds me of what a marvellous world the Creator has made for me, and how grateful I should always be for it. The paint on the wall of the room where I write is paint spread on a surface, and it is pleasing to me but I do not call it a picture. Even if I added stripes, or diaper patterns or what not to it to make it more pleasing, I would still hardly call it a picture, and this is because it has no subject. It says nothing to me that is important. It means nothing and therefore serves me only as a very simple good. ~~Thus~~ By subject I do not mean that the painting must be naturalistic or narrative. It may be as geometric as Baskara's algebraic proof of the Pythagorean theorem. That, to my fancy, is a ~~not~~ very pretty subject if well painted, and one of considerable interest and importance. But if a picture is to

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be part of the great pattern of man the maker serving man the user, and serving him on any kind of a human level, it must mean something or it cannot achieve anything. To say that it is its own meaning is to say that it has no meaning, and to say that it has no meaning is an honest statement.

And about the word "interesting" — "it is interesting primarily for itself —" Cannot we say "it is useful because it serves such and such a good purpose (final cause)", or "it is admirable in that it is such a perfect example of its kind, (formal cause)"? ~~It is~~ ^{is it not} Goodness and Truth that we seek in works of art, not interest?

A few lines further down you quote Eric Gill as saying: — "Take care of being, and beauty will take care of herself." I am fairly familiar with Gill's writing + thinking, but I do not remember exactly this. In his book Beauty Looks After Herself, Sheed + Ward, 1933, Chapter XIII, entitled Beauty Looks After Herself, the last sentence in this chapter (is) "Look after goodness and truth, and beauty will take care of herself." * This seems to me a truer and better statement, as it includes specifically the all-important element of final cause. And it can be expanded into "If you make a thing which is true to its nature, and useful for its purpose, you will find that it is beautiful also whether or not you intended it to be so."

It seems to me probable that you have been misquoted in the little publication I am sending you under another cover in case you write to protest the misquotations.

I had not intended to write at such length. Please forgive it. My only excuse is the importance of the subject, and the necessity that is upon

* The phrase itself was borrowed from W.R. Inge. (Colquhoun note)

us of expressing it as well as we can. Sincerely yours, G.C.