

Metaphysical poetry is a poetry which, like that of the 'Divine Commedia' has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence. Its themes are the simplest experiences of the surface of life, sorrow and joy, love and battle, the peace of the country, the bustle and stir of towns, but equally the boldest conceptions, the profoundest intuitions, the subtlest and most complex classifications and discourse of reason, if into these the poet can carry sensation, make of them passionate experiences communicable in vivid and moving imagery, in rich and varied harmonies. Donne is metaphysical not only in virtue of his scholasticism, but by his deep reflective interest in the experiences of which his poetry is the expression, the new psychological curiosity with which he writes of love and religion. The divine poets who follow Donne have each the inherited metaphysic, if one may so call it, of the church to which he is attached, Catholic or Anglican. But none of the poets has for his main theme a metaphysic like that of Epicurus or St. Thomas passionately apprehended and imaginately expounded. In Donne, passionate thinking is always apt to become metaphysical, probing and investigating the experience from which it takes its rise. Of him, Dryden says that he affects metaphysics not only in his satires but in his amorous verses where nature only should reign, and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy when he should engage their hearts and entertain them with softness of love. If we go one step farther

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