The UNIVERSITY BOOKMAN

A Quarterly Review

Edited by Russell Kirk

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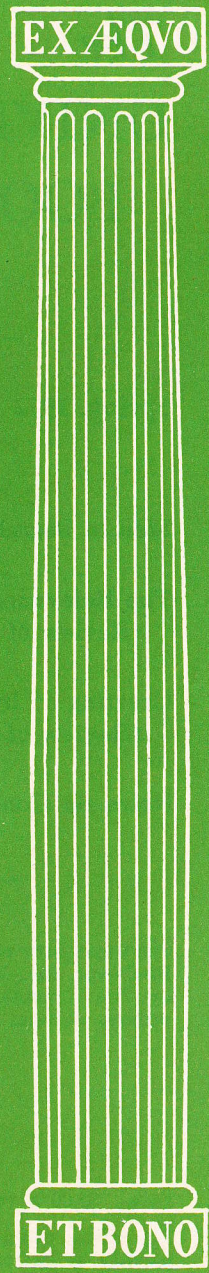

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CONTENTS

Men in Search of Glory ..... James V. Schall 51

The Relevance of T. S. Eliot ..... Arther S. Trace 63
(Review of Russell Kirk's *Eliot and His Age*)

Creating an Intellectual Proletariat .... Tommy W. Rogers 67
(Review of Ivar Berg's *Education and Jobs*)

Notes on Contributors 71

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Men in Search of Glory

JAMES V. SCHALL

ONCE IN A RARE WHILE, we come across a sentence or a phrase that keeps ringing in our memory, ringing perhaps because it sounds at least partly true, mostly because of the very sound itself. Two lines keep coming back to me now. I am not, indeed, fully sure what they mean, yet they strike me somehow as being of more than ordinary importance. Perhaps by writing them down, I can understand them, or forget them. The first I found in an essay in *Corriere della Sera* (March 14, 1971) about the chairman of the Italian Parliamentary Commission charged with investigating the Mafia. The writer, Egidio Sterpa, worried to himself if the frequent accusations were that this minister (Cattanei)—whom Sterpa called, appropriately, *"lo Sherlock Holmes dell'Antimafia"*—was merely seeking his own political advancement.

On second thought, however, Sterpa questioned his own premise—is such concern for political advancement really so bad? Even more fundamentally, *"la democrazia ha bisogno di gente alla ricerca di gloria. . . ."* That is the sentence I cannot forget—"democracy has need of men who search for glory. . . ." There are needs and realities beyond the ordinary, beyond even political ambitioning and reward that men also search for. There are simply some rewards beyond politics. "Glory," to be sure, is both a divine attribute—*soli Deo gloria*, Calvin said—and a Machiavellian one—*soli principi gloria*. The *doxa*, the *gloria* is the concentration, as it were, of something's goodness and beauty merely for its own splendor. What it already is, is that for which all else is. To limit the requirement of society and man merely to motives of greed or reward or self-interest is to imprison.

The second phrase I cannot quite forget was in *La Stampa* (February 26, 1971), written in connection with the thesis of the young Soviet critic, Andrei Amalrik, the one who questioned whether there would even be a Soviet Union by 1984. Nicola Chiaromonte brooded about this unexpected argument because he feared the same disease that was sapping the spiritual strength of Russia was also at an advanced stage in the West. Are we really

so advanced over the baseness of a Soviet society whose admitted highest earthly norms are now, by force of its own logic, not the "*ricerca di gloria*" but the "*ricerca di benessere materiali*," the crude search for material welfare, for personal advantage, for merely trying to survive by avoiding any further criteria for questioning anything?

Chiaromonte is an aristocrat for whom the pedestrian wants of the masses are a yoke and a weight on them and their society, for whom an interest in material welfare means necessarily a denial of the spiritual. "Can we really say," he asks, "that in our lands the thought of the majority is much elevated above that of the 'manual level' (as in Russia)? We have certainly a 'mechanized' level and even a 'televised' level. But is that so superior to the manual?" The he adds—and this is the sentence that bothers me —"*oggi, il peggior nemico dell'uomo é l'ottimismo*"—today, man's greatest enemy is optimism. This optimism is evil because it causes our consciences to sleep, and this merely worsens the destructive forces already at work in our society.

THIS, OF COURSE, is rather a somber outlook. The English put it better. Last fall, I remember buying the last copy of *Punch* in a San Francisco bookshop on Geary Street. The trouble with the English, it chided, was that they were too polite. The reason they never got ahead in the world was because they did not, like the Americans, complain about everything. Only those groups that bitch and gripe, that insist on how badly off they are ever get ahead in this cruel world. "Given a choice between two evils," the English were advised by this impeccable source, "*choose both!* Find a little bad in the best of things. . . ."

W. C. Fields used to think this was the main English problem also. Robert Lewis Taylor writes of him: "The lopsided romance between Fields and the English continued off and on, for years. On subsequent tours, at each unusual expression of their good manners, he worked out some compensating mischief." (*W. C. Fields: His Follies and Fortunes*, Signet, 1967, p. 77). Apparently, Fields even developed his philosophy of "never give a sucker an even break" from his experience with the English. He seems to have gained his basic insight from watching an American confidence man by the name of "Doc" Atterbury operate in this incident:

> In Fields' presence, Atterbury had taken a seat on a train and lit a cigar, in violation of the rules, as stated clearly in every car. A stranger on the opposite seat demurred, pointing to the sign. Gazing serenely out of the window, Atterbury continued to smoke, pausing only to flick off his ash. The stranger became increasingly upset and argumentative. At length he pulled out a card and cried, "Perhaps you don't know who I am, sir?" Atterbury's scrutiny of the landscape was undisturbed, but the complainant succeeded in forcing the card between two of his fingers, after which Atterbury put the card in his vest pocket. At this moment the conductor arrived, and the stranger, arising, burst into an impassioned protest. When he had finished, the conductor began a reproachful lecture. Atterbury, still studying the countryside, abstractedly drew out the card and handed it over. "Oh, that's different, sir," said the conductor, and led the stranger away, promising to find him a seat elsewhere [p. 80].

There is something pleasantly perverse about our lot. Such a reminder, at times, is worth a fortune. I bought this biography last spring at a rummage sale in Rome for fifty lire, about eight cents. The best things in life are almost free.

MEN in search of glory, optimism is our worst enemy, find a little bad in the best of things, never give a sucker an even break—such are the contrasts and contradictions of our times, indeed of our lot. What I wish to do here is to pursue this notion of the curious way our intellectual and political history has overturned itself in recent years. There is something at work here that we do well to pay attention to. It is, I suspect, that our restlessness is not altogether of our own making.

In John Berryman's warm and human poem, "Five Addresses to the Lord" (*Saturday Review*, 26 Oct. 1970), we read:

> incomprehensible to man your ways.
> Maybe the Devil after all exists.
> "I don't try to reconcile anything," said the poet at eighty,
> "this is a damned strange world" [p. 23].

And Isaac Bashevis Singer remarked in his delightful memoirs, "things happen in life so fantastic that no imagination could have invented them." (*In My Father's Court*, New York, 1966, p. 116.)

A damned strange world, so fantastic that no one could have invented it—such is, I suspect, the truth not only of our personal lives, but of the events of history and politics themselves, events, moods, reasons, and passions which charge our public world. The French philosopher Jacques Monod is currently fond of proving

that all is explained by statistical probabilities, by chance. But if this were so there is really nothing to explain, not even statistics. And besides, the strange and the fantastic are precisely what is outside of statistics. And the improbable, the strange, the fantastic, it seems to me anyhow, happen all about us.

In a recent edition of Rome's Communist daily, for example, the headlines screamed about fascist plots, the Resistance, the preservation of Democracy, almost as if you could look out the window and see the Brownshirts instead of only PCI posters, almost as if *L'Unità* were somehow itself a well-tried bastion of liberal thought. "Let us go all the way to the bottom to strike the promoters, financiers, and accomplices of this vast reactionary plot!" (March 18, 1971.) How nice it is to have an enemy again! For *L'Unità*, alas, the moral quality of a street fight depends upon who promotes it. The ethical right to take to the barricades, it seems, is the private property of the Left—excuse me, of the Left which follows *L'Unità*.

Among the liberals, however, there is none of this one-sided view. All parties, left and right, must have equal rights to demonstrate and to be heard. On February 19, 1971, the noted German weekly, *Die Zeit*, celebrated its 25th Anniversary. The reasonable, fair, calm liberal has fallen on evil days. *Die Zeit* epitomized the German hope that we would never again have to worry about unethical and degrading forms of government, that mankind had finally learned.

A couple of months ago, I was inadvertently on a back street behind the American embassy on the Via Veneto, on the Via Lucullo, I believe, where I had never been before. On the side of a quite modern-looking building was a sign saying that this was the site of the Nazi Military Tribunal during the Occupation of Rome. So, I guess, *L'Unità* does have much to remember as does *Die Zeit*.

In his editorial, "*Zwischen allen Stühlen . . . was gilt heute noch der Liberalismus*," Marion Gräfin Dönhoff vainly tried to revivify the liberal ideals of mutual tolerance and freedom, this time not alone against the "fascists" *all'Unità*, but against mainly the German Left where, I suspect, the real source of modern fascism lies. How strange, how fantastic it seems that after a mere quarter of a

century, leading rational liberals, almost pleadingly, would have to defend their very philosophical and political existence against those who accuse them of being—the German is descriptive—"*Wischi-Waschi-Bürgers*," men who merely talk but do not know how to act. "We have today men who think they can overcome the thousand-year-old problem of the exploitation of men by men in the course of a single working day. . . ." The radicals of the movement make an idol of unreflected acts, "acts done without purpose or thought, without hesitation or hindsight." "Such political romantics who are reaching for the stars," Dönhoff concluded, "have constantly made this world unlivable—thus the counterweight of the liberals today is indispensable."

Yet, this calm and admittedly necessary liberal vision, it seems to me, however indispensable, still has failed to grasp the reasons for its own crisis in the contemporary world. Even the liberal sees himself only as a "counterweight" and not as the one who is reaching for the stars. Why, 25 years later, have the romantics and the fanatics everywhere seemed to have gained so much intellectual and ethical impetus? The free market of ideas—"the legitimate place of the liberals," Dönhoff puts it, "is between all chairs"—has not in fact worked well. This is precisely the flaw of all classical liberal thought—that is, theoretical indifference to ends, the belief that it is all merely a reaching for the stars. "It does not so much depend upon the purposes—everyone ultimately has sublime ends—but above all the means with which each end shall be achieved, on the methods with which man seeks to accomplish them."

Man, none the less, does not live by means alone. What the current antiliberal, revolutionary moods are about is specifically the moral need of ends to justify and to satisfy. No longer is it enough to say that we must be "liberal" with regard to unknown or unknowable ends. We vastly misinterpret our times, in my view, if we assume the essential question—political or religious—is not about a glory to be searched for and, hopefully, to be gained.

John Cardinal Heenan recently gave a sermon in Dublin in which he said that Britain is a "post-Christian nation, a land of former believers. . . . The people have not rejected Christianity—it is only that religion is no longer regarded as important or, as they say nowadays, relevant." (*Herald Tribune*, Paris, March 15, 1971.) I

believe myself, however, that it is not important for religion to be relevant—this may be its greatest contemporary mistake—but to be right and holy. Nor do I think that because organized religion is not recognized that we are not therefore confronted with a time that is almost overly religious, indeed mystical. "The reachers for the stars" have gained the day as the German liberal has well sensed. And *Time*, for once, may not be far from wrong about the importance of "the Jesus revolution" (June 21, 1971). Our problem is in fact the spiritual quality, the orthodoxy, as it were, of these new politico-mystical faiths.

Perhaps, in this regard, the paradoxical fate of the Jews and the Muslims in recent years is worth some attention. In the post-war years, the Jew, of course, has been understandably the first to react against any sign of fascism with its antisemitic overtones. No one can blame him for that. Thus it might seem that *L'Unità*, which sees fascists everywhere, and the Jew might have much in common. But the Jew is not faring at all well in the Soviet Union these days, nor among the leftist movements of the West. As Seymour Martin Lipset has well noted, what we have forgotten is that classical socialist and Marxist thought has always had a basic antisemitic tinge, especially when led by ex-Jews.

American and European Jews, then, have been used to favoring so-called leftist movements since World War I, only to discover belatedly and at their peril that their major enemy is now rising out of these very sources. It is no accident to find radical liberal, Christian, socialist, and black sects favoring the Arabs. "The fact that this time the predominant weight of the antisemitic thrust is on the Left rather than on the Right will surprise only those who are unaware of the considerable literature on antisemitism in socialist and other leftist movements." ("The Socialism of Fools," *New York Times Magazine*, January 3, 1971, p. 34.) The socialists have not forgotten that the Jews are also largely capitalists.

But in the long run, the Arabs—or better, Islam—will fare little better. It is by no means clear that freedom of worship, freedom of political and religious activity is better for the Muslim in Russia, Yugoslavia, or Bulgaria than it is for the Jew. Indeed, in many ways, it may become worse if the political situation should change slightly. The example of Albania—perhaps for the moment not at the center of our attention—is something the Arab

world speaks precious little about in high worldly councils, but it surely cannot overlook its potential implications. The Albanian Communist Party has recently begun a bitter struggle against all religion, but especially against Islam which is looked upon as a cause of the backwardness of that country.

"The struggle against religion should perhaps be judged from a more profound historical and social view," Enzo Bettiza has written. "In a country where three-fourths of the people are Muslims, as in Albania, the religious struggle is, in the first place, against Islam and the Islamic heritage" (*"L'Ateismo programmato di Tirana," Corriere della Sera*, March 14, 1971). Active atheism is seen as the common substitute for all religions, a way to separate the people from their past. This eventuality "stupifies not only Western observers, but also, if not more, certain exponents of the Third World, Muslim or South American. Those regimes with strong confessional bases such as Algiers or Cairo certainly cannot understand or consent to the closing of mosques in Tirana. Nor can a Red-tinged Brazilian or Chilean priest approve the transformation of churches into basketball courts." Both the revolutionary and modernization elements of current Marxism are ultimately anti-Islamic as well as anti-Jewish.

WESTERN THINKERS of a distinctly liberal training, I believe, commonly underestimate the strength of ideology and religion. Since their world-view can contain in itself no absolutes, neither can anyone else's. Consequently, they consistently misjudge not merely the aberrations of absolute beliefs—and of these there are, to be sure, many—but also their power and necessity in the world. Man simply will not leave absolutes alone so that any theory which advises him to do so is bound to come to despair in confrontation with actual men. Averell Harriman is a good example of this:

> The actual ideological divergencies between the USSR and the U.S.A. are not based on their economic systems, but on the principle of the relation between the state and the citizens. I believe that with time, also in the USSR, they will move themselves toward respect for the will of the people, namely toward the concept of individual liberty and of the legal state which we have inherited from the English tradition [*"I Grandi a Tavolino," La Stampa*, March 17, 1971].

Professor R. Löwenthal of Berlin believes that the Soviets are in

a period of decline, that technological development practitioners there have won out over the revolutionists, that Mother Russia has finally conquered the internationalism of the classic Marxist party. (Cf. M. Coriat, *"La problématique du professeur Löwenthal: L'avenir idéologique de L'URSS," Journal de Genève*, Feb. 6-7, 1971.) Yet, no one could even watch the Clay-Frazier fight in the Soviet Union, the Jews complain every day, writers are more and more suppressed, we all remember Czechoslovakia which, were the evolving theory really true, should not have happened, the Soviet navy sails the seven seas, and the balance of intercontinental missiles has now shifted to favor Russia.

I asked a Yugoslav friend of mine recently what will happen when Tito is gone. "It will depend mainly on the Russians," he laconically told me. In other words, I feel such optimism about future changes misses the essential point about the ideological and spiritual strength of Soviet belief. The essential relativism of liberal theory continues to minimize and therefore misunderstand the reasons why most men act. Perhaps Chiaromonte was right. Such optimism may be our greatest enemy.

WE ARE, no doubt, ideologically and spiritually discontented. We know that some absolute order does exist, that it takes some kind of moral zeal and earnestness to discover it. The enthusiasm and sincerity are everywhere present among us. Yet, at same time, we know that there can be false gods which can likewise be highly spiritual. We begin to suspect with John Berryman that "maybe after all the Devil exists." We should not, however, devaluate too much our sense of the inadequacy and the revolutionary power it calls forth. Sir Peter Medawar was right:

> Superimposed on all particular causes of complaint is a more general cause of dissatisfaction. Bacon's belief in the cultivation of science for the 'merit and emolument of life' has always been repugnant to those who have taken it for granted that comfort and prosperity imply spiritual impoverishment. But the real trouble nowadays has very little to do with material prosperity or technology or with our misgivings about the power of research and learning generally to make the world a better place. The real trouble is our acute sense of human failure and mismanagement, a new and specially aggressive sense of the inadequacy of man ["On Effecting All Things Possible," *The Advancement of Science*, September 1969, p. 8].

Material prosperity is not a necessary sign of spiritual impoverishment, nor is it, on the other hand, the answer to man's ultimate meaning, as so many social religious movements want to make it today. I wonder sometimes if anyone else today is struck, as I am, by the curious number of religious, revolutionary mystics who believe that materialism is the answer to man's spiritual problems.

Consequently, there is both a secular and a spiritual response to this sense of human inadequacy—indeed, they are both somehow identified since the reason for our spiritual inadequacy is, paradoxically, the cause of our secular hope. In a way, it is fascinating that our inadequacies were ever considered reasons for despair rather than as gifts which is what they in truth are. "Likewise, mankind, symbolized in Israel," Rabbi David Goldberg has written,

> is not to be regarded as the perfected crown of God's creation. Man is an incomplete creature who must struggle through the hardships and sufferings of this world toward his goal of union with God. God and man, the father and his child, will come together at the end, when man has reached spiritual maturity. And then God will be fulfilled ["The Survival of the Jewish Faith," *The Times*, London, February 6, 1971].

There is, in other words, both a reason why the earth is incomplete and why man has a definitive goal which is his alone. His incompleteness, as it were, is precisely why he begins to be, why he can ultimately accomplish something, why, finally, what he seeks is not his at all. Absolute ideologies and religions, consequently, are not destructive because they are absolute, as liberal thought has insisted on believing, but because there are false absolutes.

WE ARE, furthermore, bound up with the cosmos even in our finiteness. Contrary to the common notion of the physical scientists who are too often prone to see no cosmic meaning to human life or any relation between the success of human life on earth and its place in the cosmos, I believe that the one implies the other. We have, in a way, a spiritual necessity to go out of ourselves, to complete ourselves because we really are to transform the earth for man. Buckminster Fuller makes this point in his usual graphic manner:

> We are going to have to learn how to pack into a little portable electrochemical system of about the size and weight of one large air-travel suitcase all the life supporting technology necessary to complement man's integral organic processing, with possibly an additional weekly milk-bottle full of metabolic essentials rocketed to each astronaut from his mother

> spacecraft, Earth. When and if humanity learns how to support human life successfully anywhere in the universe, the logistic economies of doing so well become so inherently efficient and satisfactory that then, and then alone, we may for the first time make all humanity a success both here and about our space vehicle, Earth ["Vertical Is To Live—Horizontal Is To Die," *The American Scholar*, Winter 1969-70, p. 44].

And yet, is this whole effort "worthwhile," will it satisfy no matter how grandiose the ultimate scale may be? Of course it will not. The discovery of fire, of the Cape of Good Hope, of the steam engine, of the New World, of nuclear energy were no more absolute than the discovery and classification of the last star will be.

There is, then, an intense need to know that man has an ultimate value over and beyond and through what he can accomplish in the universe. This is what our contemporary revolutions and unrests are mainly about in their spiritual origins. We cannot, finally, be spiritual liberals. What we do, rather, is freely to choose ultimates. Jean-Marie le Blond has noted that we all have the psychological experience of knowing our own value through the love and recognition of others. Without this, we cannot be saved from the despair of insignificance and from a sense of inadequacy.

> This elementary intersubjective experience leads us to place in question the value of which humanity as a whole attributes to itself. In effect, on reflection, if humanity recognizes itself as being all alone in the dereliction on an immense universe, it will feel itself incapable of giving itself any true value. Here arises the evocation of Another capable of absolutely valorizing it ["*Après le Christianisme*," *Christus*, July 1968, p. 303].

The world is, indeed, stranger and more fantastic than we could ever imagine. Even more, there is even a faint glimmer of hope that it all might make some sense after all.

And yet, while I believe there is a strong and intelligent case that can be made for precisely sense and hope, I am convinced that the generations coming along do not know what this sense and hope is. Our academic and cultural institutions no longer present any real way for us to find out. James Reston's lament—James Reston, alas, is always lamenting—not inaccurately reflects this situation:

> America is not a happy nation today because its people are not living up to the best in them, and its politicians are too often appealing to the worst in them. America has got rid of its faith but not of its conscience. And try as they do, its children are hung upon the same old predicament, best defined by Lincoln, for a hundred years later they are even more "destitute of faith but terrified of skepticism" ["Words to the Class of '72," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 20, 1971].

What is hopeful in such a context is that the faith that is lost is not in the sane tradition, for that was little known or taught, but the faith that the aberrations of man's intellectual history could produce Utopia.

MAN," Arthur Miller wrote, "is a social animal or a son of a bitch, as God and the prophets have warned since the beginning" ("When Time Had at Least a Form," *New York Times*, January 24, 1971 p. 17).

God and the prophets have, more accurately, warned that man is a social animal *and* a son of a bitch—at least that is my interpretation and experience; very seldom do we find anyone who is exclusively one *or* the other. Perhaps this is why Mr. Reston's students have lost their faith because it is this latter alternative that has consistently been given to them. God and the prophets have said that all men have sinned, *and* that all men are called to glory.

A couple of months ago it was raining, a Monday night in Rome. A friend had told me *The Messiah* was being performed by the Academia di Santa Caecilia orchestra and choir that evening. I had never heard *The Messiah* completely as a performance before. Händel wrote it in 24 days in the late summer of 1741. It was first performed in Dublin where Cardinal Heenan over two centuries later remarked, even before Mr. Reston's pronouncement about the New World, that Britain was a post-Christian nation, a land of former believers.

Yet I thought as I watched and listened to *The Messiah* that it is precisely the kind of a thing that our age seeks—not only The Messiah in the religious sense, but in the musical sense, something that is *gloria, doxa* in its very presentation, something that is not a means to go somewhere else because it is already there where we want to go.

The last chorus ends in simple, powerful praise:

> Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,
> and hath redeemed us to God by his blood,

to receive power, and riches,
and wisdom, and strength,
and honour, and glory, and blessing.
Blessing and honour, glory and pow'r
be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne,
and unto the Lamb forever.
Amen.

As I walked home, again in the rain on the empty streets of Rome, near midnight, near St. Peter's, across the Tiber, by La Chiesa Nuova, Sant'Andrea della Valle, the Collegio Romano, across the Corso by the Dodici Apostoli, I thought it is true, the social gospel is not nearly enough, however important it might be.

There are things in the universe, ye sons of bitches, that are ever so strange and fantastic. They are luminous, all about you. You should find a little bad in the best of things, for we are all sinners. But man has need of glory. Our worst enemy is optimism terrified by Lincoln's skepticism, while *L'Unitá* sees fascists everywhere. We are all *Wischi-Waschi-Bürger*s with a deep sense of the inadequacy of man.

Do not think all is well on the face of the earth, that the Russians are merely German liberals or that the socialists love the Jews or that the Muslims are happy in Tirana. We are, alas, searchers to whom someone has given a slightly even break. We are surely incomplete creatures who have set out to know the universe. In the end, however, we will find nothing, as God and the prophets rightly have told us. For the truth is rather the opposite, in the end we shall be found.

"Blessing and honour, glory and pow'r . . ."

The sentence that now rings in my memory is rather that of Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Things happen in life so fantastic that no imagination could have invented them."

This is, indeed, a damned strange world.

Praise it, ye sons of bitches.

The Relevance of T. S. Eliot

ELIOT AND HIS AGE: T. S. ELIOT'S MORAL IMAGINATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by Russell Kirk. New York: Random House, 1972.

Reviewed by **Arther S. Trace**

AMONG ALL the studies that have been made of the works of T. S. Eliot, too many have been concerned with how Eliot wrote and not enough with how he thought. And yet the true significance of Eliot's works for our time may well be what he was saying, far more than how he was saying it. Russell Kirk's newest book very likely will prove to be among the half-dozen most significant commentaries yet written on Eliot, and surely the best study to date of the development of the thinking of this powerful literary and cultural figure who moved steadily in the direction of Christian orthodoxy as the only antidote to the moral decay and chaos toward which he discerned the Western world to be heading.

Eliot and His Age is a handsome 460-page volume with sixteen pages of notes, and an index including a useful index of "Topics and Ideas." Dr. Kirk recognizes that there has been no major biography of Eliot, and even though he insists that this is not that biography, it is indeed an intellectual biography as well as an interpretation of Eliot; a biography enhanced by the fact that Dr. Kirk knew and corresponded extensively with Eliot in Eliot's later years.

But it is primarily in the development of Eliot's thought and the implications of that thought for our time that Kirk is most interested. His principal aim, he states, "is to explain what Eliot was saying, rather than to praise the manner in which he says it."

In a sense the touchstone of the book is the concept of the "moral imagination," a term which appears in the subtitle and which Dr. Kirk borrowed from Edmund Burke; but it is a term too that Kirk has made his own and by which, in general, he means the power of ethical perception which aspires to the apprehending of right order in the soul and right order in the commonwealth, particularly as this perception may be expressed through literature and the arts. The moral imagination, he points out, was the gift and obsession of Plato and Virgil and Dante, and it somehow lingered on even in

the twentieth century in the works of such diverse writers as Frost, Faulkner, Waugh, and Yeats, as well as in Eliot. It has, however, become an increasingly rare virtue in the twentieth century, as the ideological demigods of scientism and progressivism and other enemies of what Eliot called "the permanent things" have taken fast hold on the modern mind.

Thus Dr. Kirk sees Eliot as speaking *to* his age against the *dangers* of the age, much as Newman and Dr. Johnson had done before him. Kirk is inclined to contrast the concept of the moral imagination with, first, the "idyllic imagination" of Rousseau, who wagered all on the idea of the natural goodness of man—an idea which led him away from Christianity; and, second, against the "diabolical imagination" of such writers as D. H. Lawrence, who similarly wagered all on the natural beastliness of man—an idea which led him away from all religion.

ELIOT, on the other hand, reaffirmed the view of man that had been dominant for more than two millennia before the time of Rousseau, namely that man is, to use Dostoevsky's phrase, "a marvellous mingling of good and evil"; and this recognition of man's moral weakness as well as his strength led him in time to Christian orthodoxy and from thence to a belief that order both in the soul and in the commonwealth might in time be regained.

As Dr. Kirk points out, Eliot's Christian orthodoxy has been tolerated by some and sneered at by others—in England it was indeed regarded as something of a scandal—while his social ideas have frequently been ignored or disparaged; and yet Kirk rightly insists that like Samuel Johnson, Eliot "would have chosen to be judged upon his merits as a moralist and statist, not as stylist merely." Hence this book "has to do with Eliot the champion of the moral imagination and with Eliot the critic of the civil social order."

Dr. Kirk gives us a picture of Eliot as a champion assaulting not only nineteenth-century smugness about the human condition but twentieth-century unbelief and despair; as a humanist but as a Christian humanist; as a man who believed that individual rationality and private judgment must be subordinate to the higher reason which "grows out of a respect for the wisdom of one's ancestors"; as an enemy of the pragmatic materialist's concept of

man as an "edified ape"; as a man whose thinking was alien both to Freud's view of man and to Marx', and above all to D. H. Lawrence's view of man as mere rutter; as a man who perceived H. G. Wells, G. B. Shaw, and Bertrand Russell, all, as intellectual enemies of permanent things; as a man who admired the humanistic thought of Matthew Arnold and of Irving Babbitt—but who saw too the sterility of their secular humanism; as a man who perceived that morals flow from faith and that political systems, including democracy, work only where man's morality is tolerably strong; as a man who saw and foresaw the fatal weaknesses of Progressiveness and of Communism, as well as of Fascism. In short, he shows us a man of a conservative habit of mind, a mind which fits both the classical and the Christian mold and hence tended to reinforce the wisdom more nearly of the ages than the wisdom of the past two centuries.

IN THE eleven chronologically arranged chapters of his book Dr. Kirk takes the reader on a guided tour through most of Eliot's major poems and plays, while drawing tellingly also from the major essays and articles, including those from *The Criterion*, which Eliot edited between the years 1922 and 1939, in order to document Eliot's exercise of the moral imagination and his reaffirmation of the permanent things. He insists, for example, that Eliot's poems are primarily not personal or sociological, as some would have them, but philosophical endeavors to relate the timeless to the temporal. *The Wasteland*, he observes, "is no glorification of the Past. What the reader should find in the poem, rather, is Eliot's understanding that, by definition, human nature is a constant; the same vices and same virtues are at work in every age; and our present discontents, personal and public, can be apprehended only if we are able to contrast our present circumstances with the challenges and the responses of other times." Kirk concludes that "'Prufrock,' 'Gerontion,' *The Wasteland*, and 'The Hollow Men' are delineations of Hell; *Ash-Wednesday* leads us up Mount Purgatory; and *Four Quartets* points out the way to the Rose Garden that endures beyond time, where seeming opposites are reconciled. Freed from Time, Sin, and Ego, modern man may know God and enjoy Him forever—if man does not presume to try to understand Him. With *Four Quartets*, Eliot at last achieves that ordering of

the emotions or of the soul, which had been his aspiration for three decades."

Eliot saw perhaps as well as anyone else of his time the consequences of the loss of religion in the Western world. In *Thoughts after Lambeth*, he wrote, "The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time; so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization and save the World from suicide."

One might wish that Dr. Kirk could call his book *The Age of Eliot* rather than *Eliot and His Age*; but he could not, for this is not his age. As Eliot himself put it, "the real issue is between the secularists—whatever political or moral philosophy they support—and the anti-secularists; between those who believe only in values realizable in time and on earth, and those who believe in values realized out of time." Thus far, however, the secularists appear to have won the day, for more and more intellectuals, both great and small, are settling themselves in the uninhabitable secular Wasteland of Absolute Relativism, and it remains to be seen whether in future decades we will be able to shape change or whether we will merely change shape.

For obscurantism in poetry Eliot's influence, it is true, has been incalculable; but for the moral imagination and the permanent things in life and of Christianity in particular, his influence has been far from overwhelming. And yet, observes Dr. Kirk, "It is conceivable that in some distant future time, when the history of the twentieth century seems barbarous and bewildering as the chronicles of Scotland's medieval age, the piercing visions of Eliot may be regarded as the purest light which endured in that general darkness." It is indeed conceivable, and Dr. Kirk's study of Eliot's thinking and writing will have contributed something toward intensifying that light.

Creating an Intellectual Proletariat

Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery, by Ivar Berg. New York: Praeger, 1970.

Reviewed by **Tommy W. Rogers**

Contemporary American education has been oversold—chiefly through an optimistic and ignorant public's regard for "more education" as a panacea. Along with this fantasy has existed a cynical promotion of education as curative by educationists themselves. Examination of the realities behind the rhetoric reveals that the educational structures and their functionaries have been encouraged by federal largesse of funds, through myriad programs. Educationists have been enticed to make propositions.

Neither the overselling of education, nor the consequent wholesale disillusion with its structure and process, would have come about easily, had not the effort been made to make formal education accomplish what it cannot do—at the expense of its better qualities. This tension has resulted in failure. For one thing, it has imposed a thin veneer upon all those who can negotiate enough "courses" to secure an entrance pass into vocational competition; at the same time, this tension has tried to retain the prestige associated with a college degree when that education did represent some real difference between the possessor of a degree and the public at large.

Having filled classrooms with captives who possess no intrinsic interest in learning and find it an imposition, need we wonder that the campuses reverberate with protests couched in euphemisms—involvement, relevancy, participation? It is this protest against learning that is largely responsible for the demands for academic credit for military service or VISTA participation, demonstrations, organizing militants in community activities, action PhDs, and travel. We have sought the label without the content, and have forced many people into seeking the label who prefer to avoid the content —because they are victims of artificial barriers and a "no education syndrome."

Although higher education in the 1960s enjoyed a particularly ex-

pansive public largesse, there exist signs that the public is moving toward the end of its tolerance. And the increased number of people who went to college to get a good job are being forced to recognize that most college curricula do not provide the individual with a marketable skill. The job-hunter with many hours of social science or psychology is liable to find that a prospective employer is interested in whether the applicant can do something that will do somebody some good—whether he can type, repair a tractor, cut hair, exercise the skills of a medical technician, operate an IBM machine, or otherwise perform services that carry their own weight. Professor James Kuhn has well asked: "Would not the colleges, teachers, and students, and those who look forward to professional careers, be better served if other entry ways were open, available, and used?"

DR. IVAR BERG, Professor of Sociology at Columbia University's graduate school of business, considers candidly the relation between formal education and the ability to perform tasks for which numerous "educational" requirements are exacted. His data suggest that this insistence upon elaborate educational credentials may impede the individual's success, actually. Studies of blue-collar occupations undertaken by Columbia's graduate school of business do not support the argument that educational requirements are good screening-out devices for such employees. By engaging better-schooled workers, sometimes the employers lost in productivity, absenteeism, and turnover

Berg reports a white-collar study of 125 branch offices of a major New York bank. Measured by "turnover" data and the number of accounts lost by tellers, the branches with the worst performance-records were those in which a disproportionately high number of employees had attended classes after working hours. Evidence also indicated that performance was worse precisely in those branches where, in addition to higher educational achievements among employees, the managers stressed "education" in conferences with tellers. Such hard data reinforce doubts as to whether the benefits supposedly accompanying educational credentials actually do take on flesh. Other studies of various types of enterprises "support the proposition that educational credentials *as such* have relatively little bearing on performance; the extent to which public services function well is apparently related to other factors."

Berg does not make any definitive claim that his evidence provides refutation of the greater value of an educated worker over a less educated one. But he does find it clear that to "argue that the well-educated people will automatically boost efficiency, improve organizations, and so on may be to misunderstand in a fundamental way the nature of American education, which functions to an important, indeed depressing, extent as a licensing agency." And, Berg observes, "One may well be skeptical, if not cynical, about how much real education can be utilized by most industrial organizations. Meanwhile, the contention that people are changed as a function of their education and thus can change the world gains at least as much horrifying as gratifying support from history."

NOT THE LEAST of the evils resulting from the overselling of education for its value as an economic and social investment, from which the individual will draw a return in status and income, is the potential which has been sown for dissatisfaction in a society that has accepted a mechanistic interpretation of the relationship between education and employment. The dictum "to get a good job, stay in school" has been thoroughly overlaid on the future labor force. We have increasing numbers of persons who have attended the colleges for whom the residual secular benefits of education are their primary motivation. Whereas in 1900 one in sixty attended college, today's high-school graduate (an achievement which itself was of sufficient consequence to put one ahead of the pack a generation ago) finds that almost half of his peers will attend college. That the percentage of nonwhite college graduates in the United States is greater than for whites in any country in Europe underscores the point that blacks in the United States (over 90 per cent of whom own television sets) are vastly advantaged in comparison with blacks and whites in most of the world. Even for PhDs in fields of actual shortage, a scant few years ago, the glut has become evident.

The potential for dissatisfaction among people who thought they would be admitted to an occupational elite by the magic of a university degree, but graduate to find that there is some considerable inconsistency between the educationists' spiel and economic realities, is readily apparent.

It can well be, as Professor Seymour Harris suggested two decades ago, Berg notes, "that the dissatisfactions of 'educated' work-

ers who believe that their jobs are far below those for which their education qualifies them are a genuine threat to the safety of a democratic society." As the pressure to stay in school has accelerated, he adds, the effect of increased education and rising aspirations—in the face of deteriorating prospects for employment—are likely to multiply the dissatisfactions of those who have heard and believed the promises held out to diploma-holders. The political consequences of latent discontent are not necessarily less threatening to democratic institutions than are those of the noisier versions of American disaffection.

Berg points out that educational barriers against mobility, by using educational credentials as screening devices to consign large numbers of people to the social limbo of the "peripheral labor market," is reinforced by public policies that facilitate access to formal education for upper-income youngsters. Today, tax-supported and tax-assisted universities are full of students from families whose incomes are well above those of average taxpayers. And if barriers to mobility are not fully visible to the disinherited, "substantial funds have been consumed by educational mercenaries who campaign against the personal—which is to say educational—deficiencies of the youthful poor. Foot-long ads addressed to 'educational technologists' offer grand salaries with extensive benefits to induce men and women (many of those who respond are public school teachers) to enroll in the legions who will train impoverished youths in encampments across the land, financed by profitable cost-plus contracts."

Policies calculated to generate job opportunities seem to deserve higher priority than those designed, by their stress on "education," to increase the considerable difficulties imposed on people without academic credentials.

Notes on Contributors

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Dr. Arther S. Trace, Professor of English at John Carroll University, is the author of *What Ivan Knows that Johnny Doesn't*, *Reading without Dick and Jane*, and *The American Moral Crisis*. He will publish soon *The Future of Literature*, and a book about Dostoevsky.

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