

P. E. More On Being Human
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A REVIVAL OF HUMANISM

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UNDER the editorial supervision of Professor Norman Foerster, assisted by three other scholars, a group of fifteen writers have contributed to make a volume of essays under the collective title of *Humanism and America*.¹ With a few exceptions the contributors range in age from thirty to forty-five years, being young enough to speak for the coming generation and old enough to have passed the first inexperience of youth. Some of the younger men have already made their mark in the critical contentions of the past four or five years; others will be scarcely known to the public. Inevitably the papers are not of equal weight and interest, but the high average of intelligence is heartening and, if it may be said without offence, a little surprising. As a whole the book seems to me, in its field, about the most significant event that has fallen under my notice in many years of reading and reviewing. I may say this without hesitation, because, though parts of an essay are reprinted from a recent publication of my own, I have written nothing for the volume, and my share in determining its character is altogether negligible.

¹ *Humanism and America*, edited by Norman Foerster. Farrar & Rinehart. \$3.50. [A complete list of the contributors with the titles of their articles will be found at the conclusion of this essay.]

Mr. Foerster calls attention to the fact that the contributors, though writing quite independently one of the other, "agree in certain broad, fundamental opinions"; and I have thought that I could not better serve the cause, of which the present work may be regarded as a spirited manifesto, than by pointing out what these common opinions are and by attempting to show the significance of the divergence where this begins.

I

On one point the agreement is already complete. From the first sentence of the preface provided by the editor to the concluding essay on "Courage and Education" by a senior student at Bowdoin College, one note is sounded over and over again: "The noise and whirl increase, the disillusion and depression deepen, the nightmare of Futility stalks before us." Futility is the final word: the literature and art most characteristic of the day are criticized as chaotic, joyless, devoid of beauty, comfortless, fretfully original or feebly conventional, impotent, futile. The blackness of the picture may be somewhat overlaid, as is the wont with those who are confessedly crying for reform; but no great movement for bettering conditions was ever carried to success without a clear sense of wrong to be righted, no hope for the future was ever effective until the bubble of self-complacency was pricked. Conceit of the present is the most deadly bondage of the human spirit, and against this devastating conceit the revolt of so many enlightened minds among the generation just reaching maturity is a sign of the times that may well challenge the attention of

those who are still wavering in their allegiance to one side or the other. They may see that the best way to be modern is to break away from the fetters of "modernism."

On another point our humanists are well agreed: they all perceive, and more or less explicitly declare, that the present confusion in letters is connected with a similar confusion in our ideas of life. They see that as we live, so shall we paint and write, or that, as Plato would put it, as we paint and write, so shall we come to live. They might give different answers to the question whether, in the large innovations of time, art precedes in moulding life or life in moulding art; they would all admit, I think, that the two are mutually interactive, and that there can be no great and simple and sincere art without ideals of greatness and simplicity and sincerity prevailing in society. Handsome is that handsome does. Perhaps the finest expression of this rather obvious truth comes to us in the present volume from one whose subtleties of sympathy have not always in the past led him to speak so uncompromisingly, to the effect that "to understand any nobly conceived work of art, one must have lived nobly in deed, in imagination, or in both." Mr. Mather for the moment is thinking rather of the appreciator of art than of the creator, but his maxim, as I am sure he would admit, merely repeats and extends the famous, and sometimes disputed, saying of Longinus, that "sublimity is the echo of a great soul."² In this

² Longinus was not contradicting himself when he wrote: "I feel almost absolved from the necessity of premising at any length that sublimity is a certain distinction and excellence in expression, and that it is from no other source than this that the greatest

spirit Mr. Mather continues (and I wish I could quote at greater length) :

... appreciation really requires a right and balanced attitude towards life. It was really more important for Florence that her great citizens, while bowing to the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome, wanted a full and honourable life in Florence—it was really more important, I say, that they cared discriminatingly for the dignity of their ordinary activities and for the authority of their faith, than that they cared *specifically* for painting, sculpture, and architecture. In short, some aristocratic vision of the good life has always been the foundation on which great national art has been reared in the past.

That is the note common to all the writers of this symposium, "the consciousness," as Mr. Stanley P. Chase expresses it, "of intellectual defeat and spiritual dismay" behind the spasmodic futility of modern literature. And it is no light matter that this clear consciousness has made itself felt among a group of men who (I omit the exceptions) are not old enough to be open to the charge of decrying the present because it is not their own cherished past, or who, on the other hand, are not so young as to take delight, like the puppies of Plato's *Republic*, in the mere act of tearing things to pieces. They speak, as a body, with a sobriety of judgement and an earnestness of conviction that must carry weight with any reader not snared by the Circean flatteries of the present. And it is to be observed that, up to this point, our militant critics not only agree among themselves but are also in accord with those novelists and poets much in the public eye against whom their challenge of humanism poets and writers have derived their eminence and gained an immortality of renown." Great art, which is what he means by the "sublime," would be the noble expression of a noble attitude towards life.

is intentionally directed. If I understand what is going on in France—and my opinion is confirmed by those who have more knowledge of the subject than I can pretend to—Proust and André Gide and their followers are animated by a determination to face the facts and to make of their art an unflinching record of the intellectual defeat and spiritual dismay they find about them in actual life and within themselves. I have read the same thing of James Joyce, who to the mind of his eulogists is a prophetic voice denouncing the age for its meaningless unrest.

But if harmony reigns between the two camps of humanism and anti-humanism up to this point, beyond it divergence begins and widens. In the first place these novelists and poets of discontent, who are deliberately preying on the intellectual defeat and spiritual dismay of the times, as vultures fatten themselves on carrion, whatever their moral pretext, are in no true sense of the word working for regeneration. They perceive the evil state of society and portray it with gloating contempt. But having no faith in the possible dignity of individual human life, they offer a very dubious alliance to humanism. Rather, on the contrary, they fill their public with a self-congratulating superiority of knowingness, as if to know the sickness about him were sufficient to relieve a man in a hospital of the need of a physician for himself. Where all without exception are depraved, it is a virtue to admit the bitter truth. Thus these apostles of depravity flatter men by degrading mankind; whereas the beginning of humanism, as of religion, is the humility that goes with a sense of personal responsibility.

In the end the distinguishing mark, and largely the cause, of the pessimism of modern literature is a false philosophy. It looks upon human nature with the inflamed vision of a monocular Cyclops, seeing man only as the slave of his temperament, or as a mechanism propelled by complexes and reactions, or as a vortex of sensations, with no will to govern himself, no centre of stability within the flux, no direction of purpose to rise above the influences that carry him hither and thither. At the same time many of these monists are aware that the literature dependent upon such a life has become, like its subject, sicklied with the depression of conscious futility. It is conscience, they say, makes cowards of us all. It is conscience that, unsubdued by all the pleas of a monistic psychology, rebellious to the truths of reason, still invades the unenlightened mind with a sense of futility and remorse. In life the traditional emotions persist in overriding theory; but art is our own to fashion as we will. Let us therefore divorce art from life by exorcizing the phantom of conscience. Then naturalism, being perfect and consistent with itself, will no longer depress its votaries but fill them with the exaltation of liberty. Hence the endeavour in one way or another to dehumanize art by a callous indifference to sentiment which is often confounded with sentimentality, or by the irony of cold contemplation as if the artist, *qua* artist, stood outside of the network of human relations, or by a brutal avowal of irresponsibility, or by a frank revelling in ugliness, or by the glorification of self-expression as a substitute for self-development. Hence too the innumerable treatises now coming from the press, that chatter about the theory of criticism

instead of criticizing, as if somehow or other, as art can be detached from life, so criticism can be detached from art. I would not imply that criticism as a means to the appreciation of art may not, for convenience' sake, be isolated from its end and so studied in abstraction; but in many of these works, including the pseudo-scientific treatises of Mr. I. A. Richards, one detects a kind of tacit assumption that if we could perfectly analyse the nature of the instrument, we should be relieved of all worry about the nature of the object for which the instrument is to be used. As if knowledge of the structure of a saw and hammer would make a good carpenter.

Against this monism and its fruits all our militant humanists, if I understand them, are openly or virtually in protest. The question at issue is thus ultimately one of philosophy or psychology. Against those who teach that man is totally submerged in natural law, the humanist lays emphasis on that in man which distinguishes him generically from other animals and so in one part of his composite being lifts him out of the more narrowly defined kingdom of nature; and the humanist assumes for himself this title as opposed to the naturalist because this super-added element, or faculty, however named, is what marks off a man as man. In a word, the humanist is simply one who takes his stand *on being human*. Against those who still hold that man is only a fragmentary cog in the vast machine which we call the universe, moved by the force of some relentless, unvarying, unconscious law, the humanist asserts that we are individual personalities, endowed with the potentiality of free will and answerable for our choice

of good or evil. Against those who reduce man to a chaos of sensations and instincts and desires checking and counter-checking one another in endlessly shifting patterns, the humanist points to a separate faculty of inhibition, the inner check or the *frein vital*, whereby these expansive impulses may be kept within bounds and ordered to a design not of their making. Against those who proclaim that a man can only drift, like a rudderless ship, with the weltering currents of change, the humanist maintains that he is capable of self-direction, and that character, as different from native temperament, is a growth dependent on clarity and strength of purpose. Against those who, to appease the stings of conscience, assure us that we are what we are by no fault of our own, that, as we have no responsibility for our character, so the lesson of wisdom is to shuffle off any sense of regret or remorse or fear; and against those who go further in flattery and, through each and every appearance of delinquency, assert the instinctive total goodness of unredeemed nature—against these the humanist contends that as free agents we are accountable for defalcations and aberrations and that self-complacency is the deadliest foe to human excellence. On the other hand, the humanist will not stand with those who jeer at human nature, as if men were in no better state than rats in a trap, rushing distractedly hither and thither, hurling themselves upon their bars in a pitiable frenzy of impotence.

In their contention with the naturalists who in one form or another have for some time dominated the public mind and controlled the springs of literature,

our rebels argue that their doctrine of humanistic dualism is no insubstantial web of fancy worn to veil the hard facts of life, but the outcome of our surest observation and of our most immediate self-knowledge. Such a dualism, as Mr. G. R. Elliott reasons, "is less naive than the theory of universal continuity; is better grounded in universal human experience; and, above all, is more truly accordant with the profound division which any thinking man may find within himself today when he is sufficiently self-reliant and experimental to plumb beneath the surfaces where our ephemeral psycho-physicisms weave and flutter." And, replying to those who revolt from the irrational aspect of dualism, Mr. Elliott continues:

. . . Recently humanism, in its attempt to fulfil and deepen the experimentality of the modern spirit, has of necessity placed its chief emphasis upon that inward division. It has insisted that the *opposition* between the higher and lower wills within us, whether they be called "divine" and "natural" or what not, is essentially inexplicable by expert reason and is nevertheless, from the present standpoint of human happiness, the most important feature of the universe arrived at by free and full experimentation. This humane *dualism* strikes at the very heart of modern pride, the pride of spiritual *monism*. It sets a true immediacy over against a false immediacy. It assigns a central value to the paradox established by the immediate experience of Everyman when he tries (in the terminology of common sense) to be "at one with himself" by keeping his "better self" above his "worse self."

It may seem that the movement I am describing is essentially negative, with no positive program to offer in place of the errors it would combat. And it is true that as matters now stand a good deal of the energy of its supporters is expended in aggressive protest. But there are times when it is necessary to demolish before building, just as it is of no avail to propose a

career of wholesome activity to a sick man until the roots of his disease are eradicated. And there is this to be said in defence of a militant policy: nothing is more likely to draw a group of men together and to prepare them for a concerted advance than the awareness of a common antipathy. The first step in a vigorous campaign must be to distinguish clearly between friend and foe.

Now one certain result of the volume we have under consideration will be to set the contributors and those for whom they speak in sharp contrast not only with the enemies who openly glory in degrading man to the naturalistic level but with those ambiguous flatterers of human nature who more or less speciously claim the title of allies. No excuse remains for muddle-headed critics to compromise the movement by accepting, for example, the saccharine simplicity of that Dr. Charles Francis Potter who recently has acquired a kind of newspaper notoriety (extending, to my knowledge, as far as Lahore, India) by launching a "new religion" of "humanism" wherein humanity is to be enthroned in the place of God, and who, in his initial address, mentioned Mr. Babbitt and myself, among others, as associates in the foundation. The *Commonweal* of October 16, 1929, made the proper reply to such impertinence: "Whoever may have said that man is inherently good, it was certainly not Professor Babbitt; the diverse negators of the supernatural have many names, but that of More is not among them." It is not the least merit of Mr. Babbitt's "Essay at Definition" that it brushes aside the pretensions of a number of usurpers in the field, including M. Sylvain Lévi (who makes Diderot a humanist), Mr.

Lewis Mumford (who performs a like service for Walt Whitman), Mr. F. C. S. Schiller of Oxford (who exalts Protagoras as a humanist above Plato), and that loquacious apostle of sweetness and darkness, Professor John Dewey, and ending with this comment on Mr. Walter Lippmann's *A Preface to Morals*:

... he would have us believe that any one who has become disinterested after the scientific fashion has got the equivalent not only of humanism but of "high religion." By thus dissimulating the gap between the wisdom of the ages and the wisdom of the laboratory, he is flattering some of the most dangerous illusions of the present time. He escapes from the main humanitarian tendency to give to feeling a primacy that does not belong to it, only to encourage its other main tendency to accord to physical science a hegemony to which it is not entitled.

In an epoch weltering through a morass of *isms* it is well to know definitely how humanism is opposed to naturalism, and wherein it differs from its presumptive brother, humanitarianism. So much in defence of the aggressive method of warfare employed by the fighting wing of the new movement.

But if humanism has its value as a clear-cut condemnation of certain tendencies always at work in life and literature, though not always so obstreperous as at the present day, it should not be regarded as a mere policy of opposition and obstruction with nothing positive of its own to offer. As a matter of fact it is rather the forces under attack that are open to the charge of negation, and they are under attack for that very reason. Like the naturalist and the humanitarian, the humanist, as Mr. Foerster states in his preface, may take for his creed the saying that the proper study of mankind is man; and he may join with them in adding that the purpose of such study is to enable

mankind to perceive and realize its humanity. But just here difference makes itself felt. The humanist is positive in his assertion that the distinguishing quality of humanity is something overlooked by the hostile camp. Both would admit that man is the measure; but it is the naturalist who denies the existence of that element of man's composite being which the humanist affirms to be the normal standard of measurement. Again it is the humanist who takes into positive account the value of tradition as a complement to the limitations of the individual, and who regards the present as a small but integral part of the long experience of the human race. Nor is it true that he would stifle the creative impulses or smother the joy of living by the restrictions of a barren discipline. The law of proportion and measure and the need of self-restraint are indeed words often on his lips; but he believes that only by such discipline in the mind of the artist can the higher creative forces be liberated. He would put a check upon the spasms of eccentricity to the end that the imagination may move largely in its work of genuine originality.

As between the humanist and the naturalist it is the former who stands for the great affirmation; it is the latter who, through obstinate ignorance or in the name of pseudo-science, limits and contracts and distorts and denies.

II

So far my aim has been to define, I will not say the new, but the newly advocated, humanism, and to this end I have endeavoured to bring out the singular and impressive unanimity among the contributors to the

recently published manifesto. I have not spoken for myself, though it is scarcely necessary to add that I am in entire sympathy with the platform thus expounded. The task has been a pleasant one for me and, I trust, not unprofitable for the reader, for there is a good deal of confusion in the minds of onlookers as to what the movement really signifies and what the battle is all about. It is an old maxim of war, to divide and conquer; and a good many assaults of the enemy would be frustrated if the defenders of the cause did not allow the points on which they differ to create an appearance of discord there where none exists. In what follows I shall speak for myself, though hoping and believing that my opinions will meet with a fair amount of assent. And in so speaking I would insist that nothing I shall say should be taken as a covert retraction of what has preceded, and particularly, if the personal note may here be intruded, that nothing should be interpreted as indicating a rift between myself and my comrade-in-arms of long standing, Mr. Babbitt, in our attitude towards the combined forces of anti-humanism.

The question to be considered is the relation of humanism to religion. Here the reader of Mr. Foerster's miscellany will have observed a divergence of views, although, perhaps for strategical reasons, perhaps in part because of a little uncertainty remaining in the minds of the contributors themselves, the matter has been kept rather in the background. However that may be, by reading between the lines or in some cases by taking into account knowledge otherwise obtained, one becomes aware that the allies are divided into three camps over the issue of religion.

A few would appear to be actually hostile to any belief in the supernatural as essentially anti-humanistic; in one person I know this to be the case, though it would not be guessed from his contribution to the present volume. Others, the majority I suspect, are friendly enough to religion in itself, but either have so vague a conception of its nature and function that practically it fades out of view, or, having clear views of what religion means to life, feel nevertheless that for the regeneration of art the program of humanism is adequate in and of itself. The remainder, some two or three perhaps, hold that without a close alliance between humanism and religion the former is shut off from its chief source of vitality. That is the issue; it cannot be bludgeoned into silence or circumvented.

For my own part, let me admit that to some extent I have been led to revise my earlier position by a number of recent criticisms, ranging from the ignorant and conceited outburst of Mr. Allen Tate on the "Fallacy of Humanism" in the *Criterion* for July 1929, and the *Hound & Horn* for January 1930, to the courteous and thoughtful note on the "High Lights of Humanism" by Mr. George N. Shuster in the *Commonweal* for April 17, 1929. Mr. Tate argues from some vague and indigested "philosophy" which I find difficult to comprehend, whereas Mr. Shuster speaks with the precision of an enlightened Roman Catholic; but they agree in complaining that humanism fails to offer any clear positive basis on which the mind and heart of man may rest. Now from one point of view it would be easy to retort, as I have already attempted to do, that humanism, tested by comparison with its lower rival, has the strength of a great

affirmation; but from another point of view the concurrence of critics otherwise so contrary-minded—and I have named only two out of many—has combined with certain questionings from my own inner experience to compel me to reconsider the whole matter. Something must be wanting to the program of reform; there is some incompleteness here that explains this common uneasiness of critics so diverse. What is it? The answer has come to me in two words: purpose and values. Can humanism, of itself, unaided, provide the purpose and values it needs for its fulfillment and without which it cannot pass from the purely critical to the productive state? Must it not for its driving force depend on religion? The question is primarily pragmatic, but at the last it involves a whole philosophy of faith.

Now in one sense humanism takes its stand unhesitatingly on the affirmation of purpose. Its animus against naturalism is based on the evident fact that the rejection of free will deprives life of any possibility of purpose and leaves man a passive victim of chance or fate. It perceives that a literature depicting our adventures in such a universe must degenerate into the clever futilities of an Aldous Huxley or the obscene rigmarole of a James Joyce, or, seeking to escape the curse of impotence, into the sadism of a Robinson Jeffers. But purpose of what? Again the answer is ready: purpose to put back into life the values of which a false psychology had emptied it. There is that in every human being which it behooves him to know and cherish, a potentiality which it is worth his while to develop at any cost, a goal of perfection towards which all his energy should be directed—the high

value of being a man. The program, laid out so long ago by the great Stagirite, has the ringing appeal of veracity. It is true, every word of it: yet is it quite all the truth? The high value of being a man—is that telos attainable, is it even approachable, without religion?

The question disquiets me as a humanist. It vexed Aristotle, and drove him on to make his vast plunge into the metaphysics of the Absolute. I read him, and am still disquieted. I turn to my great Aristotelian friend of the present, from whom I have so often found help in intellectual difficulties, but in this matter I am still left unsatisfied. Mr. Babbitt admits "an element of truth in the assertion of Plato that things human cannot be properly known without a previous insight into things divine." He goes further than this, and accepts the thesis of Pascal to the effect "that unless man has the support of the supernatural, unless in short he attains to true humility, he will fall fatally either into the Stoic pride or else, through the intermediary stage of scepticism, into the Epicurean relaxation." He holds that "the humanist will finally . . . have to take sides in the debate between naturalists and supernaturalists"; and he ranges himself "unhesitatingly on the side of the supernaturalists." The language is strong enough. Yet when I try to grasp what Mr. Babbitt means precisely by the supernatural, I am held at bay by his sweeping reluctance, veiled perhaps but deeply felt, to associate it with any kind of "dogmatic or revealed religion." On the other hand the "religious insight" which he would retain as an effective background for humanism, leaves me still asking: insight into what? The attempt to give

"definite content" to this insight by identifying it with the "higher immediacy" might have satisfied Buddha, though even that is doubtful; certainly Plato would not have recognized it as equivalent to his "insight into things divine," or Pascal as affording "support to the supernatural." Nor does it seem to me to meet the clear conviction held by Sophocles or by any other of the great humanists of ancient Greece.

The cause of humanism is identical, as we have seen, with belief in free will and purpose as the traits that distinguish humanity from nature or, if you prefer, from the rest of nature.³ And so far the humanist has no need to call in the sanctions of the supernatural in the guise of revelation. As Mr. Babbitt puts it with force and finality: "why not affirm it [man's higher will, or "immortal essence presiding like a king over his appetites"] first of all as a psychological fact, one of the immediate data of consciousness, a perception so primordial that, compared with it, the deterministic denials of man's moral freedom are only a metaphysical dream?" So far the way of the humanist is clear. But purpose in the direction of free will implies the realization of values. And here the difficulties begin. Why should I propose to myself a line of life which requires a constant exercise of

³ A certain amount of ambiguity adheres inevitably from historical usage to the words "natural" and "supernatural." One may, and often does, limit the term "nature" to that which is common to all animals including man, and designate the distinguishing faculty of man as "supernatural." Or one may, and often does, speak of that which pertains to man alone as his "higher nature," while that which man possesses in common with other animals is called his "lower nature." In this case the "supernatural" will properly designate the other-worldly elements of religion whether known by revelation or by intuition.

choice and restraint, in themselves painful to the natural man, unless something of value is to be attained thereby? Why should I not follow the sway of temperament and satisfy all the desires of nature as they arise? Mr. Babbitt, I know, has an answer to these questions. "In his attempt," he says, "to show the inadequacy of humanism apart from dogmatic and revealed religion, Mr. T. S. Eliot has painted a picture of the humanist exercising in a sort of psychic solitude self-control purely for the sake of control." And against this picture Mr. Babbitt, forgetting, as it seems to me, the full importance of the supernatural already conceded by himself, cites the communion of souls described by Aristotle as attainable on the purely humanistic level by the act of self-control, and upholds worldly happiness as a sufficient guerdon. And Mr. G. R. Elliott (who otherwise stands with Mr. T. S. Eliot for dogmatic and revealed religion, rather than for what may be called just religion) puts the case even more emphatically: "Humanism is the study and practice of the principle of human happiness *uncomplicated* by naturistic dogmas on the one side and religious dogmas on the other."

That blessed word happiness! If only we were sure of attaining it on the human level, how the problem of purpose and value would be simplified! How easy the whole matter would be! Happiness. I cannot forget the terrible ending of *Vanity Fair*: "Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?—come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out." And I am haunted by the refrain of so many men who have

drunk deep of the chalice of mortal life and found always at the bottom the *amari aliquid*: Abd-ar-Rahman, that great caliph, who at the end counting up his days could remember only twenty of happiness; Septimius Severus, master of the world, with his dying comment, *Omnia fui, et nil expedit*; Solon, with his famous caution, "Count no man happy until he is dead"; Socrates, the embodiment of self-control and good cheer, who, to comfort his friends in the hour of his condemnation to death, reminded them that few of our days or nights could equal in happiness a time of deep and dreamless sleep; Johnson, the sturdy champion of British common sense, denouncing as a liar any man who dared call himself happy unless drunk; our own Edison, who at least has reaped all manner of worldly success yet declares that he has never known a happy man. But there is no need to multiply random examples. It is always the same story, whether the word comes from the East or the West, from the North or the South—always the bitter truth: In this world we have no abiding city; he who thinks to find peace in this mortal life is pursuing a phantom more elusive than the winds. It may be possible to achieve a kind of simulacrum of happiness by a dull or bovine acquiescence in things as they are, or by an indefatigable activity that leaves no time for reflection, or even by a cunningly managed pursuit of worldly pleasures; but such a state is precarious always, and at the best devoid of the "high seriousness" demanded by a genuine humanism.

That is the dilemma that faces the humanist. The intuition of free will; free will exercised for a purpose; purpose directed to clothe human life with

value; value measured by happiness—the chain is perfect, link by link, only at the end it seems to be attached to nothing. And so I ask myself, reluctantly, almost wishing my answer were mistaken, whether those who advocate humanism, as an isolated movement, are not doomed to disappointment. It is not that the direction in itself is wrong; every step in the program is right, and only by this path can we escape from the waste land of naturalism. But can we stop here in security? For purpose that will not end in bitter defeat; for values that will not mock us like empty masks, must we not look for a happiness-based on something beyond the swaying tides of mortal success and failure? Will not the humanist, unless he adds to his creed the faith and the hope of religion, find himself at the last, despite his protests, dragged back into the camp of the naturalist? If we perish like beasts, shall we not live like beasts? I know that certain adherents of the present movement think they can avoid this fatality—notably Mr. Alan Reynolds Thompson, whose thesis, though concerned primarily with tragedy, may be extended to the whole range of literature:

. . . The dilemma of modern tragedy remains very real. There is no refuge in obscurantism through return to illusions which science has shattered. Reason denies the objective reality of our dreams; and so long as the honest man accepts a monism which identifies man with nature, he can find no justification for tragic exaltation. The humanist, however, denies the necessity for this identification. Without in the slightest degree disparaging the truth or worth of physical knowledge he maintains that the realm of value has significant validity when taken as distinct from the realm of fact. The realm of value belongs to man; that of fact, to outer nature.

Following this thesis, Mr. Thompson rejects the doctrine of poetic justice as formulated by Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn: "Serious drama deals with the transgressions of an immutable moral law by a self-originating will. . . . In each instance the destruction of the protagonist reconciles the spectator to a universe in which guilt is punished and justice is upheld." On the contrary Mr. Thompson declares that "the ethical victory of the tragic hero is not a vindication of a moral order in the universe"; rather, the exalted feeling we get from tragedy is due to our "admiration" of a hero "steadfast in his will even to death." That is to say, if I understand the argument: the realm of values connected with a moral order belongs to man not as a fact, but as a dream; and as human beings we must cling to this dream by a desperate act of admiration against the truth of reason which leaves to it no objective reality. Brave words, but so inhumanly difficult. I am troubled by the saying of Pascal that, unless man has the support of the supernatural, he will fall inevitably into Stoic pride or Epicurean relaxation. In our modern tongue that is equivalent to pronouncing that the humanist who thinks to stand without religion is desperately beset by forces that would sink him to the level of naturalism. He may cling stubbornly to values that are the creation of his own fancy—for a while; in the end he will be overcome by the brutality of facts.

Now humanism is concerned primarily with the manifestation of life in art and literature, and the question may thus arise as to the kind of religion, granted that some religion is necessary, which would serve as a sound basis for the exercise of the imagina-

tion. Well, I think one may say this at least without hesitation, that it must be more than a vague acquiescence in a vaguer conception of something divine and infinite floating far above the world in the vacuous heaven of metaphysics, or oozing out of the world like an opiate vapor to induce the reveries of pantheism. Nor can it be such a possession as may be kept, so to speak, in a compartment by itself, as a precious ornament to be contemplated in idle moments and enjoyed in secret. It must be a militant force that will intermeddle with the whole of life, exacting obedience and arousing enmities. Nor, on the other hand, can it, for the humanist at least, be such a sublimation of the ethical will as would deprive this transient world of significance and demand the total renunciation of mortal ambitions and desires. On the contrary it must come into the heart of man, not without austerity of command, yet with salutary hope, assuring us that our practical sense of right and wrong, of beauty and ugliness, is justified by the eternal canons of truth, and that the consequences of our deeds in this little segment of space may follow the soul in its flight into regions beyond our utmost guessing. It must fortify the purpose of the individual by inspiring him with a conviction that the world in which he plays his part is not a product of chance or determinism, but the work of a foreseeing intelligence, and is itself fulfilled with purpose. It must lend new meaning and larger values to visible phenomena by seeing in them shadows and symbols of invisible realities, and by exhibiting them as servants to a spiritual end. It will so knit the future with the present, so bind together the eternal and the temporal, that

the torment of frustration will be assuaged, the sting of transience blunted, and the triumph of the grave overthrown. Only so will happiness be possible here and now as at once the duty and the reward of man. Thus religion was understood by Socrates, in the great age of Grecian achievement, when he consoled his friends in the hour of his apparent defeat: "Wherefore be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death; he and his are not neglected by the gods." Thus it was proclaimed by a greater than Socrates, again in the hour of apparent defeat, when he comforted his disciples with words that might be interpreted as a divine response to the Socratic faith: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

It does not follow, if what I have said be true, that the art and literature of a creative era must be exclusively or even predominantly religious in intention, or that every individual artist must be a believer. But I think it would not be difficult to prove from history that wherever great art has flourished, noble in theme as well as in technique, there religion such as I have described it, though the ingredients may vary in proportion and degree and tone, has been present in the background, colouring the thoughts and emotions of society and investing the natural world with a glamour of the supernatural. On the other hand it is equally true that religion, even when favourable in spirit, does not automatically produce a humanistic

age, while in some of its manifestations it has been actually antagonistic to art and humane letters. There is need also of a humanism, aroused to its own dignity and ardently concerned with the beautiful representation of life as well as with life itself.

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