

American, English, and Continental attitudes toward the life of the mind contrasted.

The Artist and the Intellectual in Anglo-Saxonry and on the Continent

ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN

AFTER HAVING REREAD the chapter entitled "Stop Baiting Intellectuals" in Mr. Peter Viereck's *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, I closed my eyes for a moment in order to eliminate the sight of my Tyrolean mountains and to visualize, in a flash, the rôle of the intellectual and the artist in the United States. I almost again heard the voice of an American friend who, upon my confession that I taught in a university, explained to me with a twinkle in his eyes what a "professor" originally used to be in the American scene — "a man out West, two generations ago, who played the piano in houses of ill fame."

But I also remembered George Bernard Shaw, who said that "those who can — do; and those who cannot — teach." (To which an American wit has added: "And those who cannot teach become librarians.") Finally I beheld the article of Bishop John J. Wright on "Catholics and Anti-Intellectualism" in *Commonweal* (Dec. 16, 1955) in which this prelate deplores the anti-intellectual attitude shown by so many

American Catholics, *i.e.*, of a Catholic minority in a predominantly Protestant nation, although the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation have been fought largely as an issue of the *Sola Fides* and anti-humanism versus rationality, intellectuality, and scholasticism. This total misunderstanding of a basic position Bishop Wright mercilessly refers back to the desperate quest of so many American Catholics to appear "thoroughly American" and thereby adopting a genuinely Protestant attitude.

Not long ago, listening to a quiz program on the local radio, I heard a contestant, asked for his occupation, somewhat pompously replying that he was a *Geistig Schaffender*, an "intellectual" written in capital letters. I doubt that an American would have told this so bluntly to so large an audience. Nor do I think that an Englishman would have done it either . . . a very important thing to remember when we want to illuminate the reasons for the curious place the intellectual and the artist

occupy in American society. That there is something peculiar and not entirely wholesome about the position of a person engaged in the production of non-material values in the New World north of the Rio Grande is a commonplace which, we think, is not really open to question; but we also are convinced that the reasons for this situation are not merely a subject for idle speculation. A society which alienates its intellectuals, as Viereck rightly says, cannot long survive; and Russell Kirk's dictum that a country's loveliness, a country's beauty, constitutes its primary claim for loyalty cannot be overlooked either . . . and spiritual-intellectual beauty is just as important as "natural" beauty. The rebuffed and isolated intellectual and artist, cut off from the live forces of their environment, might decide to retire into an ineffectual sterility of an ivory tower, or become intent in destroying a society which encounters him with cold indifference, if not with a thinly veiled enmity.

The position, the status, of the intellectual and the artist in American society can only be properly understood with the clear understanding what America represents and what Americans really stand for. In reply to this question within the framework of a mere article we have to be most dictatorial and axiomatic, hoping that the sympathetic reader will excuse our undocumented and sweeping generalizations. No other procedure is technically possible.

Agreeing with Sartre that the United States is the most myth-ridden region of our globe, let us start out in all candor saying that America is not a "New World," but an integral part of the Occident. Yet if there is a demarkation line, a "crease" within the Western World, it is the Channel and not the Atlantic. The map, as often, lies. Even Britishers, frequently, refer to the Continent as "Europe" thereby tacitly excluding themselves from the "Old World." North America's (relative) cultural remoteness from the Continent stems from the fact that it is a large island, a *Grossinsel*, in the World Sea deriving her

roots from a smaller island — Great Britain. Nor should there be any doubt in the mind of a "third party" like myself that the vast majority of the "genuinely American" characteristics are variations, are paraphrases of English-British themes. Of course, there *are* a few traits on the American Scene which do not transcend the frame of the New World, such as liberality and generosity in material matters, yet most other traits "characteristic" for America distinctly point to the British heritage. Enumerating them, may I be forgiven if I seem trying to be paradoxical: a skeptical melancholia (frequently covered with a thick veneer of "optimism" if not with a somewhat bitter humor), a strong communitarianism (with sporadic eccentricity as a protest), a relentless anti-intellectualism among the masses (which by no means cancels out the existence of a brilliant array of thinkers and poets), strictly set limits to ideas and their public expression (imposed by society and not by the state), a widespread misogyny (compensating for the collapse of the father-image), a constant emphasis on human equality (covering a distinctly aristocratic background in the political tradition going back to 1215 and 1688), and an irrepressible desire for social status which is the cause for the "chase after the dollar" — the American's "worship of money" (an old *European* vice!) being wholly mythological. The dollar merely serves as a means to *emphasize* (not to "establish") social prestige, recognition by the community being an important goal in life for the "outer-directed" man.

The myth of the classless society in the United States is partly the result of the fairy tale about the lack of social mobility on the European Continent. Totally misleading elements like titles in Russia, the glaring *economic* differences in the Mediterranean area and romantic novels about "Ruritanian" nations, have contributed to these misconceptions. (A glance at Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu's *La Russie des Tsars* will convince us that all Western social labels

are meaningless in pre-Revolutionary Russia.) It is American social life which, probably more so than that of Britain, is based on "exclusiveness" in the original sense of the term. (Yet as to sheer exclusiveness Switzerland, undoubtedly, has the leading rôle in Christendom.) The hearty manners, the liberal use of first names, the great conviviality should not make us forget the other aspects of American "folkways," as, for instance, the equivalents of the Old School Tie, the Social Registers, the gamut of secretaries protecting "Men of Distinction," the strict etiquette codified in various handbooks, the lengthy society pages in the newspapers, the problem of "smart addresses," country clubs and "highly restricted" residential areas and resort hotels, and last but not least, the educational system which, especially in its fraternal societies, reflects rather than creates social stratifications. All this also has its political implications; remembering the careers of Ramsay MacDonald or of Dollfuss one cannot forget that men of illegitimate birth speaking with a strong Brooklyn accent never could have become Presidents of the United States. A candidate for the Presidency, as D. W. Brogan pointed out in his *Government by the People*, at least must have graduated to middle-class levels.

In these matters, the differences between America and Britain may not be inconsiderable; of the two nations, America building up a society in a process of crystallization, is the one socially more conscious; while Britain, subjected to a leveling activity, is heading the other way. This distinction, needless to say, has nothing to do with the myth of America as a "young nation" only now reaching adolescence. Culturally or "biologically" America is not a split second younger than Europe. Chaucer, Donne or Milton are the common literary ancestors of the poet in Kankakee no less than that of the essayist in Tewkesbury.¹ The ruins of Luxor, the Acropolis, or the Forum Romanum show architectural expressions which are "younger," not "older," than those of rebuilt Frankfurt or

Mid-Town New York. And the nation which has produced Henry James and Henry Adams, as Chesterton once rightly remarked, cannot be considered one of "healthy young barbarians." America, moreover, is anything but "free and easy;" like Britain, the United States is a highly evolved and differentiated product of Calvinism. Whereas in Britain a religion prevailed which is based on a gently touched-up Calvinist theology plus a certain ritualistic veneer retained from the Catholic past, America has her roots in a less diluted form of the Genevan doctrine.

Here, finally, are we being faced with the elements which, since the early 16th century, have effected the cleavage between Britain and the Continent and thus, also, between America and the Continent. These decisive elements are differences in mentality caused by different religious backgrounds. They are, independently from the *present* vigor of religious convictions, the prime factors responsible for having laid the groundwork for our widely divergent outlooks. In this respect an intermediary position is being taken by Lutheranism, which formed the minds of Northern Germany and Scandinavia. Still, of the cultural cleavage within the "Germanies" even the average American is quite conscious; a Blue Danube restaurant, a Bavarian beer garden, a nightclub with the atmosphere of "Old Vienna," Rhine wines and pictures from the Cologne carnival might draw his attention or appeal to his imagination. But we wonder how he would react to a Prussian beer garden or to a nightclub with an "Old Potsdam" atmosphere. (The "Calvinistic" adjectives "Scottish" and "Dutch" might denote qualities of a sterling character, but they hardly evoke a spirit of cozy conviviality.)

In this connection one has to remember that it is not the "denominational" element alone which is acting as a dividing factor, but also the intrinsic character of the Reformation which was a revolt *against* the Renaissance, against Humanism. Neither Britain, nor America went through the

Renaissance, nor even through a genuine Baroque period — the grand style of the Counter-Reformation which reached its perfection in Central Germany and in Austria. (Of all Catholic nations only the Irish were completely left out of these important stages of development.) Thus it is the Anglo-Saxon world which preserved the medieval heritage, in a way, much better than the *Orbis Catholicus*, a fact of which we are perfectly aware if we compare, let us say, Grant Wood's *American Gothic* with Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. And while St. Thomas More, the friend of Erasmus and a true product of the humanist Renaissance, was beheaded as a Catholic martyr, life on the Continent continued along the lines of the New Way: Michelangelo and Julius II shouted at each other in the Sistine Chapel, Leo X vainly implored the Sage of Rotterdam to stay with him in the Eternal City, and Emperor Charles V, in whose realm the sun never set, created a minor revolution by humbly picking up the brush which Titian invertedly had dropped.

* * *

It is thus against a background full of Calvinist implications that we have to view the position of the intellectual and artist in Anglo-Saxonry and then to compare it with the situation on the Continent. The Lutheran Reformation, in spite of its anti-rational and anti-humanist stand, affected the status of the intellectual to a markedly lesser degree than the Calvinistic upheaval, and though the artist in Lutherdom had declined in influence and prestige, the churches and cathedrals of the Evangelical parts of Germany and of Scandinavia, up to our days, have preserved their artistic treasures inherited from the Catholic past. Sankt-Lorenz or Sankt-Sebaldus in Nuremberg, fully restored after the ravages of World War II, look almost exactly the same as in 1520; few changes have taken place in Ulm Cathedral or in the sanctuaries even further north. Yet leaving Evangelical Germany, where the "Protestant" label, though of Lutheran origin, has no official standing

and encounters more and more opposition, and entering Presbyterian Scotland, we find that a clean sweep of the artistic features in the churches was made in the 16th and 17th centuries. The situation in Britain is very much alike. And America, we must bear in mind, is the product of "Dis-senters" of Low-Church inspiration.

The circle of mutually-conditioning influences is closed when we remember the Calvinistic fatherhood of modern finance, of the industrial revolution, and of disciplined communitarian man who alone had the qualities to become the pioneer of technological civilization. (This is well illustrated by the close connection between Calvinism and the rise of the watch industry, between the Huguenot *réfugiés* and the rise of the modern militaristic, bureaucratic and industrial Prussian state.) The Catholic and Greek-Orthodox world, lagging far behind in general "progress," produced an anarchical human type who even today is the despair of Soviet managers in the East and E.C.A. counsellors in the South of Europe. Indeed, the culture and civilization of Rome and Byzantium, from a Protestant point of view, seems to be oddly "ineffective;" there apparently is something "irregular" and "Bohemian" about their human products; and although the Irish have escaped the blessings and charms of the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Rococo, the charge of "unreliability" and "too much imagination" coupled with the "gift of gab" has been levelled also against them.

While the British and American aristocracies went on cherishing eccentricity, originality, and independence of mind, the new bourgeois and more truly Protestant² society of Anglo-Saxonry turned away from the "talkers" and placed the "doers" on the pedestal. In Britain this process can be observed somewhat earlier though it was more gradual and, therefore, more insidious; we see this especially in the evolution of the "public schools" which after Dr. Arnold began consciously-subconsciously to train their products for "leadership" and "cooperation" in an "industrial de-

mocracy." The United States, on the other hand, after a singularly great period of literary flowering, turned to an age of unparalleled material construction and expansion, made possible by the immigration and assimilation of countless immigrants who, culturally, had come with empty hands. It cannot be denied that periods of very rapid and intensive material aggrandizement have limiting effects on the intellectual and artistic life of the nations which, in this respect, rather seem to benefit from military defeats, a certain penury or, sometimes, even from minor political pressures and discomforts. Germany's *Gründerjahre* after 1871 and the continuing prosperity until 1914 show this very clearly; the *Reich*, during that period, had shown a surprising sterility in the realm of creative endeavor. Nor has the wealth amassed by neutral Scandinavia and Holland in the First World War benefited the cultural output of these four nations. Still, one must admit that even such times of general well-being, accentuated by a fabulous rise of industry and commerce, have never seriously affected the status of the thinker or the artist in Continental Europe. If certain changes can be observed in their position and esteem in the last generation these have to be accredited to other factors. We will return to this problem presently.

We already have mentioned the fact that the American and the British élites have a native respect for originality, if not eccentricity. The names of poets and writers from Lord Byron to John Jay Chapman and the various luminaries of the Adams and Lowell families inevitably come to one's mind. Yet here we encounter a distinguishing feature which cannot be overlooked: the relative unwillingness of the American upper crust to incorporate and to assimilate men of genius from other classes or "estates." Such an assimilation, admittedly, has been rendered more difficult by the lack of titles of nobility given as a just compensation for great achievement with a minimal monetary return. Unlike the Chicago packer or the Detroit

manufacturer, the lyric poet or the professor of entomology can hardly leave a small fortune to their heirs. Yet titles, in Europe, have been the reward for authors from Goethe and Schiller to Tennyson, Maeterlinck and Schaukal, to scientists from Lister to Wassermann, to technologists from Engerth to Marconi, no less than to the outstanding men of the Vienna Medical School (Hebra, Rokitansky, Billroth, etc.)³ The rôle which many European courts played in fostering the arts and sciences hardly needs stressing. Contrary to what the man in the street might think, it is the award of titles of nobility which fostered social mobility. Only in a republic, an upper-crust, or an aristocracy is in the danger of becoming a caste. . .

It is quite true that the newer American aristocracy has often been instrumental in financing artistic and intellectual projects, yet usually this has only been carried out in a very impersonal way through foundations. The highest political forum in the United States, the Presidency, ever since the days of Jacksonian democracy, has shown only the scantest of interests in non-material activities. The friendship which sprang up between Christian VIII of Denmark and Kierkegaard, Louis II of Bavaria and Richard Wagner, Lorenzo di Medici and Marsiglio Ficino, Grand-Duke Charles-Augustus of Saxe-Weimar and Goethe, Catherine II and Voltaire, Philip IV and Rubens, E. L. von Gerlach and Frederick William IV did not and, perhaps, could not be repeated in America; Soeren Kierkegaard, indeed, could hardly be imagined as a frequent visitor in the White House. Democracy is averse to the intellectual extremes, to illiteracy no less than to genius.

All this would not be tragic if the intellectual and artist would find an enthusiastic echo among the masses, yet in this respect the communitarianism of the English-speaking world is acting as an obstacle. Thought and arts stand and fall with "originality," *i.e.*, with the conception or the invention of something *new*. Yet whereas the "early" Protestant world is as revolu-

tionary as the *mundus catholicus*, the "late" Calvinistic orbit is evolutionary. Only as long as Protestantism in general and Calvinism in particular were wedded to absolutes, did their revolutionary fervor continue. Yet "evolution," which implies slow gradual change, spells conservatism, and the English-speaking world is fundamentally conservative. The picture of Americans as a nation craving for eternal change is wholly mythological; they like things *they are familiar with* in a "bigger and better" edition, but they recoil from revolutionary newness; and rightly they see in the European immigrant from countries of the "Old Church" an "element of unrest." Still, there is no reason to get desperate over this state of affairs because, whether we like it or not, it makes America a pillar of stability in this dangerously chaotic world.

Now, a truly *popular* echo in matters of thought, especially of abstract thought, is hardly conceivable anywhere at any time, and art, only too often, has an esoteric aspect. Naturally, there is also such art which appeals to the naive as well as to the initiated as, for instance, most of medieval art. (This does not eliminate the fact that the "high" and the "low brow" see something quite different in such "dual purpose art." Don Quixote for instance can be read on several levels.) Yet art, to use Picasso's expression, is a "lie to say the truth," and such "translation" needs efforts, needs insight, intuition and intellect. Thus Norman Rockwell will always be more appealing to the many than Kokoschka and Rouault, not to mention Chirico or Mondrian. In this respect, the masses of the European Continent do not differ widely from Mr. and Mrs. Averageman in America; yet let us admit that the Continental has been educated in a greater sense of awe for the thinker and artist than has America's Man-in-the-Street. The European might confess defeat before a picture by Chagall, a novel by Gracq or a tale by Ernst Jünger, but only rarely will he declare in all bluntness such artists or thinkers to be useless

fools or arrogant impostors. Hitler in his fanatical hate for modern art has to be viewed as an extreme representative of Jacobin democracy and, more recently, a German cabinet member's slighting remark about contemporary painting created an uproar in the whole Federal Republic. The common man's lack of genuine confidence in his own opinions and tastes, needless to say, is one of the many causes for the weakness of Europe's political democracy permanently laboring under fits of bad conscience since the voters periodically realize that they are putting men into power they hardly know and that they are voting on issues about which they do not have the haziest notion. Our Continental educational system never lets us forget that human equality is sensible only as an administrative procedure and that the expert ought to take precedence over the amateur. Yet the amateur making a "monkey" out of the expert is a cherished hero in American ("democratic") imagination, in the comics no less than in the movies.

At the same time it remains true that "non-practical" imagination never was at a premium in the English-speaking world. Consider only the rôle novels played and still are playing on the Continent (significantly called *romans*, *Romane*, etc.) and the more lowly status "mere fiction" has in America and in Britain. In educational libraries it ranks well below "geography" or books containing "facts and figures" or other "useful information," the reading of "just fiction" being positively discouraged. Jefferson (*cf.* his letter to Burnwell, written in 1818) objected not only to poetry, but also to novels, since they created a "bloated imagination, sickly judgment, and disgust towards all real business in life." In this condemnation he was preceded a century and a half by the Reverend Richard Baxter, who thought that novels "poison the minds of sensual people with idle fumes and intoxicating fancies, as may divert them from the serious thoughts of their salvation." (*Christian Directory*, VIII, 6.) Yet remember the historic rôle of the novel,

especially in modern Russian history (Chernyshevski, Turgenyev, Tolstoy, Saltykov); the German novel politically was also most effective. (H. Grimm, Salomon, H. Mann.)

There is, obviously, something aristocratic and "exclusive" about intellectual and artistic creation entailing the consolations of the spirit, an element of personal expression and emancipation, and also an *a priori* rejection of external controls, be they of a vertical (governmental) or of a horizontal (communitarian, societal) nature. Yet the latter are very strong in Anglo-Saxonry, where "democracy" asserts itself more and more, which is not surprising; because there definitely is a conflict between intellectual and artistic activities on one hand and the thing very loosely called "democracy" on the other. (If intellectuals and artists frequently extol "democracy," they usually are mistaking the liberal for the democratic ideals; liberalism stands for personal freedom, democracy merely for equality and majority rule, which means the negation of values and the dominion by the Philistines.)

Both the intellectual and the artist, as we have said before, are doing things not properly understood by the many; but they also are leading lives of a pattern alien and *hidden* to the people at large. The happenings within the upper crust frequently get into the papers — even the scandals are serving the purpose of publicity — yet the artist's "Bohemian" life, whose true nature is guessed rather than actually known, is censored and envied at one and the same time. The slender financial returns of most intellectual and artistic pursuits help to stress their irrational mysteriousness, but there is also the deeply ingrained suspicion that these "long-haired guys" could not earn an honest dime through "regular work" even if they set their minds to it; these dreamers, talkers, and scribblers simply are not sufficiently aggressive to succeed like "ordinary people," nor are they manly enough to engage in a career or in a profession which is competitive, in which

man is brutally pitted against man—*viz.*, business, manufacture, sports, or *even* politics.

The "moral" downfall of the "politician" in America, on the other hand, is merely the effect of the political democratization of the country since the days of Andrew Jackson. The contempt for the politician in democracies, of course, is by no means confined to the United States. Irate French taxi-drivers disappointed by meager gratuities might call a man "*espèce de député*" and no Swiss would maintain that the best people in the Helvetic Republic enter politics. To *most* men of pride, integrity and uprightness the very idea to extol himself or his party in front of the public is distasteful. Yet in the United States with its not too obvious but very British misogyny — especially foreigners are fooled by the trappings of a prefabricated matriarchal myth — the generally held notion of the politician has female implications; he is seen as a not-so-male prostitute or, at least, a baby-kisser with a flabby body, long hair and a broad-brimmed hat. In other words: he is a male "mom." The effect of this image on America's *natural aristoi* — to use Jefferson's expression — is disastrous for the country, since it psychologically dissuades the best Americans from embarking on political careers. This suspicion of the masses for the "talker" also holds good for the (Protestant) clergyman who, in Britain, is the butt of all jokes in popular plays. The Catholic priest in the Irish, American, and French-Canadian societies, on the contrary, not only partakes of his Old World prestige, but as a "doer" (as opposed to the "preacher") he has an even more elevated rôle than in the Continent: in a decapitated and not yet entirely re-crystallized society he enjoys the prerogatives of the First *and* of the Second Estate.

These popular suspicions, in America, reach their zenith if they are levelled against the male "educator," the "professor." The curious dichotomy which we see in the realm of politics — religious respect for the Constitution accompanied by an al-

most total disrespect for the professional politician — is being repeated here in the form of a deadly respect for education (remember all the hymns sung nostalgically in praise for the Little Red Schoolhouse and the dear Alma Mater) coupled with humorous contempt for the professor, who even in his British equivalent is an innocuous and slightly ridiculous person, yet a terrifying creature with beard, bushy eyebrows, a sarcastic expression and a stentorian voice, in the Continent.

The professor in the United States not only is poorly paid (as in *certain* Continental countries), but, as an “educator” as well as an “intellectual” he is in a female double-rôle; for American conditions, moreover, he is enjoying an extraordinary degree of security; and this brings him no prestige whatsoever, because security of tenure implies the absence of risk — risk which stands for manliness. Still, in the lesser universities, he can be hired and fired by a president who, in turn, can be hired and fired by a board of trustees; while in Europe his colleague can only be removed for committing common crimes; if he wanted to, he could with impunity read the local paper aloud in the “lecture halls.” (The term “academic freedom,” now so frequently heard in America is a 19th century German “import.”) And, indeed, the professor in Europe only “lectures;” he is not a “teacher” and the term “educator” he would reject with horror. His status is merely that of a scholar giving to the students (the *Hörer*, the “listeners,” as the official German term says) an opportunity to profit from his research and his views. When Adolf von Harnack introduced a visiting American professor to William II he could do it with the words: “May I present to Your Majesty a gentleman coming from a monarchy in a republic, visiting republics in a monarchy.” In view of the fact that “His magnificence, the Rector,” *i.e.*, the president in a Continental university, is one of the professors elected by his colleagues for a one year period only, Harnack’s description was entirely correct.

The fact is usually forgotten that the American professor is one of the few persons in the land who can lead a full life, because of a generous schedule of vacations. Only women and “educators” can really travel and enjoy prolonged holidays. Still, the picture of the intellectual as a female being — “long-haired” as an artist — is incomplete if we omit some other aspects. His *degradation* to feminine status is serious enough. (We repeat that the export cliché of woman in America as a “goddess” is purely mythological; it would transcend the frame of this essay to delineate her extremely ambiguous status which permits no oversimplification.) In Continental Europe, certainly, nobody would dream of identifying intellectuality with the feminine element; Keyserling rightly insisted that the intellect is the purest manifestation of maleness. As a matter of fact, the more strictly intellectual a pursuit, the smaller the percentage of women engaged in it. With the exception of Husserl’s disciple Edith Stein, the “Jewish Carmelite” (died in 1943 in an extermination camp), we cannot recall the name of any female philosopher or theologian in the narrow sense of the term (or we had to include names like Hexdigg Conrad-Martius, Adrienne v. Speyer, Simone Weil). Thus the real tragedy in this lack of real status for the intellectual and the artist lies in the establishment of a vicious circle, not unlike the one which menaces political democracy through the rejection of political careers by the best minds and strongest characters in several nations. If the status of the intellectual or the artist is made odious by public opinion, the most brilliant and versatile persons will choose more “practical” and “virile” professions, while those clinging to their vocations will lose the live touch with a human environment which, in a way, depreciates them.

In the Continent of Europe only the musician is considered to be “long-haired;” no wonder, since of all arts music is the one most refractory to intellectual analysis. Tolstoy went as far as to say that the music

kills the intellect, which dictum does not eliminate the fact that of female composers there are almost none. One has to admit that there is the half-truth of a greater female sensibility with which the artist is often credited; but sensibility alone is no guarantor of creativeness; and true art is unimaginable without a realization of the abstract. Woman, though, is a creature of reality, of nature, of concreteness, and only the "sexual" bipolarity of our ways of thinking can offer us a tentative explanation why she functions in our civilization as the pictorial embodiment of the abstract, as symbol: as Liberty, as Hope, as France (Marianne), as America (Columbia), etc. Yet America (and Britain), which gave birth to pragmatism and the worship of the practical, actually are putting a premium on the female rather than the male qualities; thus we see in American educational institutions the science teachers reaping a higher material reward than those who engage in the liberal arts. There is a purely commercial explanation for this situation, but we suspect that, at bottom, the reason has to be found in the generally held conviction that it is more important to learn how to make a living than to learn how to live. Thus the old pagan *primum vivere deinde philosophari* is reasserting itself.

While, in Britain, dexterities, aptitudes, and skills never have to be disguised, all display of learning is considered to be vulgar. In England it is smart, at least, to *appear* to be ignorant — *vide* the hearty dislike for the "swot" in the Public School. There is no other way to knowledge except through curiosity, but curiosity in Britain is treated as a minor crime (or as a major vice) and its methodical suppression plays a large part in a genteel education. All this is no judgment whatsoever on English intelligence or on English scholarship. It only delineates community demands in the upper middle class and shows how Ortega y Gasset came to the rash conclusion that "the Englishman is stupid and drunken."

Still, it would be a grave mistake to

think that the intellectual in the mind of the Anglo-Saxon masses merely figures as a harmless dolt. To the "people" there seems to be a certain Luciferian connection between knowledge and evil. Professor Moriarty, this monster of learned wickedness created by the imagination of Conan Doyle, might carry an Irish name, but he certainly evokes a live echo in Anglo-Saxon minds. One only has to glance at the American comics to discover a whole array of "crackpot professors," the Satanic version of the saintly "Men in White," these high-priests of modern, "progressive" society: in the "funnies" as well as in the B-films we behold these bald-headed ("egg-headed"), bespectacled fiends with mongoloid features tying innocent maidens to operation tables ominously wired for electric shocks; we see them perform diabolical skull operations or engaged in plastic surgery for criminal purposes. In cartoons, on the other hand, the professor reappears as the confirmed "radical" in medieval gown and mortar board as brain-trusters of the New Deal, and telling off sturdy farmers what to plant, or commanding enterprising junior executives, with a Kremlin wave, what to sell. (Here another curious dualism is being manifested: religious veneration for science, contempt or mistrust for the scientist.) Today the sinister implications of the word "intellectual" are gaining momentum, and besides the psychoanalyst (white coat but dirty mind!), there is the even darker figure of the atomic scientist with horn-rimmed glasses and a Sherlock Holmesian pipe: the *Beau Massacreur*, the undertaker of our dear little globe. Yet we sincerely doubt that this particular new development will produce a real improvement of the status of the intellectual, and this awesome, suspicion-filled respect for a certain type of scientist will hardly benefit the artist.

Neither should we forget the curious identification of the "intellectual" with the confirmed Leftist. There is a saga in Anglo-Saxonry, and it is by no means confined to the silliest of "conservative" circles, a

saga to the effect, that Leftism is based on "reason," while "true conservatism" depends upon naturally refined feelings, blindly followed traditions, and intuitive insights. The result is a curious and even perverse juxtaposition of some sort of "conservative," tradition-laden "noble savage" of rural origin (with or without a coronet) to a *déraciné*, pure thinker with a "murderous intellect." This frequent misrepresentation of our ideological scene has been ineffectively used by Leftist circles who, in their denunciation of "reactionary governments" abroad, have accused them with monotonous repetition of "persecuting intellectuals and artists." Such accusations have rendered many an oppressive government only more attractive to the (basically "conservative") masses in the English-speaking world. Any régime jailing non-objective painters or surrealist poets whom "nobody can understand" should be applauded!

Yet clichés have a directive and formative power, they close vicious circles, and the result of such notions in America (and Britain) is a situation which, seemingly, confirms these prejudices. Hence one really can observe in the United States a most unhealthy strife between a leftist intellectualism and a "conservative" (read: Manchesterian) *sentimentality*, a strife which destroys all chances of many a worthwhile political discussion. It still remains to be seen whether the *new* American conservatism is going to break this vicious circle of disgust, offense, and revenge. And since in matters intellectual the lack of a systematic opposition is most debilitating, this particular situation is very unsatisfactory. The Leftist intellectuals, deprived of a sparring partner, easily become victims of an arrogant and provincial mediocrity. At the same time they develop into an "internal proletariat." The unique sociological structure of the C.P.A. and the very nature of "fellow-travelling" in the United States prove it sufficiently.

All this is not surprising, because the intellectual and artist, rejected by Mr. and

Mrs. Averageman, not only adopt a defensively aggressive cockiness and a pronouncedly esoteric turn in their creations, but also show a definite *désintéressement* if not a disloyalty towards a society which neither supports them materially, nor respects them in human terms. (The material rewards given to successful Soviet intellectuals and poets laureate create easily a nostalgic envy.) Yet as a result of this widening gulf between the thinkers and artists on one hand and the "masses" on the other, we not only find an increasing number of paintings and poems solely understandable to tiny conventicles of initiated, but we also are confronted by the odd fact that in Anglo-Saxonry one can spot the intellectual or the artist at first sight: he looks and behaves differently. In France most writers, painters or philosophers, as to their external appearance, seem not to be vastly different from *boutiquiers* or *rentiers* — and, in turn, many a *boutiquier* or *rentier* is a minor intellectual or art connoisseur of some sort. In America or Britain, however, the intellectual and artist visually sticks out like a sore thumb. There is something particularly ridiculous and even sordid about the American or British *Bohème*. The Latin Quarter of Paris or Munich's Schwabing, with all their extravaganzas of immature aspiration, never evoke the pitying and knowing smile whenever Bloomsbury, Greenwich Village, or even Taos are being mentioned.

Finally, we have to ask ourselves whether this whole situation is immutable, whether the American intellectual and artist will always remain a marginal figure in the life of the nation. (Obviously we are not talking here about the five or six dozen men and women who have reached national or international fame and its accompanying impressive monetary rewards.) A moderate optimism should color our forecast. Both the United States and Britain are subject to concrete influences from the Old World; their "splendid isolation" gradually is breaking down, not only because the various parts of the still free

Occident are being welded together, but also because in the United States the newer Continental immigration is now graduating socially *and* intellectually. Their ties still function with a geographically "closer moving" Old World. And in this connection it is important to note that Americans instinctively exclude Britain from the term "Old World." No American would name Boston, Salem, New Bedford or Williamsburg as places with an "Old World" atmosphere, a term readily applied to Québec, Havannah, the *Vieux Carré* of New Orleans, or Taxco, since their cultural roots are Continental and not British.

All this brings us to the subject of the position of the intellectual and the artist on the Continent. In the Dark Ages the intellectuals and artists usually were clerics, but in the High Middle Ages this identification ceased to exist. Still, the intellectual and artistic gifts enjoyed great prestige, and more so in the West than in the East with its slight Manichæan undercurrents (manifested in the artistic limitations imposed by the forms of worship) and also by its primacy of wisdom (*sapientia*) and of intuition over knowledge (*scientia*) and pure intellect. (There is a Protestant equivalent to the *staryets*, but I don't quite see the possibility of a Catholic version.)

The intellectual in the Occident was felt to have a calling, a *vocatio* based on a *talentum* which was God-given and had to be exploited. The fostering of arts and sciences, conversely, became a task for the rulers, the aristocracy, and, above all, for the (Catholic) Church, which, with her constant extolling of reason, was and remained until our days a strongly intellectual institution. It was, after all, the Catholic glorification of man, intrinsically connected with an enthusiasm for reason and beauty, which provoked the late medieval reaction of the Reformation, the Calvinistic emphasis on the *Soli Deo Gloria*. Thomism, which in Catholic thinking still plays such an important rôle, places the moral virtues *below* the *virtutes intellectuales*. (Temper-

ance, which includes chastity, thus figures at the bottom of the ladder and it is even eclipsed by courage.) St. Thomas, as a matter of fact, regarded these intellectually superior as bound in duty to strive — short of revolution — for the highest positions in government. Talent and genius traditionally broke all barriers, but it needed the Catholic Renaissance to establish the supremacy of the "Republic of Letters." Certainly, were it not for the monarchy, the (somewhat urbanized) nobility, the patriciate, and the Church, Europe's attraction to the intelligent American traveller would almost be nil.

Today monarchy merely survives in Europe's Protestant orbit as a moral symbol (or as a sacred cow) and the Church is bitterly poor. (The ecclesiastic treasures admired by overseas visitors usually are either state property or "national monuments" which cannot be sold.) The real dominion of the intellectual and artist, significantly enough, was shaken though not entirely destroyed by the fall of the *ancien régime*. It probably reached its zenith in the 18th century, when the "enlightenment" recorded its intellectual victories in an age of royal absolutism and aristocratic supremacy. "If any one requires to be convinced that speculative thought is one of the chief elements of social power," J. S. Mill wrote in *Representative Government*, "let him bethink himself of the age in which there was scarcely a throne in Europe which was not filled by a liberal and reforming king, a liberal and reforming emperor, or, strangest of all, a liberal and reforming pope; the age of Frederick the Great, of Catherine the Second, of Joseph the Second, of Peter Leopold, of Benedict XIV, of Ganganelli, of Pombal, of Aranda; when the very Bourbons of Naples were liberals and reformers, and all the active minds among the noblesse of France were filled with the ideas which were soon after to cost them so dear." The intellectual and artist on the Continent played an important rôle even after the French Revolution which

not only showed the immense power but also the helpless misery which characterizes intellectual *déracinement*; Condorcet's tragic fate and the frank if grim reply of the judge condemning Lavoisier — *La République n'a pas besoin des savants* — show this sufficiently.

Still, if we compare the Continental intellectual's influence in the nineteenth or twentieth century with that of his Anglo-Saxon confrère, it still proves considerable. Not since the 1820's has there been the impact of an important thinker on American political life or on party affairs; American politics had no Mazzini, Guizot, Stahl, Groen van Prinsterer, Bauer, Iglesias, Don Sturzo, Kautsky, Maetzku, Seipel, Jorga, or Lenin. In Britain also, the intellectual influences upon the political scene, for some time, have been on the wane. Intellectuals and artists deeply concerned with politics — not just signing manifestoes — are rare in Anglo-Saxonry. Most of our leading Continental figures in the fields of arts and letters also are political figures. It is, perhaps, sufficient to mention from days immediately past and present the names of French authors like Barrès, France, Zola, Péguy, Bloy, Claudel, Bernanos, Mauriac, Sartre who wrote *littérature engagée*, "engaged" in religion or politics. *Littérature engagée* in Anglo-Saxonry (which truly stands for the principle of *l'art pour l'art*) is written either by Catholics or by foreigners. The artist and the intellectual on the Continent has *still* not retired to the ivory tower. He continues to be "in the world." Thus I never will forget a public poetry lecture arranged by the Austrian Legation in Budapest, way back in January 1937, when seven out of the nine poets reading their verse belonged either to Austria's cabinet, the state council or the higher civil service. Of course, these men worked for a "reactionary" régime; imagine Herr Fiegl or the late Mr. Bevin intoning poetry!

It would be a folly, though, to believe that even on the Continent the intellectual's and artist's rôle, influence and prestige, are

the same as they used to be or that they even could keep their present status. First of all, there is a purely economic angle to the problem. Confiscatory taxes and political levelling have radically decreased the number of individuals capable of financing and supporting gifted artists and intellectuals be they members of their families or complete outsiders. In the past there was many a writer who had independent means.

Yet indigence in itself probably was less harmful than the increasing rootlessness and esoteric isolation towards which artists and intellectuals drifted on the Continent as well. We can see this in modern poetry which, on the Continent, is, by and large, still more generally comprehensible than it is in the English-speaking world, but the two deadly tendencies of artistic and intellectual development now are also discernible east of the Channel: hermetic isolation on one hand, and craving for popularity on the other. In this connection we must remember the words of Franz Werfel in his "Theogumena" (*Between Heaven and Earth*): "I have experienced many varieties of arrogance, in myself and in others. But since I myself shared these varieties for a time in my youth, I must confess from personal experience that there is no more consuming, more sneering, more diabolical arrogance than that of the artistic advance guard and radical intellectuals who are bursting with a vain mania to be deep and dark and subtle and to inflict pain. Amid the amused and indignant laughter of a few Philistines, we were the insignificant stokers who preheated the hell in which mankind is now roasting." There just can be no doubt about the great guilt of many of our artists and intellectuals who sawed off the branch on which we all were sitting. The *fides quaerens intellectus* was not theirs. And the late Waldemar Gurian was very right in declaring Russian communism to have been *primarily* a movement of intellectuals with certain demagogical gifts.

Still, the most fateful blow to the older position of our artists and intellectuals has

been struck by the phenomenon usually referred to as the "Americanization" of the European scene. No expression is less just and equitable than precisely this use of *Amerikanismus* and *Amerikanisierung*, which squarely rests on a European illusion. This piece of our mythology which is neither printed nor pronounced openly contains the subtly veiled affirmation that we Europeans really would prefer to live in the Middle Ages, read illuminated missals and build Gothic cathedrals; only the wicked Americans coming across the Atlantic destroyed our idyllic way of life by selling us jet-planes, penicillin, saxophones, and Coca-Cola. This sort of myth one can hear in all sorts of innuendos even on the extreme left. The truth about the whole matter is that modern civilization conquered America no less than Europe, that both parts of the Occident contributed to it, that we both enjoy its advantages — our "medievalists" would be desperate without a dentist — and that neither of us has been too successful in coping with the more terrifying aspects of modernity. Democracy and democratism (born in Europe and rejected by America's Founding Fathers) are revivals from Antiquity and they affect adversely the status of our intellectuals and artists. It was democracy which victimized Socrates, frightened Plato, and caused Aristotle to flee Athens.

Democracy in the modern world has taught mass-man to pass judgment on everything under the sun; the democratic dogma insists that it is sufficient to be "on the hoof" and to have celebrated one's twenty-first birthday in order to have a directive, even if microscopic, influence on the fate of the nation. Knowledge, wisdom, experience and originality have become irrelevant; prostitute and professor have been placed on the same civic level and the capacity to please is all-important. The politician no longer is in a category close to that of a statesman but has a status similar to that of a film-star or a beauty queen. In democracies, where mass-man holds the purse-strings and statism (a dis-

ease peculiar to modern democracy) is rampant, the parliaments and party-controlled ministries replace the courts and the episcopal sees; as a result the tastes, the whims and cravings of the masses tend to become paramount. The other menace is commercialization. In an age of widespread illiteracy literary standards are usually fairly high. Witness Russia in the nineteenth century. Today truly serious books can often only be published with the help of foundations. It doesn't "pay" any longer to address élites. The intellectual and the artist who do not "clown" for the masses are considered to be "failures;" success is counted by cash.

Thus the Continent is getting "Americanized" and the human position of the intellectual and artist is declining, which means that the effects of modern civilization are the same on both sides of the Channel, on both sides of the Atlantic. In order to survive physically, the intellectual and the artist will be tempted to sell themselves to those in power, not to courts, wealthy burghers, free universities, or cathedral chapters, but to political parties, ideologically circumscribed, and ruling either democratically or monocratically. The State, the "coldest of all monsters" (Nietzsche) alone will have the means to dictate price, form, and performance. Thus if the age of democracy and populist monocracy (*i.e.*, totalitarian dictatorship) continues on the Continent, the moral prestige of the intellectual and the artist will continue to suffer. The animals will command Orpheus and will cease to be his thralls.

In this connection we should never forget that National Socialism was a rebellion of the masses against their élites or, in the statistical sense, against "exceptional man" who dared to deviate from mediocrity — a rebellion against the priests, the Jews, the intellectuals, the "plutocrats," the aristocrats and all the artists committing the crime of being incomprehensible to Mr. and Mrs. Averageman. Hitler, in spite (and on account) of his medium-like gifts,

was a "fellow-like-you-and-me," a "regular guy," the very personification of mediocrity as testified by his *Table Talks* collected by Dr. Pick. His hatred for all those thinkers and artists whom he failed to understand was monumental. The phenomenon of National Socialism — courageously opposed only by the élites — testifies to the democratization of the masses who gradually are losing their old respect for those exceptionally gifted. One therefore truly wonders what would be the result of a referendum in which the "little people" would have to choose between Picasso and Piloty, between Klee and Norman Rockwell, or between *L'Esprit des Lois* and *Mein Kampf*. Democracy is primarily, but not solely, a political issue; it is a "way of life" which affects all aspects of human existence. And mass-man, today, from San Francisco to Vienna, is no longer a hungry desperado exposed to the harangues of resentment-laden intellectuals (as in the good old days of the Romanovs, when the *intelligentsia* waited with impatience to save and to inherit the world), but a petty bourgeois with limited aims, rigid views, and not many flights of imagination. From him the artist and the intellectual will increasingly take orders.

Thus the difference between the status of the artist and the intellectual in both parts of the Occident is slowly but surely decreasing. M. André Siegfried, in his last volume on the United States, relates with gusto the story according to which President Theodore Roosevelt, afraid to address Booker T. Washington as "Mister" — the Potomac is dangerously near to the White House! — condescendingly called him "Professor" to which no racialist could object. This is an incident, more or less, of an "historic" interest. An enthusiastic American, on the other hand, told me of his recent experience while travelling on a train from Holland to Cologne with a German professor. At the border he discovered that he had forgotten his passport, but when the official came to stamp his travel document, his German friend mere-

ly explained: "I am V. W., professor at the University of G., and I vouch for this gentleman." Whereupon the official bowed courteously, and the "affair" was settled. *Mutatis mutandis*, this never could happen in New York Harbor; but we will have to ask ourselves whether it still will happen in Europe a generation hence.

Of one thing, though, we can almost be certain: the future hardly will see equivalents to Goya's frank and brutal representation of Charles IV's royal family or of Ryepin's frightening paintings of Russia's imperial history. Even in the pictorial field, "Newspeak" awaits the artist. After the chaplaincy to King Demos come the *Reichsschrifttumkammer* and the *Soyus Sovyetskikh Pisateley* — if not the subterranean atomic lab flanked by heavily armed guards. Caught between the horizontal (societal) and vertical (governmental) pressures, even the intellectuals and artists of the Continent will cease to have an easy time; they might be left to the bitter choice between loneliness and serfdom, between isolation and the gilded cage. As everywhere else, their fate, their happiness, their influence, and even their greatness not only depend upon their own self-respect and a sense of true responsibility, but also upon their acceptance by generous hearts and minds in an ambience of ease and freedom. Neither intellectuals nor artists can thrive in a world rejecting liberty, uniqueness, and a true hierarchy of values.

¹Cf. my "Mythology of Anti-Americanism" in *Commonweal*, Jan. 15, 1954.

²Hence the curious illusory impression of Anglo-Saxon tourists to the effect that there is "no middle class" in Spain, Italy or (prewar) Russia. Yet it must be evident to every thinking person that these countries have millions of shopkeepers, officers, lawyers, civil servants, doctors, executives, priests, even if they do not resemble their Anglo-Saxon equivalents.

³A great many outstanding medical men in Austria, Bavaria and Hungary were noblemen by birth who had chosen the medical profession. Names which immediately come to my mind are: Eiselsberg, Auersperg, Gagern, Gebsattel, Koranyi, Verebely, Batthyany, Pirquet, Wagner-Jauregg.