

own teaching experience, the appallingly destructive influence a modern university can have? The book review section alone of *Modern Age* would have justified its existence; in no other area are such standards of integrity and critical judgment as have characterized the reviews in *Modern Age* more needed than in the reviewing of books.

How great the influence of *Modern Age* has been it is impossible to say. It does have a wide ranging readership, but if it had been read by no one else than the writers of its articles it would have been worthwhile: to maintain standards in such a time as ours is an undertaking that is worthwhile in itself, if only to demonstrate that it is still possible.

—HENRY REGNERY

From Left of Center to Right

BECAUSE I have experienced the events to which I shall refer in this toast to the twentieth anniversary issue of *Modern Age*, my comments will be couched in biographical terms; I beg the reader not to interpret the frequency of the first personal pronoun in them as an expression of egoism or vanity; it is simply the briefest way to make clear what I take to be the meaning and felt value of these events.

When I began to realize that I had been holding philosophical and political opinions that were false and socially harmful, I felt utterly lonely or, as I put it to myself in self-mockery, I felt that no doubt I was the only man in step in the regiment. I was immersed in the academic environment over which, as known, hangs a thick pink to deep red fog. If there were other heretics in my world in those days I did not know about them—I had not yet come to Northwestern and had not heard of Professor McGovern. But no man, unless he is a total

“idiot” in the etymological sense of the term, or stone-deaf to the regimental band because he gets the tune he marches by directly from God, can be happy with such a condition. Ordinarily a person must suspect that he may be wrong while knowing, at the same time, that he is right and that the band is playing a funeral march. Psychological conflicts of this kind are not contradictions in these post-Dostoevskian days. But the conviction that one is right, however strong, cannot fill the vacuum in which he finds himself, especially when the vacuum is accompanied by the explicit disapproval of one’s colleagues.

For the writer the loneliness began to dissipate when a number of events began to occur. First came the publication of *God and Man at Yale*, a book that startled the innocents, yanked the ostriches’ heads out of the sands and, as was to be expected, outraged the propagandists it exposed. In 1954 appeared Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind*. It is too late today, after its many editions and revisions, to add anything in praise of this formidable job of scholarship and thinking.

While it was too early to jump to the conclusion that these two events were signs of a trend, it was not too early to bask in the warmth that dispelled my loneliness. A pessimist by temperament and on reasoned grounds, I allowed myself to feel, with hesitation of course, that the publication of these two books might be cause for hope. All the more when I considered that it was not the result of miraculous parthenogenesis. Back of them stood a publisher. That his organization did not have the “prestige” of the big Eastern publishers, in spite of the distinguished and unusual books he was putting out, was not surprising. The boys in the East are masters of the technique of suffocation by silence. What to me was comforting was the knowledge that here, in my home grounds, there was a man with the courage to stand up to the regnant orthodoxy. One does not become a *guerrillero* who would prefer to serve as an officer in the big battalions.

In 1955 came the publication of *National Review*. It took no extraordinary acuity to see that the young man who had outraged his teachers a few years back was moved by serious convictions. Moreover, the pages of the review sparkle with wit and fine writing.

Then came the founding of *Modern Age*. Here was another welcome event to give the lie to my pessimism. When, later, Robert Jones (R.I.P.) brought me the invitation to join its editorial board, I was more than flattered. It was a chance to do more than I had been doing in my private way to serve; it was an opportunity to join one of the *guerrillas*.

How many readers does *Modern Age* have? The number is available, since it must be made public by law. But the question is one for Madison Avenue. It would be *contra natura* were its circulation to come close to that of *The New York Review of Books*. As I have heard Henry Regnery observe, *The Criterion's* circulation was never more than eight hundred copies, yet it made literary history. In this respect I am a Leninist: what is needed at present is a small band of men and women concerned with the threat to our civilization and with courage to stand up to the bah-bahing of the orthodoxy. *Modern Age* is not likely to win anything that can be called one of the intellectual "decisive battles" of history. If it did, it would be advisable for some of us to begin to think of defecting. What is needed, in view of the pandemic threat to our civilization, is a stubborn campaign in favor of immunization against the philosophical and the sociopolitical threat. For this reason the job will take time and effort and it is not one for those easily discouraged or who crave for popular applause. *Modern Age* is fully doing its part.

The last event was the founding of The Philadelphia Society in 1964. Its value, as I have believed from its beginning, arises not merely from the papers one hears yearly, the great majority of which are the products of creative minds. To me, at least,

as great a value resides in the fact that once a year one has the opportunity to meet a number of men and women who know where they stand, know that the others—"those people," as General Lee called the men in blue—are in error, and know why. They do not agree among themselves and some of them do not agree, each with himself. But here is a group of men and women who do not only give the lie to John Stuart Mill, but who have a sense of responsibility for our civilization that the liberal-radical herd lacks. They think for themselves and, *Gott sei Dank*, one never hears from them the moldy liberal-radical platitudes fed the sheep by the academics and the liberal press. They constitute a threatening heresy.

I have never heard the relationship between *Modern Age* and The Philadelphia Society discussed. It adds up to the fact that living in separate menages, they have been carrying on without benefit of clergy ever since the older institution met the younger. *Modern Age*, to put it literally, has served as a medium in which many of the papers read at the Society come to the attention of a larger number of people than those who attend its meetings. The value of this cooperation cannot be overestimated.

It seems fitting to close with a remark I can make without offending modesty, since outside reading occasional articles for Doctor Collier, actually I have very little to do with the publication and management of *Modern Age*. That a man who is by training a political scientist and, as one may say, an editor only by accident, should have raised the quality of the quarterly he publishes and edits, as he has, is quite a remarkable achievement. That the quality of the magazine has steadily improved since he took over its editorship can easily be confirmed by comparing earlier with later numbers.

We, intellectual *guerrilleros* of the right, have very good reasons to toast the twentieth anniversary of *Modern Age*.

—ELISEO VIVAS