

not necessary to humanism. With T. S. Eliot (in "Second Thoughts About Humanism") and Allen Tate (in "The Fallacy of Humanism"), I disagree. If the "higher self" is not supernatural it is natural, and however much the humanists might enshroud it in mystery, as Hoeveler says they did, it is open to rational understanding, and humanism becomes a naturalism. Eliot argues that the human mind doesn't invent spiritual realities, it merely recognizes them; they must come either from below or from above. Those who believe the former, he says, are naturalists; those who believe the latter are supernaturalists, and only religion can nourish their belief. My disagreement with Hoeveler may only mean that those who read the New Humanists from a distance of half a century and more can no more agree on this important point than they could themselves.

Reviewed by FRANCIS X. DUGGAN

*A recent critique of democracy indebted to Babbitt and More but without their antipathetic tone is Claes G. Ryn, *Democracy and the Ethical Life: A Philosophy of Politics and Community* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). Mr. Ryn is a native of Sweden, where the New Humanists have always had adherents. For another example of Swedish interest see Folke Leander's philosophical monograph *The Inner Check: A Concept of Paul Elmer More With Reference to Benedetto Croce* (London: Edward Wright, 1974).

A Roman Haruspex

Signposts for the Future, by Hans Küng,
New York: Doubleday and Company, 1978.
204 pp. \$7.95.

A STUDENT recently asked me how revolutions break out. I secretly thanked those faculties which have begun giving separate courses on "revolutions," so that a debate may commence on the issue, hence a more articulate answer than what historians have so far proposed. But since I had to reply to the inquiring student, I said that two elements are usually present in a

pre-revolutionary situation: the authority (king, church, government, party, despot) whose confidence in its own legitimacy has been undermined and is thus shaky, and the radicals whose intellectual audacity breaks down the moral underpinnings of that legitimacy. Thus the revolutionary is an audacious man (or group) who dares to say and do things nobody has yet said and done.

This is not a very deep analysis, but it is sufficient to pinpoint the rôle of a Mirabeau in the tennis-court episode. Less flamboyant than Mirabeau, Hans Küng has been playing a similar rôle in what Father Yves Congar called the "October revolution" in the Catholic Church. If Congar's expression is correct, then Küng played that rôle *vis-a-vis* the "Kerensky" of the late Pope Paul VI. Küng is, of course, not only a flamboyant but also a banal man, verbose, an inextinguishable source of exasperating platitudes. But our age is banal, even when it commits evil, so why not when it sponsors revolutions.

Küng is addicted to writing bulky books, and if the present volume is relatively slim, it is because it contains only essays, lectures, press conferences, interviews, and debates put together by the American publisher: the dimensions are not Germanic. In every text, however, several bombs explode, although the resulting devastation does not alter the impression of general greyness. Here are some examples: the interviewer of the *Lutherische Monatshefte* asks Küng whether he would not feel better in the skin of a Protestant theologian? Küng: This temptation never occurred to me. But it is true that as the significance of ecumenism grows, that of one's own denomination diminishes. Küng again: I do not like the word "papacy," I prefer "Petrine ministry." Or: The essential distinction between "Catholic" and "Protestant" no longer lies in doctrinal differences but in the diversity of basic attitudes since the Reformation. Küng: Internal reforms of the Catholic Church are necessary in regard to the style of Church leadership, election of bishops and popes, compulsory celibacy, ordination of women, freedom of conscience in questions of morality.

There are many more such casually pro-

posed reforms, each of which is enough to erase the Roman Catholic Church, including the adjective "Roman," found by Küng to contradict "universality." For, indeed, all Christians must be "Catholic," that is, universal, and also "Protestant," that is, forever critical of things sacred and secular: *universal criticism* is the only dogma. Auguste Comte, also a self-appointed church father, but of a self-founded, one-man religion, wrote that since Descartes, the "critical doctrine" has brought anarchy to the world and ungovernability to the state. Küng may not have read Comte, with whom he would discover many affinities.

For example, there is the insistence on the sublimity of women. Comte saw in them the soft element in his harsh scientific society. Küng wants to ordain them and meanwhile grant them abortion rights for reasons of both "physical and mental health." Since, then, Küng is also for married priests, would a married woman priest abort her child? No interviewer asked this, but I guess that Küng, with his wide-eye manners and good-guy face would answer innocently in the affirmative.

One reason why I accepted to speak of this book is that one or two readers reacted to my earlier review of Küng's *On Being a Christian* somewhat critically. Does Küng's theology not contain, one of them wrote, elements with which one might agree because they are basically orthodox, and other elements which, if reformulated, might become just what Catholics now need? Here is my opportunity, I said to myself, to correct my error, read more sympathetically, lean over backwards, etc. My judgment, after reading *Signposts*, did not change one iota. As in the earlier volume, nowhere, absolutely nowhere, does Küng call Christ God. Here are three instances: "It was impossible even then [the early centuries] to speak of Jesus without speaking of God and Father, so it was difficult subsequently to speak of God and Father without speaking of Jesus. When it was the question of the one true God, the decision of faith was centered not on particular names and titles, but on this Jesus." "All statements about divine sonship, pre-existence, incarnation, often clothed in the

mythological and semimythological forms of the time, are meant to do no more and no less than substantiate the uniqueness, underivability, and unsurpassability of the call, offer, and claim made known in and with Jesus" (the many italicized words in this passage, from which I refrained, do not make it more meaningful, and certainly not more orthodox). "I do not think that Jesus simply made himself out to be God or that he quite formally described himself as Son of God." Küng argues that the apostolic succession should be re-examined because it is wrong that the laying on of hands is still the only way of ordination. "Would we then not have every reason to judge apostolic succession and the validity of the eucharistic celebration in [the other Churches] that are not part of this chain of ordinations in a different and much more positive manner?"

Küng has an answer to everything and to all takers. It is enough to abolish this and initiate that, so we may have a new, better, more shiny Church.

A good *Christian* [meaning here neither Catholic nor Protestant] service, is a memory of Jesus Christ . . . made, it is to be hoped, continually freshly alive in his whole visibility and audibility, the basic model to be realized in a variety of ways, inviting modern man to a new outlook on life and a new practice of life. Anyone who has experienced this can also testify to the fact that in this way the religious service can really produce for man in his ordinary life a wider horizon, a clearer line, a firmer conviction and also, to put it quite simply, a little more courage, joy, and freedom for the following week.

If the bread distributed by "Jesus of Nazareth" (as Küng consistently calls him) had been kneaded of such platitudes, Küng himself would not be a Catholic theologian, but a Roman *haruspex*, watching the flight of birds and studying animals' entrails. But the question indeed remains: is he a Catholic theologian?

Reviewed by THOMAS MOLNAR