
new life for art

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The photograph on the cover is of Victor Sparre Smith's painting 'Veronica's Veil'.

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by

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GROSVENOR BOOKS

GROSVENOR BOOKS
54 LYFORD ROAD
LONDON SW18 3JJ
FIRST PUBLISHED MARCH 1971

ISBN 0 901269 08 5

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY TONBRIDGE PRINTERS TONBRIDGE KENT

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INTRODUCTION

In Caux-sur-Montreux, two thousand feet above the Lake of Geneva, many painters, musicians, writers, actors and other cultural workers met during July 1970 to explore man's predicament in the modern world and to assess the possibilities of a renewal of the arts.

The initiative for this conference came from Norway, but many other countries, including some in Eastern Europe, were represented, and delegates were able to discuss their conclusions with workers, students, educators, politicians and others gathered from over sixty countries for the International Conference of Moral Re-Armament, of which this special conference was a part. The papers in this book are the result of that dialogue.

It was a genuine dialogue, for the artists did not regard culture as the monopoly of an artistically-gifted minority. As one of them said, 'A couple who create a sound home, a man whose work is worthy of being taken as a pattern, a teacher who helps young people to realize their finest qualities – these are as much cultural workers as the poet or the musician who rouses our highest aspirations. The word "culture" means the sum of man's efforts to ennoble human life.'

Sir Kenneth, now Lord, Clark, at the end of his masterly survey of the history of European Civilization which is being broadcast in many countries, quotes a 'famous prophetic poem' by W. B. Yeats:

'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.'

'Well, that was certainly true between the wars, and it damn nearly destroyed us,' comments Kenneth Clark. 'Is it true today? Not quite, because good people have convictions, rather too many of them. The trouble is that there is still no centre.'

Again and again, in his thirteen TV programmes, Kenneth Clark comes back to this need for a centre, for a sense of permanence, for some faith either, as in the Middle Ages, in God or, as during the Renaissance and since, in man, if great art is to be produced. 'It is lack of confidence, more than anything else, which kills a civilization,' he says. 'We can destroy ourselves by cynicism and disillusion, just as effectively as by bombs.'

Here lies the dilemma of artists today. Many feel unable to believe in God, but after all that man has done to man in this century, it is harder still to have sufficient faith in man to provide any sense of 'centre' or 'permanence'. This dilemma and the predicament into which it plunges those who have rejected God, is illustrated by two typical products of our age, one English and the other French. Kenneth Tynan, the Literary Director of the British National Theatre and the creator of the pornographic revue *Oh! Calcutta!*, praises the Theatre of the Absurd because it 'shocks us into awareness of our new and grievous plight, awaiting death in a universe without God, ungoverned by reason and devoid of purpose.' André Malraux adds, 'In a universe without God, life is absurd.'

The result of such disillusionment can be seen in the modern theatre. Thus, Mr Harold Hobson, perhaps the premier British drama critic, writes: 'Disillusion, protest and denunciation, when they are directed against corruption and hypocrisy, are positive goods. Man, however, cannot live for ever on antagonism. The need for assertion is sooner or later imperative.' But he adds, 'We are living in an age which is without confidence and without faith. At such a time it would be naïve to expect the d ama of ringing and positive assertion.'

In facing up to these trends in Western culture, delegates to the Caux conference were helped by their colleagues from Eastern Europe who, because of their realistic attitude to the current situation of man and their faithfulness to fundamental principles, made a contribution out of proportion to their numbers. They brought the sharp perspective typical of Solzhenitsyn's books, where the capitalistic and socialist ideologies are seen as two sides of the same materialistic coin, 'an anti-materialistic perspective', as the Norwegian essayist, Aasmund Brynsildsen, writes, 'which does not believe in either the eastern or the western social system as such, but believes in the inner change and moral liberation of the man who shapes society.'

The words of Shulubin, the old Communist in *Cancer Ward*, were quoted: 'We thought it was enough to change the mode of production and immediately people would change as well. But did they change? The hell they did! They didn't change a bit.' Those at Caux saw these words as an equal challenge to the West as to the East, for men have not been changed by the materialism of the West either.

It was the secret of regenerating men – and so art and all society – which those at the Caux conference sought. They declined to accept as inevitable that ours must remain 'an age

without confidence and without faith', or that life must continue meaningless. Someone recalled Aldous Huxley's words in *Ends and Means:* 'The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem of pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do, and why his friends should not seize power and govern in the way they find most advantageous to themselves . . . I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.'

The authors of the papers in this book go further. They suggest there is a way out of the basic dilemma of world culture. They believe that the individual can, without blinding himself to any of the facts of modern life and discovery, put himself in a position to find a faith which can renew our civilization before it declines and falls, as so many others have done. Several of them have, in fact, found their way out of the very situation in which men like Tynan and Malraux find themselves, and it is this rebirth which gives them courage for the future. For, as Kenneth Clark says, 'Western civilization has been a series of rebirths.'

ART–EXPRESSION OF SELF OR OF TRUTH?

by Victor Sparre Smith

Victor Sparre Smith is a painter whose oils hang in Norway's National and State Galleries and who has exhibited in Britain and Germany, as well as throughout Scandinavia. He is a pioneer of the revival of stained glass work in Norway and, in 1955, won the national competition for the new windows in the medieval cathedral in Stavanger. Currently he is making a window 140 metres square which will take up the entire eastern end of the new Arctic Cathedral in Tromsö, and which will be one of the largest stained glass windows created in Europe in this century. Mr Smith lives, with his wife and three children, just outside Oslo.

A Swedish poet said recently, 'The only thing I can use my head for today is as a battering-ram against the police.' That is the final consequence of the current notion that art no longer exists – only politics.

Artists have been so preoccupied with being modern and radical that they have stormed from one extreme to the next. That is the reason why we today have so many artists and so little art.

The trends after the last World War, at least within the fine arts, turned art mostly into a refined play with forms and colours. Aesthetic non-figurative painting moved ever further away from the ordinary man into obscure forms of delicate

beauty. The reaction had to be violent. The pendulum swung over to the other side in an orgy of brutality, ugliness and bitter attacks on present society.

This does not mean that all art within these trends was valueless; but unbridled reactions do not help us to come much nearer to the truth. Truth survives every rebellion or betrayal because it is eternal and independent of man. We discover the meaning of art and living to the extent that we humbly serve the truth which is above our ambitions.

In this connection I must mention the artists who, loyal to the highest truth they see, demonstrate in life and art a freedom so impressive that others of us must bow our heads in awe. I am thinking of those who proclaim the truth in countries where truth is not wanted. We in the so-called free countries should not take what we say or paint too lightly. We should live the truth for which our colleagues are ready to die.

When I work in my studio my thoughts often go to a certain artist in a totalitarian state who has had a deep Christian experience. He is trying to express it in his art, but is not allowed to exhibit or sell his works. I have the possibility of creating freely, and bringing his message out in my paintings.

At one time the Church and art stood for the same thing, the service of God. Then they parted. Art began to seek on its own for purpose and meaning. What the Church lost by this we do not know, but art started on a course which meant that it rejected more and more in order to become freer and freer. When, finally, art became an end in itself, it also rejected being art. The battle cry of the Dadaists in 1920, 'Art is dead, long live the machine!' proclaims that in the end art forfeited everything.

Today we hear a similar cry from the theologians, 'God is dead!' Could it be that God and art have been alive all the

time, but that we, their servants, need to be born again? Could it be that religion and art, meeting after years of separate development, could together bring to life a new and yet mature culture?

A month before the dedication of Farnes Church, situated beside a fjord on the west coast of Norway, I was mounting on the wall the ponderous mass of material which would serve as the altar-piece. Two workers helped me fix the heavy sections of metal, wood and glass to the br ck wall. While they were do ng this, one of them looked at me from the scaffolding and said, 'We ought to have got over this superstition by now.'

I was standing there, uncertain, deadly afraid that a year's work would prove to be in vain and powerless in that vast room. His words sounded like the voice of doom. I had sawn, cut, soldered, hammered and carried that huge cross in my studio. I mustered all my courage and said, 'No, we are just beginning. Christianity has not played out its role. We have just barely started to develop the creative power which is in it.'

Four hundred pounds of material had been fastened to the wall. The workers left the church. I stayed on to give a few final touches. That night I would have to drive home over the mountains and I had no time to eat. The empty church was heavy and solemn. The scaffolding worker came back. He took some sandwiches and a Thermos from his bag and said, 'I thought that you wouldn't have time to eat, so I put together something for you to eat before you go.'

Thus was the first supper served at Farnes Church. There among the tools, which still lay on the altar, stood the Thermos and the sandwiches. I do not know what the worker thought, and he does not know what the artist thought, but from the altar I was handed the cup of coffee and then the bread. Suddenly the decoration above the altar started to function.

The room had become sacred, in fact it had become a church.

I have found unbounded riches for art by making my fumbling way into the Christian mystery, which seems to have been a locked room for art for so long. We are told that an artist to make progress must have faith in himself. This idea suits the modern religion which claims that the meaning of life is the development of one's own personality. But surely we have had too much of that, at least in our generation, too much of the great personality who forces his development upon society. For an artist to be the slave of his own personality is a constriction of his art. The task of art is to lift a corner of the curtain so that man can see the essentials of existence.

Of course, most art has come about as an expansion of self – a development of personality. But great art, which is a rarer phenomenon, springs from quite different sources. Great art comes about by denying oneself, by the spiritual power that fills the heart when it is emptied of self.

Moral Re-Armament has taught me one thing for which I shall always be grateful: to do the right thing at the most unpopular time. That is the time when it is most needed.

Ambition is a colossal force in all artists. We so badly want to be appreciated. Driven by this, many of us produce ultra-modern paintings which are of little value and soon out of fashion.

Art should not be used or exploited for our personal ends. Art is a free creation of the spirit, given to free and open hearts. It is like breathing. You breathe in and you breathe out. You receive and you give. Real art comes to humble hearts, to those who are ready to receive and to pass on.

The trouble with the heart is that it cannot be filled if it is full already. Some of us may have filled our hearts with things that are of little value, to ourselves or to the world. We may

have to clean them out to make room for the real gifts of God. I am talking of God because I believe every creative man has some kind of faith. You cannot create something of spirit if you do not believe in spirit.

We say we must portray reality. But to direct the camera down into the gutter and say you are filming reality is a lie. The gutter is a small part of reality. No partial truth can become real art unless it carries within itself a sense of the whole truth. A journal from a lunatic asylum has a certain medical interest but it has no interest as art. It is not the special that is the real motive in art, it is the mysterious richness in ordinary things. Art will give meaning and content to the things we all have in common.

Our own times can only be understood as part of a historic development. A culture lives through a life span which is like that of a man. The Europe of the Middle Ages was the Europe of the child, where God was everyone's father and the Church was everyone's mother. With the Renaissance came the first sign of the child's desire to think for itself, often in opposition to the Church. The Renaissance was the beginning of the age of the individual – one could also call it the age of protest.

The 'protest period' of a person's life often starts at fourteen or fifteen and lasts for perhaps five years. It sometimes becomes permanent, unfortunately. But more often, the mature man, when he has lived through his protest, finds his way independently to a position which can unite him again with his origins.

This may happen in our time. The protest will spend itself until it ends in absurdity. Then a generation of spiritually mature and aware people may emerge.

In this conference something important has happened. We have all become fellow citizens of the spiritual land from which you never need to emigrate. The conference has been the best

possible training ground for artists who want to feed the world. Our task is not to retire from the world of ugliness into the tower of peace and harmony. We must accept the pain of being part of this perverted culture and carry it, through our living, from chaos into new form again, from despair into creative faith.

ART MUST RE-DISCOVER MAN
by Professor Lennart Segerstråle

Professor Lennart Segerstråle's works are represented in the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Uffizi Gallery, Florence; the State Museum, New York; the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish National Museums and in galleries in Prague and Riga. His frescoes appear in many public buildings, including the Bank of Finland and the city hall of Lund, Sweden. He is an honorary member of the Association of Nordic Artists, and has been decorated by four Nordic governments for his work.

In the world of today we have more reason than ever before to ask, 'What is art helping to create? What is its aim? How will it affect the future?' Certainly it is a very potent factor in every field of life. It reflects the spirit of the times. It is a part of the present, but it also looks to the future and helps to shape it. It reports upon the fate of mankind. We have only to recall that it is through the creations of art that we still can see and understand the way of life, outlook and history of peoples of bygone eras.

In artistic circles people say unreflectingly, 'Art for art's sake – *pure* art.' They wish by this to underline the integrity of art. They try to ward off every conception that would enlist art for any other objective whatever. They reject every right of control over the free creativeness of art, its standards and its sovereignty. Here is the 'Noli me tangere' of art – 'Touch me not'. And obviously no art can gain from cutting

down its own standards. A 'subject' can never save a work of art.

On the other hand, if the work concerns a specific milieu, a church for instance – the artist cannot do his work without regard to what the piece of art is there for. If he did, he would have to fill the space on aesthetic considerations alone – a kind of artistic wallpapering. As Jean Bazaine says, 'If it were just a question of decoration, the problem would not be so serious. One decorates a drawing-room or a post office. To decorate a church is a nonsense. The point is not to make the place more attractive, but to make the walls radiate something of the Spirit which fills the church. The churches where decoration has come before inner life are just those which one has no desire to visit. If there is one place where the words "tasteful", "plastic", "aesthetic" no longer have decisive meaning, it is here.'

One must put oneself directly under the inspiration of the Spirit, and by its guidance make art the independent 'Word' it should be. This is the same as the right of the preacher to seek his own inspiration from the same source. It is not a matter of providing an illustration for the words he speaks. The best art has always expressed something of universal truth which could not be better expressed by other means. *That* is the original voice of art and its unique significance.

It is inadvisable to make a division between shell and kernel, an inner and an outer reality, a technical work and its content. That would be to explode the oneness of art, its essence, and its character as an organic whole. It would simply be materialism, upholding the material as sovereign. And this brings us to the question whether we see art as a master or a servant.

The most basic of all facts about art is that the man and the

artist are *one* person. Together they decide the quality of the artist's work and personality.

Jacques Maritain, in an article analysing Christianity and art, writes, 'Christian art is the art of the redeemed human being. Everything has a place there, the profane as well as the holy. Never try to do something so absurd as to distinguish between the man and the artist in you. They are one and the same person.'

No theme, and no attitude, can make art more Christian. Basically art is the expression of the relation between the artist and his God. So it is possible for a definite Christian theme to have less true Christianity in it than did those famous shoes painted by van Gogh. Weary and worn by a life of service for a man, they breathed from their trodden shape the blessing of work. Here we can again quote Maritain, 'Do not try artificially to make religious art. Be a Christian and paint as well as you can. But never let anything but the artist in you enter the studio.' Here he speaks of a conception of art which is one hundred per cent ready to concentrate on expressing what is essential. It represents life as a total unity in the Creator's hand.

The act of creation is the process whereby an infilling of inspiration seeks that form for its outpouring which will most adequately reproduce the experience. The more mightily this experience grips the artist, the stronger is his need to fight through to the one form which gives it reality, and no other. Such an attitude rejects all cheap hunting for originality, all slavery to style, all urge to imitate. The internal determines the external. This is the secret behind the ever present and the most deeply personal, when the artist can give something vital to the beholder.

The power of art is determined by the source of its inspiration. Its form determines what art will release in the beholder.

A change of style will, of course, never change the essence of art. Apologists of art have, for example, propagated the expelling of man as an element in creative work. Here I venture to make a prophecy in exactly the opposite direction. Only when man becomes the greatest concern of the artist will he return to art from his exile, with a power hitherto unknown. It is through the discovery of fellow humans, in love, that art will radically contribute to the renewal both of itself and of the age. It will become a first rank weapon in the development of mankind.

In an age when the value of the individual was not yet acknowledged, the Lords of Assyria and Egypt used art to maintain power. When Christianity came and set up the highest of all values, basilicas and churches were filled with an art that revolutionized the world by its new conception of the human being. The pre-Renaissance period stands without a peer as the era which saw heaven and earth as one single unbroken whole in God's hand.

Today society itself increasingly commissions art. But there are different kinds of social order. In the totalitarian states the directors of the system decide and control art, so that it slavishly serves their political ends. Free creativeness does not flourish there. The democratic societies consider artists as a kind of 'spiritual capital' and support them by public commissions. Public places are made so that they can be decorated, and an ever higher proportion of building costs is allocated to this. Thus by degrees an art is developing which may be said to belong to the people. This kind of art can be a significant injection into the national bloodstream, especially when it is not directed to political ends, and leaves the artist full freedom. I remember what a stimulus it was to me when the head of the Finnish National Bank commissioned me to do two frescoes

in the entrance hall of the bank, and said, 'You need not think of having a subject connected with economics. No, give us who live with economics the refreshment we need.' When such a responsibility is left to the artist he does his very best for his people.

I touched on the unity of the artist and the human being within him. What elements, then, within himself are hostile to him as an artist and therefore to his art? Perhaps his full creative ability and quality can be reduced by fear of what the critics and others say. Perhaps a false tension can creep in because of a wrong ambition, or the need for self-assertion can pollute his work. There can be many enemies within myself, which spoil my art, while I am trying intellectually to protect my art from external assault.

Let me give one of many personal experiences. I had won a contest for making a fresco above the altar in a church in the north of Sweden. I had an excellent woman artist as an assistant. One day we were trying out the colours for the next surface. We each did some, and compared them. I saw at once that my colleague's colours were better than mine, both in feeling and in combination. It cut me to the quick, but I would not admit my defeat. I decided that we should go ahead with my choice right away.

My colleague silently assented. So we began to paint. But there was no joy in it. The atmosphere was fouled. Team-work did not flow. The result grew visibly worse. I saw it with horror, but my pride forbade me to admit it openly. I gritted my teeth and went on.

A few days later I felt awful. It was because of my sin. It cut me off both from inspiration and from my colleague. Then the point came when it could not go on. On the third day, as we walked back from lunch, I stopped on the road. 'Miriam,'

I said, 'I am awfully unhappy. I have wounded you because I would not admit that your colours were the ones we ought to use. It has ruined our team-work and the work itself. Can you forgive me? My jealousy? If you can, we will go and tear down these three days' work and start all over again.'

We did it – to the horror of our mason – until I told him why. Then he put on a thoughtful expression, and made the best new surface he could. And I have just seen this very section reproduced in a history of Nordic art, as an example of fresco. Symbolically enough, it represents the disciples sleeping in Gethsemane.

If you think of the world today, in the East you have enslaved servile art that will serve the political system. At the same time, in the West you have an art that does not touch the heart. And both need an answer. This cannot be found only in the realm of art, you have to find it in your own heart. I think the time is coming when we will all create the new culture so close to each other that we know we are one, because we all need each other to create one great whole.

The gigantic perspective before us is nothing less than the vision of a world that wants to bring God's will to reality. For anyone who thinks in old moulds that is a utopia. But for a new thinker it is a necessity. The whole question is concentrated in one point. Does man *want* this? Is man *willing* to co-operate with God as the director? *Will* he let God remake him into a fellow worker in His plan? This is the alternative to the materialistic and mechanistic thinking of our age, with its dictatorial outlook and irresponsible conception of man.

COURAGE TO STAND ALONE
by Gerd Ekdahl

Gerd Ekdahl is a young Swedish textile artist. Her tapestries, gobelins, prints and screens can be found in many public buildings. In 1969 she won First Prize in a national competition arranged by the Cultural Institute of the Swedish Church on the theme 'Man'. She lives with her painter husband and two children in Gothenburg, and has received two scholarships from her city.

The confrontation between the two halves of the world today, one half with a surplus of everything, the other with urgent needs, bears in upon us as an insoluble conflict. Population explosion, the unchecked exhaustion of water resources, pollution of the environment, indiscriminate tree-cutting which transforms forest land into desert – these are all problems that affect me, both as an individual and as an artist. Indeed they are such overwhelming problems that I have felt desperate when I think about them. For behind them lies the strong, de-personalizing tendency in our civilization, reducing everything to terms of buying and selling. Unfortunately no country has yet planned realistically to reverse the trend. Economic considerations take precedence over human considerations. Our aim has always been too small.

The two main movements among youth today agree at least in wanting to change the world. The hippies long to break away from materialism and discover a simpler and more fundamental way of life. They have turned to drugs, music

and meditation to try and achieve this. The new Marxists on the other hand are activists who, with Mao and Marcuse as their prophets, want to change the system. To produce the changes for which we long, however, something more is needed than that which either of these movements proclaim.

Meditation needs to lead to action. Thoughts, even inspired thoughts, which do not find expression, lead, sooner or later, to depression. Here in Caux I have learned something you might call 'action-meditation'. The inspiration of meditation that leads to unselfish action is needed to transform our lives and the world.

Changes in the structure of society are certainly necessary. But to be genuinely effective, a revolution has to deal with and change the selfishness in people as well. A social and political involvement cannot be constructive if it is based on despair or hate. It has to be rooted in the joy of living and the love of man. Otherwise apathy or bitterness so easily take over.

Think, for instance, of all the TV programmes about starving children in different parts of the world. We need these facts. But unless we find a real care for people, we soon come to consider the evidence of the suffering as just so much after-dinner entertainment.

We need the factor that is contained in *The New Testament*, or life may not long survive on earth. The most essential thing is to create live people and that is a thing only God can do. But all of us have the task of carrying on the creative process.

In Sweden today reviews of art occupy very little space in the cultural pages of our newspapers. We artists have too long been occupied with a change of form, where the message has been unessential. The peculiar has often been called art and has been accepted because somebody with a name has made it. But is it any longer daring to have an exhibition with one-coloured

paintings or to throw your pictures into the Seine as a happening-art, or to paint directly upon your model? The list could be a long one, but for the working man such things are only interesting as curiosities, if they are not looked upon as a mockery or an upper class game. For too long the ordinary man has been left out of art and has not interested the artist.

Art has to be something men long for because something in them responds to it. Its task is to help men to find new ways in which to direct their lives. It is as difficult to create art out of a theory as life out of laws.

A renaissance in the world of art and culture goes hand in hand with ceasing to be afraid of what may cause pain, ceasing to be afraid to be honest, to see things as they are. It begins for me when I begin to do what I know is right, whatever the cost. It means having the courage to stand alone and not depend on being accepted by a group or guided by group slogans. If we consciously avoid life's challenges, we have nothing to give others, no message to proclaim.

Perhaps we always have to be ready to battle through 'grey days', but there is something wrong, something that has gone stale in us, if such times go on and on. It is true that if our concern is people, we can be hurt by them. But it is when we care for people and are interested in them that things happen. Indifference produces no results. Love is rare, but I think it is going to have a come-back.

II Civilization—dead or alive?

ROAD TO RENAISSANCE
by Professor Eiliv Skard

Dr Skard is Professor of the History of Ideas and was Dean of the History and Philosophy Faculty at the University of Oslo for twenty years. During the war he was arrested by the Nazis and spent two years in Grini Concentration Camp. He is a Member of the Academies of Science of Oslo, Trondheim, Copenhagen and Lund, and received the Nansen Award in 1968.

Our civilization faces such serious threats that no partial reform will be adequate. It desperately needs a renewal, a re-birth, a *renaissance*. But is a renaissance possible? What are the available resources?

Consider some simple historic facts. At the cradle of culture stands religion, man's awe towards the power which he feels is *das Heilige*, *das ganz Andere*, a power definitely higher than himself. The superficial optimism of the nineteenth century fostered the belief that progress consisted in secularization, going away from religious faith. Our generation has had to pay the cost of that illusion.

The fact is: the first poetry we know is more or less religious – prayers and hymns to the divine powers. The oldest architecture has a religious vein: at the time when man lived in miserable huts, he built marvellous temples for his gods. In the primitive philosophical speculations, or in the first attempts to find a basis for legislation, principles for right and wrong – everywhere we meet the idea of 'the holy'. Someone has said,

'Culture was born the day when a man built an altar for that unknown power which he felt he had to adore.'

The fact is that all culture, or we may safely say all human life, needs two elements which are given us in religion, the one more static, the other more dynamic: *authority* and *inspiration*.

A culture, a society, cannot do without a set of moral standards which have an undisputed, accepted *authority*. And a morality which is going to have this absolute validity has to be rooted in the absolute, the holy – *das Heilige*. The language itself gives us an important hint here; the worst thing you can say about anyone is: 'For him nothing is holy!' Such a man has broken out of human fellowship, because to be a man is to accept something as sacred and absolutely binding. The great ideologies of our century demonstrate with drastic clarity the hopelessness of the attempts to replace God by man-made idols.

Perhaps the other element, *inspiration*, is more important still. Think of the role of religion in great poetry down the ages: the Psalms of David, the Greek tragedies, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, Goethe's *Faust*, Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. Everywhere in great poetry religion is present – partly as the firm, undisputed basis of life and thought as in Dante's gigantic work, partly, as in Ibsen's dramas, as a problem with which the poet can never stop dealing. Or take classic Greek tragedy which, with its three great dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, flourished for one hundred years – no longer than that. Why? Well, the first tragic poet was a man with an unshakeable faith, the second had a faith combined with a mild resignation, the third was a man whose faith had crumbled – and the tragedy lost its greatness. Smaller men followed, men who might have said what the old Georg Brandes pessimist-

...y wrote about himself, 'I was not the man to write immortal works.'

Great poetry demands *greatness* in life, a life which knows the deep conflicts, the great competing powers – good and evil, God and Satan, heaven and hell . . . A poet who does not know the abysses of human existence can never give us great art. His writing will end in banality.

Another religious motive also belongs to great poetry. I think of what a Norwegian psychologist, Bishop Berggrav, called 'the barrier-breaking tendency', the eternal longing in man, the 'divine unrest', a longing which in its root is religious, metaphysical. The Swedish lyric poet, Karin Boye, has said in a glorious poem: 'The best day is a day of *thirst*.' A life without that element of adventure can never provide the stuff for great poetry.

About fifteen hundred years ago the old Greek and Roman culture broke down, and a new, Christian civilization took over. What did that mean in spiritual life? Christianity came into a world which has been said to have been *eine Welt ohne Liebe*, a cold world, a world without love. Christianity made love of man and love of mankind the highest value, and preached the dignity of man, every man, without class or race distinction. The classical civilization was intellectual, sophisticated and aristocratic; the Christian Church, as St Augustine has said, was the first to go out to the great masses, to help and to educate them. We see this reflected in literature.

In the classical Greek and Roman literature we seldom hear about the life of the ordinary man and woman, still less about that of the child. A Swiss philologist, Erich Auerbach, some time ago remarked that the story of Peter in the courtyard of the high priest – the story which ends with the words that Peter 'went out and wept bitterly' – would not have been

possible in classical literature. No Greek or Roman writer would have found it decent to make a poor fisherman the central figure in such a great, poignant scene. In Christian writing that is different. In an old history of martyrs two women who are executed – a lady of a noble family and a slave – are pictured with just the same care and interest. Hans Drexler, an outstanding German philologist, has written a book in which he shows that only Christianity made it possible to give a real picture of an *individual*. In classical literature we only meet *types*. The reason is that only the eye of love sees a fellow man as a personality; if you look at him from the stand-point of selfish interest, he is only a type to you.

In a book such as St Augustine's *Confessions*, the language itself has gained a new warmth and intimacy, and – which is very important – the author tells about his life with a drastically unveiling honesty, such as no poet or philosopher has done before. St Augustine has brought the Christian sharing of sins into literature, a step which has had tremendous importance for all ages after him. Another thing in *The Confessions* is still more important: we meet a man who is able to tell about a radical change in his life, because he had the startling experience that God had made him *a new man*. A new dynamic was brought into literature, a dynamic which had come to stay.

A new man – that is Christianity's greatest historical contribution. But a new man also means the possibility of a new civilization, the possibility of renaissance. And here we come back to the decisive point.

Is a renaissance of culture possible? Arnold Toynbee talks in his *Study of History* about a series of civilizations which have followed one after another, flourished and fallen into decay. This poses the question: how long will our own last? But this

civilization, which has its historical root in Christianity, has one special characteristic. The Greek and Roman civilization had a rich heritage and a noble tradition, but it had no perspective for the future. It was under the curse of a fatalism which certainly could look back to a golden age, but looked forward only to an endless and hopeless repetition. Nothing really new is to be hoped for. 'I do nothing new, I see nothing new, in the end it makes me sick,' said a Roman philosopher, a contemporary of St Paul. *The New Testament* has an eternal aim in God's mind. It looks forward. It is to a pronounced degree the religion of expectancy.

No wonder then that this religion won the world! No wonder that the history of this civilization tells about a series of renaissances – quite different from static fatalism. We remember here the words of Dr Frank Buchman: 'Apart from changed lives no civilization can endure.' We may say it in a positive way: when men change, the whole civilization will have the glorious experience which we call renaissance.

But this whole question may also be seen from another angle.

II

Is human history meaningless or has it a meaning? We can easily agree that it is important to find a meaning in our personal lives – indeed the psychologist Victor Frankl has recently stressed that man is by his very nature a being who always seeks a meaning. But we also need to try to find a meaning in the history of the world to which we necessarily belong.

A deep pessimism is dominating our age. There is a fear of war, a fear of dictatorship, and – not least – a fear of a development towards mechanization and de-personalization. We have

not been able to master this development which could mean the ruin of the dearest values of our civilization and even the end of civilization itself.

A scientific study of history can never fully answer the question of the meaning of history, but it may give us important information. It can help us to understand why a civilization crumbles and dies; and then – which is still more important – we can also learn what makes a civilization live and grow and flourish.

An example from ancient history may be instructive. The Roman empire is perhaps the most impressive political achievement of all ages. Through some hundreds of years before Christ the Romans had conquered the world; then the decay began which, after three to four hundred years, resulted in the fall of the Roman empire and the antique culture – a gigantic catastrophe, perhaps the most grandiose drama in human history.

Historians have tried to find the causes of this great disaster. Some of them have talked about a degeneration of race; others have found an explanation in the economic or military field. None of these theories is quite satisfactory. Other scholars have called attention to the notorious moral decline – an explanation which we meet already in antiquity itself.

I certainly do not underrate the moral factor in human history, but I think we have to dig deeper. What was the attitude to life which dominated late antiquity? We know it fairly well: men were dominated by fear, depression and pessimism, they had lost faith, hope and expectancy. What was the reason for this?

We are fortunate to have a witness – the best possible. He is the man who was emperor of Rome in the last half of the second century after Christ, Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher,

one of the noblest characters of antiquity. We know this man from his diary, a little book where he discusses the difficult problems of life and government with great objectivity. We meet a man who is very sympathetic – and very pessimistic: a maximum of moral effort and a minimum of hope. Indeed everything is in vain, life is a tragic, or rather a disgusting, business, often it is nearly unbearable. 'All that is prized in life is empty and rotten and petty.' One cannot help asking: what is the cause of such pessimism – combined with such moral greatness?

Here one passage in his diary is particularly helpful. Marcus Aurelius had read *The Republic*, where Plato wrote about his fondest dream, the ideal state, which could be realized on this earth on one condition: that power and wisdom had to be combined, the philosopher must become the ruler of the state. Marcus Aurelius could not fail to see that these words pointed to himself. They challenged him for he was both the great philosopher and the ruler of a world empire. But he evades the challenge. He writes in his diary: 'Don't hope for Plato's Utopia.' And why? His words are quite unmistakable: Plato's dream would imply a deep change in the mentality of man, a change which Marcus Aurelius, together with the whole line of ancient thinkers, considered impossible. Man has a nature which is unchangeable.

A well-known Norwegian psychiatrist, Gordon Johnsen, recently emphasized the importance of hope and expectancy in the life of the individual. He writes, 'Without expectancy life will be crippled, poor and dried up.' This goes also for a nation or a civilization. What hope and expectancy and confidence in God's promises mean in the life of a nation is clear from the history of the Jewish people. Expectancy implies hope of a change – a real change for the better.

Marcus Aurelius knew no such a hope. May I once more quote the saying of a wise and experienced man: 'Apart from changed lives no civilization can endure.' Marcus Aurelius had no experience of such a change, and that not only restricted but blocked and barred his outlook.

The fact is that our conception of the future or – to use a big expression – our philosophy of history, determines our actions and efforts. And which philosophy of history was prevalent in late antiquity? It may be formulated in a few words. The life of the individual and the life of mankind is a process of nature. At the beginning of our century the famous German biologist, Ernst Haeckel said, 'Nature is everything, everything is nature.' Many a Greek philosopher might have used the same words. And nature is eternal: it is not created by any god and shall not be ended by any god – it just *is* there. And the processes of nature are regular, unalterable and predictable; think of astronomy, think of chemistry. In nature we see an eternal repetition: spring and autumn, day and night, life and death. When Homer wants to give a picture of human life, he borrows it from nature: mankind is like the leaves of the trees, coming out in the spring, fading and falling in the autumn. 'Everything is nature' – and man is part of nature. This is the Greek way of thinking – from the old poets to the late Stoic philosophers. And the more this idea of an endless repetition is thought out in all its consequences, and the more it is expressed in terms of merciless stringency, the more it kills initiative, hope and love of life. When St Paul said that we all once walked 'according to the course of this world' (Ephesians II,2) I suppose he thought of this living and walking in an eternal repetition, without hope of a change or a fresh renewal. We may say: this idea, this naturalism, was the curse of late antiquity.

That history has an aim was an idea which did not dawn upon the ancient philosophers. But where there is no aim, there is no meaning – and *fear* creeps in. Late antiquity feared the future and clung to the past – to the fairy tale of the Golden Age. Some historians of the last century have given us a picture of the Greeks according to the ideas and sympathies of their own age. They told us that the Greeks were liberal, optimistic and progressive – like an English gentleman from the age of liberalism. This picture is far from reliable. There is pessimism and resignation in the Greek mind.

An excellent Dutch scholar, van Groningen, who has written a remarkable book about the Greeks, says that they lived 'in the grip of the past'. The Greek way of life is retrospective; the first reaction of the Greek, when he meets a new situation, is to look backwards. He does not look forward, not at any rate with hope: 'Nothing like a five year plan has even presented itself to his mind. He hardly knows a regular government budget.'

A brilliant historian – the Swede, M. P. Nilsson – puts it this way: 'Antiquity is like a wanderer who moves forward, but looks anxiously backwards to the glory he has lost.' The best way to recommend a political reform in Greece and Rome was to say that it meant restoring the good state of the ancestors. The past was good and safe, the future was risky and terrifying. Time does not create values: 'Time consumes and destroys values,' says the Roman poet, Horace.

The language itself is instructive on this point. The word *new* in Greek and Latin has often an unpleasant ring. It indicates something problematic and dangerous. The worst thing a good Roman could imagine was revolution, but the Roman word for revolution was just 'new things' – *novae res*. It is characteristic also that the Greek philosopher Celsus, who

attacked Christianity very fiercely, especially criticized the Christian faith because it was something new and broke out of the good old tradition. He was right, more right than he knew! Think of *The New Testament;* the word *new* has a positive meaning, a ring of hope, promise, triumph. We shall have a new heaven and a new earth – new and better! We shall see a new Jerusalem, we shall sing a new song, live under a new covenant. There shall be a new creature, a new man – 'Behold I make all things new.' (Revel. 21,5). I stress this point, because for myself it is a very personal truth: the hope first – and then the experience – that God can make all things new, was for me the turning point in my life. The Christian idea that history has a goal and is not just an endless repetition, is the most revolutionary message that has been proclaimed on this earth.

When we read the history of, for instance, the Wesleyan rebirth in eighteenth century England, and study its far-reaching history-changing consequences, we learn about the causes which make a civilization live and create values which make life great. Here I think we are brought back to the relevance of the moral factor. If I accept moral defeat, if I accept to walk 'according to the course of this world', i.e. without change and renewal, then I necessarily build – I may know it or not – a philosophy corresponding to my practice: a deterministic philosophy which denies change, renewal and renaissance and prepares the decay of civilization.

We have spoken here about remote ages. But fundamentally we have dealt with the problems of our own time.

In antiquity the Christian hope and vision for the future had to fight against Greek naturalism and fatalism. But this is an eternal fight, it is the conflict of today. To me this conflict has never been so clearly visualized as when one night during

Christmas 1968 I followed on TV the daring flight of the three American astronauts who, for the first time, circled the moon and now showed us photographs of our own little planet, taken at a distance of three or four hundred thousand miles. I was reminded of the words of a poet: 'This is the earth, this is the home of men.' And so my thoughts began wandering. The distance from the earth to the moon is not much more than one light second; but there are stars far out in the universe at a distance of millions of light years! I felt – as I had once felt as a young student – the spell and fascination of the naturalistic *credo:* 'Natur ist alles, alles ist Natur!' What can a little beating heart of man mean confronted with these enormous distances and enormous masses, ruled by merciless laws! Is there any place for belief, morals, responsibility? Then suddenly I was awakened from my contemplation by some well-known words recited – the most poignant line of poetry in world literature: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth!' These words are the mighty protest of a Jewish visionary against the naturalism of the heathen world around him. Not nature but God is eternal: God who started history and who in His good time will bring it to an end.

Some time ago I talked with a young philosopher about the problems we have dealt with here. I said, 'You know – we live in the last phase of a cultural epoch.' He replied, 'What a pessimistic idea!' 'By no means,' I said. 'Many civilizations have disappeared – true. But our civilization has the great privilege which lies in the word renaissance. The history of our Christian civilization is the story of a series of renaissances. A civilization has to be reborn – Apart from changed lives no civilization can endure.'

Can our civilization once more experience this glorious

rebirth? Well – it can, on one condition: we must live out the faith which is the root of all change; we must willingly accept the experience of this personal rebirth which is the invaluable gift of the Gospel to individuals and to mankind.

CREATIVITY TO END DESTRUCTION
by Rolf Ulfrstad

Rolf Ulfrstad plays the viola in the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, of which he was the chairman for two years. He has also been a member of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and given concerts on violin and viola. His father was the well-known Norwegian composer, Marius Moaritz Ulfrstad. He lives in Oslo with his wife and three children.

The Greek philosophers rated music very highly as a personality-forming factor. The Pythagoreans, for example, held that music had the power to purify the soul and to produce spiritual changes. For Plato and Aristotle music was a factor capable of nourishing intellectual life, a moral force towards the formation of character. Much the same concept is expressed in the Latin motto 'Musica movet, delectat, illuminat', and Confucius went so far as to say, 'If you want to know whether or not a land is well governed and has good customs - listen to its music.'

This type of far-reaching, ethical evaluation lies behind the culturally unique development of choral and instrumental music that took place in Europe. Mozart's 'Magic Flute', based on the ideas of masonic brotherhood, acted like dynamite in a Europe already shaken by the French revolution. The powerful dramatic genius of Beethoven fired liberal citizens

to enthusiasm and to action in the time of Napoleon. In his sovereign fashion he broke with current convention and let his harmonies roll out in sudden leaps. Wagner, who took an active part in the revolutionary movement in Dresden in 1849, wrote his music dramas about people and powers in order to give the German nation high ideals. While he was confined to the Wartburg, Liszt, always idealistic and generous, sent him money from Paris. Chopin in his piano music interpreted the tragic fate of his country, and Paderewski, who became the first Prime Minister of free Poland, carried on that tradition. With his wide-ranging, epic imagination, Sibelius gave form and backbone to Finnish national consciousness, as did Grieg for Norway. In Czechoslovakia Smetana identified his own destiny with his fatherland's struggle for freedom and kindled the same spark in Dvořák who was then playing under Smetana's baton in Prague.

Songs, hymns, marches have always gathered men to fellowship and to action. Luther's hymn, 'A sure stronghold our God is still', gave strength to the pioneers of the Reformation, whose spirit was later given an enduring monument in Mendelssohn's 'Reformation Symphony'. In America, hymns nourished the Pilgrim Fathers and the Negroes expressed their longing for freedom through negro spirituals. On the Paris barricades, the Marseillaise roused the citizens to battle and from there too, a hundred years later, came the 'Internationale', the workers' song of a new day.

In all ages and on all the continents people have played and sung about joy or sorrow. These unknown musicians have given us folk-music, treasures which have enriched succeeding ages. During the last war, music was a powerful factor in keeping up morale. A striking example of this is seen in 'Miracle on the River Kwai'. Under terrible conditions in a

Japanese prison camp, the prisoners managed to make musical instruments and give concerts. It gave them new life, something to live for, even in that 'valley of death'.

The trend away from the human in art has produced a deep gulf between the creative artist and the public. This is very apparent in the sphere of music where performers recreate the composers' ideas. In many lands members of orchestras have refused to convey what they consider to be artistically destructive impulses. This pressure is one that composers are feeling too. Benjamin Britten, for instance, exclaimed, 'There are many dangers which hedge around the composer; pressure groups which demand true proletarian music, snobs who demand the latest avant-garde tricks, critics who are already trying to document today for tomorrow. These people are dangerous – not because they are necessarily of any importance in themselves, but because they make the composer, above all the young composer, self-conscious, so that, instead of writing his own music, music which springs naturally from his gift and personality, he may be frightened into writing pretentious nonsense or deliberate obscurity. He may find himself writing more and more for machines, in conditions dictated by machines and not by humanity.'

With the invention of electronic instruments, the future possibilities of sound are nearly unlimited. Electronic music has brought a new dimension into human feeling and experience. It gives you the fascination of space, it shakes you with its speed, volume, colour and contrasts, and could well be a means of expressing transcendental experience and truth. But, at the moment, this music is too often just an expression of man's fascination with technique. It is a form yet to be filled.

The present crisis of forms is a crisis of norms. Our living

and thinking are going through a far-reaching transformation. Seldom have so many trends been brought to bear on us simultaneously. In every sphere there are both constructive and destructive forces at work. Side by side with an outbreak of nihilism in the sphere of values there goes a desire for renewal of the very values that are being abandoned. All the different forms of art mirror this conflict, a conflict which finds its weirdest expression in the anti-art movement. 'Art for art's sake' has led to this kind of nihilism, which not only destroys the vitality of art, but even clamours for the burning down of museums and concert halls. 'Culture is dead!' shouted Parisian demonstrators.

Art (in its widest sense) is today like an existential cry: What is humanity? What is it for? Whither is it bound? The present inability to create the new man leads to a more and more desperate seeking after some answer. Mankind searches desperately for a sense of identity, and the craving for experience and change steadily increases.

In this situation Moral Re-Armament comes to men offering the possibility of a change in men, their motives, and their circumstances. In Caux one meets people who have learned to pull out of the blind rush, who have an openness which brings new understanding of the world's needs, a new determination to be responsible. Such a dynamic community was a challenge to me to live honestly, purely, obeying God's will. It was like experiencing a profound saying of Tolstoy's, 'There is nothing fresher than the feelings that spring from the religious consciousness of each age.' Art, in its deepest meaning, is creative love that gives growth and ennobles human life.

The world needs simple melodies singing from heart to heart. Music is a powerful weapon to develop a universal culture and unite men. Psychology teaches that feeling precedes

thinking; so it is all the more a responsibility of the artist to create the needed climate of change, of unselfishness, of right and justice. Who better than they can show that evil is evil, and can live creative lives which will end the trend towards destruction? Artists responsible in this way will not only serve their own talents best, but will be the heralds of a new world order.

III Challenge to the theatre

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE
by Staatsschauspieler Kurt Müller-Graf

Mr Müller-Graf plays the leading dramatic roles in the permanent company of the Baden National Theatre at Karlsruhe and is chairman of the committee representing all the personnel at the theatre. The title Staatsschauspieler is only accorded to actors of national renown.

There has been here a meeting of minds which has widened the spiritual horizons of everyone present. The importance of this should not be minimized especially when we remember that human nature, selfish as it is and perhaps rather lazy, tends to interest itself mainly in what lies closest to hand and in what will bring immediate advantage. Hence the significance of Caux where we can work out courageous, common goals.

'The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!'

Shakespeare puts these lines into Hamlet's mouth and spotlights, in a few telling words, the key problem for all men of goodwill. They all agonize and wrestle to discover the right method, the right path to this one goal – how to change what is rotten in the nation and what is rotten in our own souls.

I love the theatre, and so, like any other lover, I tend to become poetical when I speak about it. You will allow me, I am sure, to quote from Goethe since he is equally appropriate for those in love as for those who adore the theatre. This is

what he writes about the theatre: 'Unless you are thoroughly spoiled or far too old, you will not find any place where you will feel better than in the theatre. There no one makes demands upon you. You need not open your mouth unless you want to. There you can sit at your ease, like a king, while everything is effortlessly set before you for the enjoyment of your heart and mind, according to your wish.'

Talking about theatre makes me think of the first scene of seduction – in the Garden of Eden. The text was provided by the snake, the setting and the costumes were naturalistic, but the consequences for the actors were catastrophic. 'In the sweat of our brow' they – and we – must earn our bread. It is a tragedy, then as now.

But of course the theatre is strongly linked to tragedy. It is to the Greek poets, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, that we owe the earliest tragedies. Already 500 years before Christ, they were using the theatre to deal with current problems. Our modern theatre rests on the solid foundation of the classical theatre. Then as now it was urgent to mobilize all available spiritual resources so that, with their help, the good in man could be released. That was – and still is – the most important task of the theatre in every country.

In the Middle Ages the Church used Mystery plays and Passion plays both for its own growth and to spread its ideas abroad among the masses.

The great European writers and thinkers of the eighteenth century played an active part in the changes taking place in social, intellectual and religious life of that time. It was not for nothing that Schiller, for example, had to flee his native land. Others were thrown into prison.

More recently men like Ibsen, Bjornson, Strindberg, Tolstoy and Gorki boldly attacked the prevailing spirit of the

day and tried to lead mankind into new paths. Gerhart Hauptmann was first and foremost a social pioneer. Frank Wedekind was a critic of all false relationships between the sexes in the bourgeois society of his day. Bernard Shaw dealt with every current problem that came his way with characteristic biting irony. Not one of these writers stood aside. They regarded it as a moral duty to engage in public life and try to bring about change.

Up to the time of the First World War, men felt relatively secure in the old, accustomed order of things. As Stefan Zweig put it: 'How little they were aware that life could also be overwhelming and full of tension, an eternal state of surprises and of being plucked out of every secure corner. Even in their darkest nights they could never dream how dangerous man could become. Just as little could they realise how much strength man has, strength to endure dangers and overcome difficulties.'

Through the late 1930s and during the Second World War our German poets were silent. Nor did the voices from the other European countries reach us. Our theatres were closed. They could no longer fulfil their mission of expressing the mental and spiritual situation of our people. As Max Reinhardt said, 'When deserted by the good spirits, the theatre can be the saddest occupation, the most wretched prostitution.'

After millions had been face to face with death, the meaning of life became the overmastering question of the age. The constantly recurring theme was to be or not to be – whether man, hedged in by uncertainty and anxiety, would go under or whether he would assert himself and find a new and right way to live. None of us, artist and layman alike, can avoid this central question. Where is our chosen path leading us? What is the right way to live? With God, or without God?

For most of our writers, putting the question is more important than answering it. Ibsen maintained, 'I am here to ask, not to answer.' Max Frisch says, 'As a playwright I considered my task was complete if a play of mine succeeded in putting forward a question in such a way that the audience could no longer live without the answer from that moment on.' Brecht, in his *The Good Woman of Szechwan*, asks, 'Is it another kind of man we need? Or another kind of world? Or perhaps only other gods? Or no gods? We are crushed – and not only figuratively. The only way out of our trouble would be for everyone immediately to begin thinking.'

Do the theatre, the poet, and the author then desert us entirely? Do they leave us to float in empty space exposed to the destructive power of scepticism and unbelief?

It is remarkable that atheistic productions put together with all the craft that masterly dialectic and dramatic skill can supply – as, for instance, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, or Sartre's *The Devil and God*, or Peter Weiss' *Persecution and Assassination of Jean Paul Marat* – often occasion religious interpretation and discussion. To an observer it is hard to see whence this concern springs, especially in those who absolutely want to be modern and 'with it'. It has become quite fashionable to talk one's head off in endless argument, trying to make intelligible what the author intended to make unintelligible.

This raises the question of the worth – or the worthlessness – of our modern theatre and of topical problem plays. Here we should distinguish between problem plays which help to solve our problems and ephemeral, time-serving plays, usually with nothing to say even though enjoying spectacular, if temporary, success. Such unnecessary stylistic exercises which lack inner sincerity or genuine dealing with problems should never be

allowed to appear in theatres supported by tax-payers' money. If a small number of the theatre-going public are interested in such plays, they might be presented for discussion in, say, studio performances. My view is that, while these last *might* be put on, real problem plays *should* be put on, and the classics *must* be put on. The classics, after all, have withstood the test of time. They have been the backbone of theatrical programmes since time immemorial. They pass the basic moral test, i.e. they help us to find the solution to our interior and exterior problems, to find the way out of our difficulties.

To write plays of this essential value is still possible today. Some of the liveliest and most constructive discussions I have personally had with both younger and more mature theatre-goers have been occasioned by the plays of Peter Howard, who was one of the most fascinating personalities of the English-speaking world. He goes straight for a theatre committed to presenting answers, which is something new and possibly uncomfortable for the conventional actor as well as for the undiscriminating spectator. His plays, very modern in form and sharp as a sword, have been described by eminent critics as 'of highest artistic merit', 'thought-provoking and disturbing' and 'intolerable for bigoted snobs'. These plays, and Howard's films as well, have found massive response around the world. In them he challenges people to put right a world that is out of joint and lead it back to God, beginning with themselves. He compels the spectator to face the necessity of a voluntary and conscious decision to change, and shakes people out of deadly apathy. His plays and films present believable and universal solutions to human problems.

That is the highest destiny of the theatre. A play's primary mission is to make an urgent appeal to man's conscience and to build bridges between people of all backgrounds – cultural,

political and religious. With such an aim the theatre, springing as it does in every land from the same source, can be a force for international understanding and well-being. Its task is to proclaim great ideas and to advance mankind along the paths of human dignity and mutual respect. In that noblest sense it could be called, in Schiller's words, 'a moral institution'. For it calls all of us, writers, artists, actors, the public, to build upon the foundation of eternal truth and to make that the measure of all we do.

BREAD AND CIRCUSES
by Peter Lotar

Peter Lotar began his career as an actor in his native Prague, where he was, before World War II, an executive member of the Czechoslovakian Actors' Union and a founder of the anti-Fascist 'Club of Artists'. After the German occupation in 1939, *he fled to Switzerland where he became a citizen in* 1949.

Lotar's plays have been performed in many German and English-speaking countries, as well as in Czechoslovakia. He received the Gerhart Hauptmann Prize in Berlin in 1954 *and the Drama Prize of the Swiss Schiller Foundation in* 1967. *He has written over thirty television and radio plays and his books include 'History of the Czech Theatre'* (*Oxford,* 1946), *'Caesar, Lincoln and Kennedy'* (1966) *and 'Prague, Spring and Autumn, through the Witness of the Poets'* (1969).

An illness is most dangerous when it is not recognized. The organism of the theatre in the West, and more especially of the German theatre, is suffering at present from such an undiscovered and serious illness.

How deep the theatre in Germany has sunk can be seen by comparing it with the period between the two world wars.

Until 1933 Berlin was considered the theatrical capital of the world. The German theatre as a whole, with its great directors: Reinhardt, Jessner, Grüendgens and Piscator; with its many outstanding authors, its almost endless galaxy of brilliant

actors and, last but not least, its cadre of avant-garde critics, was a cultural world power.

Who today would take direction from the German theatre? The world finds its directors, authors, set designers and entire productions above all in two small Eastern countries – Poland and Czechoslovakia. It is these two countries which at the moment are most permanently fructifying the world theatre. This leads us to an obvious analogy. Both periods of theatrical culture, that between the war years in Germany and that after the Second World War in the East, grew from a serious political, material and spiritual crisis.

Artists in the East fight, often under the threat of death, for spiritual freedom and the rebirth of human dignity against a terror which has sprung from an extremist materialist ideology. The result is that they are in harmony with the feelings and the needs of their people and get the widest response while attaining high artistic quality.

We in the West, who hardly a quarter of a century ago were saved from a tyranny no less inhuman, master the present even less than the past. Our all too easily attained affluence is producing a materialism which in its capitalist guise is as inimical to the spirit as it is in its communist form. This outlook is destroying both our culture and our democratic freedom.

The characteristics common to materialism of both Right and Left are extreme selfishness, the suppression of independent thought, the use of force and the deriding of all ethical and moral values.

A true artist will always stand for freedom of the spirit and for the inviolability of human dignity, from whatever quarter they be threatened, from Right or Left.

Only a minority among us is ready to fight for or against

anything. Why should we risk fighting when we have it so good?

Everyone connected with the theatre knows the expression 'sleeping car – VIP's', although the sleeping car has long since been outmoded by the advances of science and affluence. In their Mercedes SL300 or in their special planes, a few hundred chosen ones, directed by their managers, rush from rehearsals into the film studio, from television shooting to an evening performance, from place to place, day and night. What leading director would still be prepared to concentrate his efforts on *one* theatre. What leading actor today could 'allow himself the luxury' of belonging to *one* company? He would be afraid that his price on the stock exchange of VIP's would be endangered. As a matter of fact, the best of our theatrical artists are anything but satisfied with this wretched state of things, which is as profitable materially as it is poverty-stricken spiritually. But how are they to withstand this 'trend'? It would need a personality of outstanding stature to give the signal for a change. Where is such a personality on the German stage?

We spoke of bread. Not everyone has caviar on his bread or is able to swill it down with champagne. The 'games' no longer take place in the circus, for that purpose we have our stage. The truth is that the 'director' of the Roman circus maximus would be green with envy, for what were the obscenities of the mimes, the cruelty and perversion of the gladiatorial contests, the bloody confrontation between man and beast, compared with the 'progress' which flourishes in our theatre of today? What a truly humane idea to make people publicly eat parts of a corpse or to kill a pig with their own artistic hands and then to smear its blood on a naked woman! Such things can be seen on our stage today.

For the backward ancient Roman, such things were nothing but an honest piece of showmanship. We on the other hand, produce the 'shock' theatre as if it were progressive art. Wherein does the progress lie? Whereas in the late years of the Roman Empire a peacock feather was sufficient, today we cannot make the overfed public vomit even with the most refined artifices of perversion.

The Romans had revolutionaries in their theatre too, but they had a different conception of their profession. One of these revolutionaries was called Genesius. In the middle of a performance he confessed to a forbidden, new way of life which called for a total change in man. It was Christianity. In truth he was not paid for this, but paid for it himself – with his life.

Revolution through the stage – yes.

Shameless sensation made up to look like revolution – no!

Whoever assumes the right to tear the mask off others, must first de-mask himself. Then it will be seen whether truth speaks from his face.

We asked about a personality who would be ready to put an end to the activities of the falsifiers. This can only happen through a work of art created against the stream and blazing a new trail. But above all it needs not only the imitative artist, but also the creative artist, the author. The centrality of his presence in the theatre decides everything.

This is not new. In every great age of the theatre, from Aeschylus to Aristophanes, Plato, Shakespeare, Calderon, Molière, Schiller, Goethe, Shaw and Brecht it is no different. The author was the living element, the spirit and soul of the theatre.

If our theatre is not to die it must again become fruitful. This can only happen if it is linked again to the creative spirit.

This spirit is not found on the well-worn paths of fashion. It is always ahead of fashion.

The true artist understands our insufficiency and need before we know them ourselves. He discovers them and makes them known to us.

'The artist of the future will not strive to attain the dark, the complicated and that which is only understandable to a clique of snobs and idlers, on the contrary he will strive for the clear and the simple. He will begin again to fulfil his true mission of leading humanity to its happiness, to a life of perfection and harmony towards which the believing conscience is striving.'

So wrote Tolstoy at the beginning of this century of self-destruction, and he continued, 'I believe that my life, my understanding and truth were given me exclusively to enlighten humanity . . . The only meaning of my life is to live in this light which is in me and to carry it high before men so that they may see it.'

SELF-CONCERN, FAREWELL
by Nancy Ruthven

Nancy Ruthven was trained at the Rambert School of Ballet and the Webber-Douglas School of Drama. She has appeared in plays, films and repertory in Britain and America, as well as in several European and Asian countries. She has written eight plays.

Laurence Olivier says that the actor has now assumed the role of the lawyer, the doctor and even the priest. It is true that the artist today is listened to more than the politician or the priest.

At this conference many people have voiced the truth that God is not dead and that moral values are essential to life and for survival and to great art. But we must now speak loud with one voice and we must go back and fight. Artists could go out from here and change the nihilistic climate of Western Europe.

One thing which stops me fighting is my own self-centredness towards my own work. I love the theatre and I arrived here at Caux with a great stack of scripts which I hoped would be put on. When it became clear that this might not work out, I went off into a back room and howled black tears and drank tea as the cup of bitterness. Then I listened to God and my thought was to stop thinking about myself; to throw bitterness into the lake and to live for others. Half an hour later I found myself with a group of young people attempting to teach them how to write. Three days later, something they had written appeared on the stage here, with great success.

BRECHT, DÜRRENMATT AND HOWARD

by Professor Theophil Spoerri

Dr Spoerri was Rector of Zurich University from 1948–50 *and Professor of French and Italian Literature there from* 1922–56. *For his work on Dante, he received the Golden Dante Medal of the Commune of Florence and was made a Commander of the Italian Order of Merit. His recent books include 'Introduzione alla Divina Commedia' (Milan,* 1966) *and 'Pascal heute' (Zurich,* 1968).

One cannot speak about the theatre of today without evoking violent reactions. That is because contemporary theatre is a reflection of our time. But just because it is the mirror in which we see ourselves and our world as we actually are, there is no sense in condemning modern theatre, any more than in smashing the mirror when it reflects a picture we do not like.

For the picture that the theatre shows us is a terrible one. It reveals that we have come to a dead end. This is clearly shown in the theatre of Samuel Beckett. His play, *Endgame* (Endspiel) depicts the few remaining survivors after an atomic war, not in order to show us how a new beginning can be made, but to reveal the irrevocable end.

That is terrifying, and it should terrify us. But if we want to understand the sense of this we have to ask ourselves a silly question. If we are already at the end of everything, why do

these people go on writing plays? There is a simple answer to this: the people in Beckett's plays are buried in dirt up to their necks. The dirt may be that of the dustbin, or ashes in an urn, or the dirt of the earth, or the blackness of their own despair and helplessness, but their heads are still sticking up, and that is why Samuel Beckett continues to write plays. Or, as Friederich Dürrenmatt says, 'Art in itself is powerless, no comfort, no religion, a sign only that now and again someone, despite the universal despair, has not succumbed to it.' Therefore, there must be something else which helps us *not* to despair.

What is this 'something else'? For Brecht, who has written the most powerful pieces of this dying era, it was the new order of society. Communism was the god in which he believed. While he was living in the old world order, and dreaming of the new classless society, he wrote his best plays, *The Life of Galileo* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. As soon, however, as he lived in the society which purported to be new, he lost his faith. He saw that the god in whom he had believed did not really exist, and so he wrote nothing more which matched the power of his former writings.

One may ask: What does it mean for Dürrenmatt (who like all writers for the theatre in this dying era is under the influence of Brecht) – what does it mean for him, this 'other thing' which saves him from despair and makes him write his great, but cruel, comedies with their original, grim humour? It is certainly not Communism.

In his lecture on Schiller, Dürrenmatt shows what made Brecht a great writer: 'He left the arena of rebellion to become a revolutionary in order to change society through his plays. His writings give an answer to the world, to our guilt, one of the few honest answers to our claptrap, a presentation of what

we have left undone.' Dürrenmatt then goes on to explain in his blunt, dry fashion why Communism is not the answer for the world's problems, and adds, 'We must do what Communism has neglected to do . . . For the problem which has made the great contemporary German dramatists side with the revolutionaries in the belief that they were acting in the interests of humanity poses for us the question as to what *is* the answer. Have we indeed an answer at all, or are we merely pretending we have one?'

Is there anything from which Dürrenmatt can obtain the answer, and if so, what is it? It is difficult to say. Dürrenmatt speaks more clearly about this 'other thing' when he talks about it negatively. This happens at the end of the play, *The Physicists*. The physicist Mobius who, disguised as Solomon, flees to a lunatic asylum in order to save the world from the dire consequences of his discovery, sees himself deceived by the mad woman doctor of the asylum, and appears before the public with the knowledge of his failure, for it has become clear to him, at this moment when he has come to an end of everything, what Solomon really stands for: 'I am Solomon. I am the poor King Solomon. Once I was immeasurably rich, wise and God-fearing. I was the prince of peace and justice. But my wisdom destroyed my belief in God, and when I no longer feared Him, my riches too were destroyed. Now the cities over which I reigned are dead, the kingdom entrusted to me is empty. There remains only a blue, shimmering wilderness, and somewhere, around a small nameless star, the ever radio-active earth circles meaninglessly. I am Solomon. I am the poor King Solomon.'

That now, at the end of this play, the actor steps forward to the front of the stage, and by his direct speech, speaks to the public and so breaks down the invisible wall which separates

the action on the stage from the reality of everyday life, that is something of great significance.

A name has been given to this phenomenon: it is called the 'epic theatre'. But of even greater significance is the means by which Brecht, through the action on the stage, makes clear to the audience the distance between that which is perishing and 'the other' which gives promise of something new. This also has received a name: it is called 'alienation'. This means that the spectator does not lose himself in what is happening on the stage as in a dream, only to awake at the end to find himself the same as before in everyday life – unchanged people in an unchanged world. It is exactly this which 'alienation' is supposed to prevent, for the world *must* be changed. Therefore the spectator must every moment be able to detach himself from the old society which is disintegrating, in order to see 'the other' which can bring new life. 'Alienation' means that man, living in the world, must see that which is not of the world and live accordingly. It results in man becoming estranged from the everyday world, and becoming a pioneer of a new world. This detachment from the usual and habitual to something 'other' from which a new world can be built has always been the aim of the theatre in every era. The theatre originally had its source in the old liturgy. The 'other' element was then God, and the action on the stage depicted the immeasurable distance between human effort and divine action.

The element being introduced through the 'epic theatre' is that the gap between stage and public is removed. The process of alienation takes place in man himself, and he carries it out into the real world. A secularization of God takes place, making Him part of the world, a humanization of the absolute. Is that bad? I think not. That is the meaning of what has been happening for two thousand years, and will continue to happen.

But what is disastrous is that a serious misapprehension can follow this line of reasoning. Because God moves towards the world and man is able to share in this tremendous happening the misfortune occurs that man begins to think he can take things into his own hands, and through his own ability build a new world. That this cannot be done is clearly shown in Brecht. But because men who pretended to act in the name of God have done no better, there has been a growing sense of despair and powerlessness, which is the hallmark of the modern theatre.

The question is whether one cannot learn from this experience, now that both the godless and pious misconceptions have been laid bare, and use the means of the epic theatre towards something new. In other words: can the theatre be renewed at its source, can there be a rebirth of the theatre in the spirit of the liturgy? Actually this is happening before our eyes. I refer to Claudel's *Silk Shoe* and *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. Even in Brecht, the liturgical element, though in a hidden or parodied form, can be seen. In Dürrenmatt it shows itself openly in the declaration of faith at the end of *The Physicists*.

In this connection it is understandable why the plays of Peter Howard provoke such strong reactions, for the element of decision, which is at the basis of all theatre, is presented in such a real and challenging form, that one is immediately and directly affected by it.

We are here entering a new phase of development, and that always means opposition, misunderstanding and attack, but also that people are challenged and moved to action.

What is new is that the basic elements of the theatre are asserting themselves with fresh relevance. The 'something different' which is creating a new order is not merely some-

thing at man's disposal but something which makes demands on him. It is not a dictatorial power, however, for everyone is free to follow its directions or refuse them. But when they are followed a new force is brought to bear, which changes people and their relationships to each other. The world change, of which Brecht is always speaking, takes place here at the root of history, in man himself.

From this it is clear why man errs, and why the world around him becomes harder and deteriorates, for he himself wants to hold the reins of authority and to become the centre of the world through his own power. This results in continual warfare, one against the other. Only one thing can help here – that man acknowledges his guilt, discards his arrogance, and, in so doing, finds a new relationship with his neighbour.

These basic features become visible and gripping events in a play like Peter Howard's *Through the Garden Wall*. The world lies before us, with its great division between East and West, between man and wife, between the older and younger generations. In the two houses on the stage, divided by a garden wall, something is coming to an end: Western democracy as represented by the dying grandmother, and the dictatorship from the East as symbolized by the figure of Uncle Jo who has died mysteriously. The new element appears in the love of the two young people who try to meet over the garden wall, but it finally breaks through owing to the intervention of the mysterious Dr Gold, who helps to free everyone from hardness of heart, and the error of their ways. At the end, this liberating, redeeming power reveals itself in the biblical quotation: 'For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.'

'HAPPENINGS' IN PEOPLE
by Kenneth Belden

Kenneth Belden is Chairman of the Trustees of the Westminster Theatre, London, which was, in January 1971, *singled out by* 1,088 *British civic leaders as the theatre doing most to 'strengthen the moral fibre of the country'. 'Its plays are first-class entertainment,' they added, 'and show how problems can be answered and not just dramatized.' Mr Belden read history at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, and has a daughter and son who are both recent Oxford graduates.*

In a recent play at the Westminster, one of the characters speaks of something that happens in the second act as being 'a sort of miracle'.

'But then,' he goes on, 'that's a word I shouldn't use nowadays. No such things as miracles, are there? Just happenings.'

The interesting thing about the theatre of Moral Re-Armament is that the 'happenings' take place inside the people in the audience. Some go out from the theatre different. You may not give them the answer to every problem in one evening, but you can open a door in their minds. You can give them fresh hope. You can offer the secret of a new initiative. You can show that there is a range of possibilities in life which they had never dreamed of.

The plays at the Westminster dramatize the basic revolution of hope that the world needs: the radical change in man himself, without which the best legislation, the most generous aid, the most enlightened thinking, and the most far-reaching

social revolution, will be doomed to failure, wrecked on human selfishness. They show where each man and woman can begin.

One evening a young miner from South Wales sat in the audience. Not long before, his home had broken up. He had left his wife and small son back in the Rhondda, and had found a job in London. He was very unhappy. A few days before in a café, he had fallen into conversation with a local chemist. The chemist said, 'I am going with some friends to a theatre later this week. I have a spare ticket. Would you care to come?' After the play at the Westminster, the miner could not sleep. The play had stirred the deep places of his life. He felt an urgent need to put things right at home. He took a train to South Wales on his first free day, determined to make a fresh start. Not long after, there in the Westminster sat the miner, his wife and the boy, watching the play together. Their home had been remade, and ever since they have been staunch supporters of the theatre.

Some years after his first visit, the miner told a group of industrial men: 'You have got to change the thinking of the ordinary man at the coal-face and on the factory floor, if you are to get anywhere in Britain today. Down our pit men couldn't care less. They have lost confidence in everybody. No appeals touch them. And yet,' he said, 'these are the men who decide whether as a nation we go forward or grind to a standstill. You have got to change their thinking.'

Then he added, 'My thinking was changed in the Westminster Theatre.'

We have recently put on a new production of a play called *The Forgotten Factor*, by Alan Thornhill. It was the first play we put on at the Westminster after the War. It played to a hundred thousand people in that cold dark winter of 1946–7,

and then toured the British coalfields. Its influence was felt far and wide in the coal industry at a period when the British Foreign Minister was saying, 'Give me the coal and I will give you a foreign policy.' One man who saw it was the manager of one of the largest and most modern pits in the country. He was a tough character, known to the men as 'The Pocket Battleship' on account of his size and nature. When he began going down to the coal-face instead of sending for the men to come to his office, the miners began to realize that a revolution was under way in the management. Before long production of the pit had risen from 13,000 tons to 17,000 tons a week. When the manager was asked what had caused the rise he said, '*The Forgotten Factor* taught me to apologize and look on the whole of my work quite differently.' A year later he wrote that the upward trend was maintained and that the 20,000 tons mark was being exceeded – all this without extra manpower or new machinery.

When the new production of *The Forgotten Factor* opened in 1970, there were, in every part of the theatre, men in positions of responsibility in the trade unions and industrial management, who had seen *The Forgotten Factor* more than twenty years before, and whose conduct in industry ever since had been transformed into a constructive battle for what is right in each situation.

We had a musical recently called *High Diplomacy*, with Muriel Smith in the lead. In it Donald Simpson played the part of a British diplomat who badly needed to change, and found the secret of how to do so. As a result he also learned how to bring God's direction into the workings of an international conference, with consequences of crucial importance to the peoples concerned, who had hitherto been in conflict. One man who saw it on the opening night was the Ambassador

of a key Middle Eastern country. He was so captivated by its truth that he came to see it three times, and often in the following months sent distinguished visitors from the Middle East in London to see it. One experienced Middle East observer in London told me some time afterwards that some of the most helpful moves for moderation and sanity in that part of the world in subsequent months had come from men who had been in the Westminster Theatre.

In the past three years, men like Conrad Hunte, former Vice-Captain of the West Indies Cricket Team, and others have used the theatre in their campaign to answer racial conflict. Here men have found the answer to bitterness and frustration which has freed them to build new relationships with men of other races and other communities.

One man who came to the theatre by chance, with a party from his neighbourhood, was an Indian teacher from South Africa who had brought his family to London because of the dire experiences he had been through. He was a deeply embittered man. As a result of coming to the theatre he lost his bitterness. He found a faith in God which transformed his life and his home. 'Since that evening,' he says, 'my family and I are different. We changed from people who came to see what we could get from Britain to people who are determined to find what we can contribute.' Now he and his wife and their five children have turned their small house into a centre of sanity and mutual understanding for their whole neighbourhood. They have already entertained more than 700 people there from many races.

Another man who met Conrad Hunte and came to the theatre at that time was an employer, a director of a chain of shops in the north of England. It had never previously crossed his mind to consider his responsibilities to members of the

immigrant community. Now he decided to serve on the city's Race Relations Committee, to ensure that fair treatment should be given in the employment of labour. He has been instrumental in making it possible for immigrant girls to be employed as shop assistants in the city for the first time, on a basis of equality.

In these and many other ways the Westminster carries the ideas in its plays out to meet the social issues in the nation. More than 400 week-end conferences have been held there in recent years to study the social consequences of the plays, and how to apply their ideas in many situations. The Westminster works with a sense of strategy. It exists to fight a battle. There is a special emphasis on industry, and tens of thousands from management and labour have come to the theatre, from all the main industrial areas of the country. The visit, over a period, of more than a thousand shipyard workers and their wives from the Clyde helped to create a fresh attitude to such problems as demarcation. In one shipyard this more flexible approach helped to improve its capacity to turn out ships on time. In another shipyard, the play *Through the Garden Wall* had a marked effect. Labour and management got through the 'wall' between them in a fresh way as a result. Production and keeping delivery dates improved to such an extent that although there had been many men unemployed at the yard in the past, every man was now employed, and workers had to be sought from other shipyards.

Another area where the theatre plays its part is in the student life of Britain. The Westminster is the only London theatre which offers a special student rate, and gives the best seats available to any student for a small payment. Often the men studying in London from the developing countries and other distant parts of the world are destined to be key figures

in their countries in the coming years. Our theatre aims to give them the faith and standards on which the future freedom and prosperity of their countries can be built.

Some people thoughtlessly complain that such an intention is 'propaganda'. Of course every play that has an idea in it is 'propaganda'. What such people mean is that they do not like the idea that is being propagated. Nowadays you can have plays that propagate drugs, class war, perversion, adultery, race hatred, cruelty, or what you will – and that is art. But if you offer plays that uphold faith and moral values, that build unity in place of division, that answer hatred, that believe in sound home-life, to give men great aims to live by – that is not art: that is propaganda. That is why we are in a battle at the Westminster for truth against falsehood.

One of the problems of modern theatre is the limited experience of playwrights. Frustrated men pass on their own frustration. Bitter men pass on their hatreds. Men with divided homes write cynically of home-life. Defeated men write endlessly, with more and more explicit, four-letter diagnosis, of the problems we all know too well already. Men whose only belief is materialism can offer no way out from the prison house of human nature. In the end their plays, how ever brilliantly conceived and produced, become infinitely boring.

The modern theatre of despair paralyses our will to act by its pessimism, just when we most urgently need to learn how to act intelligently, vigorously and effectively to meet the needs of modern man.

At the Westminster, our plays are rooted in the experience of authors who have found hope because their own lives have been profoundly changed, who have found faith because God has broken into their own experience, who know how to point the road forward for others because they are stepping

out on it themselves, who know how to unlock every deadlock because the key has been turned in their own hearts.

The playwrights who have the experience Moral Re-Armament offers can dramatize the endless possibilities of change. In the hands of such writers, good becomes infinitely more interesting than evil and, in the context of the modern world, a great deal more shocking. But it holds the secret of the future that we all want to find.

THEATRE OF AFFIRMATION
by Professor Angus Springer

Professor Springer is Chairman of the Department of Drama at Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, and a pioneer of the teaching of drama in the United States. He has directed over 160 plays, has edited several theatre magazines and is in demand from all over the United States as a judge of drama competitions.

I have always believed that there can be no confrontation between men and any art without change. How deep that change goes and what kind of change it is, depends, of course, upon the art.

In the American theatre, at least from the 1920s with Eugene O'Neill and all who followed him, the major themes have been three in number: first, man's sense of loneliness, his lack of belonging; secondly, man's sense of guilt and, thirdly, a sense of alienation – alienation from other men, alienation from the family, alienation from God. These are significant themes which come out in Eugene O'Neill, Albert Camus, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, John Osborne and the others.

A friend of mine, the Professor of Drama at one of our leading universities, made a profound study of all of the plays shown in New York over thirty years. He found that all of the prize-winning plays, except one, treated these themes and omitted one other major concept, which is, I think, the guiding light for the future of the Theatre. They omitted hope. All these plays were negative, without hope. Man is alienated,

there is no hope. Man is guilty, there is no hope. Man is lonely, there is no hope. But in one play of that period, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, we find that concept of hope reaching its highest level.

Towards the end of *Our Town*, Emily says to the Stage Manager, the linkman of that particular play, 'Does anyone ever realize life while they live it, every, every minute?' The Stage Manager replies, 'No. Saints and poets maybe. They do. Sure.' Now if we substitute 'artist' for the word 'poet', this is the job of the artist in the 1970s – to make man realize life while we live it, every, every minute.

Anne Wolrige Gordon in her play *Blindsight*, which recently appeared at the Westminster Theatre, London, deals with guilt and with the idea of loneliness. She attacks people who are alienated from honesty and purity. But there is hope because lives are changed.

A great teacher of mine, who was also a major American poet, said in a lecture which I shall never forget, 'Everything else being equal, the art that affirms is greater than the art that negates.' There is need today, as well as in the past, for the presentation of the negative. We need the Samuel Becketts, for example. But the greatest need in the 1970s is for playwrights who will thunder like Jeremiah against injustice and hypocrisy: but who do it with hope, with promise, with the possibility of change.

IV Inspiration's source

THE MISSION OF THE ARTIST

by Peter Lotar

What is the purpose of writing, and what is the function of creative art in general? I am afraid that most artists do not know the answer themselves. And if they do think they know, they have completely different opinions. Has the artist and the cultural worker the task of changing mankind and the world? Is he able to do so?

Friedrich Dürrenmatt, the famous Swiss author, is known to enjoy shocking people, which he does in a masterly fashion by revealing us all as hypocrites, gangsters and robbers. Will he change people through this? He says himself, 'What ought a writer to do? First of all he must realize that he has to live in this world, that he has to write realistically about it. He must understand that our world of today is the natural outcome of human nature as it really is. The world will either become a vast technical arena or will disintegrate. Collectivism in all fields will grow, but the world's spiritual significance will decrease. Our thinking is being forced away from the truth of the word to mathematical abstractions. I feel that the form of present day philosophy is material science; so we are in danger of being deceived, if we believe we can continue to uphold the old philosophy of the spiritual world in any form . . . Writers should give up trying to save the world.'

Now a quarter of a century ago I had the good fortune as a young publisher's reader to discover Dürrenmatt and was instrumental in getting his first plays produced on the stage. I ask myself today whether authors of such outstanding talent

could not achieve more than merely shocking people. But, of course, to achieve more needs a different kind of understanding of the essence and function of the written word.

In a book not yet totally forgotten which some nonconformists call 'The Book of Books', there is written, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not.'

The word here is the expression of the Spirit, indeed it is the Spirit himself. It is not only Alpha, but Omega, the beginning and end of all spiritual life. On it is built the self-knowledge, dignity and calling of the cultural worker.

Through the last centuries there has been a growing lack of balance and harmony in the cultural life of nations. The statement 'cogito ergo sum' – 'I think so I am' – as Descartes said, was a self-assured declaration from thinking man that he had come of age, and it caused a development which deeply split the whole human organism. I refer to the division between thought and faith, which has destroyed the unity between feeling and action. Of course, men saw this at first as a deliverance from the burdens and chains of the past to a greater freedom of spirit, leading to marvellous discoveries, inventions and achievements in the materialistic sphere. Faith came to be looked upon as a ridiculous outworn superstition whose only function was regarded as a pious self-deception for the old, the ill and the childish. How can faith in a mysterious, invisible almighty Creator be justified when man himself thinks he has absolute control, not only over this diminishing sphere of earth but over the ever nearing vastness of the Universe?

But strangely enough, things are different from what they appear. The mastery over the forces we have released slips out of our hands as we lose mastery over ourselves. The more fruitful the marvellous new achievements in the fields of science, technical progress, industry and social organization seem to be, the more terrible and harmful are the effects on the relationship between the individual and the community in a self-seeking and hate-filled world. More and more we are losing the control of the effects of our research and actions.

How could it be otherwise, if we do not recognize the creative Spirit behind materialistic things? The majority of men regard faith and the ethical laws founded on it only as an outward façade. In reality they think it is a ridiculous hindrance to getting ahead in life. So mankind falls back into the grave which he has dug for himself through his rejection of life's fundamental principles.

Happily, from death and decay, according to eternal laws, new life can spring. The degeneration of a culture can lead at the same time to the birth of a new cultural epoch. The pioneers of revolutionary physical research may lead mankind on to a higher stage in its history. Rutherford discovered in the nucleus of the atom a miniature universe. It is as much a wonder as space, the mighty Universe itself, which can never be fully explored by research. Planck and Einstein, as a result of their scientific research, confess their belief in God and His creative power. That is a happening of revolutionary consequence. For it means nothing less than a synthesis between thought and faith and the hope of the coming of a new world era.

This places upon us as trustees of the written word a tremendous responsibility. Is it not extremely short-sighted, in face of this revolutionary development, to assume that the

present must remain as it is? Are then water and air pollution, food contamination, traffic chaos, the hell of noise, atomic warfare and the collective suicide of mankind the only possible answer for present and future? No, we must now re-write the former quotation from Dürrenmatt so that it reads, 'If the world becomes nothing more than a vast technical arena, and merely that only, then it will disintegrate.'

From this we must conclude that the task of the cultural worker is to do all he can towards the saving of the world. 'Our institutions fail because a barbaric destructive spirit prevails within them. The greatest task of culture is to create a spiritual philosophy on which to base the ideas, thoughts and deeds of an age,' wrote Albert Schweitzer.

Is this Utopia? Let us hope so. The whole history of progress is the history of the realization of Utopia. The ideals of Socrates and Plato, the philosophy of Aristotle have been the hallmark of epochs. Preachers in the wilderness and unique personalities like Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha have given direction to the lives of hundreds of millions of people through the power of their word. The pamphlets of a simple man named Rousseau brought about a revolution, and a solitary philosopher named Marx, writing in his garret, has changed the thinking of half the world.

Why then should we accept the present day situation with resignation? We can discuss different philosophies and ways of thinking. But to give up their tool, the living word, is to deprive writing of its meaning and will lead inevitably to the capitulation of the writer. To undertake responsibility does not mean unrealistic idealism. It is the fulfilment of our function in society. We have the choice either to be funeral orators for a dying world or humble workers for the creation of a new one.

The ideology of Moral Re-Armament is far more radical than the revolution of Marxism. It does not mean merely changing the structure of society, but of man himself. Selfish, greedy, hate-filled men cannot form a just society. They are also incapable of creating true and lasting works of art.

But there is still something else of decisive importance we artists should learn.

In the time of the Romantic movement an artist was expected to wait upon 'The Kiss of the Muses'. I fear many had to wait a very long time, others remained unkissed to the end! Since then psychology has taught us something of the essence of artistic inspiration. It is like the work of a miner digging out from the depth of the unconscious mind inspired pictures, music and thoughts and bringing them to light.

But how does one achieve this practically? About this, psychology has little to say. In Caux, in the Quiet Time we learn about it through the age-old art of meditation. This can unite us with the great minds of all ages. The philosopher Nietzsche, a heroic yet despairing fighter against God, said, 'The greatest happenings are not those which speak the loudest, but those which occur in our hours of quiet.'

Lahiri Mahasaya, the wise Indian Guru, said, 'Exchange fruitless religious speculations for true union with God. Free the mind from theological dogmas through the living waters of direct truth. Follow the directions of the inner consciousness. The voice of God has the answer to all questions in life.'

Edith Stein, the Jewish philosopher who became a Benedictine nun and suffered martyrdom under Hitler, left the following words as her spiritual legacy: 'It is of the utmost importance that we should have a quiet place in which we can get into touch with God. We must be open to receive His grace, to surrender entirely our own will and to follow the will of God,

leaving in His hands the shaping of our whole spiritual life. That is our fulfilment.'

Finally the words of the educator Heinrich Pestalozzi, the most pure and unselfish mind that Switzerland has produced: 'A true man is he who follows the voice of God from within, and who wills and carries out what the Spirit tells him.'

Can an intellectual today acknowledge God without being in danger of looking ridiculous and being thrust out of the society of intellectuals? It provides such a cheap and easy satisfaction to drag God's name in the dust. But there is a high price to be paid for unbelief.

For God is comprehended in all ethical values and is the source of inspiration. Without God we end up in despair and art is led to a dead end. This we recognize clearly amongst the greatest writers of our day. As, for example, Samuel Beckett, in whose works the end is naked despair. To proceed further in this direction brings only chaos and all becomes null and void. That is why we have today the kind of painting and music which does not move people any more, and a literature and drama of ugliness, cruelty and perversion which originate from unredeemed human nature. These are but the signs of a decline, the death agonies of a decaying culture already condemned to perish. The true creative spirits of this age have already advanced in a new direction.

'The true artist is a prophet. Long before any such understanding can be reached, the eyes of men begin to turn towards the distant light of the new age. Discernible at first only by the eyes of the man of genius, it must be focused by him on the speculum of a work of art, and flashed back from that into the eyes of the common man. The artist divines by inspiration all the truths that the so-called scientist grubs up in his laboratory slowly long afterwards . . . '

These words are quoted from Bernard Shaw. You may be surprised that I quote from him who is looked upon by the world as a witty mocker, the advance guard of an atheistic philosophy. Actually Shaw had the greatness to acknowledge his error, and to testify to the following:

'Ever since Shakespeare, playwrights have been struggling with the same lack of religion; and many of them were forced to become mere panderers and sensation-mongers because, though they had higher ambitions, they could find no better subject matter.

'I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if He had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman . . .

'Another observation I had made was that good-natured, unambitious men are cowards when they have no religion. They are dominated and exploited not only by greedy and often half-witted and half-alive weaklings who will do anything for cigars, champagne, motor cars and the more childish and selfish uses of money, but also by able and sound administrators who can do nothing else with them than dominate and exploit them. Government and exploitation become synonymous under such circumstances; and the world is finally ruled by the childish, the brigands and the blackguards . . . But if the fear of God were in the politician, it might be possible to come to some general understanding as to what God disapproves of; and Europe might pull together on that basis . . . For God is the rock on which equality is built.'

But where is God? So ask the countless seeking people of the world.

As a Soviet astronaut returned with his 'sputnik', he said,

'We were twenty-six hours in space, but we did not see God anywhere.'

Now, he did not really have to look so very far. But he could not conceive how near God was to him, as He is always near to each one of us. When we ask God sincerely and humbly, 'God, where are you?', He Himself gives us the answer, 'Within your own heart.'

And too, in the hearts of artists, God is waiting to be discovered by us that He may make us fruitful.

Ernst Barlach said, 'The highest possibility for an artist lies in the fact that he may stretch upwards, away from himself, to receive a reflection of the Godhead. A work of art conceived in this way may become a part of heaven on earth.'

One day I saw a picture of the painter Oskar Kokoschka, one of the great masters of our time. He had painted a picture of my native town, Prague. He had so caught the essential spirit of it that I was moved to tears. When I asked him what was the secret of his art, he answered, 'I am only an assistant of Him who is above.'

So, I believe as Kokoschka says, 'An artist is a man who hopes to break through to what the enlightened ones call the divine, and who bets his life on it.'

In that way, we believe that divine imagination will always have priests to serve it and life will always keep a quality of greatness.

ARTIST, HEAL THYSELF
by Garth Lean

Garth Lean was an Exhibitioner of Worcester College, Oxford, where he studied law. His books of biography and on current cultural questions have sold over 150,000 copies in Britain, and have been published in the United States, Germany and Denmark, one of the best known being 'The New Morality', which he wrote with Sir Arnold Lunn.

Art is an expression of the drama which takes place in the heart and mind of the artist. If he can find a faith in something larger and higher than himself, his art can achieve a deeper dimension.

My son, while still at school, wrote to a celebrated novelist, an old friend of ours, saying that he would like to learn to write. She replied most thoughtfully. 'It will well up from within you, if it is your metier,' she wrote. 'I well remember your father saying to me more than twenty-five years ago, after I had written a best-seller, that if only I could turn my writing talent into winning people for God, then it really would be something! But writing does not happen that way. The book, in point of fact, was a study in jealousy and welled up from within me because I had been jealous of a very beautiful girl to whom my husband had been engaged a few years before he met me. I had built up all sorts of silly fantasies about her in my mind, just as the narrator did about the dead heroine, and quite unnecessarily too – all those things took

root and so turned into the story. In fact everything I have ever written has always been the trying to puzzle out and solve a problem – often an unconscious one – within myself. I think that is true for most writers.'

She was, of course, right. An artist can only produce from what is within him. Yet one wonders whether he has the right – as often happens nowadays – to work out his frustrations on his readers. Or even if he has the right – for people need not read him – is it his highest function? Is it not rather to head straight into the problems, honestly registering the truth about himself and battling through to find a cure, to find an unselfish aim for one's life, to pay the price of winning a faith which can well up inside and combat the cynicism which, as Kenneth Clark wrote in *Civilization*, could destroy us?

Certainly, many of the greatest authors of modern times – unlike my friend the novelist – do seem to have exercised to excess the supposed right to vomit over their public. The distinguished English critic, Cyril Connolly, recently selected and commented upon the 100 key books which 'best illustrate the modern movement which dawned with Flaubert and Baudelaire and only became past history in the fifties' – the books, in fact, which most shaped our age. Professor Joseph Krutch, former Professor of English at Columbia University, writes of Mr Connolly's selection, 'Although his list does contain certain works which are neither beatnik, sadistic nor sexually perverse, at least a half – and perhaps two-thirds – of them might, I think, be classified as guide-posts to perdition.' The word 'perdition' is taken from a saying of one of Mr Connolly's key authors, Guillaume Apollonaire, the champion of Dadaism whom Mr Connolly describes as 'novelist, gourmet, bibliophile and pornocrat'. The saying, which is carved on the monument to Apollonaire in Paris reads: 'We have set out as

pilgrims whose destination is perdition . . . across streets, across countries and across reason itself.' How much of the cruelty and despair in today's world goes back to men of genius who have seen themselves as pilgrims to perdition and have portrayed that journey as the natural trip of modern man?

'Pornography,' wrote *The Times* in a recent leader, 'always has in it somewhere a hatred of man, both of man as a human being able to respond to ideals and of man as an animal. It is not an affirmation, but a denial of life.' 'Most disturbing of all,' the leader continued, 'are the symptoms of despair among artists. If one took only the development of natural science, one could consider the twentieth century one of the most creative of periods. If one took only the arts, one can trace the symptoms of despair of the artists to an increasingly barren society. Only a society in deep despair about itself would accept the hostility to meaning in some of the artists of the 1960s.'

Society itself must, therefore, be changed. As *The Times* concludes, 'The counter-attack on the pollution of our physical environment has, thank goodness, begun; the counter-attack on the even more serious pollution of our cultural environment needs to be started.'

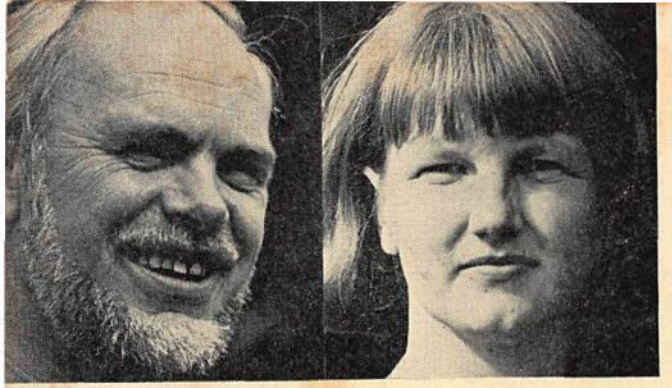
Several of the contributors to this book have mentioned Peter Howard as one whose writings have altered society. The reason for his great and beneficial influence is not his technical skill, even though as good a judge as Gabriel Marcel places him with Brecht as one of the two dramatists of recent years most likely to survive. His influence came from the fact that, before he ever wrote a play, he went to God to find the answer to his own character needs – and that he returned to that place each day. He believed that an artist 'should be a mixture between a surgeon, a physician, a prophet, a poet and a priest', and his hope was that men of greater gifts than himself would

do this far better than he could. But meanwhile he did what he could with all his strength.

How can a cynical, sophisticated modern man find such a faith? Can he do anything about it, if he finds himself without one? I was privileged to be present when Howard made the decisions which ultimately took him from being a destructive journalist on to becoming a creative artist. It began with the bold experiment of giving as much of himself as he knew to as much of God as he understood which, as an atheist, was very little. He established clinically pure conditions for this experiment by facing the objective moral standards of Christ. With moral clarity, faith followed and creativity increased.

Even – perhaps particularly – in the toughest circumstances, ordinary men and men of genius can find their way to this source of strength and inspiration. The precondition is humility, the honesty which kills conceit. Then, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes:

How easy it is for me to live with You, Lord!
How easy it is for me to believe in You!
When my mind is confounded by doubts and almost gives up,
when the cleverest people see no further than this evening
and do not know what must be done tomorrow,
You send down to me clear confidence that You exist
And that You will ensure that not all the ways of goodness are blocked.
From the summit of earthly fame I look with wonder
at the road that led through hopelessness to this point,
from which even I have been able to shed abroad among men the refulgence of Your glory.
And You will grant me to express this as much as is necessary.
And in so far as I am not able to do it,
– that means You have allotted the task to others.



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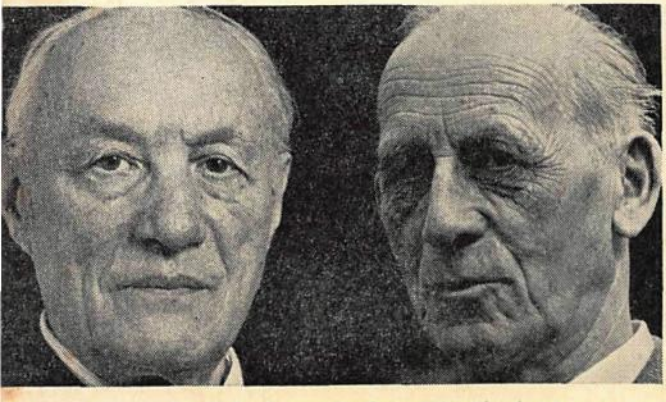

Lennart Segerstrale Finland *Professor Eiliv Skard Norway*

'Most disturbing of all,' wrote *The Times* in a recent leader headed 'The Pollution of Culture', 'are the symptoms of despair among artists . . . Only a society in deep despair about itself would accept the hostility to meaning of some of the artists of the 1960's.

Painters, musicians, actors, authors and other artists from both West and East Europe met at Caux during the 1970 MRA World Assembly to explore man's predicament in this society and the possibility of a renewal of the arts.

In *New Life for Art* they contend that it is possible to renew society itself. This starts with the renewal of the artist as he takes up his mission as surgeon, prophet and priest for this age.

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