

Note well Peter Bachrach's *The Theory of Democratic Elitism* (1967) in which it is argued that we must rely on established elites to maintain the "rules of the game." Popular participation must be accepted if it is in defense of liberalism. He urges upon us that we let the liberal elite alone, but that we should go after the oligarchies of private business. What a contrast Hyne-man and Carey show us! An earlier and conservative, as well as liberal participation, has been part of our tradition, but it is rejected in the contemporary elitism of social "scientists." It is rejected, because as Zoll brilliantly shows, the social scientist has a baggage of hidden postulates based on the fear of the authoritative affirmation of popular values. (pp. 75-76) Even William F. Buckley, Jr., recently and unhappily objected to the most democratic of all our procedures—the initiative, referendum and recall. I suspect that it is only certain kinds of conservatives who love the people as they are, as surely did many of the speakers in Congress in the first generation after the adoption of the Constitution.

Early American republican theory was the American proposition about human happiness in the actual world. It was flavored with utopia in the sense that it was regarded as the natural constitutional law of the free society. In contrast, the French Revolution was practical in that it destroyed the old institutions, it attempted to create a new political order, and it attempted to spread its ideology by war. Still, behind the revolutionary movement were a hundred shadings of utopian dreams. The relationship between nineteenth century romanticism and these dreams is complicated, too complicated for casual statement. But it must be agreed, I think, that the English poets and dreamers of the new order of life, including Blake and his friends, were utopian and romantic.

As a revolutionary William Blake had no interest in participating in ordinary political agitation. His visions through the poetic imagination apparently led him to

believe that the world was inevitably headed in the right direction. Perhaps it is for this reason that Professor Altizer (who has written among other books *Radical Theology and the Death of God* [1966] and *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* [1966]) believed one might use the abstractions of Hegel to explain the wordy giants of Blake's didactic poems. Hegel, it would seem to me, merely makes Blake less understandable than before. As a revolutionary Blake seemed to hate the institutions of Great Britain (his Albion), especially the formally organized Christian Church. To this reviewer it is clear that Altizer is more concerned with Blake's contribution to "God is Dead" ideas than with his potential revolutionary reconstruction of society in some visionary epoch outside of time. Many would, I think, be more content to read Blake's facsimile editions with their remarkable paintings, printing, and poetry than to see in Blake a contemporary advocate of a theological view, which to many is surely of only passing interest. For us today who are logical and scientific as well as imaginative (like Zoll) there is not much political juice to be squeezed out of Blake. If we are conservative we will return to *A Second Federalist* and not to the *Radical Christian Vision of William Blake*, in part because the radical Christian vision of today is activist; it is on the streets with violence and a reform, but hardly with a program.

Reviewed by FRANCIS G. WILSON

## *The Utopian Mirage*

**Utopia—The Perennial Heresy**, by Thomas Molnar, *New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967. 245 pp. \$5.95.*

AT A TIME when—to quote Kierkegaard—"men, having refused to use their freedom

of thought, claim freedom of speech as a compensation," a book like Professor Molnar's *Utopia* is a great comfort. In an atmosphere polluted by a multitude of shallow and confused books on religion, on God and on the world, on love, on sex, on freedom and filled with slogans such as "modern man," "man has come of age," "the necessity of adapting religion to the industrialized age," Molnar's book is a current of clean, healthy air. In it we find clear and sober thinking, good taste, a courageous unmasking of fashionable false prophets. Ours is a period in which the gregarious instinct has reached its peak, in which "aliveness" rather than truth is the norm, in which the fact that an intellectual trend is "in the air" is taken as proof of its validity, and it is therefore a great consolation to encounter a mind that is not infected with historical relativism nor overpowered by the "dynamism" of public opinion—that is, an independent mind. We mean the real independence of a mind interested only in truth and thus firmly rooted in the truth that has been conquered in the past, the independence which gladly and gratefully accepts the invaluable treasures of tradition. There is no greater lack of independence than that of the man who above all seeks the "new" and believes that by severing himself from all tradition, whether good or bad, true or false, he is making himself independent.

In *Utopia, the Perennial Heresy* Molnar exhibits an extraordinary scholarship. But unlike many scholars he does not make of scholarship a fetish. He does not replace thought with scholarship; nor the pursuit of truth, with the striving for scholarship. In so many instances certain positive qualities only unfold their true value when they are not the theme, not in the foreground; thus it is with scholarship, which acquires a real value when it remains in the background, an accompanying factor leaving the stage to true insights.

And notwithstanding his broad scholarship, Molnar does not fall victim to the widespread historicism which C. S. Lewis

so brilliantly exposed in *The Screwtape Letters*:

The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true. He asks who influenced the ancient writer, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in other books, and what phase in the writer's development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man's own colleagues) and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is "the present state of the question."

Molnar's book is also characterized by originality. He does not inform the reader about all the literature on utopia or offer a multiplicity of references to other authors; rather, he presents an original intuition of this phenomenon, a profound diagnosis of this perennial heresy. Again, we stress: originality is by no means what he is aiming at—just truth. True originality is only to be found in the author who is not seeking to be original. Originality is essentially an epiphenomenon. As soon as it becomes the end of an author's work, his originality is doomed.

When an ideal, a plan, or an expectation is labeled "utopian," the connotation is primarily of something that, though beautiful and desirable, can never become real. The blame implied in the term "utopian" is usually without reference to its value; it rather refers to the fact that it is incompatible with reality—an outgrowth of wishful thinking, a dream—castles in the moon, as one used to say, as long as one did not prepare for a landing on the moon. But in Molnar's terminology, "utopian" means much more than an ideal that cannot be realized. The utopia that he calls the perennial heresy is not only something unrealistic, but something evil:

Utopian thinking is no mere exercise in wish fulfillment; it is a constitutive ele-

ment of our mental attitude, and, as such, it possesses its own structure. But utopian thinking is itself evil and it leads people to commit evil.

And Molnar describes the central evil in utopian thinking as follows:

We may speak of heresy in its strict sense only in the case of utopians who admit to religious beliefs, but in reality all utopians follow the same pattern, the liberation of man from heteronomy, from the guidance and providence of a personal God, in the name of autonomy, of moral self-government.

In order to grasp the meaning of Molnar's characterization of the utopian mind as bent on overcoming heteronomy by autonomy, it must be understood that he uses these terms as the utopians themselves do and not in their classical philosophical meaning. Traditionally, autonomy has meant the free decision of the will in contradistinction to a decision that is the result of any kind of pressure or of mere instinct or passion. The typically autonomous action results from a clear insight into the value of the object and a free conforming to this value. The ideal autonomous attitude—in this traditional sense of the term—is the value response to God, the unconditional obedience to and love of God.

The utopian concept of autonomy that Molnar condemns is something completely different. For the utopian, autonomy is rebellion against God, the refusal to admit our creaturehood. And in showing that the utopian's autonomy is a liberation from the guidance and providence of a personal God, Molnar touches on the deepest source of the utopian heresy—nay, on the very core of the fall of Adam. And simultaneously, he touches also on the most typical perversion of our modern times. In my book *The New Tower of Babel* I wrote:

This individualistic self-sufficiency is characterized by the rejection of all bonds linking us to God and to moral law. . . . Reverence, obedience, gratitude

are alien to this man. He no longer wants to admit the existence of that factor in our life as creatures which is often called "chance" and which a Christian calls providence.

It is this defiance of God as it expresses itself in various projects for self-deliverance from the conditions of human existence in history that Molnar exposes.

Liberation from sin effected by human efforts is an essential element of utopia. To fight sin, to try to abstain from sin with the help of God and the life of grace infused by baptism in man's soul, is obviously the goal of Christian life. But to abolish sin in this world, to make of this world a paradise in which the danger of sinning is no longer present, is the utopian idea. The aim of life is no longer the sanctification of the individual person through the *imitatio Christi* in a world full of temptation, in the valley of tears; it becomes the establishing of a society in which there is no longer injustice, or sin, or disharmony, in which the striving of the individual for perfection is no longer necessary. This program is indeed, as Molnar says, a defiance of God. The utopian arrogates divine attributes in his will to change the very nature of man in this world.

Molnar criticizes the utopians for making a complete separation between good and evil. Of course, he does not at all intend to diminish the absolute qualitative antagonism between moral good and evil. Rather, he wishes to stress that in one person we find morally good and evil tendencies and that they are often interwoven in one single action or attitude. The co-existence—in this world as well as in the individual—of moral good and evil in no way contradicts the absolute antithesis of good and evil.

Throughout his book, Molnar emphasizes an essential difference between Christianity and all types of utopia: the role of the individual soul in the doctrine of the Church. The great theme of the Church is the sanctification and salvation of every individual soul and the communion of saints

in eternity. Utopianism, however, focuses on the society, a collective, and its perfection is not expected in eternity, but in a future period here on earth:

To realize the main objective of establishing an ideal community, the collectivity attempts to usurp the prerogatives and attributes proper to God. Such a collective divinity—an idol in the scriptural sense—will then lay claims to unchangeability.

Here, again, Molnar points out not only an essential feature of utopia, but also a sinister tendency that characterizes the present epoch. It is the shift from the stress on the individual person to collectivism. The utopian's desired autonomy—that is, his refusal to admit the creaturehood of the individual person—is paradoxically sacrificed by accepting complete dependence on a collective. Molnar explains this contradiction as follows:

But since this [autonomy] would lead immediately to anarchy, the emancipated individual is necessarily plunged by the utopian into collectivity, which will assume his guidance and provide for him.

I am not sure that this practical necessity of avoiding anarchy is the only, or even the decisive, motive for the contradiction—namely, in the name of autonomy, falling prey to a complete heteronomy. I rather believe that because the autonomy to which the utopian aspires is not genuine free assent (a specific mark of the *imago Dei*), but the rebellion against God in the denial of creaturehood, the utopian is easy prey for the evil heteronomy of complete dependence on a collective, the totalitarian depersonalization.

To be sure, rebellion against God need not assume a utopian character. Nietzsche is not a utopian. The Satanic revolt against God does not necessarily aim at the establishment of an earthly paradise, and therefore does not necessarily lead to a shift from the individual to society—to utopian

totalitarianism. It is the goal of a heaven on earth in which sin is no longer possible—the *utopian project*—that renders inevitable the transition from a pseudo-autonomy to a heteronomy in the form of collectivism.

Moreover, be it noted that the outstanding utopians of all varieties—including Marx, Engels, Lenin—who want to create terrestrial paradises, conceive of themselves as “leaders” of their utopian movements and states; they do not accept the role of enslaved members of the totalitarian collective. In this, they bear a certain analogy to those thinkers who desire to apply their theories to all men except themselves. Freud energetically refused to apply a psychoanalytic interpretation to his own system, nor would Hegel consider his own philosophy a mere step in the historical unfolding of the *Weltgeist*. Similarly, the utopian wants to remain above the society of which he is the creator.

For this reader, the chapter on “Secularized Religion” held special interest because in it Molnar dextrously unmasks a number of what he regards as false prophets of our age. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich, and Bishop Robinson, similarly impressed with the massive achievements of modern technology, conclude that mankind has now come of age and must therefore shed its traditional religious outlook—perhaps even the term “God.”

God “is being more and more edged out of life, losing more and more ground.” What will happen, asks Bonhoeffer, when even the so-called ultimate questions—death, guilt—will have been answered without recourse to divine explanation? We must prepare for that day, Bonhoeffer urges, by recasting God in his new role and, indeed, with his authorization, for in this twentieth century God is decidedly calling us to a form of Christianity which is independent of religion's premises. As Bultmann would have it, Christianity must be de-mythologized and the entire conception of a supernatural order which invades and permeates this order must be abandoned.

One must be especially grateful for Molnar's unmasking of Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard's optimism, which intoxicates so many persons at the present moment, is correctly shown to be utopian in motive and design, and its incompatibility with Christian revelation and the doctrine of the Church is made clear.<sup>1</sup>

While reading Molnar's book, in which there is so much brilliant criticism of our modern confusion and in which he exposes the absurdity of so many of the false prophets and the fashionable slogans of our era, one might get the impression that utopia is the only source of all the errors and evils of today's world—not that Molnar wishes to give this impression. Nevertheless, I should like to note that one of the chief spiritual poisons, the source of innumerable errors and heresies, is relativism in all its forms. The denial of objective truth, or, as is preferred today, the denial of "static" truth, is the greatest defiance of God. The hatred of truth, which in its inalterable majesty is experienced as a limitation on man's arbitrary sovereignty, manifests itself today in the most vicious way. Whereas former skeptics made a frontal attack on truth, today's relativists declare it to be "historical" or "evolutionary"—that is, changing in the course of history. And the basic, authentic notion of truth is labeled "Greek" or even "Platonic."

Thus historical relativism not only shares the inherent contradiction of all skepticism and radical relativism, it also exhibits the ridiculous contemporary fashion of making of the most elementary data specialties of a certain nation or epoch. To say that the historical consciousness of modern man requires us to liberate ourselves from the "Greek notion" of "static truth" is as nonsensical as to say that we must get rid of the "Aristotelian" notion of existence. This absurd temporal localization of the authentic notion of truth, the depreciation of it as something "Greek" or "Platonic," also reveals a resentment against Greece born of a sense of inferiority before

Greece's incomparable cultural and intellectual attainments. The anti-Greek spirit takes the form especially of a despoliation of Plato. But Gabriel Marcel has rightly suggested that what the modern world needs is the therapy of Platonism.

Truth is neither an invention of Plato nor a notion stamped by his specific mentality; but truth rather left its stamp in a unique way in the spirit of Plato. Unmatched in his greatness as a philosopher, Plato will always remain the great champion of truth. The perennial heresy of relativism, which finds its classical expression in Protagoras' "man is the measure of all things," receives its only completely adequate answer from Plato: "God is the measure of all things."

I must therefore confess that I disagree with Molnar's general attitude toward Plato. It cannot be denied that in the fifth chapter of the *Republic* Plato proposes a state which is utopian in the sense Molnar gives to this term. Like most great thinkers, Plato paid his tribute to his epoch. But the same Plato not only retracted this utopian proposal in the *Laws*, he wrote the most admirable things about the individual soul in the *Phaedo*, about the ultimate meaning of morality in the *Gorgias*, about the battle between good and evil in man's soul (the mysterious rupture in man's nature which for the Christian derives from original sin) in the *Phaedrus*. Far from being a father of utopia, Plato fully deserves the title given him by the Fathers of the Church: *paidagogos eis Christon*.

Also, the role that Molnar assigns to Descartes in the history of utopian thought seems to me not correct. Descartes is above all the champion of objective truth against skepticism. And as a faithful Catholic he neither arrogated to man divine attributes nor replaced the Christian emphasis on the individual soul with a collectivist bias. He did not anticipate an earthly paradise. That his rationalist tendency makes him susceptible to progressivism cannot be denied. But he has neither any affinity with Hobbes (as Molnar seems to



assume) nor can he be listed with the utopians. Descartes has been greatly misunderstood. In no way was he the father of subjectivism. It is too often ignored that all subjectivists from Hume and Kant to Jaspers have been outspoken and bitter adversaries of Descartes.

But this disagreement by no means diminishes my admiration for Molnar's book, which should certainly, as I have indicated, be wholeheartedly welcomed for the shrewdness and soundness with which it casts a light of truth and learning on a dangerous and sinister feature of human thought and action which is all too powerful in our epoch.

Reviewed by DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND

'Molnar's article, "The Cult of Teilhard," in *Triumph* (March, 1967), is a valuable completion of his discussion of Teilhard in this book.

## *Poetry and Anthropology*

**Anthropology and The Classics**, edited by R. R. Marett, *New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc.* 1967. 191 pp. \$6.00.

**Poiesis: Structure and Thought**, by H. D. F. Kitto, *Sather Classical Lectures, Volume 36. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press,* 1966. 407 pp. \$7.50.

THE CLASSICS, once the foundation and the mainstay of education in this country and in Europe, no longer command the attention in course curricula and in educational planning that they once did, at least in the original Greek and Latin; but with their waning influence they gave rise to a number of other subjects which command important positions in the world of scholarship and education and have nourished even more fields (art and archaeology, linguistics, comparative literature, philos-

ophy, religion, and even science). The modern American curriculum, particularly, at the college level, is now characterized by a good deal of fluidity and flexibility (to use kind words), not to say chaos, lack of uniformity, and uncertainty. No longer do the classics and mathematics provide the fixed, firm basis that characterized the educated person of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The impact of science and the scientific method have rendered all curricula tentative, uncertain, and subject to change.

It is in this light that it may be useful to look at two recent publications, one of them a re-issue, the other a good example of the new classical approach to literature, both products of British education and scholarship, giving the disciplined reader a solid idea of the changes that have occurred in classical scholarship over more than half a century. *Anthropology and The Classics* was originally published in 1908 and comprised six lectures delivered before the University of Oxford by Arthur J. Evans, Andrew Lang, Gilbert Murray, F.B. Jevons, J.L. Myres, and W. Warde Fowler, and were edited by R.R. Marett, Secretary to the Oxford Committee for Anthropology. The names of the authors will be familiar to all classical scholars; their pioneering work in anthropology may come as a surprise to some. "Anthropology and the Humanities—on verbal grounds one might suppose them coextensive; yet in practice they divide the domain of human culture between them," says R.R. Marett in his brief preface. A modern classicist may well wonder why Barnes and Noble should wish to reissue in 1967 a book now so out of date as to be a curiosity even to a classicist, except, of course, as a collector's item for historians of classical scholarship, and for historians of anthropological scholarship interested in the relations of their science to the classics. It is interesting, historically, to read Evans' extensive but outdated and outmoded discussion of "The European Diffusion of Primitive Pictography and Its