TWO DECADES OF AMERICAN CRITICISM

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NO age can be summed up in a formula or epigram. So complex, so manifold are its manifestations that it escapes rigorous definition. As an intellectual convenience, however, it is possible to select certain salient traits and show how they fit into a more or less distinct cultural pattern. Before tracing the outlines of that pattern, the critic must learn to beware of unduly exaggerating the importance of his own age. It is natural, and perhaps inevitable, that each generation should regard its life as the highest, the most complete expression of life, different in almost every respect from all that has gone before. For life in the present has this indisputable advantage—*it is*. It is dynamic, not static; immediate and all-absorbing, not remote and historical like the reign of the Seleucides.

With that caution in mind, we can attempt to formulate the form and features of "modernism." The physical and psychological aspects of modernism are interrelated, though not interdependent. Is modernism nothing more than an inflated figure of speech for industrialism? Are its chief traits and achievements but the result of a technological evolution unprecedented in the course of civilization? Is this the source of our pride and uniqueness? If the Egyptian mummy that Poe imaginatively brought back to life were plunged without warning into the maelstrom of modern times, what differences would strike him first and most forcefully? Would he gaze in bewildered awe and wonder at the towering skyscrapers, the monumental steel-ridged horizons of our cities, the speed of our trains and subways, the furious efficiency of our mechanical factories, the swift flight of a bombing plane crossing the sky in mimic attack, the babel of the radio, the rhythm of multitudes in motion? Or would he pass by the purely physical changes as interesting novelties which, in view of the lapse of time, were more or less to be expected, and concentrate his attention on the amazing transformations visible in man?

Now it cannot be denied that the industrial development of an age directly and profoundly affects human nature. The speeding-up process, the intensification of the productive system, the stress and wear of modern life, the increase in the number and variety of stimuli to which man is subjected—these to some extent shape the conduct of human beings. They cannot help reacting; their environment is bound to condition their behaviour, but not necessarily to determine it. This being conceded, we are ready to discover exactly what constitutes the temper of the modern age.

Just as each individual strives for consistency and self-realization, so each age collectively endeavours to objectify and understand the true nature of its aims, its interests, and its existence. There are always a number of earnest, self-appointed interpreters who are willing to undertake this difficult task. Voltaire, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Emerson, George Bernard Shaw—each one sought, in his own way, to reveal the character of his time. Among the moderns in America, one may mention at random men like John Dewey, Joseph Wood Krutch, Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank, Irving Babbitt, Henry L. Mencken, and Max Eastman. Though they vary considerably in their appraisals and interpretations, one is struck by the recurrence of certain *motifs*. There is the emphasis on the machine age. We are portrayed as a neurasthenic generation, intoxicated with efficiency and speed. The age is described as cynical, skeptical, disenchanted. It is a critical, not a creative, period. It is experimental, groping confusedly for direction and light. Finally, the dominance of science has led to the declining prestige, if not bankruptcy, of religion.

II

In the interests of further discrimination, it is desirable to survey and write the epitaph of a number of literary movements, some fruitful, others abortive, which determined the history of American criticism from about 1913 to 1935. It is particularly significant that the period of daring and original critical activity coincided with one of intensely hopeful creative effort. This was more than a coincidence. However diligently the critics beat the drum, their work does not call forth new talented writers; but the critics do provide an ideological and cultural background within which the writer is able to proceed harmoniously and clarify and "orientate" his views. In other words, the intellectual atmosphere of an age is often determined by the contributions of the critic as well as the poet and novelist and dramatist. And it is this close correlation between what critics say and believe and what writers attempt to do, that makes the critical movements of the last two decades of high significance.

From an instrumental point of view, ideas may be considered as neither right nor wrong. Ideas are useful or functional. If they satisfy an important need, if they are found to work, then they are *right*. Truth is guaranteed by pragmatic sanctions, not by universal validity. This theory of instrumental relativism applies with special force to the work of various critics during this embattled period. The ideas developed so earnestly by many poets and novelists at this time, the causes for which they pleaded with such prophetic passion, were derived directly or indirectly from the articles and books of contemporary critics like Harold Stearns, Ezra Pound, Van Wyck Brooks, and Waldo Frank—to name but a few. The positive contribution of the critics lay in their encouragement, their justification of the creative life, their protests against most materialistic trends in the economic organization of society which seemed to threaten it, their service in ordering the mental states of the writer and investing his calling with purpose and meaning. But the extreme position, which many of the critics were forced to uphold, also caused considerable mischief. If they helped to inspire, they also implanted the germ of many notions which proved obsessive and injurious. One need but cite the case of Sherwood Anderson, a potentially gifted novelist of uncommon sincerity, who was led astray by taking certain critical doctrines too seriously. He became a primitivist when his method tended towards realism; he thus ended up by being torn between two conflicting tendencies, and by producing books which are classics of confusion.

III

It took a long time before the modern writers were able to overcome the conceit that springs from "contemporaneity"—the feeling that they were unique, that their problem was insoluble, that theirs was a lost cause. Worse still was their insufferable arrogance. To be dead and buried—that provided food for jeering laughter, crowing contempt; to be alive at this cross-road of time—that meant one possessed a monopoly of the truth and of the gift of seeing clearly. The thought strongly persisted: only by repudiating the past could this age come into its own. In their eagerness to achieve recognition, the young writers—and the critics abetted them in this — committed a symbolic unconscious act of parricide.

Repudiation—that alone was natural, if not altogether legitimate. Every generation overhauls its possessions, appraises their value, and discards what it considers outworn or worthless. But the twentieth century gave birth to a self-satisfied, insolent, and vociferous band of critics who hoisted the black flag of piracy and attempted to gain notoriety, if not fame, by the bold expedient of pulling others down. The epithets used ran the whole gamut from emotional disapproval to derisive rejection. Venerable figures like Longfellow, Bryant, Cooper, Washingon Irving—to mention but a few—were the targets for well-aimed and angry missiles. These writers were certainly not invulnerable to criticism. What writer is? But the attack on their work took the extreme form of vituperation, which is miles removed from dispassionate, understanding criticism.

Then, too, an amusing contradiction was evident in the braggadocio of the younger critics—and most of them were members of "the younger generation." They denounced and condemned the American past, and yet longed for some past in which they would dig their roots and where, like the English writers, they could build up a continuity of tradition. Yet how could they do so if they repudiated that past? Whereas the critics of the nineteenth century were as a rule reverential in attitude towards the established figures, the latter-day critics were iconoclastic with a vengeance. All those in the past whose ideas differed from theirs were called either hypocrites or fools, or both. In that way they cut themselves off from the cultural tradition they sought and of which, whether they knew it or not, they were an integral part. Foolishly they wasted and sacrificed their heritage. They made impossible that insight into and assimilation of the past which is essential for the vigorous development and continuity of letters.

A few concrete illustrations will, perhaps, make this clear. *Civilization in the United States*, an ambitious symposium by thirty young Galahads of the pen, belied its title. It triumphantly proved that this country was the Land of Darkness. The contributors were united by a common purpose in denouncing the shoddy, disgraceful quality of American life. Mencken, George Jean Nathan, Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, and others, joined in a mighty chorus, the burden of which was that we were emotionally stunted, aesthetically starved, without culture or rooted traditions, our intellectual resources bankrupt, our philosophy false and shallow, our literature a pathetic trail of failure and frustration. In the essay, "The Intellectual Life," the editor, Harold E. Stearns, fiercely laboured the point that America had not yet grown up. It was still under the crude domination of the pioneer spirit, which was opposed to the values of the mind. It was narrowly and crassly utilitarian. Americans had conquered everything but themselves. They still clung to the terrible illusion that the making of money was the chief aim and end of life. Holding all purely intellectual values in contempt, they had not the remotest conception of the good life. "The most hopeful thing of intellectual promise in America to-day," he declared, "is the contempt of the younger generation for their elders." The book as a whole was a ferocious onslaught, a withering crossfire of hatred, dissatisfaction, derision, contempt. Every volley was punctuated with a hoarse cry of "Puritanism—materialism—pragmatism—standardization—industrialism—the machine—the booboisie."

All this, in 1922, was symptomatic of a profound but not altogether articulate feeling of dissatisfaction with American life. The same note had been sounded in the critical work of Van Wyck Brooks and Waldo Frank and James Oppenheim. Thwarted idealism expressed itself in a furious compensatory negation. Now, in the cool light of time's perspective, we are able to examine these manifestations in a disinterested, analytical spirit, and disentangle the true from the false, the substance from the turbid froth of rhetoric. The compelling motive behind these blasts of satire and indignation was a desire to build anew, to reform our society and clear the ground for a Holy Temple to house the creative spirit. In actuality, these efforts did little more than to confirm the general impression of confused and desperate futility. When a man is helpless in the face of odds, he vents his impotent rage by shouting. The critics ranted because they had no constructive programme of action, no solution to offer for ills that then afflicted us. Their ideal of beauty and the organic life was as vague as the bogey of Puritanism they sought to exorcise.

IV

Out of the welter of movements which arose in the past two decades, one emerged that created a tempest of controversy. Its name was Humanism. It is inaccurate to speak of it as a revival, for it had never really died. Like Romanticism and Classicism, it is a more or less permanent expression of the human spirit. It is a manifestation not only of the desire for order and restraint, but also of the search for some binding ethical authority. It is opposed to excess, undisciplined enthusiasm, formless and futile rebellion. It is a search for standards, as distinguished from individual caprice. As Professor Babbitt declares: "The true humanist, that is the man who is sympathetically selective, has his standards within him—living, flexible, intuitive." In protest against a vulgarized democracy in life and letters, Professor Babbitt, the leader of Humanism in America, cried out for abiding values, for a critic who is neither traditional nor conservative, but endowed with vital unity and vital restraint.

The time was apparently ripe for the austere emphases of Humanism. In an age of violent dissension, of disintegrating values, where nothing is certain and men wander lost in a forest of confusion, any doctrine confidently preached as salvation is bound to receive a great deal of attention. Right or wrong, it seems to promise a way out of our painful perplexities. But the forces that contributed to its appeal also militated against its enduring success. It was challenged as a diluted brand of religion smuggled back into a skeptical, scientific, despiritualized world. Its dogmatic gospel of the inner check, its attack on Rousseauistic emotionalism and the cult of the *ego*, its disparagement of science and the philosophy of determinism, its stress on virtue and the higher claims of our nature, the false dualism it set up between Man and Nature—these tended to repel a post-war generation that had grown accustomed to doubt everything, to be suspicious of all pontifical moral assumptions. The prophets of the faith lost caste, and the movement gradually died of inanition.

V

Another folly exuberantly indulged in by some of the critics was their adoption of the theories of psychoanalysis. Franz Wittels, in his *Freud and His Time*, declares with some ground of truth that no living author can escape the Freudian influence. And the critics during the Freudian Era out-Freuded Freud. From the year 1919 when *The Erotic Motive* by Albert Mordell appeared, to the extravagant psychoanlytical interpretations that were published after that time, one heard a good deal, indeed, about neuroses, the fantasy, wish-fulfilment, the libido, frustration, inhibition, release, and so on—a whole arsenal of formidable and imposing terms. In her distress at the prevalence of these ideas, Amy Lowell wrote that the promiscuous distribution of Freud's books had done incalculable harm. "To suppose that all life under the surface consists of violent sexual desires crushed out or sublimated, that all personal relation is a war of sexual antagonism, is to see life through a perfectly distorted medium. We have run mad on the subject in this country, as a few years ago we ran mad over Christian Science." She little suspected how mad the country—and especially the critics—was to become on this subject. Harvey O'Higgins, James Oppenheim, Waldo Frank, Joseph Wood Krutch, Van Wyck Brooks—they all seemed to feel that they had at last hit on the secret of the creative process. Mark Twain, Henry James, Walt Whitman, Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, the American people as a whole, were the victims of their psychoanalytical dissection. The writing of a novel or poem or what not was regarded as little more than a sublimation of a suppressed wish. Art was the fulfilment of cravings denied in reality. It was an elaborate and satisfying dream. The writer, it was maintained, possessed many of the characteristics of the neurotic. Genius was subtly related to the psychopathic state; it was a condition of mental tension and "unbalance," partly cured by the outpouring of creative energies. The psychoanalytic method, however, neglected to point out that the artist communicates his message to others, that his work is therefore to that extent objective, while the neurotic remained imprisoned within the walls of his *ego*. Furthermore, psychoanalysis could offer no explanation of form or aesthetic value: what made one book superior to another. It could perhaps deduce the subjective need driving an author; it could not show why the need was satisfied in a literary creation, rather than by immersion in the world of action or by resorting to opium.

VI

When there is nothing of importance to affirm, cynicism and negation are admirable substitutes. When there is nothing to believe in, blasphemy is a satisfying expression of the frustrated will to faith. This was virtually the condition of the younger generation who were in full revolt, but who were not altogether clear as to what they hated and what they should do about it. Since art was essentially a joyous acceptance of life, what was there to be done? Contempt was not enough, nor hatred. Art was salvation; but since this country stifled the life of art, the writers decided to go abroad. The exodus began.

The forces producing this bitterness, this fever of unrest, this resort to flight, have been vividly analysed by Malcolm Cowley in *Exile's Return*. Our young potentially talented writer wished to escape because he felt there was no freedom in this country, no challenge to create. The trouble with the leaders of the younger generation during that muddled period of revolt was that they were primarily intellectuals; their protest against art for art's sake was, ironically enough, a philosophical aesthetic protest. Consciously or unconsciously, they were reaffirming the creed of life for art's sake. They nailed their banner to a theory and attempted to make life over—in Europe—in the image of an idea, a vague romantic ideal. Lengthy debates, ardent polemics, exquisitely printed pamphlets, yards of talk in Parisian cafés took the place of direct action. The Revolution of the Word—that was the logical outcome of their pilgrimage abroad. The proclamation of the newest idea was the symbol of their insurgency and independence. Their attitude towards reality was mystical; their revolt was essentially aesthetic.

As Sinclair Lewis pointed out in an article, "Self-Conscious America," the café to which these sensitive expatriates fled for inspiration was as standardized as the America that they professed to loath. At the Dôme, he learned the binding code of these self-exiled Bohemians. First, he learned that literature must be purely original, without benefit of tradition or imitation. Secondly, "All literature must be imitative of (a) Joyce; (b) Gertrude Stein; (c) Ezra Pound; (d) André Gide; (e) Jean Cocteau; (f) Sherwood Anderson; (g) Waldo Frank; (h) Marcel Proust." Thirdly, writers must deal with the American Scene; but since all Americans are fools, this must be located on the Left Bank of the Seine. In this manner, Sinclair Lewis vigorously satirizes the folly of the theory that writers should go abroad in order to create and in order to understand America better in the congenial, liberating atmosphere of Paris. It was not until the economic depression set in, that writers began to realize that they must make the best of their situation in America. Exile and emigration would lead to nothing fruitful and indigenous. It was Edgar Lee Masters who wrote: "This country is our fate, and we cannot escape it."

VII

A more serious source of trouble and confusion was the attitude of the literati towards the machine. They had to find some plausible explanation for the maladjustments which they and their contemporaries seemed to experience. Who or what was the cause of the sterility of American life? The obvious answer was overlooked, and the machine was looked upon as the evil genius throttling the creative spirit. This was the Frankenstein that their excited imagination conjured up, and that they sought to slay. What eloquent and incredible nonsense was written on the subject of the Machine! Critics who harshly judged the excesses of the romantic temperament in the nineteenth century themselves indulged in an orgy of sentimentalism that would have put a Shelley or a Byron to shame. They cried out that the machine was a terrible menace which must be destroyed or effectively checked before it destroyed our civilization. Everything, they declared, was being mechanized, society was becoming regimented and standardized, quantitative values were replacing older and nobler conceptions of value, beauty was being sacrificed to power, art to efficiency. Technological development accounted not only for economic dislocation, mass unemployment, but also for the mechanization of our minds and lives and consequently of our whole complex of culture. And the panaceas proposed—day-dream panaceas of dilettantes, writers who had no knowledge of the function of machinery in society, no comprehension of economic theory or practice—were the stuff of midsummer madness. They betrayed a curious nostalgia for the leisurely ways and customs of a mythical past. They idealized the handicrafts and condemned the articles of machine production as cheap, uniform, and ugly.

Only of late has it dawned on critics—for example, Lewis Mumford in *Technics and Civilization*, Gustavus Myers in his recent book, *America Strikes Back*—that a more realistic understanding of industrial society makes the protest against the machine seem naive and retrogressive. Those who had violently opposed the machine had in reality personified it, had invested it with a malevolence and a power to harm that existed only in their febrile fancy. It was all a nightmare abstraction, a gargoyle theory, which bore no correspondence with the actual facts. Whatever harm the introduction and extension of machine production may have caused, the fault is certainly not to be imputed to the machine. It is man's servant, it will never become his master. When men are allegedly enslaved to it, reduced to the status of automata, the cure is not machine breaking or reversion to the Middle Ages. The solution lies in the application of the elementary principles of social engineering and scientific management. Even as it is, with all the conspicuous waste and disregard of human life and welfare, the machine has proved a decided blessing. There can be no doubt but that in the future it will serve more and more to lighten man's burden; it will help him to conquer his natural environment, and free him from the servitude of excessive physical toil for those nobler and more congenial pursuits of the mind which he has not now the leisure to satisfy.

VIII

Equally arresting and amusing was the tendency that arose to discredit the achievements of science. Man, not the "theology" of science, was to be made dominant. As one young critic put it, it was more humiliating to behold the human soul cringe and shiver before laboratory reports and clinical charts than to see it kneeling in terror before a God of Vegeance. Science, like the machine, was regarded as an enemy to be feared and overcome. For it threatened our cherished spiritual possessions, our culture, our traditional beliefs, the very existence of art. This was the attitude assumed not only by the Humanists, but by critics like Waldo Frank (*The Re-Discovery of America*), T. S. Eliot, Gorham Munson, and many others. Science sought the truth by means of objective experimentation, but this cold, factual truth interfered with and cancelled the "special truths" they wished to live by. Therefore, they reasoned, science was dangerous and destructive. Man needed a stable and consistent system of values, which science was powerless to provide. The force of these attacks was vitiated by unsound reasoning, as Max Eastman has demonstrated in *The Literary Mind*, an impressive plea for the scientific method in the study of letters. If the aim of science was objective truth and its method empirical verification, what could then be possibly urged against it? Was the light of knowledge to be dimmed because it hurt eyes accustomed to traditional darkness? Could the truth, however repugant to our egomorphic vision, be ultimately injurious? Was it not rather to be welcomed and integrated with the existing body of reliable knowledge? Was it not possible to reconcile the aims and achievements of science with those of art and ethics? Was it necessary to build on illusion in order live an ordered and happy life?

IX

What caused the sudden change from the scheme of values of 1920 to that presented in 1930? With the exception of a drastic reversal in economic conditions, the structure of society had not greatly changed. But a profound change had apparently come over the subjective face of American civilization. The America pictured by the critics had undergone a remarkable transformation. Gone were the half-maudlin, half-militant complaints about the jungle of the machine, the curse of Puritanism, the "theology" of science, the ugliness and impotence of life in this crude, raffish, money-roistering nation. The writers no longer sought to flee to Paris or sentimentalized about the creative necessity for escape, the uniqueness of the artistic life as a counterbalance against the worship of the dollar. The whole tower of Babel, with its invidious adjectives and derisive epithets, fell to the ground. A touch of economic suffering made the critics human, restored them to reality, saved them from a spurious attitudinizing. New and important problems now engaged their attention.

Now that criticism has been assigned to its rightful position as cooperating with, if not in part partaking of, the creative process, it has been found necessary to take cognizance of its methods, limitations, and conclusions. For criticism is not merely a judgment of books and aesthetic matters; it is fundamentally an expression of the spirit of an age, its self-consciousness articulated and socialized. An age of lucid and logically coordinated criticism is one that has clarified its ideas and achieved a consistent philosophical outlook. Before American literature can come into its own, it must make an assessment and thorough investigation of the critical values it holds.

Critics like I. A. Richards in England and Kenneth Burke in America have come to the conclusion that the only way to avoid the prevailing confusion in the use of critical language is to arrive at a precisely formulated terminology. A reform is called for in method and in the technique of defining. Criticism, it is now maintained, will not reach its true estate and proceed with full effectiveness until the words it employs are given a commonly established and acceptable signification. While these can never attain the rigorous precision that we find in the physical sciences, it is surely no idle hope to look forward to a time when words like imagination, beauty, talent, truth, realism, naturalism, impressionism, and so on, will possess a recognized and strictly determined currency of value. To do this, however, psychology must come to the aid of literature and demonstrate, if possible, the legitimate empirical use of these terms. Or rather, the critics will have to depend on psychology as an added indispensable part of their professional equipment.

Another problem that has lately arisen, the problem of propaganda *versus* art, cannot be settled by an arbitrary decision one way or the other, but by a patient and careful definition of the issues involved. The whole question at present is swathed in a thick fog of contentious words. Quite often the disputants are talking about different things. One group (Granville Hicks, Michael Gold, Malcolm Cowley) argues that art is a class weapon and that all art is therefore propaganda. The opposing camp of critics (Max Eastman, Joseph Wood Krutch, Mary Colum, Henry L. Mencken, and many others) insist that there is no connection between literature and politics. The former group leaves out of consideration the very point at issue: what distinguishes a pamphlet by Lenin, a campaign speech by President Roosevelt—to choose two examples at random—from a poem by Alexander Blok or Archibald MacLeish? Or to state the matter more precisely, is art that is not consciously and perceptibly directed at propaganda of any kind to be regarded as poor art? Is all art that is impregnated with propaganda to be classified as art? Certainly not, since these critics will deride and denounce works of literature that are freighted with a "bourgeois" ideology. The pivot on which the whole issue turns, then, is whether one agrees with the propaganda or not. But if it is merely a matter of intellectual belief or disbelief, then the aesthetic problem is shifted to another plane, and the question of what part belief plays in literature must come up for discussion.

Thirdly, the critics on the left in this country—Joseph Freeman, Joshua Kunitz, Granville Hicks, and Michael Gold—have coined a new entity: *proletarian literature*. Though much has been written and is being written about this new creation, there seems to be little or no agreement as to its functional meaning. Even the official theoreticians are evidently at sea as to what really constitutes a proletarian literature. Is it literature produced by the masses, or by a small group of radical intelligentsia? Is it possible to inaugurate it in a society still divided into classes, or must it wait for consummation until the "dictatorship of the proletariat" gives way to a classless society? Does it deal with farm laborers and factory hands only, or does it include treatment of all classes and types of society, but from a Marxist point of view? Would a novel portraying the breakdown of capitalistic society, but with captains of industry and finance as the chief characters, be accepted as a genuine proletarian product? Does the proletarian novel, for instance, require the masses as hero with a proper subordination of the individual, or is it permissible to focus attention on a few representative characters juxtaposed against a background of mass action? These important questions, and many others like them, remain either unanswered or else left in a confused and contradictory state.

Finally, another critical tendency of recent development, the result of the above devious impulses and experiments, calls for analysis. Those who cannot accept the arbitrary theory of economic determinism outlined by Karl Marx, and elaborated into a scriptural law by the modern epigones, have adopted a philosophical and linguistic skepticism, which is extreme in its rejection of past critical systems. Caught in the swirl of conflicting doctrines, some American critics, influenced in this respect by the work of I. A. Richards (*Principles of Literary Criticism* and *Practical Criticism*) recommend that we cultivate the surviving virtue of skepticism, a creative skepticism which would look upon the dilemmas and difficulties of this epoch as but another phase of man's arduous and unsuccessful quest for truth. Skepticism is creative when it permits the utterance of some beliefs which are supported by experience, beliefs which are not contrary to the canons of reasoned truth. Certainly absolute skepticism is untenable logically and undesirable from the human point of view, for to disbelieve all things with unrelenting consistency would make any form of utterance—speech itself—an impossibility. Falling back on the plan suggested in a recent book by Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*—the plan of perspective by incongruity—we are justified in stating some conclusions which reverse the pessimistic conclusions of the critics of the twenties. Within the limits of the skeptical view, we may affirm that:

1. Contemporary American literature is dynamic and intrinsically fruitful.
2. American criticism, whatever its rationale, and despite its serious blunders and follies, has contributed much of value to the culture of our time, and is itself an encouraging sign of creative resurgence.
3. Science is not the foe of the creative life or of art. Properly utilized and understood, it may enormously extend the range of the writer's vision and subject-matter, his technique and the scope of his appeal. Now that science has made such extraordinary progress, the aim of this generation is to humanize and "aestheticize" the material provided by the natural sciences.
4. Humanism, with its opposition between animal and man, between the realm of the natural and the supernatural, is not pertinent to our purposes and proposes no efficacious solution of our problem. An attempt at the secularization of the divine in terms of ethics and aesthetics, it is wholly at variance with the conclusions of modern science.

5. The machine is not the Juggernaut it has been portrayed as being; it is to be neither condemned nor romanticised. Our task is to use it, to convert it whenever possible into an instrument of social and aesthetic value to mankind.

The historian of the future will no doubt subject the cluttered heap of contemporary critical theories to rigorous analysis, and reject the bizarre, the fantastic, the subjective, the extreme. But for us at this juncture of events it behooves to formulate some positive body of values which will enable us to live harmoniously and proceed creatively, without falling into spurious modernity or the equally dangerous pit of pessimistic nihilism. The road to the future lies open; but whatever goal the American critics eventually reach, they have travelled a long distance since the twenties when Gertrude Stein declared, "We are all a lost generation."