

The Easter Egg

by Sebastian Moore

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I love man. He is wild and lost and searching, searching. O God how he searches. He searches for the woman that will understand him. He searches for the more-than-woman that will understand the very thing in man that woman never understands, his passion for the absolute. He desires to be woman as well as man in his search: desires a maturity in his metaphysical passion whereby it will be able to shed that adolescence that seems to be built right into it. The most precious thing in man, the spark, seems fated to intellectualize the world, so that out of the live fire of his mind he peoples the world with immutable essences, so that he loses himself, his fire, transmuting it into dead cool planets of conceptual thought. And the concepts once formed have a terrifyingly long life. They continue to encircle him and constitute his mental universe long after big changes in human living have rendered them useless. He has to project himself all around, because he *cannot* believe in himself, cannot come to himself. I love him as he circles round and round the agony and promise of himself that he cannot enter; as a woman loves the man whom love has made talkative, parading before her his achievements because he cannot expose *himself*. And she waits for the moment of tears, of dissolution, of the truth of man. I love this conscious treasure that dare not own the treasure of consciousness.

For how many centuries, under the awful shadow of the greek miracle, has man projected his mind and lost touch with himself in the process. The miracle of his mind was too much for him, he couldn't bear it, couldn't simply live it—did he, I wonder, even in those far-off days suspect the appalling solitude and exposedness to love that its acceptance would involve?

In youth, when we have not the strength to know ourselves, we project onto other people. The girl we love gets lost in our projection of the male psyche's dream girl. This is what man for centuries has done with his mind. With a literally pathetic pride he asserted that the world was intelligible, he equated being with intelligibility. And so, although in fact he was surrounded by the great sea of life whose only law is ceaseless becoming, he surrounded himself with immutable essences, the emblems of immature mind. He insisted that what he saw before him was only the changing vesture of a constant substance. And, as a complementary sign of this lostness, he saw himself as such a constant substance, an unchanging human nature beneath the accidents of changing and dissolving.

And even when his discovery of the world in its empirical reality took a huge leap forward; even when he found himself changing the face of the earth with his invention: nay, even when a corresponding advance in *psychological* insight led him to a far greater degree of self-understanding and the human sciences were born: even *then* he continued to think of his *religious* questing in terms of his old philosophic world. As changer of the face of the earth he was a modern, taking nature on its own terms. As seeker for truth in human relations he was a modern, coming to understand that people only exist by relating. But as enquirer into the ultimate meaning of it all he remained a greek, pursuing a divine essence that stood over-against a world itself conceived of as fixed and closed. And so a world which in fact was shouting God at him in the strangest and most intimate accents, this world he deadened and made into a dull, mute, and immutable witness to a God above it. And thus the God who is *supposed* and continually *said* to be and to give the meaning to it all, patently was *not* giving meaning, being dissociated from the whole process of the quest for meaning as that process was showing itself in the multiple essays of man towards a fuller life. How unutterably sad is the papal encyclical which passes in review, with considerable competence, the works and aspirations of modern man, and then places piously at the centre a God whose real habitation is a quite other shrine, a God who serenely rules over a world of essences, a world innocent of change, innocent of itself. We accord to our fellows an intelligent reverence; but we continue to genuflect in Church, treating God as a boring old emperor.

And now at last the crisis implied in this dualism has burst upon the christian world, and, once burst, there seems no end to its inroads. At first it seemed merely a question of shedding the jewelled episcopal cross. But now we are realizing at an accelerating rate how many, nay all, of our christian forms have in fact been taken to witness to God after the manner of platonic essences. New dispositions that seemed to be concerned merely with the better, more humanly bearable running of the Church, are seen to touch the very nerve of God's self-revealing. Auden has said 'we must love one another or die'. In the Church is heard—if we have the courage to listen—'we must love one another or be Godless'.

As we face this crisis, we notice for the first time a glaring anomaly in our allegedly christian fidelity. It has been cast in the mould of confessing a God beyond the changes of this world, a God whose worldly image was the unchanging. And yet the God we say we worship is stated, in every article of our creed, to be revealed *in* those changes. Suddenly we realize that the whole complex panoply of our religious philosophy has had no place as a philosophy for the central tenet of our faith, the self-disclosure of God in history. With amazement we run down the whole gamut of our theological training and realize that at every point the structure had to be

adjusted, and how clumsily, to accommodate the fact of revelation. The graciousness of God, whose medium, nay, whose very substance is history and the opening of the flesh, was frozen into an essence called grace. It was even asserted that the Christian fact told us nothing really new about the *nature* of God, only about his *doings*, and an endless problematic strove to find some way of distinguishing the privileged christian acts of God from his whole conduct of the world: strove in vain, for the whole concept of particular acts of God was alien to the heavily ruling concept of the nature of God. And this produced the paradox that the particular acts of God, unable to be integrated into a theology fundamentally greek, yet believed to be of crucial moment, came to be seen as particular in a wrong, provincial and thoroughly anthropomorphic sort of way. It fell to the preacher, deploying rhetoric, the harlot of the arts, to raise up the cross against the philosophic posture of man, regarded here as pride yet regarded elsewhere as basic to our theological instruction. We have still to see in any sort of manageable perspective the immemorial struggle between religious, self-fearing and world-immobilizing man and the Christ who in the quite other posture of the cross is man's very dearest self filled with all the fulness of God.

This new realization, that Christ and our inveterate philosophic absolutism are oil and water, has a converse: that a new concept of man about to be born will be an incomparably more fruitful servant of the God of history. We, whom christian faith commands to see our salvation in a contingent event, are learning at last a relation to the world's contingency that is a fine balance of mind and heart allowing entry to an unstemmable rush of insight. The heart and fulcrum of this new balance is the acceptance of consciousness as our constitutive reality. We have stumbled from the classical posture of a mind viewed as *capax entis*, through the clumsy adolescent amorous pass of 'I think, therefore I am', into the unbearable truth of ourselves: 'I am, that means I think'. We understand our conscious self-making life as an exercised existence, an existence whose very meaning is its exercise. We at last accept, as a shattering revelation of ourselves to ourselves, the convergence of consciousness on being. Our philosophic forebears saw the conscious life of man as an accident—albeit a privileged and inalienable one—of the inert substance man. They saw it that way because they stood outside it. Now that we stand *inside* it, and grasp the meaning of consciousness, we form the awe-inspiring proposition voiced by Lonergan: 'conscientia nihil addit supra ens'. Lonergan looks to me now to be the last magnificently competent *prise de conscience* of the ancient philosophic world preparatory to its infolding into the new.

And now that man becomes present to himself he realizes that this act, which is a self-differentiation from the world, is the very power in which he discerns the world in all its multiple richness, that power which has fascinated the philosopher from the beginning. He

now sees as amazingly jejune and awkward his former attempts to understand that power, the various posings of the age-old problem of knowledge, the search for the balance of mind and object which attained the at best uneasy peace of conciliation, never the true peace that, in the words of a recent encyclical, lies in development, the limitless acceptance of the burden of consciousness.

At last, it seems, man is beginning to live in a sane world of life and growth where everything is possible, where faith is the courageous acceptance of this fact, and where faith is fulfilled in the revelation of the crucified. At last man is finding the courage and the enablement to withdraw his intellectual self-projection into the unfolding richness of himself and to contemplate a truly intelligible world and to celebrate with amazed recognition a liturgy of flesh and blood, of bread and wine. He was loveable as he flung himself around, his eyes partly lit up with the fire within him, partly drugged by the intellectual world he forged in that fire. Indeed he was loveable knowing and not knowing, like the man who 'must needs express/his love's excess/in words of unmeant bitterness'. He was loveable in his centrifugal diffusion from his unbearable treasure. But now is past this romance of man. Now is the time of his nuptials, the love which after consummation grows into the dawn.

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