

A monthly review cannot, in the nature of things, be as 'hot' as a daily, a weekly or a fortnightly. And the delays of printing and the speed of events nowadays further compel it to be more reflective, more meditative in character. Nor is this necessarily a disadvantage. On the contrary, this very feature can come as a particularly felicitous grace to a journal edited by an Order whose motto is still *Contemplata aliis tradere*. Such reflection or meditation must, of course, be taken in the sense of 'contemplative engagement' or 'engaged contemplation' evoked over two years ago by Fr Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (*New Blackfriars*, July, 1967). But granted this, policy then becomes a matter of discerning what are the really urgent topics underlying the immediate press of events which call for such further reflective analysis and clarification. And this task is particularly important at this juncture of the Church's history, when the reconciling centre seems at last to have struck boldly and effectively, and, symbolically, at the very centre, in Rome, at the recent Synod. What Bernard Lonergan, S.J., has called 'a perhaps not numerous centre, big enough to be at home in both the old and the new' (cf. *New Blackfriars*, March, 1968, 'Insight into Lonergan') has become a political force, shaking the rigidities of the Right and seeking now to absorb the finest insights and impulses of the Left. We seem, therefore, to be at a moment of creative consolidation.

In this perspective, one topic we suggest as urgent in this sense is that of the Person. This may not be an immediately obvious choice, and it can be approached in two complementary ways.

A few months ago now, Fr Peter Hebblethwaite, S.J., sought to make a 'careful study' of the New Catholic Left (*The Tablet*, 9th August). It may not be so very odd that despite his claim to come to the subject with an attitude of 'critical sympathy' he should have failed to do justice to the master idea of this movement. What is more surprising is that the Editorial Board of *Slant*, in their eventual reply, should not have articulated this either: they supplied many pertinent details but seemed to take for granted, and so did not here formulate, their underlying premiss. And this is still simply the idea formulated by Raymond Williams in the concluding chapter of his book *Culture and Society*: 'The crucial distinction is between alternative ideas of the nature of social relationship. "Bourgeois" is a significant term because it marks that version of social relationship which we usually call individualism: that is to say, an idea of society

as a neutral area within which each individual is free to pursue his own development and his own advantage as a natural right . . . the individualist idea can be sharply contrasted with the idea that we properly associate with the working class: an idea which, whether it is called communism, socialism, or co-operation, regards society neither as neutral nor as protective, but as the positive means for all kinds of development, including individual development' (pp. 312-313).

Now it may be that we are involved in a series of problems which are perennial, and to which, for instance, Kierkegaard, gave a vivid expression: 'Every individual is essentially interested in the history of all other individuals, yea, just as essentially as his own. Perfection in oneself therefore means participation in the whole.' Nevertheless, so much that is vital, as well as so much that is apparently freakish, in our present world, does seem to make sense only in terms of a conflict between alternative versions of the relationship of society to the individual such as is articulated by the New Left. And it is because there does seem to be this deep sense that we need to explore, in practice and in thought, new forms and implications of this inter-relationship that we are devoting a number of articles to the topic of the Person. For it is some such notion—of a being who is at once the product and the re-maker of his social matrix—that seems to lie at the convergence of the individual and the social.

In this light, therefore, it is no accident that a basic movement of the Synod as an institution of the Church should be taking us in the same direction. For it has become common ground, firstly, that one major theological as well as practical task thrown up by the Council is the reconciliation of the notions of the primacy of Peter and the co-responsibility of the apostolic college of bishops; and, secondly, that thinking has moved rapidly along this path (cf. *The Tablet*, 23rd August; 13th, 20th September; 18th, 25th, 31st October; 1st November. It may, therefore, be suggested that the logic of this movement is towards some notion of what might be called, with almost Shakespearian overtones, 'representative pre-eminence'—a notion which in its combined suggestion of listening association and distinctively symbolic headship can be seen as another aspect of the notion of the Person in the sense adumbrated above.

It is in this spirit that we are devoting a number of articles to the disentangling and elucidation of various facets of the notion of what we call provisionally the Person. P.L.