

W. H. AUDEN

CATTIVO TEMPO

Sirocco brings the minor devils:
A slamming of doors
At four in the morning
Announces that they are back,
Grown insolent and fat
On cheesy literature
And corny dramas,
Nibbar, demon
Of ga-ga and betise,
Tubevillus, demon
Of gossip and spite.

Nibbar to the writing-room
Plausibly to whisper
The nearly fine,
The almost true;
Beware of him, poet,
Lest, reading over
Your shoulder, he find
What makes him glad,
The manner arch
The meaning blurred,
The poem bad.

Tubevillus to the dining-room
Intently to listen,
Waiting his cue;
Beware of him, friends,
Lest the talk at his prompting
Take the wrong turning,

HORIZON

The unbated tongue
In mischief blurt
The half home truth,
The fun turn ugly,
The jokes hurt.

Do not underrate them; merely
To tear up the poem,
To shut the mouth
Will defeat neither:
To have got you alone
Self-confined to your bedroom
Manufacturing there
From lewdness or self-care
Some whining unmanaged
Imp of your own,
That too is their triumph.

The proper riposte is to bore them;
To scurry the dull pen
Through dull correspondence,
To wag the sharp tongue
In pigeon Italian,
Asking the socialist
Barber to guess
Or the monarchist fishermen to tell
When the wind will change,
Outwitting hell
With human obviousness.

DAVID GASCOYNE

LEON CHESTOV

AFTER TEN YEARS' SILENCE

I

As far as it is possible to judge, there exists at present among the intelligent reading public in England only a dim and confused conception of the significance of Existential Philosophy and its situation in relation to the rest of contemporary thought. It is unlikely however that the confusion that reigns here in people's minds with regard to this philosophic movement is anything like the dense and inextricable confusion regarding it that must by this time have become general in France. Intellectual discursivity, having sensed the menace to itself that a proper understanding of the essential thought of the philosophers who may rightly be described as existential would represent, seems to have found the topic of *Existentialisme* more stimulating than any other to have cropped up in France for a long while and to have set about muddling the crucial issues involved with a dogmatizing polemical gusto such as is fortunately seldom equalled on this side of the Channel. Here, stifling our resentment at being as usual about a decade behind the intellectual development of the rest of Europe, we generally miss the real point, pass on garbled accounts of what it is all supposed to be about and are wearily deprecating in our comments on it.

When I refer here to Existential Philosophy, I should like it to be quite clear from the start that I do not mean this expression to be understood to designate the philosophy associated with the movement headed by the brilliant ex-professor, publicist and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre. If one would form a just estimate of the distance that separates Sartre's *Existentialisme* from the kind of thought that in what I am going to say I shall refer to as existential, one should try to imagine Pascal writing a poetic novel about the gulf that he felt to be yawning at his side all the time towards the end of his life. Existentialism is the post-experimental intellectual exploitation of the experience of existing. The kind of