

## Hospers— (Continued from page 3)

find some of his best: "In a Summer Garden," "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring," "Summer Night on a River," and "A Song before Sunrise." This record plus two others, Angel 36756 (containing his "Appalachia," based on American Negro themes) and Angel 36415 (all three records beautifully conducted by Barbirolli), will together give you the best of Delius' music.

The twentieth-century inheritor of the Beethoven-Brahms symphonic tradition is the English composer, Ralph Vaughn-Williams (1872-1958). His early symphonies are all programmatic, but extremely evocative: no. 1 ("The Sea"), no. 2 ("London"), and no. 3 ("Pastoral"). All of them are impressive works, particularly as conducted by Sir Adrian Boult on Angel, but especially the no. 2 (Angel 36838).

But it is in his later symphonies that his great sustained power as a symphonist is displayed. Combining the drive and energy of Beethoven with the romanticism and involution of Brahms, we have some of the most moving orchestral music of our day. My own favorite is the intense no. 5 (Boult on "Serenade to Music; Symphony No. 5 in D," with Vaughn-Williams' fine "Serenade to Music" on part of one side), although perhaps the single most powerful movement is the second movement of the no. 6 (Boult on Angel 36469, with the lovely romantic violin-and-orchestra tone-poem, "Lark Ascending," on part of the second side).

In concluding, let me mention three other works worth considering. Vaughn-Williams' fellow Englishman, William Walton (1902- ), has written one symphony with great drive and suspense (Previn on RCA LSC-2927) and the enjoyable "Facade Suite" (London 15191). Gustav Holst (1874-1934) wrote a famous orchestral piece, "The Planets" (Boult on Angel 36420). And, the far more prolific Englishman, Benjamin Britten (1913- ), has written some intermittently interesting orchestral works, particularly enjoyable being the "Spring Symphony" (London 25242). (Next month: Orchestral Music of the Twentieth Century.)

# EGALITARIANISM AS A REVOLT AGAINST NATURE AND OTHER ESSAYS

By Murray N. Rothbard

For well over a decade, libertarians all across the country have been looking through the archives like medieval monks searching out one or another of Murray Rothbard's numerous articles in this or that—often obscure—journal. To compile all of this amazingly prolific scholar's articles, essays and reviews would be a multi-volume task, for his range of interests and knowledge is truly astounding.

Dr. Rothbard is best known for his work in economics and history, and therefore strangely enough he is least appreciated in areas where he has done some of his most cogent and seminal work, i.e., in the area of social philosophy and social commentary. The publication of *For a New Liberty* has helped considerably in acquainting libertarians with the consistency and eloquence of his point of view. With the publication of *Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature*, however, readers will be able to go directly to the important foundations upon which the Rothbardian edifice has been built. There are very few ideas which are as important and more in need of circulation than the ideas of Professor Rothbard. This book—when combined with *For a New Liberty*—will take the reader far into the depths of the evolutionary process of the brilliant mind of this great libertarian. REVIEWED BY WALTER E. GRINDER / *Political Philosophy* (151 pages) / LR Price \$2.50

## HOFFER'S AMERICA

By James D. Koerner

# THE TRUE BELIEVER & THE TEMPER OF OUR TIME

Both By Eric Hoffer

When his first book, *The True Believer*, was published in 1951, Eric Hoffer was unknown. Readers recognized, however, that a powerful and original talent had made its appearance and were astonished to learn that Hoffer was a common laborer who had been virtually blind in childhood, who had recovered his eyesight, and who had educated himself entirely by his own efforts.

*The True Believer* remains his most important book. In it he examined the appeal of mass movements and attempted to understand—and explain—how such totalitarian forces as nazism, fascism, and communism are able to enlist so many in their crusades.

Part of Hoffer's conclusion is that when individualism dies, tyranny becomes possible and, often, probable. He wrote that, "Faith in a holy cause is to a considerable extent a substitute for lost faith in ourselves. . . . A man is likely to mind his own business when it is worth minding. When it is not, he takes his mind off his own meaningless affairs by minding other people's business. . . . In running away from ourselves we either fall on our neighbor's shoulder or fly at his throat."

Totalitarian movements offer man an escape from the difficulties of freedom and the task of confronting his own individuality. The man who is unhappy with himself, Hoffer writes, is the prime target of the organizers of mass movements:

Unless a man has the talents to make something of himself, freedom is an irksome burden. Of what avail is freedom to choose if the self be ineffectual? We join a mass movement to escape individual responsibility, or in the words of the ardent young Nazi, "to be free from freedom." It was not sheer hypocrisy when the rank and file Nazis declared themselves not guilty of all the enormities they had committed. They considered themselves cheated and maligned when made to shoulder responsibilities for obeying orders. Had they not joined the Nazi movement in order to be free from responsibility?

Modern American society faces a strenuous movement in behalf of the philosophy which holds that "society"—not the individual—is responsible for all actions and that the goal of the body politic is the achievement of "equality"—not the traditional idea of equal opportunity, but the opposed notion of equality of condition. The appeal of such a philosophy, Hoffer tells us, is the same appeal held by nazism, fascism, and communism. He writes, "The passion for equality is partly a passion for anonymity, to be one thread of the many which make up a tunic, one thread not distinguishable from the others. . . . They want to eliminate free competition and the

ruthless testing to which the individual is continually subjected in a free society."

By rejecting his individuality, man, Hoffer states,

not only renounces personal advantage but is also rid of personal responsibility. There is no telling to what extremes of cruelty and ruthlessness a man will go when he is freed from the fears, hesitations, doubts and the vague stirrings of decency which go with individual judgment. When we lose our individual independence in the corporateness of a mass movement, we find a new freedom—freedom to hate, bully, lie, torture, murder and betray without shame or remorse. . . . The hatred and cruelty which have their source in selfishness are ineffectual things compared with the venom and ruthlessness born of selflessness.

To produce willing submission to tyranny, to enlist men and women who will man the gas chambers of Auschwitz or the slave labor camps of the Gulag Archipelago, totalitarian leaders must first destroy all aspects of individuality. As Hoffer points out:

In order to be assimilated into a collective medium a person has to be stripped of his individual distinctness. He has to be deprived of free choice and independent judgment. . . . By elevating dogma above reason, the individual's intelligence is prevented from becoming self-reliant. Economic dependence is maintained by centralizing economic power and by a deliberately created scarcity of the necessities of life.

Now, 23 years after publication of *The True Believer*, after six additional books, Hoffer is recognized as a brilliant aphorist and a provocative commentator on men and events. Despite this, Hoffer the man has remained rather obscure. In *Hoffer's America*, James Koerner attempts to satisfy the curiosity of Hoffer's readers and stimulate the interest of those who have not yet encountered him. In both of these attempts he is notably successful.

The book grew out of many talks and walks taken by the author with his subject, and many issues are touched upon in its pages. As Hoffer sees the American past, it was personal liberty—and the heavy burden of work that goes with it—that gave the ordinary American the scope he needed to excel. For Hoffer, this freedom to be left alone, to be free of coercion by state or society, has always been crucial. When he traveled from New York to California as a young man and saw the country for the first time, he "looked around," as he puts it, "and I liked what I saw. This was a country in which you could be left alone. . . . This country was

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## Hoffer— (Continued from page 4)

made largely by people who wanted to be left alone. Those who couldn't thrive when left to themselves never felt at ease in America."

Koerner notes that, "Hoffer's ire is easily raised, but nothing raises it quicker than the platitudes of liberal academics, intellectuals and politicians about the relationship of poverty and crime. The fact that their theories seem to be accepted unthinkingly by the majority makes him madder still."

"Poverty causes crime," Hoffer shouts. "That is what they are always shoving down our throats, the misbegotten bastards. Poverty does not cause crime. If it did we would have been buried in crime for most of our history and so would every other nation on earth." He observes that he has lived most of his life with poor people who did not commit crimes. "Criminals cause crime," he declares, "And the minute we let them get away with it, we are going to have lots more."

The arrogance of American "intellectuals" is also a subject which brings forth a vigorous response. To Hoffer, the touchstone of the intellectual is not a passion for truth but a passion for power, especially power over people. The *sine qua non* of the Hoffer intellectual is his conviction that he belongs to an educated minority whose duty it is to instruct the rest of mankind and, if necessary, compel them to be better than they are. According to Hoffer, one need not be particularly intelligent to be an "intellectual," and he notes that, "In their hearts American intellectuals have always hated the ordinary man whom they have sought to dominate. They have never been able to accept the fact that the riffraff of Europe were able to tame the American continent and build the world's greatest

and best nation largely without the guidance of intellectuals."

In *The Temper Of Our Time*, Hoffer discusses the role and outlook of the intellectual at some length. He writes that, "A ruling intelligentsia, whether in Europe, Asia or Africa, treats the masses as raw materials to be experimented on, processed, and wasted at will. Charles Peguy saw it long ago, before the First World War. The intellectuals, he said, dealt with people the way manufacturers deal with wares, they were capitalists of people." Hoffer goes on to declare that,

A saviour who wants to turn men into angels will be as much a hater of human nature as a man who wants to turn them into slaves and animals. Man must be dehumanized, must be turned into an object, before he can be processed into something wholly different from what he is. It is a paradox that the idealistic reformer has a mechanical, lifeless conception of man's being. He sees man as something that can be taken apart and put together, and the renovation of the individual and of society as a process of manufacturing.

Those who would destroy man's individual uniqueness, who would place him in a straight-jacket of "equality" and "uniformity," who would take from him the responsibility for his own life and actions, are setting the stage for even greater tyranny than we have seen thus far in the twentieth century. Eric Hoffer understands this all too well, and he is justifiably concerned about contemporary trends. He is truly a philosopher of individualism and freedom, and those who would preserve a society in which such values flourish would do well to consider his ideas. REVIEWED BY ALLAN C. BROWNFIELD / *Political Philosophy-Psychology / True Believer* (160 pages) / **LR Price \$ .75** / *Hoffer's America* (137 pages) / **LR Price \$5.95** / *Temper of Our Time* (138 pages) / **LR Price \$ .75**

## SERPENT IN EDEN

By Fred C. Hobson, Jr.

If you ever go back to the book reviews printed during the Great Depression, take a look at the reception Scott Fitzgerald got. Your jaw will drop. Today anything he wrote—any word he typed or scribbled—is considered publishable and praiseworthy. But most of the critics of the Depression era treated him and his works with irritation or contempt. Some, especially the Marxist ones, scoffed that he had the scale of values of a high school senior. There are, in other words, fashions in literature as well as in bluejeans. Today Mencken is unfashionable, particularly among the Manhattan mandarins. Any book sympathetic to him rates stiff scoldings. He was a prejudiced man, as he freely admitted, and the trouble is that his prejudices are not always those we like. Yet it's possible that his reputation will rise again, along with a more just estimate of his strengths and weaknesses.

We find an abundance of material for such an estimate in *Serpent in Eden*. It describes how he both derided and supported the South, how the different parts of the South reacted to him, and how he helped and hindered the southern literary renaissance.

It all started with a single outrageous essay. Timing had a lot to do with it. "The Sahara of the Bozart" hit the bookstands at exactly the right season. It appeared in a collection of Mencken's essays entitled *Prejudices: Second Series*, which was issued in October 1920. A shorter and earlier form, to me equally brilliant, had appeared as a column in the *New York Evening Mail* one night in November 1917. Nobody noticed it; it came too soon. But with the world war done and its backlash of cynicism manifest throughout the country, the essay made a steadily widening impression.

In Virginia, in the Carolinas, in Louisiana, even in Mississippi, it was noticed by the brightest of the young newspapermen and writers. Among the first of them was Gerald Johnson of the Greensboro, N.C., *Daily News*. No mere overnight sensation, "The Sahara" continued to be noticed and 10 years after publication was still affecting some remarkable Southerners, among them W. J. Cash of the Charlotte, N.C., *News*, who went on with Mencken's encouragement to write his classic *The Mind of the South*. More little magazines began to be founded below the Potomac and more than one of those already in existence but half asleep revived as the result of Mencken's barbs.

The best magazine to emerge was the *Reviewer*, published in Richmond by Emily Clark, who shrewdly used her little-girlishness to sustain a first-rate publication. She got Mencken to advise her and even to contribute.

The universities showed both the short-run and the long-run effects of the essay. Faculty members, puffing on their pipes, discussed it at their lunch tables and in their lounges. Its deepest effect came, understandably, at the university readiest to receive it: the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill. Its faculty already ranked as the most energetic and eminent in the South. Its leader in rallying social forces was Howard Odum, but it showed distinction as well in the humanities and especially in literary studies.

Throughout the 1920s Mencken kept up his brisk attack. He did it how

ever, with liking if not love. Strange though it sounds, he felt drawn to the South, felt comfortable in it in many ways, and wanted it to improve. He himself would have jeered at the notion that he hoped to reform an erring quadrant of a country. Yet any examination of the bulk of his comments during the decade shows his good will. He hailed the accomplishments of James Branch Cabell, enjoying his elegant wit and romantic cynicism. He defended him from the censors, local and federal, official and unofficial, who sniffed the obscenities in his pages on Poictesme. He looked around eagerly for Southern talent. He opened the *American Mercury* in particular not only to incisive journalists like Johnson or Cash, but to the authors of short stories, essays, and poems. He published four of William Faulkner's short stories in the *Mercury* in the early 1930s. And when he finally married, he married a Southern writer, Sara Haardt of Montgomery, Alabama.

In the first half of his book Hobson brings together the evidences of Mencken's effect, levying on letters, newspaper reports, periodicals, and many other prime sources. In the second half he moves on to the story of Mencken's waning influence and a description of the elements in Southern culture that Mencken failed to appreciate.

This part of the book centers on the "fugitives," led for polemical purposes by Allen Tate and Donald Davidson. They came from Vanderbilt University and proved to be the most gifted group of writers to develop in the South during our century. From the outset, in the early 1920s, they were devoted to poetry, and to intricate poetry. By the end of the 1920s they had become devoted to land as well as literature and had announced themselves as defenders of the Old South. They soon regarded Mencken as blind and bigoted: blind to the values of poetry which they saw so clearly, bigoted about an agrarian South, formed before the Civil War, which to them lay much closer to Utopia than did the noisy, egalitarian North. Allen Tate submitted poems to the *Mercury* and Mencken promptly sent them back; these facts summed up the situation.

During the 1930s most of the fugitives moved to posts in Northern universities and carried their contempt for Mencken with them. They charged him, correctly, with the failure to respond to modern and modernistic poetry. They charged him with neglecting the novels of the two Southern giants of the time, Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe. And they found his basic stance as a critic distasteful. The scrutiny of the text, the subtle sympathy for atmospheres, the appreciation of the source, these were the hallmarks of the "new criticism" the fugitives founded. They were never characteristics of Mencken's mode. He relished wit, clarity, precision, and gusto.

At the end Hobson quotes Mencken for the defense: "Before the creative artist of genuine merit can function freely, the way must be cleared for him, and that clearly is best effected by realistic and unsentimental criticism." As Hobson sees it, that was Mencken's contribution, and he declines to scold Mencken because he refused to do everything else. This is a solidly researched book, well thought through. It should help in the reevaluation of Mencken and his role in our culture. ©1974 The Evening Star Newspaper Co. REVIEWED BY CARL BODE / 242 pages / **LR Price \$8.95**