

perience on the later writings of Pound, of Eliot, and of Lewis was profound.

There are a few redundancies and apparent contradictions in *Vortex*, but they can be attributed to the complexities and paradoxes of the materials with which Materer, in his study of "artistic cross currents," had to deal. The literary and visual arts histories, the references to and discussions of works of influential twentieth-century creators, and the illustrations of Vorticist sculptures, paintings, and drawings—these elements should make the book a desideratum for clerics studying Pound, Eliot, and/or Lewis.

Reviewed by CHARLES C. CLARK

Keeping Heart in the Caves

The Failure of Criticism, by Eugene Goodheart, *Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978. 203 pp. \$13.50.*

EUGENE GOODHEART'S reading of modern literature and of the criticism which should "sustain, reflect, and understand" that literature is analogous to Mrs. Moore's entering the Marabar Caves, in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*: they are both overwhelmed by the echo they hear, an insidious repetitive assertion that life is without value. "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth," declares the echo to Mrs. Moore. "Everything exists, nothing has value." Professor Goodheart hears the same assertion throughout modern criticism, in the work of the deconstructionists Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, for example. "Deconstruction," writes Goodheart, "ambiguously preserves everything and makes everything the object of suspicion. Nothing disappears, but nothing is stable."

Here the analogy must end, however. Mrs. Moore is defeated by her vision in the cave. On her passage back to England she gives in to her despair and dies. Her defeat is not clearly Forster's defeat, although Lionel Trilling's censure of Forster's refusal to be great seems to intimate as much. Forster does not *refuse* to be great as much as he admits his inability to be so; that is, he admits the limitations of his perspective to transcend the negative implications of a decentered universe in which everything exists and nothing has value. Goodheart is as much aware as Forster is, and as Mrs. Moore is, of the negative implications of a decentered universe. But he is also aware of the limitations of a criticism bent upon demystifying and deconstructing that universe, and in the caves of modern criticism and modern literature (also, of course, a criticism of life), he refuses to take heed of the echo. Rather, he defies it. The critical function, Goodheart argues, is not to devalue experience, not to demystify reality, not to deconstruct the past and the values that shaped the past. The critical function is to affirm a qualitative life and to define—if necessary, to defend—the values which are essential for the maintenance of a qualitative existence.

Goodheart is not naive. He is fully aware that the "problem of ultimate justification is...extremely difficult, if not insoluble." Nevertheless, he will not consign the task of wrestling with the problem to those more confident that a solution is attainable. His task, as he understands it, is not to ascertain whether or not the One exists at a Center; the problem is how the One, how value that is, should determine the individual life. For Goodheart, there are "precincts of our being from which our capacity for conduct, for affirmation, and for negation issue. These are the precincts of darkness and silence in which the absolute presuppositions of our being are to be found." Being absolute, they are not subject to criticism. Yet modern criticism, informed as it is by the spirit of science (Northrop Frye is here identified as the major influence), intimidated by a progressivist view of the authority of history

over that of the humanist ideal (*i.e.*, "we are asked to accept the decline of the humanist ideal because it has occurred"), and demoralized by a reason which has turned upon itself, such criticism has lost sight of its limitations and has surrendered its authority as a moral force in our culture. The failure of criticism, then, is that it has given in to the modern dogma of the decentered universe, a flat universe in which no final qualitative distinction can be made between any two people or attitudes or experiences. One can write *Crime and Punishment* or write a shopping list: it amounts to the same thing. No, Goodheart insists. In following the lead of modern aesthetic tendencies to devalue experience by decentering, demystifying, or deconstructing the traditional concept of reality, modern criticism fails at its primary task to define a qualitative existence by judging literature, experience, life against a moral order inherited from the past.

The figures Goodheart selects to study come primarily from the recent English and French literary traditions (Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Eliot, F. R. Leavis, Stendhal, Flaubert, and Joyce), but he makes excursions into other disciplines (the social philosophy of Philip Rieff; the art criticism of Clement Greenberg and E. H. Gombrich) to demonstrate how pervasive the failure of modern criticism is. In structuring his argument, he depends largely upon the technique of contrast, the major mode of traditional humanist criticism as he understands it. He contrasts humanist criticism, which he defines as a criticism inspired by "a positive order of values," "a moral understanding of the religious tradition," and "a profound appreciation of the works of art and intellect of past and present," with the current criticism inspired by the scientific zeal to know everything and to withhold moral judgment as it aspires to bring everything into the light. He acknowledges the honesty and lucidity of the objective, scientific critical spirit, but, again, he insists that there is an "invisible spiritual reality" impervious to the light of reason. Thus he finds that the vir-

tues of honesty and lucidity act as corrosives, "subverting all tacit, unexamined acceptances and beliefs" which are necessary to "the kind of commitment that sustains life."

Another structural contrast of his argument is the contrast between the kinetic Protestant criticism of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold and the static Catholic criticism of Eliot, Flaubert, and Joyce. The criticism of the English Protestants is founded upon the conviction that it is within the power of man to reform himself and his society. The Catholic sensibility has no such confidence in the moral capacity of man:

Arnold's appeal to the best self springs from a confidence in the poetic authority of religious experience and the religious authority of poetic experience. The feeling that the conversion of the inner man can possibly change the world and that literature can be an agency for such conversion is a phenomenon of modern English literature from Carlyle to Lawrence and it is a phenomenon peculiar to the Protestant temperament. In contrast, the sentiment about the social powerlessness of art is a fact in the cultural life of Catholic countries. One must turn to an Irish writer like Joyce, whose alienation from the English "community" urged him to French and European affinities, in order to find the condition of aesthetic alienation in English letters....

Expressed as a virtue, the aesthetics of a Flaubert or a Baudelaire or a Joyce is a declaration of the purity of art, its freedom from contaminating moral and social concerns. As a vice, it is an expression of essential Catholic hopelessness about improving the world.

Here is perhaps the major tenet in Goodheart's faith. The critic who despairs of man's capacity to improve himself will relegate himself to a passive role in his culture; the critic who believes in man's capacity for moral reformation can actively work to improve his culture.

A third contrast developed by Good-

heart is one within the Catholic tradition itself, between the life-affirming aristocratic sensibility of Stendhal and the life-denying aesthetic sensibilities of Flaubert and Joyce. As an artist, Stendhal strove to disengage certain values (brio, grace, intelligence, imagination) from the past, values which he understood provided depth and order and significance to character, and to introduce these values into the new context of the present. Goodheart admires the effort (it is in part what he seeks to do himself), but admits that Stendhal is an artist *sui generis*. The aesthetic strain in Flaubert and Joyce, far from developing along the line pursued by Stendhal, is distorted by these two artists into a defense against life itself. For Flaubert, bourgeois reality is synonymous with life itself: thus, "Art must insulate itself from the impure energies of life." Joyce's aestheticism is more pretentious, and more arrogant. Joyce seeks an "alternative theology offering a new integration of the spiritual and material aspects of life." But, Goodheart concludes, an art that has assumed the complete burden of the spiritual life is doomed to failure: "To presume to possess a power greater than one is capable of is to embrace emptiness."

Goodheart's argument is confident, cogent, clear. He develops every contrast with scrupulous honesty. His own commitment to the moral authority of criticism prevents him from attacking the enemy at any but their strongest points. Not to do so is to invite defeat. Thus, F. R. Leavis, in whom the reforming spirit of the great nineteenth-century English critics persisted, was defeated. Professor Goodheart knows that "there is sufficient intelligent force in the modernist challenge to compel us to take it seriously," and that "The impulse toward the moralistic censure of modernism in a critic like F. R. Leavis represents...a self-defeating unresponsiveness to and consequent incomprehension of modern reality."

It is this willingness to look squarely at the modernist challenge to the humanist ideal that makes Professor Goodheart's argument in *The Failure of Criticism* so

cogent. He sees clearly the ruin about him, but, unlike T. S. Eliot, he is not content merely to sit among the ruins in despair, describing in minute detail each fragment he has shored against the ruins of the collapsed moral order. He is himself in the critical tradition he defines as extending from Carlyle to Lawrence. He believes man has the moral capacity for inner conversion, and he believes such a conversion can affect the direction of history. This being so, it seems to me that the title of his book is a misnomer. It is not criticism as a mode of evaluating human experience that has failed in the modern world. It is the critic himself who, by submitting to the modern dogma of a de-centered universe and by renouncing his authority as a judge of human experience, fails the civilization it is his responsibility to serve.

Reviewed by HANS FELDMANN

The Realm of Values

Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge,

by Max Scheler; translated by Manfred S. Frings; edited and introduced by Kenneth W. Stikkers, *London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. vii + 239 pp. £9.50.*

MAX SCHELER DIED of a heart attack in 1928. He was fifty-four years of age. He left behind him a vast legacy of books, articles, and manuscripts which are being published in the original German as the *Collected Works* under the editorship of Manfred S. Frings, the translator of the present volume. While few would dispute his genius and his historical importance as one of the founders of the phenomenological movement in philosophy, Scheler has