

D0127

Feb. 20: Munford, Ch. 1

1. Creation and the human mind
 2. 4 factors contributing to the development of culture (humanity)
 - a. ~~the~~ language
 - b. propensity to imitation
 - c. sense of awe (antedating religion)
 - d. dreaming
 3. Present-day significance of such an understanding of human origins.
-

The Last Western

The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time; so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide.

T.S. Eliot, "Thoughts after Lambeth,"

Selected Essays

Books One and Two:

1. The Apocalypse of Modern Culture
 - a. From the desert winds to Nagasaki Zero
 1. The irrelevance of religion to modern culture
 2. The Crucified as the challenge of the millions murdered in our "enlightened" age
 3. Racial and class prejudice: persons cannot be persons but must conform to roles
 4. The perversion of intelligence: "There was, Americans were finding no light at the end of the tunnel, only greater darkness." The concluding words of D. Halberstam's The Best and the Brightest.
 - b. Cool Dawn's Story
 1. The union of opposites: strength and love
 2. Salvation is in self-sacrificing love
2. The Vanity and Falseness of Advertising
 - a. The Devil is the best salesman.
 1. All this I will give you, if . . .
 2. Persons into objects
 - b. Sports as distraction
 1. The contagion of the crowd
 2. Was Jesus a Supercar?
 3. Life outside the arena

N.B. For the reading of the Last Western, students should keep a journal of comments on what has struck them as significant. The journal should go on the questions that come to mind in reading the book, the insights, the feelings and impressions. Each Wednesday the journal should be handed in. It will be returned by the following Monday, when it will be used as the basis for the class. The readings are to be divided as follows:

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The same process will be followed for the next book, The . . . will be read during the first 3 weeks of October.

Theo 143, Feb. 20, (intro -- skip, but keep notes)

1. Whitehead is tracing a history
(Rev.) of the emergence of religion
in human consciousness.

He has already indicated that its growth
as a specific "idea"
(differentiation of cs)
was very gradual,

that it only emerges with definite specificity
with the rise of beliefs and systems (rational religion),
and that this specificity
is connected with the note of solitariness
assuming central religious importance.

Three things seem to be connected in its analysis:
solitariness, rational religion, and civilization.

All three are missing in early consciousness,
which, like animal consciousness,
is barely able to exercise actions
beyond what is needed for biological survival.

This surplus of energy, however,
is the condition of early ritual,
which is the repetition of actions
for the sake of the emotions they generate.

This ritual is the foundation of play and art,
and these are barely, if at all,
distinguished from religion
at this earliest stage.

Emotion is not yet sufficiently differentiated
to permit of a clear distinction among play, art, &
religion.

Theo 42, Secs. 1,2

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Theo 143, Feb. 20, 2

All that is distinguishable
is that the complex of emotions generated for their own sake
by actions performed in freedom from biological need
are different from purely biological emotions. (p. 21, sensi-
tized in different ways)
This early ritual and emotion
is collective and social, not individual.

It represents "the first faint glimmerings
of the life of the spirit raised beyond
concentration upon the task of supplying
animal necessities" (23).

Today, as W. says on p. 23,
we tend to regard such collective emotion,
whether religious or otherwise,
as decadent.

We are afraid of merely collective emotion,
afraid of losing ourselves in its passion.
We also are critical of religion that is mere sociability.

But that is because

we are separated from this earliest human es,
systemic es.

by an earthshaking readjustment of psychic economy,
the separation of the individual ego
from the collective basis of human
consciousness.

Take questions on Sec. 3

(4 only on Sec. 3!)

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Feb. 20, 1953, 1

1. The 1st ch. of Mumford
deals, as does W. in "ritual & emotion,"
w. the emergence of human es
from animal es,
and w. its cultural & religious significance.

Again the standpt., as w. H., is a progressive liberation
of energy fr. biological necessity
& of es from the here & now.

He finds something similar to what we indicated
early in the course:

there is a process of creation
slowly gathering purpose & direction,
slowly becoming mind,
and finally achieving self-es
in the human animal,
i.e., enough space created by excess energy
for self-reflection
& freedom.

Only mind aware of itself
can affect the course of evolution
in a way other than by biological change,
can dare itself to be a creator,
bec. of its capacity for more learning,
greater memory retentions,
and more extensive anticipation
of future possibilities.

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The same process will be followed for the first book of Return to the West which will be read during the first 3 weeks of November.

Feb. 20, 1943, 2

Man's oversized brain, an "economy of abundance,"

the condition of this surplus of energy,
permits him a more elaborate undercurrent
of images & symbols to work with,
and a greater freedom for exploration, curiosity,
and creativity.

1. Play, for M. as for W.,
is the earliest realm of human freedom,
and art & culture are the outcome of play, of leisure.

2. Several factors contributed to the development of culture: all
a. Language. ^{4 fcs.} Language enables our world
to stretch beyond immediacy
to distant times & places,
to past & future.

connected w.
freedom fr.
immediacy

It is because of language
that our world is mediated by meaning.
(Lorenz)

2) Furthermore,

language is more precise an expression
of emotion & need
than animal sounds,

and so can be pin down
& multiply

associations,

allowing human expression of feeling &
meaning to be precise, nuanced,
refined, creative.

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143, Feb. 20, 3

3) Moreover, the symbols of language
are more definite than the symbols of the dreams,
and can help us from being inundated
by the latter,
can help us to control the impact of the psyche's
symbols, through naming.

Lq, then, helps us to gain
- a detachment from the unconscious;
helps us to become more conscious.

It stands at the beginning of rationality,
thinking, & practicality,

& serves as an instrument of control & command
over nature,
even as an instrument of creation.

4) For we find in our experience
that words effect change,
and so Lq gives us
a sense of our own creativity.

6. The human impulse to imitate others, share emotions
with them, emulate ideals, and repeat valued
emotions in fantasy and make-believe.

Our propensity to imitate & emulate
is not mere mechanical drill
but is rooted in emotions of admiration & love,
& in a tendency to draw closer to what we love
by identifying with it.

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143, Feb. 20, 4

We can also imitate, not an actual person whom we admire,
but an ideal father
for our actions,
a father wh. gives ^{us} our most biological actions
special meanings & values
detached from their immediate function.

(p. 18: 11 - "Thus the snatching of food, etc.")

It is this propensity
that makes out of our life a drama,
a story,
w. plot & dialogue,
w. a certain sequence of actions,
appropriate costumes,
and a special stage.

Culture is this drama,
this way of making life a work of art,
this masquerading of animality
in a plot or story,
in wh. we try ever new parts,
& master ever new situations.

This means that our being itself is a becoming,
that we only become ourselves
by continual transformation
of the 'given' self we were born with.

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143, Feb. 20, 5

We become human by dramatising
every natural act we perform.

And by this dramatising & formalizing,
we also transform our environment
into a human one.

We take on a second self, the cultural self,
one we ourselves have created,
one quite different from the animal self,
one that man became proud of in its distinctness.

c. Our sense of awe & veneration,
mingled w. anxiety,
in the presence of forces that beyond the range
of our intelligence.

Man intuits that there is more to nature
or reality

than meets the eye,
and his intuition of the unknown
& unknowable
has provided a greater stimulus
to his creative imagination
than has the known.

Contributing to this intuition
is our peculiar foreknowledge of death,
wh. tears our imagination
of what is beyond
that wh. we can know.

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