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## **The Outsider** **by Colin Wilson**

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This is not to say, however, that India is altogether free from too much state control. One cannot put down the present work without the thought that, whatever may be said about Indian "socialism" so far, there is need for caution. Certainly the Fourth Amendment to the Indian Constitution is not too reassuring on this point. A former justice of the Indian Supreme Court has declared that this amendment destroyed "the guaranteed protection of private property" in India. Even "Gandhian Socialism" in its Bhoodan Yagna approach is not free from uncertainties on the question of private property.

But when these cautions have been uttered one can breathe freely with regard to Indian "socialism" at least as it has developed thus far. What the new Five-Year Plan will bring remains to be seen.

The University of California is to be complimented on its Indian Press Digests. India has always been a mystery even to the other peoples of Asia. In giving us these monographs the University is performing a public service to scholars everywhere. The monograph under consideration contains an appendix of eight texts taken from various statements of government officials, political leaders and others which have to do with the main subject, as also a bibliography of works cited and graphs showing stock-market behavior in India during the period 1954-1955.

ARTHUR A. WEISS

## THE OUTSIDER

THE OUTSIDER. By Colin Wilson. London. Victor Gollancz Ltd. 1956. Pp. 288.

ARTISTIC genius, critics say, consists in depth of vision. Whether he be a Greek tragedian, a Roman poet, a Renaissance humanist, a Victorian gentleman, or a twentieth century gray-flannel-suit-man or worker, the artist expresses in his work his vision not of that veneer of his particular time which lesser minds see, but rather of the universal and the eternal in man. Colin Wilson's

*The Outsider*, a London best-seller during the first half of the year 1956, touches on the disastrous effects of an empty twentieth century world of secularism upon its artists gifted with such a penetrating vision.

Himself endowed with a literateur's keen understanding of the painful searching peculiar to present-day artists, author Wilson inquires into the "nature of the sickness of mankind" in our time. He points out that because of such an insight artists today find themselves strangers—"Outsiders"—to this modern world of no permanent values. A T. E. Lawrence and a Van Gogh can perceive secular man's hollowness through his *faces prepared to meet the faces that he meets*... Our artists, then, in their own little bohemian worlds, bereft of the True Light, grope in vain for the real world of absolute values.

Mr. Wilson opens with a scene from Barbusse's novel *L'Enfer*, which scene accurately pin-points the fundamental "outsider" problem. The hero is muttering to himself as he walks down a Paris street: "I see too deep and too much!" Barbusse's hero has become aware of the world as a "country of the blind." To illustrate his thesis more graphically, Wilson draws from some mid-twentieth century literature—H. G. Wells' *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, Camus' *L'Etranger*, Granville-Barker's play *The Secret Life* and Hemingway's early novels—all of whose characters are jolted into a realization that modern man is a hollow man. The Outsider feels profoundly dissatisfied, and in the words of George Bernard Shaw the artist "does not feel at home in the world" (*John Bull's Other Island*, Act IV). From such a basic difficulty springs the most important of human problems—the *how* of man's self-realization.

The Romantic Outsider's answer, Mr. Wilson writes, prescribes a search for his lost world in the realms of fantasies and dreams or in drugs and death as the nineteenth century poets Shelley and Coleridge have shown. In his ivory tower, his Island of Shalott, the romantic Outsider finds self-realization. Herman Hesse's novels provide author Wilson with his main example of "outsider" Romanticism. Hesse, Mr. Wilson writes, has a deep sense of the injustice of human beings having to live on such a lukewarm level of everyday triviality; he feels that there *should* be a way of living with the intensity of the artist's creative ecstasy, a "timeless moment" all the time. But Mr. Wilson dismisses

the Romantic Outsider as having been inconsequential towards a positive approach to the solution of the problem. Like Henry James, Hesse and the Romantic Outsider have proved only the fact that the answer lies not in some Platonic ideal kingdom but in the real world to which the artist with his vision is an outsider.

Author Wilson turns next from literary fiction to the drama of modern life. He studies the lives of Van Gogh, T. E. Lawrence and Nijinsky, three "typical" Outsiders, each with a distinct approach towards the solution of the problem. The author traces the development of each artist's discipline that may lead to that world where he can feel at home and be an outsider no longer, thus realizing himself. Lawrence gropes with the discipline of the intellect, Van Gogh with that of feelings and Nijinsky with the discipline of the body. All three fail miserably. Lawrence commits mental suicide. Van Gogh and Nijinsky go mad. Author Wilson notes that the supreme desire of the Outsider is to cease to be an Outsider. But this he cannot accomplish by a resignation to the world-without-values about him. His problem is to find an *inside* where his human nature, endowed with that keen vision, can fit with ease. The author concludes that if Lawrence, Van Gogh and Nijinsky had known themselves as well as we can know them, their lives need not have been tragic. The Outsider's first business is self knowledge if he is to discover a world where he can find self-realization.

But the Outsider is not a freak, though to the ordinary citizen he may bear all the appearance of eccentricity. He is simply more fully aware of the inadequacy of the secular world and feels the need of an eternal delight in which his soul may discover rest. It is the Augustinian *inquietum cor* beating within his breast. Psychiatry is not the answer. Mr. Wilson asserts that the solution lies in religion, which to him seems to be a purposive life to be realized not so much in a "rebinding" (as the etymology of the word suggests) as in an "unbinding" of man's will—the realization of an absolute will. Wilson's concept of religion is defective. If there is a god to be worshipped, it seems (in his concept) to be not an objective infinite God but the projection of the ideal man possessing an absolute will untrammelled by reason and morality.

Thus, the common "healthy-minded" man is not free and he does not know it. The Outsider, however, appreciates his situation and he desires a lasting experience of freedom. Wilson brings up the example of Nietzsche who, he says, has felt some momentary lapses ("vastations" in Wilson's terminology) into happiness and freedom, as noted in a letter to his friend Van Gersdorff in 1865 and in the first few pages of his book *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche contributes to the solution by shocking the world into an awareness of its imprisoned state and by suggesting that the answer can be found only in a true appreciation of man's end—that state of absolute Will. Wilson then studies in great detail the Russians, Dostoevsky and Tolstoi, in their search for the purpose in human nature.

But the question now arises: How attain that end? Orthodox religion, Mr. Wilson claims, is inadequate with regard to both the search for the purpose of man and for the *how* in the attainment of that end. It simply makes man smug in his condition of unrecognized bondage. The Outsider therefore must either, like George Fox, denounce the world as corrupt and deluded, or look for an intuitive faculty which he must cultivate.

At this point the Eastern mystics are considered. Wilson looks into the spiritual odyssey of Sri Ramakrishna. Both orthodox Christianity and Eastern mysticism demand extremes of bodily penances, but the Outsider asks whether or not acts of penance can lead to final freedom. If they are done merely for penance, these acts seem deliberate burdens and may be useless or even harmful. Mr. Wilson concludes that it is the Will that matters—that which gives purpose and meaning to man's acts.

Colin Wilson does not pretend to give an infallible solution to the problem but he asserts only that "traditional solutions, or attempts at solution, do exist." He ends with the statement that the Outsider may finish his quest as a saint.

An important work in literary criticism, *The Outsider* manifests a marked erudition and scholarship in its twenty-four year old author. But stylistic obscurity, sometimes bordering on what is called "mystic," betrays the fact that this work is a first book for Mr. Wilson. He seems to indulge in his own private jargon, such as *yea-saying*, or the *ultimate Yes*, or the *ultimate No*.

It must also be said that the numerous half-truths throughout the book seem to invalidate its thesis. He has accurately diagnosed the evils of our times in the superficiality of modern living but he seems to prescribe an immoral remedy when he presents (and thereby condones) the artists' bohemian gropings as possible solutions. He fails to see the error in them. The author is indeed right in seeking the answer to the problem of self-realization in the discovery of the nature of the human self—its purpose. But in this regard he himself seems to betray an unawareness of what man's end truly is. Again, there is truth in his concluding statement that the Outsider may finish as a saint, but not in the premise upon which the conclusion is based. True, the Outsider may end up a saint, *if* he discovers that man's end is the Beatific Vision, and *if* he finds the "inside" in a body of transcendent values—the Mystical Body of Christ where true freedom is realized.

*The Outsider* therefore in its entirety is a half-truth. It is the *inquietum cor nostrum* but unfinished. The danger in it lies in that it tends to add to St. Augustine's verse not St. Augustine's *donec in Te, Domine* but the existentialist's *donec in te, Homine*.

ANTONIO V. ROMUALDEZ

## BAD TRANSLATION

THE SOURCES OF CATHOLIC DOGMA. Translated by Roy J. Deferrari from the thirtieth edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*. St. Louis. Herder. 1957. Pp. xxxiv, 653, (67).

THE trials of a translator are many, as Ronald Knox has demonstrated well in his masterful *Trials of a Translator*. His book is the fruit of the blood and sweat and tears which went into his translation of the Bible. No doubt Dr. Deferrari could write a book in similar vein. And one of his trials would be reviewers like me who are commissioned by editors to evaluate a book.

The idea of translating into English Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* is an excellent one. For with the modern's