

# The Logic of Contemporary Humanism

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**A**MONG the attitudes toward belief in God characteristic of contemporary philosophy of religion is one which is called "Humanism." To distinguish it from other forms of Humanism, we propose to call it Ecclesiastical Humanism. By this term we mean the recent tendency in religious and philosophical thought to shear Christianity of its metaphysical elements and to subsume it under an ethico-social idealism. There are many American exponents of this position. Among those who may be so classified we may list the following: John Dewey, Roy Wood Sellars, Max Carl Otto, T. V. Smith, O. L. Reiser, J. A. C. Faggner Auer, Walter Lippmann, Harry Elmer Barnes, Charles F. Potter, C. W. Reese, E. D. Martin, and John H. Dietrich. Many others have been included in this movement, either by themselves or others. Among them the following are perhaps most widely known: John Haynes Holmes, Edward S. Ames, and A. E. Haydon. As we have defined the term above, it is probably true that Professor Haydon, at least, may be included among the Ecclesiastical Humanists. By including such a diverse group of thinkers in one group we do not mean to assert that there are no differences in their general systems; it is but to assert that at the points in which we are here interested they are sufficiently similar to be treated as a group. A magazine, *The Humanist*, edited by Edwin H. Wilson, published at 1201 Union Street, Schenectady 8, New York, is one of the journals through which the group finds expression.

## I

There are perhaps two important types of Humanism in the Western world today. They are alike in their interest in human values, but differ in

their methods and conclusions. The two groups have difficulty with names, both claiming the name "Humanist," meaning by that, presumably, that they are the historical projections of the Humanists of the Renaissance period. The first of the two to be discussed is that which recognizes as its leaders the late Irving Babbitt, and Paul Elmer More. It is somewhat difficult to know precisely who belong to this group. However, a volume entitled *Humanism and America*, Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., New York, 1930, claims to present the position in the words of important adherents. The editor, Norman Foerster, suggests that Babbitt and More were leaders of the movement, and presumably the others invited to contribute must belong also, in some degree or other. The other contributors to the volume, aside from Foerster, Babbitt, and Paul Elmer More are: L. T. More, G. R. Elliott, T. S. Eliot, Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Alan Reynolds Thompson, Robert Shafer, Harry Hayden Clark, Stanley P. Chase, Gorham B. Munson, Bernard Bandler II, Sherlock Bronson Gass, and Richard Lindley Brown.<sup>1</sup>

This Humanism is an ethical Humanism. It may well be termed literary or aesthetic Humanism since most of its exponents are interested either in literature or fine arts.<sup>2</sup> However, the term Ethical Humanism perhaps best characterizes them. As Foerster

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Bandler II is also a contributor to a volume which appeared the same year entitled *The Critique of Humanism*, edited by C. Hartley Grattan, New York 1930. Brewer and Warren, Inc. He states, in a note in this volume that the only difference between the contributors to *Humanism and America* and the *Critique of Humanism* is in the interpretation of the Humanism which both profess.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Norman Foerster, in the preface to *Humanism and America*.

states it in the concluding sentence of his preface to the volume concerning the essential point of agreement among the contributors: "They are here temporarily assembled for the sole end of offering suggestions toward that new integration of values which may yet justify modernity."<sup>3</sup> They are primarily concerned, therefore, with the reestablishment of standards by which human life may be judged, and by which the course of essentially human living may be guided.<sup>4</sup> This type of Humanism represents, in the main, a reaction from 'the call of the flesh' to the 'life of the spirit.' It is quite different from the Humanism of Otto, Lippmann, Auer, and Barnes. Any attempt to classify Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More with the Humanism of Otto, Lippmann and company, is confusion indeed.<sup>5</sup>

The type of Humanism with which we are concerned may be said to agree with Ethical Humanism at one fundamental point, namely, in its interest in distinctively human values. At practically every other point which may be discussed, differences in varying degrees may be discovered. The Ethical Humanists look to Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More for at least a nominal leadership. The Ecclesiastical Humanists do not. John Dewey, J. H. Dietrich, C. W. Reese, M. C. Otto, A. E. Haydon, and others, provide the leadership of this form of Humanism.

## II

There are certain characteristic features of Ecclesiastical Humanism. Perhaps the first characteristic which demands attention is its "ecclesiocentricity." This form of Humanism is essentially church-centered. Some of its most important leaders are officially connected with religious institutions. John Haynes Holmes, John H. Dietrich, and Charles Francis Potter were or are clergymen or leaders of religious congregations; J. A. C. Fagginer Auer is professor of Church History in one of the best known schools of theology in America; A. E. Haydon, formerly professor in a

school of theology is now professor of the History of Religions in another great denominational university. Furthermore, those who are not officially connected with the church, such as Professor R. W. Sellars and Harry Elmer Barnes, are still profoundly interested in the church and its activities. For Dr. Sellars this may not be surprising, but, if we may believe Mr. Barnes' own statement, he, too, is interested in the church. In the preface to his *The Twilight of Christianity*, he begins with a plea that his purpose be understood. "The chief thesis which the writer desires to advance is that the old supernatural concepts and criteria relating to human conduct and its objectives should be discredited and abolished as rapidly as possible and supplanted by strictly secular and mundane considerations . . . The writer is unalterably opposed to all vestiges of the old supernaturalism, with its distorted and rudimentary views of the universe, God, man and human life. He is equally cordial to any type of secular religion devoted to the cause of making this life here on earth more pleasant and worth while."<sup>6</sup>

Every member of the group is concerned with the contributions to the good life which the church may make, provided the church is redirected as they believe it should be.

These, then, are the reasons for naming this Humanism Ecclesiastical. The adjective "religious" is often used as a differentia. However, in the analysis presented in a recent issue of this journal we attempted to validate the proposition that religion, historically, always included a reinterpretation of the existential medium, or some phase of it,

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XVII.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. C. Hartley Grattan, in *The Critique of Humanism*, pp. 15ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Humanism, Another Battle Line*. Nashville, 1931, Cokesbury Press, in which the editor, W. P. King, apparently confuses them.

<sup>6</sup> p. v.

which today results in the concept God. In so far as that analysis is sound, this recent form of Humanism which denies the relevancy of the concept God cannot be called religious. For that reason we prefer to use the term Ecclesiastical Humanism.

The more fundamental characteristic of Ecclesiastical Humanism is its anthropocentricity. "Humanism may be said to be 'a system of thought which assigns a predominant interest to the affairs of man as compared with the supernatural or the abstract and which believes man capable of controlling those affairs'."<sup>7</sup> The first phase of this definition, the paramountcy of human over divine interests, is the direct antithesis of the traditional attitude as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, of 1647. According to this historic document, "God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them: he is the alone foundation of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth."<sup>8</sup> Over against this ponderous affirmation of the paramountcy of Deity, contemporary Humanism states tersely, "It is legitimate that man should consider his own affairs to be of paramount interest to himself."<sup>9</sup>

Religion, for the authors and sponsors of the Westminster Confession, was interested in the service of God. Religion from the point of view of Ecclesiastical Humanism, is concerned with man, and with the service of man. According to Haydon, religion may be defined as "a shared quest of the good life."<sup>10</sup> Its task in the modern world "is that of subjecting all material resources to the ennobling and beautifying of living, or reorienting the social

order toward the spiritual ideal, of releasing from bondage the inarticulate millions by an art of human life."<sup>11</sup> This form of Humanism is thus definitely humanistic in its interests. It is concerned with human beings and the ennobling and enriching of human life here and now.

It is man-centered not only in its values but also in its search for resources. "Man is capable of dealing with his own affairs."<sup>12</sup> This attitude is taken as a result of a critical study of historic reliance upon non-human powers for help. In primitive societies, and among people of all ages who have not fully accepted the modern scientific worldview, attempts have been made to introduce extra-natural or supernatural agents or agencies into human technological processes. We may use the term metatechnology to designate all such attempts. It is, thus, denotative of such attempts to affect changes in natural processes by extra-natural means which are usually called magical, supernatural interventionism, miraculous, and so forth. Humanism believes that it may have been all right for the primitive to seek metatechnological aids in his quest of the good life, but today man must rely upon his own intelligence and skill for the satisfaction of his wants. "The gods are a splendid company. It is a great pity they are not better known . . . They have individual differences very distinct, but their role is always the same. They are man's helpers in the quest for the values of the good life."<sup>13</sup> The gods are, for the Humanist, essen-

<sup>7</sup> J. A. C. Fagginer Auer, *Humanism States Its Case*, Boston 1933, The Beacon Press, Inc., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 11, 2., quoted in *The Creeds of Christendom*, by Philip Schaff, fourth edition, New York, 1919, Harper and Brothers, volume III, p. 607.

<sup>9</sup> Auer, *Humanism States Its Case*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> *The Quest of the Ages*, New York and London, 1929, Harper and Brothers, p. IX.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>12</sup> Auer, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Haydon, *The Quest of the Ages*, p. 72.

tially metatechnological agents. Since recent developments in science and philosophy have cast doubt upon the attempt to produce changes in the existential medium by supernatural or extra-natural power or powers — the gods according to these Humanists, have become irrelevant. When this function disappeared, so did the gods.

Ecclesiastical Humanism is thus anthropocentric in its refusal to recognize any essential role for deity in the modern world. It is in the light of this approach that one can understand such statements as these: "It is thus a constructive social suggestion that we endeavor to give up, as the basis of our desire to win a satisfactory life, the quest for the companionship with a being behind or within the fleeting aspect of nature; that we assume the universe to be indifferent toward the human venture that means everything to us; that we acknowledge ourselves to be adrift in infinite space on our little earth, the sole custodians of our ideals."<sup>14</sup>

Harry Elmer Barnes seeks to make this a bit more explicit. "With the repudiation of the conception of a supernatural power we quite naturally and inevitably dispose of the ancient conception of a spirit world. The whole orthodox hierarchy of spirits; Yahweh, the archangels, and the angels; the devil, his supreme council of hell, the non-commissioned officers among the diabolical forces, and all the swarm of petty imps given over to the torture of the damned — are wiped out at one gesture by the introduction of the scientific and historical point of view and by its application to the analysis of the orthodox complex of belief."<sup>15</sup> Walter Lippmann, with perhaps more sympathy for the popular mind, after discussing the traditional world-view with its supernatural kingdom, concludes, but without a trace of glibness or glee, "To the modern spirit, on the other hand, the belief in this kingdom must seem a grandiose fiction projected by human

needs and desires."<sup>16</sup> John H. Dietrich, in a sermon entitled "The Advance of Humanism," writes: "We are alone in a terrifying and uncaring universe; it is for us to create and sustain whatever can make human life worth while. Our lives are very insecure upon this little planet as it swings through space, and upon us rests the hard and glorious task of deepening and enriching them. In spite of an indifferent universe, we ourselves must keep alive all the good the past hath had and add to it such good as we can create."<sup>17</sup> Auer, in his carefully balanced statement of Humanism, discusses the need for God in terms of emotional over-beliefs. He insists that "There is nothing in Humanism which militates against the possession of such beliefs. Why should a Humanist be less daring in matters of faith than a Theist? I can see no reason."<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, he refuses to agree with those who insist that these over-beliefs must involve faith in a personal God and personal immortality. "Theists would grant the existence of over-beliefs in the case of those Humanists who do believe in a God or everlasting life, but not in the case of others who deny the existence of both . . . Why may not overbeliefs have reference to man as well as to God, to this life as well as to another? There is no reason why this should not be the case."<sup>19</sup> According to Auer, God is not an essential factor in religion. Religion can function with God or without him. Furthermore, his discussion suggests that if one believes in God, this belief must be classed as an

<sup>14</sup> M. C. Otto, *Things and Ideals*, pp. 289f. Quoted by W. M. Horton, *Theism and the Modern Mood*, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> "Religion from the Standpoint of Agnosticism," in *Religion and the Modern Mind*, edited by C. C. Cooper, New York and London, 1929. Harper and Brothers, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> *A Preface to Morals*, New York 1931. The Macmillan Co., p. 143.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted by Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Twilight of Christianity*, p. 459.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>19</sup> Auer, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6.

over-belief, presumably a belief which one holds because he wishes to do so, not because the facts compel it. It is difficult to see where this differs in any essential fashion from the views presented from other Humanists. The Humanist is anthropocentric, therefore, in his insistence that man is of paramount value to man, and in his belief that man, not God, is the source of power and value here.

Ecclesiastical Humanism is thus definable as a religio-philosophical movement which seeks to shear religion of its divine, or more-than-human elements and to subsume it under an ethico-social idealism.

### III

The basic issue between Ecclesiastical Humanism and other philosophies of religion is this: Is religion possible without God? In a recent article we noted that religion had three phases: function, theology, and technique.<sup>20</sup>

Theism believes it necessary to maintain the metaphysical aspects of religion, i. e., belief in God and cosmic reference for human values, and Ecclesiastical Humanism does not.<sup>21</sup> Theism does not believe it possible to realize the goals of religion apart from God, while Ecclesiastical Humanism, where it does not definitely deny this need, as is done by M. C. Otto, is yet ready, with J. A. C. Fagginer Auer, to let this rest until we finish with the fundamental task of making human life more productive of value here. Belief in God is an over-belief, for Auer. As such it may be valuable, but it is not fundamentally necessary.

We may satisfy the purposes of the present discussion with two comments. In the first place, if it be granted that the term religion must be used only in such ways as maintain a continuity of meaning-relation with its past use,<sup>22</sup> and if, in the next place, our conclusion that all historical religions have achieved their ends, in part, by means of intellectual and emotional adjustments to that dominant phase of the Existential

Medium which they termed God,<sup>23</sup> then in so far as Ecclesiastical Humanism denies the need for God it ceases to be a religion. It may be an ethical idealism, or an ethical culturism, but it is not religion.

The second comment is perhaps more pertinent for our purposes. In his Preface to *Morals*, Walter Lippmann maintains that religion, in the traditional and popular meaning of the term, has become impossible for the scientifically trained men of his generation. That is to say, we of this generation must live without religion because we can no longer believe in God, the soul, and personal immortality.<sup>24</sup> The comment which must be made here takes the form of a question: Why is it that we can no longer believe in God? Is it not possible that the Ecclesiastical Humanist has beat a precipitate retreat from a valuable position which he believed to be untenable when perhaps he has underestimated the forces supporting that position and over-estimated the attacking forces? This leads us to the next topic, namely, the logic of Ecclesiastical Humanism.

### IV

#### THE LOGIC OF HUMANISM: AN EXPOSITION

By the logic of Humanism we mean the assumptions upon which their tests of truth are based. We are limiting the term logic to one phase, namely, criteriology or tests of truth. There are several different assumptions discoverable in the writings of representative Humanists. We shall examine two such assumptions and note their implications.

<sup>20</sup> "Where are We in Our Religious Thinking?" *The Iliff Review* II. 2. pp. 224ff.

<sup>21</sup> We are using the term "theism" to designate all forms of positive belief in God. It is perhaps the most usable term to denote those who, in opposition to Ecclesiastical Humanists and historic "Agnostics," have faith in that more Inclusive Environment which Christianity has called God.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *The Iliff Review*, Spring 1945, p. 230.

<sup>23</sup> *The Iliff Review*, Winter, 1946, pp. 31ff.

<sup>24</sup> P. 35f.

The first is that found in the writings of Walter Lippmann and Harry Elmer Barnes. This assumption may be stated very briefly: In religion and metaphysics there is no middle ground between absolute assurance and none. For Walter Lippmann we would have to state it in terms of absolute assurance that human values are central in the total cosmos; for Harry Elmer Barnes we would state it in terms of absolute truth concerning metaphysical concepts of God as well as the centrality of human values. In both cases, however, the assumption is that we must have absolute assurance or absolute truth if we are to have any.

As Mr. Lippmann studies the history of human society, he discovers that religion has functioned for men in providing them with absolute assurance in matters of morals and religion. They were certain they knew "why they were born, why they must work, whom they must love, where they may turn in sorrow and defeat."<sup>25</sup> The 'acids of modernity' have, however, deprived men of that deep-seated assurance. Since the ancestral ways have been dissolved, "They have left to them the ancient codes and the modern criticism of these codes, guesses, intuitions, inconclusive experiments, possibilities, probabilities, hypotheses. Below the level of reason, they may have unconscious prejudice, they may speak with a loud cocksureness, they may act with fanaticism. But there is gone that ineffable certainty that once made God and His plan seem as real as the lamp-post."<sup>26</sup> In the past, man had absolute certainty and assurance because he had an authoritative basis for his ethics and religion. In the present he has relative assurance that what he believes probably may not be too far wrong. He is certain that it is not true, but he hopes it is not too untrue. In the past, life was grounded in the faith of traditional religion, with God as the supernatural Governor in complete control of the world, ruling his earthly subjects through decrees

authenticated by revelation, unimpeachable testimony, and incontrovertible signs.<sup>27</sup> In the present, for thoroughly modernized man, there is no ground for life except the shifting sands of constantly changing scientific and empirically-derived theories. In the past men differed, it is true, in their understanding of what the final source of authority might be. Some found it in the Bible, others in the Church, and still others in that portion of the Bible called the Gospel. They were in agreement, however, in that they never doubted that such authority existed. There was, they believed, final authority available in the fields of morality and religion. In the present, however, the 'acids of modernity' have eaten away our belief in any final authority. "The upshot of the discussion to this point is that modernity destroys the disposition to believe that behind the visible world of physical objects and human institutions there is a supernatural kingdom from which ultimately all laws, all judgments, all rewards, all punishments, all compensations are derived."<sup>28</sup> The present attempts to find substitutes for the old foundations of human life, and there are many of them, are recognized by Mr. Lippmann, but rejected because they fail to provide absolute assurance co-ordinate with that of the past. In his rejection of these substitutes, his basic assumption reveals itself.

One of the first of the substitutes to which Mr. Lippmann refers is the attempted division of the field between science and religion. It was suggested that science be allotted those areas of human experience which were subject to observation and experimentation, and that religion be given those areas not amenable to such methods. By religious methods is here meant, of course, those of revelation and intuition. This solu-

<sup>25</sup> *Preface to Morals*, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

tion satisfied neither party. The scientist refused to believe there were areas which could not be subjected to his methodology. Granted that he may fail, yet other scientists who follow will some day succeed. This led him to make repeated raids into the territory allocated to revelation and intuition. The religionist resented these encroachments, and thus both were dissatisfied. In the second place, the question of arbiter was left open. Who should tell science where its methods were applicable, and religion where it might apply its methods? Neither was willing to trust the other. This led to the attempt to synthesize rather than to divide. Mr. A. N. Whitehead was selected by Mr. Lippmann as representative of this point of view. Whitehead noted that Galileo and the Inquisition were at antithetical points in their interpretation of the cosmos. "Galileo said the earth moves and the sun is fixed; the Inquisition said the earth is fixed and the sun moves; the Newtonian astronomers said that both the sun and the earth move."<sup>29</sup> According to contemporary scientific thought, any one of these three conceptions is equally true, provided you give the proper meaning to the terms 'rest' and 'motion.' Relativity in physics has enabled us to find a higher synthesis in terms of which the conflicts of the past may be reconciled. So also, according to Whitehead, 'wider truths' and 'finer perspectives' may enable us to reconcile the conflicting claims of religion and science. But Mr. Lippmann refuses to see in this anything more than a capitulation to science. Religion may appear to make its proportionate contribution, but science is still the arbiter. Revelation, in other words, is wholly subordinated to scientific method. Furthermore, "if the method of science is the last word, then revelation is reduced from a means of arriving at absolute certainty to a flash of insight which can be trusted if and when it is verified by science. Under such terms of peace, the religious experience of mankind be-

comes merely one of the instruments of knowledge, like the microscope and the binomial theorem, usable now and then, but subject to correction, and provisional. It no longer yields complete, ultimate, invincible truths. It provides an hypothesis. But the religious life of most men has not, until this day at least, been founded upon hypotheses which, when accurately stated, included a coefficient of probable error."<sup>30</sup>

This attempt to find a substitute for the old religion is rejected by Mr. Lippmann precisely because it fails to provide absolute assurance at one point. That point is the centrality of human values. The absolute assurance the religious man seeks is that his life, his values, his mind, are like unto God's. "This is the climax which men instinctively expect: the ability to say with perfect assurance that when the truth is fully evident it will be seen that their desire and will are rolled by the love that moves the sun and the other stars. They hope not only to find the will of God in the universe, but to know that His will is fundamentally like their own."<sup>31</sup> Any proposed substitute for traditional religion which fails to provide absolute assurance at this point is rejected as inadequate.

The Theistic conception of God, as held by thinkers since the 18th century, is also examined by Mr. Lippmann. Kant, after a careful and exhaustive examination of the traditional proofs for the existence of God, reached the conclusion that the task was beyond the mind of man. "He then insisted that without belief in God, freedom, and immortality, there was no valid and true morality. So he insisted that God must exist to justify morality. This highly sophisticated doctrine marks the end of the simple theism in modern thought. For Kant's proof of the existence of God was nothing but a plea that God

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

ought to exist, and the whole temper of the modern intellect is to deny that what ought to be true necessarily is true.<sup>82</sup> This type of proof leaves Mr. Lippmann cold. It does not provide the absolute assurance required, and he concludes that "when men can no longer be theists, they must, if they are civilized, become humanists."<sup>83</sup>

We are now in position to appreciate the manner in which this basic assumption becomes operative in another way. We noted that it provided the principle of elimination: Whatever proposed conception of God fails to provide men with absolute assurance that human values are central in all reality is false. But Humanism is more than a criticism of contemporary God-concepts. It is a positive, affirmative faith. As M. C. Otto stated it, "it is important to emphasize this fact of affirmation. One can be without a belief in the existence of God or have a belief in the non-existence of God. The two are by no means identical. Each implies distinctive beliefs and each eventuates in distinctive commitments as to ideals and conduct. The general point of view which I hope to develop — I repeat that this is said in the interest of clearness — is associated with an affirmative faith in the non-existence of God."<sup>84</sup> The second part of the Humanistic position, namely, its positive faith in the non-existence of God, is based upon the assumption stated above, namely, absolute assurance or none. The corollary which follows from the above is this: Between traditional theism and Ecclesiastical Humanism there is no middle ground. This means that if traditional theism is not true, then humanism is true.

Mr. Lippmann believes that these two positions are diametrically opposed one to the other, and if one cannot accept the one he is logically compelled to adopt the other. After sketching these two positions, and eliminating the attempted conciliatory positions as impossible, Mr. Lippmann writes: "In this book I take the humanistic view because, in the

kind of a world I happen to live in, I can do no other."<sup>85</sup> That is to say, the proof of the Humanistic position is to be found in disproving the only other possible position, namely, traditional theism.

The logic of this position is valid provided the basic assumption is true. If traditional theism and Ecclesiastical Humanism are contradictory, not contrary, positions, then to disprove one means to prove the other. This is an application of the logical law of Excluded Middle." This law may be stated as follows: "Between contradictories there is no middle ground. Contradictory propositions are such that if one is true the other is necessarily false, or if one is false, the other is necessarily true."<sup>86</sup> Another term, "contrary," is often confused with the term "contradictory," yet its meaning, logically, is profoundly different. "Contrary propositions are such that if one is true, the other is necessarily false, but both may be false. In other words, there is middle ground between contraries."<sup>87</sup> Mr. Lippmann, in the discussion just summarized, assumes that traditional theism and Humanism are not merely contrary terms or propositions, but what they are contradictory propositions. If this be true, then to disprove one is equivalent to proving the other.

In order to keep the problem clearly before us, it may be well to restate the argument. One must be a Humanist if one is not a traditional theist, believing in a personal God, supernatural and transcendent, who has planned for men careers-in-time. In this life-in-time, men must obey the commands of God and

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>84</sup> "Conversation about God." *The Christian Century*, Feb. 24, 1932, Chicago, Ill., p. 250.

<sup>85</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>86</sup> M. T. McClure, *An Introduction to the Logic of Reflection*, New York 1925, p. 405.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.



seek the goals established by Him. These goals and commands are given to men by means of a supernatural revelation. If one finds difficulty in achieving these ends, either because of their seeming unreality or because of personal inability, the reason for this difficulty must be found within himself. He has been negligent or disobedient. He must return to God and receive from Him the needed sense of reality (faith), and the help (grace), needed for salvation. Secondly, the program for this temporal life is definitely stated in the Scriptures, or in the Church, or in the Gospel, depending upon one's theological interest. It is to these sources, then, that one must turn for guidance and help. The Catholic appeals to the Church, the Protestant to the Bible, or the Mind of Christ, if he is Ritschlian in his theology. Thirdly, the apparent difficulties found in this scheme are met in one of two ways, or by some combination of the two. First, if one found difficulty, he could be reproached for immoral living, or for negligence in attendance upon the means of grace — attendance upon Church services, prayer, tithing, or some other form of religious technique. Secondly, one could be told that man was not made for happiness. He was made for service and sacrifice, and the idea that we are here to find satisfaction and happiness is irrelevant, erroneous, and evil. Faithfulness and obedience here, and rewards in the realm of Heaven, is the rule.

If one cannot accept this position, say the Humanists, he has no other alternative but to accept the Humanistic position, described above. There is no middle ground between them. There is no middle ground between them precisely because no other system appears to Mr. Lippmann to provide man with absolute assurance concerning the centrality of human values and the meaning and purpose of human life. According to Lippmann's view, absolute assurance is given in traditional theism at these points; no assurance is given

by Humanism at these points. These are contradictory positions, and if one does not choose one, he must choose the other.

Attention has been called before this to the attempt on the part of Humanists to exclude from consideration only the two extremes, traditional theism and their own position. Dean Mathews stated it succinctly in these two sentences: "There are only two alternatives which he can see, that of popular religion which 'rests on the belief that the kingdom is an objective fact'; and the other, the humanistic view that the problem is how mankind is to come to terms with facts. To our mind there is a third alternative which is genuinely religious although including the truths of humanism."<sup>38</sup> But the crux of the matter, it would appear, lies deeper than this. One must understand precisely why the Humanist has come to the conclusion that these two positions are contradictory. It is the search for this basic assumption which led us to the conclusion that it is based upon Mr. Lippmann's belief, to speak only of his position, that religion must provide absolute assurance if it is to be adequate.

In the *Twilight of Christianity*, Harry Elmer Barnes reaches conclusions similar to those of Walter Lippmann. It is Mr. Barnes' conviction that historic Christianity, no matter how important certain outstanding figures such as Augustine and Calvin may have been, relied upon the Bible for its basic conception of God. Of this God-concept he writes: "To show that the God of the Bible cannot be harmonized with present-day knowledge is a very simple matter and the demonstration is con-

<sup>38</sup> Shailer Mathews, "The Religious Basis of Ethics," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. X, No. 2. (April 1930), p. 222. Cf. also D. C. Macintosh, "Contemporary Humanism," in *Humanism, Another Battle Line*, edited by W. P. King, p. 67 for the same criticism. Also A. K. Rogers "Is Religion Important?" in *Religious Realism*, edited by D. C. Macintosh, p. 13.

vincing to any person of respectable literacy."<sup>39</sup> The more vital task is that of fashioning a conception of God which will be adequate to modern needs and consistent with modern knowledge. He is here concerned with the possibility of middle ground between traditional Christianity and Humanism. His conclusion is negative. "It seems to the writer utterly foolish and indefensible today for a thoroughly informed modern scholar either to deny or affirm the existence of God. The complexity and difficulty of the problem remove the whole issue from the realm of finite certainty. If the accumulated evidence concerning the extent and complexity of the cosmos serves to render any plausible conception of God ever more majestic and impressive, this same information likewise enormously increases the difficulty of reducing any reasonable notion of a cosmic God to human terms which are scientifically defensible and logically convincing."<sup>40</sup> This inability of the modern mind to refashion the concept of God so that it will meet the needs of the contemporary is, according to Mr. Barnes, based upon two propositions. The first is intellectual. The mass of information available today makes metaphysics impossible. By metaphysics we mean a systematic, organized, and critically evaluated statement of our beliefs about the total universe. The concept God emerges as we reinterpret our existential medium under the impulse of religious needs. The reinterpretation is precisely the activity engaged in by men who have called their activity the construction of a metaphysics.<sup>41</sup> Mr. Barnes believes this task intellectually impossible. The second reason is practical. If it were possible for us to arrive at a tenable and logically convincing conception of God, the result would be unsatisfactory religiously. "Even if we were to grant the existence of a cosmic Deity, such a God would be too majestic, vague, remote and impersonal to make possible the assumption of His di-

rect and immediate solicitude for such indescribably unimportant and ephemeral term in the cosmos as homo sapiens."<sup>42</sup> For these two reasons, then, the possibility of middle ground between traditional theism and Humanism is denied: (1) it is intellectually impossible, and (2) if it were intellectually possible, the result would be religiously unsatisfactory.

This would appear to be based upon an assumption similar to that which characterized Mr. Lippmann's view, namely, that unless one can have a God of whom one is absolutely certain intellectually, and who satisfies one in the highest degree religiously, he must become a humanist. Absolute assurance, intellectually and religiously, or no assurance. Any satisfactory conception of God must be definite, certain, and personal. Since the cosmic deities of recent thought cannot be defined so definitely, nor believed in with the same certainty as the God of the Bible, these deities are rejected. Furthermore, since the recent degeocentricizing and deanthropocentricizing of Western thought make it practically impossible to conceive of God in the same personal terms which characterized Catholic and traditional Protestant thought, we must give up the attempt to find those religious satisfactions which involve God.<sup>43</sup>

The logic of Professor Haydon's position is somewhat different. He approaches the problem of the gods from the angle of their function in the past. He finds that they have been the meta-technological agencies of primitive man and the uncultured of today. At the

<sup>39</sup> *The Twilight of Christianity*, New York 1931. Richard R. Smith, Inc., p. 180.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *The Iliff Review*, Winter, 1946, pp. 24 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Twilight of Christianity*, p. 263.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258. "Nor does the human personality require any such attitude toward the cosmos to insure its more perfect development."

same time, he recognizes the fact that modern science has definitely undermined faith in the possibility of metatechnology. At least, this is true for those who are conversant with modern science and accept its basic tenets. The gods, therefore, become impossible because their sole reason for existence has disappeared. The thesis which he defends may be stated in terms used by T. V. Smith. According to Smith, religion is belief in the possibility of a short-cut, what we have called metatechnology. "There remains over and above science and art and philosophy the way of faith, the will to depend upon a short-cut to success in the venture of life. This is religion. Scratch the skin of the most liberal person in the world; and if he call himself religious, some germ of this attitude will be found. It is this germ that makes him religious. When he loses this germ, he ceases to call himself religious and contents himself with more direct and straightforward discourse. It is only when men know not what to trust that they trust they know not what."<sup>44</sup> Haydon will not agree with Smith in what he believes religion to be, but he does insist that the Gods were always man's helper in the quest for life.<sup>45</sup> With the development of modern science, western man has learned more about the actual forces operative in his world. God or gods are not discoverable among these actual forces. The result is that more and more man concerns himself with these more immediate forces, and the gods sink into relative insignificance.

If the gods are but metatechnological agents, then any interest one may have in them is not definitely related to the achievements of the goods sought by modern man. The subjection of the material resources to the development and enrichment of human life is a process which is, today, unrelated to metatechnology. It requires intelligence, skill, and social idealism. These are acquired by effort and education, by enlargement of one's sympathies and the dis-

cipline of one's impulses. Since neither magic nor crass supernaturalism make any direct contribution to these values, the supernatural agencies — the gods — have become irrelevant. These values are achievable without recourse to the supernatural. Therefore, whether it is intellectually possible to believe in God or not ceases to be significant to Mr. Haydon. He is concerned with actual forces and actual goals, and the gods are not classifiable for him in either category.

Professor Haydon's logic is thus quite simple: The goals of modern religion are achievable without recourse to the concept Deity. While one may grant that there is some possible intellectual and esthetic satisfactions to be obtained in considering the Divine, the practical tasks of today do not permit one to devote much time to them. When, in the course of future development, one has leisure, then perhaps the gods may be considered.

## V

### THE LOGIC OF HUMANISM: A CRITIQUE

The basic assumptions of recent Ecclesiastical Humanism are now before us. It remains now to examine these assumptions in the light of history and contemporary thought to determine whether or not these critics of traditional and modern religion have analyzed their problems adequately and have actually proved that contemporary religion may well dispense with belief in and experience of God.

According to Walter Lippmann, belief in God has become impossible to the intelligent contemporary because the traditional theistic conception is intellectually impossible and the recent cosmic deities do not provide absolute assurance that human values are fundamental to the whole cosmos. The logic

<sup>44</sup> T. V. Smith, *The Philosophic Way of Life*, Chicago, 1929. The University of Chicago Press, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> *The Quest of the Ages*, p. 72.

of this proposition depends upon the validity or invalidity of his claim that God, to be religiously valuable, must provide absolute assurance that the cosmos is anthropocentric. This assumption, however, fails to stand the test of critical examination. Since the development of modern science, upon which Humanism is so dependent, absolute assurance has become impossible with reference to every existential field. Fields, such as mathematics, which have no necessary reference to existent realities, may be so thoroughly organized and investigated that absolute assurance is possible, but in no other intellectual field is this possible. Intellectual relativity has become a philosophical commonplace, even though the Humanist may not be ready to admit this with reference to religion. If the fact that we have been unable to capture the truth concerning a given field in final phraseology condemns that field, then every phase of human endeavor which is concerned with existential realities is condemned. If, on the other hand, one recognizes the instrumental function of knowledge, namely, that ideas are instruments used to realize goals in the existential world, or to reach better understandings of the relations among existents and concepts, then one can dispense with absolute truth and absolute assurance in all existential fields, including religion. Workable knowledge and workable adjustments have to satisfy us in most fields, even though we would prefer final truth and perfect adjustments. The realization of the physicians' goal of final truth concerning the human organism, its maladjustments and methods of perfect restoration of proper adjustments, would be of inestimable benefit, probably, to the human race. The same would be true regarding economics and politics. The patent fact, however, is that in none of these fields have we realized this goal. We have to content ourselves with partial knowledge and relatively workable adjust-

ments. Since this is true of every other field, it seems wholly unreasonable for the Ecclesiastical Humanist to demand of religion that it achieve final truth and perfect adjustments, or to give up the attempt altogether. Furthermore, if it is possible for men to realize partial values in religion, as they do in other fields, then the Humanistic assumption of no middle ground between traditional theism and Ecclesiastical Humanism is proved untenable.

It is assumed by Mr. Lippmann that traditional theism provided absolute assurance to its adherents. Whatever the case may have been with reference to the non-literary mass of believers in all ages in Christian history, it is not true that the thoughtful leaders of the Church retained their faith in absolute assurance. It is unthinkable that thoughtful human beings could have rested in dogmatic assurance while theological controversy raged. During the first seven hundred years of Christian history at least seven great ecumenical councils were held. An ecumenical council is one "purporting to be representative of the entire Christian world, or whose doctrinal decisions have reached universal acceptance."<sup>46</sup> At these councils men debated the truth of almost every article in the Christian faith. They not only debated these matters, but they were ready to kill or be killed in the interest of the views they held. Does this mean they were absolutely certain concerning the view they held? It means they were committed to the conceptions they believed, but that there were not moments when a doubt crossed the mind of an Arius, an Athanasius, a Gregory of Nyassa, seems inconceivable. After all, they were human beings, possessed of minds like ours, capable of being swayed by groups, and susceptible of doubt when an opposing view was presented. Furthermore, the evidence for lack of assurance among the laity is abundant. The heretical

<sup>46</sup> DRE, p. 141.

movements in southern Europe known as the Cathari and Waldenses, and the establishment of the Inquisition by Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) designed to ferret out and destroy heretics, suggests that some of the laity differed with the Church at significant points. From the time of the Reformation, which in itself was more ecclesiastical, political and economic than theological, the disintegration of absolute assurance, assuming it ever existed, progressed rapidly until today we have a host of different sects, each defending some particular doctrinal or ecclesiastical position. If one views Christian history somewhat objectively, he does not reach the conclusion that all men, everywhere, held one faith with absolute assurance. Such may have been the ideal, but it was never realized.

Mr. Lippmann's demand that modern attempts at a reinterpretation of the Christian faith be such as to provide men absolute assurance is true of much Christian theory but not of actual Christian practice. In practice, Christian leaders and followers have had to be content with practical certainty; they had to fight for their faith and hold it with difficulty. To demand of the recent reformulations that they be such as to realize unanimity of opinion and wholehearted Church-wide acceptance is to ask the impossible. To deny that men can find religious satisfactions on the basis of practical certainty is to repudiate the evidence of the centuries.

Another phase of this assumption with which we shall not deal at the present is the centrality of human values. We have discussed the demand for absolute, assurance without making definite the specific doctrines concerned. We shall withhold treatment of this point until we discuss the theory which we call Absolute Immanence, in some future issue.

The second basic assumption is that discoverable in the writing of Harry Elmer Barnes. His conviction of the impossibility of belief in God rests upon

intellectual grounds. God, if he is to be known, must be known through his work in the whole universe. But our knowledge concerning the universe is so vast that it is impossible for man to speak, with any assurance, concerning what is true of it as a whole. Since one cannot affirm anything to be true of the universe as a whole, the obvious conclusion is that one can say nothing positive about God. Mr. Barnes, at this point, is in harmony with the position of the late F. C. S. Schiller. Schiller believed, in 1914, that all systems of metaphysics must be viewed as individual creations, and as such, definitive for the individual creator but for no one else. One may, if he will, develop a system of metaphysics, but any claim that this particular system is true in the sense that it has the right to compel the assent of others is denied.<sup>47</sup> This means, in effect, that metaphysics is practically, if not theoretically, impossible. If a systematic statement, critically evaluated, of the nature and the relations obtaining among the several elements comprising our existential medium has no right to claim the assent of any person but the particular metaphysician himself, it is obviously not a product of objective reasoning. Mr. Barnes, from a more practical standpoint, denies to any person the ability to do such thinking with regard to the concept God.

In the case of Mr. Barnes, it appears that the problem of God resolves itself into that of the possibility of metaphysics. Metaphysics may be defined as a systematic and critically evaluated statement of our conceptions of the nature and destiny of man and of the total system of conditions which produced him, and in harmony with which he must achieve his destiny, whatever it may be. It is this quest, we believe, that has characterized the metaphysical activities of men from the time of Dem-

<sup>47</sup> Cf. his article, "Humanism" in ERE, vol. VI: 830-1.

ocritus to that of Whitehead. Men have sought to understand themselves and their environment, not piece-meal, but as wholes. "The problem of metaphysics is the discovery of ultimate principles. How shall we explain the world, what is its essence? Democritus and his school had reduced it to moving material atoms, Plato to transcendent ideas, which somehow influence formless matter. Aristotle rejects both answers, and seeks to mediate between them."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, "The metaphysical need, on the other hand, finds expression in theories of the gods, their origin and relation to one another and the world."<sup>49</sup> It is probably true that most metaphysical systems have been grounded in the religious impulse, in the attempt to find cosmic companionship and cosmic grounding for human values. This is declared impossible by the Humanists in the person of Mr. Harry Elmer Barnes.

The attempt to estimate the validity of this assumption may well be made by reference to the practice of certain members of the Humanistic fraternity. One of the strong supporters of the Humanistic attitude toward God is Professor Roy Wood Sellars. In a popular volume, referring to the God-Idea, he wrote: "At present, I shall only state that I think that all these efforts are as misguided and as doomed to ultimate failure as the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures to make them fit in with science. Such edifices act as half-way houses of the spirit. Readjustment takes time."<sup>50</sup> This means that immature religion used the God-idea; as religion becomes mature it will dispense with it. At the same time, Sellars insists that metaphysics is necessary to religion. "If religion is an affair of adjustment to the conditions of life, it always involves an interpretation of the universe as well as an insight into the values and meaning of life. Beliefs and attitudes always go together; they are, as it were, organically interwoven."<sup>51</sup> In more decisive fashion he denies the pos-

sibility of understanding man without understanding the universe to which he belongs. "Modern philosophy, like science, is dominantly inductive. It is an effort at discovery and exploration. What kind of a universe is this anyway? And the swing towards naturalism has meant the recognition that we human beings are a part of a larger whole and that our nature and career can be understood only when so approached. Nature is a system of give and take, of trial and error, of large processes and small, of adventure and of drift."<sup>52</sup> He criticised John Dewey's naturalism because it is naturalism of human experience rather than of the cosmos. "Basic goals and conditions are not analyzed. In short, the new naturalism finds a certain thinness about instrumentalism on fundamental issues. It is not the naturalism of the cosmos but of human experience. The human is lit up and the cosmic with its vastness and eternity is left in the shadow. But there are many questions about human life which are unanswerable apart from decision as to the texture of the physical world."<sup>53</sup> This conviction characterises Professor Sellars in most of his writings. In *The Philosophy of Physical Realism*, he assertedly is laying the foundations upon which a fundamental metaphysics may be erected. He believes that this is an age of rapid change; that the present generation is a sincere one, ready to face the realities as well as the possibilities in life. "But a foundation in the truth of things is needed for sound reconstruction. I am hoping that this book will assist in the laying of this foundation, for such I take to be the obligation of philosophy. With the aid of science,

<sup>48</sup> Thilly, Frank, *A History of Philosophy*, New York, 1914. Henry Holt and Co., p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Religion Coming of Age*, New York, 1928, pp. 155-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>53</sup> *The Philosophy of Physical Realism*, New York, 1932. The Macmillan Co., p. 11.

its co-worker, it must decipher the principles and patterns of being."<sup>54</sup> Sellars' basic interest is scientific, epistemological, and ontological.<sup>55</sup> He is convinced not only that metaphysics is possible, but also that it is the obligation of the philosopher to provide it.

John Dewey, one of the leading recent antagonists of metaphysical activity, must be understood as opposing what he calls 'vain metaphysics' rather than metaphysics as defined above. In a review some years ago he stated his conviction as to the place of such metaphysical reflection in the philosophical ifelds. "The problem of effecting a unified synthesis within the field of the sciences, as to their postulates, methods and general conclusions, is that of a limited branch of philosophy: of cosmology or the philosophy of nature. The problem of bringing about not only this unification, but the further harmony between its conclusions and the purposes, ideals and values characteristic of the cultural life of humanity is that of philosophy in its wider sense."<sup>56</sup> The book which he was reviewing when this comment was made was *Philosophy and the Concepts of Modern Science*, by Oliver L. Reiser, another Humanist, in which Professor Reiser was attempting "To harmonize the methods, general theory and specific conclusions of science in a variety of fields, especially in relation to the conflicts and problems that exist in present human life in its immense variety of lines of action, interest and value."<sup>57</sup> Thus Dewey is commending a Humanist on his attempt to present a systematic and critically evaluated statement of our knowledge of the nature and destiny of man and the system of conditions which produced him, namely, a metaphysics.

This is sufficient to call attention to the fact that probably the anti-metaphysical wing of the Humanist group is the non-philosophic section of it, and that some important members of the Humanist fraternity who are profes-

sionally equipped for metaphysical reflection are not only not averse to it, but are definitely committed to such reflection. The question then rises, why should one who defends the right of the metaphysician deny the possibility of belief in God?

The answer would appear to be that they oppose not metaphysics as such, but the belief that there is a metaphysics which should provide men with absolute assurance that human values are central in all reality. Once they give up this basic assumption, their criticism of contemporary philosophies of religion ceases to be relevant.

The reason for this opposition to reflection about God on the part of Professor Sellars is probably the result of the fallacy of the false start or more technically, the Fallacy of Initial Predication. These penetrating thinkers have apparently failed to see in the God-concept anything more than reference to metatechnological agencies. Gods are those realities through which or by whom we manage to make a 'short-cut' to the desired goods of life; they are the beings to whom one may pray for rain, health, progeny, and success in war or other enterprise. It is the failure to approach the God-concept functionally, to determine not merely what values men believed they could obtain through or from God or gods, but what values they actually received. No one condemns chemistry today because the alchemists of the past sought for impossible goals. We recognize the fact that knowledge is of slow growth, and that centuries are required for an idea to come to birth. The slow growth of chemistry from alchemy, of astronomy from astrology is not cited by intelligent contemporaries in condemnation of these respected fields. Rather the general attitude is that these men, seek-

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> "Nature and Humanity," *The New Humanist*, October-November, 1935, p. 153.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

ing mistakenly for impossible goals, laid the foundations upon which men today are able to build useful structures. It is true that men in the past sought for metatechnological values from the gods; it is also probably true that the values they actually received from worship of the gods was something quite different. Whereas they sought to produce changes in the objective world, the actual changes took place within the souls of the men concerned. A mistaken quest may result in true values, and the attempt to divest contemporary religion of the divine element because of historic mistakes seems as unnecessary and unreasonable as to condemn chemistry and astronomy for unreasonable conduct on the part of the early alchemists and astrologers.

This failure adequately to analyse the God-concept, then, is presented as the reason for the cavalier attitude of Ecclesiastical Humanists toward recent attempts at reconstruction of the God-concept. Until they engage in more careful analysis of this concept, their conclusions regarding it must be viewed with profound suspicion.

The basic assumption underlying Professor Haydon's attitude toward God is, as stated above,<sup>58</sup> that the God-idea is unnecessary so far as the fundamental tasks of modern religion are concerned. Modern religion seeks to subject mankind's total material resources to the advancement and enrichment of human life. This must be done in terms of the best knowledge and skill available today. The gods have always been metatechnological agencies, and since the coming of modern science with recognition of the futility of metatechnology, the gods have been relegated to the historic junk-heap with the entities of alchemy and the astral beings of astrology.<sup>59</sup>

The problem presented by Professor Haydon's analysis is sociological rather than metaphysical. He rests his case upon an analysis of that form of individual and social behavior termed relig-

ion. As a result of this analysis he comes to the conclusion that religion's primary function has been that of aiding man in the quest for the good life. In the past man, because of his ignorance, sought mistakenly. One of the mistakes made was to trust in God, a supposedly superhuman, supernatural being, who cared for man, and would see to it that man received what he deserved, in return for worship from man. Scientific and historic research had proved that this faith in metatechnology was not justified, and that man, and man alone, must assume the responsibility for discovering the nature of the good life, and the means for its achievement. If this be true, then the attempt to keep the God-idea must be very carefully guarded lest it lead man to reliance upon what has been definitely discredited. The God-idea, therefore, according to Haydon, is not only unnecessary, but may be positively dangerous.

Mr. Haydon's criticism of the God-concept depends for its validity upon the truth of his two subsidiary theories, (1) the nature of religion and (2) the nature of the God-concept itself. Religion, according to him, is the most inclusive of human interests. "It seeks a synthesis of ideals and the subjection of all specialized techniques to the single goal — the joy of life on the highest level — and it includes all men."<sup>60</sup> It is thus a generalized social science, concerned with man's total manipulative approach to the values of life. As industry seeks to manipulate certain phases of man's environment, transforming it into values more readily assimilable by man; as economics seeks to manipulate other phases of man's environment, or interrelated activity, the exchange of values, so that this made be done more expeditiously and justly, so religion seeks

<sup>58</sup> Cf. p. 81.

<sup>59</sup> *The Quest of the Ages*, pp. 122ff.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.



to organize and humanize the total manipulative approach of man toward his environment, human and non-human. It is the ultimate technique whereby man controls environmental, and, so far as morals are concerned, some of his own impulses and internal conditions in the interest of human values.

In contrast to this conception of the function and nature of religion must be placed those which view it not as a manipulative approach to life, but rather as an appreciative or distinctively non-manipulative one. Rudolph Otto defines religion as "the *sensus numinus*, an experience of the mysterious and an impulse toward the mysterious — an experience which breaks forth from the depth of the emotional life on the stimulus of outer attraction as the 'sense of the wholly other'."<sup>61</sup> Or, as I should state the conception of the nature and function of religion to which I have come as a result of studies in the history of religion, it represents man's attempt to achieve a condition of personal harmony with the dominant phase of his existential medium and with those non-manipulative aspects of existence which disturb him, by means of a reinterpretation of his own existence and the existential medium which is made emotionally effective by some techniques.<sup>62</sup> In these conceptions of the nature and function of religion, the God-concept is an integral factor. Without it the specific nature of religion would disappear, and the resultant be something other than religion.

This problem is not one which can be dealt with adequately in a paragraph or even a chapter. As I have pointed out in another connection, the immensity of the problem involved in defining religion seems to have escaped the attention of many recent contributors to the field.<sup>63</sup> Until the whole matter of defining the function of historic institutions is investigated more carefully, we shall have to withhold judgment regarding the adequacy of Professor

Haydon's conception of the function of religion. However, this is not a matter of too much importance for our criticism of the Humanistic denial of the possibility of belief in God. It is more important that we examine the second basis upon which Professor Haydon's position rests, namely, the nature of the God-concept itself.

Our analysis of the God-concept in the preceding issue of this journal left us with the conclusion that it is the concept or symbol used in the interpretation of one's existential medium, or some dominant phase of it, under the impulse of religious needs. Or, God is the term used, in the higher religions, to designate the Evocative Factor which elicits the religious response, whose nature, in so far as it is determined, is a function of one's interpretation of the Existential Medium, or some dominant phase of it. Professor Haydon's interpretation of God as the metatechnological agent in man's attempt to shortcuts to the goods of life must be included as one of these interpretations, by specific groups at specific cultural levels. At the same time, it must be recognized that in so far as the above statement of the general nature of the God-concept is correct, then any attempt to limit the function of Deity to metatechnology alone must be deemed invalid. If Rudolph Otto and others are correct in their interpretation of the nature of religion, that is, as non-metatechnological in character, then the function of the God-idea is not that which is suggested by Professor Haydon. It is possible that even those folk who seek to use God as a metatech-

<sup>61</sup> Otto, R., "The *Sensus Numinis* as the Historical Basis of Religion, II." *The Hibbert Journal*, v. XXX. No. 3. (April 1932), p. 430.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. my "God as Dynamic Determinant," *The Journal of Religion*, October 1943, or *The Church Looks Ahead*, edited by C. E. Schofield, New York, 1933. The Macmillan Co., pp. 254ff.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. "Concerning Definition," *The Crozer Quarterly*, October 1933, pp. 458-479.

nological agency found other values than those assertedly sought. In so far as these values men have found in religion have been subjective, so far is the attempt to define the function of deity in purely metatechnological terms invalid. Thus a more careful analysis of the nature of the God-concept itself would compel Professor Haydon to revise his attitude toward this idea.

Our conclusion regarding Professor Haydon's position may be stated in few words. It rests upon two very debatable points, the conception of religion as mankind's most inclusive shared quest of the good life, and his analysis of the God-concept itself. Since these two points are debatable, the rejection of the concept God which rests upon them is itself in a precarious position. So far as the analysis of the function of religion is concerned, we stated above that the problem is not precisely that under discussion here, and any attempt to deal with the problem of defining religion in a footnote overlooks the difficulties involved. But our analysis of the basic nature of the God-concept presented in the Winter issue of *The Iliff Review* leads us to conclude that Haydon's analysis of the God-concept is incomplete and therefore inadequate.

The attitude of Ecclesiastical Humanism toward the idea of God seems hardly justifiable in the light of its basic logic. Those Humanists whose position resembles that of Walter Lippmann make impossible demands of the concept when they insist it must provide absolute assurance that the universe is anthropocentric. If this demand for absolute assurance is legitimate of religion, it is probably illegitimate of every other field. The result would be intellectual chaos. The Humanists of the Harry Elmer Barnes type who deny the possibility of metaphysics are contradicted by other, and just as reputable Humanistic scholars. Their difficulty is probably failure adequately to analyze the God-concept itself. The same difficulty is discoverable

in the writing of Professor Haydon. An inadequate analysis of the nature of the God-concept leads them to unnecessary conclusions.

## VI

The logic of Ecclesiastical Humanism is thus comparatively simple. It assumes that religion as such must provide individuals and groups with absolute assurance that human values are central to the totality we call the cosmic process. Stated in more technical language, this means that between absolute assurance in religion and no assurance there is no middle ground. But we have noted that in no area of human life is there a similar demand for absolute assurance, no matter how important the values found therein may be. Workable knowledge and partial assurance are the best which are available to finite man living under present conditions. Even when an institution like the Catholic Church asserts that it provides its adherents with such assurance, in actual practice it denies this. Certainly the history of the Christian quest for more adequate theologies is eloquent evidence of the fact that finite minds cannot reach ultimate truth. Once this fact is recognized, the Ecclesiastical Humanist's demand that Christian theologians provide absolute assurance or give up the attempt altogether becomes meaningless. Christian theologians, like thinkers in other areas, must work within the limits imposed upon them by the conditions of human existence.

The criticism of recent Humanism is valid, however, at one point. It is time that more theologians recognized their own limitations, and the limitations of their methodologies. If we must live religiously in terms of partial knowledge, then this fact should be admitted. The theologian, like the scientist, must recognize that knowledge is partial and that new discoveries may affect all fields. It may be that we shall have to accept the dictum that

"New occasions teach new duties; Time  
makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward,  
who would keep abreast of Truth."