

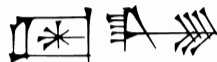
MODERN AGE

MODERN AGE

THE FIRST
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

A SELECTION

edited by
George A. Panichas



Liberty Fund
INDIANAPOLIS

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The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (*amagī*), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

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TO
RICHARD M. WEAVER
(1910–1963)

J. M. LALLEY
(1896–1980)

DAVID S. COLLIER
(1923–1983)

“One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.”
—JOHN DONNE, *Holy Sonnets*, X

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FOREWORD

IN *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*, George H. Nash has this to say about *Modern Age*:

... it immediately became the principal—indeed, the only—scholarly medium deliberately designed to publish conservative thought in the United States. . . . [It] was primarily oriented toward the traditionalist or new conservative segment of the conservative revival. . . . *Modern Age* . . . filled a desperate need . . . [as] the principal quarterly of the intellectual right.

The first issue appeared in the summer of 1957; its founding editor was Russell Kirk, the author of *The Conservative Mind*, which, since its publication in 1953, has become a classic. Henry Regnery, an independent Chicago publisher, and David S. Collier, a political scientist trained at Northwestern University, assisted Kirk. When Kirk resigned in 1959, as Nash observes, “he had established what he wanted: a dignified forum for reflective, traditionalist conservatism.”

The editorial continuity of *Modern Age*, no less than the original graphic design

and format, remains unbroken, despite changes in editorship. Eugene Davidson, formerly an editor and then a director of the Yale University Press, succeeded Kirk and served as editor from 1960 to 1970; in turn he was succeeded by Collier, who remained as editor until his death on November 19, 1983. The literary editors of *Modern Age* have been, successively, Richard M. Weaver (1910–1963), a professor of English at the University of Chicago and the author of the celebrated book *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948); J. M. Lalley (1896–1980), a journalist and for many years an editorial writer and book review editor for *The Washington Post*; and George A. Panichas, a moralist critic and since 1962 a professor of English at the University of Maryland. Upon Collier's death, Panichas assumed the editorship.

Bearing the subtitle “A Conservative Review,” *Modern Age* was first sponsored by The Foundation for Foreign Affairs, in Chicago, which brought out the first nine issues (Volume I, number 1, Summer 1957 through Volume III, number 3,

Summer 1959). The Institute for Philosophical and Historical Studies, also in Chicago, then took over publication and brought out the next thirteen issues, up to Volume VII, number 1, Winter 1962–63, when sponsorship reverted to The Foundation for Foreign Affairs and the subtitle was changed to “A Quarterly Review.” Starting with the Fall 1976 issue (Volume XX, number 4), The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, became the publisher.

For twenty years Chicago was the editorial base of the journal. Both Kirk and Regnery had hoped that *Modern Age* would serve as an intellectual forum for “the culture of the Middle West, and the heart of the United States generally.” This hope did not materialize, for in content and outlook *Modern Age* transcended any regional identity or parochial affiliation. From the beginning, as Anthony Harrigan has observed, “*Modern Age* introduced a wider, more comprehensive intellectual tradition than existed in New York or Boston.”

No statement more definitively announces the aims of *Modern Age* than does its first editorial, “Apology for a New Review.” That the journal is called, in the very first sentence, “a journal of controversy” is especially pertinent, given the conditions inciting its publication, for liberal journals of opinion predominated at the time, and positions advanced by “creative sceptics in defense of the liberal temper” (as one apologist described the task of his liberal allies) identified strong tendencies in American life. That *Modern Age* was not in the mainstream of American social-political and intellectual thought points to a situation crying for the publication of “a conservative review”:

By “conservative,” we mean a journal dedicated to conserving the best elements in our

civilization; and those best elements are in peril nowadays. We confess to a prejudice against doctrinaire radical alteration, and to a preference for the wisdom of our ancestors. Beyond this, we have no party line. Our purpose is to stimulate discussion of the great moral and social and political and economic and literary questions of the hour, and to search for means by which the legacy of our civilization may be kept safe.

As “Apology for a New Review” expresses it, “*Modern Age* intends to pursue a conservative policy for the sake of a liberal understanding.” The axiological constituents of this conservative policy, in their standards of discrimination, differentiate the editorial orientation of *Modern Age* from that of other journals of opinion in America. There is a dearth of serious reading in the nation, admittedly, and therefore a serious conservative quarterly is not likely to exert great national influence or noticeably affect conditions of life and civilization. “But for all that,” the editorial goes on to say, “modern society cannot endure—and its survival is immediately in question—without discussion among thinking men.” These words illuminate the aspiration of “a new review” that purposes “to reach the minds of men who think of something more than the appetites of the hour,” as well as “to revive the best in the old journalism and to mold it to the temper of our time.”

By encouraging critical discussion of moral, social, and literary issues, *Modern Age* has unremittingly defended the idea of value as it relates to the necessity of *humanitas* and to the concept of the *honnête homme*. Virtues and values that resist a majoritarian leveling in culture and society: these are what inspire the viewpoints delineated in the journal and at the same time provide such reminding evidence of the force of truth as Paul Elmer More’s contention: “We are intellectually incom-

petent and morally responsible: that would appear to be the last lesson of life.” In registering the ramifications of More’s words, *Modern Age* has exercised its conservative articles of faith on both a diagnostic and a corrective plane.

Concerned though it is with the state of American civilization, *Modern Age* is not restricted to American issues. Its perspective—generalist and universal, catholic and critical—is rooted in the larger world. And though it has also been faithful to “the idea of diversity in conservative thought,” it has refused to succumb to any form of compromise bordering on the centrifugal allegiances and the imperatives of techniques that identify a mass consciousness. Its conservative principles have been absolute in their rejection of a “morality of drifting.” The principles of a critical conservatism and of a “principled conservatism” that *Modern Age* seeks to preserve are planted in a fusion of moral effort and disciplinary virtues forming the bedrock of tradition, which, in Austin Warren’s words, “emphasizes the shared inheritance as embodied in institutions—all organized, continuous, and more or less coherent expressions of values and ideals.”

Although many of its writers are academics, *Modern Age* rejects narrow academic specializations. Its approach is interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. The journal does not speak exclusively to or for the academy but rather to “man thinking.” Indeed, even as one can discern a deepening state of social and cultural decline, one can also discern increased social and moral disarray, which many in the intellectual community have willingly tolerated, even as they have also been willing, as Wilhelm Röpke asserts, to allow “incidentals [to] recede behind the essential, the variables behind the constants, the ephemeral behind the permanent, the

fluctuating behind the durable, the fleeting moment behind the era.” Disarray is a failure to locate a center of values, which in turn becomes the rejection of “paradigmatic” history, that is, of spiritual history and community. As Father Stanley Parry observes: “Civilization itself—tradition—falls out of existence when the human spirit itself becomes confused.” No words could better define an initial, central concern of *Modern Age*.

In placing and evaluating the organic interconnections between the economic, the political, the philosophical, the educational, the literary, and the religious essences that embrace social and cultural qualities of existence, *Modern Age* supports the axioms of restraint and control implicit in Edmund Burke’s statement: “There is no qualification for government but virtue or wisdom, actual or presumptive.” But how are those two sacred concepts of virtue and wisdom, dedicated to the law of measure and the life of reverence, to be preserved when other sacred concepts, encouraging both inspiration and aspiration—loyalty, honor, nobility, honesty—have been weakened by forces hostile to the idea of value? *Modern Age* has grappled with this troubling question.

That the crisis of modernity is essentially a crisis of disorder is a phenomenon that *Modern Age* views with deep apprehension. In rejecting the presuppositions and prepossessions that instill “the faith of a liberal,” the journal accepts the belief that the order of the soul is inextricably tied to order in the republic. Likewise, in going beyond political and socioeconomic arrangements of an inherently mechanico-material cast, *Modern Age* affirms metaphysical concepts and spiritual beliefs. This is not to say that it discards temporal considerations, but rather that it looks for guidance in the light of eternal values and permanent truths. With un-

common unanimity, its contributors insist that moral effort and moral conversion precede programmatic and material experiments; that principles, not possibilities, are priorities that govern the human prospect.

If no single religious viewpoint prevails either in its editorial policy or among its contributors, the Judaeo-Christian heritage has had the largest shaping influence in the perspectives enunciated in the journal. *Modern Age* exemplifies precisely the religious assumption of T. S. Eliot that "morality rests upon religious sanction, and . . . the social organization of the world rests upon moral sanction." At a time that has seen an overwhelming crisis of faith, *Modern Age* has defended religious traditions, siding with the supernatural against the natural, with permanence against relativism, with the idea of cultural probity in religion against secular or pagan utopias. Clearly what can be termed a metaphysics of transcendence impels and defines the spiritual cares and the theoretical unity of the journal.

Along with the terror and revolution that are emblematic of the modern world, there are two other closely related processes that are inescapable in their consequences: the fragmentation of science through specialization and the deculturation of society. Their consequences have been anxiously monitored in *Modern Age* by writers opposed to the glorification of social egalitarianism and the diminution of the nature of man. Both the classical ideal and the biblical view, foundations of the human spirit that they are, retreat before these phenomena. The moral meaning of man, society, and history deteriorates as "enemies of the permanent things" annul the covenantal concept of existence that Eric Voegelin singles out: "Every society is burdened with the task, under its concrete conditions, of creating an order that will endow the fact of its

existence with meaning in terms of ends divine and human." In essence, the mission of *Modern Age* resides in Voegelin's concept of order.

A surrender to the demands of "historical necessity," as *Modern Age* has tried to show, typifies the fate of large sectors of modern society. It further underlines retreat from the moral framework of political philosophy emphasizing what Leo Strauss calls "the character of ascent." In this connection, the anti-Marxist position of *Modern Age* has been unyielding: both Marxist politics and Marxist philosophy have been closely examined in the pages of the journal. As modern gnosticism and leftist-horizontalism have gained ground, the mission of the journal has become more urgent. And where pluralistic, pragmatic, and collectivist palliatives have tended to leaven the thinking of the American intelligentsia and political leadership, *Modern Age* has chosen to focus on the higher and ever demanding "task of intellectual and moral preparation and restoration."

Conservatism, Kirk reminds us, is a way of looking at the human condition. Such a conservatism is predicated on an equitable understanding of the relation between philosophy and practical politics, between theory and practice, between idea and reality. *Modern Age* has striven to attain this understanding; thus, what one finds in inspecting the journal as a whole is a comprehensive conservatism attuned to the total human condition. Behind its valuations lies an endemic preoccupation with the disciplines of continuity that Walter Bagehot has in mind when he declares: "The first duty of society is the preservation of society." Honoring that duty is unusually difficult in an age disposed to the doctrines of positivism, progress, reform, and much that comes under the heading of "open society." Clearly, when the scale of values and the meaning

of value have been altered, the conservative's task is immeasurably complicated. The intrinsic nature of this complexity has been fully recognized in *Modern Age*.

"For a conservatism of ignorance, like a liberalism of ignorance, is a curse to society; while a conservatism of reflection is a counterbalance to a liberalism of reflection." Thus Kirk wrote back in 1955 in *Commonweal*. Two years later, with the founding of *Modern Age*, that counterbalance was to emerge as the most conspicuous goal of the journal. For its contributors the journal was to become, in Marion Montgomery's words, "a house where we gather periodically in complementary encounters." In *Modern Age* the conservative voice has been animated, as Kirk observes, by a "love of right reason" and a "desire to inform and persuade, rather than to indoctrinate in secular dogmas."

The following essays come from the pages of *Modern Age* during its first twenty-five years—1957 to 1982. In selecting the essays, I have sought to represent and chart the major ideas, themes, and problems assayed in *Modern Age*. In particular, I have sought to include essays that distinguish the genus of scholarship arising from a conservative sensibility as it evolved in the United States after World War II and as it responded, often with iniquity, to protean conditions of society and culture.

A selection in itself cannot achieve comprehensiveness, but it can capture critical discriminations. For readers who might investigate the consecutive unfolding of the subjects that *Modern Age* has confronted, a volume-by-volume examination will disclose that the journal's parts constitute a whole stamped by the critical unity that this selection endeavors to convey.

Above all, this selection seeks to show

a manifold conservative outlook that goes beyond place and time to exhibit a permanence of principles. To see things in large perspective and in vital interrelationship, beyond the local and temporal, has always been a chief aim of *Modern Age*. To assess consequences, as well as to measure cause and effect, has been another aim. To impart paradigms of conservative theory and thought enabling one to become more aware of modern conservative intellect responsive to both immediate and long-range aspects of American and Western civilization has been still another aim. These aims have also guided the selection and the arrangement of the essays reprinted here.

Inevitably, one must reflect on how *Modern Age*, without an academic base, without munificent foundation grants, without popular support, and without a heavily financed visibility, has survived. Formidable privations have not deterred an entire generation of conservative scholars from speaking out on fundamental issues in *Modern Age*. That some of these issues have in more recent years received forceful national attention helps to justify the function of "a conservative review." That, also, there are now new journals that patently emulate this function accentuates the influence of *Modern Age*. It is hoped, then, that this selection shows the workings, the order and movement, of the conservative mind: its assimilative concerns and affirmations, its style and character, its critical and cultural standards, its social-political dissent and loyalties, its tradition and decorum, its veneration for universals and moral constants, its relation to the total symmetry of life—in short, its vision.

GEORGE A. PANICHAS
College Park, Maryland

EDITOR'S NOTE

EACH ESSAY IN *Modern Age: The First Twenty-Five Years* has been reprinted as it appeared in its original version. Enclosed in brackets at the end of each essay are cited the volume number in Roman numerals, the issue number (*e.g.*, Spring), the year, and the page numbers in Arabic numerals of the particular issue of *Modern Age* in which the essay first appeared.

Some slight variances in editorial style will appear from essay to essay, reflecting the decision not to tamper but to reproduce what originally appeared; points of style do change over a quarter of a century. Some corrections, of course, have been quietly incorporated when and where needed, and typographical errors have been removed. In a very few instances, ellipses indicate the omission of perfunctory transitional material within an essay.

In 1983, Earhart Foundation, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, awarded me a grant that permitted me to be released from my teaching duties in order to devote an entire academic year to the initial prepa-

ration of the manuscript. I am indebted to Earhart Foundation for its help and patient confidence in my ability to complete this project in its published form.

It should not go unnoted that, in 1957, Earhart Foundation had provided an initial subvention "to publish one or more issues of *Modern Age*." Without this assistance, the journal would have been unable to embark upon its mission. In particular, the sage counsel given to *Modern Age* through the years by Richard A. Ware, now President Emeritus of Earhart Foundation, deserves thanks. I am also happy for the occasion to thank Dr. Antony T. Sullivan, Secretary of Earhart Foundation, for his kindnesses and friendly concern.

During the past ten years, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, under the dedicated leadership of its president E. Victor Milione, has contributed both financial and moral aid to *Modern Age*. This aid has been forthcoming even when the Institute's own position and obliga-

tions have at times been under severe economic strain. The publication of this anthology thus pays tribute to the Intercollegiate Studies Institute for its steadfast commitment to conservative scholarship. Neither the quarterly journal nor this selection would now exist without the Institute's support. Since 1979, John F. Lulves, Jr., Executive Vice President of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, also has served as our faithful publisher.

Throughout the three years that I worked on the manuscript, I was assisted by Mary E. Slayton. There is no aspect of the manuscript and no phase of its preparation that has not had the benefit of her competence and, indeed, of her craftsmanship.

I also thank Elizabeth Dunlap, Ann Wendig and Elizabeth Manly, production editor of *Modern Age*, for their many contributions to this work.

These acknowledgments would be in-

complete without an expression of deep gratitude to the "Founding Fatherhood" of *Modern Age*: to Russell Kirk, who first defined and shaped the editorial character and conscience of the journal, and to Henry Regnery, whose many generousities have helped to build the enduring principles and foundations of *Modern Age*.

For their thoughtful comments on early drafts of the foreword, I am indebted to Henry Regnery, Martha Seabrook, and William C. Dennis. Their criticisms prompted extensive and valuable changes concerning economy, orientation, and style. The foreword, it is hoped, pays tribute in its own way to all those who, whether named or unnamed, living or dead, have in any manner of word or work contributed to the continuity of *Modern Age* as "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled."

G.A.P.

MODERN AGE

The scholar then is unfurnished who has only literary weapons. He ought to have as many talents as he can; memory, arithmetic, practical power, manners, temper, lion-heart, are all good things, and if he has none of them he can still manage, if he have the main-mast,—if he is anything. But he must have the resource of resources, and be planted on necessity. For the sure months are bringing him to an examination-day in which nothing is remitted or excused, and for which no tutor, no book, no lectures, and almost no preparation can be of the least avail. He will have to answer certain questions, which, I must plainly tell you, cannot be staved off. For all men, all women, Time, your country, your condition, the invisible world, are the interrogators.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON, “The Scholar” (1876)

Prologue