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point certainly colors his outlook, as does his love of jazz. The collection also can strike its reader as a series of jibes at *The New Yorker*. However, where I find fault with his arguments, as in his essay on *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, I have to concede that Rosenbaum has achieved what he claims good criticism is supposed to achieve. He has opened up debate rather than closing it off, and I must admit that Rosenbaum's desire to provoke discussion has beguiled me.

Taken singly, as they should be, some of Rosenbaum's essays are exemplary of the best in film writing: his essay on Orson Welles's *Othello* is both a fascinating description of a rarely seen film and an introduction to the politics of film preservation. "The Death of Hulot" is a beautiful evocation of Jacques Tati, the great, if little-known and less-discussed French actor and director. "Jerry Lewis's *Hardly Working*" situates Lewis's film as a product of Reagan's America and opens inimitably:

> My dream scenario runs roughly like this: J. D. Salinger finally relents and allows Jerry Lewis to direct a film based on *The Catcher in the Rye* ...and civilization as we know it collapses. In the ensuing sociocultural upheaval occasioned by this deconstruction of two critical reputations, anarchy reigns supreme: mad dogs roam the street, *The New Yorker* shrivels to a cinder out of acute, well-mannered embarrassment; and all those distinguished gray eminences in my profession...run screaming off to the Hamptons and Berkshires...never to return. (210)

When Rosenbaum gets around to discussing Lewis's film (and after an opening like that, it's almost superfluous) he says it is "unbearable, beautiful, terrible, wonderful, stupid, brilliant, awful, shocking, inept, and even very funny" (211). In short, it is because of his opinions, as objectionable as one might find them, that Rosenbaum is such a pleasure to read. Mark Twain once said that "the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between 'lightning' and 'lightning bug.'" In *Placing Movies*, Rosenbaum provides film criticism written with lightning.

PRISCILLA BARLOW

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Milton Mayer. *Robert Maynard Hutchins: A Memoir.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Milton Mayer first met Robert Hutchins in 1933, when Hutchins, at the age

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of 34, was already four years into stirring up the University of Chicago as its "Boy President." Four years later, Mayer, who had been working as a journalist in the city, asked Hutchins for an interview; once in the door, Mayer implored Hutchins to "save" him from William Randolph Hearst. Hutchins thought Mayer needed saving only from Mayer, but he gave him a job anyway—at half his former salary. Mayer: "I can't live on that." Hutchins: "You didn't say you wanted to live; you said you wanted to be saved. You cannot be saved any cheaper" (7).

For the next decade, Mayer worked, in his words, as "hired hand" for Hutchins and the university, in various capacities. More significantly, both for the principals and for this book, the two men became close friends and remained so over the next forty years, until Hutchins's death in 1977. They were intimates through Hutchins's Chicago years, the years he spent fighting McCarthyism via the Ford Foundation and the Fund for the Republic, and the fifteen-odd years he devoted to his Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Mayer's memoir is thus "not," as he notes in the introduction, "an orthodox biography" (1). Told largely first hand and close up, this biographical narrative, though comprehensive and not uncritical, is possessed of a narrator who is unabashedly "subjective" about—which is to say, participatory in—the events and the life he describes.

As Milton Mayer cannot write about his subject without putting himself in the picture, neither—at least in this instance—can I. When I first heard Mayer's name, I was in similar need of salvation (and like Mayer in the 1930s, didn't realize what I most needed saving from). As a dissatisfied college student, I was looking to be saved from the uninspiring grind of the conventional undergraduate curriculum. Mayer had given a lecture at my college on, of all things, education, and had made some rather interesting noises, or so I was told. I was also told that he knew something about undergraduate dissatisfaction, having been booted out of the University of Chicago in the 1920s for "conduct unbecoming a junior" (he'd assembled seven "A"s, seven "F"s, and thirteen incompletes). Since that time, he'd published extensively as a journalist, returned to the university to teach in the Hutchins College, authored or co-authored some thirteen books, worked for the American Friends Service Committee and the Great Books Foundation, received an honorary doctorate from Windham College, taught at various colleges and universities, and served as "Roving Editor" for the *Progressive* magazine. I was told, still further, that he sometimes accepted writing students on a tutorial basis. So I applied, was accepted (though he took some convincing), and spent the next six months studying at his feet and often under his thumb—and his smirk. Mayer: "Tell me, did you watch a lot of television

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as a child? Wright: "No, not really." Mayer: "Well, then, I just can't explain it."

We exchanged a few such kicks, but eventually something took, and eventually we grew quite fond of one another, with himself in his seventies as the adopted grandfather figure and myself as the "backward, but not my most backward" student. In the years following, I'd visit him in the incongruous setting of Carmel, where he was working on this, his last, book, until his death in 1986. (The book was nearly finished at the time of his death; John H. Hicks, former editor of the *Massachusetts Review*, who had been assisting with the manuscript in Mayer's last years, has readied it for press.) What I learned from Mayer is unencapsulatable (but includes a penchant for neologizing and usage bending); what I learned about him is that he was, among many other things, a remarkable prose stylist, a committed social activist, a pacifist, and, like Hutchins, a born teacher, a true believer in liberal education, a widely read autodidact, and a hilariously irreverent man. In this memoir, Mayer has brought all his talents and passions to bear upon the story of a man who was not only the most profound single influence on his own life, but also among the most profound influences on American education in the twentieth century.

On its own terms, Hutchins's life is compelling and, in Mayer's telling, compellingly told: "a nearly-a-success story of the preacher's son, phenomenally bright, preternaturally handsome, who comes sauntering out of small-town Ohio...to dazzle Yale with his insouciance...rockets into the upper reaches of the American 1920s as the Boy President of a great university...and within five years is a figure of the first eminence both in educational innovation and in liberal politics" (1). But from there, both the life and the work were a struggle. The narrative of Hutchins's life reads in fact remarkably like that of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, down to some surprising details (and this is particularly ironic, given Hutchins's lifelong antipathy for William Randolph Hearst). Mayer refers to this "nearly-a-success story" as "a cautionary tale"; he most likely had in mind Hutchins and his personal demons (2). It is such a tale indeed (his first marriage, for instance, was disastrous by all accounts), but it is also, intentionally or not, a "cautionary" narrative of the promises, the vicissitudes, and, even more clearly, the limitations of a peculiarly American brand of liberalism. In this sense the life, and in particular the issues it engaged, appears unusually relevant to our moment, when liberal assumptions have maintained their central position in the public discourse, even under heavy attack from the right, and even, or perhaps especially, when they masquerade—as they often do, at least in the universities—as more radical presumptions.

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What was peculiarly American about Hutchins's liberalism was derived from its midwestern, Calvinist roots—in Mayer's shorthand, from "Oberlin." Hutchins was descended from a line of preachers, and from the age of eight grew up in Oberlin, Ohio, where his father was the Presbyterian president of the Congregational college there. According to Mayer, his father—and the missionary ideals that "Oberlin" represented—informed everything Hutchins became and did:

> The law had been the third love of his life. The university had been the second....But his first love was Oberlin, and as his life closed he found himself recalling that 'the most important word in the Oberlin vocabulary was "ought." (505)

What one "ought" to do, certainly, but also what the law ought to provide, what education ought to involve, what kind of government ought to obtain—these were the concerns that drove him, and they were the sorts of concerns he assumed would drive, or ought to drive, everyone else.

They led him, precociously, first to the deanship of the Yale Law School and soon thereafter to the presidency of the University of Chicago. At Yale, he instituted an interdisciplinary approach to legal studies based on his conviction that the law, in order to better serve its social function, ought to be studied in the context of disciplines such as psychology, economics, and, most importantly, philosophy. At Chicago, informed by his Yale experience, Hutchins spearheaded a restructuring of the undergraduate curriculum within months of his inauguration. He proposed—and in that honeymoon period, the faculty senate approved of—reviving the freshman/sophomore "junior division" as a program of interdisciplinary general education, with substantial autonomy for the college teaching faculty; eliminating compulsory attendance and the course-credit system and replacing them with a series of comprehensive examinations; instituting S/U grading for the freshman year; and establishing a "divisional" organization for the university as a whole (which effectively weakened the walls between the specialized departments, if only slightly). It became known as the "Hutchins Plan." Hutchins promptly announced that "we are now in a position to teach the wrong things in the right way" (100). Mayer: "What was the matter with him? Hadn't he got everything—well, almost everything—he wanted (or should have wanted)?" (100). Well, no. The little-known fact of the matter, Mayer goes on to explain, has eluded even most die-hard Hutchins adherents:

> All this was revolutionary, and Hutchins wanted all of it. But it wasn't

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> Hutchins' revolution.... Most of the elements of the new program at Chicago had been proposed by a faculty committee which had been sitting (and sitting on it) for two years before Hutchins got there.... The 'Hutchins Plan' was not the Hutchins Plan. (100)

So what *was* his plan—what did he really want? He wanted education to be organized as it ought to be, if it were to achieve its (that is, his) desired end (as he put it to a rather stunned collection of faculty and trustees): "to procure a moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolution throughout the world" (328). And what means were wanted to achieve this end? Mayer:

> He wanted a 'new' method of education. He wanted a 'new' curriculum. And he wanted a genuine consolidation of research, a common set of principles which might establish an order and proportion of the goods of the mind just as there is an order and proportion of all other goods. (101)

He was never able to get quite everything he wanted, at least not the last, at least not at Chicago (although his undergraduate dream program was eventually established by two of his associates at St. John's College). It was the "common set of principles" that most scandalized the faculty, many of whom saw a *specific* set of principles, and, specifically, a set of Thomistic first principles, lurking in his opposition to the notion of "value-free" science. (His opponents, however, were forced to acknowledge that his opposition was to the notion, not the practice, of such science—the Manhattan Project was only the most famous, or infamous, of the many scientific enterprises that flourished under Hutchins at Chicago.) The suspicions regarding Thomism were due largely to the highly visible, and audible, presence of Hutchins's friend and associate Mortimer Adler, who made it clear—and, to many, irritatingly so—that the ordering of principles had been best achieved by Aristotle, and after him St. Thomas Aquinas, and after him...well, it had been a long, slow, downhill slide from there.

Those faculty and others who entertained such suspicions would jibe, bemusedly, that Hutchins's Chicago was a Baptist institution wherein Marxist professors taught Catholic philosophy to Jewish students. But these antagonists refused to acknowledge that their own positions were themselves ideologically infused and determined. The "absolutist" Hutchins was quite clear, however, on this relative truth and, in his final battle at the university, let the relativists know it:

> 'I have lately heard'—he had been hearing it for fifteen years—'that I am seeking to impose a particular philosophy on the University. This is in a sense a highly complimentary suggestion, because it implies that I have a

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philosophy. I suppose everybody has a philosophy, in a way. We are all metaphysicians'—he couldn't resist it—'whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not. For we act all the time on certain basic assumptions in regard to the nature of the world and of man. To say that freely determined teaching and research are the object of the University is to state a philosophy for the University. To say that no other philosophy is possible is to seek to impose it on the University.' (346)

These were the words of the university president most widely recognized in his era as its most uncompromising defender of academic freedom, especially during the Red Scares of the 1930s and 1950s (Chapter Fifteen, "The Red Room," which chronicles the "Walgreen affair" of the 1930s, is one of this book's most vibrant). But for Hutchins, freedom did not imply disorder: "The university must find a way to be an agent of harmony and unification without suppressing the vagrant intellect or violating the claims of freedom.... The university cannot fashion the intellect of the modern world if it proclaims that the fundamental disorder of the modern world is indifferent to it as a university" (346-347). And the moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolutionary saw "freely determined teaching and research," at least as his opponents defined and practiced them, as but a reflection of that contemporary social disorder.

His opponents were well organized, however, at least by the mid-1940s, and by then they were less disposed than ever to be persuaded by such arguments, especially when accompanied by Hutchins's further proposals to abolish academic rank (abolishing football three years earlier had been bad enough), to determine salary on the basis of need (a proposal that should give us pause today, with our $100,000-a-year "Marxist" professors), and, perhaps most threatening of all, either to give the president real executive powers or else eliminate the office altogether. With these "impossible" propositions, the "Brooks Brothers Bolshevik," who seemed in at least some respects to be getting more radical with age, provided his antagonists with the ultimate organizing principle, and Hutchins lost the battle of the books at Chicago.

Yet the method and curriculum he wanted—one that would replace textbooks with the original works he called "Great Books" and would teach those books via Socratic dialogue—took shape not only at St. John's College but in the adult education program that came to be known as the Great Books movement. Presided over by Hutchins, the Great Books Foundation was established to promote the reading and discussion of books in public libraries across the country, by adults from all walks of life. And not just books, mind you, but great books; and not just great books, but Great Books,

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as selected and so designated by Mortimer Adler and seven of Hutchins's closest associates. Published by Hutchins's Yale chum William Benton under the auspices of his Encyclopaedia Britannica and with the imprimatur of the University of Chicago (for which "service" the university received nearly $60 million between 1943 and 1980), the Great Books of the Western World turned out to be a highly lucrative business venture for just about everyone involved (although Hutchins's share, like all his outside earnings, was turned over to the university). But the Great Books movement was also something of a missionary undertaking, with motives and assumptions that were, intriguingly, at once democratic and elitist. They were democratic in that Hutchins and Adler claimed that laypeople were capable of understanding original works of philosophy, history, literature, and science without the interpretive mediation of experts. They also claimed that these readers would be able to make interdisciplinary connections among the ideas found in the works they read. They felt, therefore, that the best education for the few should also be the best education for the many. And Hutchins in particular was committed to the idea that this sort of citizens' education or, as he called it, "education for democracy," was essential to the survival of any democratic republic, and this one in particular. But the movement's assumptions were at the same time quite clearly elitist in that the specific works selected by Adler and company for the Great Books set comprised the quintessential "dead rich white male" curriculum, as Mayer acknowledges: "With the possible exception of St. Augustine, there was no non-Caucasian author, and the list was 100 percent male" (304). Unfortunately, Mayer's characterization of the set's early critics is, for him, uncharacteristically reactionary in tone: "Apart from the enormous ballyhoo that attended its publication in 1952, the set was attacked, with varying degrees of justification, by those modernists who believed that the world began last Thursday; by the cultural jingoists, who believed it began in America; by the small cliques (in those days) of admirers of oriental, female, and Negro writings; and by the partisans of those great writers who were excluded, such as Cicero, Calvin, Nietzsche, Leibniz, Mark Twain, and the Brontes. It was a classic undertaking, nine years in publication, all told, and the triumph of a vision as immense in literary and educational as it was in commercial terms" (304).

The fact remains that this "immense" vision was exceedingly exclusive, however, as is rather more apparent by now, those "small cliques" having grown somewhat since 1952. Yet the larger fact is that while Mayer is critical of many of Hutchins's public and private actions (his willing administration of the university's "war plant," for instance), he is critical of very few of Hutchins's ideas and ideals, and this is one of his memoir's few

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significant weaknesses. Indeed, while the biography as a whole might be pigeonholed ideologically as the life of a mainstream liberal with left leanings—in Mayer's terms, "the establishment's anti-establishmentarian"—as viewed by a left liberal with more radical inclinations, Mayer consistently endorses Hutchins's philosophical and ideological perpectives. And this becomes particularly problematic when he uncritically treats Hutchins's involvements with the wartime Commission on Freedom of the Press and the postwar World Government movement. Some of the Press Commission's findings were unexceptionable, for instance that "the periodical press...failed miserably to discharge its moral obligation to the community, more often than not reflecting the views of its owners and advertisers in the treatment of news" (255). However, when Mayer asserts that the Commission's "members were not special pleaders" and thus had a "reputation for objectivity [that] could hardly have been higher," he is describing men like historian Arthur M. Schlesinger and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, whose reputations as "special pleaders" for the Eastern liberal establishment can hardly have been clearer, at least to those not dazzled by their status as what Mayer calls "blue-ribbon types" (257-258). And as for the World Government movement, it's difficult not to feel skeptical about the promise of a centralized global government (such skepticism being hardly the exclusive property of militia paranoids), which Hutchins saw as the only answer to the threat of total nuclear war in the atomic age he had helped inaugurate. In fact, centralized power and doctrine (the latter a legacy, perhaps, of Oberlin) is what many of Hutchins's critics over the years from both right and left have seen as a consistent and troubling theme running throughout his career, from the Chicago years through the Great Books, World Government, and Fund for the Republic/Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions projects. To such critics, what would seem more likely to lead to democratic empowerment would be a decentralization of power rather than its opposite.

In describing Hutchins's decision in the 1950s to have the Fund for the Republic turn away from the social activism of its fight against McCarthyism in order to study "basic issues," Mayer finally acknowledges Hutchins's elitism, his desire to have "great men" investigate the issues of democracy and then hand down their findings to the masses: "This democrat of democrats was in the final analysis a genuine elitist who wanted to establish a kind of Lords Spiritual to lead the country and the world out of the intellectual wilderness.... They would, in due season, clarify the great problems of the race in interrelated terms and democratically (and lordily) submit their clarification to their fellow men" (461). Hutchins's desire was to assemble intellectual leaders who would, in his words, do "what the universities used

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to do: formulate, state, clarify, and advance the ideas that underlie or should underlie our civilization," in order to counteract the "disintegration of the intellectual world, which results from specialism, nationalism, and philosophical diversity" (461-462). This monocultural and elitist vision had been implicit, and often explicit, in virtually everything Hutchins had said about education and the university since at least 1930. In speech after speech, the university's charge was to provide "leadership," to "fashion the intellect of the modern world," to show the masses the way (347). And by the time he was organizing the "blue-ribbon" panel that would brainstorm what would become the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (his first thought had been to call it the Academy—after Plato's, of course), Hutchins's vision was explicit enough. Among the eminent on that panel were journalist Walter Lippmann and Hutchins's fellow Yalie (and *Time/Life* magnate) Henry Luce, and a later gathering on the "basic issues" included Reinhold Niebuhr, who had not only been a member of the Press Commission, but had also participated in drafting the 1946 *Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution.* Lippmann and Niebuhr were the preeminent establishment liberals of their day who urged, respectively, "the manufacture of consent" and the creation of "necessary illusions" by intellectual elites in order to keep the masses in line, as Noam Chomsky has been at pains to point out; in turning to advisors like these, Hutchins was surrounding himself with fellow liberal "democrats" who were convinced that, in Lippmann's words, "the common interests very largely elude public opinion entirely, and can be managed only by a specialized class whose personal interests reach beyond the locality."[1] The establishment's anti-establishmentarian, indeed.

As it turned out, Hutchins was never able to attract a permanent staff of "great men" to his Center, and he lived out his last years presiding over discussions of basic issues by those lesser lights who had become the Center's Fellows and who had become engaged, as well, in more and more ridiculous internecine squabblings. As for the discussions themselves, "the thinking was done in an expensively remodeled (and, of course, spacious) mansion of Greco-Hispanic pretensions—Hutchins called it El Parthenon—atop a hill on the edge of Santa Barbara's suburb of Montecito" (470). Under such circumstances, the discussions—with rare exceptions—grew less and less relevant to a world that was exploding around (and beneath) them, and fewer and fewer from the outside cared to listen in. In the midst of the conflagrations of the late 1960s and the 1970s, Mayer's Hutchins story thus ends with little more than a whimper: "At seventy-five he told a friend, 'I

1. Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), p. 16, 17.

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should have died at thirty-five'" (1). Although Hutchins "lived on [for three more years] to see most (not all) of his efforts undone or disappointed, his high hopes dilapidated, his dark-unto-ebon predictions materialized in the national plunge to illiteracy, consumerism, banality," Mayer sees him as a hero who did well in choosing to fail at the right things instead of succeeding at the wrong ones (2). As Hutchins described his own modus operandi, "I am inclined to string along with the proposition enunciated by William the Silent (or was it Charles the Bold?) that it is not necessary to hope in order to undertake, nor to succeed in order to persevere" (506).

At the conclusion of his memoir, Mayer offers this assessment of his friend's virtues and vices:

> Bob Hutchins was not the very best man I have known, not by a long shot (nor yet the very worst, by a longer shot still.) But he was the only great man I knew both well and long. I knew him well enough and long enough to know that he was a great man who wanted to be good—and got greater. But not as great as he would have got had such goodness as he had had permitted him (as we say these days) to stroke the right people. (508)

He's referring, principally, to Hutchins's political ambitions (and those of others for him), which might easily have taken him to a Supreme Court Justiceship or the Vice-Presidency, or even the Presidency, had certain compunctions and a habit of speaking his mind not got in the way. But for Mayer, these compunctions and habits not only kept him from greater greatness but made him, in Mayer's eyes, truly great, and, to some extent, truly good as well.

One of the virtues of Mayer's book is its obsession with virtue, and it is a concern that is apropos of its subject. But one of its few vices (if one can call it a vice) is found in its over-concern with "greatness." Not only with great books, but with Hutchins as a "great man" in particular and with other "great men" in general. In fact, these phrases appear so often in this book as to become not only tedious but irritating, given what they reveal about the—dare I say it?—elitist obsessions of not only the subject but also his biographer. And the problem is equally with the "men" as with the "great." While Mayer makes it clear enough that Hutchins was both publicly and privately sexist in outlook and behavior (though his was a sexism cloaked in urbanity), the form and content of Mayer's own treatment of the issue is almost equally troublesome. For all their differences, Mayer and Hutchins are indeed closer in many respects than such friends often are, which may be what led Mayer to write this in his Epilogue: "No man need bother writing his friend's biography—or his enemy's. It will be a bad biography for the

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main and simple reason (as Penrod would say) that no man is a judge in his own cause (as Aristotle would say)" (507). Hutchins's cause *is* Mayer's cause more often than not, yet Hutchins, as a bred-in-the-bone (though lapsed) Calvinist, propounded a liberalism that might be read as a species of secularized Calvinism, and Mayer was not quite a Calvinist and not quite Hutchins's kind of liberal. However—and significantly—the two did share a certain dualistic ontology (derived, most likely, from the Greeks) that assumed a virtually insuperable separation of head from heart, and this resulted in a rather tragic view of the world in these men who had dedicated the primary portions of their public lives to education. (Although, given his Quaker beliefs, this tragic sense was ameliorated somewhat for Mayer.) As Mayer has put it elsewhere, such an ontology leaves the educator with little more than the perhaps vain hope that "there may be a kind of postnasal drip by means of which some of what goes into the head will find its way to the heart."[2] Hence both men, given their mutual underlying concern for virtue, found themselves frustrated by the apparent inability of those liberal arts they so ardently espoused to effect the moral and spiritual (not to mention intellectual) revolution that they sought.

But to say that Hutchins's cause is Mayer's is of course not to say that this memoir is a "bad biography"—quite the contrary. To say so is only another of Mayer's mirrorings of Hutchins, in this case a reflection of what he calls Hutchins's "bad man trick," whereby the speaker, by employing a much harsher self-deprecation than mere false modesty, creates a situation in which it is impossible—or at least difficult—to criticize him or her in terms that will carry any real weight. Yet in the face of this it must be said that Mayer's memoir, while written in his characteristically arresting style, is in places somewhat disjointed, despite the impressive efforts of editor Hicks, who at the time of Mayer's death was left a rather unwieldy manuscript to trim and assemble. In addition, despite Mayer's generally delightful prose style—or perhaps because of it—certain readers may tire of its baroque lucidity over such a long haul (500-plus pages) or else simply bog down when it gives way, upon occasion, to passages that are downright convoluted and which bear all the marks of the first-draft effort. (Out of respect for Mayer's craft, Hicks says he "has added nothing other than grammatical linkages required for coherence or continuity, and has striven to keep intact Mayer's style and liveliness" [511]). But Mayer was not unaware of these problems. In his last years he told me that he was having trouble, like Pound, in "making it cohere" and that he saw this as a legacy of

2. Milton Mayer, *The Nature of the Beast* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), p. 16.

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a lifetime devoted to the art of the essay, whose requirements, as he was finding, are a bit different from those of the long narrative.

But all this is as nothing (or close to it). As everything (as Mayer was fond of saying) are the strengths this book possesses in abundance. It is not only intelligent, witty, and full of the anecdotes that only an intimate could know and tell, but it's also written in a voice that is committed, personal, and perhaps most interestingly, dialectical. As, for instance, when describing the "humility" that was an aspect of Hutchins's "bad man trick":

> Beneath the humility he enjoyed professing was the arrogance of the Michelangelo who says, 'I'm just a dauber.' But beneath the arrogance in this case was an oppressive sense of his own unworthiness. Accepted by everyone else, he could not accept himself. Contemptuous of others' high evaluation of him, he could not but have a contemptuous opinion of their capacity to evaluate. Ashamed of his contemptuousness, he spent his life listening politely, with fixed attention, to their inferior evaluations and their inferior insights and their inferior alibis. It takes a Calvinist to be despicable, but any fool of an atheist can be unworthy. (195)

Moving from thesis to antithesis, as it were, and up toward a synthesis, Mayer at once moves down, in this case beneath the surface of Hutchins's demeanor and toward a rather subtle insight into the man behind the mask. And he takes this winnowing approach not only to the personality, but to the social and political issues taken up by that personality, and in so doing reveals their essentials.

For Mayer, as well as for Hutchins, the essentials were always moral and ethical, questions of value. During part of our time together, I lived with Mayer at his home in rural Massachusetts, working around the house as well as in the study. Walking by as I was scraping ice off his sidewalk one very cold morning, he muttered, "those are the *real* liberal arts, my boy." Yet he wasn't just ribbing (and trying to rile) me. He was in fact concerned, in a quite traditional way, about what used to be called "character." While the work we were doing was ostensibly intellectual, focusing on philosophy, history, and literature, the consequence was not. He made it clear that he'd known—and been associated with—his share of brilliant scoundrels, and he made it clear that he didn't want me "succeeding" such that I ended up like them. On one or two occasions, he took me down the road to visit his neighbor, John Duffy, an old Scottish farmer. Duffy was barely literate, but he very clearly had that thing that used to be called "character." I remember asking him what he thought of the rich hippies from nearby Hampshire College who were trying to be farmers, and he just laughed a benign,

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yet very giddy, laugh. As we walked home, Mayer said to me, simply, "Not Mortimer Adler, but John Duffy."

Hutchins's values, when it came right down to it, were Mayer's values: "On his sixty-fifth birthday an interviewer had asked him for the meaning of life in one word, and Hutchins had said, 'Learning' ('Generally people say "Loving,"' said the interviewer)" (504). His legacy of lasting value—education for democracy, interdisciplinary studies, academic freedom, a vision of individual minds engaging other individual minds across time and space—was first and last focused upon education. Yet for Hutchins, education was ultimately but a means to a more significant end, the "moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolution" that was his truest vision. Despite the fatal flaws of an establishment liberalism that never fully challenged the fundamental economic power structure (and the concomitant flaws of elitism and monoculturalism in the name of democracy), Hutchins was able to articulate what was fundamentally wrong with American education in the first half of this century and offer a comprehensive solution, much of which remains crucially relevant to our present moment. In the weeks before his death, Hutchins wrote an essay for *The Center Magazine* on "The Intellectual Community" wherein he spoke to the apparent moral vertigo of the post-Watergate moment. "On reading that article," Mayer explains,

> his friend Clifton Fadiman wrote him that the 'techo-state' did away with the necessity of distinguishing good and bad and the necessity to understand anything. Hutchins managed to reply: 'Perhaps I overrate the power of reason, the resilience of the spirit, and what Aristotle declared in the opening sentence of the *Metaphysics*—the fact that all men by nature desire to know. But these are impressive human credentials, and it is not at all clear to me that the techno-state, as you have described it, is indomitable.... The techno-state is in fact a powerful force. The techno-culture may indeed threaten to sweep all before it. But if that is true, all the more reason to rally human resources, summon the best in man, and try to create those intellectual communities which will subordinate technology to higher purposes. (506)

He concluded, after what appears to have been a moment's reflection, "I had not realized how optimistic I am."

JOHN WRIGHT

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