

thinking seems wholly justified.

Frankly, I do not believe in the separate existence of an Oriental mind or an Occidental mind or an ancient mind or a medieval mind or a modern mind. I do believe indeed that different races of mankind have different aptitudes or talents.... We may misunderstand ancient writers, but our very recognition of the possibility of misunderstanding them shows that there is also a possibility of understanding them. I may have difficulty in understanding the mental processes of the Chinese and the Japanese, as they have difficulty in understanding mine; but the very fact that we can both detect that difficulty shows that there is a common intellectual ground upon which we can stand.^7

Though the modern mind *per se* must be consequently denied any quasi-ontological status as an historical entity, its reality as a cultural phenomenon must be asserted. A *Zeitgeist* is no doubt as elusive and intangible as a fog, but it is just as real -- and may be just as obfuscating. Julian Huxley acknowledges this, when despite his abhorrence of religious taboos, he remarks:

Every society in every age not only needs some system of beliefs, including a basic attitude to life, an organized set of ideas round which emotion and purpose may gather, and a conception of human destiny. It needs a philosophy and a faith to achieve a guide to orderly living -- in other words a morality.^8

Every society in every age not only needs a generally accepted belief-system or moral framework: it possesses such a controlling ideology, a set of assumptions, sentiments, and attitudes, a body of operational presuppositions that are rarely called into question. A helpful imagery has been suggested by Duncan Williams:

If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way... and then, they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs will appear rather to resist the decrees of providence itself, than the mere designs of men.^9

In some ages, however, the "mighty current in human affairs" must be resisted, as Burke himself resisted the French Revolution, because it is sweeping people towards destructive rapids.^10

The Origins of the Modern Mind

Conceding, therefore, both the historical and heuristic legitimacy of modifying the noun *mind* by the adjective *modern* -- a limited legitimacy -- another preliminary issue arises which requires investigation. When did the modern mind begin to obtrude upon Western civilization, pushing aside that intellectual and cultural *gestalt* known as the medieval mind? And what were, if they can be identified, the causes and forces that produced it?

This investigation may turn out to be a futile quest if Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr., are correct. In the introduction to their comprehensive anthology, *The Modern Tradition*, they describe the efforts of that amorphous group of intellectuals, authors, and artists whom they label "the modernists" to determine "their relation to the past." A most