

The essay which follows is the introductory lecture of a new course offered for the first time on the campus, «European literature and its philosophy.» It is given by Dr Gustav Mueller, poet, author and playwright who is associate professor of philosophy



Literature and its philosophy

BY GUSTAV MUELLER

PHILOSOPHY in a broad and popular sense means evaluation of life. Everyone, insofar as he believes in something "worth his while," insofar as he consistently realizes a purpose of importance to himself or to others, possesses in the pursuit of his ideal his philosophy. Even the "chasing of the dollar," the belief that it is a moral obligation "to make good," is a kind of philosophy, the philosophy of capitalism which has large implications.

A trifle more technical, however, philosophy is not only to be found in this factual evaluation of life, this one-sided pursuit of certain values and ideals, it is rather the reflection on them, the conscious attempt to become aware of them to weigh, compare and order them. An artist, for example, is a philosopher in that he not only wiggles his fingers, but when he asks what value or what meaning his particular art has within all arts and further when he attempts to see the meaning of art in comparison with other values of life. Philosophy evaluates life by distinguishing values and by asking what place they occupy in the whole of life. In this sense philosophy is the unifying interest in civilization, the craving for conscious clarity and unity of life. Unity of interests, tendencies, purposes in an individual is his soul or personality. Philosophy is the soul and center of a civilization.

But conscious evaluation also involves criticism. We know values tend to exaggerate their importance, to be blind for the just claims of other perhaps opposing values. This blind and measure-

less exaggeration, this loss of balance, is the contrary of a sane philosophical attitude. Philosophy tries to see not only the values but also their intrinsic limitations. A balanced, objective, critical, vigilant judgment is known as conscience of man. Philosophy in this sense is not only the soul but also the conscience of a civilization.

But the criticism must be constructive. It is the way in which you rate and range things with regard to their merit. Compare for instance Plato's *State* with Aristotle's *Ethics*. Both books survey the values of Greek life, make clear and unify the different ideals. But the difference in putting them together, the architecture so to speak of both systems is very different. It takes courage to have a conviction about the relative merits of ideals. Yet no man can escape this responsibility. If he does not take it consciously and intelligently, he will accept systems blindly, unawares and credulously. In this sense of personal risk and responsibility philosophy is the adventure of civilization to give meaning to existence.

Now in speaking of the philosophy of literature we do not mean to hunt for so-called influences of particular philosophers on particular writers. Nor do we mean to hunt for "wise" sayings, proverbial maxims that are found in good literature.

We rather refer to a fundamental similarity or kinship of great literature and philosophy.

For the writer also makes you aware

of the struggles, hopes and defeats of life. He also does not stay within his own private concerns but pictures in the clash of his personalities the character of his time. And if he is first-rate he even will transcend his time and portray concerns important as long as there is humanity alive. This corresponds to what we have called the reflective, unifying function of philosophy in a person or in a civilization.

The analogy goes further. The writer, the great writer, also is not satisfied with a mere portrayal or report. He also will have a convincing and unique way of "building;" he also has an "architecture" or a style. And "the style is the man," as someone long ago put it. Behind the panorama of life lies the attitude, the evaluation of things. In giving artistic form to it the writer manifests his philosophy of life.

This many will deny or misunderstand. They will protest that the artist shall never preach. But I do not say that he should. I do not advocate an explicit reasoning or moralizing. I mean the inner form of a work, the feeling of what is important and what is emphasized, that betrays a philosophy of life. An example may make this clear. When Zola in the Nineteenth century came out with his "experimental novel" theory, that the writer like a scientist should take everything as being equally important and write his novels as if they were results of laboratory investigations, he thought that he had inaugurated an "objective" epoch in literature. But what

(TURN TO PAGE 191, PLEASE)

- ROBERT E. ROBERTS, M. D. '26; 113 East Seventh street, Stillwater
 CHAS. WALTER ROBERTSON, M. D. '28; Chandler
 FRANK P. ROBINSON, M. D. '14; Nash
 JOHN H. ROBINSON, M. D. '25; 301 West Twelfth street, Oklahoma City
 MAMILIANO JUAN RODRIGUEZ, M. D. '31; 300 West Twelfth street, Oklahoma City
 WILLIAM GERALD ROGERS, M. D. '30; Grace hospital, Detroit, Michigan
 NEESON ROLLE, M. D. '30; Charity hospital, New Orleans, Louisiana
 JAMES W. ROLLO, M. D. '13; Lubbock, Texas
 GODOFREDO DILAY, ROSALES, M. D. '26; Batangas, Philippine Islands
 RALPH L. ROYSTER, M. D. '30; 617 Main street, Purcell
 †G. CLYDE RUBLE, M. D. '22; Deceased
 JOE C. RUDE, M. D. '30; Bethany
 †BEDFORD W. RUSSEL, M. D. '09; Deceased
 MARVIN LEROY SADDORIS, M. D. '27; Canyon, Texas
 LEROY H. SADDLER, M. D. '29; Graduate hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 P. SALMAN, M. D. '18; 187 Henry street, New York City
 AUSTIN O. SANDEN, M. D. '22; Bear Oil, Wyoming
 FENTON A. SANGER, M. D. '26; 305 Cotton Exchange building, Oklahoma City
 F. M. SANGER, M. D. '07; 305 Cotton Exchange building, Oklahoma City
 PAUL G. SANGER, M. D. '31; Wesley hospital, Oklahoma City
 WELBORN W. SANGER, M. D. '31; San Diego County General hospital, San Diego, California
 JOHN F. SARGENT, M. D. '21; Waverly, Kansas
 J. R. SAYERS, M. D. '29; U. S. S. S. *West Virginia*, San Pedro, California
 ROBERT M. SAYLOR, M. D. '29; Seiling
 HERMAN CHARLES SEHESTED, M. D. '31; 800 East Thirteenth street, Oklahoma City
 DWIGHT B. SHAW, M. D. '26; Address unknown
 WM. LOTON SHIPPEY, M. D. '27; Wister
 †ERNEST A. SMITH, M. D. '09; Deceased
 LESTER P. SMITH, M. D. '25; Elmore City
 MORRIS W. SMITH, M. D. '28; Comanche hospital, Comanche
 R. EARLE SMITH, M. D. '13 410 Powers Theater building, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 WILLIAM O. SMITH, M. D. '25; Philcade building, Tulsa
 YONEKICHI SOMA, M. D. '20; Botica Japonesa, Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico
 RICHARD G. SOUTAR, M. D. '22; 3300 Cutter Way, Sacramento, California
 J. ELLIS SOUTER, M. D. '19; 320 East Boyd, Norman
 HOMER CLARENCE SPRINGER, M. D. '31; City hospital, Macon, Georgia
 ORION C. STANDIFER, M. D. '24; 103½ South Main street, Elk City
 HARRY W. STEINIG, M. D. '25; 2103 Seventy-fourth street, Brooklyn, New York
 AUDY BRYAN STEPHENS, M. D. '28; care Ware hospital and Clinic, Seminole
 I. P. STEPHENSON, M. D. '29; St. Anthony's hospital, Oklahoma City
 ROBERT J. STILLWELL, M. D. '29; 1608 North Lottie, Oklahoma City
 HUGH D. STITES, M. D. '24; Aledo, Illinois
 RAYMOND WARD STONER, M. D. '30; 504 Simpson building, Ardmore
 DANIEL FREEMAN STOUGH, M. D. '27; Geary
 MARVIN E. STOUT, M. D. '10; Thirteenth and Robinson, Oklahoma City
 S. ERNEST STRADER, M. D. '17; 515 Medical Arts building, Oklahoma City
 FORREST L. STRATTON, M. D. '26; Kilgore, Texas
 CLAYTON K. STROUP, M. D. '26; 2121 Proctor street, Flint, Michigan
 CLARENCE B. SULLIVAN, M. D. '22; Tioga La. Charles N. Talley, M. D. '23; Marlow
 WILLIAM L. TAYLOR, M. D. '10; Gerty
 EDWIN C. THOMAS, M. D. '14; 54 Fifth street, Miami, Florida
 FRANK THOMASON, M. D. '17; Slick
 BENJAMIN D. THOMPSON, M. D. '26; 507 Kress building, Houston, Texas
 WAYMAN J. THOMPSON, M. D. '29; 120 Osler building, 1200 North Walker, Oklahoma City
 JOHN B. TODD, M. D. '29; 4085 West Third street, Los Angeles, California
 C. DONOVAN TOOL, M. D. '31; University hospital, Oklahoma City
 IRVIN B. TRAPP, M. D. '29; care Health Unit, Indianola, Mississippi
 ALBERT CARROLL TRAWEEK, JR., M. D. '30; U. S. Naval hospital, San Diego, California
 MAY DREW TWYFORD, M. D. '13; Box 346, Oklahoma City
 ERNEST R. VAHLBERT, M. D. '23; 723 Perrine building, Oklahoma City
 SILVINE LUNA VALDERAS, M. D. '24; Sariaya, Philippine Islands
 GLENNWOOD MILFORD VAN VALKENBURGH, M. D. '31; Graduate hospital, Philadelphia, Pa.
 EVERETT P. VEACH, M. D. '26; Okeene
 WILLIAM DUKE VINCENT, M. D. '17; Woodward
 L. L. WADE, M. D. '17; Ryan
 JOHN CLIFTON WAGNER, M. D. '19; Ponca City
 THEODORE G. WAILS, M. D. '21; 902 Medical Arts building, Oklahoma City
 AGNEW A. WALKER, M. D. '24; Aldridge building, Wewoka
 JOSEPH D. WALKER, M. D. '22; 1305 Walker avenue, Houston, Texas
 PRICE M. WALKER, M. D. '22; Medical Arts building, Dallas, Texas
 WILLIAM A. WALKER, M. D. '27; 316 East Thirteenth Place, Tulsa
 VIRGIL M. WALLACE, M. D. '11; 219 South Hughes, Morris
 DELBERT AUDRAY WARD, M. D. '31; St. Louis City hospital, St. Louis, Missouri
 ROY CHESTER WARREN, M. D. '28; Temple
 O. A. WATSON, M. D. '29; Altus
 R. DELBERT WATSON, M. D. '29; Britton
 ROY WEBB, M. D. '16; Pampa, Texas
 HENRY WEEDN, M. D. '16; 8702 Chestnut, Southgate, California
 ROSS WILSON WEISIGER, M. D. '30; University hospital, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 EVA AUSTIN WELLS, M. D. '10; 712 Medical Arts building, Oklahoma City
 WALTER W. WELLS, M. D. '10; 1209 Medical Arts building Oklahoma City
 W. KELLY WEST, M. D. '15; 233 West Thirty-third street, Oklahoma City
 NELSON STUART WHITE, M. D. '20; 404 Medical Arts building, Tulsa
 MALLALIEU M. WICKHAM, M. D. '26; 716 West Symmes, Norman
 WILLIAM B. WILD, M. D. '25; Pampa, Texas
 DORA DOTY WILDMAN, M. D. '26; 925 East Eleventh street, Oklahoma City
 STANLEY F. WILDMAN, M. D. '24; 405 Medical Arts building, Oklahoma City
 A. RAY WILEY, M. D. '13; 812-814 Medical Arts building, Tulsa
 LEE ROY WILHITE, M. D. '16; Perkins
 BERNIE J. WILKERSON, M. D. '30; Baptist hospital, Houston, Texas
 HARRY B. WILKINS, M. D. '27; 912 Medical Arts building, Oklahoma City
 FRANCIS M. WILKS, M. D. '10; Corner of Twelfth and Spring, Collinsville
 D. G. WILLARD, M. D. '29; Security National bank building, Norman
 ALPHA McADAMS WILLIAMS, M. D. 21; 11 West Drummond, Shawnee
 GORDON DARNALL WILLIAMS, M. D. '27; 321 North Custer, Weatherford
 LEONARD C. WILLIAMS, M. D. '20; 402 Osler building, Oklahoma City
 R. McKINLEY WILLIAMS, M. D. '30; Fresno County hospital, Fresno, California
 KENNETH J. WILSON, M. D. '16; 710-711 Medical Arts building, Oklahoma City
 JOHN POWERS WOLFF, M. D. '27; 2516 North Twenty-first street, Oklahoma City
 JAMES C. WOLL, M. D. '17; 604 North Seventh, Tonkawa
 HAROLD ALVA WOOD, M. D. '30; care A. S. Wood, Blackwell
 LOUIS E. WOODS, M. D. '26; 1902 South Fourteenth street, Chickasha
 FRED EDWARD WOODSON, M. D. '31; University hospital, Oklahoma City
 NEIL W. WOODWARD, M. D. '29; 311 Harrison avenue, Oklahoma City
 ASA WRIGHT, M. D. '13; Mirando City, Texas
 FLORA A. WRIGHT, M. D. '25; Olive View, California
 HOSLER H. WYAND, M. D. '22; 624 Guardian bank building, Cleveland, Ohio
 CHARLES W. YOUNG, M. D. '22; Cleveland



LITERATURE AND ITS PHILOSOPHY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 176)

he had thereby inaugurated was merely a peculiar, in his case, a scientific philosophy of life, a bias of his epoch.

Philosophy and literature are similar but not identical. The difference lies in their medium. The vehicle of philosophy is logical thought, the vehicle of literature is the word. The word as medium of art does not point beyond itself to "things" outside of itself, but carries an emotional, imaginative fringe, it challenges you to build up an irreal, a seeming world, in which you believe as if it were a real one. Thus it emancipates you from the cares and problems of your environment and permits you to see life steady and see it whole.

And even in this differentiating medium lies a similarity to philosophy. By virtue of its entirely symbolic medium, the word, literature ranges over the realm of all the other arts. In imagination you build and chisel and paint and sing. Literature is a synthetic and therefore the most philosophical of arts. Philosophy has an analogous mystic function with regard to special sciences, whose methods and presuppositions are philosophical problems. If what has been said is valid at all, the conclusion seems to be inevitable that we should have a philosophical interpretation of literature. This philosophical interpretation should have its place side by side with a material informatory, philological method and a literary, artistic, reproductive, intuitive method. The philosophical method would be to interpret art as the symbolic expression of evaluation, which constitutes the adventurous history of philosophies of life or what is the same thing, of cultural epochs. It would have to approach great works of literature with the respect due to genial individuals, whose message is an actual challenge and a question rather than an indifferent, dead and gone fact.