God Is Dead But Maguire Says Man Can Live On

By RICHARD BEST
Thresher Religion Editor

Wesleyen University’s John David Maguire presented his first Religious Emphasis Week lecture in Hamman Hall Wednesday morning. Excused from classes for the occasion, the audience listened enthusiastically as the young theologian, with a curious combination of Ivy League apparel and Southern accent, expounded his ideas for life in a culture whose god has died.

Regardless of the individual’s belief, “God is dead, culturally speaking.” This assumption underlay Maguire’s attempt to discover a modus vivendi, or as he put it, “a certain style,” by which men can fashion a meaningful existence when they are no longer conscious of “cosmic superintendance.”

Esthetes Escape

Maguire mentioned three principal “styles” prevalent in current intellectual life. The esthetic way, or the life of art for art’s sake, has become attractive in a distasteful world. The esthete tries to transcend life by shifting into another realm. This trend, as exemplified by Joyce and John Updike, can evolve into an utterly self-centered isolation.

A way popular in theological circles is that of the victim—the ability to “take” all the suffering that life can inflict. The victim glories in endurance and martyrdom. Maguire noted that this mode is adopted by many college students who are content to be buffeted about like “ping-pong balls in a mountain stream.” Yet victimage can lead to a type of homosexuality and to suicide. The victim is “filled without being fulfilled.”

Aggressors’ Way

Finally there is the way of the aggressor. Aggression is obvious among militant civil rights workers fed up with the pacifism of Martin Luther King. Above all it is seen in the recent writings of Norman Mailer. The aggressor delights in demonstrations of his power; aware of death’s inevitability, he “wants to do it to them before they do it to him.”

The reception of the talk augurs well for the success of Religious Emphasis Week. Maguire has presented in his first lecture a satisfactory and well-delivered chart of the intellectual currents of the post-Christian age.