

Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change  
Series I, Culture and Values, Volume 33

# **Three Philosophies of Society**

By  
*Paul Hanly Furfey*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy



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Box 261  
Cardinal Station  
Washington, D.C. 20064

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Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication**

Furfey, Paul Hanly, 1896-1992

Three theories of society / by Paul Hanly Furfey.

p.cm. — (Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series I, Culture and values ; v.

33)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1.Christian sociology—Catholic Church. I. Title. II Title. III. Series.

HN37.C3F83 2005

261-dc22

2005024301

CIP

ISBN 978-1-56518-228-8 (pbk.)



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## Preface

Modern social thought is in an extraordinary state of confusion. There is lack of agreement on the most fundamental issues. Expert opinion is divided a score of ways on any social problem of the day: the merits of the New Deal, the danger of overpopulation, the necessity for rearmament, the respective rights and obligations of capital and labor.

Anyone who has followed current discussion of such topics will realize that the existing disagreement affects not only the questions themselves, but also the very methods by which they are to be studied. Authorities on social problems do not generally recognize the validity of each other's techniques. Thus, a trained social scientist from a university faculty will be unimpressed by the fervid oratory of a labor agitator who reaches his conclusion by sentiment rather than by social surveys. A theologian, on the other hand, will regard the social scientist as narrow-minded because he gives no weight in his researches to the data of revelation. Again, a poet, sensitive to the subtle cross-currents of human feeling present in the social scene, will regard as more or less obtuse those who do not share his fine intuitions of emotional values. So it happens that diverse approaches to the study of society lead to diverse opinions about the nature of society and the solutions to current questions. Thus confusion becomes ever worse confounded.

A sensible thing to do under these circumstances would be to drop the discussion of society itself for the moment and to turn to a discussion of the validity of the various ways of studying society. In the understanding of social phenomena what part, if any, should be played by poetic insight? What part, by objective scientific methods? What part, by theology? What part, by philosophy? It is only after these questions have been clarified to some degree that we can hope to return to the study of society with any prospect of even partial agreement.

The present volume represents a rather tentative approach to the problems of the last paragraph. The conclusion finally to be reached is that many different techniques must concur in order to reach a really satisfactory view of society. These techniques will be very diverse and they must be combined, with a proper subordination of one to another, to the final purpose of attaining the deepest and fullest possible understanding of society. On the basis of such a deep understanding, it is possible to build a human society which shall be deeply satisfying to the most fundamental needs of man. Modern society is, on the whole, unsatisfying or even actually evil, because the welter of conflicting opinions makes it impossible for most persons now to attain an adequate understanding of society, its function and its working. Modern society is drifting helplessly toward dangerous shoals because the persons who steer the course of society lack the proper charts.

No one realizes better than the present writer the difficulty of the problem faced in this volume. That he has dared to undertake it at all has been due to the kindly encouragement and the helpful advice of friends too numerous to mention. It would be unfair, however, to omit the names of Dr. Mary Elizabeth Walsh of the Department of Sociology at the Catholic University with whom each chapter was thoroughly discussed before it was written; of Very Rev. Anthony Viéban, S.S., S.T.D., J.C.D., Superior of the Sulpician Seminary, Washington; of Very Rev. Louis A. Arand, S.S., S.T.D., President of Caldwell Hall, Catholic University; of Very Rev. Francis Augustine Walsh, O.S.B., Ph.D., of the Department of Philosophy at the Catholic University; and of Rev. Eric F. Mackenzie, S.T.L., D.C.L., of St. John's Seminary, Boston. While the author is extremely grateful for the help received from these persons, it is only fair to state that this

acknowledgment does not imply their approval of all the viewpoints herein expressed. The mechanics of composition were facilitated by the efficiency of Miss Beatrice PA. Murphy to whom the book was dictated, and of Miss Edwina T. Boyer who typed some of the chapters. Finally, acknowledgment is due the J. B. Lippincott Company and the Atlantic Monthly Company for permission to reproduce certain copyrighted material.

*Paul Hanly Furfey*



## Introduction

*Three Theories of Society*, a work of Msgr. Paul Hanly Furfey, is both old and new. For both reasons it is especially important for our day.

Let me explain. First, it is old not merely as written over 65 years ago, but especially as bearing the content of the long tradition of Western philosophy and theology, stretching from Plato and even the mythic stage of Greek thought to the immediate pre-World War II Great Depression of the 1930s. It bears then the philosophia *perennis* which he relates to the social order. In this it is truly unique, for there are few of any comparable works which draw so richly upon classical scholastic philosophy and theology and apply it to social theory.

Why is this so? It would seem that the emergence of sociological theory, especially in the Anglo-Saxon context, was carried forward in the shadow of the physical sciences. It was their hope to establish a science of society which would be reduced to the same empirical simplicity and surety as in physics and chemistry. In the atmosphere of the early 20th century this would be not without some of the search to control all whether by the mental laboratories of psychology or the social totalitarianism imposed by the ideologies of fascism and communism.

In strong contrast to this the effort in Catholic intellectual circles was to develop a consciously Catholic psychology (Dom Vernon Moore) and a Catholic sociology (Paul Hanly Furfey) based upon the dignity and freedom of the human person as image of God.

When, however, in the 1960s the Second Vatican Council reflected the need and desire to engage human life more directly, as typified by its document "The Church in the World," this was generally taken to suggest the abandonment of the previous effort at "Catholic" human and social sciences. Work in Catholic intellectual circles was merged – or immersed – into the strongly empirical currents of the social sciences.

The time of P.H. Furfey's *Three Theories of Society* had come, and gone.

Yet today it is in many ways returning. After 400 years the hopes of modernity have proven to be unrealizable. With the development of human powers its search for certainty and control at the expense of human freedom and values has shown itself to be destructive of humanity; with the succession of a global to a bipolar world, its process of abstraction from all but the material now renders us incapable of the encounter of civilizations and religions.

Suddenly P.H. Furfey's *Three Theories of Societies* and its inclusion and culmination in a society that is pistic or faith-based is no longer quaint but prophetic. In this context scholars at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan came to search in the Furfey archives at The Catholic University of America, Washington. They called attention to the rich vision of thought, newly indispensable for our times, which they contain. The republication of this work at this time is the result of their stimulus.

It would, of course, be vain to hope that this work, written in 1938, would hold a detailed epistemology for the sociology of the 21st century. Indeed, in the companion volume resulting from a joint conference of the above two Universities, Paul Sullins rightly criticizes Furfey for not having drawn more adequately on the critique of social structures which had been appearing in such social documents of the Catholic Church from the late 1800s as *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Annocited* in this work.

Nevertheless, as sociologists for the 21st century take up the global issues of the formation and interaction of cultures and civilizations in this newly global age they will find in this work of Paul Hanly Furfey, *Three Theories of Society*, a greatly expanded horizon. Beyond the modern

empirical or positivistic dimensions of American sociology, and beyond the conceptual and systemic dimensions of European theoretical sociology, it goes to the religious foundations of society. He has richly articulated these in terms of the long tradition of perennial Christian philosophy and theology. These will need to be related both back to patterns of social structures much as in the Encyclicals, and ahead to meet the multiple faiths and civilizations of Asia, Islam and the Southern Hemisphere.

This work of Paul Hanly Furfey unlocks the door to both past and future while providing the long and rich heritage of one of the world's great religions and civilizations. He has left us much to do, but will be with us throughout.

*George F. McLean*

## Chapter I

# The Modern Success-Ideal

Social insight is a prerequisite for social reform. To improve conditions, we must first understand them. There is no hope of solving the grave social problems which confront the world today unless we appreciate the causes which have created these problems. Generally speaking, our success will be proportional to the depth of our insight.

Insight is necessary. If, then, we hope to bring genuine alleviation to the countless rachitic babies and their undernourished mothers, to the millions of discouraged unemployed, if we wish to bring peace to a world torn by class struggle and terrified by war and rumors of war, if we expect fundamental social reform of any sort, then we must set ourselves seriously to the task of understanding society as deeply as possible.

This much must be granted; yet the question remains, how is this fundamental insight to be acquired? Broadly speaking, the study of society may be approached in either of two ways.

One way is to examine only the visible facts of society in the hope of finding general laws underlying them. This is parallel to the method of the astronomer who examines the motions of the planets and discovers general laws explaining or summarizing these motions. This, then, is the method of science. It is the accepted method of most modern sociologists. Let us call it the phenomenological method.

The other approach also studies the visible phenomena of society but it tries to explain these phenomena in terms of human motivation rather than in terms of impersonal laws. This method looks at society from within, from the human side. It views as the essential thing in society the end, *telos*, which the members of that society pursue. Let us therefore call it the teleological method.

The teleological method is the classical approach to the study of society. From the earliest times down to the beginning of the last century, practically all students of sociology used this method. Those of them who were interested in understanding society as it was, asked, What do men desire in society? Those with ethical preoccupations asked, What ought men to desire in society? But whether or not they were concerned with questions of ethics, these social thinkers saw the essence of society in the common purpose pursued by its members.

The phenomenological method followed the rise of modern physical science. Science had made great advances through the painstaking observation of phenomena and the classification of these phenomena under general laws. It began to occur to social thinkers that this same technique might be applied to sociology. The method had proved surprisingly successful in astronomy, chemistry, biology, physics. Why should it not prove equally successful in the study of society?

This viewpoint is closely associated with the name of Comte. From his time on, students of society began to collect facts with a new enthusiasm. Biology, anthropology and climatology were ransacked for relevant data. In the meantime, Quetelet had begun to apply mathematical methods to the analysis of social data and the task was continued by enthusiastic workers in other countries. Theoretical sociology was gradually pushed into the background.

The movement inaugurated by Comte has seen its culmination in our own day. In the presence of widespread determinism, the influence of free will has been neglected or denied. Sociologists are less and less concerned with questions of common purpose. On the other hand, there has been widespread borrowing from the exact sciences. The spirit of modern American sociology is behavioristic. The phenomenological method is definitely dominant.

The present book will be based on what I have called the teleological method. We shall attempt to understand society by understanding the fundamental purpose of its members. Before proceeding with this method, however, it is only fair to examine the rival technique and to state the reasons for discarding it.

The phenomenological method begins with the exact observation of social phenomena. It examines such things as delinquency rates, unemployment statistics, price indices, population trends, the progress of social legislation, the rise and decline of social institutions. It tries to discover uniformities in these phenomena, in which attempt it frequently uses mathematical methods of analysis. Thus, the modern sociologist hopes to arrive at general laws and by these laws to learn to control society.

This method has certain evident advantages. It is the method of science, and no one needs to be told of the striking success of scientific method in other fields. Then too, it is objective. It deals with concrete and verifiable facts, while the rival method is concerned with such an ethereal thing as human purpose. Finally, the majority of modern sociologists, the persons who ought to be most competent to judge, would almost certainly vote for some form of the phenomenological method.

The disadvantages, however, are even more serious. First of all, it is clear that the success of physical science has been dependent on the existence of clear-cut uniformities in nature. On the other hand, social phenomena do not show the same degree of uniform action. The fall of a body in a vacuum may be described by the well-known formula:  $s = \frac{1}{2} gt^2$ . Every time this formula is applied, it works equally well because the fall of a body in a vacuum is a uniform phenomenon. But we cannot find these same clear-cut laws in human activities. Under apparently similar circumstances a man may act in one manner ninety-nine times and then in a completely different manner the hundredth time. Human beings are like that.

This lack of uniformity is most clearly evident when mathematical techniques are applied to sociology. These methods succeed brilliantly where clear-cut uniformities exist, as in astronomy or physics. When applied to social phenomena they limp badly. It is true that the more enthusiastic of the mathematical sociologists claim to have discovered uniformities in their statistical analysis of social data, but their methods will not bear up under careful mathematical examination. The uniformities, one finds, are artifacts introduced without justification by the formulae themselves.<sup>1</sup>

A second disadvantage of the phenomenological method is its very objectivity. Objectivity is highly desirable in the exact sciences. It is an advantage to be able to describe physical phenomena without reference to one's subjective mental state. Certainly it was a great day for physical science when investigators learned to rule out such subjective factors. Objectivity, however, is, in certain cases, a drawback in the study of society. For objectivity prescind from mental states, and these very mental states are part of the etiology of social phenomena. In other words, concentration on external facts distracts us from the element of purpose, and purpose is the essential element in society.

A society, after all, is a group cooperating for some common purpose. This common purpose gives the society its specific character. How does a golf club differ from a scientific society? The obvious answer is that the members of one group have come together to play golf while the members of the other group have come together to discuss scientific subjects. The common purpose makes a given society what it is. Common purpose is the essence of a social group. Without a common purpose a group becomes a mere aggregation of individuals. It ceases to be a society. This is the justification of the teleological method.

Really to understand a society we must know its common purpose. To understand our modern civilization as a whole we must understand the purposes of the men who make it up. We shall

therefore study in the present book, not the external aspects of the various sectors of the modern world, their territory, population, products, but rather the way their people react to these things. We shall examine, not the mere events of history as an annalist might see them, but rather these events as the actors saw them, as viewed in the light of national ambitions. For the external events are the mere shell within which the living reality exists. The living reality itself, the life of society itself, is something deeper. It is a scale of values, a way of looking at things. It is a congeries of traditions, prejudices, and vague fears. It is a massive common activity which takes its direction from these apprehended values. If we wish to understand our contemporary civilization, then we must not be content to view its surface aspects alone. We must probe deeper. We must examine the ambitions which sway the great bulk of modern men and which thus give direction to the current of modern life. Only thus can contemporary society be deeply understood.

We proceed therefore to the question, what are the ideals and ambitions from which the multifarious activities of the modern man arise? There is an obvious, if superficial, answer to this question. The modern man's ambition is to succeed. This is what he values. This is what he reads about in newspapers and periodicals. No compliment is more welcome than to be called "an outstanding success"; no epithet is more damning than "failure."

It is evident, of course, that the word 'success' is only a relative term. To 'succeed' means to attain some desired end, but the word itself does not indicate what that end may be. In what sense, then, does the modern man understand this word? What is this brand of success which is on every tongue and which seems to summarize the average person's ambition?

At this point we must beware of the grave danger of over-simplification; for there is a temptation to answer the above question by some easy formula. One might say, for example, that to succeed means simply to make a lot of money, or one might say that the desire for physical comfort tells the whole story. All this, however, is actually too simple. Human nature is very complex. Even the most single-minded man has many ends in life, and it is difficult to summarize all these varied ambitions in a word. It is true that money is very much overvalued in the United States of America, but even modern Americans are not quite completely given over to avarice. They actually do desire a few other things besides money.

The success-ideal therefore cannot be summarized in an easy phrase. Perhaps the best way to study it is to seek the meaning of success in the life of those people who have admittedly attained it. There exists a successful class. When the average man talks about success, he intends to adopt the golden manner of life which he sees or reads about in this class. The success-ideal, therefore, is a manner of life, a scale of values, a system of ethics, almost a *culture* in the anthropological sense, that is, a "trait-complex manifested by a separate social unit of mankind." 2

We must therefore turn our attention to the success-class. We must inquire what it is, what its manner of life is like, what its desires and its privileges may be. This investigation may give us the key to the question asked above about the ambitions of the average man and consequently about the common purpose of our civilization.

The success-class is a group of persons recognized by the balance of the community as having won out in our competitive society. Its members have qualified as winners in various ways. One very important qualification certainly is money. It is, indeed, almost essential to be able to live in comfort, if one is to be accepted in the class. Money is probably the most important single element, but it is certainly not the only one. We recognize a man as successful if he has power without a great deal of money. A United States senator may have an income no greater than the local saloon-keeper, but the former is recognized as successful while the latter may not be.

Other sorts of achievement may qualify one for membership in the class. A well-known writer, a musician of note, or an artist of recognized standing, may well be considered successful. Even the performance of some spectacular and wholly useless stunt may bring the coveted membership, as it did in the case of Colonel Lindbergh. Education, too, is certainly a desirable qualification. The man with a college degree finds it easier to enter the success-class than the man who makes mistakes in grammar. The possession of certain standardized tastes is desirable. Successful men tend to think alike on politics, even on religion. Successful women must know how to dress fashionably and they must master a complicated system of etiquette. Finally, certain persons are born successful in the sense that their birth from very successful parents almost automatically qualifies them.

All the above are certainly elements helping toward membership in the successful class, but they are not all equally essential elements. A distinguished scientist may be considered successful even though comparatively poor. A millionaire may be accepted even though he says "ain't".

There is a surprising uniformity of culture within this class. Although entering on the basis of wholly different qualifications, men who are once received within the class tend to think and act alike. The rough millionaire who has been accepted because of his wealth, tries to correct his grammar, while his wife reads Emily Post. The man who has been admitted because he is a recognized musician, tends to adopt from his fellow members their political and social prejudices. A certain leveling process is thus at work, with the result that one can speak of *the* success-culture as though it were a unit, without seriously misrepresenting the facts.

The success-class enjoys more than its proportional share of the privileges of our civilization. Successful men can take physical comfort for granted, sufficient wholesome food, warm and attractive clothing, adequate housing, and excellent medical care. The poor, in contrast, must constantly struggle for these things. Successful men have a comforting sense of security. Seldom need they fear real want. Even when a member of the class "loses every cent" on the stock market, he does not expect to go to the almshouse. Somehow his friends will make an opening for him. Perhaps he may succeed again or face a radically restricted income for the rest of his life; but he seldom need fear literal poverty. The successful woman is advantageously placed in regard to marriage. She can select a desirable mate. The successful man has a comforting sense of power. He can get interviews with important people and all reasonable favors. His wife is accepted in society. She is not snubbed. All in all, life in the successful class is comfortable, pleasant, and secure.

There is another side to the picture. The class which enjoys the privileges also must bear the responsibilities. Since money and power are qualifications for entrance into this class, it is to be expected that the class will dominate the business and political world. But the power of successful men extends far beyond these fields. They finance our charities and, thus, control the fundamental policies of modern social work. They hold the majority of places on the boards of trustees of our universities and, thus, they have their say about the policies of modern education. Wealthy and successful men endow, and consequently control, our museums and libraries, our hospitals and research foundations. Thus, they are in a position to dictate the course of much of our national life.

It is evident from all this that the success-culture is a thing too complex to be summarized adequately in a phrase. The successful man is a many-sided individual. He is selfish enough to take to himself a large share of the good things of life, yet he has a sense of responsibility which makes him willing to devote a goodly portion of his time and money to altruistic ventures of various sorts.

It is this class with its meanness and its courage, its selfishness, its altruism, and its complicated etiquette, from which our modern civilization takes its character. For not only does the success-class regulate its own life according to the success-culture, but, by its power of controlling society, it tends to direct the whole trend of modern civilization toward this same success-culture. This directive process is partly unconscious; for by acting as an ideal to the rest of society, successful men diffuse their own customs, their own scale of values, their own principles, through the rest of society. Thus, the success-class gives society its *telos*.

Of course, it would not be accurate to push this generalization too far. We must not represent the success-ideal as completely dominant. In every part of society there are some individuals who refuse to accept their ideals from the success-class. There are contented farmers, living close to the soil, taking a homely joy in their contact with growing things, who would not change their manner of life for the hectic existence of a successful Wall Street broker. There are mothers completely absorbed in the management of their households, who find their satisfaction in the simple duties of family life and who would not change the atmosphere of mutual love in which they live with husband and children for the most brilliant success in fashionable society. There are obscure artists, conscious of their own strength, and consequently rebellious against current standards, who find a self-fulfillment in honest workmanship which means more to them than the acclaim of critics after a successful New York show. This sturdy, independent minority, however, is numerically small. Its members are comparatively unimportant in their influence on others. At least, they are not able to alter fundamentally the trend of modern life, a trend which is directed toward the success-ideal in spite of them.

Our basic thesis, therefore, remains undisturbed. The success-ideal is not the ideal of every man, woman and child, but it does command an effective majority. It is the success-culture which gives a scale of values to the average man. The thought of success lightens the burden of his toil and sweetens his minor triumphs. The life of the success-class dominates his fantasy. In the motion picture theater or in his favorite magazine, he tries to flee in thought from the routine of his daily existence and to become, at least in imagination, a successful man.

It follows that if we are to understand modern society teleologically, if we are to gain the insight necessary to remedy social evils, then we must understand the success-ideal. We must follow the complicated success-culture through all its ramifications. We must understand all its implications with precision. We must penetrate to its inner essence; for here and only here will we find an explanation for the deepest and most fundamental trends in modern society.

## Notes

1 Furfey, Paul Hanley and Daly, Joseph F.: *The Interpretation of the Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient*. Washington, Catholic Education Press, 1934, (Catholic University of America Educational Research Monographs, Vol VIII, No 4), "Product-moment correlation as a research technique in education." *Jour. Educ. Psychol.*, 25: 206-207. March 1935; "The Correlation Coefficient as an index of relationship" *Jour Exper.Educ.*, 3: 66-69, March, 1935; "The subjective element in the measurement of relationship." *Jour. Educ. Psychol.*, 27: 307-309. April, 1936; "A criticism of factor analysis as a technique of social research." *Am. Sociol. Rev.*, 2; 178-186, April, 1937.

2 Wissler, Clark: *The American Indian*. Second Edition, New York (etc.), Oxford University Press, 1931, p. 217.





## Chapter II The Essence of the Success-Ideal

To understand the success-ideal we must first understand the success-class. This is not altogether simple. For the class is made up of human beings only loosely bound together by common ideals. It reflects the paradoxes of human nature itself and presents aspects which are apparently contradictory. In consequence, different observers have given widely different interpretations of the success-class, its essence, its ethics, and its social significance.

One extreme opinion is represented by the more radical interpreters. According to this group, the success-class is explicable in terms of mere frank selfishness. The life of the successful man could call for more than he and his family really need.

Imagine a man with a family of average size. Let us suppose that he buys a house, well built, fireproof, sanitary, and large enough for his family and an occasional guest. Around this house is enough land to provide for the necessary light and air, a flower garden for his wife, and play space for his children. The family has sufficient, well-cooked, wholesome food. Their clothing is clean, warm, and in good repair. They have good medical care, regular physical examinations, and in case of serious emergencies, the services of specialists and first-class hospitals. The man puts aside some money every year so that he may send all of his children to good colleges and to professional schools if they wish to go. He has a large car for the family and a smaller one for errands. For recreation he can go to theaters and concerts, and he has money to buy books and periodicals. In the summer, the family has a cottage by the seashore and now and then can travel overseas. Moreover, the man puts away enough money in the form of insurance and savings, not indeed to provide for all conceivable emergencies for himself and his descendants, but enough to cover the ordinary emergencies for his wife and himself until their old age and for his children until they are old enough to be self-supporting.

This standard of life is, of course, higher than the average man can hope to reach. It is a standard of life which it is perhaps selfish for a man to desire, but it is a standard about which this may be said: The man is getting something in return for every dollar he spends. Not all of his money is spent for real needs; some of it is spent for luxuries. But none of it is entirely wasted. All this is obtainable under modern American conditions.

Now arises a very important question. Why should any man in his senses want to spend more money than that? In fact, how can he spend it except in sheer waste? More can always be spent on clothing, but it will not be warmer or more comfortable but only more fashionable. In other words, the extra money serves no useful or reasonable purpose. It is spent, not for greater comfort but for mere display. It is deliberately wasted in a conspicuous manner. That is to say, the spender's money is valued for itself as an object of display and not as a legitimate means to a legitimate end.

The same may be said of most other expenditures. One may buy a more expensive car but will it be noticeably more efficient from a mechanical standpoint? A less expensive car will serve the purpose of transportation with practically equal efficiency. Or a man may spend lavishly on a house, but will such a house really serve better the primary purpose of sheltering him from the elements and giving him privacy? Possibly there are some exceptional persons who can really use and not waste more money a year, but such people must be rather rare. In the ordinary case, a high annual expenditure must be largely waste.

Pure display has no basis at all in reason. It does not further any legitimate human purpose. Such spending rests upon a belief which has no basis in fact, the belief that a man becomes

somehow greater, more worthy, by displaying his ability to waste money in public. The man who acts upon such a misapprehension of the facts belongs in the same class with the man who draws back in terror of non-existent pink and purple alligators on the floor of his padded cell. It has no common-sense reason behind it. It deserves to be considered strictly pathological like transvestitism, *necrophily*, or *geophagia*.

This abnormality becomes the more marked when the rich man must devote his whole energy to the task of becoming and remaining wealthy. This, indeed, is usually the case, because in our highly competitive economy it is hard to become rich, and also because the lust for money quickly becomes insatiable. The result is that the young man who wishes to "succeed" must put out of his life everything which would interfere with his efficiency as a money-making machine. He must put aside not only dissipation but also all distracting devotion to romance, intellectual curiosity, and aesthetic pursuits.

Instead of following breathlessly the bold intellectual flights of Plato or St. Augustine, he must master the unctuous art of selling a customer two neckties instead of one. Instead of learning the deep, calm joy of Beethoven's *Missa Solennis* or the new daring of Stravinsky's *Concerto in D*, instead of spending long dreamy hours before the magic of a good Rembrandt or before a Gothic statue from the great thirteenth century, instead of yielding his soul to the wonder of all that is great and breathless and exciting in human achievement, he must learn the mean arts of the counting house, how to invest shrewdly, how to out-wit organized labor, how to win customers from his rivals by a feigned and flattering humility, or how to bully them by a blustering self-assurance.

Thus, the ambitious man becomes what he wanted to become: hard-hearted, proud, mean, and successful. Surely the words of Edwin Markham<sup>1</sup> apply better to such a man than to the crushed field laborer for whom the poet intended them:

"What to him  
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?  
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,  
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?"

I have dwelt at some length on the monetary selfishness of the success-class because this is a clear-cut and conspicuous trait, but this is not the only element in their selfishness. There are others of almost equal importance.

Consider, for example, the question of snobbery. Human friendship and the joy of social gatherings, are natural and good; but these simple and wholesome pleasures are restricted in our modern world by artificial barriers which separate race from race, economic group from economic group, the educated from the uneducated. All this snobbery is largely the reflection of the success-class' characteristic exclusiveness.

The success-class indeed has erected a barrier about itself which may ordinarily be crossed only by a person who is able to adopt a highly complicated and often useless way of life, rather than taking part in the life of the man with the hoe, the community, or bearing the responsibility of a busy household as a joyful parent of children.

It is rational and praiseworthy to accept responsibility when such responsibility will help one's fellow man; but how abnormal ambition becomes when a man seeks prominence for the sake of his own vanity rather than for the real good of his subordinates.

A willingness to put aside office for the general good ought to be a primary trait in every public man, yet such self-denial is most unusual, so unusual indeed that it surprises us.

How many instances can one recall like that of José de San Martín, who retired to private life after his interview with Bolívar at Guayaquil in 1822, when he realized that the latter was too ambitious to cooperate and that, consequently, one of the two men must retire? Thus, Bolívar received the credit for the successful conclusion of the South American revolution; but San Martín's self-abnegation made that successful conclusion possible.

The much more usual case is the growth of ambition by what it feeds on. Napoleon plunged Europe into a succession of horrible wars which lasted for a generation. What was the result? The net result was no permanent benefit to the people of Europe, but only the satisfaction of the little Corsican's vanity. A high price indeed to pay for one man's ambition!

What was the cause of World War I in which some eight and a half million persons died? Was this war a real struggle between peoples? Was there some long-standing and fundamental reason why, for example, the people of the United States should hate the citizens of Austria? Or was it rather a question of the ambitions of the handful of generals and statesmen who guided the destiny of the nations concerned? Is it not quite possible that if these men as a group had shared the spirit of San Martín that this war might have been averted?

In time of peace, it is hard to imagine vividly enough the horrors of war, but we all know what bereavement is; we can all imagine the gap left in the life of some young soldier's wife when the news of his death is brought to her. Through the weary years of bereavement, she must often ask herself, "To what avail was this death which has wrecked my life?" The only answer we can give her, if we are to be realistic, is this: "Your husband's death satisfied the vanity of some great man, some general who wanted to make a name for himself by a brilliant offensive, some statesman who wanted to show himself a man of iron by refusing to discuss peace with the enemy."

All the above seems to form an unanswerable indictment of the success-class, its irrational avarice, its childish snobbery, and its cruel ambition. It would seem, then, that the radical view is correct and that the success-class is an obstacle to the welfare of the people. Yet it is only fair to examine the other side of the picture. Has not the success-class virtues as well as faults? May not the former even outweigh the latter? Justice compels us at least to consider this possibility.

The first benefit conferred by the success-class is leadership. Has this leadership, which the class undoubtedly exercises, been beneficial? Before answering, let us remember the special character of the modern success-class. For a new success-class has come into power with the Industrial Revolution, which took place in England between 1770 and 1825 or thereabouts and which has spread since Waterloo to the rest of the civilized world. This new success-class has been predominantly a class of capitalists. It has displaced the old aristocracy. With the coming of this capitalist success-class, great changes have occurred, more radical perhaps than in any previous century of the world's history. Capitalism has remade the world. What has the effect been?

The first and most obvious effect has been the multiplication of material comforts. It is a commonplace to say that the average modern American is better off in this sense than many an ancient king. The ends of the earth are ransacked to provide him food and clothing. A vast amount of technical ingenuity has been mobilized by the capitalists and the automobile, the cinema, and the radio have resulted. Housework has been lightened by a score of clever inventions. A similar brand of ingenuity has been applied to modern medicine with the startling result that years have been added to the average length of human life.

All this surely represents a very real benefit conferred on society under the rule of the modern success-class. Yet it is only fair to add that the capitalist has made a tidy profit for himself while

conferring all these benefits on others. Moreover, these benefits have been conferred very unequally. The abstract "average man" has benefited, but a new, disinherited class of proletarians has been created. Finally, one may perhaps question whether the credit for these modern developments is due to the success-class itself or rather to the inventors and research workers whose ingenuity made them possible.

An achievement which redounds with more surety to the credit of the success-class is the wide diffusion of popular education. Education was once a privilege of the success-class and of certain professions, but the modern success-class has been willing to share this privilege with all, at least as far as elementary and even secondary education are concerned, while excellent universities have been provided for higher study. Of course, in doing these things, the success-class has insisted on dictating the policies of education. The old liberal ideal has been supplanted by a vocational ideal. Education has become largely a process of preparing for success. Yet, the most unfriendly critic must admit that this diffusion of knowledge represents a sound and important contribution.

Even more remarkable is the consent of the success-class to popular democracy. This indeed seems magnanimous. When before did a ruling class ever cede a share of government to the underprivileged? This generosity appears especially striking when we remember that the new democracy has frequently curbed capitalism by social legislation. Of course this policy of the success-class has been partially due to a fear of the masses. Sometimes compromise has been necessary to forestall revolution. Yet it is only fair to give a large share of the credit for these concessions to bourgeois idealism.

I have spoken above about the success-class' devotion to money, but this consideration seems to be counteracted by the generosity of the wealthy. It is almost a general rule that great fortunes are in large part returned to the people by philanthropy. The amount of modern philanthropy is staggering. The John Price Jones Corporation has compiled the publicly announced benefactions in six large cities for the first nine months of 1936. The gifts amounted to \$38,612,000 and the bequests to \$39,544,000. The principal objects of this munificence were education, organized relief, health, and religion in that order. If the defects of our capitalistic system have weighed heavily on certain groups, then at least capitalists seem to have been anxious to do something toward restoring the proper balance.

A skeptical person might point out, however, that the rich do not often reduce themselves to poverty by their generosity, even if one gives large amounts, one can still worry along without too much acute suffering. The success-class is careful in its generosity. It seldom sacrifices its own comfort. These Men of Measured Mercy control our economic system. They take more than their proportional share of the profits. If, then, they return part of these profits to the proletariat, are they avoiding the condemnation which is implied in the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of Pope Pius XI: "The wage-earner is not to receive as alms what is his due in justice. And let no one attempt with trifling charitable donations to exempt himself from the great duties imposed by justice."

A final contribution of the success-class has been stressed by some writers. This is its function as a model for ideal living. The success-class has the leisure, the freedom from worry, the education, which allows its members to cultivate the things of the spirit. The noble, the wealthy, the successful, have always served as patrons of art, music, poetry, and architecture. Thus, the success-class has been the custodian of our civilization. This contention seems to be borne out by a study of criminal statistics. After all, do not the lower socio-economic classes fill our jails? Are not the rich looked upon generally as the sober, law-abiding, solid, and respectable element in the community?

It was this function of the old-fashioned gentleman which was emphasized by Henry Dwight Sedgwick in the quotation near the beginning of this chapter. The gentleman it was who preserved and cherished the standards of conduct which raised civilized man above the savage. Mr. Sedgwick saw no incongruity if the gentleman in return was "highly paid by privilege, leisure, and luxury, even in times when serfs and peasants were suffering from want."

Yet, should we call a mode of life *civilized* when it must be paid for by "privilege, leisure, and luxury"? Must real virtue be bought at a price—especially when this price is only material comfort? If a man can enjoy luxury at the expense of others' suffering, can that man really contribute anything valuable to society? Can he show the rest of the world what human life ought to be? Can he inspire others with high ideals of generosity and self-sacrifice?

The modern success-class looks down on the lower socio-economic groups and despises them as shiftless, unambitious, degraded, criminal; but can the morals of the success-class stand close inspection? Is not their virtue, like the virtue of Mr. Sedgwick's gentleman, bought at the price of "privilege, leisure, and luxury" while the masses suffer from want?

It seems little to the credit of the successful man that he does not commit the crimes of the poor. He is not tempted to steal a loaf of bread to appease his hunger. He is not driven to desperation by months of unemployment. His nerves are not shattered by the noise, the stenches, the overcrowding of the slums. All in all, the purchased virtue of the success-class is not impressive. Fundamentally, its members are probably neither more nor less virtuous than their humbler fellow citizens.

Now that both the faults and virtues of the success-class have been discussed, we can return to the question which gave this chapter its title. What is the inmost nature of the success-ideal which inspires the philosophy of life of the successful man, and which through him gives its specific character to our whole contemporary society? Two things stand out from our data. The success-ideal is not wholly good. The success-ideal is not wholly bad. It is then, a sort of compromise. The successful man wants the good things of this world. He wants money, power, and physical comfort; but he also wants the pleasure of a good conscience and the respect of his fellow man.

It is, thus, that he works out a system of ethics which leaves room for both elements. His principles require him to be decorous in his public life, courteous and considerate, yet he does not feel a moral responsibility to pay a living wage. His principles require him to support popular education for the masses, yet to send his son to a private school. His principles require that he give large sums of money to the poor, yet at the same time he himself lives in luxury.

The ideal of the success-class is then essentially a compromise, and herein lies its real weakness. It is an ideal which preaches decency and respectability, but it is not an ideal to make moral heroes. It is an ideal rooted fundamentally in the obvious. For it seeks what is obviously pleasant for self, such things as comfort, security and respectability. At the same time it seeks also what is obviously good for others and therefore encourages popular education, political democracy, and organized philanthropy. But the success-ideal implies no quests for vague and distant ideals, ineffable truths, half-realized beauties. The success-ideal is a philosophy of life for middle-aged businessmen, but it is not an ideal to fire the heart of youth with dreams of a suffering which transcends joy. The success-ideal is sane and moderate and common sense, but is it the ideal in which man finds his deepest fulfillment? Is it the best we have to offer?

## Note

1 The man with the hoe.

### Chapter III The Failure of the Success-Ideal

The success-ideal is a compromise. It is morally uninspiring and mediocre. The success-class is unidealistic. Its members confer benefits on society, but insist upon being well paid for doing so. The success-culture as a whole is merely an unheroic "middle way" between virtue and vice.

Let these things be admitted. The question still remains, May not the very mediocrity of the success-culture be an advantage? After all, is not human nature itself pretty mediocre? Saints and heroes are rare, and so also are deep-dyed villains. Most of us live at a comfortable distance from both extremes. Is it not, therefore, an argument in favor of the success-ideal that it is not pitched too high, that it does not demand too much of human nature?

This viewpoint is expressed or implied by a considerable number of social thinkers, a group which prides itself on its realism. The members of this group appeal to the pragmatic test. They are willing to admit that heroic virtue is in itself more admirable than the dull respectability of the bourgeoisie. But, they argue, heroic virtue is for the few. The success-ideal is for the many. However unromantic the latter may appear in theory, it does work out in practice. This being the case, is not the success-ideal perhaps, after all, the best we have to offer the rising generation — not the best in theory, but the best obtainable in actual practice? The viewpoint of the last paragraph rests on the assumption that the success-ideal actually is working out satisfactorily in the modern world. The proponents of this view admit that defects exist; but they assert that these defects are not inherent in the system itself. The system itself, they say, works out reasonably well. We cannot let these assertions pass unchallenged. Is the success-ideal a reasonably satisfactory one as we observe it under modern conditions? To answer this question, we must study the success-ideal both as it affects society as a whole, and also as it affects the individual members of society.

At first it may appear quite evident that the success-ideal has been very beneficial to society. For this ideal has dominated the business world. Business, in turn, has brought progress, that is to say, the widespread high living standard enjoyed by modern man. Therefore, the effect of the success-ideal has been good. Before accepting this argument, however, we must ask, Is this connection between modern competitive business and a high living standard essential, or is it only accidental? Granted that business has actually brought many benefits, was it the only means of attaining them? Is competition in our modern sense the only feasible economic incentive? Is the success-ideal the only workable stimulus for progress?

We do not want a socialist state, but we wish to retain private ownership as the general rule and to accept government ownership only in exceptional cases. Private ownership, however, need not imply the present type of competitive business. The cooperative movement alone is enough to demonstrate this. This movement is comparatively young. The Rochdale Pioneers opened the first cooperative store December 2, 1844. Others gradually adopted the idea. Growth has been slow; yet the movement has attained considerable proportions in recent years. In England, seven million persons, representing about one-half the families of the nation, belong in some way to the cooperative movement. About one-seventh of the retail sale of food is through cooperative stores. The fourth largest bank in the nation is cooperatively owned, while the Cooperative Wholesale Society factories produce more flour, shoes, and soap than any other manufacturer in England.

Cooperation in Denmark dominates the agricultural life of the country. It represents, in fact, a great national movement toward economic democracy. It has guided the country through crises which would have ruined other nations. In Sweden the Kooperativa Forbundet broke monopolies

in oleomargarine, sugar, flour, galoshes, and soap. Finally, in cooperation with other countries in northern Europe, it organized LUMA to manufacture electric light bulbs, forcing the monopolistic International General Electric Company to meet the price of twenty-two cents for a twenty-five watt bulb. These had previously cost thirty seven cents.

In the United States, the movement has made much progress among farmers. Beginning in the form of marketing cooperatives, it has branched out into purchasing cooperatives, particularly for such staples as feed, seed, fertilizer, gas, oil, and the like. Cooperative power lines in rural districts are a recent development, while the five thousand credit unions in this country serve over a million members. In Nova Scotia, under the leadership of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, there has been a remarkable growth of credit unions, cooperative stores, buying clubs, fish plants, lobster factories, and other enterprises, all resting on intelligent study and thoughtful planning guided by the very progressive faculty of the University mentioned.

The considerable expansion of the cooperative movement encourages us to hope that the same principles may be carried out on a still more radical scale, even to a complete reorganization of economic society on a truly cooperative basis. This is, of course, a very radical proposal. It would involve the abandonment of modern capitalism in its present form, but it is a plan very familiar in Catholic economic thought, being, in a sense, the Church's social program.

The proposal rests on the theory that society should be organized along vocational lines. Vocational groups are, indeed, a natural form of economic organization. "For as nature induces those who dwell in close proximity to unite into municipalities, so those who practice the same trade or profession, economic or otherwise, combine into vocational groups. These groups, in a true sense autonomous, are considered by many to be, if not essential to a civil society, at least its natural and spontaneous development." 1

These vocational groups should represent both the workers and those who employ them and should spring from "the common effort of employers and employees of one and the same group joining forces to produce goods or give service." 2 The cooperation of labor and capital does not imply, however, that these two may not retain their respective group organization. "Regarding cases in which interests of employers and employees call for special care and protection against opposing interests, separate deliberation will take place in their respective assemblies and separate votes will be taken as matters may require."3

Moreover, this principle of cooperation must be extended beyond the limits of a single industry. There must be interorganization among the vocational groups. Only thus can they work for "the common good which all groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, with friendly harmony."4 Finally, the interests of the consumer will be protected by the state, "directing, watching, stimulating and restraining, as circumstances suggest or necessity demands."5

The Holy Father suggests an economic society which is to be fundamentally cooperative, thus contrasting sharply with our present organization which he describes as follows: "The demand and supply of labor divides men on the labor market into two classes, as into two camps, and the bargaining between these parties transforms this labor market into an arena where the two armies are engaged in combat. To this grave disorder, which is leading society to ruin, a remedy must evidently be applied as speedily as possible."6

From all these considerations, it appears that emphasis on the modern success-ideal with its accompanying fierce competition is not a necessary feature of a highly developed economic society. The same material progress attained by modern business might be brought about far more easily in a cooperative society. Economic progress cannot therefore be ascribed solely to the



success-ideal. The criticism of the success-ideal may be carried even further. Not only are the good features of modern society *not* necessarily connected with the pursuit of success, but the evil features of this society to a great degree are necessarily connected with this pursuit.

The reasons for this latter fact are fairly evident. The success-ideal by its very nature involves the desire to have more than the next man. In some cases, of course, this need not involve grave injury. If Smith is an enthusiastic student, if it is his ambition to know more than Jones, then that fact need not necessarily injure Jones, although it may hurt his pride. In other spheres, however, the success-ideal is necessarily mischievous. Consider the economic world which we have just been discussing. The amount of wealth existing at a given time and place is more or less limited by the nature of things. Hence, if it is one man's ideal to succeed financially, to get more than his proportionate share of the existing wealth, then his success in this ambition involves necessarily, and by its very nature, the failure of others. If one man gets more, others must get less. This rule can have few exceptions.

In concrete terms there is a huge and growing disparity between the most and least wealthy. To understand what this condition means in concrete terms, let us suppose that the whole upper one-tenth of one per cent, in a frenzy of self-abnegation, should decide to reduce their incomes voluntarily to a comfortable living wage and to divide the balance among the economically underprivileged. Even in 1929 this would have doubled the income of the latter.<sup>7</sup>

This redistribution of income would imply, of course, an oversimplification of the economic problem. It would be hard to carry it out literally. Most wealthy persons are not free to dispose of all their annual income beyond twenty-five thousand dollars. They may have certain fixed commitments and there are direct taxes which they must pay. These obstacles could, however, probably be surmounted with good will. For example, the rich man could obtain exemption from income tax by establishing a charitable trust and turning his savings over to it.

Another difficulty in the application of this scheme arises from the fact that many people would be thrown out of work. In voluntarily reducing his income, the rich man would have to discharge most of his support staff. A dressmaker, losing lucrative accounts, would have to discharge seamstresses. So, too, with other concerns with whom the wealthy man dealt. On the other hand, we must remember that a redistribution of this income among the underprivileged forty-two per cent would mean that the money would be spent over a wider base and would probably create much more employment than it would destroy.

As a final objection, one must take into account the fact that such a redistribution of income would involve some overhead expense. For example, it would involve additional bookkeeping and probably the employment of a number of social workers. On the other hand, some of the persons helped might previously have been unemployed and might then be required to do something in return. They might, for example, labor on public works, a principle widely used under the Roosevelt administration. Or they might use their leisure in educating themselves. In either case, the result would be a social gain which would probably more than compensate for the overhead involved.

All in all, even though this redistribution of income is probably not the most feasible way to rescue economic society, it is nevertheless a useful sort of schema, a simplified diagram of what might really be done. If a tiny fraction of individuals at the top of the economic world would renounce their selfish ambition to receive so much more than their proportionate share, if, in a word, they would renounce the success-ideal in its modern extreme form, then the poor would not have to suffer so much.

It is worth our while, therefore, to consider the effect of a redistribution which would reduce the income of the upper one-tenth of one per cent of families to raise the incomes of the lower forty-two per cent. Let us try to imagine what this would mean to an actual family. Consider, therefore, such a family, which we may call the Jones family, a real family who lived in Washington, D. C. in 1927, that is to say, during the era of prosperity considered in the Brookings report.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Jones was forty-two. His wife, Mary, was thirty-two. Their two children were a three-year-old boy and a two-year-old girl. In every way the family was exemplary and normal, except financially. There were no vices such as gambling, drinking, immorality, or neglect. The slender income was prudently managed. There were no health problems beyond those necessarily connected with poverty. The Joneses did not suffer from special racial disabilities. Finally, the year we are discussing was a year of great prosperity so that their financial plight could not be blamed on a general depression. Mr. Jones was an auto painter; the only fault of the family was poverty. What does this income mean concretely? Fortunately, we can answer this question with some accuracy. In December, 1928, a budget was issued by the Subcommittee on Family Budgets of the Family Committee of the Washington Council of Social Agencies. This budget makes it possible to calculate the amount of money necessary to maintain families of various composition, on a health-and-decency level, which is defined as "a bottom level of health and decency below which a family cannot go without danger of physical and moral deterioration." For a family of the make-up of the Jones family, the health-and-decency budget would amount to 40 percent more than the family actually received.

What does this difference mean in concrete terms? It means that the monthly salary was a pitifully inadequate sum. According to the budget quoted, the cost of food alone "sufficient in quantity and of the proper nutritive composition to maintain the health of all members of the family and to promote growth of the children," would not leave sufficient funds even to rent decent living quarters. What, then, would the family do for clothing, light, fuel, household furnishings, medical care, carfare, and the necessary incidentals, to say nothing of education, recreation, insurance, and other less necessary yet important expenses? The answer is clear. The Jones family must have sacrificed essentials. This, indeed, was the case. According to the record a third child was born dead, "probably due to inadequate diet of the mother."

What does all this mean in terms of human suffering? When Mr. Jones married Mary, he did not look forward to this. Not that he expected luxury! Not that he expected success, wealth, power, and prominence! But he did expect decency. He did expect that in a world which was beginning to feel the effect of an unparalleled prosperity, his humble share of this prosperity would provide him with the necessities of life. He did expect to enjoy the simple blessings of family life, conjugal love, and the presence of healthy children to give him a sense of fulfillment and to be his comfort and support in old age. But now he must see the suffering of his wife, the suffering of his children. He must sit down at a table in his cold, inadequate living quarters and realize that he must get up hungry. He must see the bloom of youth die out of his wife's cheeks. He must see her shabby and neglected. He had hoped to provide her with decent, simple clothing so that she might satisfy an innocent desire to look well. He had hoped that the family might enjoy modest recreation, an occasional visit to the movies, an occasional trip in hot weather, but now all these things are denied him.

Is this suffering really necessary? If the redistribution of income which we spoke about were to take place, Jones would still receive less than the amount demanded by a health-and-decency budget; but it would provide the essentials.

We know, however, that this redistribution of income will never take place! To understand why, consider Smith, the typical head of a family in the upper one-tenth of one per cent. If Smith would restrict his spending, then he might give this amount of money to very many families like Jones'. An immense amount of human suffering would be thus relieved! But Smith will not rescue them from misery. He may give to the Community Chest, but he will not reduce his income. The success-ideal requires that he spend money uselessly on himself. This waste of money is an integral part of his philosophy of life.

How many times does Smith waste the money on jewelry, travel or hobbies; but there will be no redistribution of income. The Joneses will continue to suffer. How absurd, after all, to expect Smith to live on less for Smith is a successful man; he must exemplify the success-ideal. We live in a success-society and these sharp contrasts are essential.

Moreover, these sharp differences are not confined to the economic field. In a success-culture, the same principle holds for other things besides money. The white man's present sense of imagined superiority must be paid for by the Negro's sense of undeserved humiliation. The satisfying snobbery of the social leader must be paid for by the shame of the excluded. The joy of victorious warriors must be paid for by the suffering of the vanquished. The triumphal march of soldiers returning from a successful war implies funeral processions, widows, orphans, just as Smith's success implies Jones' failure. The ideal of success cannot be carried to its logical conclusion without precisely such contrasts. Without them society would not be fully loyal to its success-ideal.

The success-ideal therefore involves widespread failure and suffering for the majority of society, but is it at least satisfying for the successful few? If so, then perhaps Henry Dwight Sedgwick's theory of the gentleman is correct. Perhaps, the success of Smith is something in itself so worthy that it somehow compensates for the sufferings of nearly three hundred families like Jones'.

This possibility impels us to study the success-ideal more closely. Is it something in which man attains a deep fulfillment? Is the possession of money, power, and prominence truly and fundamentally satisfying? It would be easy to answer this question in the negative in the light of the New Testament, but here we must not do so. We must try to answer it on the level of human experience and common sense.

To answer, we must distinguish two kinds of pleasure or well-being. One type of pleasure seems to consist essentially in the attainment of an object, rather than in the enjoyment of that object once attained. For example, a hungry man enjoys eating, but once he has eaten his fill, the sense of pleasure becomes less intense. It may even be succeeded by disgust if he has eaten not wisely but too well. Or, again, if a man plays a game of golf, winning may seem very important while the game is in progress; but having beaten his opponent, his sense of satisfaction wanes and he begins to yearn for new conquests. Let us call this type of satisfaction attainment satisfaction.

On the other hand, there are pleasures whose essence seems to consist not precisely in the attainment of the object, but rather in the enjoyment which follows the attainment. Think of study as an example. A man cudgels his brains to follow a complicated mathematical theorem. This studying is not pleasant. It is hard work. But once he has mastered the proof, then he enjoys a rather lasting satisfaction. This new truth becomes part of his intellectual treasury. Again, a person may find that listening to a concert requires a certain strained attention. It is not perhaps directly recreative. But when the concert comes to a close, when he has absorbed the beauty of a great piece of music, he feels that he has acquired something permanent. He can return to the music mentally and hum the various tunes to himself. Let us call this post-attainment satisfaction.

Consider the contrast between these two pleasures. Attainment satisfaction usually has to do with bodily pleasures or pleasures somehow connected with that level of being. Post-attainment pleasures are largely intellectual or spiritual. We share the former type with the brute beasts, whereas the latter are characteristically human. Attainment satisfaction often implies only the removal of a defect, the satisfaction of a want. Post-attainment satisfaction seems to imply an added perfection, something which is positive, not negative. Evidently, this latter type of satisfaction is closer to the deepest human fulfillment.

When we examine the pleasures implied by the success-ideal (money, power, prominence), we find that they characteristically lead rather to attainment satisfaction than to post-attainment satisfaction. We conclude therefore that the success-ideal is only superficially satisfactory. It is not satisfying in the deepest sense.

This is a truism of all moralists. In all ages the wisest and the best men have preached the proposition — paradoxical, yet demonstrable — that the deepest human satisfaction attainable on earth is not reached by grasping at the tiling which would seem most immediately and evidently satisfying, but rather by a rigid self-control, by a certain self-denial in regard to attainment satisfaction in order to reach a greater measure of post-attainment satisfaction.

Few thinkers have — in theory — seriously questioned this truth. Even Epicurus, with his frankly selfish philosophy, taught that intelligent selfishness is better served by concentration on the more subtle pleasures of mind and spirit than by a direct service of the flesh. The success-ideal applied to society leads thus inevitably to failure. Followed as it is being followed in our own civilization, it implies a society in which widespread failure is essential in order that the few may be outstanding successes, while these few themselves attain only a superficial satisfaction. We can only conclude that the success-ideal, so highly valued in the modern world, is not a satisfactory psychological basis for society.

## Notes

1 *Quadragesimo anno*.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *Ibid*

4 *Quadragesimo anno*.

5 *Ibid*.

6 *Ibid*.

7 Brookings Institution: "America's Capacity to Produce and America's Capacity to Consume"; a digest of studies made by the Brookings Institution. Reprint of Part Two of the Report of the Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation for 1933 and 1934.

8 See the discussion of Miss Gilda Castello in her dissertation, "A study of a selected group of families of 'white unskilled laborers known to a social agency in the District of Columbia with special reference to 'wages and standards of living.'" Washington, Catholic University of America, 1933. 35, ii p. (Typewritten MA. dissertation on file in the Catholic University library.) The family herein called the "Jones family" is No. 10 in Miss Castellu's list.

## Chapter IV

# Positivistic Society

A society based on the success-ideal is unsatisfactory because that ideal is itself unsatisfactory. Modern progress is largely illusory because it is progress toward a false goal, the goal of "success" in the peculiar modern sense of the word. Society is an organization of individuals for a common purpose. A success-society is vitiated by the very fundamental fact that this common purpose is not a radically good one.

The basic difficulty, then, in a society which worships the success-ideal is not some weakness of will which prevents people from living up to that ideal once accepted. It is not some error of organization which renders inefficient the common pursuit of the ideal. Rather, it is an error of the intellectual order. It is a mistake about the ideal itself, a failure to choose the ideal which will, in the long run, be of most benefit to society and to society's individual members.

It follows that if we wish to understand the root evil of a success-society, we must trace to its source the intellectual error just mentioned. We must try to understand very clearly how such a society comes to choose the wrong ideal. Since the modern world is, to all practical purposes, a success-society, the question may be stated more concretely: What has led modern society astray? Why has modern society chosen the success-ideal instead of some more worthy objective?

The mistake of modern society implies some wrong approach to the truth, some error of epistemology. For it could hardly be mere carelessness or any merely casual error which has led, in this all — important matter, to a failure to distinguish between true and false. Rather, it must be the choice, implicit or explicit, of some wrong philosophical method. Only thus can we explain such a fundamental error.

There are two general types of epistemological error, the error of accepting too much and the error of accepting too little. That is, a man may fail in his quest for the truth by an uncritical attitude which accepts propositions not fully proved, or else through an overcritical attitude which refuses assent to propositions even after adequate proof. It seems in general true that the success-culture does not err very often in the first of these two ways; for this culture is characterized by a certain skepticism. The successful man prides himself on his realistic attitude. He boasts that he will not let sentiment interfere with business. He likes to see all the facts before he takes action. He does not, therefore, tend to believe falsehoods uncritically; but may he not overcritically reject truths?

Consider the prosperous business man, that *casus typicus* of the success-culture. He is proud that his life is based on an unsentimental respect for facts and that he will not allow emotion to warp his judgment. In accordance with this principle, he regulates his business life by a conscious recognition of the principles of efficiency. He forges ahead because he is clear-headed enough to single out the essential facts of the economic situation. He succeeds where others fail because they do not have his clear, cold insight. His personal life shows the same realism. It is characterized by a planned comfort. He wants the joys which come from physical well-being and he gets them. Thus he controls and guides the course of his life as best he can in accordance with the facts as he sees them.

Yet, this same businessman is so occupied with these concrete details that he has little room left for the intangibles, little room for beauty, art, metaphysics, music, or meditation. He approves such things in an impersonal way, but he is content to leave them to less tough-minded men. For himself, he prefers the tangible, obvious goods: golf, good wine, a new Lincoln, a shrewd business deal, a month at Sun Valley.

Such a man may not realize it, but his point of view is essentially that of positivism. This system, which was developed by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), involves a great emphasis on observed facts and their relationships, with a corresponding contempt for all theological or metaphysical doctrine which seeks any deeper reality beneath these facts. "The positive Philosophy is distinguished from the ancient, as we have seen throughout, by nothing so much as its rejection of all inquiring into causes, first and final; and its confining research to the invariable relations which constitute natural laws."<sup>1</sup>

This attitude might, I think, be summed up in two propositions: First, all obvious truths will be accepted, plus all more or less direct deductions from these truths. Secondly, all non-obvious truths will be rejected. Positivism, then, is essentially characterized by its emphasis on what is obvious, that is to say, on what is discoverable without great subtlety or insight. It is a philosophy of the commonplace.

It is not hard to see that the hypothetical business man just discussed is an unconscious positivist. For this man's view of life is characterized by the great importance which he attaches to concrete, commonplace and mundane realities. Therefore, he accepts all such obvious truths as the advantage of system and efficiency in office management, the pleasurable character of a good dinner, or the wisdom of consulting a skilled physician in case of illness; but he rejects — or at least he overlooks — such non-obvious truths as the advantage of systematic bodily mortification, the pleasure of hearing a good string quartet, or the wisdom of viewing all things in the light of eternity.

This positivistic attitude is characteristic of much of our modern university learning which, indeed, reflects the success-culture of the successful men who sit on university boards of trustees. As a consequence, students are trained to great skill in the collection and systematization of the obvious kind of truth which is dealt with in geology, physics, astronomy, mathematics, history, and biology. But these same students are as naïve as any uneducated peasant or self-made industrialist in their attitude on the less obvious issues, such as the attributes of God, the nature of beauty, the immortality of the soul, or the ultimate basis of morality.

The wide acceptance of the success-ideal in modern society is due to this positivistic attitude toward truth, while this positivistic attitude itself rests on a still more fundamental error, the error of making up one's own private criteria of truth and falsehood, the error of trying to impose one's own ideas upon reality, whereas reality should be allowed to impose itself on the thinker. This is an error which specialists of all sorts are likely to make. Quite naturally, the specialist has a keen appreciation of the techniques of his own specialty. From this attitude it is easy to pass to a contempt of the techniques proper to other fields, until finally the specialist begins to feel that he alone has the key to all truth. He becomes of One Method and begins to reject all conclusions based on methods notably different from his own.

The Person of One Method may be an experimental psychologist. Such a man can so fall in love with his laboratory instruments, with his *tachistoscopes*, his *plethysmographs*, his kymographs, his chronoscopes, his *ergographs*, that he begins to feel that only the data accumulated by such instruments are valid. Thus, he comes to doubt even the testimony of consciousness. This is actually the position of the behaviorists. Almost precisely opposite is the attitude of those subjective idealists who concentrate attention on their own mental states until they feel certain only of their own consciousness and reject the very existence of sensible objects.

It is easy to multiply examples of Persons of One Method, who set up their own personal standards of truth and refuse to accept the most cogent facts which do not meet these highly personal standards. Consider, for example, the aesthetes who paint a bit perhaps, or play a bit, or

dabble in poetry. At least, they have enough experience with the fine arts to realize that therein lies a certain deep and thrilling contact with reality. They love this sensed reality, value it very deeply, and so come to despise all other approaches to the truth and all vulgar grubbing after facts. These aesthetes have no sympathy for the anatomist who spends long, back-breaking days in the stench of an anatomical laboratory, seeking with his forceps and his carefully whetted knife the natural secrets which lie hidden among arterioles and ganglia and fascia. But the anatomists are also Persons of One Method, so then, in turn, despise the fine arts. They look upon them as weak stuff fit only for children and women. They mutter unfounded generalizations about the aesthete's emotions being, after all, only a product of hormones, perhaps, and the autonomic nervous system.

Again, the Persons of One Method may be mathematical physicists, who spend their days in a chaste atmosphere of tensors and Christoffel symbols. For them, reality is a constantly elusive thing which can be only approximated by mathematical constructs. These constructs are found to fit only imperfectly the observed data. Impressed by this lack of agreement, they come to believe that truth of all sorts is essentially relative and consider as soft and uncritical all believers in absolute truth.

Or, perhaps, the Persons of One Method are those who pride themselves on being an uncompromising realist. Life, they say, is hard, and all hope is elusive. Let less tough-minded persons dream of a future paradise or seek escape in fiction. They themselves will face life as it is. They will dodge none of the unpleasant facts as venereal disease, crooked politicians, gang murders, drunken orgies in cheap saloons, quiet feminine suicides on gray winter mornings. They call themselves realists; yet what is their realism, after all? Is it anything more than the reaction of disappointed persons who somehow missed the fulfillment they sought in life and now willfully blind themselves to the very possibility of that which once they sought?

Thus, these Persons of One Method grasp, in their various ways, their little fragments of truth. Each refuses to examine sympathetically what the other has found. Each loves his own viewpoint better than the truth. They are all unwilling to cooperate and to try to fit their private truths together into a universal pattern. Among these Persons of One Method, there is no philosopher in the etymological sense of that much abused word. There is no true lover of wisdom, no broad-minded seeker after all reality, no one like Aristotle or St. Albert the Great.

All these subjective, personal, and private epistemologies are wrong, for the very simple and very important reason that truth, by its very nature, cannot be manufactured subjectively. Truth must be taken as it is. If we try to mould it to our own desires, then it is no longer truth.

The old-time prospectors had a saying, "Gold is where you find it." The meaning, of course, was that the prospector must have no preconceived notions about the location of the treasure. He must be constantly alert to find gold even when it turns up in the most unexpected places. In a parallel fashion, we can say, "Truth is where you find it." We must, then, have no prejudices which prevent us from being alert to seize truth even when it, too, turns up most unexpectedly.

The Persons of One Method can discover partial truths, but they cannot attain to a well-balanced view of reality. The very fact that they are Persons of One Method, the very fact that they insist upon their own privately chosen means of discovering truth, limits them to a mere portion of reality. For truth, after all, is to be discovered only when we approach reality without preconceptions, when we renounce all desire to bend the facts to our whim, when we are ready to accept truth in any form that it occurs, when we take our position in all humility face to face with reality, respectfully awaiting the oracle. For truth is not what we make it; truth is what it is in itself.

The necessity of this correct attitude cannot, strictly speaking, be proved. For before we prove any proposition, including this one, we must assume an epistemology. To try to demonstrate the

facts of the last paragraph, then, would inevitably lead to a vicious circle. Yet if we cannot prove these facts, at least we can show that without them all certain, common knowledge becomes impossible.

If I refuse to submit to reality, if I set up my own private criteria of truth, then I obtain a system of knowledge which is valid for myself, indeed, and for all others who accept my criteria. But if I am to be free to make up my own epistemology, then my neighbor has the same freedom. Taking advantage of this liberty, he also can create his own epistemology and his own private system of knowledge. Each of us may find satisfactory his own private and personal system; but since these philosophies are personal, they will generally disagree. Each of us will seek the justification of his own system in the criteria which he himself has selected. Thus, common agreement becomes impossible because there is no test upon which all agree and which will serve to decide between the varied personal criteria of reality.

There is one way to avoid this intellectual chaos and only one way. That way is to seek the criteria of truth and falsehood outside of one's own mind, to seek them in the very nature of existing reality; for although there are many minds, there is only one objective universe. Knowledge can be unified by seeking its basis in the one universe and not in the many minds.

The intellectual conflict which we have been discussing is not a mere danger. It is a reality. It is a summary of the history of serious thought since the decline of the great schools of mediaeval philosophy. The abandonment of a belief in absolute truth has led to the reign of the Person of One Method. The only reason that the intellectual world of the present day is not even more confused than it is, is the fact that the Persons of One Method are so occupied with their private systems that they pay little attention to each other. Thus, an idealist can teach philosophy in a university classroom while a materialist teaches physics next door; and these two men will never clash, because their interests are so narrow that they are not fully aware of each other's contradictory systems.

Perhaps, the fundamental reason underlying this intellectual chaos is a certain individualistic selfishness. It is flattering to be a Person of One Method when that method has been composed by oneself. Dwelling each in his idea-proof compartment, the Persons of One Method work out their private epistemologies. Each lives, an autocratic ruler in his own world of ideas, and feels consequently a flattering sense of individual power.

The creation of these private worlds is an enjoyable intellectual pastime, but it has no particular connection with reality. At most, it is in contact with some isolated aspect of reality. A real love of truth demands a more humble attitude. The thinker must realize that the unity of truth leaves only a slight play for originality. It is wildly impossible that one thinker's private system should be right and that all the rest of mankind should be wrong. Truth, rather, is to be sought in a long and great tradition to which millions of men have added, each his humble bit. Intellectual greatness consists not in perverting this tradition, this *philosophia perennis*, but in an intensity of insight by which the thinker makes the great tradition his own. The eminence of St. Thomas Aquinas was not in his originality. It was, rather, in the comprehensiveness of his viewpoint which saw all the knowledge of his day as one and penetrated deeply into it.

The foregoing general considerations will throw light on the particular error of positivism. For the positivist, too, is a Person of One Method. He is one of those who try to impose their own subjective criteria of truth, accepting only that which is discoverable by a certain previously determined method. Positivism is, in fact, one of the crudest and most elementary of such systems. The positivist is one of the most naïve among the Persons of One Method; for he demands that all truth shall be obvious, and rejects *a priori* all subtleties and non-obvious truths.



This is, of course, a thoroughly illogical position. There is no reason for rejecting truth merely because it is not obvious. The positivist is impressed by the controversial nature of so much metaphysics and theology. Because there is not general agreement in these fields, he argues that all search for non-obvious truths is futile. But this conclusion goes beyond the premises. The premises merely prove that the less obvious a truth is, the harder it is to attain, and that under such circumstances, one must be unusually alert against error; but they do not prove that the more subtle truths are not attainable with full certainty.

One does not come closer to reality by systematically renouncing a search for the less obvious truths. In fact, these non-obvious truths are precisely the ones most important for our own orientation. The existence of God, the ultimate nature of man, his rights, his duties, the immortality of the soul — these things are not obvious. It takes hard work and good will to learn about them. And yet, these are precisely the things which it is most necessary for us to know. Positivism ingloriously gives up the search for them. Thus in his effort to be as realistic as possible, the positivist loses contact with the most important realities.

The positivist argues that when the search for truth becomes difficult and when doubts arise, it is better to stop, rather than to continue at the risk of error. But the wisdom of this course cannot be taken for granted, as the positivist takes it for granted. Our daily life would become impossible if we demanded full certainty at every step. That man succeeds best in the ordinary affairs of life who does not accept at its face value every rumor and every fleeting impression and who, on the other hand, does not withhold his assent from truths which are proved beyond any reasonable doubt simply because unreasonable doubts arise. So, also, in the broad field of the intellectual world, the true philosopher, the true lover of wisdom, will not be too ready to run away in the face of difficulty. Not being a Person of One Method, one will try by various techniques to overcome the difficulty and will often be rewarded by a satisfactory solution.

Positivist society is unsatisfactory precisely because its underlying philosophy leaves out of account all difficult but vital truths. Its ideal is the success-ideal, which is merely the apotheosis of the obvious and the commonplace. The leaders of this modern positivistic world are very sure of themselves. They pride themselves on their realism, but actually they are blind to the most essential facts. Life in such a society is not deeply satisfying because it is not based on a deep perception of reality. The whole society is false because it rests on the epistemological error of positivism.

If we wish to reach a society better than the current success-culture offers, then we must aim at some better ideal than the success-ideal. This we can do only by relying upon a better epistemology than positivism gives us. We must therefore break sharply with the limitations of positivism. We must strike out boldly toward a deep truth for which the positivist dares not search, a deep truth whose very existence is hidden from the cold, practical, self-satisfied, worldly men who govern our society, a truth which shall set us free from the unexciting mediocrity of this modern world, where comfort is more valued than beauty, where gold is more precious than the souls of men.

## Note

1 Comte, Auguste: *The Positive Philosophy*. Trans. by Harriet Martineau. New York, William Gowans, 1868. P. 799.



## Chapter V

# Deep Knowledge

A success-society is unsatisfactory because it is based on the success-ideal. The success-ideal is unsatisfactory because it is based on the false epistemology of positivism. Positivism is unsatisfactory because it is a partial and superficial view of reality. To attain, then, to a better society we must build on something more adequate than positivism. We must not be content with the commonplace and obvious truths which limit the positivists' view. We must seek for facts which are too basic to be obvious and we must build our better society on them. For a deeply satisfying society must be built on deep and fundamental truths.

At this point a doubt arises. Can the human mind attain such truths? Comte gave up the search for deep knowledge because he felt it was unattainable. He alleged the failure of the theologians and metaphysicians to reach any agreement in their search. If Comte was right, then the quest for non-obvious facts is futile. We had better reconcile ourselves to positivism. We had better be content with our present society; for, unsatisfactory as it is, we can hope for nothing better. We are condemned by nature to live in a mental world of superficial truths and our society must inevitably show corresponding limitations. This was essentially the viewpoint of positivism and this is essentially the viewpoint of the dominant majority today.

This viewpoint, however, need not be accepted without protest. It is a theory characteristic of the less brilliant periods of human thought. It was not the viewpoint of great thinkers like Plato. Indeed, Plato's greatness lies precisely in his vision of the non-obvious and its social significance. He often stated the importance of deep and non-obvious truths, but probably never better than in the Allegory of the Cave.

The importance of this allegory merits a detailed consideration for it. Plato imagined a number of prisoners who had been chained and fettered in a subterranean cave from childhood on. Their chains were so arranged that they could look only in one direction where a flat wall stretched before their eyes. At a distance behind these prisoners a fire was burning, while between the fire and them was a road and a low wall. At intervals men passed along this road carrying objects which showed above the low wall in such a way that the shadow of these objects was cast by the fire on the flat wall before the prisoners' eyes. Thus the prisoners were prevented from seeing the real objects, but were introduced to a wide variety of shadows cast by stone and wooden images of human beings and of animals and of all sorts of other things. Moreover, the men carrying these objects behind the prisoners' backs would sometimes speak and an echo in the cave would make it appear to the prisoners that these sounds were coming from the shadows. The effect would be, of course, that the men chained in the cave from childhood would never see any other thing than the shadows on the wall opposite them. Shadows would represent their only conception of reality. If Plato had been living in modern times, he might have represented the condition of these men less awkwardly by imagining them confined from childhood in a motion-picture theater so that all their lives they would have seen nothing else than the shadows cast on the silver screen.

Plato now considers what would be the effect of the liberation of a prisoner thus confined from childhood. As soon as the man was freed he would at once stand up, turn around, and face the light, which would at first dazzle his eyes. Now if someone should point out to him the real objects whose shadows he had seen from childhood, he would find it hard to believe that these had a reality superior to that of the shadows. His mental inertia would make him persist in attributing more reality to the shadows with which he was familiar. Plato supposes further that the prisoner

would be led unwillingly out of the cave into daylight. At first he would be almost blinded by the sun, but gradually would become used to the new situation. He would recognize shadows; for shadows are the things with which he had been familiar from youth. Then he would recognize the reflection of objects in the water, next, the real objects, and finally the sun itself, the source of light.

What would be the mental effect of this liberation? Naturally, the man would learn to pity his former fellow-captives who mistook the shadows on the wall for reality. If now he were led back into the cave and chained in his old position, he would feel only pity and contempt for his fellow captives. If certain prizes were awarded among them for the ability to recognize the shadows with their customary sequences and coexistences, the returned captive would naturally despise these petty competitions; for having once become acquainted with reality, the world of shadows would appear trivial to him. The other prisoners, in turn, would laugh at him when he told them that the shadows which they studied were not deep realities but mere half-truths.

What is the meaning of this allegory? Evidently, Plato distinguished two classes of men. First, there were those satisfied with superficial knowledge, the positivists of his day. These People of One Method felt that they had exhausted reality by their study of superficial phenomena. Yet such men, in spite of their intellectual self-assurance, were really to be pitied. Like the prisoners in the cave, they were mistaking shadows for reality. On the other hand, living side by side with these positivists was another group, the true philosophers, men who had discovered a deeper truth, a truth unknown to their fellows. These men corresponded to the returned prisoners in the cave who had become acquainted with a deeper reality.

What exactly does Plato mean by this superior knowledge whose existence he implies? First of all, he says it is something gained by the soul's ascent "to the intellectual region,"<sup>1</sup> that is to say, to a sphere where the highest faculty of the soul, the intellect, *nous*, is active. Deep truth is something to be acquired by the superior powers of the mind. This passage gives us a hint about the subjective element in deep knowledge, the method of acquiring it; but it does not tell us in what this special quality of depth consists.

Some light is thrown on this latter question by a passage in which Plato says that "[this organ of knowledge] together with the entire soul, must be turned around from the world of becoming until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of being and of the brightest of being; and this, we say, is the good."<sup>2</sup> Deep knowledge, therefore, is knowledge of being, while superficial knowledge is knowledge of becoming. The special quality of depth arises from the fact that the object has a truer existence than where this quality is absent. All this reflects a characteristic doctrine of Plato. The world of phenomena which we see and feel does not possess reality in the deepest sense. It is a world of becoming, rather than of being. It is a sort of middle stage between being and non-being and has therefore only a half-existence, a half-reality. This world of phenomena, however, reflects a world of ideas which is the real world, "which, as unconditioned Reality, is unaffected by the change and partial non-being of the phenomenon, and, as uniform and self-identical, is untouched by the multiplicity and contradictions of concrete existence."<sup>3</sup> This world of being is distinguished, then, from the phenomenal world of becoming because it possesses existence in a higher degree. This real world is *üntos on*, *really existing* and *pantelôs* or, completely existing.

It is easy to see why knowledge of this more real world should be a truer knowledge than knowledge of the transitory world of becoming. For intelligibility rests on existence. That which is, is knowable; that which is not, is unknowable. Knowledge, then, of the half-being of the sensible world is really only a half-knowledge, which Plato calls *doxa*, opinion, and which is carefully to

be distinguished from true knowledge. Opinion is indeed something "more obscure than knowledge, but brighter than ignorance."<sup>4</sup> Opinion, the knowing of the half-real world of the senses, is the science upon which the positivist prides himself. True knowledge, the knowledge of the true world of real being, is the deep knowledge which Plato indicated by his Allegory of the Cave.

Plato conceives the real world as a world of ideas. His doctrine on this point is somewhat obscure, but the most natural interpretation of his language is that the Platonic ideas are substances with an existence of their own and arranged in a hierarchy leading up to the highest of all ideas, the idea of good, possibly identified in Plato's mind with the Deity. These ideas are somehow shadowed in the world of phenomena but the true philosopher will not be satisfied with phenomena. He will insist on penetrating into the real world of subsistent ideas.

What are we to think of this theory of Plato's? It is clear, first of all, that we cannot accept his doctrine of hypostatized ideas. This doctrine, indeed, has never found much acceptance in the form taught by Plato. It is even somewhat doubtful that Plato himself held it in just this sense. In any case his theory is not logically satisfactory. It looks too much like a *deus ex machina* introduced to solve the philosophical problem of universal ideas.

There exists a better solution to this problem, due to Aristotle and the Schoolmen. The universal ideas as universals exist only in the mind, but these universal ideas which exist in the mind are not mere figments of the imagination. They have a real basis in the external world in the essences of things. The universal idea of dog exists only in the mind, but this universal idea is based on real dogs existing outside of the mind.<sup>5</sup>

Although we are forced to reject Plato's theory of ideas, we can accept his distinction between deep and superficial knowledge. We can accept his doctrine that the former is distinguished from the latter by the fact that it implies the comprehension of more being, more reality. But how can a mind comprehend more being, a greater quantity, so to speak, of existence? Certainly not by the mere multiplication of objects. In a sense, indeed, a hundred oak trees have more being than ten oak trees, but this cannot be the answer we are seeking; for a man who has viewed a hundred oaks does not necessarily know more about oak reality than he who has viewed ten. The effort to gain superior knowledge by the mere mechanical multiplication of facts is a vulgar, positivistic error. In Plato's allegory, the liberated captive did not see more objects. He saw a deeper reality in the same objects, truth instead of shadows.

Deep knowledge, then, means the attainment of more reality in that same object in which superficial knowledge attains only a lesser reality. How can this be? How can different thinkers discover different degrees<sup>5</sup> of being in the same object? Some light is thrown on this problem by the Aristotelian and Scholastic distinction between essence and accident. The essence of a cube is that which makes a cube a cube. Everything else, other than the essence, which can be affirmed of an object is an accident. Thus, a dog may be brown, white, sleeping, barking, chasing a cat. All these additional ideas are accidents.

Now it is clear that in apprehending the essence of an object and in apprehending some mere accident of the object, we are apprehending two different degrees of reality. One can apprehend the essence of a triangle without thinking whether the triangle is scalene or not; but one cannot apprehend the accident, scalene, without thinking of a triangle. The essence of an object is its very being considered as intelligible. It denotes the same reality as the substance of the thing itself. It is characteristic of substances that they exist in themselves, while accidents exist only in something else. Therefore, while in apprehending the essence of a thing, we are apprehending something which completely is *pantelôs* on; in apprehending an accident, we are apprehending only a sort of

half-reality, something which does not possess full being. As St. Thomas said, "Being is affirmed absolutely and in the first place of substances but secondarily and after a fashion of accidents." 6 Elsewhere St. Thomas declares that accidents are only "a sort of being."

An accident in the sense of the last paragraph is called a predicamental accident and is a way of being. In addition to this, there exists another type of accident called the predicable accident. It is, as the name implies, a class of predicates. This concept also is valuable in understanding what is meant by deep knowledge. A predicable accident is a predicate which does not flow from the essence. It is contrasted with a property which is a predicate which does flow from the essence. For example, man is essentially a rational animal. This is his essence. Now there are certain things which flow from this essence, rungs which are so intimately bound up with the essence that if the essence is, they also must inevitably be. For instance, risibility, the ability to laugh, arises from the very fact that man is a rational animal. Risibility is therefore a property of man. On the other hand, such predicates as sitting on a park bench or eating a ham sandwich, are accidents; for these things do not derive from the essence of a rational animal and are separable from it. A man would be no less a man if he were not sitting on a park bench or if he were not eating a ham sandwich.

A property is therefore, as St. Thomas has said, "something half way between essence and accident."7 Hence, we may divide the objects of knowledge into three categories-essences which have full being, properties which have less being, and finally accidents which have only a very inferior degree of being. This gives a satisfactory answer to the question as to how objects of knowledge can have varying degrees of reality.

The application of the above principle is clear. Deep knowledge is only possible when one attains to the essence of the object, or at least, when one attains to properties which lie close to the essence. No amount of merely accidental information will ever give depth of knowledge. Herein lies the error of positivism. The positivist enthusiastically accumulates information about accidents while systematically renouncing the search for essences. Hence results the extreme superficiality of the knowledge of those scientists who follow Comte's methodology.

As an example of this superficiality, consider a psychologist who has devoted many years to the experimental study of human behavior. From this patient labor, he has accumulated an enormous store of facts. He knows about the Purkinje phenomenon, the Weber-Fechner law, the position of Bechterew's nucleus; but he does not know what man essentially is. He does not know that man is a rational animal and because he does not know this, he constantly falls into all sorts of laughable errors. For example, he expects to find in the apes reasoning properly so-called, or he tries to explain the growth of the human intelligence by evolution. Because this psychologist has never grasped the essence of man, because he has never learned what a man essentially is, he quite literally does not know the difference between a man and an ape. He knows some differences, of course, but not *the* difference, that is to say, the essential difference.

This difference between deep and superficial knowledge is clear from a comparison of Plato's *Republic* and Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology and Ethics*. At first glance, the advantage seems to be entirely on the side of Spencer. Spencer is clear, precise, and logical. His work is based on familiarity with the achievements of science. Twenty-three centuries of study separated Spencer from Plato, and Spencer took full advantage of the intervening accumulation of knowledge. Thus, he was able to document his statements by a painstaking reference to proved facts.

Plato, on the other hand, seems inaccurate by comparison. He does not take pains to back up his assertions with experimental evidence. His proposal for an ideal state is certainly not very

feasible. Some of its features, indeed, are absurd and morally offensive, such as the proposed communism of wives and children in the ruling class.

It might seem, therefore, that the advantage lies with Spencer. Yet actually Plato is incomparably the greater man. Herbert Spencer, who died only a generation ago, is already out of date. Plato is never out of date. Since his day, every great system of thought has felt his influence, directly or indirectly. From time to time his intellectual leadership has been so overpowering that choice spirits have yielded themselves almost wholly to his guidance, like the members of the Florentine Academy in the fifteenth century, or the Cambridge Platonists in the seventeenth.

Plato is incomparably the greater man. Why is he greater? He is greater because he concentrated his attention on the very essence of things. He did not limit himself to the study of the merely accidental aspects of society: the form of government, the size of territory, the prevailing economic system. He went straight to the essence of society. He studied the common animating purpose which makes a society what it is. He asked what this purpose should be, and he asked the nature of those things which gave this purpose dignity. He built his ideal society, then, not about any attractive accidental aspect but about the essential justice which makes a society good. Plato knew that society must rest on a clear knowledge of these truths; therefore, Plato's work is enduring while Spencer's is not.

The eternal fascination of Plato lies in the fact that he not only caught sight of the essences of things, but he saw them with an extraordinary clearness. Herein lies another factor making for depth of knowledge. We have said that depth implied a knowledge of essences and not merely of properties or accidents. But this fact does not tell the whole story, for essences may be known with different degrees of clarity, and unless they are known with real clearness, the resulting knowledge is not as deep as possible. There is a great difference between the mere factual comprehension of the proposition, Man is a rational animal, and the vast depth of meaning which St. Thomas Aquinas saw in that proposition. Depth of knowledge, then, implies not only the comprehension of essences, but a clear comprehension.

This special quality of clarity is particularly visible in the fine arts. For the perception of beauty implies precisely this clear vision of the essential form of an object; and a thing is beautiful when it is so made that clarity of vision is facilitated for the onlooker. "Each thing is called beautiful according as it has clarity of its own kind, spiritual or bodily, and according as it is set in due proportion."<sup>8</sup>

It is easy to find this clarity in the work of great artists. It is visible in a superlative degree, for example, in the work of Rembrandt in the last decade of his life. At this time the master had left far behind him the facile realism of his early work. He was content to abandon the task of pleasing the public taste to those of his pupils who cared to do so, to Govaert Flinck, Ferdinand Bol, or Nicholaes Maes. He was content to leave the management of his personal affairs to others. For Rembrandt himself had become obsessed with one ambition, and that ambition was to express with the utmost clarity the inner, utter reality of things. And so his work took on an extraordinary beauty. His paintings showed the most essential, secret facts of his subjects' beings. We seem to know these subjects quite as well as if they had been our friends since childhood. Even Rembrandt's most rapid drawings became creations of overwhelming power expressing, with marvelous accuracy of line and with Titanic vigor, the exact idea which the master desired to express, in all its naked clarity.

Deep knowledge, then, implies both a knowledge of essences and a knowledge of these essences with a certain glorious clearness; but the process does not stop here. The person who is accustomed to search for the essences which underlie the appearance of individual objects, will

carry the same attitude of mind into his contemplation of the universe as a whole. Just as he seeks the essential reality underlying a man or a tree, so he will seek the essential reality underlying the entire knowable world.

Thus the path to deep knowledge leads inevitably to the vicinity of the Divine Reality. This is true even when it is implicit. Plato or Rembrandt may not have been conscious of the attributes of God, and yet the overpowering urge, the burning thirst for reality which drove these men to sink themselves ever deeper and yet deeper into the essential mystery of existence brought them, albeit unconsciously, closer to God, Who is pure actuality, utter and complete existence.

Almighty God Himself sees all reality, not by a painstaking investigation of successive objects, but by a single and completely simple intellectual act, an act in which there is no affirmation or negation, but simply a direct vision of all reality. Deep knowledge on the part of any thinker tends, precisely in proportion as it is deep, in the direction of this single, perfect act. Here we find in transcendent perfection something which was foreshadowed in Plato's clear vision of essence and in Rembrandt's clear view of beauty. For the thinker attains depth of knowledge only when he sees the essence beneath the individual object and the unity beneath the universe, only when his vision becomes increasingly clear and pure and unified until it partakes (to the extent possible for man) of the single, transcendent, perfect act of divine knowing.

## Notes

1 *Eis ton noçton topon*, (*Republic*, 517 B).

2 *Republic*, 518C-D

3 Zeller, Eduard: *Plato and the Older Academy*. Trans. by Sarah Frances Alleyne and Alfred Goodwin. London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1888, p. 237.

4 *Republic*, 478 C.

5 *Universalia, secundum quod sunt universalia, non sunt nisi in anima. Ipsae autem naturae, quibus accidit intentio universalitatis, sunt in rebus.*" St. Thomas: *Comm. in Arist. De anima*, Liber II, Lec. 12.

6 "Ens absolute et primo dicitur de substatiis, et posterius et secundum quid de accidentibus." St. Thomas: *De ente et essentia*, Cap. 2.

7 "Medium est inter essentiam at accidens" St. Thomas, *Sum. Th.*, I, q. 77, a. I, ad 5um.

8 "Unumquodque dicitur pulchrum secundum quod habet claritatem sui generis, vel spiritulem vel corporalem, et secundum quod est in debita proportione constitutum." St. Thomas: *Expositio in librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, Cap. 4, Lect. 5.



## Chapter VI

# Wishful Thinking And Society

A satisfactory society must be founded on deep knowledge; but how is this deep knowledge to be attained? The natural answer would seem to be that it is to be attained through an intensive use of the resources of the human intellect. This answer, however, leaves many persons unsatisfied because in their minds the intellect is associated with that superficial kind of knowledge which characterizes positivism. These persons, therefore, seek access to deep knowledge through some sort of non-intellectual approach.

Perhaps the most typical modern representative of this school is Henri Bergson. Bergson recognizes the value of intelligence in the discursive thinking of the physical sciences, but he criticizes it as a tool of philosophy. He feels that intelligence is too akin to the material. It is at home in physics and chemistry which deal with the material. It is less adequate in biology. It is quite inadequate for dealing with the world of the spirit. Therefore, Bergson turns to intuition as the proper philosophical method. Intuition, he believes, goes straight to the heart of reality. Intuition sees life and movement, while intelligence deals with the inert. In our terminology, intuition is Bergson's road to deep knowledge.

It is not easy to understand precisely what Bergson understands by intuition. In fact, he himself quite frankly says: "Let no one ask us, then, for a simple and geometric definition of intuition. It would be only too easy to show that we use the word in senses which are not mathematically reducible to each other."<sup>1</sup>

The same vagueness characterizes the works of others whose position is more or less like that of Bergson, for example, Scheler or Müller-Freienfels or Keyserling. These men all agree that the intellect alone does not attain a satisfactory view of reality, that some other mental power or faculty is necessary. They all describe this faculty in more or less metaphorical language; but they never state clearly and in unambiguous terms exactly what this new non-intellectual faculty is and where it fits into the scheme of human psychology.

If we are to suppose that this non-intellectual power really *is* non-intellectual, what can it be? To answer, one must consider all the various powers of the human mind. What are these powers? Most modern psychologists would answer this question by making a tripartite division of mental activity, as follows: (1) cognition, which includes all mental representation of reality, for example, sensations and abstract ideas, and all mental re-working of these representations, for example, fantasy and logical reasoning, (2) appetite, which includes all striving of whatever sort, will, impulse, drive, and the like, and (3) emotion, a term which is fairly self-explanatory.

This tripartite division is somewhat open to criticism because emotion is not really independent of appetite. Emotion is a sort of by-product of striving. Joy, for example, is a by-product of the successful attainment of the desired object.<sup>2</sup> Anger results from violent striving against a present evil, while fear results from the struggle against an evil difficult to avoid.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we must exclude emotion as a possible independent approach to truth; whatever conceivable value emotion has as a tool of philosophy must be considered in connection with appetition.

Having discarded emotion as one of the fundamental forms of mental activity, we are left with the dual division of cognition and appetition. Each of these operates on two separate levels. Cognition involves either mere sense knowledge, or else the rational processes of the intellect.

Appetition may be either a blind impulse akin to the senses or it may be an act of the free will dependent on rationally acquired knowledge. This gives us the following classification, the classic Scholastic schema:

intellect  
cognition  
sense  
Mental powers:  
free will  
appetition  
blind impulse (*appetitus sensitivus*)

We return now to the question asked at the beginning of the chapter. If deep knowledge may be gained non-intellectually, what power of the mind can lead us to it? If intellect be excluded, then the remaining possibilities are the senses or else some form of appetition. Let us consider the first of these possibilities. Can some power of sense lead one to deep knowledge, knowledge such as was discussed in the last chapter?

Cardinal Newman would seem at first sight to answer in the affirmative, for in his *Grammar of assent* he speaks of an *illative sense* and he seems to consider this illative sense as precisely the mental power which leads to deep truth. A more careful reading of the passages in question, however, is enough to convince one that Newman's illative sense is really a function of the intellect. In the field of moral duty he compares the illative sense to Aristotle's *phronesis* and the latter was certainly intellectual. Finally, Newman himself makes it clear that he is using the word sense very loosely; for it is, he says, a use of this word "parallel to our use of it in 'good sense', 'common sense', a 'sense of beauty', etc.<sup>4</sup> What is true of Newman is also probably true of those others who have spoken of some sense leading to a deep knowledge of reality. That is to say, all these thinkers were using the word loosely.

If, however, the word *sense* be used strictly, can one talk thus? Can human beings literally "sense deep truths? It seems clear that this power is not possessed by any of the classical five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell. Neither is it possessed by any of the more subtle senses which modern psychology has added to the list, for example, the kinaesthetic sense or the labyrinthine sense. All these senses are adapted, each to perceive some particular physical or chemical quality. Hearing perceives air vibrations; taste perceives certain chemical compounds; vision perceives light rays. It is, therefore, absurd to suppose that deep knowledge can be attained by any of these faculties.

May it not be, however, that deep knowledge is attainable by some sense other than those enumerated above? May there not be an additional sense whose function is precisely this? Such a faculty could be properly called a sense if it were ultimately corporeal like the other senses (and therefore distinct from the intellect) and if also, like the senses, it were to offer data to the consciousness as being present and true, but without assigning a reason for this truth.

St. Thomas admits the existence of some such sense which he calls *vis aestimativa* in brute animals, and *vis cogitativa* or *ratio particularis* in man; but the function which he assigns to this sense is quite limited. It is merely to judge automatically about particular situations. Thus, by this sense, this sheep knows that it must run away here and now from this wolf. In man, of course, these "instinctive" reactions may hold in more complex situations; but this is merely because they

are somehow influenced by man's higher faculties. In itself man's *vis cogitativa* is not essentially different from the brute's *vis aestimativa*.<sup>5</sup>

St. Thomas is undoubtedly correct in his analysis. Every sense is ultimately physiological and this fact is just as true of any internal sense or "instinct" as it is of any external sense like the sense of touch. The human being is not essentially superior to the beast in the perfection of these senses. Whatever superiority man has, or seems to have, in regard to the senses is a superiority which is really due to the activity of his intellect. It is, therefore, absurd to suppose that the deep knowledge which we have been discussing, the high point in man's quest for truth, should be discoverable by powers which we have in common with the beasts. It is safe to conclude that the discovery of deep truth calls for something other than a sense faculty of whatever kind.

One possibility remains to be considered. If there is a non-intellectual approach to deep truth and if this approach cannot be by way of the senses, it follows that it must be through man's powers of appetite, that is to say, through one of the other of man's appetitive faculties, free will or blind impulse (*appetitus sensitivus*). It will be clear, on a little consideration, that each of these can play its part in bringing about our assent to a proposition, whether or not either can lead to genuinely deep truth. It is, therefore, worth while to discuss both of them.

First, consider the role of the free will. It is certain, in the first place, that we all have some power of free choice in assenting to propositions. We accept certain statements as facts because we wish to do so. Of course this freedom of believing or disbelieving is quite limited. I cannot choose to believe that two and two make five or that some triangles have four sides, no matter how badly I may wish to do so; but, within limits, such freedom does exist. For example, having left my room in the morning, I may doubt whether I turned off the electric light. If this is a real doubt, I ought to go back and see; but suppose it is not a genuine doubt. Suppose that it is an entirely unreasonable doubt which I am able to recognize as such, because if I stop and think, I can distinctly remember turning off the light. Suppose, however, that in spite of this clear consciousness, the doubt continues. This is admittedly quite illogical; but such things do happen. Now under these circumstances, there is only one thing to do. That is to recognize the doubt for exactly what it is, a baseless, unreasonable scruple, and to eject it forcibly from the mind, assenting under the influence of the will to the proposition, The light is out. This sort of voluntary assent is not only possible; it is the only way to avoid paranoia.

It is very important, indeed, to notice that in such cases of voluntary assent, the will does not really discover truth. The will only acts under the guidance of the intellect. In other words, I will to assent because, and only because, I see that it is reasonable to assent. In such cases, then, the will contributes absolutely nothing to the discovery of truth. The whole responsibility lies with the intellect. If the intellect is right, then the will helps us to give our assent to a truth; but if the intellect happens to be deceived, then the will merely helps us to assent to a false proposition. The whole validity of voluntary assent goes back to the question of whether or not the motives for assent are reasonable motives. Accordingly as they are or are not, the use of the will is, or is not, justified. This point is important in connection with divine faith as we shall see in a later chapter.

Voluntary assent, as described above, may be a valuable aid toward the attainment of truth. At worst it cannot lead us very far from truth because it is controlled by the intellect, and the intellect has a very pleasant custom of returning and repairing its own errors. Not so, however, for that type of assent which is conditioned by blind impulse, by the *appetitus sensitivus*. Assent thus conditioned is what we call wishful thinking. Such wishful thinking is a mental process which easily leads to serious error. It therefore needs very careful study.

How can blind impulse lead to assent to a proposition? It is clear that it cannot do so directly and openly. I cannot consciously yield to impulse and assent to a proposition which clearly lacks an intellectual basis. I cannot, for example, believe that the number of the stars is odd, merely because such is my whim. Assent on the basis of blind impulse must be brought about in some more subtle fashion. What precisely is the nature of this process?

The answer to this question has been vaguely understood for a good many centuries, but in our own day it has been much more clearly formulated on the basis of the modern knowledge of the unconscious.

Briefly stated, the facts are as follows:<sup>6</sup> The total content of the mind may be divided into three parts:

- (1) the *conscious*, that of which I am here and now actually thinking,
- (2) the *foreconscious*, that of which I am not thinking at this moment but which I can easily bring into consciousness, for example, the proposition,  $7 \times 7 = 49$ ,
- (3) the *unconscious*, that mental content which I cannot bring into consciousness without the use of special technical methods, if at all. The existence of the conscious and the foreconscious is an evident fact of experience. The existence of the unconscious is abundantly proved by psychological research.

It is known, moreover, that the unconscious not only exists but also influences conduct. It does this in very many different ways. In fact, the irrational behavior of persons whom we consider abnormal is conditioned in a great many cases by just this unconscious influence. This influence, however, is, not confined to overt behavior. It may apply to one's thinking as well as to one's acting and thus affects the assent given to propositions. In other words, it is quite possible for a person to believe a statement merely on account of a blind impulse, which is concealed from the consciousness of the believer himself. This is, of course, a quite irrational process. It lacks any reasonable motive. But this irrationality remains hidden, a fact which makes such wishful thinking extremely dangerous.

This process may be made clearer by an example. Here is a politician who is proud and ambitious. In other words, his plan of life is almost completely dominated by a blind, really childish, impulse to show off, to exhibit himself in public as a great man. In order to preserve his self-respect, it is necessary for this man to preserve his faith in the proposition: I am a great statesman, caring nothing for my own advancement, but unselfishly devoted to the promotion of the public weal. This is a proposition quite at variance with the facts, yet a proposition which this man must necessarily believe if he is to preserve his exaggerated self-respect. The politician in question has a selfish, blind impulse to believe it; and he believes it, not on any rational basis, but simply and solely on the basis of this impulse. How is this possible? It is possible because the impulse in question remains unconscious and does its work in various subtle, devious ways. If an opponent accuses him of being over-ambitious (which is true), this politician explains the fact away by saying that his opponent is jealous (*parataxis of rationalization*)<sup>7</sup> If someone attacks his previous record, he will answer by attacking his attacker, thus distracting attention from his own faults (*parataxis of projection*). If the memory of his past misdeeds comes before the politician's mind during sessions of silent thought, he will forcibly eject these unwelcome mental visitors (*parataxis of repression*). By these and similar irrational, but effective, devices, he manages to preserve his faith in his own blamelessness, not on any rational ground, but simply on account of

his irrational blind impulse to retain his pleasing sense of personal superiority. It is simply a case of wishful thinking.

It is easy to see that such wishful thinking may affect not only individuals, but also whole groups of people, in which case it has a great and tragic social significance. What, for example, is the basis of the white man's unshakable belief in his own superiority over other races? Is it based upon an open-minded and careful investigation of the known facts? It is quite safe to say that this is not ordinarily the case. Such an investigation of the facts, indeed, would be certain to shake the belief seriously. Belief in racial superiority is almost entirely the result of unconscious impulse. That is to say, people believe that they are superior because they wish so to believe. As in the case of all wishful thinking, this belief is accompanied by a strong emotional tone which makes it very difficult to face the facts rationally.

As a further example of wishful thinking, consider the modern evil of ultranationalism. If citizens were willing to consider calmly and rationally the status of their respective countries, then ultranationalism would be impossible. Each patriot would be forced to recognize that his beloved country possessed certain defects as well as virtues. International problems could then be approached realistically and settled on the basis of the actual facts of the case. War, in such a world, would be a rare occurrence.

When, however, each citizen has a blind faith in the complete superiority of his own country over every other country in every conceivable respect, then he has ceased to think rationally. Such faith is not based on fact. It is based on a blind impulse to exalt one's own country simply because it is one's own country. When the citizens of each nation are moved by this spirit, then international agreement becomes very difficult because every nation has its own set of national prejudices which it is unwilling to relinquish. Thus, nations fail to agree because they literally will not listen to reason.

Such wishful thinking on a national scale comes about because it gratifies certain selfish, blind impulses of individual citizens. It is easy to see this process at work in those thin-lipped women and pompous retired majors who group themselves into self-styled "patriotic societies." Now, if such groups really were patriotic, they would certainly be very highly commendable. For patriotism is an important virtue; and like all virtues it rests on a basis of fact. A real lover of his mother country will recognize both her defects and her virtues. One will do one's part to develop the latter and remove the former. Moreover, one will recognize the necessary subordination of one virtue to another; and, therefore, one's patriotism will take into account the independent rights of the individual, the family, and the Church. True patriotism never leads to injustice.

Not so, however, in the case of the professional superpatriot. This man makes his "patriotism" an excuse for all sorts of selfishness. His snobbishness is gratified by his belief that he is superior to his fellow American citizens because one's ancestors, immigrated to this country in the seventeenth century. One's selfish interest in one's own economic class is rationalized into the assertion that all labor leaders are Communists. His lust for blood appears in his advocacy of what one euphemistically calls national defense, that is, an enormous army and navy.

Such wishful thinking may be merely funny when it is confined to a little group of segregated super-patriots. But there is always the danger that the contagion may spread to the great masses of the people. Then a truly tragic condition may come about. Love of country and duty to country are exaggerated beyond all bounds. Individual rights are trampled under-foot. Economic problems are simply settled by force. Militarism becomes consecrated into a national philosophy. And *My country Right or Wrong* becomes the basis of a new official system of ethics. Such is the totalitarian state.

It is, perhaps, too hard to realize the full danger of this ultranationalism, but it is easy to see how pernicious it has been in certain countries, for example, in Russia, Italy, and Germany. These are excellent examples of wishful thinking on a national scale. These nations saw very clearly the evils of modern extreme capitalism. In seeing these evils, they were perfectly correct and rational, but they ought to have tried to work out a solution for the evils of the capitalistic system on a basis of the known facts.

The citizens of these countries, however, could not wait. They did not have the patience and the balance necessary to face the problem rationally, and so they turned from the evils of a positivistic society to the still greater evils of a society based upon a system of wishful thinking, Communism or Fascism as the case might be.

The lack of a sound, rational basis is quite characteristic of these systems. It is easy enough to refute the errors of Communism or Fascism in the classroom. If all were willing to face them rationally, they would involve little danger; but they are dangerous just because people find wishful thinking easier than rational thinking. Wishful thinking is accompanied by all the emotional forces which accompany human impulse. Therefore, Communism and Fascism have become objects of blind faith and emotional fervor. Hence it is that in some countries it is practically a crime to question the most unimportant proposition of the national ideology. The only patriotic person is the man who accepts without question every dogma, e.g., of Stalin or Hitler, as the case may be. Thus, the same wishful thinking with its concomitant emotion accompanies ultranationalism wherever it is found, in Russia or Germany or in the United States. The superpatriots of the D.A.R. amid the fanatic women on the production line of a Russian tractor factory are all sisters under the skin.

It is clear from the foregoing that no form of assent based on mere appetite can serve as an ultimate basis for attaining deep truth. Voluntary assent given deliberately on the basis of rational motives can indeed be a useful step toward the truth; but in this case the function of the will is actually quite subordinate. We believe not precisely because we want to, but because we see that it is reasonable to do so.

Still less can mere impulsive thinking be a road to deep reality. It is, in fact, a dangerous path which almost inevitably leads to error; for it rejects the leadership of time intellect and so deliberately blinds itself, thus sinning against the light. Wishful thinking of this sort, based on blind impulse alone, is a pernicious thing. It underlies the welter of blind, passionate conflict which plays its part in class war, international war, and oppression of all sorts. It is an abominable habit which must be deliberately and completely rooted out of our personal and national lives.

One fact is evident from the considerations of this chapter. The road to deep reality is not through sense or through will or through blind impulse and its accompanying emotion. Therefore, the intellect alone remains as the sole possible approach to that deep reality which stirred Plato and Aristotle and Rembrandt. To the intellect, then, our quest for deep truth must turn.

## Notes

1 "Qu'on ne nous demande donc pas de l'intuition une définition simple et géométrique. Il sera trop aisé de montrer que nous prenons le mot dans des acceptions qui ne se déduisent pas mathématiquement les unes des autres." Bergson, Henri: *Le pensée et la mouvement*. Paris, Librairie Félix Alcan, 1934, pp. 37-38.

2 For a fuller criticism of the tripartite scheme, see Moore, Thomas V.: *Dynamic Psychology*. Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1924, p. Part I, Chapter VI.

3 Newman, John Henry Cardinal: *An essay in aid of a grammar of assent*. London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888, p. 345.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Illam eminentiam habet cogitative et memorativa in homine, non per id quod est proprium sensitivae partis, sed per aliquam affinitatem et propinquitatem ad rationem universalem, secundum quandam refluentiam. Et ideo non sunt aliae vires, sed eadem perfectiores quam sint in aliis animalibus." St. Thomas: *Sum. th.*, I, q. 78, a. 4, ad 5um.

6 For a fuller treatment see the following references written by the present author: *The Gang Age*. New York, the Macmillan Company, 1926. p.189. Chapters IV and V, and , *New Lights on Pastoral Problems*. Milwaukee, the Bruce Publishing Company, 1931, Chapters IV and XIV.

7 For a discussion of the parataxis, see Moore, Thomas Verner: "The Parataxes; a study of certain borderline mental states." *Psychoan. Rev.*, 8:252-83, July, 1921. Also, by the same author, *Dynamic Psychology*, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1924. p. 444. Consult also the references in the preceding footnote.





## Chapter VII

### The Aristotelian and Thomistic Doctrine of *Noësis*

The discovery of deep truth must be a function of the intellect, since it is a function neither of sense, nor of will, nor of impulse. But the intellect is the power by which the positivist reaches the superficial truth which characterizes his system. How can this same faculty lead to deep truth also? Evidently the answer must be, that the intellect functions on different levels. Depth of knowledge, then, is not attained by the use of some special faculty other than the intellect, but by the use of the intellect in some special way.

What is the special use of the intellect which yields depth of knowledge? To answer this question, we must enumerate the different possible ways by which the intellect can attain truth, and then we must try to find which one of these ways is particularly associated with the special quality of depth. We therefore proceed to ask, What are the ways in which the human mind, as distinct from the senses, can attain truth? It seems that there are two such ways:

(1) The first way is by deducing new truths from others previously known. This is the familiar process of discursive or syllogistic reasoning. The syllogism may be explicit, as in the following example:

All men are mortal.  
But Socrates is a man.  
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Or the syllogism may be implicit, as when we know two angles of a triangle and the length of one side, and then proceed to determine the remaining parts. Such discursive reasoning is a useful technique, but evidently it cannot account for all our knowledge. For such reasoning always presupposes truths previously known. If these truths in turn are to be proved by discursive reasoning, such proof will require still other truths. Evidently this process cannot go on indefinitely; nor can truths depend on each other in a circular fashion, A being proved by B, B by C, and C by A. Therefore, while discursive reasoning can account directly for much of our fund of knowledge, it presupposes by its very nature some other means of attaining truth.

(2) The other method is the immediate apprehension of truths which are in one way or another self-evident. These are propositions which contain in themselves the evidence of their own validity, and which consequently need not be deduced from other truths. A simple example is the proposition, "The whole is greater than any of its parts." As we shall presently see, not all examples are as simple as this. Some immediately knowable truths are to be discovered only by hard mental labor. To be immediately knowable is not the same as to be easily knowable.

Unfortunately, there is considerable confusion in the nomenclature of these two abilities. In Scholastic terminology the former is properly called the reason (*ratio*), while the latter is the intellect (*intellectus*). "Intellect," says St. Thomas, "is not the same thing as reason. For reason involves a certain discursive progress from one proposition to another; but intellect involves a sudden apprehension of something; and therefore the intellect is properly concerned with principles which present themselves at once to cognition, from which principles the reason draws conclusions." 1 But even St. Thomas is far from being consistent in his use of these terms,2 and this inconsistency has become quite general. Hereafter in the present volume the operation of the reason, properly so called, by which one truth is deduced from another, will be called discursive

reasoning. The operation of the intellect, properly so called, by which certain truths are immediately apprehended, will be called *noësis*, from the Greek synonym, *noësis*.

It seems reasonable that depth of knowledge should be associated with *noësis*. For discursive reasoning yields no new truth. It simply makes explicit that which was already contained implicitly in the premises. The premises are the cause of the conclusion; in this the syllogism differs from a mere train of thought.<sup>3</sup> But a cause cannot produce an effect superior to itself. Therefore, any excellence found in the conclusion must somehow have existed beforehand in the premises. Hence the origin of the special quality of depth is to be sought in *noësis* rather than in discursive reasoning.

Again, discursive reasoning implies progress from general to particular while depth implies the attainment of ever more simple and more unified views of reality. Finally, *noësis* is the highest human cognitive act. This sudden apprehension of truth has about it something of the angelic. "The human soul," says St. Thomas, "as far as concerns that which is highest in it, touches on something which is proper to the nature of the angels; that is to say, it acquires a knowledge of some things suddenly and without investigation."<sup>4</sup> Discursive reasoning, on the other hand, is a sign of weakness. It becomes necessary because we cannot, like the angels, see at once all the truth which we are able to attain. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suppose that deep knowledge, the most worthy and most noble sort of knowledge, will be acquired by that operation of the mind which is highest and most angelic, namely, by *noësis*.

Since *noësis* would seem to hold the secret of deep knowledge, we proceed to study it. Before we go further, however, it would be well to inquire precisely how the cause or principle of *noësis* differs from that of discursive reasoning. Both are operations of the mind and both are distinct from the operations of sense, will, and impulse. The recognition of *noësis* side by side with discursive reasoning would seem to introduce an unpleasant dualism into the human mind. What, then, is the exact interrelation of these two operations? St. Thomas gives a very satisfying answer to this difficulty: "It is clear that discursive reasoning bears the same relation to *noësis* as moving bears to remaining at rest, or as acquiring bears to having. But it is manifest that remaining at rest and moving are not to be referred to different powers, but to one and the same, even in the things of nature; for by the same nature a thing moves to a place and rests in a place. Much more truly is it by the same power that we understand (noetically) and reason discursively."<sup>5</sup> *Noësis*, then, is not a separate power (*potentia*) distinct from discursive reasoning; yet, is it not somehow distinct? St. Thomas throws some light on this question when he states that the immediate apprehension of primary truths is due to a distinct habit (*habitus*),<sup>6</sup> a technical Scholastic term which, as here used, means a stable quality disposing and helping the power to act. The act of *noësis* differs from discursive reasoning, then, in its origin as well as in its own character. The two acts originate in different habits. Having defined the place of *noësis* in the human mind, it is next necessary to define as accurately as possible the field which its operations cover, that is to say, the objects of *noësis*. I believe these objects may be reduced to four: the essences of things, analytic immediate judgments, synthetic immediate judgments, and unanalyzed truths. Let us consider these four objects separately.

Before the intellect can make a statement, the meaning of the subject and predicate must be known. Before I can say, 'Dogs are vertebrates,' I must first know what dogs and vertebrates are. Therefore, a first operation of the intellect must be to discover what a thing is, that is, to discover its essence.

It may properly be objected that this discovery of essences is not a function of *noësis*, for we have defined *noësis* as the immediate apprehension of truths, and this is not the same as the

immediate apprehension of essences. In spite of this objection, it will probably be justifiable to include the discovery of essences among the functions of *noësis*. For *noësis*, properly so called, not only presupposes a knowledge of essences, but it is an act which in itself is very closely related to the discovery of essences.

Therefore, the latter function will be discussed here. The intellectual act by which essences become known is extremely important in Scholastic thought; for it represents a transition from the world of sense, of particulars, to the world of the intellect and of universal ideas. Therefore, it is a necessary preliminary for the discovery of deep knowledge. The transition takes place when the phantasm, the product of the senses, is so illuminated by the active intellect (*intellectus agens*) that the passive intellect (*intellectus passivus* or *possibilis*) is able to see the general in the particular, the universal idea underlying the sense data.

It may occur to some that this process is unjustifiable on the ground that it seems to imply the addition to the sense data by the intellect of something which was not originally there. This, however, was not the viewpoint of Aristotle and St. Thomas. The intellect, in discovering essences, does not add anything completely new to the sense data. Rather, it brings out something previously existing in some way therein. "The particular is sensed properly and of itself; yet in a way sense touches the universal also. For it knows Callias not only in so far as he is Callias, but also in so far as he is this man, and similarly Socrates in so far as he is this man. But if it were the case that sense apprehended only that which is particular and if at the same time it in no way apprehended the universal nature in the particular, then it would not be possible that universal knowledge would arise in us on the basis of sense apprehension."<sup>7</sup> The proper operation of *noësis*, as we have seen, is not the simple apprehension of essences, but the making of immediate judgments about these essences. These immediate judgments may be either analytic or synthetic, two terms which unfortunately are used in very different senses by different authors.<sup>8</sup> Here we are using the terms in their Kantian sense. An *analytic* judgment is one which is merely explanatory. It simply makes explicit what was already clearly implied. Thus the statement, 'All triangles have three sides,' is analytic because its truth is evident from the very analysis of the word 'triangles'. A *synthetic* judgment is one which really adds a new idea, something not to be discovered by a mere analysis of terms. Kant gives as an example, some bodies are heavy.

The second object of *noësis*, as was stated above, is constituted by immediate analytic judgments. In Scholastic language, immediate judgments are called 'first principles'. There is no doubt that analytic first principles exist and that they are discoverable by *noësis*. Thus the statement, 'The whole is greater than any of its parts', is analytic because its truth is evident from an analysis of the words 'whole' and 'part'. It is a first principle because it need not be deduced from any other truth and, therefore, may serve as the beginning of a chain of reasoning. It is discoverable by *noësis* because *noësis* is by definition precisely this immediate recognition of a truth.

When Aristotle and St. Thomas wished to give an example of the first principles discoverable by *noësis*, they nearly always cited some analytic judgment like the example given above. This usage has passed into the textbooks of logic. Are we to suppose, then, that all immediate judgments, all first principles, are analytic?<sup>9</sup> It is quite certain that they are not. There are synthetic immediate judgments as well; and these form the third of the four objects of *noësis* enumerated above. This point is enormously important. It shows what a valuable tool *noësis* may be in the discovery of truth. Truths such as, 'The whole is greater than any of its parts', are so obvious as to be almost trivial. If *noësis* could do no more than discover such facts, it would not lead us very far.

But if there are noëtic synthetic judgments, then *noësis* can open up new fields of thought. Such is, indeed, the case.

The possibility of reaching synthetic general truths by noësis is proved by a consideration of the process of induction. Consider, for example, a physician who has observed the cure by quinine of a considerable number of malaria patients. Also, he has found no contrary instances where quinine, administered under proper conditions, failed to cure. The physician observes these facts and forms the judgment, 'Quinine is a specific cure for malaria'. The above logical process is recognizable as induction. How can it be justified except by *noësis*, that is to say, by the immediate recognition of the truth, once certain facts are known? In a famous passage,<sup>10</sup> Aristotle seems to say that this process is implicitly a syllogism and he gives the following example:

Every man, horse, mule, is long-lived.  
But whatever is void of bile is man, horse, mule.  
Therefore, whatever is void of bile is long-lived.

This, evidently, is only true if 'man, horse, mule,' constitute a complete enumeration. It is an example of what logicians call 'complete induction'. Evidently complete induction will not explain a case like the induction about quinine and malaria cited above; for if complete induction were applicable, then the syllogism would have to run somewhat as follows:

All malaria patients are X, Y, Z.  
But X, Y, Z . . . are curable by quinine.  
Therefore, all malaria patients are curable by quinine.

This syllogism is evidently invalid. The major is not true. The premises, then, do not prove the conclusion. And yet, we can be perfectly sure that the conclusion itself is true. How can this be explained? It can be explained only by supposing that the intellect has the power, after contemplating adequate data, of reaching directly by an act of noësis a conclusion of universal validity.

It is vain to argue that induction gives mere probability. It may give mere probability in unfavorable cases, but in other cases, it gives certainty. For it is foolish to state that if water boils at 1000 Centigrade in a million experiments, then there is only a high probability that it will do so the millionth-and-first time. We know that there is more than probability in such a case. There is certainty. For the intellect has perceived the general law beneath the multiplicity of particular instances.

This perception of the necessary nature of a truth from the observation of a limited number of instances is clearer still in geometry. The teacher draws two or three triangles of different shapes and sizes on the blackboard and proceeds to prove a certain proposition concerning triangles in general. Nobody feels any doubt that this proposition, if properly demonstrated, will be just as true of a fourth triangle as it was of the three on the blackboard.

The preceding were examples of synthetic noëtic judgment. How can they be explained? This is a difficult question. It touches the very heart of the human cognitive abilities. Perhaps the nearest approach to a solution will be found in the closing section of Aristotle's *Analytica posteriora*, together with St. Thomas' commentary thereon. After remarking that discursive reasoning is impossible without some immediate primary principles to serve as a starting point, Aristotle inquires how these principles are to be acquired and answers that we must have some

power, *tis dúnamis*, by which they can be attained. Since there are no innate ideas, this power must work on sense data, and discover the general truths therein. But how exactly does this power operate? Aristotle answers that we remember the phenomena which we have perceived by the senses. Then out of frequently repeated memories of the same thing comes experience, *empeiria*. The first principles, finally, the beginning of scientific knowledge, come from this experience, "from the universal now stabilized in its entirety within the soul, the one beside the many which is a single identity within them all."<sup>11</sup>

The intellect, therefore, is capable of making the transition from the particularities of sense data to the universal truths of noëtic synthetic judgments, and this process underlies all true induction. But precisely how is this transition from particular to general possible? The answer is the same as the answer given above to the very similar question about the mind's ability to abstract universal ideas from sense data. In either case, the transition from particular to universal is possible because, and only because, the universal in some sense preexists in the particular. Although, strictly speaking, my eyes see only the color and figure of an apple, yet I can say correctly that I see the apple. The apple is in Scholastic terminology accidentally sensible (*sensibile per accidens*). In a similar fashion, although the physician sees directly only Mr. John Doe recovering from malaria after a dose of quinine, still he sees also at the same time an instance of the curative action of quinine on this disease. It is only necessary, therefore, to put aside the particularities of the individual cases, so that the universal truth can stand out in all its naked reality: 'Quinine is a specific care for malaria.' As St. Thomas put it in his commentary on this chapter of Aristotle: "Reason," — we might have expected him to say 'intellect', but St. Thomas' usage of these terms is not consistent, as we have previously remarked — "Reason does not rest with the experience of the particular, but from the many particulars which it has experienced, it receives the one thing which is common and which becomes fixed in the soul so that it considers that one common thing without considering any of the singular instances." <sup>12</sup> As in the case of the abstraction of universal ideas from sense data, this action is performed by the passive intellect after the active intellect has made the universal intelligible amid its surrounding particulars.<sup>13</sup>

By such induction, we are able to discover general truths, truths applicable to a whole class, say, to all igneous rocks, or to all 'Lepidoptera', or to all malaria patients. But *noësis* can not only make such wide inductive statements; it can also discover truths applicable to a small group. For example, 'All of Richard Roe's children are keen-witted'. Indeed, the process can be continued down to the individual. By *noësis*, for instance, I can make the synthetic immediate judgment, 'Peter is extraordinarily tall'. The field covered by synthetic judgments is therefore very broad, extending as it does from the widest inductive generalizations to particular judgments about one individual.

*Noësis* has a fourth function, which is harder to define. This appears when the mind feels itself in the presence of a truth which it knows to be very real and very important, but which it cannot put into words. When one reads, for example, in the proper spirit great works of poetry such as the choruses from the *Oedipus rex* or certain passages from *Hamlet*, the mind exults in the consciousness of its contact with a reality of overwhelming importance. Yet if it tries to put this reality into the exact language of science or philosophy, the spell is broken, the great reality fades from view. Evidently the magic of the poet's lines lies not in their literal significance, but in their ability to suggest something beyond language. As the Orientals say: "The words stop, but the sense goes on."

I have before me as I write, a picture of a statuary group of Christ and St. John, now in the Deutsches Museum in Berlin. It was carved out of wood in Sigmaringen by a nameless master at

the beginning of the fourteenth century. This deservedly famous work has a wealth of meaning. The skill of the mediaeval artist has managed to communicate a truth of eminent depth — something of the trustful, human love of St. John for Christ, something of the tender and sad, divine love of Christ for men. The statue carries implications of infinity; for the artist had evidently learned — perhaps through years of prayer and meditation — some part of the mystery of God Made Man, and he managed to express this truth in wood. All this depth is very evident to one who sees the statue, but how vain it is to try to put it into words! If you try to express in the accurate language of theology the exact nature of the artist's message, or to explain how his particular vision of Christ differed from that of another artist, then once more the spell is broken. The artist's message was too subtle to be expressed in language.

Such experiences fail under the definition of *noësis* because they involve contact with truths immediately perceived by the intellect, truths which were not reached by discursive reasoning. They constitute, therefore, a fourth category of noëtic judgments, something which I have ventured to call 'unanalyzed truths'. The existence of these truths is evident; but how are they to be fitted into the scheme of Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy?

The answer to the foregoing questions depends on the distinction between the comprehension of a truth by the mind and the formulation of this same truth in language. These two things, comprehension and formulation, are separable. I remember reading of a certain mathematician (Henri Poincaré, I think) who said that he had discovered a complicated mathematical theory at the precise instant that he put his foot on the step of a Paris omnibus which he was boarding. Yet, of course, this theory, which he saw thus instantaneously, could be formulated only after considerable mental work. Probably we have all had analogous experiences. Probably we are all familiar with the flash of insight by which we solve, say, a mathematical problem. But the formulation of this solution on paper may require a very considerable amount of further labor.

The above examples show that *noësis* far outruns language. After the act of *noësis*, a certain delay is necessary in order that language may catch up; but sometimes *noësis* outruns language so far that the latter can never catch up. This happens in the case of unanalyzed truths. In such instances the mind perceives by *noësis* a truth which it finds not only difficult, but quite impossible, to put into words.

When we stand before the statue in the Deutsches Museum, we drink in a certain deep knowledge, a knowledge which comes suddenly, without previous effort, by a sort of inspiration. But if we turn to our neighbor and try to tell him what we have seen, then we find that these unanalyzed truths are simply not expressible in language. We stutter and stammer and fail quite miserably in our attempt to explain the ineffable.

This vision of a truth which is so deep as not to be expressible in language is a certain participation in the angelic manner of knowing. For we occasionally have great moments of vision in which we do so participate. "Although the cognition of the human mind is properly by way of discursive reasoning still there is in it a certain participation in that simple cognition which is found in superior substances,"<sup>14</sup> which substances, of course, are the angels. But one of the characteristics of the angelic manner of knowing is that angels do not "compose and divide," that is, form positive and negative judgments.<sup>15</sup> In the higher flights of *noësis*, which involve a certain human participation in this heavenly way of knowing, we also perceive truths as wholes, without separating subject and predicate as would be necessary if these truths were to be expressed verbally.

The ability to discover truths by *noësis* is the great signal triumph of the human mind. It is this which sharply distinguishes our mental powers from those of the brute beasts. The beasts live

in a world of particularities; each object is an isolated phenomenon. But by *noësis*, we can see general truths beneath the apparent chaos of quotidian particularities; and in moments of intellectual exaltation, the veil seems to be drawn aside momentarily, and for an instant we have a vision of unutterable realities too holy for the human mouth to utter.

It is this God-like faculty which makes materialism forever impossible. It is our answer to death and despair. It is our earnest of immortality. It is this *noësis* power of discovering breathless, profound truths which make forever unacceptable the mean society of positivism. One who has seen the vision will never return to the cave to bend his knee before the success-ideal.

## Notes

1 "Intellectus non est idem quod ratio. Ratio enim importat quendam discursum unius in aliud; intellectus autem importat subitam apprehensionem alicuius rei, et ideo intellectus proprie est principiorum, quae statim cognitioni se offerunt, ex quibus ratio conclusiones elicit." St. Thomas: *Comm. Sent.*, Lib. II, Dist. 24, q. 3, a. 3, ad 2.

2 For an excellent discussion of St. Thomas' usage, see Hufnagel, Alfons: *Intuition und Erkenntnis nach Thomas von Aquin*. Münster, Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1932, p. 301. (Veröffentlichungen d. Kath. Inst. f. Phil. Albertus-Magnus Akademie z. Köln, Band II, Heft 5/6.), pp. 196-199.

3 "Discursus secundum causalitatem addit supra successionem cognoscendi quod una cognitio causetur ex alia, ita quod ex uno noto seu cognito moveamur ad aliud ignotum ex vi prioris cogniti et manifestati." John of St. Thomas: *Curs. th.*, IV, q. 58, Disp. 22, a. 4, No. 2.

4 Anima humana, quantum ad id quod in ipsa supremum est, aliquid attingit de eo quod est proprium naturae angelicae; ut scilicet aliquorum cognitionem subito et sine inquisitione habeat." St. Thomas: *De vent.*, q. 6, a., c.

5 "Patet ... quod ratiocinari comparatur ad intelligere sicut moveri ad quiescere, vel acquirere ad habere ... Manifestum est autem quod quiescere et moveri non reducuntur ad diversas potentias, sed ad unam et eandem etiam in naturalibus rebus; quia per eandem naturam aliquid movetur ad locum et quiescit in loco. Multo ergo magis per eandem potentiam intelligimus et ratiocinamur." St. Thomas: *Sum. th.* I, q. 79, a. 8, c.

6 "Similiter nec in homine est una potentia specialis, per quam simpliciter et absolute et absque discursu cognitionem veritatis obtineat; sed talis veritatis acceptio inest sibi per quemdam habitum naturalem, qui dicitur intellectus principiorum." St. Thomas: *De verit.*, q. 5, a., c. Besides this *habitus principiorum* there exists at least one other noetic habitus, namely, *synderesis*, as we shall see in the next chapter.

7 "Singulare sentitur proprie et per se, sed tamen sensus est quodammodo etiam ipsius universalis. Cognoscit enim Calliam non solum in quantum est Callias, sed etiam in quantum est hic homo, et similiter Socratem in quantum est hic homo. Si autem ita esset quod sensus apprehenderet solum id quod est particularitatis, et nullo modo cum hoc apprehenderet universalem naturam in particulari, non esset possibile quod ex apprehensione sensus causeretur in nobis cognitio universalis." St. Thomas: *Comm. in An. Post.* Liber II, Lect. 20, No. 14.

8 For a discussion of these, see Wilpert, Paul: *Das Problem der Wahrheitssicherung bei Thomas von Aquin*. Münster, Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931, p. 214. *Beiträge z. Gesch. d. Phil. u. Theol. d. Mittelalters*, Band XXX, Heft 3, pp. 172-82.

9 A hasty reading of St. Thomas would incline one to answer this question affirmatively. But Wilpert (*op. cit.*, pp. 182-190) has shown very clearly that St. Thomas—and Aristotle also, whom

St. Thomas was expounding—recognized the existence of synthetic first principles. The proof depends on a very careful examination of the relevant passages in both their immediate and remote context.

10 *Anal. pr.*, II, Cap. 23. The syllogism given as an illustration by Aristotle in this passage is obscure and is variously translated by various authorities. I have followed Owen's translation.

11 *Anal post.*, II cap 9. Mure's translation.

12 "Ratio . . . non sistit in experimento particularium, sed ex multis particularibus in quibus expertus est, accipit unum commune, quod firmatur in anima ut eonsiderat illud absque consideratione alicuius singularium." St. Thomas: *Comm. in An. Post.*, Liber II, Lect. 20, No. I.

13 "Quod quidem fit per intellectum possibilem; et iterum quae possit agere hoc secundum intellectum agentem, qui facit intelligibilia in actu per abstractionem universalium a singularibus." St. Thomas: *loc. cit.*, no. 12.

14 Quamvis cognitio humanae animae proprie sit per viam rationis, est tamen in ea aliqua participatio illius simplicis cognitionis, quae in substantiis superioribus invenitur." St. Thomas: *De veut.*, q.15, a. 1, c.

15 St. Thomas: *Sum. Th.*, I, q. 58, a. 4.



## Chapter VIII

# Noëtic Society

A noëtic society is a society based on *noësis*. That is to say, its citizens value *noësis* — or at least, the dominant majority of them do. They regulate their own personal lives by the truths which they have discovered noëtically and this attitude gradually dominates group life. Thus, *noësis* determines the ultimate common purpose of the society and the direction of the common will which makes the society what it is. A *noësis* society, therefore, is one founded on deep knowledge in the same sense that a positivistic society is one founded on superficial knowledge.

What would the ideal noëtic society be like? It seems certain, first of all, that in such a society much time would be devoted to contemplation. For when men value *noësis* properly, they are naturally anxious to contemplate the deep truths which *noësis* brings. This contemplation of deep and beautiful reality is inwardly satisfying, for "the imperfect bliss which is attainable here consists first and foremost in contemplation." 1

This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of modern positivism. Today action is valued above contemplation. The popular hero is the active man, the man who does things, the athlete, the warrior, the successful politician, the big industrialist. Even pleasure must be a continued search for thrills and physical excitement. This would not be true in a noëtic society. The members of a noëtic society would know how much more deeply satisfying it is to discover the fresh, undying beauty of a Shang bronze *chia* than to play a round of golf in the lower 70's, how much more excitement there is in a page of St. Thomas' *Summa* than in a brilliant coup on the Stock Exchange.

We might imagine, then, that a noëtic society would be something like the Athens of the days of Pericles. For this small city contributed more to human civilization in a few decades than most mighty empires have contributed in the entire period of their history. Not that the Athenians were supermen, but the sum total of their accomplishment is astounding nevertheless. In the three decades of Pericles' dominance, the Acropolis was made magnificent by the erection of the Propylaea and the Parthenon and by the sculptures of Phidias and his co-workers. Sophocles and Euripides were writing their tragedies and Aristophanes was looking forward to his first comedy. The brilliant visitor Herodotus was inspiring the young Thucydides. Protagoras was teaching philosophy, while a far greater philosopher, Socrates, was approaching intellectual maturity.

Such a brilliant flowering of art and letters must have reflected a remarkably well-developed taste on the part of the Athenians. Certain fragile arts can flourish on the patronage of a select and isolated aristocracy, but such arts as drama and public architecture can reach their apogee only with wide popular support; and it was for precisely these arts that Athens was great in the fifth century. A deep appreciation of the beautiful seemed to have reached the souls of the common people. Those who have seen the "Theseus" from the east pediment of the Parthenon will remember the dreamy look of godlike contemplation which this statue wears. This is impressive; but it is even more impressive to see something of this same aspect in the humble terra cottas which were turned out in quantities for the use of the common people.

It is true that commerce and industry were flourishing in Athens at the same time. Yet, the city was not so occupied with finance that she lacked time for things of the spirit. Indeed, her very industry reflects her artistic preeminence; for the red-figured ware which is found by archaeologists all over the Mediterranean area is no less a tribute to her artistic ability than to her

commercial enterprise. It is not surprising, then, that Athens in this great period has been looked upon as an ideal by those who value art and learning above mere material success.

Athens was great in the things of the spirit, yet there is a certain unsatisfying coldness *in* her very perfection. Her culture is something like a marble statue, altogether perfect in its white aloofness, yet cold and hard beneath the touch. It is "a thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want."

This hidden want is discoverable in the moral aspects of Athenian life. Her citizens lacked generosity. They lacked human sympathy outside the limits of their own small circle. All those who did not share their own culture were heaped together as "barbarians" and received little consideration. The elegant life of the cultured citizens was made possible only through the toil of a large number of slaves. It is perhaps symptomatic of the time that one member of the inner circle of intellectual elite under Pericles was Aspasia, the courtesan. The judicial murder of Socrates a generation after Pericles had died, is still more symptomatic. For Socrates was a man whose greatness lay precisely in the moral order, and it is tragically significant that the Athenian mob was blind to greatness of this sort.

We cannot avoid the conclusion, then, that Athens in her great period was only an imperfectly noëtic society. Her citizens had remarkable insight in the sphere of art and letters, but they were not remarkable for insight in moral matters. It seems, therefore, that *noësis* is somehow divisible, that *noësis* in the field of pure speculation is separable from *noësis* in the practical conduct of life.

This was, indeed, the view of St. Thomas, who taught that immediate first principles in the moral order were discoverable by a special *habitus* which he called *synderesis*. This ability is parallel to the ability to discover first principles in the speculative order such as we discussed in the last chapter; and both are intellectual operations which, by their immediacy and their certainty, are almost angelic. "In so far as human nature touches on the angelic, it ought to have an immediate knowledge of truth both in the speculative and in the practical fields; and this knowledge ought to be the principle of all the knowledge which follows, whether speculative or practical.... But just as the human soul has a certain natural *habitus* by which it knows the principles of the speculative sciences, which *habitus* we call *intellectus principiorum*; so it has a natural *habitus* for first principles in the field of things to be done, and these are the first principles of the natural law; which *habitus* belongs to *synderesis*."2 St. Thomas goes on to say that the word *synderesis* is used either to denote the *habitus* by which the first principles of the moral order are immediately known, or else the power of reason along with this *habitus*.

Athens was not conspicuous for this quasi-angelic moral insight. Her culture, therefore, was a mixed culture. Her knowledge was deep in the field of art, literature, and speculative philosophy; but her knowledge was superficial in the field of ethics. Athens was far superior to modern positivistic society in her keen appreciation of the beautiful, so much so that even today our official architects can think of no better plans for our public buildings than third-rate imitations of Greek temples. Yet, in spite of this, the Athens of Pericles was hardly more outstanding in her appreciation of the moral law than is the average positivistic society.

This mixture of cultural sensitivity and moral obtuseness is characteristic of the intelligentsia of every age. It is, indeed, for this reason that the intelligentsia often show to poor advantage when compared to quite ordinary people. The Bohemian who can discourse wittily about Schönberg and Braque and Hindemith and Brancusi is often lax in his morals, vain, and irresponsible. He may, therefore, be literally more unintelligent, that is, more out of touch with deep reality, than is his scrub-woman who willingly accepts long hours of toil because she sees that it is her duty to support her growing children. Her moral insight which makes her willing to accept unpleasant obligations,

raises her above the cleverness of the self-styled intellectual. *Noësis* in the moral sphere is, after all, the most important kind of *noësis*.

A fully noëtic society would be one whose citizens had depth of insight in moral matters as well as in art and speculative philosophy. In what, exactly, does such depth of insight consist? It is insight which sees the existence of a moral order with man occupying his place in that order. All this is discoverable by *synderesis*. For *synderesis* teaches first of all that good is to be done and evil avoided. This principle is so evident that no man of good faith can fail to recognize its truth at once; but we must not imagine that because this principle is obvious, it is trivial. It is, on the contrary, the corner stone of all moral knowledge upon which all other moral truths are founded.<sup>3</sup> For this great principle reveals that man is not merely a physical entity occupying his place in a physical universe,

Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course

With rocks, and stones and trees.

He is also a moral entity occupying his place in a moral universe.

The moral universe is just as much subject to law as is the physical universe and the laws of the moral universe are discoverable by man's intellectual powers just as truly as are physical laws. Yet, a perverse opinion has grown up in recent centuries that moral laws in general are changeable and unstable. The very existence of such an absurd theory shows how lacking in moral insight many of us are. It is, indeed, true that the ordinances of government may change. For these ordinances depend on the will of a legislator. It may be legal today to park an automobile on the north side of X Street and tomorrow it may be illegal. Such regulations which are due not to the nature of things but to the will of a lawgiver are called the positive law. But beside the positive law, which may be more or less changeable, there remain certain stable principles which never can be changed. It can never be right to murder an innocent man. It can never be right to defraud the laborer of his just wages. These prescriptions are eternal because they are founded *on* the very nature of things.

God made the universe in a certain way, and his creatures must act in accordance with the way they were created. A stone released from the hand must fall to the ground. A seed planted under favorable conditions must grow into a plant and then decline and die. And with an urgency which is no less real because it is moral and not physical, men must do good and avoid evil. This divine plan of the universe is called the eternal law.<sup>4</sup>

It is discoverable by us and in as much as it is discoverable, it is called the natural law.<sup>5</sup> Here is the sphere where moral insight is necessary. For, although the universal obligation of doing good and avoiding evil is immediately evident to every well-intentioned man, and although the most important specific rules of the natural law cannot long escape the earnest seeker, there are, nevertheless, more obscure aspects of this law which may remain permanently unknown, even to men of good will. There is, for example, a prescription of the natural law that private revenge is evil. Yet, many societies have allowed their members to revenge wrongs privately. They stamped revenge with public approval and it became an institution. Here was a serious mistake in regard to the natural law which has escaped the moral acumen of whole societies. It would be easy to multiply examples.

To discover the natural moral law in its entirety, great sharpness of moral insight is necessary. This involves the noëtic activity of *synderesis* by which the first general principles of the natural law are discoverable, followed by an accurate and thoroughgoing use of the human reason, by

which particular applications are deduced from these principles. A society is not fully noëtic unless this moral insight is developed. The fully noëtic society is, therefore, one characterized not only by cultural development in art and letters, but also by this moral keenness leading to deep appreciation of the natural law in all its relevant applications.

We have previously discussed life in a positivistic society, and we argued that it was unsatisfactory both from the individual standpoint and from the standpoint of the group. Let us now examine life in a fully noëtic society under the same two aspects and let us see whether it succeeds where positivistic society fails.

It ought to be clear, first of all, that life in a fully noëtic society would be satisfactory to the individual. *Noësis* is the most fully human intellectual act, the act by which we are most sharply distinguished from the brute beasts. Consequently, a happiness based on *noësis* should be more fully satisfying (precisely because it is more fully human) than the pleasures which we share with the lower animals. The noëtic individual should get more real joy out of art and music and poetry and philosophy than the positivist gets out of the things which he calls pleasures, the joy of struggle in competition, the luxury which lulls his senses, or the flattery directed to his childish vanity. Indeed, it is true that even the legitimate physical pleasures are more enjoyable when they are taken in their proper place, when they are carried out rationally. Thus, it may be that the philosopher gets more enjoyment out of his humble meal than does the rich fool at his banquet. After all, even Epicurus, who accepted the enjoyment of life as his basic principle, found that moderation best satisfied his enlightened selfishness.

In a previous chapter, we distinguished between attainment satisfactions and post-attainment satisfactions. The former were joys whose existence was tied up with the very moment of attainment, a moment which they did not long survive, while the latter were pleasures which greatly outlasted the instant of attainment. We saw that these latter were more truly satisfying because they were more truly human. The noëtic life ought, therefore, to be more deeply enjoyable because it is characterized by a large measure of post-attainment satisfaction.

Life in a fully noëtic society ought also to be more satisfying to the individual, because such a life is moral, and only a moral life can satisfy human aspirations. The man who lives morally lives in accordance with his nature. He is more truly human. Human life can reach its culmination only under such conditions. The pleasure of a good conscience, then, may outweigh much physical pain. Thus, the honest workman may feel no envy of the rich industrialist rolling by in great style because he has the pleasure of a good conscience and the industrialist has not.

At this point a difficulty arises which has troubled the moralists of all ages. It is a fact of observation that often the evil prosper and the good suffer. How can we say, therefore, that the noëtic life of the honest man is really more satisfying? It is all very well to talk about the pleasure of a good conscience, but is this always enough to make up for poverty, calumny, and even death, which things the honest man may be called to suffer for his conscience's sake?

To many this is a hard question. Indeed, for the positivist it is an impossible question to answer. And so if he is logical, such a man becomes a hedonist, immorally snatching pleasure where he can. But this objection is not an insuperable difficulty to the noëtic individual; for his insight shows him the deeper reality which the positivist cannot see. Precisely because the noëtic individual is accustomed to contemplation, he is much more conscious than is the positivist of the nature of his own thinking faculty. He realizes to the full the implications of the overpowering fact that the human mind can see the universal in the particular and can rise with angelic power to the immediate discovery of general truths.

This power of discovering abstract truths testifies to the superiority of the spirit over matter. Only a simple spiritual substance could see these truths of the intellectual order underlying the particularities of sense experience. A simple spiritual substance like the human soul is therefore superior to matter and superior to decay. The more the noëtic individual yields himself to contemplation, the more he is conscious of the contrast between the undying permanence of the spiritual soul and the transitory nature of the corruptible body. Of course, the positivist in his mean world of shadows quite misses this deep reality. He sneers at the noëtic individual's consciousness of immortality just as the prisoners in the cave sneered at their liberated fellow prisoner who returned to the cave and spoke of a world unknown to his companions.

In this consciousness of immortality lies the solution to the problem of the persecuted honest man. For God is a just God and knowable as such to the human mind. This just God, Who established the natural law, surely cannot allow those who flout it to triumph over Him, nor can He allow those who observe the natural law to suffer as a consequence in the long run. To the noëtic individual these facts demonstrate the inevitability of future reward and punishment. The soul is not only simple and spiritual; its destiny is an eternal destiny of reward or punishment.

By his deep knowledge, then, the noëtic individual sees something of the great scope of the divine plan. He faces the problem of evil not in relation to the puny span of mortal life, but in relation to eternity, and this insight leads him to realize that the life of virtue is in very truth more deeply satisfying, not here then at least hereafter.

Life in a noëtic society, therefore, is more satisfactory to the individual who adopts in his own life the ethics of the natural law, but how will *noësis* affect society as a whole? Is there not some danger that the public life of such a society will tend to be dreamy and impractical? May it not be that the hard-headed positivist is better adapted to face the practical problems of group life? To answer the above questions, we must first ask what a good society is and then ask whether a noëtic society would be such. Now, a society in general, is a group of persons cooperating for a common purpose. It seems reasonable, therefore, to define a good society as one in which the common purpose is a good one and the cooperation is efficient.

It ought to be fairly evident that in a fully noëtic society, the common purpose for which the citizens would cooperate would be a good one because such a society would be characterized by a deep and sure knowledge of the natural law and would therefore be able to see with clarity the proper ends for which men should cooperate. In other words, such a society would be good as far as its common purpose was concerned.

It is not enough, however, that the common purpose should be good. The cooperation by which this purpose is to be achieved must also be efficient. A fully noëtic society will be efficient in this respect, not because the individual citizens are necessarily more clever in the routine business of government than the citizens of a positivistic society, but rather because the noëtic citizens would be less hindered in their cooperation by personal ambition and because they would have a keener realization of the dignity of others. The positivist is normally very conscious of his own ambition. As a result in a positivistic society, a great share of the time is wasted by the clashing ambitions of selfish men. In a noëtic society, however, each individual would have a clearer insight into his own relative unimportance and into the superior importance of the good of the group. The positivist scorns the vulgar masses. He regards them as dupes to be used for his selfish purposes. At most, he extends to them a condescending pity. But the noëtic individual sees his fellow men as persons endowed with immortal souls like his own. He sees them as beings with an eternal destiny. This engenders a deep and fundamental respect for others and such a respect is obviously an excellent basis for cooperation.

It is pleasant to dwell on the contrast between a noëtic society and our present positivism. A fully noëtic society would not be torn asunder by war. The brutal slaughtering of one's fellow men in large numbers would not be considered a glorious achievement. Rather, the deep underlying consciousness of human dignity would lead men of various races and nations to cooperate so that the society of nations would be a reality rather than a philosophical term. The ends of the earth would be bound together with a common respect and a common sympathy which would make easy the solution of international difficulties.

In a noëtic society we would not have to contemplate the degrading spectacle of men brutalizing themselves in superfluous luxury while the lives of their fellow men were miserable from want. A rational appreciation of material things, an appreciation which would neither overvalue nor undervalue them, would be the basis of a decent and truly humane economic system in which each man would enjoy the benefits of private property as the natural law demands, but in which no man would abuse this right of private property and cause suffering to his fellows by his avarice.

A noëtic society would be, above all and before all, a society in which it would be easy to be a human being, in which it would be easy, that is to say, to develop those human faculties which are most human and to conduct one's life in accordance with really human principles of conduct. Such a society would banish the twin occasions of sin, extreme riches and extreme poverty. It would establish a constant and unfailing public order. It would not enkindle evil ambitions by honoring the great killers and the rich and notorious misers. It would honor the moral heroes, the scientists, the artists, the workers. Education in such a society would emphasize the supremacy of the moral order and would turn out graduates who were not only clever but morally great.

In such a society all the social stimuli would urge a man to fulfill his destiny. His intellect would expand in an atmosphere in which *noësis* would be considered the natural and ordinary thing. His will would develop in conformity with the dictates of the natural law. Thus, men would become more and more truly human, not proud and hard and overweening like the modern hero, but just and kind and brave and honorable. Thus, through the development of the intellect and will, man would prepare himself by a life of rectitude in this world for a life of reward in that future world which his noëtic insight had revealed to him.

## Notes

1 "Beatitudo imperfecta, qualis hic haberi potest, primo quidem et principaliter consistit in contemplatione." St. Thomas: *Sum. th.*, I-II, Q.3, A. 5, c.

2 "In natura humana, in quantum attingit angelicam, oportet esse cognitionem veritatis sine inquisitione et in speculativis et in practicis; et hanc quidem cognitionem oportet esse principium totius cognitionis sequentis, sive speculativae sive practicae. Sicut autem animae humanae est quidam habitus naturalis quo principia speculativarum scientiarum cognoscit, quem vocamus intellectum principiorum; ita in ipsa est quidam habitus naturalis primorum principiorum operabilium, quae sunt naturalia principia juris naturalis; qui quidem habitus ad synderesim pertinet." St. Thomas: *De Verit.*, q. 16, a. 1, c. For an excellent discussion of St. Thomas' doctrine on synderesis see Renz, Oskar: *Die Synderesis nach dem bl. Thomas von Aquin*. Münster, Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1911 (Beiträge z. Gesh. D. Phil. U. Theol. D. Mittelalters, Band X Heft ½.)

3 Hoc est ergo primum praeceptum legis, quod *bonum est faciendum et prosequendum et malum vitandum*. Et super hoc fundantur omnia alia praecepta legis naturae. St. Thomas: *Sum. th.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, c.

4 Ratio divinae sapientiae movens omnia ad debitum finem, obtinet rationem legis. Et secundum hoc, lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae, secundum quod est directiva omnium actuum et motionum." St. Thomas: *Sum. th.*, I-II, q. 93, a. 1, c.

5 "Lex naturalis nihil aliud est quam participatio legis aeternae in rationali creatura." St. Thomas: *Sum. th.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2, c.





## Chapter IX The Failure of Noësis

The preceding chapter was written in the conditional mood. It discussed the hypothetical, not the actual. It described the conditions which would prevail if a fully noëtic society were to be established. Such purely theoretical discussions have a certain interest, but the student of society has a right to demand proof that the theory will work out in practice. Can we therefore show that a fully noëtic society is feasible? Does past history justify the hope that such a society would be a workable society, human nature being what it is?

It must be confessed that the data of history are not encouraging. The ethics of historical states have varied greatly. Some nations have been ethically abominable. Some have shown a commendable idealism. But probably no sovereign state has ever shown an amount of idealism based on the natural light of *noësis*, idealism in both internal and external affairs, which would justify one in calling it a fully noëtic society. At most, some nations have shown a noëtic idealism by fits and starts. They have used noëtic in this field or that field, as the Athenians did in their art and poetry. But no state has ever adopted noëtic as the dominant guiding principle of its public life, so that the deep truths discoverable by noësis would consistently outweigh the cheap truisms of positivism in the formation of a national policy. There has never been a fully noëtic society on the scale of a sovereign state.

There have been examples, however, of communities on a less-than-national scale which have shown some resemblance to noetic societies. At least, their idealism was striking enough to distinguish them quite sharply from the positivistic societies in whose midst they existed. Many of these groups were more or less religious in their make-up, but probably their dominant motivation came not from revelation, but from a purely human idealism. Many of the most interesting of these flourished in the United States during the nineteenth century. Some, as just stated, were on a more or less religious basis — the Rappist communities at New Harmony, Indiana, and Economy, Pennsylvania, the Amana communities, and John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida Community in New York. Others were due to the influence of the doctrines of Robert Owen — one at New Harmony (acquired from the Rappists), another at Yellow Springs, Ohio, another at Nashoba, Tennessee, and others at various places. The leadership of the Frenchman, Etienne Cabet, was responsible for various experiments in America between 1848 and 1895. Most influential of all was the inspiration of another French socialist, Charles Foutier. Quite a number of idealistic communities were organized along the lines suggested in his writings. Of these the most famous was the Brook Farm Experiment which existed near Boston from 1841 to 1847, but which was strictly classifiable as a Fourier phalanx only during its final period. This community was a rallying ground for New England Transcendentalists and their sympathizers, having either as residents or as visitors for longer or shorter periods such men as Charles A. Dana, Father Isaac Hecker, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Orestes A. Brownson, Theodore Parker, and William Henry Channing.

The records of such communities leave the impression that they really were noëtic to a large degree. They broke sharply with the selfishness of the surrounding acquisitive society. They made an honest attempt to replace competition with various sorts of cooperation. Visitors reported a spirit of kindness, consideration, and high enthusiasm and an absence of avarice and selfish ambition. On the whole, the members seemed motivated by a deeply realized and genuine idealism. Yet, it is only fair to add that these communities had faults which sometimes outweighed

their good qualities. If the members were idealistic and enthusiastic, they were not always well balanced. Side by side with their remarkable virtues, one sometimes finds equally remarkable faults. The Oneida Community practiced a system of "complex marriage," which can hardly be considered to represent a high standard of morality. A number of examples of this sort prevent us from classifying such groups as completely noëtic societies. Again, it must be noted that such communities have been characteristically short-lived. Some were very ephemeral indeed. Others flourished for a few years. None gave any promise of permanence, with the exception of a few which changed their characters so radically that they practically became a part of the surrounding bourgeois society. All in all, the idealistic communities of history do not give us much basis for believing that a fully noëtic society is possible.

To see the significance of *noësis* in actual practice, one must turn from the group to the individual; for, if it is hard to find a truly noëtic society, at least there have been idealistic individuals whose personal behavior has shown the unmistakable effect of noëtic insight. One thinks of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Motze, and men of that stamp. These were men who, without the benefit of revealed religion, but through the sheer power of their moral and intellectual insight, took a deep and comprehensive view of reality, and showed by their lives the power of their conviction.

*Noësis* of this sort is probably much more widespread than we realize. For although there are few persons as articulate as the men enumerated above, there are probably many who have shared the vision of a deep knowledge whose transcendent importance makes insignificant the mean realities of a positivistic culture. These are men who have discovered a beauty in the moral law which makes them rise superior to the cheap compromises of their fellows, men who are truly captains of their souls because their deep and certain insight has taught them to despise the weapons of a success-society.

It is a mistake to believe that these mute and unsung Platos are confined to the consciously intellectual classes. For *noësis* is not completely dependent on formal education, although it may be developed by training like other faculties. Many a simple person, therefore, without outward display or articulate pretense, may share the privilege of deep knowledge with the great thinkers of history. A farmer living close to the soil in intimate daily contact with growing things may drink in, along with the sunlight and the aromatic air, a consciousness of deep natural secrets which he cannot put into words. A machinist bending the stubborn steel to his will by his intelligent manipulation of cunningly devised tools may see in the accurate interplay of gray metallic planes an inevitability which reflects the clean, mathematical dominance of matter by mind, an inevitability like that of the solar system, the inevitability of the eternal law. A mother, absorbed in the contemplation of the small, developing personalities which she has borne, may, in an ecstasy of insight, see a reflected glory in this miracle of personality, a glory which mirrors God.

Thus, individuals on different planes may share an inarticulate sense of divine truths; but because they cannot put it into words, because they cannot translate it into terms of social significance, their insight fails to aid society greatly, however much it may add a secret effulgence to the interior lives of these noëtic individuals. We are, therefore, forced to conclude that *noësis*, however precious it may be in itself, has not contributed very significantly to the development of society. Thus, we find ourselves face to face with a paradox. *Noësis* is the very triumph of the human mind, a power we share with the angels; yet this power has failed to give us the insight necessary to rescue ourselves from the morass of positivism. How is this paradox to be explained? Why has not *noësis* led to a noëtic society?

The answer is this: Before a noëtic society can exist, two things are necessary. First of all, an effective majority of the citizens must discover by noësis certain definite principles of individual and social conduct. In the second place, these principles must be carried out in actual practice by the members of the society. At each of these steps, our imperfect human nature interposes obstacles which have effectively hindered the development of a really noëtic society.

First of all, it is really very difficult for any man to perform the act of *noësis*. For this is a sphere of activity proper to the angels, and the human mind is not completely at home in it. Of course, there are certain elementary principles which are noëticly discoverable without difficulty. One example would be, 'The Whole is greater than any of its parts'. The deeper truths, however, cannot be so easily discovered. Here our noëtic insights are difficult to express. Unfortunately, it is precisely these difficult and deep truths which are essential for the building of a noëtic society.

Consider the demands which the noëtic discovery of deep truths makes on human nature. In the first place, it is necessary that the thinker have the requisite intellectual ability. It is true, indeed, that every human being, by the fact that he has a human mind, has at the same time the fundamental ability for noëtic thought; but the extent of this ability varies enormously from one individual to another. Some dull-witted persons simply lack the mental capacity to discover deep truth, no matter how willingly and persistently they try. Others possess a certain noëtic insight, but it is still partly superficial; it fails to touch the deepest reality. It is only the exceptionally gifted thinker who can penetrate habitually to really deep strata of knowledge.

Granted the necessary intellectual ability, will power is also needed. Unfortunately, these two qualities are not always found side by side. The man with great intellectual capacity does not always have a parallel capacity for sustained effort. Yet, such effort is necessary; for systematic thinking is hard work. The senses constantly interpose a thousand alluring distractions. A thousand irrelevant ideas are constantly being offered by the imagination and memory. It requires a firm and consistent effort of the will to exclude these distractions and to focus the intellect for long periods of time on what St. Thomas calls contemplative research.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, few are willing to make this continuous effort. Many people, indeed, are ready to accept noëticly such random inspirations as may come without effort in moments of unplanned reverie. But few are willing to set aside regular and definite periods for contemplation and to fill these periods with the exhausting mental labor which the systematic search for deep truth requires.

The human mind has a most perverse tendency to flee from the labor of *noësis*. Any teacher can witness this fact. It is comparatively easy to make students do a considerable amount of hard routine work, reading books, copying notes, listening to lectures, memorizing material for examinations; but it is not at all easy to initiate even select graduate students into the exhausting toil of habitual *noësis*. Certainly any university which can teach this habit to one-fourth of its doctoral candidates is a brilliantly successful university. The reason for these facts is easy to understand. It is pure torture to force the human mind to the acme of activity which *noësis* requires. We are essentially lazy, all of us, and this supreme mental effort is obtainable only by an almost heroic exercise of will power.

Mental labor does not cease, however, once noëtic insight has been attained. These insights must be examined critically and unified into a system. One insight must be checked against another, and, where discrepancies occur the labor of *noësis* must be resumed so that true insights may be distinguished from false ones. It is only necessary to read the works of outstanding philosophers to realize how easily error can appear in the midst of an honest search for deep knowledge. Even Plato made mistakes. Indeed, everyone must recognize that this great thinker, for all his marvelous depth of insight, fell frequently into inconsistency and error.

When noëtic truths have been discovered and arranged systematically, the long labor of deduction must follow. That is to say, it is necessary to use discursive reasoning, to argue from general noëtic principles to their particular applications in everyday life. No matter how deep noëtic insights may be, they begin to be useful only when the thinker has shown exactly how and why they must modify the routine of everyday existence. All in all, it is easy to understand why the intellectual labor necessary for the foundation of a noëtic society is so extremely formidable.

It is scarcely surprising therefore that society has pretty consistently avoided *noësis*. The superficial knowledge of positivism puts a much smaller strain on the human mind. Positivistic half-truths force themselves upon consciousness with hardly any mental strain. Unless, then, we are ready to accept the laborious and long quest for deep knowledge, we shall almost inevitably slip back to the level of positivism by a sort of mental gravitation.

Given the evident fact of human intellectual laziness, it is not surprising that the race lives habitually on the positivistic and not on the noëtic level. It is not surprising that positivistic half-truths should receive an almost universal acceptance and that almost everybody should believe that wealth and power are desirable in themselves, that real success must include luxury and comfort, and that the intangible values of art and ethics are scarcely worth striving for. In a word, the nature of the human mind makes it almost inevitable that superficial knowledge should become the creed of the average man and that deep noëtic insight should remain the privilege of a few scattered thinkers.

The fact of mental laziness, then, seems enough to explain the rarity of noëtic society. Yet, there is another difficulty which is at least equally formidable. For the discovery of noëtic principles is not enough to make a society noëtic. It is also necessary that the citizens should live in accordance with the principles so discovered. This certainly is very difficult; for the acceptance of noëtic standards in human behavior is opposed by the entire brute force of the human passions. *Noësis* favors the more subtle pleasures of the soul, but the passions tend with fierce intensity to the gross pleasures of the body.

*Noësis* counsels the postponement of satisfaction and the value of bearing present pain for the sake of future reward, but the passions will brook no delay. They tend to turn aside all barriers and to trample underfoot every obstacle to the immediate and utter satisfaction of desire.

Every human being knows the intensity of this struggle in his own life. In moments of spiritual exaltation, it seems easy to dominate the passions; but such moments pass, and the sleepless passions are on the alert to catch one off one's guard. It is easy to tire of the struggle. If a certain decency prevents complete and overt surrender to the passions, it is still easy to compromise and to accept the low standard of positivistic respectability which does not put too great a strain on human nature.

What is true of the individual is equally true of society. It is difficult to maintain our common life on the high level of *noësis*. The crude force of human passion is whipped up to an acme of intensity by the mob spirit and becomes every bit as formidable in the life of society as in the life of the individual. History repeats this lesson in a thousand forms. Idealism plays a very minor part in shaping the destiny of nations. The effective historical forces have always been the hot animal forces of collective ambition, anger, and hatred. Even when the leaders of nations have been personally convinced of the value of idealistic motives, they have seldom been able to impose their idealism on the great mass of their followers. As a result, the history of nations has almost invariably been a nauseating chronicle of hatred, cruelty, intrigue, plunder, bloodshed, rapine, murder, duplicity, treason, treachery, callousness, envy, lust, and evil, bestial passion of every sort.

This same fundamental perversity comes to the surface in whatever field of social relations we investigate. It poisons family life. It breeds corruption in politics. It generates interracial hatred and injustice. It leads to the maddening inequality which characterizes our fetid economic system. It whips up the insensate ultranationalism which masquerades as patriotism in the modern world. Is it any wonder that the delicate and subtle truths discoverable by *noësis* are crushed by the juggernaut of untamed passion?

Thus, strong, cruel, passionate men have tended to dominate history, while great thinkers have been elbowed aside. The fate of Archimedes is typical, killed by a Roman soldier at the capture of Syracuse while engaged in drawing a mathematical diagram in the sand. The fate of Lavoisier is typical. This "father of modern chemistry" was sentenced to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in Paris. The great scientist pleaded for more time in order that he might complete certain experiments and received the contemptuous answer, "The Republic has no need of chemists." Thus, passion and prejudice triumph over the things of the spirit in our essentially positivistic world.

Of course, the domination of passion may not always be so visibly brutal. As was implied in earlier chapters, our modern success-society tends to conceal its positivistic selfishness. Thus, a society may be fundamentally dominated by selfishness even when it pays lip service to noëtic or seminoëtic ideals. This fact is brilliantly illustrated by the Lynds' study of a Midwestern city which they call *Middletown*.<sup>2</sup> It pictures the same state of affairs which Sinclair Lewis has written up in *Babbitt or Main Street*; but the Lynds are enormously more convincing, because they have written not fiction, but a social survey. Middletown, then, is a city efficiently organized, from the reigning dynasty, the rich and powerful X family, down to the humble day laborers, with one purpose in view, the acquisition of wealth. This is the ideal accepted almost with unanimity, not only by the business world, but by all classes of society. Even the schools and colleges and Protestant<sup>3</sup> churches are unwilling to make any effective protest. It is a universal worship of the success-ideal, a universal willingness to regulate life by the superficial knowledge of positivism. In contrast to this, what vestiges of *noësis* are discoverable? Possibly a sporadic interest in art and music by a few business-class wives with idle time on their hands, possibly an occasional mild protest by some unusually daring clergyman or educator. But the whole picture is a striking illustration of the ineffectiveness of *noësis* against modern positivism. *Noësis* is a real and valid power of the human mind; but how little it accomplishes in the face of human passion and intellectual torpidity!

The power of *noësis*, then, real and beautiful though it be, is unable in the long run to overcome the inertia of human mental laziness and to outwit the passions. Thus, this power, marvelous though it be, is not widely effective in reforming our essentially positivistic society. This paradoxical combination of strength and weakness reflects the essentially composite nature of the human personality. For we are partly like the angels in our noëtic ability to penetrate to deep truth, and we are partly like the brute beasts in our dullness and our animal passions. Thus, it happens that in exalted moments of blinding insight we catch glimpses of eternal truths too holy for human utterance. In these moments we see with the clarity of vision that we cannot be truly happy save in the exercise of this supreme human ability of contemplation. Yet, in an instant the mood passes and we find ourselves standing in bewilderment among our brother beasts, beasts with whom we share the indispensable drives toward food and sex and selfish ambition.

This essential dualism becomes the more acutely conscious the more we struggle to attain deep knowledge and to live in accordance with it. Thus, every purely human effort to fight one's way up from the animal level is accompanied by a tragic consciousness of partial failure. We

demand a clear answer to the great pressing questions which mankind is ever asking, questions about God and immortality and the natural law, but our intellectual inertia is such that our certainties are ever clouded by persistent doubts. We try to renew ourselves, we try to unite ourselves to the great realities discovered by *noësisso* that we may make these deep truths our rule of life, but the force of passion ever draws us back from these holy ideals.

The nature of man is compassed by a certain essential futility, a futility which is very clear in classic paganism. Great pagan art repeats again and again this note of tragedy. There is in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts a marble, female head called the Bartlett Aphrodite. This work is evidently conceived under the inspiration of Praxiteles. It shows the warm human feeling of the generation which he dominated rather than the somewhat aloof idealism of the preceding century. This work reflects the basic, inner tragedy which characterizes the best of paganism. One marvels, looking at it, that a woman's face could be at once so beautiful and so sad, so godlike in her breathless beauty, so hopeless in her eternal despair. It is as though the artist had concentrated in this one marble head all the restless love of beauty, all the tireless idealism of his great race, along with all the ageless tragedy of persons crying for an impossible apotheosis in the ears of an unhearing fate. It is a thing of cosmic sorrow. It reveals the essential tragedy of sad humanity. For human life has ever been thus futile-generations of men catching occasional glimpses of their ineffable destiny, yet ever slipping back into their pristine selfishness. Thus, mankind reveals its basic inability for self-regeneration. No matter what single triumphs may mark the history of thought, human society is fundamentally on the positivistic level and must so remain as long as man relies on his own efforts. The only hope of humanity is the hope of a savior.

## Notes

1 "Contemplativa inquisitio." St. Thomas: *Summa contra gentiles*,. Liber I, Cap 4.

2 Lynd, Robert S. and Lynd, Helen Merrell: *Middletown; A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929. X, 550 p. This volume reported studies made in this city in 1924-25. In 1935 a follow-up study was made, which was published by the same two authors as *Middletown in Transition; A Study in Cultural Conflicts*. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937. xviii, p. 604 .

3 The Catholic population of Middletown is almost negligibly small.

## Chapter X

### Faith

A society founded upon positivism is mean and commonplace. A society founded upon noësis is beautiful but unworkable. A society founded upon wishful thinking or feeling or emotion does not even deserve serious consideration. For wishful thinking and feeling and emotion are epistemologically unsound. They are not valid approaches to reality, and societies founded on them cannot be realistic and satisfactory. It begins to look as if a good society may be one founded upon faith, *apistic* society, as it will be hereafter called. This possibility, the sole remaining one, at least deserves to be seriously considered.

To understand *apistic* society one must first understand faith. Faith in general is the acceptance of a proposition on another's authority. Thus, it differs from knowledge. Knowledge implies that the proposition itself has been proved, that is, that the proof bears upon the intrinsic truth of the statement in question. In the act of faith, also, the intellect comes into play; but it proves, not directly the truth of the proposition itself, but rather the fact that a reliable witness has vouched for the proposition. In the case of knowledge, the work of the intellect is involved intrinsically in the proof. In the case of faith, the activity of the intellect remains extrinsic to the act of belief, the authority of the witness being<sup>1</sup> the real motive of assent.

Faith thus involves the authority of a witness. This witness may be either human or divine. There are thus two varieties of faith, human faith and divine faith. It is evident that human faith cannot represent a fundamentally new approach to reality. For the human witness whom we believe must himself have somehow acquired his information. If he acquired it from another witness, then that witness in turn must somehow have learned the truth of the proposition in question. Either a closed circle of witnesses or an infinite series of them being evidently inadmissible, the chain of evidence must sooner or later lead back to a witness who does not hold the proposition on human faith but for some other reason

If human faith can never be the fundamental basis for accepting a proposition, the same is not true of divine faith. When God reveals a truth to man, this truth often is one otherwise unattainable by the human mind. Divine faith is thus a wholly new approach to reality and a *apistic* society, one founded upon divine faith, is a wholly new type of society.

Revelation by God to man of new truths is certainly possible, but is it a fact? A number of religions have laid claim to such a revelation: Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Hinduism, Mazdeism, Mormonism, to mention but a few. This very multiplicity of claims repels many inquirers who are so confused by the conflicting assertions that they give up all hope of attaining revealed truth. Of course, this attitude is illogical. One might as well say that because ten students add up a column of figures and obtain ten different answers, all ten are therefore wrong and the problem is impossible of solution. In a parallel fashion the fact that ten religions disagree irreconcilably merely proves that at least nine of them are wrong. It does not destroy the possibility of divine revelation. One ought to examine the claims of various religions to see which one, if any, is true. This examination can be carried out in only one way, namely, by the use of the human intellect.

First of all, we can eliminate several supposed revelations because they are internally contradictory or because they are immoral. We can do this because the principle is unconditionally true that any purported revelation which flatly contradicts reason or any truth of the moral or physical order proved by reason, is not a true revelation from God. If the heavens should open and

an august personage should descend to earth and teach that two plus two are five, then we could unhesitatingly reject this as a false revelation, no matter how impressive the circumstances had been. This is why theologians are at such pains to prove that the mysteries of faith do not contradict reason. It is scarcely necessary to add that a revelation is not disqualified if it contains truths impossible to understand. A true revelation may be beyond reason; but it can never be against reasoning the above principle, we can eliminate from consideration certain spurious revelations which contradict reason. Some of these contradict reason by teaching dogmas which are absurd, impossible, or mutually contradictory. Others contradict reason by advocating such practices as sacred prostitution, which reason has shown to be against the natural law. After this elimination, the Christian revelation, the Old and New Testaments and the Apostolic tradition, begins to stand out as an especially pure and consistent body of teaching. This fact, however, does not prove the truth of Christianity. Such a proof requires some positive method, whereas our process thus far has been negative.

To arrive at this positive proof, it is necessary to examine the motives of credibility. The best and most striking of these are miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled in proof of the divine character of the revelation with which they are connected. These, however, are not the only valid motives of credibility which Christianity possesses. There are others, such as the testimony of the martyrs, the holiness of believers, the intrinsic beauty of the doctrine, the conversion of the civilized world, the adhesion of so many deeply intellectual men, the fecundity of the doctrine in good works, and many other motives, some more and some less, valuable.

Are these motives a sufficient intellectual basis for assent to Christianity? This question must, of course, be solved by the use of the human intellect; but how shall the intellect be used? In examining the motives of credibility, shall we limit ourselves to positivistic techniques or shall we use in this process the full resources of the human mind, including *noësis*? This is a methodological problem of enormous importance and one to which various answers have been given.

Since the development of the "higher criticism" in the last century, it has become usual, outside the Catholic Church, to study the motives of credibility positivistically, an attitude which impels the scholar to try to explain them away. This tendency is an outgrowth of the scientific movement in the field of Biblical study which led men to approach Scriptural problems in a new and more critical spirit. This, of course, was a commendable attitude and it led to many interesting and important discoveries; but soon the principle was pushed too far. Having used scientific methods as an aid to Biblical study, scholars became so fascinated by scientific habits of thought that they began to reject whatever lay outside the ken of science. Since miracles and prophecies lie outside the range of scientific law, the critics soon set up the principle that miracles and prophecies are impossible and must therefore be explained away when they are mentioned in the Bible.

This arbitrary limitation was, of course, thoroughly positivistic in spirit; for positivism, as we have seen, implies the acceptance of obvious truths and the arbitrary rejection of all non-obvious truths. Thus Biblical scholars became Persons of One Method. They insisted on setting up their own private criteria of truth and rejected whatever failed to meet these artificial standards. An excellent example of this positivistic approach is furnished by Rashdall, who quite frankly revealed the bias which made it impossible for him to accept the Resurrection, no matter how excellent the evidence. "The reanimation, or the sudden transformation into something not quite material and yet not quite spiritual, of a really dead body, would involve the violation of the best ascertained laws of physics, chemistry, and physiology. Were the testimony fifty times stronger than it is, any hypothesis would be more possible than that." 2



It is easy to see that this deliberate limitation of vision is quite unjustified. It is open to the fundamental objection urged in a previous chapter. Truth is where one finds it. No one has a right to make up his own private epistemology. No one has a right to reject a truth because it comes in an unexpected way. The Persons of One Method are quite as wrong in their treatment of the motives of credibility as they are in any other field.

The positivistic method cannot prove the reality of the Christian revelation any more than one can prove the beauty of the Elgin marbles by a tape measure or by a string of syllogisms. It would be evidently suicidal for a Catholic apologist so to approach the motives of credibility. It is, therefore, not altogether surprising that some of them fled to the opposite extreme. They were so shocked at the effect of a critical intellectual examination of the motives of credibility, as this method was applied by the rationalists, that they resolved to abandon the intellect altogether and to base their faith on non-intellectual grounds, on some sort of vague religious experience. Such was Modernism.<sup>3</sup>

One can sympathize with the Modernists in their revolt against the positivistic treatment of the motives of credibility; but their revolt led them in the wrong direction. By abandoning the intellectual approach entirely, they cut the ground from beneath their feet. After all, a Turk can claim just as good a religious experience as anyone else and there is no way to disprove his claim.<sup>4</sup> What is needed, as against the rationalists, is not less intellectual activity, but more. The motives of credibility still must be examined by the intellect, but this examination must not proceed under the artificial restrictions of the positivistic critics.

In examining the motives of credibility, all the powers of the intellect must be brought into play, including *noësis*. This is certainly logical. It is a very difficult, delicate task to examine the grounds of what claims to be a divine revelation. This difficult task ought, therefore, to have the cooperation of all the powers of the intellect and particularly of *noësis*, which is the most brilliant among them.

Concretely, how will this noëtic examination of the motives of credibility, be carried out? In the first place, the use of *noësis* will generate a different general attitude. The positivist closes his eyes to all non-obvious truths. He accepts the realities taught by the physical sciences but remains blind to the more subtle realities, the delights of good music, the dignity of the natural law, the excitement of philosophical speculation. The noëtic individual, on the contrary, is already alive to such realities. Through *noësis* he has become familiar with them. One is not, then, greatly surprised when the Christian revelation reveals still further extensions of the suprasensible universe.

In such a frame of mind, the noëtic individual examines the motives of credibility. One first considers the major motives, miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled in testimony of the Christian revelation. These signs one finds very convincing in themselves. But, unfortunately, few inquirers are privileged to see personally an unmistakable miracle. Ordinarily miracles are reported by other witnesses. The most important miracles for our purpose are attested by the New Testament. To evaluate their force as proofs, one must, therefore, consider the whole complex question of the integrity and authenticity of these documents, a question which in turn rests upon a complicated mass of testimony. The noëtic individual approaches this problem more intelligently than the positivist. For his deeper insight assists him to a delicate evaluation of these involved questions which the positivist with his crude and limited techniques cannot so well perform.

The inquirer will then consider the various minor motives, for example, the beauty of Christian doctrine or the heroism of the saints' lives. Here the mass of evidence is more subtle and difficult still. For what, after all, do we mean by beauty and heroism? Definitions cannot be given with the crude and clear-cut exactness upon which the positivist insists. These are subtle realities which

escape the positivist's method, but they are realities none the less and are important evidence to the noëtic individual. The same delicacy of judgment, the same subtlety of insight, is required in evaluating all the other motives of credibility. Thus, it comes about that only the noëtic individual, the person with really deep insight, can appreciate the full force of the evidence in favor of the Christian revelation. He is convinced by evidence which the positivist rejects, and this fact is due not to any credulity on the part of the noëtic individual, but to the positivist's blindness.

The motives of credibility must not only be thus examined individually. They must, also, be examined as a whole. For it may well be that all the various motives of credibility taken as a whole lead to a grade of certitude which they do not possess when considered separately. This is a principle which St. Thomas admits. He says: "The arguments taken separately would not suffice to demonstrate perfectly the Resurrection of Christ, but when they are all taken together they do demonstrate it perfectly."<sup>5</sup> But how can the arguments gain force simply by being summed up? To say that they do so seems like saying, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The positivist can answer this only by invoking the law of compound probability. There is one chance in two that a coin tossed in the air will show heads when it falls, but there is only one chance in 1,048,576 that it will do this twenty times in succession. So, although a given argument may merely prove that the Christian revelation has only one chance in two of being false, twenty such arguments can prove that there is only one chance in more than a million that it can be false. May not one accept such a great probability as equivalent to certainty?

The argument of the preceding paragraph has been used occasionally by Christian apologists, but it is fundamentally fallacious. The Church does not merely claim a high probability for her revelation. She claims certitude.<sup>6</sup> The question then remains: How can certitude — not merely a very high probability but actual certitude — arise from a group of arguments which taken separately are only probable? *Noësis* supplies the answer, for noësis carries the insight which makes it possible to see a general truth in particularities which separately do not perfectly manifest this truth.

The case of induction, discussed in a previous chapter, is an exact parallel. A physician sees a number of malaria patients cured by quinine. No one individual case proves that quinine is a specific for this disease. At most each case contributes a merely probable argument. But the noëtic insight of the scientifically minded physician, considering all the cases together, sees, not a sum of probabilities, but an inductive generalization which is certain. If this were not so, there would be no true induction. In a parallel fashion the noëtic individual sees in the sum total of the motives of credibility not a sum of probabilities, but full certainty. Thus, it comes about that he who uses his intellect to the full, refusing any artificial limitations, apprehends in the motives of credibility the clear, underlying fact that the Voice of God has spoken.

When a person has thus convinced himself that the Christian revelation is true, he has acquired a basis for further investigation. He can, for example, approach the question, which of the divers churches which claim to interpret the Christian revelation is the correct one? He will try to find the church which bears the marks implied in the New Testament, which church, that is to say, is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. He can thus convince himself of the authority of the Catholic Church and of his own duty of accepting her dogmas as revealed truth. This provides him with a means of knowing the truths of revelation with certainty and in detail.

We shall not, however, follow out this further investigation. Rather, we shall turn to another methodological question concerning faith itself, namely the role of the will. From the foregoing discussion, one might imagine that faith was generated entirely by the intellect examining the motives of credibility. This, however, is not true; the will also plays a part. Both the Old and the

New Testament present faith as a meritorious act and, therefore, as a free act involving the will; for an unfree act cannot be meritorious. The contribution of the will to the act of faith has been explicitly vindicated by the Church.<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to see how the will in many ways plays a part in faith. The will must, in the first place, decide to investigate the claims of revealed religion. The will must expel prejudices and unreasonable doubts. Will is required to hold oneself to the long and exacting task of examining the motives of credibility. In the case of *noësis* particularly, the need of good will is very clear. For noëtic contemplation is a subtle process easily upset by the passions. To succeed in such a process, one must be unselfishly in love with truth.

The facts of the last paragraph, however, do not satisfactorily explain the part which the Church assigns to the will in the act of faith. For the acts which we have just mentioned are common to both faith and knowledge, while it is theologically certain that faith has a special sort of liberty which is not found in ordinary knowledge. For Our Lord assigns a special merit to faith (and therefore a special liberty) which knowledge does not involve. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."<sup>8</sup> This special liberty may be explained as follows:<sup>9</sup> In ordinary human knowledge we normally know not only the truth of a proposition, but also something about the place which that truth holds in the chain of causes and effects that exists in nature. Thus, when Newton discovered the law of gravitation he did not apprehend it as a merely abstract statement, a truth existing in a vacuum; rather, he saw it as flowing from an immense mass of astronomical data to all of which it was related and as governing the future action of all the bodies in the physical universe.

In the case of faith, however, we learn truths wholly on God's authority. As we receive them, they are more or less cut off from the other realities with which they are actually connected. We learn that there are three Persons in one God, but we do not see this divine reality in its relation to other realities with the same clarity that Newton saw his law of gravitation penetrating the whole physical world. Divine faith, therefore, is somehow a non-natural way of knowing. This is very strikingly the case for those revealed truths which are actual mysteries, which the mind cannot picture nor the reason understand.

When the intellect faces these revealed truths with their inevitable obscurity, it is out of its element. Its natural tendency is to doubt, in spite of the authority of the witness. Such doubt would be justified and right in the case of natural knowledge. If, for example, I should for a moment imagine that I saw a man eighteen feet tall, I would be quite right in suspecting some sort of an optical illusion; for there is no room in my personal world of knowledge for eighteen-foot men. The special activity of the will in faith brings it about that, on account of the overwhelming authority of the divine witness, we deliberately put aside this natural tendency of the human mind to doubt those propositions which do not fit in with one's previous knowledge. Thus, we accept what we cannot even understand (the Trinity, the Hypostatic Union, Transubstantiation) for the sole sufficient reason that such mysteries have been revealed by an omniscient and veridical God.

As far as the believer's consciousness is concerned, the activity of the intellect and will seem to explain the act of faith; but we know that in reality the causation is much deeper than this. For faith is a supernatural manner of knowing and, as such, it cannot be explained by the natural activity of man's faculties. It can be explained only by the activity of grace which elevates these faculties and makes them capable of actions for which they are naturally incapable. Let us see what all this implies. First of all, the act of faith itself is supernatural.<sup>10</sup> If we now analyze this act and examine the separate activities of will and intellect, we find that both of these<sup>11</sup> are supernatural. Indeed, many theologians teach that some, at least, of the actions which precede the will to believe are

themselves supernatural in character. Thus, the whole act of faith itself, together perhaps with some of its preparatory acts, is superhuman, something to which man's natural faculties could never attain.

Besides raising man's powers to a supernatural plane so that he may be capable of faith, grace cooperates toward faith in many other ways. Revelation is itself a grace. The prophecies and miracles which mark out this revelation are graces, too. Finally, man in his seeking after truth may be aided by many other graces. These are the "internal helps of the Holy Ghost" of which the Vatican Council<sup>12</sup> speaks. These helps may be true internal miracles, as overwhelming and as convincing as St. Paul's vision on the Damascus road. Or they may take the form of a divine suggestion,<sup>13</sup> merely adding new force to an argument which the inquirer has not yet fully appreciated. These divine helps are particularly necessary in the case of simple people who lack the intellectual equipment to examine the motives of credibility in all their complexity.

Faith, therefore, is supernatural. It is wholly supernatural in itself. It is conditioned and facilitated by an entire series of supernatural graces. This implies that through faith we may gain an insight into reality far deeper than the most inspired searching of *noësis*. By *noësis* we may reach the most bounds of knowledge to which human genius can attain; but by faith we may break these bounds and learn mysteries which the human mind has no natural right to know.

This penetration of thought into regions beyond the powers of the natural intellect represents the great triumph of faith. How great a marvel it would be if by some miracle of God's unlimited power, some humble creature, say a snail or an ant, were given the intellectual ability to understand the subtleties of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* or of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Yet, this would be a small wonder compared to the wonder of faith. Faith surpasses the highest ranges of *noësis* by a far larger gap than the great mind of Aristotle surpassed the simple mental capacity of a snail or an ant. For faith is absolutely supernatural, something to which no created or creatable being has a right. Is it any wonder, then, that men who have penetrated deeply into the mysteries of faith have returned with a feeling almost of boredom to the contemplation of even the highest triumphs of merely human genius? "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men."<sup>14</sup>

If, therefore, there is any hope for a fully satisfactory and great human society, and if such a society must be founded on the secure foundation of a deep and penetrating knowledge of reality, then we must not pin our hope on the powers of the human intellect, not even on the marvellous power of *noësis*. Our only hope for building such a society is to make our foundations deeper still, to found a society upon faith, to make it a pistic society. It is only on such a foundation that a fully satisfying human society can be built.

## Notes

1 ". . . imprimus miracula et prophetias, quae cum Dei omnipotentiam et infinitam scientiam luculenter commonstrent, divinae revelationis signa sunt certissima et omnium intelligentiae accommodata." Conc. Vat., Sess. III, Cap. 3, *De fide*. DBU. No. 1790. See also the oath against Modernism. DBU. No. 2145 (The letters "DBU" refer throughout to the 1932 edition of Denzinger's *Enchiridion*, revised by Bannwart and Umberg.)

2 Quoted from Rashdall's manuscript by Kirsopp Lake in his book: *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, London, Williams & Norgate, 1907. The passage in question is quoted on page 269.

3 "Rem enim sic edisserunt: in sensu religioso quendam esse agnoscendum cordis intuitum; quo homo ipsani, sine medio, Dei realitatem; attingit tantamque de exstentia Dei haurit

persuasionem deque Dei tum intra tum extra hominem actione, ut persuasionem omnem, quae ex scientia peti possit, longe antecellat." Pius X: Encyclical, *Pascendi domonici gregis*, 8 Sept. 1907. DBU. No. 2081.

4 "Quo iure autem modernistae veritatem experientiae abnuntent, quam turca affirmet, venasque experientias unis catholicis vindicabunt?" Pius X: *op. cit.* DBU. No. 2082.

5 "Singula argumentorum non sufficerent ad manifestandum Christi resurrectionem; omnia tamen simul accepta perfecte Christi resurrectionem manifestant." St. Thomas: *Sum. th.*, III, Q. 55 A. 6, ad 1<sup>um</sup>.

6 The following proposition was condemned by Innocent II, 2 March 1679: "Assensus fidei supernaturalis et utilis ad salutem stat cum notitia solum probabili revelationis, immo cum formidine, qua quis formidet, ne non sit locutus Deus." DBU. No. 1171. For an excellent discussion of this and parallel ecclesiastical documents see the relevant section of the article "Foi" by Harent in Vacant-Mangenot's *Dictionnaire de theologie catholique*. Vol. 6, columns 191-205.

7 "Si quis dixerit, assensum fidei christianae non esse liberum.... A. S." Conc. Vat., Sess. III, Can. 5, *De fide*. DBU. No. 1814.

8 John 20:29.

9 This is one of several alternative explanations suggested by theologians. It is included here because it appears to the present writer as the best.

10 "Si quis dixerit, sine praeventione Spiritus Sancti inspiratione atque eius adiutorio hominem credere, sperare et diligere aut poenitere posse, sicut oportet, ut ei justificationis gratis conferatur: A. S. Con Trid., Sess. VI, Can 3, *De iustificatione*. DBU. No.813.

11 The supernatural character of the will's part was defined by the Second Council of Orange (DBU. No. 178). St. Thomas and theologians in general teach the same for the intellect's act, although the point has never been defined.

12 "Voluit Deus cum internis Spiritus Sancti auxiliis externa iungi revelationis suae argumenta." Conc. Vat., Sess. III, Cap. 3, *De fide*. DBU. No. 179. (Italics mine.) The graces mentioned in the last paragraph as possibly making supernatural some of the acts preparatory to the act of faith must be distinguished from these *interna* Spiritus Sancti auxilia. The former are supernatural quoad substantiam; the latter are supernatural quoad modum only

13 *Species suasivae* or *illustratio suasiva*.

14 1 Cor. 1:25



## Chapter XI Contemplation

The truths of faith are infinitely superior even to the greatest discoveries of human genius. This is a strong statement, but demonstrably true, for all the truths of science or philosophy are merely human; they are natural to man. The truths of faith, however, are supernatural. They represent a participation in God's knowledge. Between these two sorts of truth lies the space which separates heaven and earth. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts."1

In the vigorous passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians in which St. Paul contrasts the wisdom of faith with human wisdom, the contrast is so sharp that the worldly philosopher cannot even recognize these revealed truths as being wisdom at all. "The sensual man2 perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand."3 Yet, this revealed doctrine is the very content of the divine intelligence. Just as a man's intelligence knows his own intimate mental life, his thoughts, his desires, his plans, so the Holy Spirit knows the divine mental life. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."4 These things God communicated to the Apostles through the Holy Ghost. "To us hath God revealed them, by His Spirit."5 The Apostles, in turn, taught these divine secrets to the faithful. "We speak wisdom among the perfect."6 This sharing in the divine wisdom makes it possible to exclaim: "We have the mind of Christ."7 These sacred truths of faith may appear foolish to the self-satisfied wise ones of this world, but they are humanity's only hope of salvation. For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe."8 The moral is clear. As was said in the last Chapter, our search for a satisfactory human society must lead to a pistic society, a society founded upon faith. Only such a society can satisfy us. The reason for this is easy to see. A noëtic society is founded on a truth which is not only deeper but infinitely deeper. The security of the foundation assures the value of the society built upon it.

It follows that whoever wishes to improve human society should place his reliance ultimately on the truths of faith and not on human wisdom. Given the transcendent quality of revealed truth, it is sheer folly to try to base a society purely on science or philosophy. This is particularly inexcusable in a Catholic. To accept the truths of faith in theory, and then to disregard them as aids in the practical task of social reform, is to neglect what is incomparably the best means to the desired end.

To illustrate the crassness of this folly we may be permitted a parable. Suppose that a certain American university had gone to great pains to secure the services of a distinguished European scholar as a visiting professor. Suppose that this man was universally recognized as a great research genius and that everyone had praised his sound scholarship, his balanced judgment, his wide erudition, his brilliant intuition. The awaited day comes, the great man arrives, and takes up his residence. Then to the horror of all concerned, he spends his time in infantile pursuits, playing in sand piles, shaking his rattle babbling incoherent syllables, smiling fatuously.

In such a case, of course, everyone would conclude that the great man had lost his mind. What other interpretation would be possible? It is inconceivable that a man who had mastered the use of the highest human intellectual powers should voluntarily renounce these powers and accept the intellectual routine of an infant. This parable is frankly absurd. Yet, is it any more absurd than the

position of those who, having it in their power to use the transcendent approach to reality which faith gives, would return to the comparatively imperfect powers of the natural intellect to seek in them the complete and ultimate answer to social problems? One might well repeat to such persons St. Paul's question to the senseless Galatians: "Are you so foolish, that, whereas you began in the Spirit, you would now be made perfect by the flesh?"<sup>9</sup> Such, however, is the position of some Catholics who apparently expect to solve social problems by purely human methods in the light of purely human wisdom without reference to the supernatural truths of faith.

Catholics who appreciate the truths of faith at something like their true value will be quick to repudiate this attitude. They will use to the full the means which faith furnishes. Concretely, what does this imply? Evidently it implies, first of all, that they will study all the revealed truths taught by the Church which have any social significance. In other words, they will try to learn the full social doctrine of the Church and then, by an act of faith, make this doctrine their own. Furthermore, if they are scholars they will try to help discover those divinely revealed social doctrines which have not yet been explicitly taught by the Church. For there is no reason to think that the Church has already explicitly defined the entire body of social doctrine contained in the Bible and tradition. It is extremely probable that much of this doctrine, although present implicitly in the sources of revelation, has not yet been clearly and definitely taught. This is indeed the ordinary history of Catholic dogma. All the truths of faith had been revealed when the last Apostle died, but many centuries were required for their full formulation. Perhaps, it will be the role of the theologians of our own century to bring the social doctrines of the Church to a fuller development.

This acceptance, by an act of faith, of the Church's whole social doctrine, is a necessary preliminary. It is a first step toward a pistic society. It is, however, not enough. The theory must be put into practice. Human experience shows that theories are not ordinarily carried over into practice by theory alone. These abstract ideas must be deeply realized. They must become vivid and actual and vital before they have much influence on the believer's daily life.

To realize the above, compare the life of an ordinary Catholic with the life of a saint. Both can make, with perfect sincerity, an act of faith in all that the Church teaches, but what a difference between them! With the ordinary believer, these articles of belief are not extremely vivid, even though they are unquestioningly accepted as truth. Therefore, they affect his conduct only now and then in the presence of some important moral problem. To the saint, on the other hand, these same truths are the most vivid realities in the world. They affect his conduct at almost every moment of the day. This constant, intense realization of the truths of faith is, indeed, a principal reason why the saints' conduct is so superior to the conduct of the average believer.

Sense realities force themselves upon us; we cannot very well help realizing them; but a conscious effort is necessary before we become thus vividly aware of suprasensible realities. To remedy this condition, the truths of faith must be integrated with the balance of our mental content so that they are no longer two isolated bodies of truth, but a single whole. This task is necessary because the human mind has a perverse ability for accommodating incompatible truths unless a conscious effort is made to eliminate such incompatibilities. Thus, for example, a very realistic scientist may be afraid to walk under a ladder. Here are two incompatible viewpoints in one man's mind, a scientific view of the universe and a puerile superstition. Yet, this strange cohabitation will continue until a conscious effort is made to eliminate it.

In the case of faith, the same thing may happen. Even after truths have been accepted intellectually, they may remain isolated, so to speak, in a corner of the mind, cut off from the rest of one's mental content. Thus, the believer who accepts all the articles of faith may accept other contradictory propositions without being conscious of the inconsistency involved, and this



antinomy will probably remain until removed by a deliberate effort. This effort involves serious, long-continued, earnest meditation through which the truths of faith are set into relation with the other elements of the believer's mental content, and all contradictions are eliminated.

Consider, for example, the believer who is very much attached to money. He is a businessman, let us say. He prides himself on his success and works very hard to attain still further success. This man, perhaps, is a sincere believer in the Christian faith. He accepts it without reservation. He believes that Christ is the Son of God and that His words were words of eternal truth. He, therefore, implicitly accepts Christ's doctrine of wealth, the doctrine that wealth is not bad in itself, but dangerous, and that in general poverty is better. Thus there exists in his mind two contradictory ideals. In theory he accepts the ideal of poverty, but in practice his philosophy of life is built about the ideal of riches. The man is not insincere. He is simply unconscious of the contradiction. The remedy in such a case is clear. The man must meditate. He must stop to think. If he does so, he will sooner or later become conscious of his inconsistency, and, becoming conscious of it, he will seek to remove it by modifying his practical philosophy of life and adopting a more Christian view of riches. Of course, it does not follow that he will immediately put this ideal into practice, but, at least, he has taken a first necessary step in that direction.

It is clear from the above that systematic meditation is an important tool for building a pistic society. It is necessary in order that those who already accept intellectually the truths of faith may realize them more vividly and may be encouraged to put them into practice. An important part of any Catholic-action program should be devoted to meditation. To attempt to reform society by overt activity without a balancing emphasis on meditation would be a dangerous innovation, something alien to Catholic tradition and likely to lead to disastrous results.

Meditation of the above sort will bring intellectual convictions which are no longer isolated but are related to the practical purposes of life. However, a difficulty remains. Even though the truths of faith have been thus integrated with other facts into a single philosophy of life, still these truths of faith are likely to lack a certain vivid urgency and, thus, to suffer in comparison with accepted facts which rest, say, on sense knowledge. In a time of crisis, the truths of faith are likely to be brushed aside, not because the believer doubts these truths, but because other more immediate realities force themselves into consciousness. For example, consider the successful businessman who has already convinced himself of the superiority of poverty over riches. Perhaps, he is intellectually convinced that he ought to give all his goods to the poor and enter a monastery. Yet, this purely intellectual conviction may be less active in influencing his conduct than is his vivid realization of the joys of wealth, his car, his fine house, his yacht, his office, his familiar business associates. The former is accepted in theory. The latter force themselves on his senses at almost every moment. Frequently these visible and tangible realities will affect his conduct much more than the undoubted truths of faith.

The remedy for this state of mind is still further meditation which gradually merges into a state called "affective prayer", in which the affections become inflamed from meditation on divine things. Thus, the sincere rich man by long and earnest meditation on the Nativity gradually comes to love this holy mystery so intensely that the stable at Bethlehem becomes as real to him as the luxurious house in which he lives. So the appeal which his material possessions exert over his mind is balanced by the appeal of the loved and deeply realized spiritual realities. In this way the truths of faith gradually acquire the strength and vividness necessary in order to exert a strong and unvarying influence over the life of the individual.

Affective prayer is very important as a step toward creating a pistic society, but such prayer does not represent the ultimate and best technique for this purpose. We have already seen that the

highest human mental power is *noësis*, a quasi-angelic ability by which one can penetrate to the very inner essence of a truth. It is quite natural, then, that this highest of human intellectual powers should be applied to the truths of faith. This is, indeed, a procedure familiar to the saints. They were given to the noëtic study of these sacred mysteries and, thus, they attained a direct and simple vision of these truths, which is known as contemplation.<sup>10</sup>

Given the mind's ability to perform the act of *noësis*, the existence and the nature of religious contemplation are not surprising. In a previous chapter we have discussed *noësis*. We have seen that it is an ability by which the human intellect, brought face to face with reality, penetrates into the essence of that reality and discovers new truths concerning it without the labor of discursive reasoning. Indeed, we know that the intellect can often apprehend in the object truths so deep and sacred that they cannot be put into words, truths which are apprehended as wholes after the manner of the angels, without the "composition and division" which characterize ordinary human knowledge. There is no reason why this process should not be applied to truths of faith, and this application does take place in the act of contemplation.<sup>11</sup>

There is another side to contemplation. The noëtic apprehension of deep and beautiful realities stirs the will to an act of love. This is true even in the contemplation of beautiful material objects. How much more it is the case in the contemplation of celestial realities! The joy and affection which come to the soul during contemplation are thus both purer and more intense than those which characterize ordinary affective prayer.

Contemplation represents the human mind's highest response to the truths of faith, and, since the truths of faith are the deepest of all truths, contemplation represents the deepest and fullest human contact with reality. We have already stated several times the principle that the more truly a society is founded on a deep contact with reality, the more satisfactory that society will be. From this principle we may conclude that the most satisfying possible human society will be a pistic society, in which contemplation is widespread so that the basic determining purposes of the society are based on a deep contemplative view of the truths of faith.

Let us imagine what such a society would be like in the concrete. It would be a society, for one thing, in which the members possessed a scale of values representing a truer knowledge of the relative importance of things that can be found in other societies. The man who has spent thousands of hours contemplating the mysteries of the Trinity, who has saturated his being with the light flowing from this center of all truth, can have nothing but disgust for the little systems of ephemeral philosophers strutting pompously across the academic stage as they mouth their consciously clever half-truths.

The man who has comprehended the reality of that mysterious love which drew down God to earth, a love hot as the sun's fire and strong as death, will not be attracted by those human affections which often masquerade so guiltily under the name of love. The man who has watched before the Crucifix in long silent hours of contemplation, who has drunk in the austere beauty of this surprising mystery, the love, the heroism, the triumph of the dying Son of God, will have nothing left but disdain for the cheap, mean pleasures of a decadent world.

A scale of values built upon contemplation will lead to a contempt for the things which this world values. The contemplative, then, is likely to turn his back on honor, riches, power, sense pleasure, and to embrace a life of voluntary poverty and mortification, not because the things of this world are evil in themselves, but because they are at best only trifles when compared to the really important values of the supernatural order and because they may become actually evil if they distract man from the pursuit of his true end. To many, a life of renunciation seems heroic and it cannot be denied that it implies a certain courage, a certain strength of character. Yet the

contemplative himself is likely not to view it in this light. It requires no sacrifice to discard what is without value. It needs no heroism to throw away refuse. This is how the saints felt. St. Paul said, "The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ."<sup>12</sup>

This "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" is the final answer to the fallacies and sophistries of a positivistic society which loves material things for their own sake and not as a means to a transcendent end. *Noësis*, indeed, shows that the success-ideal worshipped by the modern world is an unworthy thing, but the full worthlessness of the positivist's ambitions becomes fully visible only by the light of faith. Then the dignified men who set the pace for the modern world, the selfish and successful men held up as models to eager youth, will be seen as they really are, as seekers after worthless things, lovers of offal, the victims of a sort of coprophilia, to use St. Paul's vivid figure.

What a degrading perversion the success-ideal represents! Man was created after God's image. He was called to an eternal destiny. He was redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ. He was initiated into the secrets of the divine life. Yet, he often turns his back on this eternal destiny — and for what? For pleasures that he shares with the beasts of the field, for comfort, the joy of conflict, the paroxysm of passion. Too often these things become his dominant purposes, the things he really loves and values. Consequently, the society which he builds for himself is a positivistic society subordinated to the pursuit of these low ideals.

It is not surprising, then, that the modern world is dominated by the men best capable of leading society in this degrading pursuit, by ridiculous little clowns and boors, self-made heroes, drunk with ambition, urging on their followers to the attainment of a destiny which is without value. How far, how tragically far, has the world departed from the truth! How far it has strayed from reality! What strange ideals it has chosen! Is it any wonder that the contemplative turns with disgust from this nauseating spectacle, that he seeks separation from it as completely as possible, and, seeing in the Cross of Christ the symbol of that separation, cries out with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

1 Isaias 55:8-9

2 *Phuxikòs ánthropos* is a man whose actions are dominated by the *phuxé*, the principle of life on the natural level. Perhaps 'natural man' would be a better translation.

3 1 Cor. 2:4

4 Ibid., 2:10

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 2:6

7 Ibid., 2:16

8 Ibid., 1:21

9 Gal. 3:3

10 "Contemplatio pertinet ad ipsum simplicem intuitum veritatis." St. Thomas: *Sum. Th.*, II-II, Q. 180, A.3, ad 1 um.

11 The type of contemplation here discussed is acquired contemplation. It is based on the natural activities of the human mind aided by the ordinary supernatural graces. We shall later

discuss another form of contemplation, called ‘infused contemplation’, which implies the presence of extraordinary graces.

12 Philip. 3:7-8.

13 Gal. 6:14.

## Chapter XII

### Charity

The most essential thing about a society is its dominant common purpose. The presence of such a common purpose distinguishes a society from a random aggregation of individuals. The nature of a society's common purpose gives it its specific character, thus, for example, differentiating a business firm from a country club. The element of common purpose makes society what it is.

In order to develop an ideal human society, we must first discover an appropriate common purpose, one excellent and worthy enough to serve as the basis for such a society. But a society, after all, has no real existence distinct from the members who constitute it. Therefore, it can have no real common purpose distinct from its members' individual goals. The ideal common purpose, then, of the ideal human society must grow out of the ideal individual purposes which the society's members have chosen for themselves. An excellent human society is one whose members are directing their individual lives toward excellent ends.

Our search for a fully satisfying human society has led us to the question: What is the ideal plan of life for the individual citizen? Once this question is answered, it will not be hard to discover the nature of the ideal society. Now, the ideal end for the individual to pursue is one which perfects him, which brings his human nature to its fullest possible development. All men desire this. They want self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-completion.

Where will man find this perfect realization of his ideal? To answer this question, we must consider man himself, asking whither his human nature tends. In these tendencies we ought to find the true end of man, the real purpose of his existence. Now, there are many tendencies in human nature. Man wants to eat and sleep. Man wants wealth and power. Man wants to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. Man wants to love and be loved. Human wants, indeed, are so many and so diverse, often so contradictory, that it is difficult to find in this welter of desires any consistent, unitary tendency identifiable as the true end and purpose of man.

There exists, however, one sure principle which will bring order into this confusion. This is the principle that the end of man must be something distinctively human. To find man's true purpose, therefore, we must look not among those tendencies which he has in common with the brutes, but rather at those tendencies which are peculiar to human beings. These properly human tendencies, which distinguish man from the other animals, are connected with the intellect and the free will. Man's true purpose, therefore, will be found in the development of these characteristically human powers.

The human intellect tends toward truth. The human will tends toward good. Moreover, both these tendencies have in them a certain character of infinity. Man wants all good, all truth, and he wants to possess these things eternally. This extraordinary ambition is so natural to man that he cannot renounce it. His hungry heart is impatient with the finite. It frets at limitation. It reaches out ever toward some half-realized, infinite goal. In moments of exaltation, perhaps, this painful thirst for infinity may be for a moment forgotten while man occupies himself with some limited ecstasy, the lover's kiss, the shout of victory, the eureka of a great scientific discovery. But these moments pass and the old dissatisfaction returns. This is, indeed, a law of life for mortal man. He yearns for the infinite, and the impossibility of attaining it here generates a dissatisfaction which ever accompanies him, consciously, now unconsciously. This is a longing which tempers all the joys of mortal life.

We look before and after  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.<sup>1</sup>

It is this restless human longing which makes life in a positivistic society so unsatisfying. The goods sought by such a society are strictly limited in quantity. The average man can hope for only a small and unsatisfactory share. Even if he were able to arrogate to himself all the goods of the world, all wealth, all glory, all power, he would still be unsatisfied. Alexander was not satisfied with the conquest of the world. He cried for new worlds to conquer. The most perfect human love leaves the heart unsatisfied. Its ecstasy is marred by still unfulfilled desires. Man wants wealth and honor and power to an infinite degree. He wants these things not for a time but for eternity. Therefore the citizens of a positivistic society are ever restless, tossed about by the tireless winds of desire, like Paolo and Francesca in Dante's Hell.

A noëtic society relieves somewhat this tension of unsatisfied desire, for *noësis* shows that material things, so limited in quantity, are not really worth man's best efforts. *Noësis* reveals a new scale of values; it turns men's desires in a new direction, toward goods which are not limited in quantity, goods like art and virtue and philosophical speculation. This is an advantage; for in a noëtic society man's success need not involve another man's failure. Whereas only one man can enjoy the competitive pleasure of being elected President of the United States, an indefinite number can enjoy the pleasure of reading Shelley's poems. Whereas only a few persons can afford to own private yachts, everyone can obtain the pleasure of a good conscience. Thus, *noësis* in this world promises a wide field for the satisfaction of man's desires. What is more important, *noësis* promises immortality, a life beyond the grave in which virtue will be rewarded. There man's desires shall find surcease. It was such a hope that sustained Socrates and Plato, together with all the great and good men of pagan times.

A noëtic society is in a large measure satisfactory to man because in such an environment he is encouraged to apply his powers of *noësis* and to live in accordance with noëtic truths. The noëtic life tends in some manner to the end of man. It represents, indeed, the best and highest possible development on the merely natural level of those human powers of intellect and free will whose perfection and realization will be the true end and purpose of man. But we have seen that a noëtic society is scarcely workable. However beautiful it may be in theory, it does not represent the perfect environment in which a man may best work out his destiny.

A noëtic society takes its character ultimately from the fact that in such a society, man would tend by the best available means to his natural end, which is such a knowledge of the good, that is, of God, as the highest exercise of his natural powers could obtain for him. But even after time fullest use of his natural powers, man remains somehow unsatisfied. Not that he has any positive exigence for more than his natural powers allow (that would be a contradiction in terms) but because he has a capacity to receive more than his nature gives, an obediential power (*potentia obediencialis*) to be raised to a level higher than that to which his nature entitles him. Of this fact, he is dimly conscious. Hence, even the fulfillment promised by *noësis* leaves him unsatisfied. In a certain sense, then, man tends to a goal above his nature a phenomenon which St. Thomas explained as follows: "When a man knows an effect and knows that it has a cause, there remains in the man a natural desire to know also about the cause, what it is. If, therefore, the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than His existence,

the perfection of that intellect does not yet attain simply the First Cause; but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Therefore for perfect happiness, the intellect must reach the very essence of the First Cause." 2

Man's nature thus impels him, in a certain sense, in the direction of the beatific vision, a direct intuitive vision of God's essence in which the human appetite for infinity is fully satisfied, and both intellect and will find their perfect fulfillment. On the natural level of *noësis*, however, this impulsion remains a velleity rather than a volition. For man's reason can suspect no ground for hoping that this supernatural privilege will ever be vouchsafed to him, nor can he learn any truths about God's nature beyond the abstractions which his mind can form. It is only through revelation and an act of faith that the reality of this supernatural destiny becomes known. Faith alone teaches man that the beatific vision is his true individual destiny and that human society must be based on this fact. God then, God as man's supernatural end, is the ultimate reality upon which a pistic society must be founded. A pistic society, therefore, is a society of men animated by the one purpose of seeking God, not as God is known by the natural intellect, but as He is known supernaturally by faith. Such a society is the only possible society which is really satisfying because it is the only one whose common purpose is based on the true end and purpose of the individual human beings who constitute it. God is the end of man. Only through the knowledge and love of God can man satiate his strange thirst for infinity. By attaining God he finds at last the fulfillment of those restless longings which could not be satisfied by the things of this world; for the complete satiation of all man's desires is to be found only in the one

true and living God, the creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in His intellect, His will, and in every perfection, Who, since He is one spiritual substance, singular, wholly simple, and incommunicable, is to be proclaimed distinct from the world in fact and essentially, in Himself and of Himself most blessed, and unspeakably high above all things, which, aside from Him, are or can be conceived.<sup>3</sup>

Granted then, that God is infinitely perfect and that He is the adequate end of man's desires, it remains to be asked, How does man attain God? How does man get into relationship with Him? It is clear that man must come to possess God by the exercise of his characteristically human powers, the powers which distinguish him from the beasts, that is to say, by the exercise of his intellect and free will. It is through these faculties that man finds his perfection. It follows, then, that to fulfill his destiny, to reach his last end and purpose, man must unite himself to God by knowing and loving Him.

Knowing God must be the first step in this process, for knowledge always precedes love. Knowledge of God, however, is not merely a preliminary to love. It is an act which itself establishes a most intimate union with the Divinity. By knowing God, we are inevitably assimilated to Him. It is as St. Paul says: "But we all with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into his very image from glory to glory, as through the Lord the Spirit."<sup>4</sup> To some it may appear surprising that the mere knowing of God should transform the knower, in a certain sense, into God; but this is explicable in terms of the Scholastic theory of cognition. According to this theory, the passive intellect knows by taking on the form<sup>5</sup> of the object known, so that, in a sense, the knowing subject is transformed into the object. Therefore, St. Thomas was able to explain the above passage from Second Corinthians as follows:

Since all cognition takes place by the assimilation of the knower to the object known, those who see God must be somehow transformed into Him. And if they see perfectly they are perfectly transformed like the blessed in Heaven through the union of fruition. But if they see imperfectly they are imperfectly transformed as in the case of faith.... We see now through a glass in a dark manner.<sup>6</sup>

Even the natural knowledge of God has this transforming effect in a certain vague way, but the knowledge which St. Paul and St. Thomas were talking about was the supernatural knowledge of God, by faith in this world and by the beatific vision in the next. Such a knowledge is, of course, something to which we have no right, something unattainable by man by any effort of his own, no matter how great. It is clear that faith is a very great privilege, infinitely more valuable than the most brilliant human genius. For faith is the road by which we become ultimately deified, as it were, transformed somehow into God.

Even by the natural intellect, it is possible to learn a little of the infinite goodness of God; but by faith this knowledge is broadened and deepened beyond measure. We learn something of God's inner life, how by a single act of intuition He knows Himself in all His infinite perfection and how this divine self-knowledge leads to a perfect act of unselfish self-love. By faith we learn the existence of the three Divine Persons within the unity of the Blessed Trinity, their equal glory and coeternal majesty. By faith we learn to appreciate the mystery of the Incarnation, how "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son,"<sup>7</sup> to rescue us from sin and give us eternal life. We learn to appreciate the loving kindness, the tenderness, the infinite tact, the strong heroic devotion of the God-man, who, being infinitely rich, became poor for our sakes and loved us to the death—yes, even to the death on the cross.

The knowledge of God's perfection, even the very imperfect knowledge given by faith, can have but one effect on the will. This effect is to make us love God. This love, of course, will be a supernatural love based on the supernatural knowledge which faith yields and itself proceeding from a soul which has been raised to a supernatural plane by sanctifying grace. This love is twofold. We love God as our good, as being good for us, as attainable by us as our last end. This is the love of hope. But we can also love God more unselfishly for His own sake, on account of His goodness which is in itself and for itself lovable. This is the love of charity.

Charity is the greatest of all virtues. Faith and hope will pass away. In heaven they will be superseded by something superior, by a direct vision of God which renders them unnecessary. But charity beginning in this world will remain eternally; for the beatific love of the blessed *in* heaven is not essentially different from charity as we know it in this world. "Charity never falleth away."<sup>8</sup>

Charity, indeed, is the participation in God's inner life. This life—so far as expressible in human terms— involves that self-knowledge and self-love of God which constitutes the ineffable activity of the three Divine Persons. By charity we share in this divine life, so that Our Lord was able after the Last Supper to pray to His eternal Father that the faithful should participate in the love existing between the Father and Son within the Blessed Trinity. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." Words of infinite meaning! By charity we share in God's very love. Who could imagine a higher destiny? Thus is man's thirst for infinity somehow satisfied even in this world, where he prepares for the perfect fulfillment of his destiny in heaven.

He who truly loves the divine perfection must love that perfection wherever he finds it. He must love it, then, when he finds it reflected in his neighbor's soul. Thus arises the duty of fraternal charity, the duty of loving one's neighbor with a love which is specifically the same as the love one has for God. For our neighbors' souls do reflect the divine perfection. This fact is demonstrable



even on the natural level because the presence of intellect and free will makes man like to God. It is, however, only on the supernatural level that this resemblance is seen in its full reality. The soul of a person in a state of sanctifying grace has, as previously stated, been transformed into the likeness of God by faith and love. Even the soul in a state of sin attains a certain dignity because it still has the possibility of this transformation. It is potentially God's supernatural image.

It is, therefore, impossible to separate the love of God from the love of neighbor. If we love God, we love our neighbor. If we love our neighbor with the love of charity, we love God. It is the merest hypocrisy to try to separate the two. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar."<sup>9</sup> It is, in fact, a contradiction in terms, like saying that at the same time we love and we do not love the divine perfection.

From the last paragraph, it is evident that a pistic society rests on a very firm foundation. Its members, having faith, have the intellectual basis for loving God through charity, and loving God in this supernatural manner, they must necessarily love each other in the same way. Thus, all the members of a pistic society are bound together into an inseparable unity by bonds of supernatural charity.

A positivistic society is characterized by competition and disunion because its members have no sound intellectual basis for mutual respect. A noëtic society has a much better basis for cooperation and understanding because by *noësis* its members have the insight to appreciate each other's dignity as human persons. But in a pistic society the basis for cooperation and common love becomes infinitely deeper, for such a society is welded together by the fire of divine love.

The word 'charity' has been used and misused so much that we are apt to overlook the depth of its social significance. We are apt to forget that charity implies that we must love our neighbors with the same love wherewith we love God, so that good deeds or ill deeds done to our neighbor will be reckoned as good deeds or ill deeds done to God. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."<sup>10</sup> The saints, however, never lost sight of this fact and this explains the extraordinary intensity of their devotion to their fellow man, an intensity which the heroes of human philanthropy can never hope to equal. The saints spent themselves and were spent in the service of their fellow man because, in the most literal sense, they were urged on by the charity of Christ. The presence of this overwhelming love, a love which does not stop to count the cost, characterizes the saints of every age and must characterize any group which deserves to be called a pistic society.

Once man has grasped the extraordinary significance of charity, his society cannot but be transformed. When man, with startled gaze, has looked into his neighbor's eyes and recognized God's presence there, then the attitude of man to man must be profoundly changed. All hatred, all jealous rivalry, all strife, must vanish. Instead, there must be born a spirit of loving cooperation, a cooperation having as its ultimate basis not the attainment of the mean ideals of a success-society, but the attainment of man's profoundest destiny, the attainment of God, in whose eternal fruition man's hunger for infinity finds its perfect satisfaction.

## Notes

1 P.B. Shelley: *To a Skylark*

2 Remanet naturaliter homini desiderium, cum cognoscit effectum, et scit eum habere causam, ut etiam sciat de causa quid est. . . . Si igitur intellectus humanus cognoscens essentiam alicujus effecti creati non cognoscat de Deo nisi an est, nondum perfectio ejus attingit simpliciter ad causam primam, sed remanet ei adhuc naturale desiderium inquirendi causam; unde nondum est perfecte

beatus. Ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae." St. Thomas: *Sum. Th.*, . 1-II, q. 3, a. 8, c.

3 Deum verum et vivum, creatorem ac Dominum coeli et terrae, omnipotentem, aeternum, immensum, incomprehensibilem, intellectu ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitum; qui cum sit una singularis, simplex omnino et incommunicabilis substantia spiritualis, praedicandus est re et essentia a mundo distinctus, in se et ex se beatissimus, et super omnia, quae praeter ipsum sunt et concipi possunt, ineffabiliter excelsus." Conc. Vat.: Sess. III, Cap. , *De Deo*. DBU. No. 1782.

4 II Cor. 3: 18. Westminster Version.

5 The form in question is a special kind of form, called *intentional* form, whose presence is due to the activity of the active intellect.

6 "Cum . . . omnis cognitio sit per assimilationem cognoscentis ad cognitum, oportet quod qui vident, aliquo modo transformentur in Deum. Et si quidem perfecte vident, perfecte transformantur, sicut beati in patria per fruitionis unionem. . . . Si vero imperfecte, imperfecte sicut hic per fidem. . . . Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate." St. Thomas: In *S. Pauli Epist. comm.*, in hoc loc.

7 John 17:26.

8 1 Cor. 13:8.

9 I John 4:20.

10 Matt. 25:40

## Chapter XIII

# The Kingdom of God

In the present volume, the word "society" has been used in a very wide sense. It has been used to denote the totality of individuals sharing a common conception of the purpose of human life and cooperating formally or informally in the pursuit of that purpose. It is evident that within a society, thus broadly conceived, there must be many subordinate organizations through which the society can carry out its general purpose. Consider, for example, a positivistic society, a multitude of individuals striving toward the success-ideal. Within the broad frame of such a culture, there will exist very many specialized organizations with subordinate purposes of their own. There will be, for example, business firms, country clubs, chambers of commerce, trade associations, luncheon clubs, to say nothing of such political units as towns, municipalities, states and nations. In a noëtic society, also, or in a pistic society, many similar subordinate organizations will appear, with differences due to the different end and purpose of the society within which they occur.

The question now arises, what is to be the relationship of these subordinate organizations to each other, and what is to be their relationship to the broad society which contains them? What, for example, will be the interrelationships among the various subordinate organizations which are to be found within a pistic society, and what will be their bearing on the purpose of a pistic society itself? Since the three types of society (positivistic, noëtic, pistic) have been defined as being dominated, each by a certain definite conception of man's ultimate purpose in life, it is clear that no subordinate organization within these three broad societies can interfere with this dominant purpose; for otherwise that purpose would no longer be dominant. On the contrary, the ends of the subordinate organizations must further the dominant end of the broad society itself. On this condition only will the minor groupings be tolerated. For example, in a positivistic society the Rotary Club is esteemed because it is good for business. The American Academy for the Advancement of Science is viewed with indifference because it has little effect on business. The Committee for Industrial Organization is barely tolerated because it is considered bad for business.

Within the pistic society, too, there will be a multitude of organizations. There will be academies of science, trade guilds, youth movements, social clubs, and numerous other minor groupings; but there will also be two very major organizations, the Church and the State. What will be the relationship between these various groups? Are we to identify the end of the Church with the end of pistic society in general, subordinating the State and all minor organizations to ecclesiastical authority; shall the State take the responsibility of leading men to their ultimate destiny, absorbing all other groups into itself; or is, perhaps, the relationship between Church and State too complex to be expressed in such sweeping generalizations?

In our modern world it is becoming usual to look upon the State as the supreme authority. This is a tendency which is everywhere marked; but in the dictator countries, it is an explicit dogma quite candidly preached to the people. Such countries are well called "Totalitarian States" because the State is the organization through which the totality of all social interests must be expressed. The State insists on dominating capital, labor, educational life, the family, even recreation. The Church itself is very closely supervised and regulated.

Such a conception of the State's function is quite natural in a positivistic society; for everyone admits that it is the duty of the State to care for the safety, external happiness, and prosperity of its members. Since the positivist is not likely to recognize any human destiny transcending these ends, he quite naturally yields to the State the total responsibility for guiding his affairs. It is equally

clear, however, that the totalitarian State cannot be tolerated in a pistic society, precisely because such a society recognizes the fact that man has a supernatural destiny and because the State, totalitarian or not, lacks competence outside the temporal and natural sphere.

Of course, we must not suppose that the State has no part to play in a pistic society. It is easier for man to work out his supernatural destiny when the State efficiently preserves the safety and security of its citizens, when the State enforces economic justice so that all citizens shall have at least a modest competence, when the State insists by law on an external goodness of morals and the removal of public occasions of sin. In a parallel fashion, a State which allows civil disorder, economic injustice, and crimes of violence is not a State in which the citizens can easily devote themselves to the things of eternity. Pope Pius XI calls our attention to the fact that this condition is very widespread today: "It may be said with all truth that nowadays the conditions of social and economic life are such that vast multitudes of men can only with great difficulty pay attention to that one thing necessary, namely their eternal salvation."<sup>1</sup>

Although the State can help its citizens toward their ultimate destiny indirectly by removing external obstacles, it remains clear that the organization which helps men directly in the attainment of this purpose must be one primarily supernatural in character. Such an organization is the Church. The Church accomplishes this purpose in various ways and, first of all, by preserving the true doctrine of Christ so that each generation of men may be sure of receiving this doctrine in unadulterated form. This is very important because a pistic society cannot exist unless the faith of its members rests on a solid basis of fact. A pistic society must be founded on the true faith, not on a faith of just any sort.

The Church accomplishes her purpose, secondly, by the sacramental system and by prayers, thus obtaining for her members supernatural grace. Without such grace, of course, man could not tend toward his supernatural destiny, and a truly pistic society would be impossible. The Church aids her members also by the exercise of her authority over them. No social group can work efficiently as a unit unless there is some central authority to coordinate the efforts of the individual members, assigning to each his function and repressing disputes where such arise. There is, finally, a psychological advantage conferred by membership in the Church; for it is an elementary fact of observation that we can accomplish a given task more easily when others are at our side ready to give their advice, interest, and sympathetic support. The feeling of unity engendered by membership in the Church is therefore not without its value to the individual in a pistic society.

From the above considerations, it might seem that the Church would absorb all the authority existing in a pistic society; for the dominant common purpose in such a society is the attainment of heaven, and the Church exists to aid men toward this end. This, however, is not the case. Other organizations besides the Church have their legitimate place in a pistic society. The function of the State has already been mentioned. Besides the State, the pistic society will contain a wide variety of minor organizations. There will be scientific and literary associations. There will be economic groups of various sorts, labor groups, business concerns, cooperatives. There will even be groups formed for healthy exercise and common recreation. All these organizations must exist, but each must keep its own place. The activity of each must remain subordinate to the dominant purpose of the pistic society which contains them. Thus it would be a derogation of right order and harmful to the good of society as a whole if the members of an athletic club should become so interested in producing a winning team that they would be distracted from the pursuit of heaven, the dominant purpose of the pistic society containing the athletic club.

The most delicate problem which arises in the adjustment of organization to organization is the problem of the relation between Church and State. The delicacy of this question arises from

the fact that both Church and State are supreme, each in its own sphere. Neither is accustomed to brook interference from any outside authority. This attitude is quite proper as long as each remains in its own field. Occasions will arise, however, in which their interests clash; for the distinction between their respective spheres is less clear in practice than in theory. When such conflicts arise, there can be no doubt about the correct solution. The State must yield to the Church because the purpose of the former is less important than the purpose of the latter. Security and prosperity in this world are less important than eternal felicity in the next. This principle is not admitted in our present success-culture, but it would be quite evident in a pistic society. Even in the Middle Ages it was pretty generally recognized, except by the hangers-on of disgruntled monarchs, men like Pierre Du Bois or John of Jordan.

The state of affairs which we have been discussing would apply if we really lived in a pistic society. Looking at the world about us, however, it is easy to see that we do not live under such conditions. The modern world is largely dominated by the success-ideal. Positivism is much more honored than faith. All in all, it would not be very far wrong to say that the world in which we live constitutes a positivistic society.

The question now arises, how can an individual living under such conditions obtain the social helps he needs to aid him in the pursuit of his last end? How can one attain heaven living in a society whose major interests lie in quite a different direction? The answer is that the Church constitutes a pistic society within the larger positivistic society of the modern world. This is, of course, a strikingly anomalous situation; yet, it is one which must needs be thoroughly understood if we are to grasp the Catholic conception of social reform. It is anomalous because the same man being both a member of the Church and a citizen of a Positivistic State is being led simultaneously in two different directions. As a member of the Church, he is urged to direct all his acts to a supernatural end, while the positivistic environment in which he moves is constantly urging him in a different direction, that is to say, toward the goal of a positivistic society, toward the pursuit of wealth, honor, and pleasure as ends themselves, a goal quite inconsistent with the Church's teachings.

In the dictator countries like Russia and Germany the situation becomes acute, for in these countries the citizens enjoy comparatively little personal liberty, and they are often put under pressure by the State to do things inconsistent with their destiny. In countries like the United States, where freedom of worship prevails, the conflict is less visibly intense, but we should not for that reason underestimate its reality and importance.

The Catholic citizen of the United States is not threatened with the concentration camp nor with martyrdom if he refuses to renounce his supernatural end, but he is cajoled and bullied in a million subtle ways. In a million subtle ways, pressure is brought to bear on him that he may accept the manner of living of his many million fellow citizens who do not recognize any goal beyond the good things of this world. The Catholic is urged to tolerate a thousand social attitudes, a thousand customs, a thousand types of official action, which cannot be tolerated in the light of Catholic ethics. The newspaper, the radio, the movies, those with whom he works, those with whom he plays, all these are at work trying to influence him during nearly all his waking hours. If he yields to these influences, he is popular, a good fellow. If he resists, he is ridiculed as queer, a crank, an extremist. It requires no small amount of moral courage to resist these daily allurements. Sometimes, indeed, one wonders which is the more inimical to Catholic life, the frank hatred of admitted enemies or the blandishments of those who pose as friends.

We must not be thrown off guard by the fact that many of these temptations to worldliness come from perfectly well-intentioned people — well-intentioned, that is to say, according to the

limited range of vision which positivism confers upon them. Such persons are extraordinarily dangerous. We are naturally on the defensive before the unconcealed malice of those who are frankly evil, but we are not so likely to be circumspect in our relations with the positivist who has the virtues as well as the vices of positivism, its facile good fellowship as well as its ultimate selfishness.

These individuals can be extremely destructive in their effect. The classical example is Pontius Pilate. This man was certainly well-intentioned. He saw very clearly that Christ was innocent and made a number of earnest efforts to avoid imposing the death sentence. He tried to have the Jews handle the case themselves, knowing they could not put a man to death. He sent Christ to Herod. He offered to release Him instead of Barabbas. He tried to make scourging take the place of crucifixion. He appealed to the Jews' pity. Finally, he emphatically stated on three different occasions that the Prisoner was innocent.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in spite of Pilate's humanitarianism, in spite of his good intentions, it was by his authority that the greatest crime of all history was committed. *Passus sub Pontio Pilato*. The reason was clear. Like a typical bourgeois positivist, Pilate wanted to be a good fellow. He wanted to avoid causing useless suffering. But like a bourgeois positivist, also, he lacked depth of insight. His spirit was too sluggish to guess the magnitude of the issues involved. Therefore, he gave way when the Jews cried, "If thou release this man thou art not Caesar's friend."<sup>3</sup> It was, after all, a question of class loyalty. So Christ went to His death and Pilate remained in the good graces of the Emperor.

In our own day and in our own country we must be aware of people like Pilate, well-intentioned men who enjoy prestige and authority in their communities. They are anxious to avoid needless suffering, but at the same time lack insight, spiritual enthusiasm, and heroism. The danger is that we may be attracted by these men's virtues and then gradually by their vices also. We may respect a rich industrialist for his generosity to the Community Chest and gradually come to sympathize with his outrageous attitude toward organized labor. We may respect a political officeholder for his real efforts to prevent discrimination against Catholics and then gradually learn to forgive his notorious dishonesty in the administration of public funds. We may respect a gentleman of the old school for his urbanity, his courtesy, his ingrained culture and, thus, begin to overlook his hatred for the Negro race. We may respect a soldier for his courage, his manliness, his devotion to duty and, thus, forget his destructive unscrupulousness, which allows him to play on the passions of the crowd and inflame them with militarism and international hate.

There is only one way to avoid this danger of contamination. That is to withdraw ourselves mentally and spiritually from this positivistic world. Our roads lead in different directions. Why attempt the impossible task of serving God and Mammon? Why try to adapt ourselves to the customs of this success-culture? "Bear not the yoke within unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light within darkness? And what concord hath Christ within Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? . . . Wherefore, Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

Unless we are willing to accept this advice, we shall not make much progress toward our Catholic social ideal. Unless we are willing to make a sharp break with positivism, our pistic society will never flourish. We must refuse to participate in the activity of the world about us. Such lion-participation is the first step toward a devout life and the first essential in a pistic society. Every saint broke with this world, broke very definitely and decisively. Every religious community has been guarded by its founder from worldliness by rules so extreme that in some cases they may even seem absurd in the eyes of worldly prudence.

Under modern conditions, what will this non-participation mean in the life of the average layman? It will not mean that they must literally avoid all contact with worldly men, all dealings with them in political or business life; for, as St. Paul shrewdly said to the Corinthians, "Otherwise you must needs go out of this world."<sup>5</sup> Particularly, must Catholics be ready to participate as citizens in all worthy efforts to pass social legislation, to repress crime, to elect competent men to public office, to facilitate the routine of just government. Catholics must also be willing to lend their aid to non-governmental agencies, when these agencies are making an intelligent effort to solve social problems. We must realize, however, that these forms of cooperation are merely superficial in nature. They imply a community of overt action which does not alter our dissimilarity of underlying motive. A Catholic and an unbeliever may work side by side in a labor union for different motives. The unbeliever will be striving after the largest possible share of the world's goods because these goods are to him an end in themselves. The Catholic will cooperate with him because he believes that distributive justice and a living wage help to create a society in which man can better work out his eternal destiny.

There will, therefore, be many exceptions to the principle of non-participation. Yet non-participation will remain the rule. A Catholic living in a positivistic society must be in the world but not of it. Tending toward a different destiny, he must show this difference in his actions. In choosing his vocation, therefore, he will want to hold aloof from those occupations which are either wrong in themselves or have a flavor of worldliness about them. The dress of the Catholic will not reflect the latest fads and fashions of Paris or the Riviera, but rather will be simple, inexpensive, modest, well-made, and in good taste. The Catholic's place of abode, his amusements, his table, will show this same frugal simplicity, this same lack of ostentation. His social life will not be cramped by the cruel class distinctions which the world regards as so necessary; but he will be free to choose his friends from other races and other social classes if he wishes to do so. Indeed, it is not too much to hope that many Catholics will feel called upon to practice a real voluntary poverty so far as is consistent within their state of life, not because this is obligatory, but because it is a means of avoiding temptations and of imitating the divine Carpenter of Nazareth.

The technique of non-participation is a necessary preliminary to the pistic life, but it is not that life itself. After all, non-participation is only a negative thing. It is a way of not living. To build a pistic society, we must not only sever our connection with the positivistic society around us, we must make a society of our own. This is a point too often forgotten even by Catholics interested in social reform. It is all very well to work for the passage of good legislation, the unionization of labor, the removal of the causes of poverty. Yet, such measures, after all, are negative. They help to remove evils existing around us. They do not directly create a supernatural society. These things are indeed explicitly approved by the great social encyclicals of recent popes; but they are approved only as a preliminary to something vastly important and that is the construction of a pistic society, a Catholic social order.

What is this Catholic social order? Ideally, as we have seen, it would be a society in which Church and State and all minor groupings would play their part to the end that a man might have health, peace, security, and frugal comfort, these things, however, being subordinate to man's true supernatural end whose attainment would constitute the dominant purpose of the society. Under the present abnormal conditions, for example in America, where we Catholics form but a minority, this absolute ideal is not attainable. They must, therefore, be satisfied with a relative social ideal, a pistic society within a positivistic one. This means that we, being cut off mentally and spiritually from the surrounding world, shall form a society of our own, the Kingdom of God, the Mystical

Body, the Church, within which we shall accomplish as best we may the purpose of a pistic society, which is to furnish those mutual social aids which lead men to God.

The Kingdom of God thus existing in the midst of a positivistic world will be sorely tried. It will be subjected to countless Satanic assaults. Non-participation will be difficult and the preservation of our organic unity will be more difficult still. To carry out our Catholic life under these conditions may seem almost impossible. Indeed, it would be impossible were it not for the supernatural aids within which we are furnished.

Grace is the secret of success for a pistic society in a positivistic world. Grace preserves us from contamination. Grace incorporates us into the Mystical Body. The greatest source of grace is the Mass with the Blessed Eucharist. The Mass is the supreme social act which the Kingdom of God performs. It is, then, not only the basis for all Catholic social action, it is Catholic social action itself.

Of course the Mass does not produce the above effects to a maximum degree unless those present participate actively with the proper spirit. What does this imply? It implies, of course, that the priest will celebrate with fervor, that he will appreciate his high office and act accordingly. But this is not enough. The people must participate, too. For the Mass is not a private and individual act of worship instituted to feed the priest's devotion. The Mass is a great social act of worship performed by the whole community, priest and people. It is true that the priest plays the chief part. He alone, independently of the people, has the power to consecrate. Yet, the Mass belongs in a very real sense to the people also. It is my sacrifice and yours..

To realize this, it is only necessary to examine the liturgy of the Mass. The prayers at the foot of the altar are said alternately by the priest and by the server representing the people. They confess their sins to each other and beg each other's prayers. The Introit belonged originally to the people and even now is sung by the choir, representing the congregation, at a Sung Mass. The *Kyrie* is said alternately by priest and server and at a Sung Mass the *Gloria* belongs to the choir. Then the priest says, "The Lord Be With You," a greeting which recurs constantly and which expresses the unity which must exist between celebrant and congregation. The official prayer of the day follows then, but the priest does not say it in his own name. "Let us pray," he says. This spirit is continued throughout the Mass. The Canon belongs chiefly to the priest, yet, the welfare of the people is ever on his lips. He prays in the plural number, he prays for the Church, he prays for the those who stand around. Finally, at Communion time both priest and people unite in receiving equally the Body and Blood of Christ.

Since, therefore, the Mass must be a social act of worship involving both priest and people, we must ask ourselves just what this joint worship involves. It involves the overt acts which we have just recounted; and, what is more important still, activesocial participation in the Mass involves certain interior dispositions. From the very nature of the Mass, it is evident what these dispositions must be. The Mass is the same sacrifice as the Sacrifice of the Cross. On the Cross Christ died for love of mankind. Those who participate actively in the Mass must, therefore, share this same love, love not only for God but for their fellow men.

It follows that the Christian community which participates actively in the Mass must be bound together by a very fervent love. This is the only way to celebrate Mass worthily. Where this is lacking, Mass is not celebrated well. There is an interesting proof of this in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Here St. Paul rebukes the Corinthians who came together "not for the better, but for the worse."<sup>6</sup> He then proceeds to recount their faults. One of these was overindulgence in drink. With this exception, however, all the abuses were sins against charity. There were divisions in the congregation. At the sacred banquet which preceded the Eucharist the well-to-do were



inconsiderate enough to "put them to shame that have not."<sup>7</sup> Some had more than enough to eat, while others went hungry. The first arrivals were so impolite as to begin without waiting for those coming later. These offenses against charity may seem comparatively trivial to us, because we are insufficiently aware of the social character of the Mass; but to St. Paul they were profoundly shocking. He even asserted<sup>8</sup> that they had caused sickness and death as temporal punishments among the Corinthians. What a striking thought! Almighty God sends these severe afflictions to those who dare to assist at Mass without a fervent love of neighbor. The death penalty for profaning the Holy Sacrifice through lack of charity!

If the penalties are terrible for those who participate in the Mass with hatred in their hearts, the rewards are correspondingly magnificent for those who participate with a proper spirit of charity. Indeed, it is not too much to assert that the Mass celebrated properly is our chief means for Catholic social action. This statement may appear surprising; but it should not. After all, social problems arise in most instances from lack of charity. Therefore, the Holy Eucharist, constituting the great source of charity, should be the most natural remedy. Such was the doctrine of Pope Leo XIII, and from his lips it is doubly impressive since he was so eminent an apostle of Christian social reconstruction. In his great encyclical, *Divinae caritatis*, written near the end of his long life, he calls attention to the social and economic evils of his day, "frequent disturbances and strifes between class and class: arrogance, oppression, fraud, on the part of the more powerful; misery, envy, and turbulence among the poor. These," continues the Pope, "are evils for which it is vain to seek a remedy in legislation, in threats of penalties to be incurred, or in any other device of merely human prudence." The only true remedy is charity — not justice alone but charity. To increase such charity we must turn to the Holy Eucharist, the source of charity. "This, then, is what Christ intended when He instituted this venerable Sacrament, namely, by awakening charity toward God to promote charity among men"<sup>9</sup> There are some politically minded Catholics to whom this doctrine will appear strange. They pin their faith entirely on social legislation, organizations, publicity, committees, lectures, pamphlets, and such "devices of merely human prudence," forgetting that these means of propaganda become effective only when used as subordinate devices to further our real social action which centers in the Mass. For this group among Catholics the Holy Father had a stern rebuke:

Some there are, no doubt, who will express their surprise that for the manifold troubles and grievous afflictions by which our age is harassed we should have determined to seek for remedies and redress in this quarter rather than elsewhere, and in some, perchance, our words will excite a certain peevish disgust. But this is only the natural result of pride; for when this vice has taken possession of the heart, it is inevitable that Christian faith, which demands a most willing docility, should languish, and that a murky darkness in regard to divine truths should close in upon the mind.<sup>10</sup>

It is pleasant to imagine what the world would be like if Catholics would join in the Holy Sacrifice in a spirit really worthy of this Divine Mystery. Then the Mystical Body would take on an extraordinary vigor and the world would soon be transformed into a pistic society. Once already in the world's history something like this occurred. The debauched and degraded Roman Empire was converted to Christianity, not by power of arms, not by learned dialectics, but by the power of love. The Empire could not resist the example of perfect social life which the Christians showed them. What, then, was the secret of this mutual love among the Christians? Again Pope Leo gives

us the answer. "There can be no shadow of doubt," he says, "that this immense blessing was due to their frequent meetings at the divine table."<sup>11</sup>

It is within our power to repeat this world conquest in our own day if only we take advantage of the grace which is offered to us in the Mass; if we Catholics would accept frequent or daily Communion as the normal thing, as was the custom in the early Church; if we would participate in the Mass actively, like the early Christians, conscious of our unity within the Mystical Body. Then our common life would become a thing of irresistible beauty and the wondering neo-pagans would flock to us, anxious to share our social life. If modern capitalism has become degraded and vile, and various "ism's" gather adherents, is not the fault ultimately our own? For we have the power, through the insight which is ours by faith and through the supernatural graces which are ours, to build a new world, strong and clean and breathlessly beautiful, a world whose common purpose is but to aid man to his supernatural end, a world which shall be heaven on earth and which can find its perfect fulfillment and consummation only in the blessed society of the world to come.

## Notes

1 Quadragesimo anno.

2 John 18:38, 19:4 and 6.

3 Ibid., 19:12

4 II Cor. 6:14-17.

5 I Cor. 5:10.

6 I Cor. II: 17

7 Ibid., v. 22

8 Ibid., v 30

9 *Divinae caritatis*.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

## Chapter XIV Consummation

A pistic society represents the Catholic ideal as far as this present life is concerned; but a pistic society is not the ultimate Catholic ideal. That ideal is the society of the blessed in heaven. This fact distinguishes our viewpoint from all others. Other social thinkers look upon human society in this world as something to be valued for its own sake. We look upon it as only a means to a more important end, and that end is the society of heaven. For "our country is in the heavens."<sup>1</sup>

It follows that in order to understand a pistic society, we must know something of that heavenly society toward which its common purpose is directed. Our pistic society in this world becomes more intelligible when viewed in relation to its future consummation; for we can understand the means better when we appreciate the end to which that means is adapted. The things of time are fully understandable only in the light of eternity.

It may appear surprising to some Catholics to talk of heaven as a society. In our highly individualistic age, an age which overemphasizes individual achievement, many of us are accustomed to look upon heaven as exclusively the goal of the individual. This, however, is a one-sided viewpoint. Heaven is not only the perfection of each person separately; it is the goal of society as well. It is not only an aggregation of saved individual souls; it is a beatific society.

The social nature of heaven is abundantly clear from the New Testament, especially from Our Lord's doctrine of the Kingdom of God. Christ chose this patently social term kingdom in order to emphasize the fact that His followers formed a social unity; for a kingdom was the type of social aggregation most familiar to the Jews. When Christ spoke of the Kingdom of God, His hearers could scarcely fail to grasp His meaning. The Kingdom of God is represented in the New Testament as existing on this earth, but as finding its consummation in heaven. For example, when Christ said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"<sup>2</sup> He was evidently referring to a reward which the poor in spirit were to receive, not here but hereafter. Again Christ certainly had the next world in mind when He said: "It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire."<sup>3</sup> It would be easy to multiply texts, but the point is too clear to make this necessary.

The closing vision of the Apocalypse emphasizes the same truth but under a different figure. For here heaven is represented as a city, the New Jerusalem. The city of God thus becomes a second social symbol of the beatific social unity toward which we are tending. The Church Militant becomes the Church Triumphant; and the social oneness characterizing the former is preserved and perfected in the latter.

The social nature of heaven is clear, also, from the fact that all the elements essential to a society are present there. A society may be defined as a group of persons cooperating for a common purpose. Now the blessed in heaven are persons, and it is clear that they have a common purpose, namely to know and love God. This fact alone, however, is not enough to make heaven a society. To constitute a society, a group of persons must not only have the same purpose, but they must cooperate with each other toward that purpose. Do the blessed actually so cooperate? For such cooperation it is necessary in the first place that each individual should be conscious of the fact that others share his purpose. It is clear that the blessed have this consciousness; for theologians commonly teach that besides the primary object of the beatific vision, namely, God's essence, attributes, and the three Divine Persons, there is a secondary object which includes, among other things, the other inhabitants of heaven. Thus, the blessed know each other and appreciate each

other's activity and from this they draw an "accidental beatitude," immeasurably inferior to the essential beatitude of heaven but real none the less.

It is, therefore, clear that the blessed are in a position to cooperate with one another in their celestial activity, but do they actually do so? It appears safe to answer in the affirmative; for Scripture and tradition affirm in many texts that both the angels and the souls of the blessed cooperate in the praise of God, a fact often presented under the figure of hymns sung by groups of celestial citizens. "I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping on their harps. And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."<sup>4</sup> The same thought is repeated in the *Te Deum*: "Thee doth the glorious chorus of the apostles praise, the laudable number of the prophets, and the white army of the martyrs." It is interesting to note that in these passages and in many parallel passages which might be adduced, the inhabitants of heaven are represented as divided into groups, the various groups having diverse functions. It would thus appear that not only do the blessed cooperate in the praise of God to form one beatific society, but that there also exists within this society minor groups differing in function just as there are minor groups in any large human society here on earth.

It seems clear then that heaven is a society. It must be evident also that this celestial society is perfect in every way. It is a perfect model for human society at its best. In heaven one finds all the elements which one would legitimately wish for in a human society. Let us see what this implies. To reach its perfection a human society must be really united. Its members must cooperate with perfect unity toward a common purpose. This condition is certainly verified in heaven. Not only do the blessed unite in their task of knowing and loving God, but their union is perfect. It is not marred by dissension, for there is no room for disputes in heaven. Every citizen of that blessed country is completely devoted to his celestial goal; for this single-hearted devotion is the very condition necessary for gaining heaven. Thus is the beatific society characterized by a perfect unity of will.

A second condition for an ideal society is the presence of peace and security. As long as citizens must worry about their safety, the society to which they belong is imperfect; for such worry injures the perfection of the society, interfering as it does with the efficiency of the members in carrying out their common purpose. It is evident that this peace and security are found in heaven to a preeminent degree. The blessed need not fear each other, for they are united by a most perfect love. They need not fear disease, earthquakes, fire, floods, and such natural tribulations; for these things belong to an existence which they have left behind. They need not fear the wiles and temptations of Satan; for he cannot pass the abyss separating heaven and hell.

Finally, a perfect society must secure for its members a reasonable economic competence, which means in this present existence a modest and assured income which shall preserve a family from worry about food, clothing, shelter, and the other essentials of living. In heaven, of course, there can be no question of finances; but the blessed, within their glorified bodies, are freed from these financial worries in a celestial way. Thus, in heaven economic questions are settled not by the methods of human economy, but through the participation by the blessed in a manner of life to which such questions are irrelevant.

The society of heaven is an ideal society even by the criteria applicable here below. All the legitimate goals of human society in this world are satisfied in heaven to a preeminent degree,

while the illegitimate strivings of human nature are joyously repudiated by the blessed. It is scarcely necessary to add that the fundamental reason underlying the various perfections discoverable in the society of heaven is the fact of the beatific vision. A society is basically good in proportion as it is concerned with the attainment of man's perfection. The highest possible society is the beatific society of heaven because it is concerned with the most perfect possible attainment of man's highest possible purpose.

The society of heaven is not, of course, a pistic society. For a pistic society is founded upon faith, and faith will not exist in heaven, having been supplanted by something incomparably more perfect. A discussion of the heavenly society might therefore seem alien to the purpose of the present volume, which is devoted to the theories underlying the three societies of this world. We must, however, take the heavenly society into consideration, not so much for its own sake, as for its value as a model for our own society. The society of the blessed in heaven is the perfect ideal toward which our pistic society on earth should tend. By considering the perfection of this beatific society, we can gain inspiration toward the improvement of the society in which we now live.

At this point one might legitimately ask, How can a heavenly society serve as a model for a terrestrial pistic society? Are not the two fundamentally different? Human life as we know it here, with all its sin and suffering, its uncertainties, its strifes, its hatreds, might, indeed, seem as different as possible from the calm, intense life of the saved in heaven. Admitting the reality of this contrast, one may nevertheless say with certainty that the beatific society of heaven is our perfect model. The reason for this is the fundamental organic unity which exists between the pistic society of this world and the heavenly society of the next, between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. After all, both faith and the beatific vision are supernatural ways of knowing God, while charity and the beatific love are not only similar, but are actually the same virtue, differing only in non-essentials.

The organic unity between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant is possibly the deepest explanation of the fact of salvation. The individual who goes to heaven after death attains heaven not as an arbitrary reward, but rather because he began in this world a heavenly life, founded on the supernatural knowledge and love of God, which at death merges into the eternal life of heaven. In other words, a citizen of a pistic society on earth becomes after death a citizen of the heavenly society because, having been a member of the Church Militant, he can pass without a violent transition to membership in the Church Triumphant. Of course, the same principle holds for the lost souls in hell.

How, in detail, can the members of a pistic society here below improve their society by imitating the society of heaven? The essential element in heaven being the beatific vision, this ought to be the primary object of mutation. Of course, we do not hope to share the vision itself in this life, but we do enjoy the privilege of faith; and faith, like the beatific vision, is a supernatural knowledge of God. Therefore, when we succeed in making our faith ever more perfect, we are in a certain sense making our pistic society here below ever more and more like the blessed society of heaven.

The beatific vision completely dominates the intellectual life of heaven. There are no fallacious pseudo-facts which try to seize the mind's attention and distract it from the contemplation of God's essence. Our minds also should give a complete precedence to the truths of faith, so that no rival ideas may distract our attention from these divine realities. Thus, our lives will become truly pistic, being guided constantly by revealed truths. It is written that the "just shall live in his faith."<sup>5</sup> So, also, the citizen of a pistic society lives a new life, one different in principle

from the lives of his postivistic associates because it is based on a deeper insight into reality which faith gives.

An active faith of this sort requires an iron will and great determination. It is so easy, after all, to swim with the tide, to accept the superficial half-truths on which modern society bases its activities. It is difficult to live by faith, but this difficulty is the very test by which we can prove our fitness for the beatific vision. The man who is a worthy citizen of pistic society here below, the man who lives by the supernatural knowledge of faith, proves himself fit for the superior supernatural knowledge which the beatific vision confers in heaven.

There is almost unlimited room for improving our faith here in this life. Therefore, our pistic society can be improved almost without limit. For the essential thing about such a society is its intellectual basis of faith; and as the faith of its members becomes more vivid, the society itself becomes more pistic, that is to say, more nearly like the beatific society of heaven. The vast possibilities which exist for improving our faith become clearly evident when we study the lives of the saints. Their experience shows us how nearly heavenly man's supernatural insight may become even in this life. Of course, the saints' deep knowledge of the things of faith is to be accounted for largely by the presence of extraordinary graces, or, at least, by the extraordinary activity of the ordinary graces of the Christian life, particularly the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> But the very presence of such graces in living men shows how heavenly human society might become if we, its members, were a little less sluggish in our imitation of the saints.

Another element in this heavenly society which we can imitate is the beatific love. Here we are on surer ground; for the beatific love of heaven is not essentially different from charity as we know it in this world. Therefore, while we can in this world imitate the absorption of the blessed in the beatific vision only in an indirect manner, we can imitate their beatific love directly. Here is a field for unlimited improvement as our increasing love makes our pistic society ever more and more celestial.

The love of heaven is characterized by an extraordinary intensity. Our charity, too, must be intense. In order to make it so, we must put aside all base and selfish limitations to our love. For there are those who look on charity as an onerous duty rather than as a privilege. These mean and uninspired souls seek excuses for reducing to a minimum their obligation of love. They are ever anxious to discount or to explain away the heroic maxims of the Gospel. They are cautious in their love, circumspect and hesitant in their works of mercy. They are ever ready to criticize or restrain the noble Christian enthusiasm of those more generous than themselves. They talk much of prudence, by which they mean, not the glorious supernatural virtue of that name, but the prudence of the flesh, its miserable caricature. These people never talk, as the saints did, of courage, heroism, martyrdom, and the fiercely burning intensity of the great virtue of charity.

Such mean souls shall not be our models. Rather, let us imitate the love of the saints, a love so hot and burning that they forgot themselves entirely, died to themselves entirely, and became totally absorbed in love for God and neighbor. Let their heroic love be our ideal; for as we grow in love, so shall our society grow in excellence, reflecting the perfect beatific love of the blessed society of heaven.

This intensity of love will have as a consequence the creation of an excellent unity in our pistic society, and this unity is another point in which we can imitate here below the characteristics of a heavenly society; for the saints of heaven are bound together in a perfect unity of love. By charity we become incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ, and the more intense our charity, the more vital will be our incorporation. Thus, the oneness which must characterize our society becomes vital and organic like the oneness of a living body. It follows that all rivalries, all

divisions, all dissensions, shall become ever more and more impossible among Christians as we increase the vital character of our unity, sharing with one another, within the Mystical Body, the common supernatural life which flows from Christ, the Head.

In these various ways, therefore, we must strive to make our human society here on earth as like as possible to the beatific society of heaven. For heaven is the ultimate social ideal of the person of faith. Only in heaven can this theory of society be seen in its perfect operation. As far as the present life is concerned, it is our duty to imitate that blessed society as well as we may by forming here a pistic society whose supernatural qualities shall mirror heaven. This is the social ideal for human society here below, to reproduce heaven on earth.

## Notes

1 Philip. 3:20. (Westminster Version).

2 Matt. 5:3.

3 Mark 9:46

4 Apoc. 14:2-4.

5 Hab. 2:4

6 This is the realm of *infused* or *mystic* contemplation, to be distinguished from the *acquired* contemplation discussed in a previous chapter.





## Glossary of Technical Terms

**Acquired Contemplation:** A form of contemplation in which the personal effort of the subject plays a notable part, as well as divine grace; to be distinguished from contemplation.

**Active Intellect:** A mental faculty which produces the *species intelligibilis* necessary for the act of cognition. In so doing it bridges the gap between the particularities of the sense data and the abstractions of the intellect.

**Analytic Judgement:** A judgement which merely makes explicit what is already clearly implied in the terms themselves. Thus the judgement, “all triangles have three sides,” expresses a fact already implicitly contained in the subject, triangles. It is to be distinguished from synthetic judgment.

***Appetitus Sensitivus.*** An organic appetitive faculty, lacking freedom and governed by sense knowledge; organic striving and distinguished from free will.

**Attainment Satisfaction:** Satisfaction essentially connected with the act of attaining some goal; satisfaction which does not notably outlast the moment of attainment; antonym of post-attainment satisfaction.

**Beatific Love:** The love of God based on the beatific vision and enjoyed by the blessed in heaven.

**Beatific Vision:** The clear and intuitive, though imperfect, vision of God as He is in Himself enjoyed by the blessed in heaven.

**Church Militant:** The Church on earth, regarded as being at war within the forces of evil; to be distinguished from the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant.

**Church Triumphant:** The Church as constituted by the blessed in heaven; to be distinguished from the Church Militant and the Church Suffering.

**Composition and Division:** Affirmation or negation considered as the joining or separating of the subject and predicate. God and the angels know without composition and division because they see truths as wholes.

**Contemplation:** A form of prayer involving a simple view or intuition of a supernatural truth; *noësis* applied to a truth of faith.

**Epistemology:** A part of philosophy which has as its object, knowledge itself, its validity, and the methods of attaining it.

**Eternal Law:** The divine act of will by which God eternally and necessarily wills that all creatures should tend to their proper ends, that is, that all creatures should observe the order which the divine wisdom has constituted.

**Habit:** See *Habitus*.

**Habitus:** Habit in the technical Scholastic sense. In its most frequent usage it means an operative habit (*habitus operativus*), that is, a stable quality which facilitates the activity of a power.

**Infused Contemplation:** Mystic contemplation; contemplation in which the subject gains an experiential knowledge of God through the operation of an extraordinary grace superior to the usual order of grace; to be distinguished from acquired contemplation.

**Motives of Credibility:** Reasons for accepting the fact of revelation; thus, for example, miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled in favor of certain revelation, move us to accept that revelation as being actually divine in origin.

**Mystical Body of Christ:** The Church conceived as forming a body of which Christ is the head. "You are the body of Christ" (I Cor. 12:27).

**Natural Law:** The obligation imposed on man of tending, by appropriate acts, to his ultimate end. It is the eternal law as applicable to man and as discoverable by the natural light of reason.

**Noësis:** The act by which the intellect perceives a truth immediately, that is, without reasoning from previously known facts; also, the mind's ability to perform this act.

**Noëtic Society:** A society characterized by its members' dominant common purpose of attaining socially the highest human destiny discoverable by *Noësis*.

**Obediential Power:** *Potentia obedientialis*; the passive capacity of man to be raised to the supernatural order.

**Parataxis:** A term introduced by Thomas V. Moore and defined in his *Dynamic Psychology* as follows: "An impulsive drive to react to difficulties in some particular way (e.g., by depression, anxiety) that becomes abnormal by virtue of its intensity or prolongation or bizarre character and which may be the preliminary stage of a serious breakdown."

**Passive Intellect:** The understanding faculty itself which carries out the act of cognition when it has received the *species intelligibilis* from the active intellect.

**Phantasm:** A mental representation of a particular real object.

**Phenomenological Method:** As applied to sociology, the method which takes as its primary data the external facts of society, such as population, crime rates, unemployment trends, ecological facts, and the like, and endeavors to arrive at general social laws through the analysis of these data.

**Pistic Society:** A society characterized by its members' dominant common purpose of attaining socially their ultimate supernatural end; a society founded upon supernatural faith.

**Positive Law:** A law depending on the will of a lawgiver, either human or divine, rather than on the very nature of things as is the case with the natural law.

**Positivism:** A system of philosophy developed by Auguste Comte (1798-1857). It accepts as subject-matter for philosophy only natural phenomena with their inevitable coexistences and successions. It excludes all inquiry into causes, both efficient and final.

**Positivist Society:** A society characterized by its members' dominant common purpose of attaining those individual and social goals which seem desirable in the light of a positivistic epistemology.

**Post-Attainment Satisfaction:** Satisfaction which notably survives the act of attainment, to be distinguished from attainment satisfaction.

**Predicable Accident:** A predicate not derived from the essence and, therefore, separable from it; antonym of property.

**Predicamental Accident:** A nature or essence whose property it is to exist, not of itself, but in something else; antonym of substance.

**Projection:** A parataxis in which the subject tries to avoid consciousness of his own faults by accusing other persons of those very faults.

**Rationalization:** A parataxis characterized by the subject's effort to explain away an unpleasant fact by fallacious reasoning.

**Senible per Accidens:** That which the senses do not perceive directly and as such but which is perceived indirectly on account of its connection with the direct object of the sense. Directly and *per se* the senses perceives a patch of color of a certain size and shape; indirectly and *per accidens* they perceive that this colored object is of a man.

**Society:** In the present volume the word is used in a very broad sense to denote the totality of individuals sharing a common conception of the purpose of human life and cooperating formally or informally in the pursuit of that purpose.

**Success-Class:** A social class whose members are accepted on the basis of their achievement of the success-class.

**Success-Culture:** A form of civilization or culture characterized by the common acceptance of the success-ideal as desirable and by the rule of the success-class; the culture of a positivistic society.

**Supernatural:** That which is above the sense, powers, exigencies and merit of a given nature; that which is not in any way due to a given nature.

**Supernatural Quoad Modum:** Something which in itself does not exceed the natural order, but is conferred in a way exceeding nature. For example, good health belongs to the natural order; but

a sudden and miraculous restoration to health would be supernatural *quoad modum*. To be distinguished from supernatural *quoad substantiam*.

**Supernatural Quoad Substantiam:** Something whose very essence exceeds the order of nature; to be distinguished from supernatural *quoad modum*.

**Synderesis:** The ability by which the mind can perceive certain truths of the moral order immediately, that is, without reasoning from previously known truths. It is *noësis* in the moral sense.

**Synthetic Judgement:** A judgement stating a fact which could not have been discovered by a mere analysis of the terms; to be distinguished from analytic judgement.

**Teleological Method:** As applied to sociology, the method used by those who see in the fact of cooperation for a common purpose the essential element in society and who therefore seek to interpret visible social phenomena largely in the light of this common purpose.

**Totalitarian State:** A state whose government insists on controlling all the aspects of its citizens' lives and not merely those aspects which form the legitimate sphere of civil authority.

**Unanalyzed Truth:** A truth discovered by *noësis* but inexpressible or very imperfectly expressible in human language.

**Vis Aestimativa:** An internal sense by which the lower animals perceive certain useful or injurious qualities in sensible objects; roughly synonymous with instinct.

**Vis Cogitativa:** An internal sense in human beings parallel to the *vis aestimativa* of the lower animals.