I. PRELIMINARY ISSUES

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1. Mentalities

Before entering into the study of bourgeois mentality, it is necessary to clarify some prior questions concerning the terms used, mentality and bourgeoisie, which in common usage carry diverse and imprecise meanings.

One of the great achievements of historians over the last two centuries has been the incorporation into the framework of historical processes of what we might call the history of ideas. A date can practically be set for this: no significant work of this kind is remembered prior to the appearance of Voltaire's *Essay on the Customs* and *The Age of Louis XIV*. In the second half of the eighteenth century, these two works represented a revolution: they incorporated into a conception of history — one in which political events had constituted the entirety of the subject matter — a whole new body of material, a new set of problems that, as Voltaire understood it, belonged to the realm of ideas, of thought, or, if one prefers, of culture.

He addressed these as problems of intellectual and cultural history in *The Age of Louis XIV*. In the *Essay on the Customs and Spirit of Nations*, an even more significant work of extraordinary methodological interest, he incorporated into the field of historical inquiry, alongside systematic ideas and aesthetic currents—or, in the terms of *The Age of Louis XIV*, the aesthetics of Racine or Corneille, the philosophical thought of Montaigne or Montesquieu—what he called customs. This included what we still call customs today, that is, concrete forms of life; but along with them, that whole cluster of common ideas, of operative ideas, which function effectively in a society, which have never been expressed explicitly and systematically, which have never been organized or made the subject of a treatise, but which nevertheless nourish the system of thought and govern the system of behavior of the social group.

Ortega y Gasset has made some extremely interesting observations on this distinction. In *Ideas and Beliefs*, he points out that, alongside systematic ideas, there is an enormous reservoir of ideas not susceptible to the rigorous analysis applied, for example, to the thought of Kant or Descartes. In general, these are relatively simpler, yet they refer to immediate problems that constitute the shared patrimony of all. They are ideas, opinions, and beliefs marked with that strong social sign that is consensus. They are operative, current: they act. They are ideas about which no social group has a perfectly clear awareness, but they are the ones secretly put into operation when a decision is made or when someone says, 'this is good, this is bad,' or 'this is tolerable, this is intolerable.'

This entire current of ideas is not easy to detect. Anyone who wished to do so would need the formidable capacity to become a witness to the very thing in which they are themselves a participant. Were they to overcome that enormous difficulty, they would discover that these ideas operate in a thousand ways; that in everyday life each person acts on the basis of an enormous quantity of prejudices; that they conduct themselves according to opinions they have decided neither to discuss nor to submit to scrutiny, or that are even consecrated by a certain charismatic quality that renders them beyond dispute.

In any society, whether a Polynesian village or a complex society, there are certain ideas which, by a kind of tacit consensus, are not admitted as being open to judgement. Alongside them are some that are less deeply rooted, and others that are ultimately occasional; they are ideas of an era, of a time, of a period, and together they form a highly intricate network. Were we to conduct a spectral analysis of our system of ideas, we would discover that among the intellectual elites there exists a body of systematic ideas, academically acquired and open to examination in their ultimate consequences, which constitute the intellectual foundation of those elites yet elicit neither assent nor rejection. Alongside them, there is a vast body of lived, internalized, and operative ideas, which represent for the historian a subject at once fascinating and unavoidable.

We cannot now draw a complete picture of what has been done since Voltaire. One has only to think of Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, or Condorcet's *Historical Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind*, or of so many works of the nineteenth century, such as Renan's *The Future of Science* — works that attempt to bring to light the whole body of ideas underlying collective life. Much has been done, and today it already forms part of standard historical analysis; it has entailed a remarkable enrichment of the field of history.

It was in the eighteenth century that interest in ancient art began, stimulated, for example, by the discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum. At that time, Winckelmann wrote his *History of the Art of Antiquity*, in which, for the first time, what was known about ancient aesthetic creation began to be systematically organized. Something similar occurred with Tiraboschi, author of the first history of literature. This began to produce a remarkable dichotomy in the field of history. Until the eighteenth century, history had been confined to political events, as recounted by Titus Livius or Tacitus, by the medieval chroniclers, and even by Machiavelli or Guicciardini. In the eighteenth century, the entire field of human creation was incorporated: the history of the arts, of literature, of philosophy, and, in general, of thought. And also what Voltaire discovered: the history of diffuse ideas, of customs and manners. From that point on, two fields existed within historical analysis: traditional political history and the new history of creation, yet divorced from one another, each governed by its own laws and presented in separate chapters. One must wait until the end of the nineteenth century for the desire to emerge to incorporate the new world of culture into the already familiar and traditional world of

political history. The interlinkages then discovered yielded sensational results and soon crystallized into concepts such as 'the Age of Pericles' or 'the Renaissance' –concepts that arose from bringing into contact well-known political phenomena — Athenian democracy or the Italian signorie — with equally well-known artistic facts: it is Pericles who commissions Phidias with the temple of Athena, or who encourages Athenian theater; the cruel *signori* are at the same time patrons of the most celebrated artists.

It was a superficial fusion, and such concepts soon proved untenable, although they continue to govern our conception of history. In the last thirty or forty years of the twentieth century, an immense effort has been made to strengthen the field of political history, placing social and economic history beneath it and showing that the former constitutes a kind of crust corresponding to the secret and everyday life of a society that cannot be reduced to the history of its political elite. The second conquest has been to incorporate the entire history of culture into this much richer body of knowledge, establishing deeper and more interesting connections. If the articulation between the history of culture and political history seemed artificial and based simply on synchronism, the link between the history of culture and social history allows us to establish relationships of coherence and ultimately refers everything that is creation back to the particularity of the group in which it takes place. The relationship between Pericles, Phidias, and Aeschylus may be accidental, but the relationship between their creation and Athenian society is robustly structural, and the social background — that is, the structure of the community, the physiognomy, and the internal mechanism of the social group — serves to explain the entire aura of what constitutes the vast field of creation.

One aspect of this creation is the group's own mentality, which is an expression, but also one of the factors that operate in its functioning, because the mentality of a group is something that is objectified — or, to put it more accurately, is first lived and then can be objectified. It constitutes a system of operative ideas: ideas that command, that determine, that inspire reactions. These are also evaluative and normative ideas, conditioning the value judgments passed on conduct. Opinions about what is good and what is bad, so changeable according to the times, rest on diffuse but deeply rooted attitudes and generate norms that direct the group's action.

The origins of these ideas are often obscure. Almost all common ideas —so-called prejudices, for instance—are old ideas that were long ago incorporated into the social group in a rational manner, but which gradually lost their precision and vigor, detaching themselves from the explanatory system and becoming commonplace ideas. This type of wisdom, distilled and then forgotten, is transformed into a system of thought far more powerful than any reached by rational means: it is perhaps more subtle and elaborate, yet it does not carry with it, as those older ideas do, the consensus of the group.

The study of proverbs, where this type of wisdom accumulates, provides some extremely interesting examples. Let us take a proverb that was surely coined in Spain in the eighteenth century and spread throughout America: First obligation, then devotion. An entire course could be developed on this. What is the moment at which one stops saying devotion first? We know, for example, what the response of a crusader in the 12th century would have been, and what, in that century or the next, that of a bourgeois would have been — one who probably would not have dared to express his thoughts with complete frankness. Since then, the bourgeois mentality has been making that secret and secular effort to come to terms with this sacrilegious thing. In the eighteenth century, a progressive could not, for example, interrupt his activities to pray the Novena. Hence the proverb, which reveals how the bourgeois mentality has gradually replaced the system of ideas of the Christian-feudal tradition. This is the progressivism of the eighteenth century, which succeeds in dissolving all tradition, all devotion in general terms, all the significance of the old idea of man as a creature of God, turning toward a progressive and profane conception.

In short, the field of mentalities is not that of systematic thought but that of the current of ideas which, in each domain, constitutes the common heritage — and of which systematic thought is, as it were, the foam, standing in a relationship to it that is not always coherent. Mentality is something like the engine of attitudes. Sometimes in a barely rational way, unconsciously or subconsciously, a social group, a community, assumes a particular stance toward death, marriage, wealth, poverty, love, work... Within the social group there exists a system of attitudes and predispositions that are not rational — although they may once have been — but which carry enormous force precisely because they are traditional. As they progressively lose their rationality, as the origin of the norm, the disposition, the value judgment grows less clear, attitudes become more robust: the original system of motivations is gradually replaced by another, irrational one, which touches on the charismatic and culminates when — almost expressly — these attitudes are withdrawn from discussion. Here, as in the case of the incest taboo, the irrationality and force of the attitude reach their highest degree.

2. Bourgeois world and bourgeois mentality

The second basic concept with which we will be working, that of the bourgeois world and, built upon it, bourgeois mentality, also requires some preliminary clarifications, taking into account not only the diverse connotations with which the term bourgeois is commonly used, but also some fundamental problems of historical periodization. If we start from the general notion that the bourgeois world is the geographical area of Europe (and perhaps of the Europeanized world), as it gradually took shape from the bourgeois revolution of the eleventh century onward, we not only modify the traditional notion of the Middle Ages but also eliminate the hiatus of the Renaissance and establish the continuity of a process stretching from the eleventh century to the Industrial

Revolution of the eighteenth, and, with certain adjustments, to the present day. Such, briefly outlined, is the temporal framework of our study.

Let us first identify the main stages in the development of the bourgeois world. The Roman Empire had been a typical urban world, built upon a network of cities, and its entire economic, social, and political structure was founded on the dependence of the rural world on urban centers. The mechanism of Romanization consisted of building, with soldiers or veterans turned into settlers, urban centers where the life of the metropolis was imitated and opinions were molded. With the Germanic invasions, this world collapsed. Cities became dangerous places and people began to disperse. Over the centuries, cities fell into decay: some were devastated, others deliberately reduced—by the walling off of a narrow inner enclosure—and people dispersed. Contrary to what occurs in our contemporary world, an urban exodus led to the creation—or rather, the recreation—of a rural world, which finally acquired a principle of economic, social, and political organization in what we call the feudal regime. In this rural world there survived the vestiges of ancient cities, seats of counts or archbishops, transformed into walled enclaves; alongside these there emerged other similar ones: the castle of the seigneury, the abbey, or the monastery. By the tenth or eleveenth century, Western Europe was a rural world with a series of walled enclosures, among which cities had lost their specific functional attributes.

The eleveenth century marks a fundamental caesura: even as the rural world persisted, cities had begun to emerge. Rural exodus, demographic growth, mercantile revival, and the frequent support of established powers all contributed to the founding of countless cities between the eleveenth and twelfth centuries. Some arose deliberately, through the political decision of a lord who authorized or promoted them, or of a group of bourgeois settlers who established themselves in what appeared to be no man's land. Others arose spontaneously, at a river ford or a crossroads. Others grew up alongside seigneurial walls, and still others were ancient abandoned cities that were repopulated. By one path or another, within two centuries Western Europe had become, far more than in Roman times, a world of cities.

It was also a bourgeois world. These cities were populated by people who adopted a mode of life different from the traditional one. Each person abandoned the fields, left the land, ceased to be a colonus, placed himself under the protection of the city, and was suddenly transformed into a man of the burg — a bourgeois. From the moment he accepted this new situation, almost physical in its immediacy, the change in the conditions of his life was so substantial that it deserves to be designated by a special name. He acquired freedoms of movement, of marriage, and of trade, protected by statutes that the bourgeois of each city granted themselves. He developed new activities: commerce, services, professions. The regime of freedoms created the conditions for him to make use of his capacity to generate wealth — monetary wealth, not landed wealth, as was

characteristic of the lords. All of this appeared very rapidly in the cities, and by the twelfth century, every one of them already had all of these elements clearly established.

Cities grew steadily until the fourteenth century, when the demographic boom ended, and then most declined. A city like Cologne built four walls over that span and came to encompass some 400 hectares. This wall was only demolished in 1885, so that between the culmination of the initial growth and the onset of the Industrial Revolution, Cologne, like a large part of European cities, generated no suburbs whatsoever.

In that first stage, the bourgeois world was not compact; it did not cover large areas. It was strictly an urban world, a world of cities that communicated with one another above and beyond the relationships that each city maintained with its region, and also with the political area in which it was embedded. Sometimes these relationships were institutionalized, as in the Germanic Hansa, but even without this institutionalization, business and cultural life, intellectual life, manifested itself through unconventional channels as people moved from one city to another. There were the head office and its branches, the ports of import and export, the preachers who passed from one monastery to another and forged a chain. There are countless links that create an interconnected chain in urban life and constitute the urban world as a kind of superstructure. On the basis of a languid stability, of the almost passive character of the rural world, the urban world becomes the creative pole, the center of change and transformation. All of this gives the city an undisputed hegemonic role: in a sense, all modern culture is urban culture.

This active and creative role is manifest in the European expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is the bourgeois world — at once bourgeois and urban — that colonizes America, founding cities modeled on its own pattern, complete with the same city council and, wherever possible, the same church, and establishing colonies or trading posts in Africa and India. This curious repetition, whose symbolic expression is the recurrence of place names, appears in almost all the cities of America; but where names are not replicated, the attempt to reproduce the entire structure with all its elements remains. For the city was understood as the active force, as civilization itself, as the operative ferment — precisely suited to disseminating the forms of life and the ideas that the bourgeoisie had been elaborating. In this way, Goa, Hong Kong and Mexico are Europe, even as mechanisms of acculturation operate and certain elements of Chinese or Aztec mentality filter through. With the imperialist and colonialist expansion of the nineteenth century, the influence of the bourgeois world, born in Western Europe, spread across the globe, except in a few enclaves of persisting cultural autonomy; and it was only in the second half of our century that movements such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution emerged to ask whether modern technological development inescapably presupposes the assumptions of Western culture — which is, precisely, the culture of the bourgeoisie.

If the creation of an urban world made up of a network of cities can be considered the first great creation of the bourgeois world, alongside it stands the elaboration of a model of relationship between that urban world and the rural world. The bourgeois revolution of the eleveenth century created the first model of an urban world superimposed upon a rural one, deliberately, in order to rule over it, direct it, neutralize it, and subjugate it. This articulation between the two worlds manifests itself in different ways at all levels, and it would be impossible to reduce it to a simple formula. If we look at it from the perspective of mentalities, it could be expressed as the relationship between the urban and progressive mentality and rural mentalities, which tend to be traditionalist. This is where the problem lies — one still current today — of the opposition between the right and progressivism. In Europe, all right-wing ideologies ultimately appeal to the ways of life and systems of ideas characteristic of rural areas: the paternalistic and seigneurial conception; the idea of a dual society of peasants and lords; the idea of a lord who can afford to be magnanimous, because things abound for him. If we analyze the elements that repeatedly constitute the right-wing mentality, they all correspond to the *pater*, the ideological model proper to the rural classes, a remote and distorted perpetuation of seigneurial power. The models of progressivism, in all its forms — moderate, radical, socialist — are all children of the urban mentality. It is the mentality of a group that, from the moment of its formation, learns to live by projecting rather than by vegetating. Unlike the inhabitants of the rural world, immersed in daily routine, it is the bourgeoisie that transforms life into a project and links it to a dynamic image of reality.

Strictly speaking, the entire urban world can be seen as a creation, or rather an invention: as a physical form, as a social structure, as a conception of life. Everything that happens in the city is based on a principle of sophistication, of the anti-natural: from the paving of the streets, the possibility of enclosing oneself within four walls, or, more generally, the desire of a group to live in a certain way within the enclosure they have created. But what is specific to the bourgeois invention is not the physical city, similar to the ancient city, but the type of thinking that informs the creation and is then created in the city. It is projective thought, with Judeo-Christian roots and different from classical, Greek or Roman thinking. Societies based on the exploitation of slaves probably have a certain inability to think about changing reality: classical religions, for example, ignore or take little account of the problem of destiny after death; Epicureanism dominates ethical thought, while political thinkers and historians tend to subsume historical becoming within cyclical visions, in which processes, having reached a certain point, begin again. In contrast to this conception, which informs the life of the city and of ancient society, Eastern salvationist religions—which force transcendence—have always remained in the minority. What is characteristic of the bourgeois is to enjoy life, to achieve glory and fortune, like the Roman, but by modifying the entire social order—since the very creation of the city is an artificial creation—altering the forms of social coexistence and ultimately modifying the goals of man. In this sense, bourgeois mentality draws its progressivist framework from the dynamic line of the Christian biblical tradition, in which life is

projected toward something, but gives it a different foundation.

Just as the urban world constitutes a woven yet subtle mesh, separate from the rural world, the bourgeois mentality initially remained isolated, contaminating neither the peasantry nor the seigneurial classes. Yet it gradually advanced. In the seventeenth century, Molière shows in *The Bourgeois Gentleman* the contrast between a bourgeois who aspires to be a lord and a world of aristocrats who feel great contempt for him yet respect his money: the value of money competes with the value of nobility, and this theme is extensively developed by eighteenth-century theater: Beaumarchais, Goldoni, Marivaux. Gradually, the old aristocratic classes became bourgeois, and in 1830 France had a bourgeois king. But in the nineteenth century, and above all in the twentieth, the bourgeois mentality conquered the popular classes who, by virtue of their position within the socio-economic structure, should not have shared that mentality. I would venture to say that the bourgeois mentality, in this bourgeois world, has ultimately become the universal mentality.

However, throughout this development, the bourgeois mentality has always been harassed, first by the seigneurial mentality, nostalgic and aristocratizing, and then by nonconformism. A line of anti-bourgeois nonconformism can be traced, one that begins with the goliards, the wandering clerics of the thirteenth century, emerges above all with Romanticism—*bohemia*, the *poètes maudits*, *épater le bourgeois*...—and reaches, for example, the hippies or Beatnik literature. If, as we shall see, what is typical of the bourgeois mentality is the deliberate, methodical, and gradual omission of ultimate problems, what characterizes nonconformism, whatever form it may take, is the appeal to precisely those problems.

3. Actual Structure and Ideological Structure

We will now return to some of the initial questions. The objective of the historical analysis we propose is to establish the effective relationship between these mentalities and real structures. I believe that, in what is commonly called reality, one can distinguish quite precisely what I would call the real structure from the ideological structure. Both belong, by equal right, to the historical structure, without supremacies or subordination.

Let us consider the case of feudalism. In a rural world in crisis and transformation, feudalism is first a normative system — an economic, legal, and social system, and even an administrative one — gradually organized on the basis of gathered experience and optimal for this rural world, perfectly suited to real situations. But it also has an absolute metaphysical foundation: the guarantee against change is provided by the religious foundation. The Christian-feudal order gives us a unique model

of real structure grounded in an ideological structure with an absolute foundation and, consequently, removed from all criticism. Both structures are part of the same reality; they support each other; they require each other. The Christian-feudal order, by integrating both structures, derives its real structure from the relationship between man and the land or between men themselves, but obtains its guarantee of stability from that formidable absolute foundation, which vaguely repeats the idea that transgression, violation, are sacrilege.

The bourgeois revolution begins to install a new concrete structure, on the basis of new economic and social situations, but it will never succeed in providing it with an ideological underpinning that guarantees immobility. Its entire history is the attempt to achieve this — to construct an ideology that is at once a project for the future and an interpretation of the past, and that represents a justification in the abstract, rather than a merely factual one, of the concrete structure which, lacking any absolute foundation, resembles a collection of mere de facto situations.

Historical analysis consists precisely in studying the complex and dialectical relationship between the real structure and the ideological structure — that is, between things, what exists, what happens, and the image that the individual constructs of them and the project he imagines arising from that image.

This implies a distinction between the subject—whether the individual, the group, or society as a whole—and its creations, the structures. It is a differentiation similar to that made in the eighteenth century, distinguishing, within nature, between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Society lives and creates things, and the real structure is the set of relationships and functions created up to the moment when that society performs the creative act. The ideological structure is a succession of states of consciousness, which crystallize into interpretive models and projective models. It should not be conceived as a stark image of reality, understood solely as rational reality: it is at once rational and sensory, and is ultimately rooted in the subject's lived experiences. On this basis, successive acts of consciousness give shape to structures that, in some cases, crystallize completely and acquire real existence for successive actors. The civil code is something very real, but at its origin lies a set of opinions, a series of experiences, subsequently elaborated and systematized.

Thus, this study of mentalities, whose most general aspects I have just outlined, allows us to perceive the interplay of these two currents of historical life: what has already been created, with an organized force that imposes itself on society, and what that society creates every day, always based on structures, but also always against them, even when it believes it is defending them.