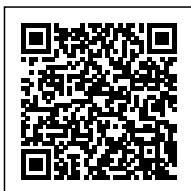


III. THE CONTENTS OF THE BOURGEOIS MENTALITY

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In each of the aspects of the bourgeois mentality that are analyzed—attitudes toward the problem of man, society, nature, and others—one observes the convergence of an initial basic attitude, the rationalization of those attitudes, and also a certain body of content, notions, or ideas that sometimes stem from experience but on occasion have a much older origin and acquire new significance. To what extent does all of this form a coherent system?

The coherence of a form of mentality is determined, in principle, by a set of basic criteria, a framework within which its contents are organized. Thus far, the aim has been to show how a change in basic social attitudes—linked to changes in society—is reflected in a new mode of thought, a new system of criteria, which constitutes a formal framework. This framework is then filled with a set of thoughts, ideas, and knowledge, drawn in part from new experiences or from the application of the new method, and in part from the traditional heritage—disarticulated from its previous organizing frameworks and reintroduced into the new ones. Thus, in the process under study, a set of major concepts and ideas from the Christian and classical traditions are incorporated into the bourgeois mentality, falling into place within a system alongside a whole further set of ideas; in doing so, they change their sign and character, and are integrated into a new coherent whole. This process is gradual, for the new context—that of the bourgeois mentality—only achieves coherence progressively until reaching an optimum, from which point it begins to disintegrate, as occurred in the Western world after Romanticism.

1. Profaneness and Realism

The first of the themes to be analyzed in an examination of the contents of bourgeois mentality is that of reality itself. The theme functions simultaneously as content and form, since the notion of reality—and the notion of causality linked to it—in turn provides the form for all the rest. This image of reality sometimes manifests itself in a very concrete and clear manner, finding expression in the realm of certain specific disciplines; but there are certain elements of reality that are diffuse, that do not fall within the scope of any particular discipline, and that nevertheless form a kind of underlying undercurrent to many scientific attitudes. We will point out the most general features of this new image of reality that bourgeois mentality is beginning to elaborate, although practically all the specific topics that follow will constitute partial aspects of this image.

The characteristic of the Christian-feudal mentality, within the framework of which the bourgeois mentality is constituted, is the interpenetration of reality and unreality, or to put it another way, the identification of sensible reality with something we call unreality, insofar as it is not sensible reality.

Let us take an example: clouds are part of sensible reality; they can be seen and eventually touched; the angels within them are not: they are neither seen nor felt, but—it is claimed—they are there. In the context of this mentality, the cloud and the angel are one and the same. Although these are two completely different channels of knowledge, the two things are so interpenetrated that there is no cloud without an angel: it rains when one prays, and excessive rain is a sign of divine punishment. The angel is an intellectual creation, even though, for those who have faith, it is an intuition of the divine. There is, therefore, an unreality—which is an intellectual creation—that intermingles with sensible reality, and this indiscriminate interpenetration of reality and unreality constitutes the world of ideas and beliefs characteristic of the Christian-feudal mentality.

In this context, the primary experience of mankind, who live from and in nature, although it naturally exists, is invalidated by an interpretive system supported by an authoritarian element, whether of a charismatic or simply magical nature. Experience is submerged in a system of thought in which causality is supernatural. Faced with a natural phenomenon—rain, for instance, whose immediate natural causes were evident and well known—one might say: 'I see it this way, but it is not so, because I have been taught that it is not so'. In this sentence lies the secret of the matter: the authoritative source of knowledge and its transmission as a dogmatic system. Remarkably, building upon the vigorous experiential tradition of Rome, an authoritarian superimposition of a scheme of thought has taken hold—one that teaches people to think against what the senses tell them. And this has been the result of a long and patient pedagogical labor accomplished by Christianity.

The emergence of the bourgeoisie—that is, the result of the bourgeois revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries—implies for its protagonists the development of a series of entirely new social experiences, hitherto unknown as such. These experiences perform a dissociative function on the tightly interlocked relationship between reality and unreality; from them a series of mechanisms is developed by virtue of which a new principle of causal explanation is found: a natural causality.

The constitution of the new bourgeois society, grounded in a monetary market economy, stimulates the practical empiricism of the merchant, the artisan, or the miner—those who, operating upon reality, invent a whole series of practical mechanisms—such as accounting—to engage with the immediate world as if it were an ultimate reality, without asking what lies behind or beyond it, and limiting themselves to establishing mechanisms that work. Here is the indication of the constitution of this new attitude; other testimonies exist, imprecise and seemingly insignificant, such as the investigations of Roger Bacon, Peter Peregrine, and the Franciscans of Oxford in the thirteenth century. They, like all others who had to deal with the immediate natural world empirically, began to conceive of the world within the framework of natural causality, as though supernatural forces were not at work. From experience to the establishment of an explanatory system based on natural causality, and from there to the reinterpretation of accumulated knowledge: this is the path by which

this new explanatory framework of reality is formed—practically, prior to any theorization about its ultimate foundations. One might say, then, that what bourgeois experience achieved was to delineate an operative reality—one that behaves in a certain way when acted upon, beyond whatever may occur when it is transcended.

Thus, the first conquest of the bourgeois mentality consists in this delimitation of reality, refraining from any analysis deeper than what is needed to explain how reality itself behaves—and consequently, how one must behave in relation to it. We shall call this conquest the triumph of profaneness. The secularization of reality, or the affirmation of the profaneness of reality, does not mean that reality is a mechanical order, as it had been for the Greek or Latin mechanists, in a line of thought that reappears in the eighteenth century with the contribution of the materialists. The assertion that reality is profane rather than sacred does not imply the denial of supernatural reality; rather, it functions as the demarcation of a sector, a level, which we would call operative reality. This is the great conquest of the bourgeoisie, and this is precisely, nothing more and nothing less, what profaneness implies.

This understanding of reality as profane rather than sacred—achieved through an intellectual effort consisting in the suppression of supernatural causality and managing it operationally, as a field governed by natural causes—is expressed in a formidable philosophical controversy: the so-called Quarrel of the Universals, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which represents the first and definitive crisis of scholasticism. This is one of the great turning points in the history of thought. The controversy began by shaking the University of Paris, gave rise to fierce disputes on Mont Sainte-Geneviève, caused the Franciscan crisis—and indirectly led to the founding of the University of Oxford—and spread throughout the entire European university, academic and theological milieu.

The realists upheld the traditional, scholastic image of reality, in which reality and unreality interpenetrated. They maintained that universals defined and expressed realities: *Universalia sunt realia*. Paradoxically, this realism is exactly the opposite of what we would suppose today, because it denied the reality of the sensible and, adhering to the Platonic, Plotinian, and Christian framework, held that the only true reality was the intelligible — that perceived by the mind, that expressed in concepts. It is the genus or species that constitutes reality, and not the individual.

The view that, on the contrary, reality must be only something referring to sensible reality—knowable through the senses, themselves subject to a methodological and epistemological apparatus—was characteristic of those who called themselves nominalists. They maintained that concepts were empty words, intellectual forms that implied a certain degree of abstraction but did not belong to the level of what actually constitutes reality: what constitutes it are individuals, not the

genus or species. The implication is straightforward: if one denies that the concept is real, the whole of Christian dogmatics crumbles, because the entire body of dogma belongs to the Platonic or Plotinian tradition.

Christian orthodoxy confronts the nominalist thesis, which it judges heretical, and in the thirteenth century the pope condemns it. Perhaps the central phase of this controversy is the dispute between St. Bernard and Abelard, who styled himself a professor of philosophy rather than of theology, and who also began to draw upon the texts of Aristotle. St. Bernard launched a veritable crusade against him and had him condemned at the Council of Soissons in 1121. In one of the pamphlets he wrote, momentarily setting aside his argument from authority and caught up in the passion and the dramatic feeling unleashed by Abelard's assertions, St. Bernard uttered this revealing phrase: 'for it seems that Abelard would like to see things as they are and not through a haze.'

In the realist conception there is an entire philosophical theory, based on the idea of the interpenetration of reality and unreality. The phenomenon operates within reality proper, yet its causes are not contingent and mechanical; instead, they reside on a higher plane—that of the Divine Will. For St. Bernard, the attempt to know things, to pierce the mist, implies wanting to penetrate the divine will, and this is sacrilegious. 'The ways of Providence are unknown' it is said. They are inherently sacred, by virtue of the fact that divinity is omniscient, whereas man cannot claim to possess the necessary tools to comprehend the immensity of God's knowledge, the infinity of divine knowledge.

The mist is the recognition of the existence of a world of causality, of essences knowable only by their Creator. Man has not been granted this: in Dante's *Comedy*, in the *Inferno*, all those who have defied God by seeking to know are grouped together in a single circle. To seek knowledge is to assert that man possesses instruments capable of claiming equivalence with God's capacity for knowledge. This is Prometheus, the worst sin, the shattering of the entire order of the absolute. The assertion that one can delimit a portion of reality and determine how it behaves, independently all other considerations, is sacrilegious. This becomes apparent the moment one says: I know reality because I know this object, and this other one beside it, and I can, on the basis of these data from experience, arrive at generalizations. This possibility is precisely what entails a total confrontation with the traditional conception.

How does this insurrection against orthodox realism come about? How does nominalism begin — that nominalism in which we now recognize the foundation of modern scientific thought? All the initial attempts at empirical interpretation of reality stem from nominalism: Roger Bacon, the early masters of Paris, Buridan, Albert of Saxony, and all the first generations of physicists. Nominalism is

reached by two paths, one empirical and the other academic. The empirical path is that of the bourgeoisie, which, insofar as it arises from a singular life experience, is nominalist *avant la lettre*. It behaves spontaneously toward nature, as if the latter were a set of individual entities whose behavior can be anticipated on the basis of generalizations grounded in repeated experience. Nominalism springs from the basic empirical attitude of the bourgeoisie, which comes into being because it functions empirically: it breaks away from traditional forms of production, is capable of escaping serfdom, and organizes both a new type of economy and urban life itself within a system that may already be called contractual — rather than one resting on dictates of a traditional and charismatic kind.

The second path, the academic one, derives from the contact between cultures brought about by the Crusades. The feudal European world, turned in upon itself and dominated by a single body of knowledge, now comes into contact with the entire accumulated heritage of classical learning preserved in the Byzantine and Muslim worlds, where the Platonic line of classical thought had persisted. Thus, at the very moment when a social sector is undertaking this spontaneous, curious experiment of beginning to live in a certain way—guided by experience—the world to which it belongs comes into contact, for the first time for these generations, with Aristotelian thought, which, in the terms we have been analyzing, could be called nominalist.

Because, in a way, what the nominalists said to the realists in the twelfth century was similar to what Aristotle had said to Plato. Neoplatonism clung to the Platonic theses, and the Hebrew-Christian religious conception clung to Neoplatonism, drawing from it the entire philosophical structure necessary to strengthen its dogmatic conception. An entire area of Greek thought—that of the atomists, Democritus and Leucippus—had been forgotten, or rather methodically abandoned, because it was naturally contrary to the requirements of the ideological structure that was being constituted.

This is what began to reach Europe through various channels, such as those provided by the teachers of Toledo and Córdoba. The future Pope Sylvester II—a French monk from Aurillac—traveled through Catalonia and introduced the decimal number system. From then on, all Muslim knowledge, which was largely Greek in origin, began to filter in, particularly along Europe's frontier zones. Averroes offers a thorough exposition and commentary on Aristotle, in a Muslim world where dogmatic orthodoxy lacked much solidity. Through this channel came Euclid, the whole of Aristotle, and all scientific, or pre-scientific, or natural philosophical thought—whatever one wishes to call it—all framed within Aristotle's physics. This corpus was translated from Greek into Arabic, then into Hebrew, and then into Latin, in Palermo, in Syracuse, and above all in Toledo—which was called the city of the three cultures—where there was a school of translators that undertook the dual task of incorporating this great flood of learning into orthodox thought. This

quickly found its way into the universities. Siger of Brabant is considered the first defender of Averroism, which Siger in a certain sense translates and adapts. From this arises nominalism, which transforms into the bourgeois theory of knowledge, into the theory of an empirical conception of nature, and constitutes the foundation of scientific knowledge. All scientific knowledge would be Aristotelian, insofar as it was nominalist rather than realist.

It is important to uncover the synchrony between changes of different natures. At the very moment the urban bourgeoisies were taking shape, universities emerged, where this polemic unfolded. At that time, spatial art appeared; the Byzantine flat painting was abandoned, Giotto and Cimabue made desperate efforts to break out of the canvas and achieve volume, and what Berenson calls tactile painting began. That real space pursued by the painter points toward perspective, developed in the fourteenth century and established in the fifteenth, during the time of Piero della Francesca. This idea of space, and of the body with its volume placed within it, as if to give the viewer a tactile sensation, is—in this dimension—the perception of reality as sense-perceptible reality. It is no coincidence that it emerged within the bourgeoisies, and at the moment when the problem of universals was being debated.

All of this takes place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In universities where law was the primary focus—such as Bologna and Rome, where philosophical discussion was less prominent—another novel element emerged: the revival of Roman law. A legal system that addresses concrete problems, where land is recognized as land and a mortgage as such, corresponds to the new social conditions of the urban bourgeoisie. Theoretical discussion took place primarily in universities that were predominantly theological in orientation, and particularly in Paris. What is fundamentally at issue is the emergence of a new image of reality; by the time philosophers sought to frame it in philosophical terms, the new image of reality had already established itself, as evidenced, for example, by painting: of Giotto's images it is said—as Vasari records—that they seem to speak. Vasari himself recalls, in relation to Michelangelo's fresco in the Sistine Chapel, a phrase from Dante: the dead and the living seemed alive. This could never have been said of a Byzantine panel or a Romanesque crucifix, for it was not the artists' intention to convey an image of reality. What we have here, as in Roger Bacon and his experiments, is a new image of reality—which we have termed profane—that frames all manifestations of the bourgeois mentality.

What characterizes this new mental attitude is having effected the dissociation between reality and unreality. It is assumed that the former—reality, in the Roman sense of the term, that is, sensible reality—is the operative one, the one that requires a new cognitive attitude, the one that drives and determines a new form of behavior; it is the only thing of immediate interest, without altogether excluding a certain unreality, which the bourgeois mentality never entirely disdains. It is simply a matter of isolating natural or sensible reality as knowable reality, and setting aside unreality—or, if

one prefers, supernatural reality—acknowledging that it is not knowable by the same means as natural reality. This attitude, which for the moment is not yet clearly defined, culminates in what in the eighteenth century will come to be called agnosticism.

The paths of knowledge of natural reality will be channelled into what will be called scientific thought, and later natural philosophy, which will become the fundamental current of modern philosophy. Philosophy of nature and of knowledge are the typical problems of modern philosophy, of rationalism, of Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza; they are the typical problems of the English empiricists, of Hume. These are the problems posed by the relationship between the object of knowledge—that is, natural reality—and the individual as the subject of knowledge, and the individual's capacity to know. Whether through scientific knowledge or through philosophy, a field of sensible and natural reality is circumscribed, one that is said to be knowable through these instruments.

As for supernatural reality, what is asserted is that it must be kept separate. This is obsessive: rain is one thing, and God's will is another. One is a subject of scientific knowledge, which is progressively developed and in which one trusts; the other, unknowable by science, is reserved for faith. At a certain point, a kind of transposition can occur—a profanation of faith, a secularization in the form of intuition. Until the eighteenth century, scientific knowledge and natural philosophy admitted only indirectly, almost as a concession to an outmoded tradition, the existence of knowledge through faith, and indirectly, knowledge through intuition. It was not until Romanticism that intuition was assigned a fundamental value.

However, within the framework of the bourgeois mentality, intuition plays a small role. The idea of its validity is linked to what we today call the formulation of a working hypothesis, but there is also an intuition that corresponds to the existence of certain fundamental categories of knowledge. When Kant says that sensory, empirical knowledge is valid only when it is constructed within spatio-temporal structures, he is in fact admitting that there is a perception of the spatio-temporal that is not the result of empirical knowledge—that is, the kind of knowledge that will nourish science and natural philosophy. Time and space are perceived prior to all knowledge. Since the spatio-temporal cannot be framed within faith—that initial and exclusive alternative to scientific knowledge—it will ultimately find its expression in that mental operation which, from Romanticism onward, will be known as intuition. Descartes himself, when he must seek a foundation for his theory of knowledge—at the very moment of what he calls 'clear and distinct ideas'—acknowledges a mental operation that is neither scientific-experimental nor even logical; there, the mind functions by performing an operation that is more or less what will come to be called intuition.

In this way, the legacy of the perception of traditional forms of unreality, as found in scholasticism on the one hand and in mysticism on the other, has remained in some way within this modern scientific and philosophical thought as a sort of second line that allows for the resolution of certain problems that prove insoluble for those who formulate the principles of experimental and scientific thought. Whether acknowledged or not, this type of knowledge—which in a certain sense is a remnant of faith—operates in the rearguard even at the most mature stage of modern philosophical thought. Kant's a priori principles precede knowledge; they prove to be of a different nature from the forms of cognition developed by science or natural philosophy. In a way, this thought is homologous to scholasticism: it secularizes its cognitive structure, changes the principles, and adjusts everything that does not work with the new principles, but it does not negate them. Its persistence can be found in Descartes—as Gilson has shown—and in all post-Kantian idealism up to Hegel.

When thought is pushed to its extreme, the inconsistencies of this secularization are laid bare, and it becomes necessary to bring its foundations into a state of total coherence. One must wait until the eighteenth century for a thoroughgoing readjustment of scientific thought as a whole, and for the methodical rejection of the surviving elements of that tradition. It is D'Alembert who undertakes this examination exhaustively and sets forth the results in comprehensible terms, resolved into formulas; in the *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia*, he ultimately arrives at a principle of coherence and a fundamental, decisive, categorical rejection of all the traditional elements of scholastic knowledge. For this new mentality, which D'Alembert gives full expression to, the problem consists in delimiting the field of the knowable through empirical-rational means, designating it as reality. This is a sensible, natural reality, and all the penetrations of unreality that the word had previously harbored are entirely excluded.

It is even beginning to be discovered that there are intermediate zones between this sensible reality—rigorously defined and suited to the experimental knowledge being developed—and unreality, in the sense of the supernatural. There is a realm of natural reality that is not yet known, but which is potentially knowable and which operates. Such has long been the case with atoms, which are real but not yet knowable. There are also other forms of intermediate reality. In the eighteenth century, the alchemical tradition was notably prevalent, but it was not so much related to the existence of a supernatural reality as to the possibility of a supernatural means of attaining knowledge of natural reality. There were many, then and later, convinced of the efficacy of scientific methods and natural philosophy for understanding certain areas of natural reality, yet who admitted that there were other zones not accessible in that way, in which supernatural methods might be employed, without thereby positing that those zones pertained to a supernatural reality. The Renaissance is full of such problems and is, at its core, the ancient story of Faust. Leibniz, a philosopher of mathematics, was nevertheless, for certain types of problems, a pantheist, just as Giordano Bruno had been in the sixteenth century and Goethe would be in the eighteenth.

With the great Romantic upheaval of the nineteenth century, the theme of pantheism is revisited. One must then ask: what is the image of reality? What validity does that image—so carefully crafted by scientific knowledge and natural philosophy—retain, if the problem of pantheism is reopened in the nineteenth century? What is that reality, if it is asserted that the whole of it is imbued with God? On the one hand, there has been an effort to define a natural reality conceived as the product of mechanical processes, an effort that leads to mechanism and to Comte's conception. But simultaneously, there has been a perpetuation of the organicist conception. Nature—written with a capital N—is something organic, which has absorbed the idea of God and preserves it. Of this organic nature, in which every part fulfills a function, it will be said that it is wise: an elementary aphorism of remarkable endurance.

In sum, the principal line of bourgeois mentality limits itself to defining reality as operational reality, whose behavior can be predicted in terms suited to action. In operational terms, the question of what lies behind it is irrelevant. Those who wish to go further adopt the deist thesis—a demiurge who creates, sets the rules, and then abandons creation—or the pantheist thesis, of medieval tradition, which extends into Romanticism in the form of organicism: the sacred is in everything; the organism encloses the sacred within itself.

2. The image of nature

The image that reality is, above all, sensible and natural reality and not a reality permeated by the supernatural is fully embraced by the bourgeoisie; to such an extent is their way of living and thinking imbued with this image that they adopt it as a theory, almost as an ideology. This is what the term realism, which is beginning to be used, signifies: the vehement purpose of affirming the existence of reality and the almost militant upholding and defense of the values implicit in that type of reality.

The emergence of this word, with that meaning, implies that a stance has been taken in favor of this conception of reality. To believe in realism is to believe in the primacy of a type of reality linked to the sensible, and not in that of supernatural reality, in principles, in ideals, in myths, in symbols, or in anything that entails a certain level of abstraction. Realism is, therefore, a tendency that resists conferring reality upon that which possesses a certain level of abstraction, and consequently falls more within the realm of the mental than that of the real. The real is the world of facts, of phenomena, of what is phenomenally verifiable—one might almost say experimentally.

This concept of realism must be related to that of masking, characteristic of a stage in the

development of the bourgeois mentality, between its initial eruption, around the eleventh century, and its final maturation in the eighteenth. In the development of the bourgeois mentality, there are a series of advances and retreats with respect to the level of realism one is willing to tolerate. At certain moments, the bare truth seems to be accepted. Suddenly, man becomes frightened, and whether overtly or not, he begins to take care not to reveal the ultimate consequences of a certain type of realism, and starts to conceal certain aspects. Arriving at a certain point, the scientist says: 'From here on, I know no more; it may be the work of God.' Evolutionism, for example, lacks an explanation for the origin of nature in its initial forms. Here, the masking mechanism consists in distancing the transcendent cause from the contingent one, so that, without denying the former, no necessary relationship is established between the two.

Whether masked or not, realism considered as a tendency implies the affirmation of the existence of an objective reality. To maintain this meant dissolving the identity between reality and unreality, characteristic of Christian-feudal thought. The hallmark of the bourgeois mentality is the perception of nature as something external to the individual—objective and knowable. In one and the same operation, the individual becomes a knowing subject and nature becomes an object of knowledge. In the context of the Christian-feudal mentality, man feels immersed in nature, as just another object within divine creation. Nature and man are equivalent in value, and the individual, living immersed in nature, does not distinguish one from the other. Signs of this can be found in the literature of the time: hagiography or epic poetry. In the entire *Poem of the Cid* or the *Song of Roland*, the landscape—that is, the natural setting in which human action unfolds—does not appear. One lives in nature, in the landscape, but does not recognize it as something distinct, worthy of description.

A defining feature of the bourgeois mentality is to bring about a double dissolution: that between man and nature, and that between sensory reality and supernatural reality. The first operation turns nature into an object of knowledge; the second implies that nature is known through experience rather than revelation. Man withdraws from nature and, having distanced himself physically and psychologically, discovers that nature in its entirety constitutes an order, a realm with certain characteristics that can be observed and systematized.

The first is variety, diversity. The bourgeoisies, the protagonists of this experience, live through a movement of expansion of feudal society toward the periphery, which breaks the characteristic enclosure of this world. In the three or four centuries preceding the eleventh century, man had grown accustomed to living in closed and confined spaces. This is due to objective reasons—military invasions and the closure of trade routes, for example—but it has lasting effects on the collective mentality: the individual, whose experience of the world is reduced to a very small sphere, calls 'mystery' everything that constitutes reality beyond those limits. All mystery literature known through children's tales derived from old medieval folklore is a remnant of a social situation of

enclosure. Generation after generation lived in closed spaces that were never transcended—owing to the feudal seigneurial organization, the dissolution of the great structures of the Roman Empire, and the system of relations within which that world was integrated—and later as a consequence of the Muslim invasions and the second invasions of the ninth century.

Fear of the unknown takes root both in the collapse of the traditional world and in the sudden irruption of another, unknown and terrible. The image of the Hungarian or the Saracen is that of a figure about whom nothing was known. When the *Song of Roland* speaks of the emir of Zaragoza, it states that his god is Apollo — which indicates that in southern France, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Christians did not know exactly whether the god of the Muslims was Allah, Muhammad, or some other.

The degree of ignorance, of unfamiliarity with the surrounding world, is so great that it creates the idea of mystery, which combines with that of adventure, typical of the Christian-feudal mentality. The adventure of the medieval knight unfolds in strange, unknown, and unpredictable settings, but this applies, strictly speaking, to anyone who crosses the borders of their small world, leaves the village, and enters the unknown forest. The neighboring village is already another world, which can be conceived of as fabulous. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, arises from the breaking of enclosure: European society, which had been compressed and threatened at all its borders, suddenly overflows them. With the Crusades, it heads to the East; from the German frontier, it moves eastward: Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic countries, present-day Czechoslovakia, and Subcarpathian Russia. To the south, it advances into Spain and Italy, driving back the Muslims. This geographical and political expansion helps shape a radically different image of the world. Within a generation or two, the contact of cultures that occurs brings down many of the received traditional notions, by a wholly empirical route. Among the many surprises encountered by those who undertook these journeys—without knowing, for example, whether their destination lay five days or five years' march away—was the realization that nature was, on the one hand, absolutely homogeneous, and on the other, distinct and diverse, yet contained within the natural order. The Crusaders, as Vasco da Gama and Columbus would later do in the East and West Indies, discovered that nature is highly varied, with changing landscapes and diverse, exotic plants and animals—yet always belonging to nature—and that the unfamiliar is not supernatural—the world of gnomes, dragons, and giants—but simply different and real. The marvellous-unreal gives way to the astonishing.

This contributes to strengthening the idea that nature is something external to the individual and that it is a possible object of knowledge. Man is an instrument of knowing, and everything else is knowable; as such, it lies outside what constitutes man's instrument of knowledge, be it called spirit or mind. That knowable object is varied. In contrast to the traditional idea that everything strange must be supernatural, the more varieties become known, the more firmly established becomes the

idea that the existence of other varieties of nature is possible. The tendency to disembodiment the supernatural, to reduce its dimensions and expand those of the real, grows with the knowledge of diversity.

On the other hand, the individual emerging from this immersion discovers the beauty of nature. He discovers that it has colors, that birds sing; all of that was there, and was naturally perceived, but in a different way. Before, he saw the birds, he saw the colors, but now he looks at them with such attention and interest that it ends in the discovery of the plastic landscape. In the Byzantine icon, for example, the depicted image is not set within a landscape; the background of the figure is simply white or gold. In a long and complex process, which we will analyze later, around the thirteenth or fourteenth century—with Giotto, let us say—the plastic landscape appears. What is the relationship between nature, which has always existed, and this landscape? The landscape is nature viewed analytically and then reconstructed synthetically, through a mental process: so says Leonardo, who provides the recipe for painting it. Giotto and Cimabue start with a nature that is chaotic; they select certain elements and arrange them, rendered as patches of relief and color. Landscape is nature filtered through the human mind, a process similar to that which constitutes the scientific knowledge of nature: first an analytical process, then a selective synthesis.

Around the same time, the landscape appears in literature, in thirteenth-century lyric poetry, in Petrarch, in Boccaccio. The lyrical attitude is, at its core, the same as that of the man who knows: he places himself outside of nature and contemplates it. He is no longer immersed in the world of nature but stands as a witness, to observe it, delight in it, and understand it.

There is a third attitude, characteristic of technical man: mastering nature. Here, too, there is an originary experience, one stemming from territorial expansion. In the traditional world, nature was worked with such routine that human operations were practically indistinguishable from the operations of nature itself; in the Roman world, this was combined with the extremely limited renewal of the economy, a condition likely linked to the abundance of slave labour. The technological level remained low until the eleventh century: from that point on, expansion toward the periphery forced a critical reexamination of existing techniques, which proved ill-suited for working new, harsh lands — lands with great trees to uproot or swamps to drain in the north. Something similar occurred in the sixteenth century in the Americas, where Europeans had to resort to traditional indigenous techniques, their own having proved useless.

This situation compels the individual to innovate in relation to nature. Just as the sailor, accustomed to coastal navigation, must undertake longer voyages and modify his navigation techniques in order to reach the East, so too does the farmer modify his techniques for working the land. In the siege

warfare against the Arabs, he likewise began to change his techniques, and as cities developed, he began to modify his architectural techniques, making discoveries that were at once simple and remarkable: the development of the glass industry allowed him to fit windows with panes and thereby harness sunlight for daily work, and also to manufacture ground glass for spectacles. At the same time, the tallow candle and the chimney with external draft were invented, rendering interiors habitable — and free of smoke. Other inventions followed, such as the padded collar for draft oxen and the wheelbarrow. This entire series of inventions is, in a sense, the result of expansion toward the periphery, which brought individuals into contact with kinds of nature different from those they had traditionally known and compelled them to resume the work of technological creation. In other cases, the impetus came from new economic activities, such as the exploitation of Baltic fish, which was sold salted in the West and made the fortune of many cities of the Germanic Hansa. This spurred both the exploitation of salt and that of timber for barrel-making, and revealed the value of resources that had previously been little appreciated.

The established routine was certainly a technology, but one so thoroughly internalized, generation after generation, that it had ultimately become almost a biological operation in which there was no fresh confrontation between man and nature. The new nature presented him with a challenge, to which he responded with the prodigious development of a new technology in all its dimensions.

Objectified nature—whether considered an object of knowledge, an aesthetic object, or a reality upon which man can act to obtain a benefit—constitutes an idea of nature absolutely distinct from that in which it was simply conceived as divine creation, and in which man was merely one more created element. This experience, which begins in this era, unfolds century after century, and, despite the leaps in that development, a continuity can be discerned: the technical attitude of the individual who invents the sail or the wheelbarrow—one of the forms of the lever—and thereby initiates the path that culminates in the technological explosion of the Industrial Revolution. Midway along that path stand Galileo and Newton, bringing order to a vast body of experience and reducing that experience to principles. Behind all the mathematization of the lever or the pendulum lies the experience of the person who invented the wheelbarrow and did, in essence, what we attribute to Galileo, who took that experience and carried it to its ultimate consequences, transforming it into rational and mathematical principles.

To this practical experience underlying the formulation of the general principles of mechanics, we must add earlier experiences rooted in that situation in which, after many generations had lived in a highly enclosed environment, the enclosure was suddenly broken and contact was made with very diverse natures. When the new man felt satisfied by the contemplation of this diversity, he began to develop the principle that nature constituted an order or a system; and since he had a certain propensity to hold to the principles of sensory reality, he assumed that nature possessed an order —

one that was not necessarily sacred but profane, even though it contained sacred elements — and within which he began to discern the fundamental character of the operative and of natural causality.

Describing this reality as profane does not mean that a divine origin is not recognized in it, but rather that it behaves in a way that man can understand with his own instruments, without resorting to divine interpretation. The secret of this conviction is that man has discovered he can experiment upon nature. If he were to admit that, in the contingent realm, nature is governed by God, man would be acting like a god, modifying nature and rebelling, like Prometheus, against the divine. This is impossible to admit or even to conceive. What is in fact beginning to be admitted is that God intervened in it: He created things, which act according to their own law, and if man can interfere with them, it is precisely because God does not act. God is displaced from the created process. His participation is acknowledged in the creative process, but not in the everyday contingent process. The defining characteristic of this profane conception is therefore to apprehend nature from a strictly operational point of view. One may theoretically concede that there is indeed a supernatural power capable of creating. Thus, the word that holds and sustains the essence of the divine is creation—that which man cannot do—and if man can act upon creation, it is because God has allowed it to function on its own.

When one begins to observe it, one discovers that nature functions in a coherent manner. It is then asserted that, in addition to being an object external to man—which he can aesthetically enjoy, come to know, and dominate—nature is a system. If one can intervene in its course, it is because it constitutes a system, and identical causes correspond to identical natural effects. This is the system that modern science seeks to explain as a whole.

This tendency, which we generically call realism, has strong roots in the Roman conception, buried by the Christian-feudal explanatory system. It is likely that much of it remained among the popular classes as folk culture and found fertile ground to re-emerge within the framework of the bourgeois mentality. The transition from the sacred to the profane conception is gradual and, in a certain sense, subtle. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there is an intermediate form of profaneness, namely pantheism. Once the system of nature has been discovered or intuited, it is attributed to divine omniscience, which permeates all creation with a certain order, because the divine mind is perfect. This is what scholasticism calls *ordinatum ad unum*—ordered toward a single end. From this, the pantheistic conception—first formulated in the West by St. Francis of Assisi—holds that the ordering principle is something inherent in human nature, because all of nature is suffused with God. This is an idea rooted in Eastern thought, present neither in the biblical nor in the Christian tradition: all of creation is permeated by its Creator, and the Creator dwells within creation.

From there, it is but a single step to ascribe a sacred character to nature itself. Nature has an order; perhaps this comes from God, or perhaps from reason: nature is wise, it is said. At this point it begins to be argued that what exists in nature is not a diffuse God, as in pantheism, but a diffuse reason, as it is in man. Here the principle of profaneness is already established — a principle that eighteenth-century thought would go on to develop at length.

3. Philosophy as Natural Philosophy: Empiricism and Rationalism

We have first analyzed what changes the new bourgeois mentality entails in terms of the vision of reality: the imposition of a new image of reality was, in general terms, a revolution. We shall then analyze that change as it relates to natural reality, as is apparent in the shift in perspective within the plastic arts, the emergence of landscape in literature, the forms of scientific knowledge, and the various revolutionary technological attitudes that emerge at that moment.

One might ask what problems this new image of reality raises for the individual who seeks to determine the criteria of truth in the relationship between reality and thought, between reality and representation. The problem arises on two distinct levels: the scientific and the philosophical, although this very distinction is already characteristic of modern thought. Previously, theology—a discipline that encompassed all general problems in addition to strictly theological ones—had practically never addressed the problem of how to know reality. Thus, the first revolution consists in theoretical thought undergoing a complete reversal, moving from a framework in which the fundamental elements were God, man, and conduct, to one whose guiding question is: What is nature? How can we know it? This is a revolution. What comes to be called philosophy now emerges, although, in order to name it in a way that precisely defines its content, it should be called natural philosophy. There is nothing as important in the work of Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, or Kant as the discovery of this subject matter, for it is in that discovery that the triumph of profaneness becomes manifest.

The problem of how to know nature and what the criteria of truth are lies behind everything that Newton, Galileo, or the Royal Society investigated. In the field of speculative philosophy, it does not appear until the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. There are three or four key figures in this field: Nicholas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, and to some extent Campanella, in the speculative realm, and Francis Bacon, who in *Novum Organum* addresses the central problem: what are the rules of the experimental method and what are the rules of thought by virtue of which the search for truth and the drawing of consequences can be organized. That is to say, what are the mechanisms for arriving,

not at the concept, as the philosophers said, but at the law. Bacon thus begins to develop a new logic, one that corresponds to the new type of knowledge and proves adequate to the wealth of data he is investigating.

Strictly speaking, the precedent for this line of thought is not to be found in philosophy, which has continued to follow the tradition of scholasticism, but in the thinking of scientists, which dates back to the thirteenth century. It was they who, without yet considering the major conceptual problems, established how experiments must be prepared so as to ensure that the conditions under which data were obtained were in some way comparable, that the conclusions were themselves comparable, and that they made it possible to reach conclusions of a general character.

This group of people, beginning in the thirteenth century with Roger Bacon or Peter Peregrine, and working on problems of optics, magnetism, and mechanics, did not address the ultimate question of what the rules of thought are; they were concerned with what the rules of experimentation are—those that allowed for the establishment of legitimately verifiable experimental data from which valid generalizations could be drawn. Certainly, they had been working on this for a long time: each of these cases may perhaps seem elementary, but it lays the groundwork for a larger process.

Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, theoretical thought picks up one of the threads of inquiry and endeavors to trace the paths through which the traditional method of concept formation is transformed into a method for the formulation of laws. Although in one case one seeks to establish, for example, the idea of a tree, and in another the law of gravity, there is a similar path of comparison and abstraction. But in what distinguishes them lies the entire transition from theology to natural philosophy, from knowledge inherited and transmitted by the criterion of authority to experimental knowledge — a transition that unfolds simultaneously with a new way of viewing nature, education, the economy, and the state, and which together constitutes the bourgeois mentality.

What characterizes this mentality is not a new accumulation of data but the framework it constitutes and the attitude with which it operates. All notions—whether new or recovered—from ancient knowledge are incorporated into a progressive thesis, in the etymological sense of the word: knowledge as forward movement. We know this, which allows us to discover that tomorrow and pose yet another problem, and so on. The idea of medieval knowledge, by contrast, is that of revealed knowledge, and it resembles more a basket in which everything that is known accumulates. This is, in the final analysis, the Bible; from it the notion is drawn; if the notion is there, it is known; if not, it is not known. Within the framework of the bourgeois mentality, the basket is never considered closed, and this is a fundamental change, similar to that which occurs when a society is

organized around social mobility or an economy around the market. What is characteristic of the bourgeoisie is this progressive conception, in the etymological sense of movement or dynamism. New problems arise at every moment, and when answers to some are found, others have already been posed. Ultimately, in the bourgeois conception, the journey matters more than the arrival, whereas in the theological conception we would say that what matters is remaining, not moving.

Thus, the fundamental theme of philosophy is the question of what nature is and, above all, how we come to know it. For this reason, modern philosophy is, more than anything else, gnoseology—neither metaphysics nor anthropology, but the theory of knowledge. To this end, modern philosophy does not align itself with scholasticism, as renewed in the sixteenth century, but with the new scientific investigators. These had sought to establish the principles of the experimental method; philosophy and speculative thought then began to offer them the principles of the conceptual method—that is, the mental schemas that provide the appropriate framework for the kind of data that scientific knowledge was in the process of elaborating. This becomes clear for the first time in Bacon *Novum Organum* is a logical system in which the Aristotelian mechanism of the concept is revised and the mechanism of the law is established: namely, the set of precautions that must be taken so that the process of comparison and abstraction may legitimately culminate in a proposition of universal validity—what we call a law—one that condenses a vast body of experience and makes it possible to predict the results of similar experiences.

This means resolving a set of problems that Bacon collectively termed the problem of the *idola*: mental schemas of such force that they can distort notions derived from reality, because thought does not dare to dismantle the totality of what has been acquired. Bacon discusses all these obstacles, which he calls *idola*, and ultimately articulates, with respect to natural scientific knowledge, the fundamental requirements of a thought process grounded in observation — one that, through successive mental operations, is finally transformed into laws and notions of universal validity. The most typical of these requirements is abstraction, which allows us, given a set of data, to arrive at a single concept that encompasses them all. The second concerns the set of precautions that must be taken to ensure that mental processes conform to the data obtained experimentally.

The novel feature here is the acquisition of data through experimentation—that is, the creation of artificial conditions in order to bring about a natural phenomenon. This creation gives rise to what we might call the drama of modern thought. As Bacon framed it, two areas clearly emerge in which the process of knowledge must be traced. One is that of experience, through which data comes from without toward within; the other is that of thought, in which that data is organized. The philosophical discussion revolving around this problem reaches its conclusion with Kant in a formula that would prove satisfactory for a long time. Experience—it is asserted—provides the data that the mind organizes within a system comprising the two great a priori principles of time and space, and the so-

called categories of thought. The mind provides a framework, and experience places the data within it. Certainly, that framework is built and rebuilt as data are received and selected. But what remains clear is that there is something that comes from the outside—namely, experience—and something that resides within—namely, the apparatus that organizes the data of that experience. The respective function of each is what divides modern thought into two major branches: English empiricism, represented by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, and rationalism, represented by Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant—who, though coming from the latter tradition, proposes a synthesis and a conciliatory line between the two.

Thus, this mentality has posed the problem of external reality in terms that are revolutionary, both from the standpoint of scholastic tradition and from that of the conception of everyday life prevalent in the Christian-feudal mentality. But as soon as this bourgeois realism is unleashed—in very primary terms rather than in scientific or philosophical ones—complex consequences emerge in gnoseological, ethical, and metaphysical terms. Realism produces, before anything else, a kind of terror, and as a result, a concealment. The agonizing question is how far knowledge can reach, and it is this that provokes the covering-over. Descartes poses a question that gathers together all the problems raised by realism. For realism, beyond the problem of the horror of total knowledge, triggers—as all naturalism does—a pessimistic attitude. Nietzsche, who is a pagan, a naturalist, who believes in nothing but nature, without God—'the gods are dead,' he declares—concludes that there is nothing but a profane world, that everything is known, that nothing can be expected. On the contrary, there are mental attitudes that occlude the world of the known at a certain threshold and stimulate a diffuse hope. Agnostics say they do not know whether this diffuse hope exists, and atheists deny it; but whoever is capable of establishing that limit to knowledge creates a hope.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when realism reached a certain limit, concealment developed. Botticelli and Raphael were the ones who, in the visual arts, took on the task of beautifying ugly reality. In Descartes, the idea that reality is unpleasant manifests itself in a diffuse way: after having exhausted one's knowledge of it, not only does a feeling of disappointment arise, but so too does the loss of hope. Man does not resign himself to having no hope, and has invented a new concealment of that reality — a reality that had presented itself as capable of being known and that he now deliberately conceals once again. This appears in a diffuse manner in his *Metaphysical Meditations* and very explicitly in the *Discourse on Method*. Descartes begins by asserting that he has no real proof, grounded in the senses, of the existence of reality. He alludes to a phrase often repeated and later coined by Pascal: the senses deceive us. The great epistemological objection to naturalistic realism is that its path to knowledge — the sensory path — is deceptive. This can be demonstrated in many different ways. Nature presents patterns of identical symptoms that conceal entirely different phenomena.

Having observed this phenomenon of the senses, Descartes reaches a categorical conclusion, stating: the only thing whose existence I am certain of is myself. By means of a derived line of reasoning, he asserts—within what he calls a clear and distinct idea—that man is capable of perceiving the unequivocal reality of his thoughts and, beyond that, a single thing from the external world, which is extension, from which he derives an entire geometric conception of reality; and, through an ontological proof, he likewise asserts that man is capable of being absolutely certain of the existence of God. Thought, extension, and God are the elements through which he believes the existence of an external world can be validated: an extended world, which he knows requires a creator who is infinitely powerful and wise. These two features allow for the validation of the existence of an external reality, which depends on the manner in which the subject is capable of perceiving it.

The English empiricists took this idea to its logical conclusion. Berkeley, above all, directly asserted that the characteristic of being is to be perceived, such that when an object is not perceived by anyone, it does not exist. He goes so far as to assume that external reality is a function of the human mind. But ultimately, regardless of the philosophical developments to which that idea is susceptible, what is remarkable is that behind it lies a compromise between two positions that is characteristic of what I call concealment. On the one hand, the recognition of an external reality that possesses a series of typically naturalistic characteristics, amenable to study through the data obtained by the senses and through the framework that the mind is capable of imposing on that data — a framework that comes to be formulated in so rational a manner that it can be expressed mathematically. On the other hand, the assumption that all of that reality, with such unambiguous characteristics, depends on the subject. On this point, the agreement between empiricists and rationalists is total: it is man who sets the limits of realism, and the endpoint of that position is Kantian agnosticism, which neither denies nor affirms that there is anything beyond pure phenomenon.

Here we reach the limit that bourgeois mentality had attained by that point. Doubt arises as to whether the things the mind creates, through the intellectual elaboration of data obtained from reality, are actually real or, more precisely, correspond to realities. Take the example of water, which boils and condenses. Boiling and condensation could perfectly well be called God's evaporative and condensative will. Where is it written that both phenomena cannot be attributed to a *Deus ex machina* — that is, to a power lying outside of nature? The mind can imagine the chemical process that transforms liquid into gas and gas into liquid. Kant's question is whether, beyond the phenomenon, what the mind imagines — and even hypostasizes by giving it a name — actually exists. His answer is that he does not know, and he does not take it for granted that he ever will.

This is the conception of the empiricists and rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is the scientific thinkers of the following century who place an absolutely unshakable

confidence in man's ability to know not only all phenomena but even their first causes. This is characteristic of the scientific faith of the nineteenth century, which derives in part from the fierce upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, in part from the great progress of the sciences that accompanied it, and in part from the philosophy of positivism. But above all, it derives from the growth in the magnitude of knowledge and from the expanding possibility of knowing concrete things. The ability to see microbes under a microscope was an extremely important revelation. These were things that existed but could not be seen, and consequently things whose existence could legitimately have been denied.

In short, the bourgeois mentality operates by creating a theory for the new type of knowledge, intended to correct the fallacies of realism. Against one of these—of a cognitive nature—it responds with the scientific method, developed by scientists and philosophers. Against another—of a metaphysical nature—it responds with a certain metaphysics, which ends in agnosticism.

4. The Image of Man

The theme of the image of reality has been at the center of all the content we have considered thus far: nature, knowledge, science. In another sphere, the image of man is the key and conditions all the activities in which man is the protagonist: society, politics, the economy, metaphysics, and history. In this idea of man, the bourgeois mentality has introduced a shift as fundamental as the one it introduced in the image of nature. This new image is usually associated with the so-called Renaissance and the modern world, but strictly speaking it is chronologically prior to both. Moreover, it is not characteristic of an era but of a social sector, which adopts a different attitude toward things and, on that basis, constructs a different image of the individual. We will begin to explore, in its remote origins, this new image of man, contrasting it with what was the dominant idea in the Christian-feudal world.

To begin, we must distinguish, on the one hand, the situational elements specific to feudal society, and on the other, the doctrinal elements characteristic of the Christian conception. Among the former, the fundamental fact is social conditioning: there are the privileged and the unprivileged, the free and the unfree. This is the actual condition of individuals: an abyssal condition, enshrined by an ancient social tradition, and later by a body of law that institutionalized this situation. Rather than with the principle of liberty, this is bound up with that of dependence. Free or unfree, the individual is hierarchically conditioned in legal terms, and in all cases some depend on others; even the king is said to be a vassal of God.

Man is first and foremost a member of the social whole, of the social body, and only then an individual. First comes the whole, and then the part. The whole is the social body, with its juridical order, and the individual has worth only within his relations of dependence. It is well known that the bourgeois conception will reverse these terms; first comes the individual, who is a complete universe in himself—a microcosm, Goethe would say—and then society, constituted by a sum of individuals. But that schema of the world, conceived as a compact system of person-to-person relationships, did not rupture all at once; guilds and corporations, for example, persisted, although they gradually dissolved in the course of a lengthy process.

On the other hand, there is the doctrinal dimension of the image of man developed by the Church: man does not exist; there exists a social body or, as the neo-Catholics say, the community, which precedes the individual. This idea is grounded in a vast ideological tradition, but also in a social practice within the Church, analogous to that of feudal society. The monastery is the place where a man, upon entering, loses his name—and with it his individuality—becoming a member of the group. There were many doctrinal foundations for this: for example, in the traditional Jewish tribal conception found in biblical texts such as the *Book of Numbers*, which the Church considers canonical. This was also present in the Greek philosophical tradition: Plato's political ideal—though he was an Athenian—was that of Spartan society: gregarious, closed, and absolutely divided. This aristocratizing political conception passed into Neoplatonism and from there into Christian theology, where the Church takes it up in the word *Ecclesia*. Furthermore, what characterized the early phase of Christianity were the Christian communities. These differed from the traditional Jewish conception of life, but had much in common with that of the synagogue of the Diaspora: a marginal, compact group that closes ranks in the face of persecution or simply marginalization. This idea of the synagogue is taken up by Christianity in the *Ecclesia*, that is, the community with a shepherd who guides the flock. Such, then, is a gregarious conception of society: what matters is the community, and the individual is secondary.

Thus, the social situation characteristic of feudal society closely resembles that which, doctrinally and traditionally, was held by the early Christian conception, whether through the Hebrew-textual tradition or the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition. This is what the Church integrates into an organicist theory, which St. Thomas brings to completion and orders. Society is an organism, with a head. It is debated whether this is the Pope or the emperor because, strictly speaking, it is neither a strictly secular nor a strictly religious community. But it is a group of individuals united by a very close bond, who fulfill their function within the organism. According to the Spanish version, they will be those who pray, those who fight, and those who labor. Moreover, according to the Judeo-Christian tradition, man is a creature of God, who created him, as the texts say, to worship and serve Him. This situation of total dependence corresponds to the social situation of total dependence. Its clearest sign is anonymity: the individual is so insignificant that it is not worth paying attention to him.

That is why we do not know who the authors are of all the panel paintings that were painted, of the *Poem of the Cid*, or of the cathedrals.

Little is known about the thousands of monks who inhabited the monasteries, until that change began to take place—foreshadowed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries—whose first sign is, perhaps, the emergence of Abelard's ideas. He is one of the first in whom a violently individualist sentiment is documented. Abelard is a philosopher who refuses to continue treating theological problems as was traditionally done; he refuses to submit to the principle of authority and elevates his own reason to the role of judge. He recognizes that he, a person within the limits of his body, possesses an instrument with which he is capable of judging everything, as God himself does. The statement by St. Bernard, cited earlier, is revealing: he said that Abelard refused to see things as if through a veil or a mist, but rather aspired to see them as they truly were. Realism, in the modern sense of the term, is there completely linked to individualism, insofar as it establishes the possibility of perceiving reality through an instrument that man possesses. To assert that man, his reason, and his experience are the source of knowledge constitutes a revolution against the principle of revealed truth: a mental revolution, but also a revolution in relations in the real world. Whoever begins to think that they possess a reason with which they can know and, above all, judge independently of what others say, is affirming the existence of the individual before that of the group. The group is the result of the decision of individuals to form it and to build a society on the basis of contract—a thesis opposed to organicist and herd-based thesis. The group is constituted not by divine establishment, but by the individuals' own will.

The figure of Abelard illustrates this idea from another perspective: the individual is conceived on the basis of his capacity for thought. In that sense, Abelard is a precursor to Descartes; starting from sacred Scripture itself, he asserts his personal capacity for criticism and judgment. Moreover, Abelard writes an autobiography, *The Story of My Misfortunes*, contained in the first letter to Heloise. This subject who writes an autobiography has discovered himself; he considers himself worthy of a history that belongs not to the group but to him alone. Finally, Abelard discovers love. At the moment when lyric poets begin to circle around the theme of love as a psychological experience, Abelard devotes a significant portion of his autobiography to describing his loves, in prose, in the most exalted terms and with a vague Ovidian inspiration. This is to say: the description of a state of mind, absolutely irreducible as an individual experience.

Abelard is the most prominent and famous example of the early emergence of a dissident attitude that breaks with the traditional image of man. This rupture is also reached through other paths. The individual who begins in small-scale itinerant commerce, traversing the first stretch of a path of social ascent, is the one who has learned that he can live by freeing himself from the bonds of dependence—which are also a source of security and protection—and embarks on an adventure

that is exclusively personal: the adventure of socio-economic ascent, from which he establishes, in practice and not as a matter of doctrine, bourgeois society, urban life, and the bourgeois mentality. Certainly, there are many who do this, and they suddenly discover that they are thinking and living in a different way. Just as Abelard discovers that he is a man of thought—endowed thereby with the capacity to know and judge, a microcosm, as Goethe would say seven centuries later—the bourgeois finds himself the protagonist of a social process by virtue of which he breaks free from the structure to which he belongs and embarks on an equally individual adventure, the goal of which is social ascent.

In this interplay of lived experiences—such as those of the merchant who prospers and becomes a proper bourgeois in a wealthy city—or in this intellectual interplay, such as that of Abelard, an idea suddenly crosses their path: love. A feeling that the moral system of Christianity had kept condemned suddenly erupts. The man who discovers himself as a being of thought and a being of action discovers at the same time that he is a subject of feelings, which begin to seem valid, noble, and even pleasurable to him.

For this to occur, his moral attitude had to change simultaneously. For the peasant, the erotic was repressed—if not in practice, then at least in its moral valuation—by a moral system transmitted by the Church, in which everything pertaining to love is terribly sinful. Upon leaving the rural world and becoming incorporated into the urban one, that system does not cease to hold, but a gap opens up between belief in a God and the entire moral system which, while grounded in that divine notion, had its foundation reinforced by the structure of society and power. Whoever escapes its confines continues to believe in the prime mover, but not in the things that this prime mover would have deposited in the structure from which the peasant is escaping. Suddenly, the entire system linked to the seven deadly sins collapses.

Let us take the case, already mentioned, of usury. In the traditional conception, any interest or profit obtained from money is sinful; in essence, all economic activity is sinful, or nearly so. This idea is neither contested nor challenged; but suddenly it is set aside, and life comes to be lived as if it had vanished by magic. Many other ideas also begin to enter a crisis, such as the idea of theft. The first merchant is, in a way, a rogue; he is the individual who begins to view cunning as a positive value—cunning being the negation of every established principle of ethical normativity. As such, he appears in the fabliaux, in the *Roman de Renart*, and by the fourteenth century his existence is so pervasive that a writer like Boccaccio presents him as something entirely accepted: the Florentine is someone who makes cunning a fundamental value. In the sixteenth century, he appears almost idealized in Sancho Panza, while picaresque literature presents him as the most representative element of the human. This individual who escaped the Christian-feudal structure has undergone a revolution of the mind—that is, he has overturned values. He has not ceased to be a believer, but he

has stopped respecting all the things that, in the traditional structure, were supposed to be backed by God.

Just as he discovers a new morality—and in part thanks to that discovery—man also discovers love: a feeling, a passion, and in its most popular and common forms, a form of gratification. Traditionally, love seemed possible only in the form of a sacrament, and everything else was broadly condemned; suddenly it is discovered that love is an outpouring of vitality and feeling, and that it belongs properly to man. It appears initially in Provençal and Italian lyric poetry, in which love is expressed as the greatest gift man possesses. It is divine love, but also the love of Dante and Beatrice. At this moment, an old concealment—transformed into the norm—is shattered. This irruption must have been so fierce that very soon, in the fourteenth century, two different literary expressions of this new sentiment emerge: Boccaccio offers the version of carnal love and Petrarch that of spiritual love, but in both cases it is profane love.

We are thus speaking of the thinking man, according to Abelard; the one who judges according to his own reason, something that is within him, which has been placed by God in all individuals but which he does not control. It is also about the man who embarks on his own adventure within society, the one who invents his relationships with his peers, the one who creates a new moral system—such as withdrawing from traditional forms of normativity and creating a new one, the most significant expression of which is cunning. It is about the man who believes that loving is inherent to his condition. It is, in short, about an individual who has elaborated an image of man entirely different from the traditional one.

One who abandons a structure in which he feels dependent yet protected is an individual who sets out to live an adventure, made possible in a rigorously planned world. There is an adventure of thought, launched by Abelard and encountered later in Pascal and Descartes. There is an erotic adventure, or rather a sensory adventure that takes an erotic form and a form of creation: all plastic and literary creation is an emergent expression of this new attitude of man, who discovers that his sensibility is not necessarily negative or sinful. There is also a socio-economic adventure, which is what builds modern mercantile society. In cities, it creates bourgeois forms of life, all of them absolutely original and unprecedented. The city is the great adventure, where creation does not consist of forms of thought or sensibility, but rather of a system of relationships. This occurs within the heart of the compact group that exists inside the city, which establishes face-to-face relationships, is enclosed within a wall, and sets out to fulfill a kind of common purpose. This is another form of creation, and it takes quite some time before that adventure consolidates into a system.

I want to draw on three testimonies of this new image of man. The first is lyric poetry. It emerged in the eleventh century, concurrently with the bourgeois revolution, in a border region with unmistakable Muslim influences, where a different conception of sensibility existed—not only for religious reasons but also due to distinct forms of life. It appeared in Provence, in Catalonia, in Galicia, in the Languedoc, also in parts of northern France and in Germany, and likewise in the Burgundian and Italian regions. It is an erotic poetry, extraordinarily passionate, with many nuances, but whose fundamental feature is a certain effort to describe love as a state of mind. This effort at introspection characterizes lyric poetry even in its earliest forms: Guillaume de Poitiers, Marie de France, the German troubadours, and Galician-Portuguese poetry. All of this lyric poetry is organized, in sublime and perfect form, in Dante's *La vita nuova*, which inaugurates the *dolce stil nuovo*. What is new here is the amorous effusion—that is, the expression of the almost inexpressible—which is intrinsic to the psychological transformation wrought by love.

This is so forceful an affirmation of the individual as an entity that begins and ends in itself that it represents a total challenge to any gregarious conception. What Dante says in that *stil nuovo* is that the individual is simply a world, through his reason and his sensibility. This culminates with Petrarch, with the great lyric poetry of the sixteenth century, with Garcilaso, and continues until it reaches Novalis in the nineteenth century. Lyric poetry is a complete expression of man as an individual, a perception whose origins lie in the eleventh century and whose culmination is reached with Goethe.

The second expression of this individualism is mysticism. Suddenly, religious sentiment acquires an unusual force. The mystic asserts that for him the most important things are not the sacraments or the Church but a certain ecstasy into which he can fall, by virtue of which he establishes direct communication with God. What matters is the conviction that, through a psychological act, the individual, without needing charisma, holy oil, or consecration, comes into contact with God. This reaches an almost diabolical arrogance in the great mystics of the sixteenth century. In St. John of the Cross, it is a total unknowing of all mediations. This is the counterpart of lyric poetry: describing a state of religious ecstasy is the same as describing a state of amorous love, and in any case, one discovers that the individual is a world in himself and possesses this formidable capacity to encounter the absolute.

The third expression is the emergence of the portrait. Simultaneously with the emergence of spatial painting, images of Christ begin to cease resembling one another; they are no longer placid and become persons. The same occurs with the Virgin. Soon the group appears, and in thirteenth-century Franciscan painting one discovers that each of the monks is a distinct individual. This makes sense because each figure is that of an individual and not a symbol of humanity, as in the placid Christ of the Romanesque period. The figure in art ceases to be a symbol of the human and becomes an individual of flesh and blood. In the fifteenth century, the process advances a step

further: the donor appears. At the side of his painting, praying to the saint and to Christ, the artist includes a figure who is the very person who paid for the work—a wealthy patrician or religious dignitary. These donors quickly become identifiable, as in Benozzo Gozzoli's painting of the Magi. The next stage is the portrait, and in the seventeenth century Rembrandt painted nothing but portraits of the bourgeois.

This idea is developed by the humanists in their examination of the human soul through philosophy — taking as their object each individual human soul. It is this that leads Pascal to declare: man is a thinking reed. In the bourgeois world, this image gives rise to a singular concept of education. It concerns the formation of the individual, the methodical effort made to reduce him to certain conditions of fitness for society, but also to guide him toward everything supposed to lie latent within his inner world. To educate is to bring out the fullness of man — to enable him to realize all the potential within himself — a conception that can only emerge once man is conceived as an individual. In this sense, the bourgeois mentality brings about a revolution, substantially altering the image of man: imagining him first as an individual independent of the group, then as an individual capable of pursuing a certain adventure and making his own life, and finally as an individual who is identified and identifiable. This is the image that Goethe perfected when he spoke of the microcosm.

5. Society, Politics, Economy

The bourgeoisie's conception of society and of politics is difficult to separate from each other. In reality, a specific thought about the social — such as that found in sociology today — did not exist until the nineteenth century; but from Plato and Aristotle onward, what is called political thought is, in reality, a mixture of both: to the extent that society is the protagonist of the political process, all considerations made of that process rest upon an image of society.

The conception of society and politics developed by the bourgeois mentality stands in contrast to another, very vigorous one, characteristic of the Christian-feudal tradition, in which the social and the political, fused together, rest on a certain image of man. To this dual image of man corresponds another dual image of society, founded on the principle of privilege. According to this image, society is composed of the privileged and the non-privileged. Privileges are legitimate and encompass the totality of the functions that the individual performs within the social group. Privilege enjoys consensus; that is, there are vast non-privileged sectors that give their consent to the one who monopolizes privileges: the ownership of land and the right to extract free labor, and so forth. This implies an image of society in which one of its terms possesses sharply defined and vivid characteristics, while the other—amorphous and obscure—is conceived merely as an instrument,

devoid of the traits proper to the human person. Implicit here is the organicist conception: each group has a particular function, and society as a whole, just as in an organism, functions only when each of its parts fulfills its function. This means adding a hierarchical principle to the principle of privilege, since the head is worth more than the feet. Underpinning this image of society is a theory of power that takes for granted the thesis of divine origin. Power is never conceived as *de facto*; it is always *de iure*, grounded in very explicit texts. There is a famous text by Saint Paul, widely used in medieval political theory—and long afterward as well—in which it is stated that whoever possesses power has the right to possess it, because God wills that they have it. Consequently, that power must be referred back to the divinity, with the result that insurrection is a sin.

This conception carries great force because it resolves the fundamental problem of the origin of power and provides it with a stable foundation. But it also pronounces upon the manner of exercising power, invoking the principles of the New Testament and those of the Old Testament, which conceive of the exercise of power in paternal terms. Indeed, passages from the Psalms and the Pentateuch are regularly adduced, alluding to the early stage of the Hebrew people, including their nomadic period. This paternalist conception of power, which as a theory remained dominant until the thirteenth or fourteenth century, makes the holder of political power a man bound to his subjects by religious and moral obligations. Whoever holds power does not do so to hold it in usufruct but is obligated, for religious and moral reasons, to protect his subjects as a father protects his children. This is the idea that pervades the entire conception of feudal monarchy.

These ideas about dual society and the principle of privilege, the organicist view of society, the theory of the divine origin of power, and the sense of service in its exercise persisted for a long time, with varying intensity, in the bourgeois conception. Unlike other revolutions, the bourgeois revolution did not begin with a rational project for structural change prior to social change. Rather, there is a long process of spontaneous social change, within the framework of structures that remain stable in principle, without there being any consideration of the need or possibility of altering or transforming them suddenly, systematically, and completely. In each case, bourgeois groups gradually alter the structures, making small modifications in relation to whatever problem concerns them at any given moment. They fight for a specific freedom—to cross that bridge without paying a toll, to avoid imprisonment on market day, and others—and not for freedom in the abstract. These are all very concrete freedoms; they are in no way merely declarative, and they carry no design to transform the structure as a whole. If, from these origins, the bourgeois revolution comes to be a revolution, it is because the sum of these partial changes eventually undermines the traditional structure to such an extent that it breaks down.

In this long process, in which only small, gradual changes take place, the traditional structure persists, and with it the traditional ideas, which no one challenges head-on, so that many remain in

force, whether intellectually or by custom. As long as an idea is not attacked—because it is not considered troublesome, dangerous, or hostile—it can continue to subsist, just as the forms of the structure continue to subsist. There are, however, some ideas characteristic of the traditional conception that endure not only through simple inertia, by the mere fact of never having been contested, but because they have been transferred and applied in a different way. In the organization of craft guilds and corporations, made up exclusively of bourgeois members, one finds certain ideas at work that derive from the old conception of a privileged society. What the artisans demanded was not the abolition of all privileges, but rather the guarantee that they themselves could enjoy some of them—thereby perpetuating that traditional conception. It would not be until the eighteenth century that this conception of privilege—applied to feudal society and subsequently transferred to bourgeois society—came to be perceived as genuinely pernicious and contradictory to the individualistic conception.

Meanwhile, it endures, just as all those aspects of the traditional structure not implicated in that change endure. Some last longer than others, until one day the traditional structure, shaken at its very pillars, collapses entirely. If this does not happen, it persists as a spectral structure, and a far more solid mercantile structure takes shape, covering it or intertwining with it. Through this path of maintaining the structure and the ideas appended to it — and even through the transfer of those ideas to new situations — many aspects of the old conception are perpetuated and sustain a certain appearance that the traditional ideas of the Christian-feudal conception remain unchanged. At the origin of the new bourgeois society there is no frontal challenge; instead, a wholly different experience begins to emerge. The first experience these new urban societies have — spontaneously and de facto, yet unequivocally — is that society is not an organism composed of parts with predetermined functions; in the experience of the formation of these social groups, it becomes clear that individuals are at the origin. Where seigneurial lordship persists, experience leads one to perceive groups rather than individuals: those who work are the lord's peasants; those who rule are likewise a group, and the differences among them scarcely matter. But in the experience of its inhabitants, it is clear that the city did not arise because one group of men came to assume the role of blacksmiths and another that of saddlers. Each of those who arrived was part of a group from which he wished to escape in order to live differently. The old German proverb says: 'city air sets one free'; it is also held that whoever lives in the city for a year and a day is free and cannot be reclaimed by his former lord. And urban society is constituted, before the very eyes of its inhabitants, by individuals of diverse origins who join, one by one, the urban precinct and the community that lives within it.

This is the basic experience from which the entire philosophy of individualism, all individualist sociological conceptions, arises. Thus, in contrast to the intellectually highly elaborate conceptions of what politics and society are in the Christian-feudal mentality, what emerges here is not a grand

theory but a firm experience, one that takes root because it bears the mark of reality.

From this experience that society is constituted by individuals, a second experience is acquired regarding the way in which these isolated individuals—who have arrived one by one, each carrying a past they have erased—come to constitute a society. What can be perceived is that those who come together out of shared interests, and perhaps because they exploit some common ecological advantage (such as settling in a favorable location), make a pact among themselves. At first, they may develop certain spontaneous cooperative forms, until a moment when they decide to submit to rules: some establish who is to rule; others, which acts are illegal and even criminal. This second major experience is that of the pact, of the social contract—the binding element of a society being the consent of the parties. This is the starting point for what would eventually be elaborated and theorized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The third experience unfolds when, in the negotiation of these points of the contract, it is established who will govern: how the mayor will be elected and who will serve as councillors. The mayor emerges as the result of a political pact, which makes it clear that power is constituted on a profane foundation, in contradiction to the Christian-feudal tradition, which conceived of power solely as the expression of a divine mandate.

This contractual and profane constitution of society and power can be clearly seen in the early stages, in the first communal charters. These are documents in which no formal or doctrinal declaration is found, but rather a small set of specific provisions, almost of the type: 'whoever owns cows may never pass in front of so-and-so's house...'. These are documents of commitment, intended to resolve specific issues; behind them lies the contractual will—the desire to resolve the problems that hinder life in solidarity. Nowhere do they write things like 'we pledge to live by our labor', because that was implicit; that was precisely why the community was formed in the first place. The charter contains, above all, prohibitions—the limits whose transgression would constitute a violation of the spontaneously established pact.

From these basic experiences, a vigorous elaboration emerges. In the daily exercise of spontaneous practices, the idea gradually takes shape, first becoming objectified and then theoretically refined. At this point, the primary experience is in a position to converge fruitfully with intellectual traditions. In the twelfth century, what has been called the 'reception of Roman law' took place. Indeed, there was a kind of awakening of this law, which all universities—both Paris and Bologna—took up. Roman law began to be widely used as a foundation for the bourgeois conception that had been developing spontaneously. It is here that the thesis of the individual, and likewise the contractual thesis of civil society, find their place. On the other hand, Roman public law had incorporated

experiences and situations from the turbulent history of the second century AD; at that time, in the wake of the major military conflicts arising during each of the dynastic crises, a principle of popular legitimation of the emperor began to be accepted. Thus, a profane conception of power also emerged within public law.

Thus, at the moment when spontaneous experience begins to grow stronger, it is discovered that there is a formidable theoretical apparatus supporting it in its confrontation with traditional ideas. First, the conflict arises within the cities. But soon the monarchy discovers that Roman law—in addition to having thoroughly developed and secured the rights of individuals, the forms of a contractual society, and those pertaining to the profane origin of power—provides it with all the elements needed for the struggle against the seigneurial class and the aristocracies, since all of Roman law tends to strengthen a strong power, namely imperial power. In this domain, the monarchy becomes an ally of the new bourgeoisie and imposes certain elements, now bearing the stamp of monarchical power. With regard to society, it continues to be acknowledged that there are privileged and unprivileged groups. But in the eyes of the Crown, all are subjects, whereby the dual society system is compromised—even though one must wait until the French Revolution for it to fall. The king's authority cannot admit the dual society in toto. It acknowledges instead that, regardless of whether society contains two groups—the privileged and the unprivileged—there are certain duties toward the king that place everyone in the same position.

Among its subjects, the bourgeoisie is of fundamental importance to the monarchy. Wealthy yet unprivileged, it becomes the mainstay of the royal exchequer, so that the monarchy quickly becomes its natural supporter; by supporting it, the monarchy consecrates it and, with it, the conception of society that the bourgeoisie is developing on the basis of its experiences and the traditions it receives. One of the things Roman law suggests is that every individual has certain rights; thus begins the development of the entire line of natural law, or of the *ius gentium* (law of peoples), defined by the professors of Bologna and transformed into truths that appear consubstantiated with a form of social organization.

Directly related to this is the development of contract theory and the contractual origin of power. Naturally, *de facto* situations and lived experience fuel the departure from old theories and the formulation of new ones. Dynastic successions allowed, in one way or another, for the fiction of divine power to be maintained through bloodline succession. The son inherits from the father and retains the sacred charisma. This works even when there are obvious discontinuities. But it does not work at all in the case of the Sforza, the Malatesta, the Gonzaga, or any of the Italian *signori*. Faced with the process by which these *signori* acquired power over the city, the principle of consent begins to come into view. If he is not a lord by divine right, then there has been an assembly that proclaimed him, in the Roman manner, or there was a meeting in the cathedral where the

townspeople gathered and voted, or something equivalent. When it is acknowledged that this institutionally expressed consensus is equivalent to divine right, the thesis of the contract has been accepted. It would not be until the late seventeenth century that Locke, driven by the need to legitimize Parliament's decision to crown Mary and William, would formulate this in philosophical terms in the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. These are the same terms that Rousseau would later carry to their logical extreme in *The Social Contract*.

This involves the complex elaboration of ideas drawn from Roman law and natural philosophy, by which theoretical validity and institutional grounding were conferred upon something that constituted a basic experience: the idea of a society composed of individuals who, bound together by a contract, delegated power to one of their own by virtue of the prerogatives they held, since they themselves were the source of sovereignty.

The thesis of the contract resolves the problem of the legitimacy of power but leaves the problem of sovereignty unresolved. Undoubtedly, the people are the source of sovereignty. Do they alienate it totally or partially? Can they reclaim it? This will divide English opinion into Tories and Whigs. The former assert that when the people, in an act of consent, alienate sovereignty, they lose the right to reclaim it. Those who, like Locke, say: the people are the source of sovereignty and, consequently, never lose the right to reclaim it, affirm the right of revolution and the principle of limited monarchy. This is the question Montesquieu seeks to resolve with the principle of the separation of powers. This entire debate drives political thought from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, but at its core lies a basic experience: society is constituted on the basis of isolated individuals who unite through a freely established contract and delegate the exercise of power to one of their own on the basis of a profane principle. Two problems remained unresolved, which would only be resolved in the nineteenth century, in the heat of new social experiences: that of political egalitarianism and that of the democratic and representative political regime.

A similar process characterizes the shaping of the bourgeois conception of economic life. To understand the conception inherent to the Christian-feudal mentality in this field, an imaginative effort is required: in a dual society where the notion of privilege is so thoroughly internalized, and where there exists a solidly accepted consensus regarding the function or duties of each person, the peculiarity, reality and historicity of economic life are obscured. There are those who own the land, dominate the peasants, and live off the labor of these peasants on the land, but this is not perceived as an economic function. The idea of privilege is so strong that this economic function is perceived almost as a natural function, as a right grounded in nature itself. This implies, beyond the fact that economic acts exist and take place in the factual order, a rejection of methodical, systematic economic activity — a rejection that becomes manifest the moment the market economy appears in contrast to natural forms of production.

The peculiarity of the economic act is not perceived until the impact of the market economy is felt. Then, this perception manifests itself first in a brutal rejection: the market economy is sinful, and this character is symbolized in the idea of usury, which encompasses all activities involving money. This is the response of a mentality that has linked economic activity to personal service, to the acquisition of goods through mechanisms of force, and destined for use rather than exchange.

When a pocket of market economy forms outside this dual society, it begins to operate upon it. First, there is a withdrawal of labor: serfs flee to the cities. Then competition and conflict arise between those rich in land and those rich in money, and eventually the former aspire to this kind of wealth — at which point they begin to try to transform their system of production, organizing it for the market.

This experience unfolds with greater intensity within the cities, where the market is created. Before this becomes an abstract idea, it has a material and concrete existence: almost all cities begin by establishing the market square, or by situating in the Main Square—alongside the church and the town hall—this thing that lacks a permanent, prominent building, yet which, in everyone's eyes, is the soul of the city. Around it there develops a set of primary experiences, foundational to economic life, which subsequently are distilled, become objectified, are expressed in abstract terms, and end up constituting an economic theory.

The first experience consists of discovering that economic advancement implies social advancement. Those who have more simultaneously occupy a higher position in society, in a way unimaginable in a dual society founded on privilege. In the city, the spectacle of new wealth is astonishing, both because of the speed with which it is acquired—many recall the modest origins of the great magnates, or of their parents—and because of the somewhat unusual methods used to acquire it: it is not a fortunate war, as El Cid did, but a commercial enterprise, equally risky, yet mercantile in nature. Although the new rich seek to join the old privileged classes by adopting their forms of life or intermarrying, and by passing off their new wealth as old, the transition is too recent for the assumptions of a dual and privileged society to remain standing in the cities. Little by little, the old image of society is giving way to a new one, in which society appears clearly divided into rich and poor and in which the divisions are not eternal and absolute but are subject to the vicissitudes of fortune.

The second experience is the discovery of the mechanisms of the market economy. In a stable economy such as that governed by the rural world, where supply and demand did not change significantly, it was possible to think that there existed a defined relationship between goods, a standard of equivalence, which the theorists defined as the just price. In the urban economy, new products are exchanged, the price of which no one can specify, such as pepper. Whoever possesses

it assigns a value to it and claims that price; moreover, they may resort to restricting supply in order to increase the need for that product. Whoever buys it, in turn, offers what they deem appropriate, and in turn resorts to not buying. Bargaining, which constitutes the life of the marketplace, where cunning, skill, and malice come into play, ends in an agreement, a transaction. From that primary experience, a new idea about price emerges: it reflects a balance—changing and unstable—between those who sell and may choose not to, and those who buy and may also choose not to. Supply, demand, and price are the foundations of what, in a slightly more abstract formulation yet always rooted in everyday practices, will come to be called the laws of the market.

The third experience concerns currency and its uses. The new goods and services exchanged in the urban market are expressed in currency; but soon the dues that peasants owed to their lords — which were traditionally paid in goods or labor — were also expressed in currency. In need of money, the lords accepted and encouraged the commutation of these services. In this way, currency came to express the progressive depersonalization of relations, not only between buyers and sellers subject to an abstract rule, but also between lords and peasants, within whose bonds the old personal ties began to be objectified. Moreover, currency began to be perceived as the true dynamic element of the economy: Jean de Meun declared that money is of no use except to be spent, and added that the nature of wealth consisted in its circulation. The circulation of goods, and its velocity, began to be perceived as one of the constituent elements of the new mercantile economy.

Currency, a novel phenomenon about which little accumulated knowledge existed, gave rise to other surprising experiences. Its enormous variety and diversity generated a distinctive activity: money-changers. Soon, those who held large sums of money discovered that it was a commodity like any other, and that there was supply and demand surrounding it: those who needed to start a business required money and were willing to pay for it. In the traditional context, where everything had its just price, it was utterly unacceptable for a mere instrument to have a price of its own. Hence the condemnation as usury. The force of this condemnation was great, and no one dared to challenge it in theoretical terms; but practice—including that of the clergy themselves—moved in another direction, and little by little a new idea began to gain ground: the possession of money gives rise to a just remuneration, which is not usury but interest.

One final experience related to currency. It was very easy to clip the edges of coins and extract some of the metal; if a private individual did so, he could be convicted of coin forgery. If it was the king himself, no one could convict him. Growing needs drove kings to the easy recourse of monetary manipulation, which in the fourteenth century triggered processes of currency debasement and inflation. Beyond the condemnations, this too is a source of instruction. It becomes clear that, in addition to the fisc, there are other potential beneficiaries: those who receive income in hard

currency—because they are engaged in the great interregional trade—and pay wages in weak currency. There are, on the other hand, those who discover that their activity is impossible without a stable and recognized currency: money begins to be valued as much for its intrinsic content as for the authority that backs it. All these experiences are what gradually distill into a theory of money, the first formulations of which, with a certain degree of abstraction, already appear in the fifteenth century.

The fourth major experience is that of hoarding. The small individual enterprises—those of the merchant or the artisan—typical of the early stages of the bourgeois revolution, gradually give way to larger ones requiring considerably more capital to launch. Wealthy merchants, or lords wishing to venture into economic enterprise, raise funds, while the first forms of commercial enterprise develop, with various capitalist partners. The daily experience of profit and reinvestment, of the diversification of investments and the formation of companies, gradually opens the way to the idea that wealth accumulates, and that this is characteristic of the mercantile economy. Such wealth did not always flow into new businesses. The turns of the wheel of Fortune—a Roman image that resurfaces with vigor in this era—are so rapid that they give rise to the desire to temper them: by withdrawing profits from risky ventures, buying land, or simply storing money in earthenware jars. Just as wealth accumulates, the most visible and characteristic form of this accumulation—clearly linked to the daily experience of the city—is the hoarding of money. This idea would dominate economic thought for a long time; only in the eighteenth century would it be discovered that wealth lies not in money but in things.

The fifth experience concerns the impact of political power on the economy. Before kings discovered that the urban economy constituted the surest source of their revenue, the lords had already recognized the advantages of plundering merchants: one of the lords' favorite resources from the eleventh century onward had been the levying of tolls and taxes of every kind on commerce. From the outset it was clear that movable wealth was inevitably subject to predatory taxation. But it was soon discovered that whoever held power could favor commercial activity. The merchant or artisan who wished to exclude foreign competitors knew this well; so too did the merchant who, in the East, secured the supply of spices by presenting gifts to local petty kings, or who paid Muslim leaders dearly for the right to participate in the trade. Merchants organized into guilds or hanses also grasped this, obtaining from a king or a count the exclusive right to trade along a particular route. When the burghers attained control of city governments, they knew how to use political power to secure their business interests, to dominate and exploit the surrounding peasantry, and to subdue rival cities, as the Florentines did to the Sienese. Later, once the cities had been brought under royal authority, they knew how to take advantage of that augmented power to expand, in its shadow, the reach of their commercial operations. Thus, the idea that all lucrative activity entailed a certain privilege, and that whoever held power could secure that privilege for

himself, stems from the earliest experiences of these groups.

All of this constituted the spontaneous practice of urban economic life—the activity of those who, if asked, perhaps still professed belief in the principles of the just price and the prohibition of usury. Little by little, this practice gave rise to a new theory. When the urban economy became incorporated into the framework of national monarchies, this practice, without much change, received a name and an objective formulation: mercantilism. More than a pure doctrine, it is a set of often contradictory principles that reflect the experiences of the new economy, mixed with many practical ideas characteristic of the old structure. The laws of the market—of supply and demand—appear mixed with the principles of privilege and monopoly. The theory of a stable currency is relativized by the dominant fiscal needs of the state. The principle of the circulation of wealth is combined with the practice of hoarding and the idea that a state is stronger the more metal it accumulates. The principle of individual profit often proves contradictory to the criteria of the greatness of the state and the nation. Finally, the idea that the market has its own laws—just as nature does—never fully separates itself from the notion that kings—like a *Deus ex machina*—can and must regulate it. It was only in the eighteenth century, with the physiocrats, Adam Smith, and liberalism in general, that economic thought came to express itself in terms as clear and explicit as, in another sphere, scientific thought does.

6. Ethics, Religion, and Metaphysics

Over time, ethics acquires in modern philosophical thought an autonomy that it did not have in the Christian-feudal conception, and this already constitutes a rupture. In the traditional conception, ethical problems are entirely contained within religious belief, to the point that one could say traditional ethics resides in the Decalogue. The very fact that a discipline dedicated to examining this problem eventually emerged signifies a crisis: the problem of morality has become secularized, and thus a special discipline, ethics, has emerged. In the theological conception, ethics is merely the development of one of the ideas, grounded in certain aspects of theological thought; it is not a domain deserving of particular examination, because it does not exist in and of itself: it is simply a derivation of the central problem, the problem of God and what He has established for eternity.

As a problem, ethics existed in Greek and Roman thought. It was Christianity that could not assign it a specific field, because religious thought presupposed a wholly implicit theory of conduct. The first feature of that implicit ethics is its dogmatic character: ethics is merely an explication of the Decalogue; the latter is the cornerstone of ethical thought, of ethical conduct. Around it an edifice is constructed that incorporates certain practices, always grounded in texts: the *Book of Job*, certain

Psalms. All ethics rests upon a revealed truth: the eternal validity of a set of norms is affirmed, norms whose formulation is general and which refer to eternal problems of human conduct. But there is undoubtedly a number of dimensions that do not refer to eternal problems. For example, 'Thou shalt not steal' is an expression that makes sense only within a certain system of property: in a communal type of organization it makes less sense than in one where private property is firmly established. Other concepts are less general and more practical than 'Thou shalt not kill' or 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain,' but all share a dogmatic foundation.

Based on this, it is assumed that these moral principles, which have a dogmatic foundation, also have universal validity: they are not historical, they do not depend on a specific type of society, but rather are eternal. The norm is immutable; it is not subject to controversy or adjustment by a society that believes, for example, that one should not steal except under certain circumstances, and that in other circumstances this might be permissible. The norm is dogmatic, immutable, and ahistorical.

Alongside these elements, which Christian ethics draws from religious doctrine, there are certain traits that stem from typical features of feudal society, such as norms regarding loyalty and obedience, which shape a practical ethics. The ethics of loyalty is characteristic of heroic knighthood, whose attitudes and ideals, of Germanic origin, are different from and even opposed to Christian ones. Yet, as the reasoning is doctrinally grounded, this conduct is in the service of the faith; the heroic act, for all its cruelty and wickedness, is justified insofar as it is carried out in defense of the faith. The knight is a hero to whom everything is permitted, because he acts in order to serve and uphold the faith. Thus, in the *Song of Roland*, one of the principal figures performing feats of this nature is Bishop Turpin, who behaves like any warrior, but blesses the knights before entering battle. Implicit in this blessing is the basic principle: the defense of the faith justifies heroic, non-Christian conduct. With regard to obedience, this virtue belongs to the lower classes; for a serf, it is equivalent in merit to what death in defense of the faith is for a knight. These are the actual forms that ethical principles take when adjusted to feudal society, and they reveal their true historicity, beyond any claim to immutability.

The Christian-feudal component of this ethic has a dual root, Jewish and Christian, that is, the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament aligns with one of the various lines of thought found in the Old Testament—that of the Book of Isaiah, the Prophets, and Deuteronomy—but not with the thought of what is called the religion of the Temple, that is, the Levitical religion. The difference is quite significant, for if two currents exist, one may choose one or the other without denying the dogmatic foundation and the immutability of the norm. That is to say, one can mount a revolution against one current, opting for the other while finding support in the same principles. If someone challenges any of the principles of the Decalogue in the name of another system of values, they behave like a pagan because they defy the foundations of Christian ethics with principles that are

foreign to it. This is the case, for example, when contradicting the principle of not coveting one's neighbor's wife in the name of the Greek theory of love. But if, on the other hand, one chooses from Judeo-Christian ethics an existing idea that is not favored by orthodoxy, a similar confrontation can arise without denying the foundations. This is what the heretics of the eleventh or twelfth century did: they took the text of the New Testament, they took the words of Christ from his most sublime and idealistic moments of preaching, and hurled them against the feudal Church. No one could accuse them of paganism.

Thus, when they recall that Christ affirms that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, they are articulating a challenge to the morality of the Temple. This corresponds to one of the great traditions coexisting in the Bible: that of ritualist orthodoxy, in which the foundations of religion are rites, formal observance. Against this line—against the Pharisees and ritualism—the Prophets rise up first and Christ later: the faithful, simple man was not made for rites; these must serve to strengthen and formalize the believer's faith, but they are not sufficient, for what is truly important is faith and goodness of heart, virtue, and related goods. This controversy between the morality of the Temple—which would later become, in some respects, bourgeois morality—and the spiritualist current resurfaces from time to time in the Church, from St. Francis onward, with the same characteristic: the battle against orthodoxy is waged grounded in particular biblical texts.

In sum, the currents rooted in Christian doctrinal thought and in the developments of scholasticism present an essentially dogmatic morality, supported by absolute foundations and with eternal and immutable norms. On the other hand, a practical morality developed from the forms of life proper to seigneurial society: loyalty toward the upper classes and obedience toward the lower classes. Finally, there remains the virtuality, the potential for a religious revival of a spiritual kind, grounded in the Christian prophetic tradition, which is anti-formalist.

This is the context in which the bourgeois mentality emerges, making distinctive contributions to the field of ethics. The forms of life characteristic of the urban bourgeoisie require a new system of norms; some are legal norms, established through contracts: the debtor's good faith is a moral norm established on the basis of the predominant type of activity in cities, and beyond what is legislated, there remains a moral norm that functions by virtue of consensus. The same is true of the norms regarding bourgeois family life, which are not grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, nor in the Christian-feudal tradition, nor in the Roman tradition, since the Roman family was not a Christian family.

In short, society and the forms of urban life require an entire system of norms that have no eternal, immutable, or divine foundation, but rather emerge from communal life. They relate to family life,

commercial activity, and erotic activities, all of which take on a singular form in the city. They are also linked to person-to-person relationships within the enclosed urban environment, through forms of courtesy and mutual respect. Furthermore, a series of demands arises from the peculiarities of a society that is becoming strongly individualistic: respect for personal intimacy and private life.

These norms find no easy support in the Christian-feudal tradition. Outside the seignorial class, the family carries a very particular meaning, one that can hardly be reconciled with that which is characteristic of bourgeois society. Peasants of servile origin who came to join the bourgeoisie had first to win their freedom before they could constitute a family. And this new bourgeois family elaborates a new morality, one that governs mutual relationships, erotic life, the privacy of each of its members, the relations between parents and children, matters of modesty, and the like. All of this signifies the creation of a new morality, constituted simultaneously with bourgeois society, which is codified under a revealing name: urbanity. The rules of urbanity are those of urban society, where there are things that cannot be done—things that are neither sin nor crime but constitute a violation of the norms of communal life.

Together, these norms constitute a new morality. They do not claim a sacred origin; developed through coexistence and fundamentally through consent, they are historical and not absolute. Consequently, they are mutable. We are faced with a secular morality that is set against a background of basic norms that are sacred but insufficient to resolve the problems of coexistence. This set of norms, which vary according to different communities and arise from consent, forms a morality with a social foundation — one that rests not on the revealed word or on divine principle but on the consent of the community. What is immoral for one group at one moment may not be so for another group, or for that same group at another moment.

In the context of this secularized, historical morality—born of the social bond and knowing no foundation other than the consent of the social group—the weakness of its foundation becomes apparent, especially when measured against the solidity of the religious foundation. A community accepts that, for it, a norm is inviolable and is capable of sanctioning those who transgress it in various ways. The foundation of this norm is a mysterious consensus, whereby everyone agrees by common and tacit accord to defend it. But, measured against the standard of the sacred, this is a weak foundation. An attempt to rationalize the foundation then emerges. In this second stage, ethics born of experience is succeeded by an attempt at ethics founded on reason, as Spinoza and Kant undertook to do.

The fundamental point of this reasoning is Kant's famous aphorism: 'Act in such a way that your conduct could be established as a universal rule'. To do so, it must have something akin to a

religious foundation, for mere consensus is historical; it comes and goes. The line of philosophy that emerged from the bourgeoisie, and which we know as modern thought, discovers that the counterpart to the religious foundation is the rational foundation. Reason in the abstract, disregarding the vicissitudes of history, reaches the conclusion that a certain norm is rational, and this confers upon it a foundation as solid as the religious one.

How can this new morality be reconciled with the traditional one? This entire set of moral norms did not arise from any intention to establish a new morality, but rather as the fruit of spontaneous communal life. Only at a certain point does it become apparent that, taken together, all of these norms constitute a new morality. In some cases they are clearly contradictory and untenable, and in such cases — setting aside the fact that everyone in general continues to observe the traditional norms, and indeed, without anyone even conceiving of the possibility of rejecting them — the old norms are gradually replaced by new ones, refined and worked toward greater nuance. This is the first form of adaptation. Progressively, it is discovered that, when brought together, these norms compose a moral world that is subject to debate. One of the central points of that debate is the foundation of this moral world, and the achievement of theoretical thought lies in finding for it a rational foundation that places it above history.

This does not resolve the problems of adequacy, especially in certain fields such as work or wealth, where reconciliation is nearly impossible. Let us consider the issue of work. Many theological and practical discussions revolve around the theme of Martha and Mary: one laborious and the other devoted to praying and serving God; Christ naturally leans in favor of the latter. For bourgeois men, however, merit lies not in devotion, and still less in idleness, but in work. The issue will ultimately be resolved by Calvinism, but the elaboration of this theme is far older. Alongside it stands the question of the morality of profit. In the New Testament it is written: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. And yet there is also a morality of wealth, which must be upheld in some way. One possibility is to scour the sacred texts in search of some alternative to the dominant version; another is to repeat the canonical version on Sundays, during Mass, and forget it the rest of the days, adhering instead to that other, socially grounded norm, according to which being rich is a virtue.

The ethics of work and the ethics of wealth constitute the two critical points of the new bourgeois morality—those where it is most difficult to conceal their incompatibility with the traditional system, and where the incipient anti-bourgeois, or more precisely anti-patrician, movements will find the greatest scope for pressure. The accusations against wealth are directed not at the old lords, owners of a traditional and unquestioned wealth, but at the new urban rich, who bear the character of the Roman publican. Many turn against these men—wealthy for only a generation or two—throwing passages from the Bible in their faces. This is precisely what Francis of Assisi does when he returns

his clothes to his father, a Faced with this, the bourgeoisie defends itself by creating an ad hoc morality, which has no foundation other than consent and can have none, since the elaboration of a rational foundation is a lengthy undertaking that would not come to fruition until the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Meanwhile, the Reformation — a typically bourgeois religious variant — endeavors to find in the Old Testament texts that extol the ethics of work and others that extol the ethics of reward in this world, as can be found in the *Book of Job*. Thus Geneva gives rise to that formidable closed community which makes work and wealth the supreme virtue, for both Francis of Assisi and Calvin were able to ground their positions in the Old and New Testaments alike.

Calvin fully expresses one of the variants that the bourgeois mentality introduces into forms of religiosity. The Christian idea of reward and punishment is transferred from the afterlife to this world, transformed into success or failure: in practical occupations, in business, in a political venture, one can find unmistakable signs of God's reward or punishment. Here, then, is the reaction against the entire dominant line of the Old and New Testaments, which asserts that human life is merely a passage to eternal life. Calvin can uphold the opposite position in the *Book of Job*. The force of the biblical text is such that it was not even easy to confront it with another biblical text, for then one would enter the dangerous terrain of exegesis and man would become the arbiter of the text.

It is well known that the *Book of Job* is a polemical text, in which different lines of interpretation coexist. The two friends who visit Job and attempt to explain the misfortunes that have befallen him represent Temple morality. The first maintains that the misfortunes stem from some great sin of Job's, while the second asserts that God does not act in that manner. From there arises a vast controversy, which Descartes and Malebranche would later take up. The latter, and Occasionalism in general, assert that God is everywhere, that everything that happens is a sign of God's will. From there to the notion of reward and punishment is but a single step. This is the line of the Jansenists of Port-Royal. The other thesis, held by Descartes, posits that God is not concerned with anything, that He has granted man free will and draws up a final account at the moment of death. From this derives the deist conception according to which God gave men free will and nature its laws, whereby God's dominion is considerably removed from human conduct.

The most distinctive variations that the bourgeois mentality introduces into forms of religiosity are those related to the role of the individual. In this strongly individualistic society, religious sentiment acquires a particular character, one form of which is mysticism: a conception according to which an individual, through a psychological act, can enter into direct contact with the divine, without the intervention of the Church as an intermediary. The Church rejects this, and condemned it whenever it could—though not always, because mysticism can be compatible with the most fervent declarations of respect for the Church. The mystic, like Saint Teresa or Saint John of the Cross, presents the experience as a gift from God. It is not the individual who has sought God—which would

be sinful, and which the Church could condemn as a diabolical act—but God who seeks the individual. Ecstasy can be explained as the work of divine grace. But all of this ultimately means that there exists, for the individual, the possibility of a personal religion—one that does not require the Church as an intermediary.

Without needing to go to the extremes of mysticism, individualism manifests itself in small signs of virtue, through which each individual believes he has the possibility of a special role in the Ecclesia, that is, in the community of the faithful. He may be closer to God if, because he is an important person, the priest seats him in the front row, next to the choir. He may be closer to God if he has a great deal of money and commissions a painter to produce a large crucifix, at the foot of which he himself is depicted praying. These are all forms of virtue, in which the individual feels he occupies a singular position relative to others.

This is a revolution that reaches its corollary on the day Luther asserts that the Church is not necessarily an intermediary — no longer between God and man, but between the divine Text and man. It is possible and permissible for every Christian to confront the sacred text and interpret it in his own way, which, as is widely recognized, led to the loss of the ecumenical character of the Church and the emergence of countless sects.

In summary, the bourgeois mentality manifests itself in the realm of religiosity in multiple ways. One is the transfer of the notion of reward and punishment from heaven to earth; another is the individualistic interpretation of doctrine, which takes the extreme form of mysticism, the practical form of the almsgiver or the donor, or the doctrinal form of the individual who interprets the sacred text without the need for intermediaries.

Let us conclude with a few words on metaphysics. In the Christian-feudal conception, there is no metaphysics but only theology. If the term metaphysics means beyond nature, it is evident that in sacred doctrine what lay beyond was God and the world of the sacred. The mere fact that metaphysics appears as a speculative discipline indicates that the subject of what lies beyond sensible reality has become secularized; that is to say, the idea—previously taken as definitive truth—that everything beyond sensible reality is God has ceased to have validity.

The first response to this is that of idealism, with Descartes and Leibniz. God is at the foundation and above all reality, but a little closer, between reality and God, there is something about which it is possible to inquire. There is a sensible reality, of which the senses give us only a deceptive image. What remains of the object I undoubtedly see, if the light goes out? The object disappears, but the idea I have formed of it does not disappear. Thus, behind sensible reality lies the idea. If one

considers the entire world of Cartesian ideas, one discovers that it amounts, roughly speaking, to a kind of secularized God. And this is, on the level of ideas, a revolution.

Empiricism, for its part, asserts that reality exists, since it is known through the senses. But, as Bishop Berkeley asserts, when it is not looked at, it does not exist. This empiricism admits the possibility that sensible reality disappears when knowledge—which is always experiential—is not in operation; when asked about that which lies beyond sensible reality, it does not affirm, but doubts. The characteristic of empiricism is not to deny the possibility of such knowledge: it is agnosticism. There exists something, beyond sensible reality, which in the tradition of faith is God, and in the rational tradition is the world of thought. In the empirical tradition, however, it is the world of the unknown, whose existence is neither affirmed nor denied.

7. The Idea of History

The idea of what history is and what its proper subjects are was forged by Greek and Roman historians, who did not have a highly developed theory but nonetheless practiced history extensively. If we set aside Herodotus, who proposed a different path, and consider Thucydides, Livy, or Tacitus, it is clear that for them the only thing amenable to historical treatment is political life, the struggle for power.

A different model emerged in the third century with Eusebius of Caesarea, who set out to write the history of Christianity and discovered the inadequacy of the classical framework. It was not the history of an institution with a defined structure but rather of small communities, of groups that, within the framework of the Empire, had developed a distinctive form of life. He had to make an abstraction, and instead of speaking of kings or emperors, he spoke of certain social groups, in the same way that nineteenth-century historians did when they sought to write the history of the labor movement and isolated, from society as a whole, those who belonged to the unions. But at the same time, Eusebius had to account for a doctrine and its evolution, the divergences, the creation of dogmas, the orthodoxies and heterodoxies. Thus, he invented a new dimension of historical analysis: the history of ideas.

When the Christian-feudal conception took shape—the framework within which the bourgeois conception of history would emerge—Eusebius of Caesarea served as the first historiographical model, which was later integrated, in St. Augustine, with the models offered by the Bible: those of *Genesis* and *Exodus*; then the *Chronicles*, *Kings*—all quite political texts; also the *Book of Maccabees*, and from the New Testament, the *Acts of the Apostles*. With all of this, St. Augustine constructs the

model of the Christian theory of history. Creation, viewed from the Creator's perspective, is a timeless creation, established in eternity. History is of interest to humans but not to God, since in creating His creatures He has created all of history. In God's mind there is no present, past, or future, for divine omniscience implies the simultaneity of all times. This is Providentialism: what for humans is present, past, and future, for God is all present; and what for humans are unknowns, for God is omniscience. Thus, everything that occurs in history—and which the historian must narrate—is what St. Augustine calls the unfolding of the divine plan. This preordained nature of what is historical for humans is crystallized in a phrase typical of medieval history or chronicles: so that what is written may be fulfilled. Any notion of causality is eliminated, since the ultimate cause is simply the will of God.

Pushed to its limit, this line of reasoning leaves man without free will. This problem — that of free will — is the most arduous in Christian theology. If there is no free will, there is no responsibility, no confession, no reward, and no punishment. This is a contradiction implicit in the doctrine, which St. Augustine articulates as a doubt. From that doubt springs the controversy, characteristic of the Reformation, between free will and grace. God grants the grace of salvation, the Protestants will say, and to this end ensures that an individual does not commit sins; this is part of the divine plan. Calvin drew an extreme conclusion from this: what sin proves is that God has already condemned the sinner, that the sinner was already predestined, and that God has willed him to sin. And if God has so willed it, the sinner is already punished before he begins to act. In Catholic theory, man retains a margin, and free will is manifested in works. The formulation of Luther — also an Augustinian — is: the just man is saved by faith.

All Christian-feudal historiography, whose most characteristic form is the chronicle, is dominated by the idea of providentialism: human events are merely the fulfillment of the divine plan, and therefore the cause—even the most immediate one—is always the will of God. The problem of theology is to try to clarify what can be known of the divine plan. It is known with certainty that there is an end point for humanity: the Judgment, for God has determined that humanity live on earth for a certain time, until the moment He so decides. For a time, it was believed that this period would end a thousand years after the coming of Christ and that the Millennium would bring with it the Last Judgment. Those who did not accept this timeframe associated the End with the Apocalypse: a total disruption of the natural order in which—as John the Theologian said—the sign of the Last Judgment is to be found. At that moment, the resurrection of the bodies will take place, and God will call all mortals who have ever lived, generation after generation, to judgment. Another thing known with certainty is how God wishes to be served and worshiped and what He thinks about what man ought or ought not to do: such are the Commandments. Theology sought to clarify everything that was legitimate to know, separating it from that which, because it belongs to God's infinite thought, man can never know. It also asserted that it was a sin to try to know more than was fitting: hence the

condemnation of natural science and the sacrilegious attempts to know what God has hidden. What is lawful is to thoroughly examine the revealed word, so that commentary might extract the last drop of the wisdom that God has willed to be known, but nothing more.

All Christian-feudal historiography is inspired by this position. Along with its most typical form, the chronicle, one finds hagiography. The hagiographer can deduce from the behavior of one of God's chosen ones what forms God attributes to the chosen, and what models He proposes for human conduct. On the other hand, the typical historiographical form of feudal society is the epic, the narration of the hero's exploits. Through contact with the Christian conception, the exploit became a sign of divine will. The hero was likened to a saint and, in the absence of an ascetic life or miraculous deeds, devoted himself to defending the Christian faith on earth. Thus, hagiography and chronicle ultimately merge into a single conception: the exploit is the fruit of God's will, and success is entreated from God, who may or may not grant it.

At a certain point, the conception of history ceases to be grounded in the providentialist thesis, and the history of man begins to be conceived in a secular manner. This change occurs within the framework of a new conception of man, of ethics, of the economy, of society—of everything that constitutes the new bourgeois mentality.

The secularization of the new conception of history consists, first and foremost, in assuming that the scope of human free will is vast — so much so that freedom appears to be total. In the explanations the historian begins to offer, it becomes clear that, even if God's will were written into events, it is a remote will, whereas what interests him is natural causality. It may happen that, at the close of a narrative recounting a series of struggles between opposing factions, he declares: such was the will of God — which is a form of what we call concealment. But in his explanation he does not claim that the social struggles determined by the opposition between two groups can be omitted, nor that one can simply say: God caused the civil struggles in Florence to arise. He seeks to comprehensively understand what happened, who the protagonists were, how the conflict began, and what the pretext was. This distinction between cause and pretext is fundamental, for divine will is being pushed ever further into the background. It may have consisted in the creation of the circumstances, but when it comes to clarifying phenomena, one must abandon the appeal to ultimate causes and, instead, seek out the immediate ones.

This new conception is manifested in the emergence of the urban chronicle. In the Christian-feudal period, chronicles of kings and kingdoms abound—that is, of the seigneurial class, the king, and power struggles—all underpinned by a powerful and enduring providentialist conception. The urban chronicle presents new ways of constructing the narrative and analyzing social, economic, and

political events, because the type of society is different, and also because the chronicler holds a different conception of man, of political and economic life, and of ethics. It renders its protagonists not as warriors sent by God to defeat infidels, or as ascetic saints performing miracles in the Thebaid, but as flesh-and-blood beings driven by human motivations and acting within a society that operates according to this new ethics. The urban chronicle is a revolution in the conception of history, whose most characteristic feature is the emergence of a new natural causality in the explanation of phenomena, corresponding to the emergence of the new mentality.

Urban chronicles developed primarily in the fourteenth century, but this group also includes Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*, written in the style of Giovanni Villani, the great chronicler of Florence. It is remarkable how, in a thinker who has radicalized the principles of the bourgeois mentality, all these traits are fully manifested. For Machiavelli, profanity is the only thing that counts, and when he must speak of the existence of an imponderable factor that has intervened to give a certain turn to a process, he does not say the will of God but Fortune, in the Roman manner. With chance, a profane motivation enters the picture. When he has to explain the historical process, he says: it can be affirmed that half of what men do is the fruit of their will, and the other half of Fortune. In the interplay of causes, he discovers that these suddenly come apart, beyond anything foreseeable—not only in human terms but in divine ones as well—thereby radicalizing the thesis of profanity.

This thesis is fully developed in another historiographical form, characteristic of this conception, which is biography — a sort of new version of hagiography. The bourgeois mentality has discovered that the individual is fundamental, that he is a microcosm, that he possesses autonomy; it is therefore worthwhile to write the history of the man who has done extraordinary things, but considering him as possessing the necessary capacities to do these things, that is, as a being of reason and will. Machiavelli makes this clear in a famous biography, *The Life of Castruccio Castracani, Lord of Lucca*, whose story he tells not in the manner of the figures of epic or the saints, but in the manner of Plutarch. Man is the son of his deeds, and at the same time their master. He is a profane, natural being, subject to instincts and passions, but above all a being of reason and will. He lives as he wills and acts as he chooses, and it is worth telling the story of his thoughts and actions according to his absolute free will, because in this conception of man, free will ceases to acknowledge any limits — and when it does, it is not the will of God but Fortune.

The theme of Fortune is the most important of the entire period, and the most revealing of the predominance of the profane conception. There is a famous poem by Juan de Mena, from the fifteenth century, called the *Labyrinth of Fortune*, and a famous work by Petrarch: *Remedies Against Prosperous and Adverse Fortune*. This is closely connected to superstition — those remedies being designed to conjure away the arbitrary. In antiquity there is an entire ancient tradition that accounts,

through a series of cases, for the existence of a wholly uncontrollable chance; and chance is the profane — it is an indeterminable natural cause — without prejudice to the fact that there also exists a chance that constitutes a determinable, though as yet unknown, natural cause.

Apart from the idea of Fortune, which explains little or does so negatively, the historiography of the bourgeois era, at the end of the Middle Ages or during the Renaissance, lacked a coherent conception of history, as providentialism had. The idea of Fortune not only fails to lend coherence to the historical narrative but confirms its incoherence. If something unforeseen and unpredictable disrupts the thread, it is because history is not coherent. At first, this insistence is a way of affirming the profane character of history, of marking the extent to which history is not providential: a minor accident, such as the tile that kills Pyrrhus, shakes the entire edifice—which seemed ordered toward a specific end—and the order of history appears to be disrupted. In the early stage of historiography inspired by the bourgeois mentality, there is a deliberate will to affirm the incoherence of historical life, which is a way of rejecting the providentialist thesis.

Once this principle of profanity is accepted, a new coherence with the idea of reason begins to emerge in history. This idea matures in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It permeates history inspired by the bourgeois mentality and, while legitimizing the new image of man, proposes an order for the coherent development linking past, present, and future. Man does not live to prove the divine plan but to prove full rationality, and the meaning of history is the progressive conquest of rationality. Every step in history is another stage in the conquest of rationality—that is, of the profane—and we call the succession of steps in that conquest progress. This is the idea expressed by Voltaire and formulated in canonical form by Condorcet. Simultaneously, beginning in the sixteenth century and as a reminiscence of antiquity, the idea of the cycle—of eternal return—emerged; it was developed in seventeenth-century Italy by Giovanni Battista Vico. In certain spheres, such as Greek or Roman culture, linear progress occurs, a high degree of rationality is attained, and suddenly it collapses entirely and a new cycle begins. This is an idea completely foreign to that of progress, and it is almost coincidental that it should appear in the eighteenth century. It cannot be understood within this line of development but rather in relation to the future Romantic mentality.

This conception of history as progressive conquest drew upon an idea from the old Christian tradition: not only do men have a history, but so does each of their creations separately. The eighteenth century invented the history of human activities—of art, of philosophy, of literature. It is remarkable that this did not appear before the eighteenth century. What Eusebius of Caesarea did with the history of Christianity, treating it as the history of an idea, was now taken up again, and not by chance: what Eusebius had seen as God's creation, eighteenth-century philosophers saw as man's creation. Creatures and abstract creations were made subjects of historical inquiry, and it was

assumed that each of them displayed a phase of the human spirit and deserved contemplation of its process in the abstract, separate from everything else. Thus Winckelmann writes the history of ancient art and Tiraboschi that of Italian literature—works that had never been attempted before and out of which grew the histories of the particular forms of human creation.

One of the basic ideas organizing the bourgeois conception of history is that of the subject: it concerns a closed community, such as an urban one, or humanity as a whole, but considered as entirely autonomous human groups, with a very wide margin of free will, which perhaps at one extreme touches upon the will of God but which, from an operational standpoint, functions as if they were truly rational beings endowed with will. The second basic idea is that of reason, which operates practically as a divinity. It has often been said that eighteenth-century reason is the secularization of God, and that almost everything theologians attributed to God is attributed to it as well. Reason dominates the world; it is creative, that is to say, the world is rational. If examined closely, one will probably find that many, if not all, of God's attributes have gradually accrued to the idea of reason. The third idea is that of progress, whereby the aim is to establish the linear relationship between the various degrees of rationality.

Originally, the antagonism between this conception and the Christian one is total. The latter does not disappear, and it has its high points, as in the seventeenth century when it served Bossuet, at the height of rationalism, to underpin the thesis of the divine right of kings. Later there are forms of reconciliation, such as that of Romanticism, and subsequently it persists, as a secondary and vulgar tendency, to this day, while the conception of the elites becomes decidedly rationalist.

8. The Meaning of Aesthetic Creation

Among the set of changes in various fields that we associate with the formation of the bourgeois mentality, we must include those linked to the sense of aesthetic creation. Here an interesting, though somewhat unclear, theoretical problem arises that is worth analyzing. Aesthetic creation is not merely a matter of mentality but a phenomenon of sensibility. The emergence of a change in mentality—that is, a change in ideas related to the interpretation of reality—occurs alongside a change in sensibility. This is difficult to define, but the fact is that specific societies and communities exhibited, in addition to a tendency to think in a certain way, a certain way of feeling, a certain repertoire of tastes, and a certain preference for choosing some tastes over others. These phenomena have been studied only superficially, but there are some very clear signs. In music, there is a transition from monody to polyphony, and then a certain return to monody itself, or to melody with accompaniment. In architecture, at certain moments a preference for the dominance of

height begins to emerge: the Romanesque temple is horizontal, while the Gothic style develops vertically. All of this has been studied through what is called the image of space. It is not, however, an intellectual fact. There is, in principle, no reason to prefer one proposition over another. What lies behind these changes? We do not know, and yet it is a fundamental fact.

The phenomena of sensibility manifest themselves as spontaneous preferences for a certain type of aesthetic expression, which implies a representation of reality, without our knowing clearly what that representation consists of. They are psychological phenomena, both individual and social, whose clearest expression is fashion. Such changes in preferences, whether subtle or profound, are nonetheless fundamental historical facts that must be explained. One possibility is to link different phenomena presumed to be similar: to associate, for example, Chopin with Delacroix or Musset and designate the whole as Romanticism. But strictly speaking, this does not yet explain very much. As social facts, these phenomena have two consequences. The first is that, after having taken root for some time, a certain intellectual content is discovered in them and they are rationalized. In the case of the Gothic, for example, the predominance of verticality is linked to a certain form of elevation toward God. The second is the conversion of adherence to certain changes in taste into status symbols. Certain elites take on the role of vanguards, introducing and promoting changes, while others choose to defend and maintain traditional or academic forms; adherence to one or the other form of sensibility thus ceases to be a matter of personal taste and becomes a question of identification and belonging to one group or the other.

Certainly this is a complex field, in which it is difficult to pinpoint the links between one phenomenon and another. We know, however, for reasons of chronology and style, that phenomena of sensibility have something to do with those of mentality. It is difficult to demonstrate how a Chopin polonaise resembles Lamartine's *Graziella*, and yet we know that their creation and reception coincide with Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, whose premiere caused a scandal similar to that of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. All of this contributes to creating a meaningful picture, even if it is not easy to define.

Starting from this unresolved problem, I aim to show how the emergence of bourgeois mentality corresponds to changes in sensibility. One could speak of the passage from a Christian-feudal sensibility to a bourgeois one—a sensibility oriented toward rationalization and toward phenomena of social prestige that connect with changes in mentality.

It is curious to discover that before the economic expansion of the eleventh century—that is, before this bourgeois revolution—there was almost no creation proper in Europe. There are no significant references in the history of literature. Nor in the history of architecture, perhaps because the era of wars and invasions is not conducive to construction. Tenth-century Europe continued to live in

Roman-era buildings, and alongside them in huts—that is, a functional, ephemeral architecture in which no element of aesthetic concern had yet emerged. European cities were for a long time cities of huts: the roof tile, for example, did not appear until the sixteenth century. Before the eleventh century, there was no architecture, except on a very small scale: perhaps thirty large buildings throughout all of Europe. It was, in fact, the impact of large human concentrations that provided sufficient stimulus for a great constructive will to suddenly emerge and, along with it, an aesthetic inclination. When this impact occurred, there was no defined style, and so new works began to be produced in the old style. Certainly, it is not easy to create a style: it is usually the result of countless efforts, of many attempted formulations, of a slow selection of elements that finally harmonize to form a system we call style. When, in an eleventh-century city, a new church had to be built, the bourgeois groups, lacking a style of their own, constructed it according to the models available to them, such as Roman monuments. Yet in the process of imitation, modifications were introduced, thus initiating a phase of creation that we might call the second Christian-feudal sensibility; contemporary with the early development of cities, it nonetheless remains imitative of earlier forms.

There is an urban form of creation, of an imitative nature, and a rural one, in the great abbeys for example, which serves the feudal classes. But this rural and feudal creation begins to be possible because there are cities, because there is a bourgeois movement, which is what provides the lords, through various channels, with the money to build. Creation thus begins to be produced for the great lords — those who possess abundant resources, who have people in their service, and who are beginning to have money because they are benefiting from the impact of the new economic forms. Thus, indirectly, the emergence of the bourgeois world favors creation in the non-bourgeois world.

A style then emerges that we might call, in very general terms, of Christian-bourgeois inspiration. Romanesque architecture appears, characterized by its elongated horizontal form and the round arch, which imitates the classical Roman temples. Since Christian worship required a bell, and since a tower was useful to the abbey or the city for keeping watch for the enemy, a tower and a bell were placed nearby; for a long time these remained outside the building's structure, much like the muezzin's tower in Arab architecture. It was a stylistic challenge to find a way to incorporate the tower into a horizontal structure, transforming it into a horizontal structure with an incorporated tower, generally as an extension of one of the three naves. This is perhaps the most spectacular creation, to which others in sculpture and painting correspond. Many frescoes and panel paintings have been preserved, along with numerous sculptural or pictorial representations of saints that in some way evoke their model. This model is not Roman painting—virtually unknown in the medieval European world—but Byzantine painting. In the literary field, the major genres are the epic, the lyric, and, to some extent, the old historical chronicle, which is less a literary creation than a bare inventory of events. In the field of music, Gregorian chant makes its appearance.

All of this corresponds to the Christian-feudal inspiration. What is most remarkable is that, although every aesthetic creation materializes in a building, a sculpture, or a narrative, the predominant effort is directed toward ensuring that matter evokes something that is not material but rather a symbol, an allegory. The aim is for the material forms of creation to evoke something transcendent. Particularly where there is more vibration and less functionality, all the elements are arranged in such a way that matter tends to negate itself. There is what we might call a true elusion of the natural. What are the signs of this appeal to transcendence, to the symbolic, to the allegorical, of this escape from the natural? The first sign is the lack of dynamism: a Romanesque sculpture is characterized by being profoundly static, because the artist has no wish to convey the impression that his subject moves. This is partly because that was the Byzantine model, and partly because the artist himself has no intention or desire to introduce or suggest change. The figure conveys a sense of downward pull; it is a dead weight; even when an element is hinted at that might suggest movement, it is rendered with such technical awkwardness and adherence to Byzantine models that the movement tends to remain imperceptible.

The typical image is the crucifix: there, the dead figure is the truest expression of Christian-feudal inspiration, where it is unnecessary to represent any movement. But when it comes to living figures, the representation is technically done in the same way, as if dynamism were a dimension not pursued. Later pictorial representation, identifiable with the bourgeois mentality, is characterized by a formidable pursuit of the representation of movement.

The second element is that of so-called flat painting: there is a rejection, an omission of the idea of volume, and no technique is employed to convey it. On the contrary, there is a reduction of creation to the flat figure. Finally, there is a distinctive preoccupation with transforming plastic expression into temporal expression, giving rise to what is called narrative painting — a cinematographic kind of painting — achieved either through the repetition of a figure with slight modifications in its movements, or through two successive scenes indicating that one action took place before another, as is the case with miracle paintings.

Thus, this type of representation, which seeks transcendence and does not wish to emphasize materiality, is not concerned with space but is concerned with time. Painting of the bourgeois type, by contrast, maintains a sense of temporal unity, as Aristotle would say. In Romanesque painting, however, it is not the observer's eye that is perceived but the mind of the one who is thinking, who can conceive of a temporal succession. This disappears in post-Giotto painting, in which the scene appears as such, depicting everything that is happening at a single moment, exactly as an observer would see it. Romanesque representation is far more intellectual than perceptual, and is characteristic of the Christian conception, according to which the material world is base and worthless, and what is valuable is the world of ideas or of the spirit.

The most typical creation of the feudal world is the epic—or poetry of historical commemoration intended to praise the medieval hero, who belongs to one of the great seigneurial families or is their distant ancestor. The way to achieve this is by endowing him with supernatural attributes and elevating him into a near-mythical figure, which is also a way of evading natural reality. There is also an escape from nature. In painting, the depiction of the human figure is complemented by that of animals or plants, as seen in the capitals. There, what is depicted is not the local and familiar fauna but the partridge, the dove, or the lions—that is, the beasts of the Apocalypse. These were not animals observed but conceived, and in some cases rendered after models such as Persian monuments—symbolic and highly stylized representations. If we add the absence of color or the one-sided preference for a single hue, we arrive at a fully delineated attitude of refusing to imitate nature, and even of escaping from it.

Perhaps we can start from here to contrast this type of aesthetic creation with that inspired by the bourgeois mentality, whose defining characteristic is, on the contrary, the representation of nature. It took the bourgeoisie a long time to develop a stereotype, consisting in abandoning this escape from nature, this search for allegory and symbol, this pursuit of the transcendent, in order to create a style in tune with its image of man and nature, with its sensibility, which is naturalistic. One must look to the thirteenth century, to Cimabue and Giotto and the naturalistic sculpture of the Gothic period, where fundamental changes suddenly appear. From then on, the bourgeois sensibility begins to seek its own style, and although it takes some time to refine it, it manifests itself from the outset through certain signs.

One such sign is the treatment of drapery. What characterizes a human figure in Romanesque sculpture? From the point of view of its execution, it consists of a face, beneath a large hat and connected by a suggested neck to a large drape that in no way conveys the physical form. The first thing bourgeois art does is give movement to the drapery, so that it conveys the shape of the human body: the breasts, the waist, the thigh, with a slight forward movement of the leg. Painting ceases to be flat and begins to seek the representation of volume. So-called tactile painting is equivalent to a sculpture based on volumes, where the human figure is fundamentally conveyed through the shape of the drapery. But a certain type of fold also appears—that of purple cloth and velvet—which possesses an almost carnal sensuality, and this becomes one of the artist's fundamental objectives. The mantle of the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Madonna, and even more so in Raphael, not only conveys the human form but also displays an entire system of folds containing a principle of voluptuousness in themselves. It is the voluptuousness of the quality and warmth of the fabric and of the form. This is something entirely new, and it stands in substantial contrast to the rigidity inherent in creation inspired by the ascetic, anti-naturalistic mentality that is characteristic of Christian-feudal inspiration.

From this point on, a panorama of contrasting elements opens up. Just as creation inspired by the Christian-feudal mentality pursues the transcendent, the symbol, and the allegory, now the figure seeks to endow the expressive material—that which is used to convey expression—with value. There is a sensuality of matter, which manifests itself in the possibility of creating a drape with very special folds, showing the smoothness of a face or of arms, or lending a sensual warmth to human skin, or rendering jewelry, flowers, or fruits that express a certain sensuality. The painter who labors to place a particular piece of jewelry on the figure—taking delight in the rendering of it—seeks to reveal all the formidable beauty and all the luxury that the human figure wearing it produces, for that figure is the subject of the painter's special concern.

Another theme is the background. In flat painting, the background was a way to neutralize the figure and place it against infinity: a golden background—ultimately an icon background—against which the flat figure stands out considerably. Bourgeois art discovers the setting, the environment in which the figure moves. The most basic form is the niche, as Giotto and Cimabue do. But the niche becomes a subject in itself, an architectural drawing, resembling a church. Suddenly the niche disappears and a landscape or city background appears, or a combination of landscape and city, or of scenes. An anecdotal background also appears: behind the very sublime figure of a saint, two characters playing dice appear in a corner. It is everyday life that is introduced, or if we wish to use the precise expression, realism. Conversely, just as in painting with Christian-feudal inspiration the absence of a background is a negation of realism and a search for an abstract world—which is, ultimately, the world of ideas—here there is a realism whose tendency is not only to endow the figure and the subject of the representation with all realistic characteristics but also to situate the figure within the contours of a world of realities. Similarly, while there is no spatiality in Christian-feudal painting, here there is volume and movement. These elements, which begin to appear in a coherent manner, are what we call realism.

Realism is the typical expression of the bourgeois conception of reality, and it stands in opposition to that traditional conception characterized by the notorious evasion of reality and the search for refuge in a conceived intellectual world. On the plane of aesthetic creation, this is conceived as representation, as an image of reality, striving to preserve all the characteristics that lend it verisimilitude. This transformation of aesthetic creation, inspired by bourgeois sensibility and bourgeois mentality, defines a coherent line from Gothic art onward. There are variations, there are phenomena of concealment and stylization, such as those introduced by Baroque sensibility, but it is evident that the line of realism is continuous from the Gothic period through the 19th century. I reject the Gothic-Renaissance distinction: from the Gothic period onward, there is a realist line. The *Smiling Angel* in Reims Cathedral is in the same line as the painting of Piero della Francesca, a line that remains consistent and extends into the 19th century—up to Cézanne, so to speak—where the break with realist naturalism becomes evident.

Perhaps where it is least evident is in architecture, where the functional predominates over the trends imposed by sensibility. There are also secondary variations, such as those in fashion, which operate within structures that allow for certain changes but without fundamental modifications. There is a basic line connecting the Gothic with the so-called Renaissance and Baroque styles, in their various regional variants. After the Gothic period, there is a return to the imitation of the classical style, and there is a tendency to do away with the predominance of height. But this disappears with the Baroque. In its most characteristic expressions — those of Jesuit architecture — one finds that in the two-tower facade, height has once again come to predominate over the low horizontal line, which is preserved only in the palace type, for functional reasons.

In the other arts, the continuity of the line is clearer. Realism largely dominates painting, except perhaps after the Council of Trent, when there is an intentional and artificial avoidance of reality in Zurbarán, El Greco, and the painters who have most sought to create a pedagogical art, intended to instill the truths of a Catholicism that, at all costs, wanted to be ascetic when no one else was. At the very moment when Zurbarán and El Greco sought to give their figures that ascetic quality, Rembrandt did not do so, nor did Rubens, the greatest painter of the Counter-Reformation.

This line is most clearly seen in narrative. The realist irruption, typically bourgeois, manifests itself in the great literary creations of the fourteenth century — with Boccaccio or the Archpriest of Hita — where realism takes on an aggressive character. This is what inspires narrative fiction, in a continuous line from Boccaccio to Dickens, up to the great crisis of the nineteenth century. Such are the typical manifestations of bourgeois realism.

